

CCEA Equality Screening Exercise

For the Outcomes of Consultation on Proposed Changes to CCEA Entry Level, Vocationally Related and Occupational Studies Qualifications for January and Summer 2021

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1 Background and Introduction

In March 2020 schools and colleges were shut as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, while learning continued online and results were issued for summer 2020 based on a combination of calculated grades and adapted assessments. Schools and colleges re-opened in September 2020. Policy direction was provided that assessment should go ahead for 2020-21, with consideration of adaptations to assessment. Awarding organisations offering vocational and other general qualifications were tasked to consider how best to develop suitable adaptations. CCEA carried out a consultation exercise on possible adaptations. This Equality Screening exercise is to assess the impact on Section 75 groups of the outcome of this consultation.

CCEA offers 14 Entry level qualifications, 26 vocationally related qualifications and 6 pathways through Occupational studies Levels 1 and 2. The qualifications are entirely evidence-based assessments with no written external examination or test. All units are internally assessed, and we carry out external moderation.

1.1 CCEA Consultation

The consultation was launched on Wednesday 23rd September 2020. The consultation ran for two weeks and during that period a total of 180 responses were received.

The consultation sought to gather views on three elements:

- Adaptations to Entry Level, Vocationally Related and Occupational Studies qualifications to ensure they meet current public health restrictions.
- The proposal to reduce the burden of assessment on students. We did not propose to make changes to specification content, rather a reduction in the number of units externally moderated by CCEA; and
- An equality assessment of the proposed changes.

1.2 CCEA Consultation outcomes

A proposed approach to adapt assessment to take account of PHA advice was supported by the majority of respondents, indicating they 'agree' or 'strongly agree';

- 55.6% for Entry Level subjects
- 52.2% for Vocationally Related subjects
- 67.2% for Occupational Studies Levels 1 and 2'.

Several respondents who commented on the fact that despite adaptations for Occupational Studies it remains very difficult to complete practical tasks with current public health restrictions in place.

Students will be expected to complete the full qualification. However, new assessment arrangements were proposed that would apply to all students hoping to cash in and achieve a qualification grade in their CCEA Entry Level, Vocationally Related or Occupational Studies qualifications in Summer 2021, up to a 50% maximum reduction in the number of units to be moderated

Respondents were in favour of these proposals. Approximately two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed reduction in the number of units moderated for

- Entry Level (65%)
- Vocationally Related Qualification (64.4%)
- Occupational Studies Levels 1 and 2 (86.7%)

A Recommendation was made to implement the revised assessment and moderation arrangements in line with the proposals. A full proposal paper was provided to the panel members to inform their screening of impact.

2 Screening exercise

A screening exercise was carried out with the following included

- Setting up an equality panel to represent a range of expertise
- Gathering panel views through an Equality Screening Questionnaire
- Screening panel meeting to review feedback and agree impacts
- Reporting

2.1 Equality panel screening questionnaire

The screening panel were asked to consider and comment on the likely impact, in any way, on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this new and temporary process, including an indication of the level of impact on the group, i.e. minor, major, or none. Comments were invited for each question for the nine Section 75 categories.

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this temporary process, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?
minor/major/none
2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?
3. To what extent is the temporary process likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?
minor/major/none
4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Additional questions

5. Are there any potential impacts of the process on people with multiple identities?
6. Are there other potential equality impacts relevant to the outcomes outlined that have not been covered?

2.2 Panel questionnaire returns

Nine returns were received from panel members. In summary;

- In answer to question 1, no or minor impacts were received on section 75 categories for Religious belief, Political Opinion, Racial Group, Age, Marital Status, Men and Women Generally, Sexual Orientation and Dependents. One major impact was recorded for those with Disabilities.
- In answer to question 2, up to three yes responses were received for the nine categories, including opportunities for collaboration between schools for Religious Belief and Political Opinion, can be mitigated by acknowledging the differences in the learning experiences of girls and boys for Men and Women in General, and acknowledging the issues with SEN and special consideration at an early stage and making adjustments in the process for these for Disabilities.
- In response to question 3 - To what extent is the temporary process likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group, 1 minor impact was recorded on the potential choice of units by providers displaying bias toward individual learners.
- In response to question 4 - Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group. 1 yes response was received out of the nine respondents, depending on the subject area of the qualification.
- Three yes responses were received in response to the question on multiple identities, recording concern on further disadvantages from the normal circumstances due to the effects of the lockdown, with increased absence or lack of engagement from students, needing to shelter due to disabilities and also having difficulties making arrangements for care of dependents or for those with complex medical needs being disadvantaged due to fear or inability of being in classroom situations.

2.3 Screening panel meeting

The panel was invited to attend a MST meeting to hear summary feedback to the questionnaire and allow for discussion on the responses and decide on the level of impact for each of the section 75 groups.

Where there was no impact in an equality category that it would be recorded as such and discussion was mainly based around the comments in relation to minor and major impacts. The consultation was in relation to additional bias that may have been introduced into the system by the proposals or additional bias exacerbated by the current conditions could be factored into discussion.

Discussion at the meeting considered the impacts recorded through the questionnaire and concluded that no major impacts on section 75 groups would be as a result of new bias being introduced.

A comment from a panellist was recorded that without knowing exact details of each specification it is difficult to be certain if there may be a disadvantage to certain groups.

3. Outcomes

Major Impact 0
Minor impact 6
No impact 3

The proposed adaptations to Vocationally Related Qualifications, CCEA Entry Level Qualifications and Occupational Studies Level 1&2 will not have major impact on the equality for the Section 75 groups.

4. Approvals

	Name	Job Title	Date
Screened by	Name C	Programme Manager (Acting)	15 th December 2020
Approved by	Name B	Head of Resources	15 th December 2020

Minutes of the Equality Screening Exercise in Relation to the Outcomes of Consultation on Assessment Arrangements for GCSE, AS and A-level Qualifications in Summer 2021

In attendance: Name C (Chair), Name A, Name D, Name E, Name F, Name G, Name H, Name I, Name J, Name B.

Apologies: Name K

The Chair welcomed the panel and thanked them for the timely turnaround in forwarding the completed questionnaires for the meeting and for their contribution. The Chair briefed the panel on housekeeping issues for the afternoon and then introduced the meeting; the panel would be discussing the outcomes following consultation on the 2021 exam proposals to explore whether there was any additional bias or indeed new bias introduced to the system of awarding to the normal trends experienced in previous typical examination series.

The Chair advised that there was a total of 12 questionnaire responses and where there was no impact in a equality category that it would be recorded as such and that discussion would be based around the comments in relation to minor and major impacts.

The Chair advised that this screening was as a result of a formal request from the Department of Education to proceed with consultation outcomes and to take time to review equality screening. The Chair advised that the Council has approved the outcomes in principle and that the outcomes will be also be sent to DE.

The panel noted that Question 4-other considerations was not within the scope of the consultation process and that individual panel members had already been contacted and advised to disregard this question. The Chair was content with this advice and action.

The Chair then proceeded to go through each category as itemised in the equality screening document.

1 Religious Belief

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
1	3	8	12

The Chair invited those who had completed the impact as major or minor to put forward their opinions for their scoring. The panel member who had considered it as major impact advised that they were not a subject expert and struggled with the questionnaire overall.

In relation to religious belief it was raised that we share the same brand across the UK division but CCEA offers unitised GCSE, England linear and as such it is hard to take a consistent approach. Moreover, as this is what is done currently there would be no additional issues in relation to bias introduced.

Clarification was put forward from another member that since the document had been forwarded to Council, proposals had been updated and the issues have been addressed to a degree. They clarified that the point is relative to what is happening in Irish but this is no different to any other language.

It was recognised that within some households there is opportunity to practice a second language but this is something outside CCEA’s control.

Recommendation: As a result of the additional work that has been undertaken since the proposal paper it was put forward by the Chair that the impact should be recorded as minor and that monitoring in relation to the delivery should be undertaken.

This was seconded and agreed by the panel.

2. Political Opinion

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
0	3	9	12

Recommendation

The Chair recommended that unless anyone had anything further to add that the impact be recorded as minor.

Agreed by the panel.

3 Racial Group

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
0	2	10	12

Recommendation

The Chair recommended that unless anyone had anything further to add that the impact be recorded as minor.

Agreed by the panel.

4 Age

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
3	4	5	12

Discussion took place around the comments that had been recorded on the questionnaires, for example potential impacts are:

-that some boys mature at a later stage than girls which may be exacerbated by the arrangements being put in place for Summer 2021,

-Older adult learners are more likely to have health issues and so not be able to attend classes.'

Recommendation

A communication strategy to be developed, in part to address issues raised.

The panel were advised that the CBI had been part of the consultation and that employers also engaged and all views have been captured.

In view of this involvement by the above parties it was proposed that the major impacts be mitigated to minor and that consideration be given to effective communication in relation to the future strategy.

Agreed by the panel.

5 Marital Status

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
0	0	12	12

Recommendation:

No impact

6 Sexual Orientation

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
0	0	12	12

Recommendation:

No impact

7. Men and Women Generally

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
2	1	9	12

As some previous discussion had already taken place in relation to gender it was proposed that there was nothing additional or new as a result of the change in process.

The panel was advised that some analysis had already been done on internal and external assessment and taking that into consideration the Chair proposed that the impact should be reduced to minor.

Recommendation:

Minor impact-agreed by panel.

8. Disability

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
2	5	5	12

The Chair read out some of the comments received in relation to this category.

-‘there may be issues for learners with mental or physical disabilities. Particularly in relation to A-levels being wholly assessed at the end of two years. Formally it would’ve of course have normally been assessed across two years, spreading the weight of assessment over time. This could add stress to vulnerable learners.’

-‘the risk of bias against SEN candidates could be increased due to the new arrangements if in particular the issue of assessing learners’ achievements is not addressed.’

The panel were advised that there are two areas which are particularly affected, those being food and nutrition and health and social care which are planned to be exam only. However there still remains an option to do a controlled assessment if the candidate so wishes.

Further technical solutions are being investigated to mitigate bias for learners preferably in relation to controlled assessment. It was put forward to the panel that The Executive Team are considering jurisdiction between schools and CCEA and that they are looking to give assurance on that.

The Chair made reference to the Restart Program and the discussion around considerations given by the Executive Team and recommended that the two major impacts should now be mitigated to minor.

Recommendation minor impact.

Agreed by panel.

9. Dependants

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
0	0	12	12

Recommendation:

No impact

Summary

The Chair summarised the final recommendations of the panel: from the nine areas under review minor impacts were now concluded in six areas and none in three areas in relation to the outcomes following consultation.

It was noted that any potential contingences as they develop may need to be screened should they become policy or recommendations.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the panel for their time and contribution.