

Consultation Response Form

Consultation closing date: 20 August 2013 Your comments must reach us by that date

Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

Consultation Response

Reformed GCSE subject content consultation

If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: <u>https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations</u>

Publication

Information you provide in your response to this consultation may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Confidentiality

Please make it clear if you want all/any part of your response to be treated as confidential and explain why. If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received by DfE, your explanation will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

Reason for confidentiality:

Personal data

For the purposes of the Data Protection Act, DfE is the data controller for any personal data you supply in response to this consultation. DfE will process all personal data (such as your name, address and any other identifying information) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. In most circumstances, this means that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please do not:

- provide information in comments boxes that might identify you unless you are content for that information to be released into the public domain; or
- provide information in your response that might lead to the identification of other living individuals

Name: Dr Rita Gardner CBE	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	х
Name of Organisation (if applicable): Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)	
Address: Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) 1 Kensington Gore London SW7 2AR	

Information sharing

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is undertaking a parallel consultation on regulatory conditions for GCSEs. Please tell us if you or your organisation has responded or is intending to respond, to Ofqual's consultation:

Yes	X	No]	Don't know	

Please only respond to the next statement if you have ticked 'no' or 'don't know' above:

If you provide comments to us that are relevant to Ofqual's consultation, we intend to forward your responses to them so they can be considered by Ofqual. If you do <u>not</u> want us to do this then please opt-out by ticking the box below:

I do <u>not</u> want DfE to forward my response to this consultation to Ofqual

Please mark the box that best describes you as a respondent.

	Academy and/or Free School	Comprehensive School	State Selective Schoo
	Independent School	Special School	Sixth Form Only
X	Subject Association	Organisations representing teachers	Parent
	Young Person	Higher Education	Further Education

Local Authority	Teacher	Governor
Employer/Business sector	Awarding Organisation	

The Learned Society and Professional Body for geography and geographers.

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is the learned society and professional body for geography and geographers. The Society maintains a strong overview of the discipline, its position and its practice in schools, higher education, and the workplace, including professional accreditation. We advise on and support its advancement, dissemination and practice in these realms and within wider public engagement and policy. We have 16,000 members and Fellows and our work currently reaches more than three million people per year. Each year the Society works with teachers and pupils from about 50% of English secondary schools and our online educational resources receive c. 1 million 'user sessions' annually.

If you have an enquiry which is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: <u>consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk</u> or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's <u>'Contact Us'</u> page.

Questions 1-6 below ask you to give your views with reference to a specific subject suite:

- 1. English,
- 2. Mathematics
- 3. Sciences
- 4. Geography
- 5. History
- 6. Modern and ancient languages.

You do not need to give answers for all the subject suites - please answer only with respect to those subjects on which you have a particular view.

Please ensure that you answer questions 7-11 as well – we would like responses from everyone on those.

1. English, including English language and English literature

1a Do **the proposed subject content and assessment objectives** for English, which includes English language and English literature, cover the appropriate knowledge and understanding for GCSEs in these subjects?

Yes	No -insufficiently demanding	No- overly demanding
Not Sure		
Comments:		
N/A		

1b Is **the relative weighting of the assessment objectives** right for English, which includes English literature and English language?

Yes	No	Not Sure
Comments:		
N/A		

1c Has the **right practical content** for English language been identified to allow students to gain the skills to progress in the subject, beyond the content which can be examined externally and reliably included in the GCSE grade?

Yes	No	Not Sure
Comments:		
N/A		

1d Do the proposed subject content and assessment objectives for English, which includes English literature and English language, **provide assurance that essential knowledge taught at the earlier key stages is built upon and represented adequately**?

Yes	No	Not Sure
Comments:		
N/A		

1e Will the proposed qualifications in English, which includes English language and English literature, secure sound progression for the purposes of further academic and vocational study?

Yes	No	Not Sure
Comments:		
N/A		

2. Mathematics

2a Do **the proposed subject content and assessment objectives** for mathematics cover the appropriate knowledge and understanding for GCSEs in this subject?

Yes	No -insufficiently demanding	No- overly demanding
Not Sure		
Comments:		
the study of geography a		nathematical requirements for / criteria a manner similar to the Idy of science are.

2b Is the relative weighting of the assessment objectives right for mathematics?

	Yes	No	Not Sure

Co	omments:		
N/	/A		

2c Has the right content for mathematics been identified for high achievers, **including those going on to study A levels** in science, technology, engineering and/or mathematics (STEM)?

Yes	No	Not Sure
Comments:		
N/A		

2d Do the proposed subject content and assessment objectives for mathematics provide assurance that essential knowledge taught at the earlier key stages is built upon and represented adequately?

No	Not Sure
	No

2e Will the proposed qualifications in mathematics secure **sound progression for the purposes of further academic and vocational study**?

Yes	No	Not Sure
Comments:		
N/A		

3. Science, including biology, chemistry, physics and combined science

3a Do **the proposed subject content and assessment objectives** for science, which includes biology, chemistry, physics and combined science, cover the appropriate knowledge and understanding for GCSEs in these subjects?

Yes	No -insufficiently demanding	No- overly demanding
Not Sure		
Comments:		
mathematics and other c		ly notes the identification of the sary to study the sciences as jects.
to the mathematics and o would welcome further d	quantitative skills needed w liscussions with DfE to help	the same approach in relation vithin a geography GCSE and identify the relevant skills and b. Please see section 4 below.

3b Is **the relative weighting of the assessment objectives** right for sciences, which includes biology, chemistry, physics and combined science?

Comments:			
N/A			

3c Has the right **practical content** for science been identified to allow students to gain the skills to progress in the subject?

Yes	No	Not Sure
N/A		

3d Do the proposed subject content and assessment objectives for sciences, which includes biology, chemistry, physics and combined science, provide **assurance that essential knowledge taught at the earlier key stages is built upon and represented adequately**?

Yes		No		Not Sure
Comme	ents:			
N/A				
physics and	combined scienc	e, secure sound	, which include I progression	es biology, chemistry, for the purposes of
further aca	demic and vocat	ional study?		
Yes		No	Γ	Not Sure
Comme	ents:			
N/A				
N/A				

3f Will the combined science double award provide students with a sufficiently secure basis for progression to A level study of each of biology, chemistry and physics?

Yes	No	Not Sure
Comments:		
N/A		

4. Geography

4a Do **the proposed subject content and assessment objectives** for geography cover the appropriate knowledge and understanding for GCSEs in this subject?

x	Yes	No -insufficiently demanding	No- overly demanding
	Not Sure		

Comments:

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is pleased to have provided advice to the Department for Education in the drafting of the Geography GCSE subject content and assessment objectives. The Society welcomes the consultation proposals for Geography GCSE content and assessment objectives and would like to make the following comments.

1. Progression and conceptual framework

We greatly welcome the fact that there is clear progression in both the conceptual framework and in the content from Key Stages 1 to 3 into the proposed GCSE. This is a vital improvement on the previous curriculum, and it is essential that this is maintained throughout the review process, and built on further in the A level review. The conceptual framework at GCSE builds on the focus at Key Stage 3 on understanding human and physical processes as they shape our world and its environments. GCSE takes the understanding of processes a step forward, and focuses on the nature and causes of change in societies and environments and of complex people environment interactions. Furthermore, at GCSE new topics are introduced that best meet this conceptual framework while still also retaining a broad balance between human and physical geography and introducing integrated study.

- 2. It is essential in our view that any further amendments of the draft GCSE subject criteria are made within this conceptual framework and continue to meet the requirement for progression in content as well as framework.
- <u>Balance across the discipline</u> The Society welcomes a rebalancing of the coverage of physical geography content in the proposed content. The two physical; two human and two integrated sections that are proposed provide an appropriate balance and coverage of this discipline.
- 4. <u>The option to extend modestly beyond specified content</u> It is a decision for Awarding Organisations to decide how best the identified

content is ordered and arranged as part of their specification. However, the Society would welcome an explicit statement that while the Awarding Organisations must meet the identified content, they can, if they wish, go beyond the content outlined in the consultation materials, provided the criteria set out in (1) above are met and that there is rigour and depth in the <u>manner</u> in which the specified content is included. A <u>small</u> amount of flexibility in this regard may provide the Awarding Bodies greater opportunity to differentiate their products and to respond, modestly, to teacher wishes. There should, however, not be an attempt to include 'everything' within the content and any additional content should provide a similar level of demand and be coherent with progression in geography and the conceptual approach for this subject at GCSE, as set out in (1).

(The Society notes that the principle of an AO developing a specification that includes content beyond that which is specified may also be a general issue for all subject areas.)

5. Fieldwork

Feedback from teachers has strongly supported the recommendation that fieldwork is undertaken 'in at least two contrasting environments'. A number of teachers have indicated that this would increase the range and extent of geographical fieldwork that they undertake. The Society endorses that view.

6. <u>Mathematics, statistics and quantitative skills in geography</u> Geography has an important and distinctive role to play in supporting pupils' use of mathematics, statistics and quantitative skills; and the discipline has the ability to set such skills in a meaningful and real-world context. Geography has long included statistical and numerical approaches as part of a wide range of methodologies, as recognised in the geography benchmark in higher education.

Former geography GCSE (and A Level) criteria have 'signalled' the discipline's role in enhancing young peoples' understanding of mathematics, statistics and other quantitative skills and have sometimes required the use of specific techniques or approaches. However, we do not believe previous criteria and specifications have identified the full extent of geography's contribution or indeed helped establish a consistent approach across the awarding bodies. For example, in the report Mathematics and A Level Assessment (Nuffield 2012) it was noted that in geography, "we found considerable variation between Awarding Organisations on mathematical coverage."

We note the explicit requirement for mathematic techniques to be identified in GCSE (and A Level) sciences and believe that the current review of GCSE provides the opportunity to formalise similar requirements within geography. The Society recommends the explicit identification of key mathematical, statistical and quantitative techniques that support a pupil's progression through GCSE geography (and separately at a more advanced level within A Level geography). This is entirely consistent with the current and well-reported calls from employers and higher education for a better grounding in quantitative and statistical methods, and their application, in students going on to university and to the workplace.

The Society proposes that the following provides a relevant and achievable range of mathematical, statistical and cartographic techniques that should be part of every pupil's experience of GCSE geography.

The Society suggests that this should form an additional section of the Subject Content and Assessment for GCSE Geography titled:

Mathematical, statistical and cartographic skills in geography

Cartographic and GIS skills

- Description, presentation, and interpretation of geo-spatial data in a simple GIS framework
- Gradient, contour and spot height
- · Interpretation of cross sections and transects
- Use of coordinates, scale and distance
- Awareness and understanding of different types of maps (e.g. choropleth, relief) and different types of projections (e.g. Mercator, Equal Area)

Graphical skills

- Plot and interpret different types of graphs and charts using appropriate scales, to include: pie chart, histogram, time series graph, and bivariate scatter plots and graphs
- Select appropriate graphical methods to present and summarise data

Numerical skills

- Demonstrate an understanding of number, size, area and scale and the quantitative relationships between units
- First hand collection of data with an understanding of accuracy
- Compare growth rate changes
- Understand and correctly use probability and ratio, magnitude and frequency (e.g. 1:200 year flood; and use of logarithmic scales for orders of magnitude)
- Draw informed conclusions from numerical data

Statistical skills

- Use basic descriptive (not inferential) statistics: e.g mean, mode and median; range and interquartile range
- Understand and use percentiles and calculate percentage increase or decrease
- Be able to identify weaknesses in selective statistical presentation of data
- Understand basic sampling procedures (ideally first hand through the collection of data through fieldwork) and the influence of sample size
- Undertake in a geographical context the 'data cycle': identifying a hypothesis, collecting data, analysis, interpreting the results and reviewing the hypothesis in the light of evidence.
- 7. Detailed drafting changes

The Society feels the following drafting changes would improve the document, aiding readability and clarity of meaning, and consistency with other subject specifications:

- Subject aims and learning outcomes: we have four suggestions here:
 - a. "GCSE specifications in geography should provide the opportunity for students to understand more about the world, their place within it, and the challenges it faces."
 - b. At the end of the first paragraph add the following sentence: "Geography enables young people to be globally and environmentally informed, thoughtful and enquiring citizens."
 - c. "GCSE specifications for the discipline of geography should enable students to:"

The inclusion of the term 'discipline' may also be appropriate for other GCSE subjects that have a recognised academic disciplinary focus and tradition.

d. The deletion of the following phrases: 'know geographical material', 'think like a geographer', 'study like a geographer' and 'understand the application of geography'. The tone of this terminology is not in keeping with the rest of the document and neither are such words included in other subject areas, such as history. Society feels it is inconsistent, patronising and unhelpful to include such phrases within geography and they should be deleted. **Comment [SB1]:** At the heart of the revised GCSE Geography is the need for pupils to understand how geographical processes combine and interconnect to bring about geographical change. Therefore, it is necessary for a clear recognition of geographical change be included in the Aims and Learning Outcomes.

Comment [RG2]: It is important to recognise that there is an outcome for individuals and for society as a whole through the study of geography as a discipline. History is also recognised in this way.

Comment [SB3]: GCSE provides the appropriate level to introduce pupils to academic disciplines as both a body of knowledge and an approach to study and understanding through a specific subject perspective. The Society would welcome, across geography and other relevant subjects, a clear recognition of the importance of disciplinary approaches at GCSE.

Comment [RG4]: We feel that these phrases, which are not found in any other subject criteria, suggest a lack of confidence in the discipline and are not particularly helpful to parents or pupils. Recognising that they may be of some use to AOs we suggest this wording is retained in the separate instructions for AOs but deleted from the main criteria document.

4b Is the relative weighting of the assessment objectives right for geography?

Х	Yes No Not Sure	
	Comments:	
	The Society welcomes the spread of assessment objectives across knowled understanding, skills and the application of geography and the general weigh The Society strongly argues for a clear and equal balance of human, physica integrated geography across the different assessment opportunities.	nting.
	Specifically, the Society would not wish to see physical geography (in relatio human geography) diminished and/or physical geography 'diluted' through a emphasis on 'integrated' approaches within assessment opportunities.	
	In addition, the Society welcomes the identification that 15% of the marks for geography should be linked to: 1. The skills needed to respond to fieldwork data and contexts (5%) 2. The application of geography to fieldwork context(s) (10%).	GCSE
	Reinforcing the new level of demand necessary for the revised GCSE Geography through assessment.	
	The Society recognises that the new GCSE for geography should demonstration carry through better balance and greater demand compared with recent predecessors. The Society believes that the revised content provides for this predecessors.	
	The Society wishes, however, to see greater demand in the styles of assess to include more extended writing, thereby reinforcing the newly established hemand in the qualification as a whole.	
	However, only a thorough assessment of the sample materials provided by A can provide proper evidence that the new level of balance and demand has established and will be carried through into the examinations that pupils will future years.	be
	Given the Society's involvement with the Department on the reform of GCSE geography, neither the Society's staff nor its Trustees have taken up invitation support AOs in their responses to the new context for GCSE and A Level. The position has also been communicated to Ofqual.	ons to
	Therefore, if appropriate, the Society would be pleased to discuss with the Department and/or Ofqual how its expertise might help support the review an validation of the new GCSE specifications.	nd

4c. We are working on options to ensure that fieldwork takes place. One option might be a letter, submitted to AOs and signed by the head teacher and head of geography, which states that fieldwork has taken place beyond the classroom and school grounds. Do you think this would be an effective measure to demonstrate that fieldwork has taken place beyond the classroom and school grounds?



Do you have any other suggestions to verify that fieldwork has taken place beyond the classroom and school grounds?

The Society <u>strongly supports</u> the proposal that a school should submit a short annual declaration about fieldwork to their AO (and that a similar annual declaration be also made in relation to A Level geography).

For the absence of doubt the Society believes that all AOs should send identically worded letters to their schools and if aggregated results are provided (see below) that these are done in a similar way across AOs.

This is a 'light touch' check and balance, which realistically should not take a geography teacher & their head teacher more than a few minutes to complete, sign and post. Society does not believe it introduces any unnecessary additional paper work. Indeed, the move from internal /controlled assessment to 100% external assessment frees a significant amount of time and administration that would have been taken up by both a teacher and their AO in undertaking Controlled Assessment.

In addition, the Society believes that this would also provide AO's with useful, and on-going, intelligence on the type, range and extent of fieldwork undertaken by their schools, and the locations visited. Furthermore, the knowledge derived from such annual returns should help underpin a more informed development of 'fieldwork' examination questions.

A number of teachers have positively commented on this suggestion, noting that it would raise the profile of geographical fieldwork with their senior management teams. The suggestion helps to overcome a very real risk that in moving to 100% terminal examinations it becomes much more difficult for subject teachers to make the case for fieldwork to their management teams.

In the public interest, there is also a case that the annual fieldwork return should be made public on a schools website, to inform parents, and aggregated returns published by each AO. 4d Do the proposed subject content and assessment objectives for geography provide assurance that essential knowledge taught at the earlier key stages is built upon and represented adequately?

X	Yes No Not Sure
	Comments: The proposed content and skills build appropriately on the geography National Curriculum Key Stages 1-3. It introduces a progression in the conceptual framework, and linked to that new areas of study and approaches to geography and a higher level demand in relation to its assessment, as set out in earlier.

4e Will the proposed qualifications in geography secure **sound progression for the purposes of further academic and vocational study**?

Yes	No	X Not Sure

Comments:

The proposed qualification will certainly secure sound progression in conceptual framework, content, and assessment onwards from key stages 1 to 3.

It is highly desirable that GCSE is further built upon in the (GCE) A Level specifications since there is now considerable overlap between the new draft GCSE criteria and current A Level specifications. This has arisen because the level of demand has been raised and proper conceptual and content progression introduced from key stages 1 to 4.

In the absence of published materials from the AOs in relation to their proposals for revised specifications for A Level geography, the Society is unable at this time to make an informed judgement concerning progression from GCSE geography into A Level.

The Society has already offered to review, independently and objectively, the range of A Level specifications drafted by the AOs, drawing on an advisory group that spans higher education, employers, and selected leading teachers.

5. History

5a Do **the proposed subject content and assessment objectives** for history cover the appropriate knowledge and understanding for GCSEs in this subject?

Yes	No -insufficiently demanding	No- overly demanding
Not Sure		
-		
Comments:		
N/A		

5b Is the relative weighting of the assessment objectives right for history?

Comments:			
N/A			

5c Should students be encouraged, as part of their GCSE history studies, to undertake a historical investigation that gives them the opportunity to conduct independent research into a historical issue, event or process of their choosing resulting in an extended essay?

Yes	No	Not Sure
If so, how can this	s be achieved best?	
N/A		

5d Do the proposed subject content and assessment objectives for history provide assurance that essential knowledge taught at the earlier key stages is built upon and represented adequately?

Yes	No	Not Sure
Comments:		
N/A		

5e Will the proposed qualifications in history secure **sound progression for the purposes of further academic and vocational study**, including encouragement of the ability to conduct independent study in the subject?

Yes	No	Not Sure
Comments:		
N/A		

6. Modern and ancient languages

6a Do **the proposed subject content and assessment objectives** for modern and ancient languages cover the appropriate knowledge and understanding for GCSEs in these subjects?

Yes	No -insufficiently demanding	No- overly demanding
Not Sure		
Comments:		
N/A		

6b Is **the relative weighting of the assessment objectives** right for modern and ancient languages?

	Yes	No	Not Sure

Comments:	:		
N/A			

6c Do the proposed subject content and assessment objectives for modern and ancient languages provide assurance that essential knowledge taught at the earlier key stages is built upon and represented adequately?

Yes	No	Not Sure
Comments:		
N/A		

6d Will the proposed qualifications in modern and ancient languages secure **sound progression for the purposes of further academic and vocational study**?

	Yes	No	Not Sure

Comments:			
N/A			

Please answer all the remaining questions, which include questions on literacy, numeracy and impact on specific groups of students.

7 Does the English language content cover the **key elements of literacy needed for employment or further study**?

Yes	No	X Not Sure
Comments:		
always a helpfu		and assessment of other disciplines is ally engages a wider range of students about.
	ht in mind, opportunities in th g are particularly important a	ne assessment of geography for and welcome.

8 Does the mathematics content cover the key elements of numeracy needed for employment or further study?



Comments:
Please see the Society's earlier comments (in section 4.) about the importance of providing greater specification in relation to the use of graphical, numerical and statistical skills (that is, quantitative methods) in geography.

9 Do any of the proposals have potential to have a **disproportionate impact, positive or negative, on specific pupil groups**, in particular the 'protected characteristic' groups? (The relevant protected characteristics are disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation); if they have potential for an adverse impact, how can we reduce this?

Yes - Positive impact Yes - N	egative impact X No
Not Sure	
Comments:	
	place in at least two contrasting at teachers can plan engaging and

10 Have you any further comments?

No

Comments:

11 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, whether it was easy to find, understand, complete etc.).

Comments:

The questionnaire was clearly phrased, easy to understand and complete.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply.	Х
E-mail address for acknowledgement: director@rgs.org	

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents.

X	Yes	No

All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office <u>Principles on</u> <u>Consultation</u>

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and consult with those who are affected
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy; and
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

Responses should be completed on-line or emailed to the relevant consultation email box. However, if you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 20 August 2013

Send by post to: Qualification and Assessment Division Department for Education L2 Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BT

Send by e-mail to: GCSEcontent.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk