

LMS Response to the Ofqual Consultation on Proposed changes to the assessment of mathematics, physics, and combined science in GCSEs in 2024

Details of the consultation can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-changes-to-the-assessment-of-mathematics-physics-and-combined-science-gcses-in-2024/proposed-changes-to-the-assessment-of-mathematics-physics-and-combined-science-gcses-in-2024>

Question 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree that a formulae sheet should be provided in the exam room for GCSE mathematics in 2024?

Options: Strongly agree/Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree.

Response

Strongly agree

Question 2

Do you have any comments on the proposal to provide a formulae sheet in the exam room for GCSE mathematics in 2024?

Response

We strongly agree with the Department for Education's (DfE's) decision that, in view of the disruption students may have experienced due to Covid, it is not necessary for them to memorise formulae for GCSE Mathematics (as they must in a normal year). Consequently, we strongly support Ofqual's proposal to carry forward from summer 2023 the provision of support materials, in the form of a formulae sheet, in the examinations for GCSE Mathematics.

The disruption due to Covid was cited as the rationale for taking the decision to include a formulae sheet in examinations for GCSE Mathematics in 2022 and 2023. Learners who will be sitting GCSE Mathematics in summer 2024 have also had their mathematics learning disrupted due to Covid, and thus these arrangements should continue for the 2024 examinations.

More generally, a view often expressed by teachers of GCSE Mathematics students, including those who are resitting, is that while higher attainers do not necessarily need or benefit from this, the lower attainers definitely do benefit and value having the formulae sheet. More importantly, it can decrease anxiety for lower attainers and increase confidence levels by knowing that these will be available. These lower attainers should be supported in a way that will benefit them in their future life, where they will need to make appropriate use of formulae that they can consult.

This also applies to all learners – using and applying formulae is the approach taken in further and higher education, and in employment.

For GCSE Mathematics examinations in general, we believe it is more meaningful to assess whether students can select the right formula for the problem in front of them, and whether they can use it properly. It is therefore more useful for learners to be assessed on the skills

of understanding, selecting, applying, rearranging and using the formulae than on memorising them.

Question 3

To what extent do you agree or disagree that a revised equation sheet covering all equations should be provided in the exam room for GCSE physics and combined science in 2024?

Options: Strongly agree/Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/Disagree/Strongly disagree.

Response

Neither agree nor disagree

Question 4

Do you have any comments on the proposal to provide a revised equation sheet covering all equations in the exam room for GCSE physics and combined science in 2024?

Equality impact assessment

As a public body, Ofqual is subject to the public sector equality duty. Ofqual has considered whether these proposals might impact (positively or negatively) on students who share particular protected characteristics.

Those students whose education might have been and might continue to be most badly disrupted include:

- students with caring responsibilities
- students whose homes are not conducive to study
- students without access to the internet or a computer
- students with SEND who have not been able to access their normal learning support
- students from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

The government's planned measures to support education recovery will target some such students. While Ofqual can bring about some adjustments to the way students are assessed and examined, as proposed in this consultation, it will always be the case that students who have been better prepared for the exams and assessments will be likely to perform better than others. In proposing changes to the exams and assessments for 2024, Ofqual has sought to guard against proposing changes that would further advantage students whose education has been less disrupted than that of others.

In proposing changes to the exam arrangements Ofqual has taken care to consider how any changes might have an impact on disabled students, some of whom will have reasonable adjustments when taking their exams and assessments. Ofqual has not identified any aspects of our proposed changes to the way GCSEs in mathematics, physics and combined science are assessed in 2024 that would have a negative impact on students who share particular protected characteristics.

Question 5

Are there other potential equality impacts that Ofqual has not identified? [Yes or no]

Response

No

Question 6

If yes, what are they?

Question 7

Do you have any suggestions for how any potential negative impacts on particular groups of students could be mitigated?

Regulatory impact assessment

Ofqual's proposed changes to the exam arrangements for students taking GCSEs in mathematics, physics and combined science exams in 2024 are made in response to a request from DfE. The changes are intended to make the exams more accessible to students, while ensuring the qualifications remain valid and meaningful. Ofqual previously developed these proposals with input from the exam boards, with the aim of putting in place arrangements that are both appropriate and manageable. Ofqual anticipates that schools and colleges will experience limited or no burden from these proposals. Indeed, the changes, as outlined above, are intended to reduce burden on centres, to enable more time for teaching.

Exam boards will incur costs to implement the changes to the exam arrangements, although these proposals would not require them to undertake major changes. They are familiar with the proposed arrangements which reflect those put in place for the exams in 2022 and 2023 for the production of the formulae and revised equation sheets.

Question 8

Are there additional activities associated with providing students with formulae and revised equation sheets in their GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science exams that Ofqual has not identified above? [Yes or no]

Response

No

Question 9

If yes, what are they?

Question 10

What, if any, additional costs do you expect you would incur if students are provided with formulae and revised equation sheets in their GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science exams for 2024?

Question 11

Do you have any suggestions for alternative approaches that could reduce burden and costs?

30 November 2023