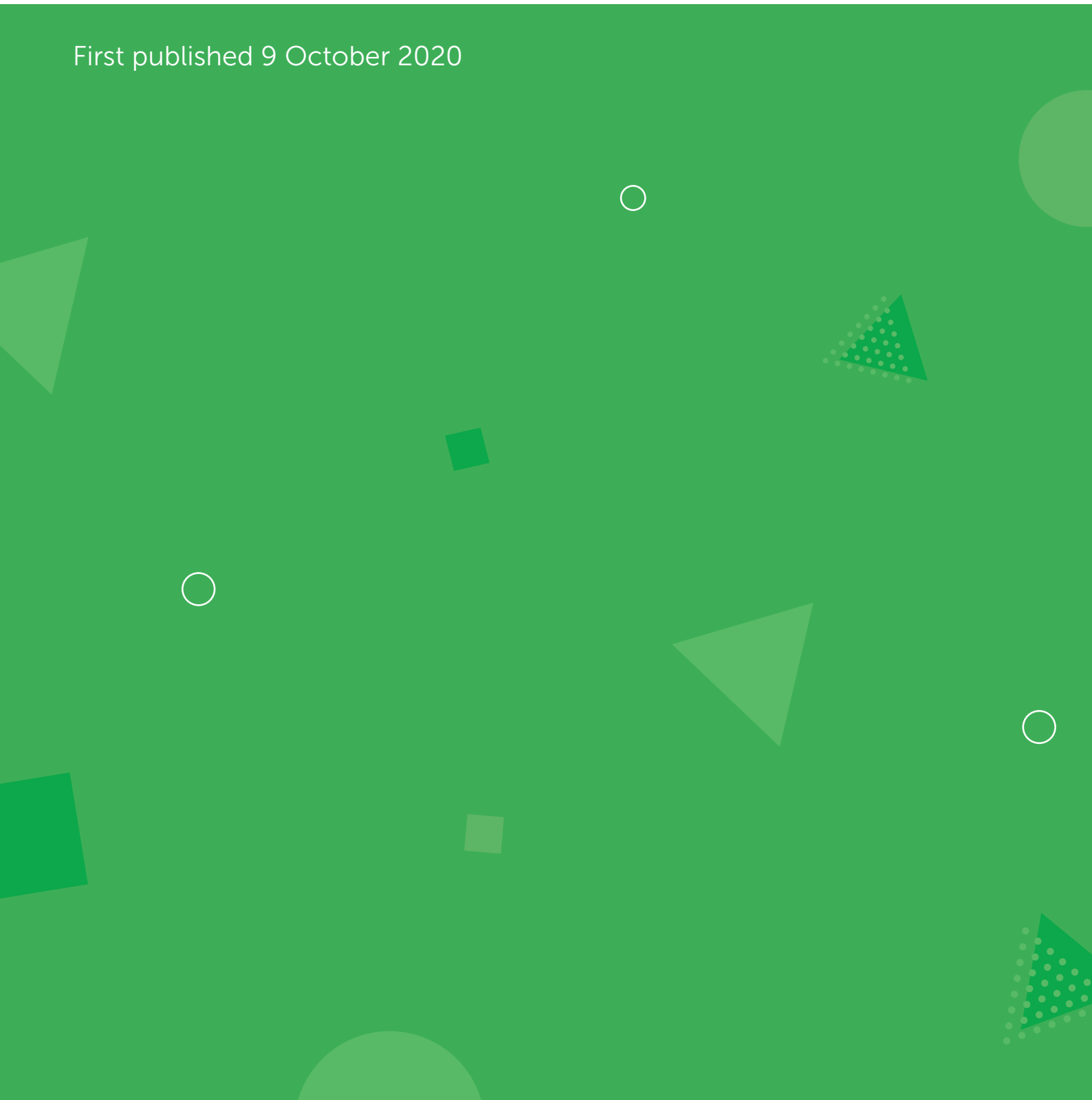


# Consultation Findings on Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021

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## Introduction

The disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures has been felt by learners across Northern Ireland. The pandemic has caused many difficulties for young people, including the loss of face-to-face teaching and social interaction, pressure on mental wellbeing and, in some cases, the difficulties of bereavement.

The Department of Education has put in place a range of different interventions to support children and young people (as well as school leaders and teachers) in these unique circumstances. It also commissioned CCEA to look at how best to adapt qualifications during 2020/21 to take account of current public health requirements, lost learning time, potential further disruption and, above all, to reduce the burden of assessment on students.

Therefore, CCEA's Research and Statistics Unit facilitated a consultation with stakeholders on proposed changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A level qualifications that are due to be assessed in Summer 2021. These were initial proposals designed to stimulate discussion through providing a potential framework for further development.

Feedback from school leaders, teachers, parents and students about their preferred approaches for the year ahead was welcomed. The intention is to further refine and develop proposals based on this feedback, and to subsequently implement changes that are easily understood and make things better for young people and their teachers.

## Methodology

### Background

In order to appropriately consider CCEA's public service responsibilities and adhere to the relevant guidance set out by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman, an online questionnaire was developed to obtain stakeholder feedback on the proposed changes to qualifications for Summer 2021, drafted by CCEA awarding organisation.

The consultation was open to any individual, organisation or representative group that wished to make a contribution. It was considered that the consultation would be of particular interest to the following groups:

- students who are expecting to take CCEA GCSE, AS and A level examinations in Summer 2021 and their parents or carers;
- teachers delivering CCEA GCSE, AS and A level qualifications;
- school and college leaders and heads of other types of examination centres;
- subject heads of department;
- examinations officers;
- further and higher education institutions;
- employers and representative bodies; and
- other stakeholders who rely on qualification outcomes to inform decision-making.

### Consultation Arrangements

The consultation was open for two weeks, starting on Monday 24 August 2020. It is recognised that this was a much shorter period than what is normally recommended for consultation. However, the short timeframe was selected to provide early certainty about the arrangements for teachers and students who will be studying for and taking examinations in Summer 2021 and to allow sufficient time for the arrangements to be put in place.

As stated, the questions posed in the online questionnaire focused on the proposed changes to qualifications outlined in the consultation document. In short, these included the following:

- a range of adaptations to GCSE, AS and A level qualifications to ensure they can be delivered safely and meet current public health requirements;
- providing guidance on the order of unit delivery in specifications and mitigating risk by improving the consistency of centres' approach;
- in the majority of GCSEs, one unit of the specification would be omitted from assessment in order to reduce the assessment burden on students;
- at this time, in order to provide consistency across subjects, it was proposed that total omissions or adaptations to any GCSE qualification would not exceed 40% of the specification;
- students would be assessed in all units of the qualification in GCSE English Language and GCSE Mathematics; and
- students studying for their A2 assessments would not be required to take AS assessments in 2021.

Respondents were provided with references and prompts throughout the questionnaire to specific sections of the consultation document that were being considered

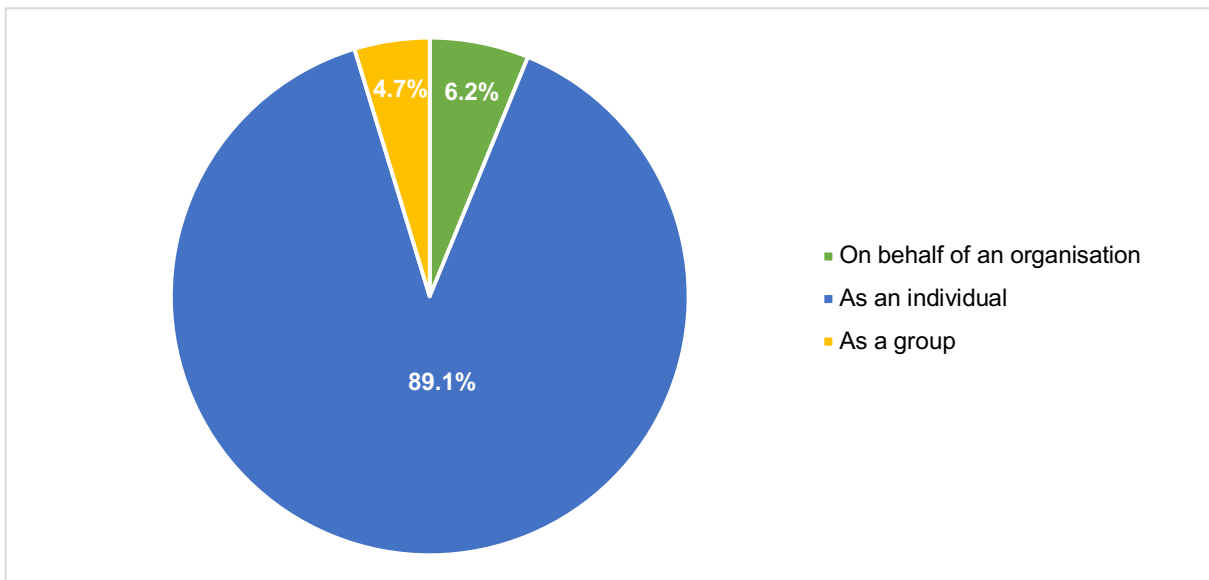
## Results

This report details the feedback obtained from 7,094 respondents. The response encompasses individuals as well as representatives from organisations and various groups; a breakdown will be subsequently provided in the Demographics section of this report. CCEA also received a number of free (written) responses, which were considered and incorporated into the report's qualitative findings.

Please note that the value 'N' in the report is the number of actual responses to the items presented, described or illustrated. In some instances, where respondents were asked to give multiple responses to an item, 'N' may be greater than the total respondent figure.

## Demographics

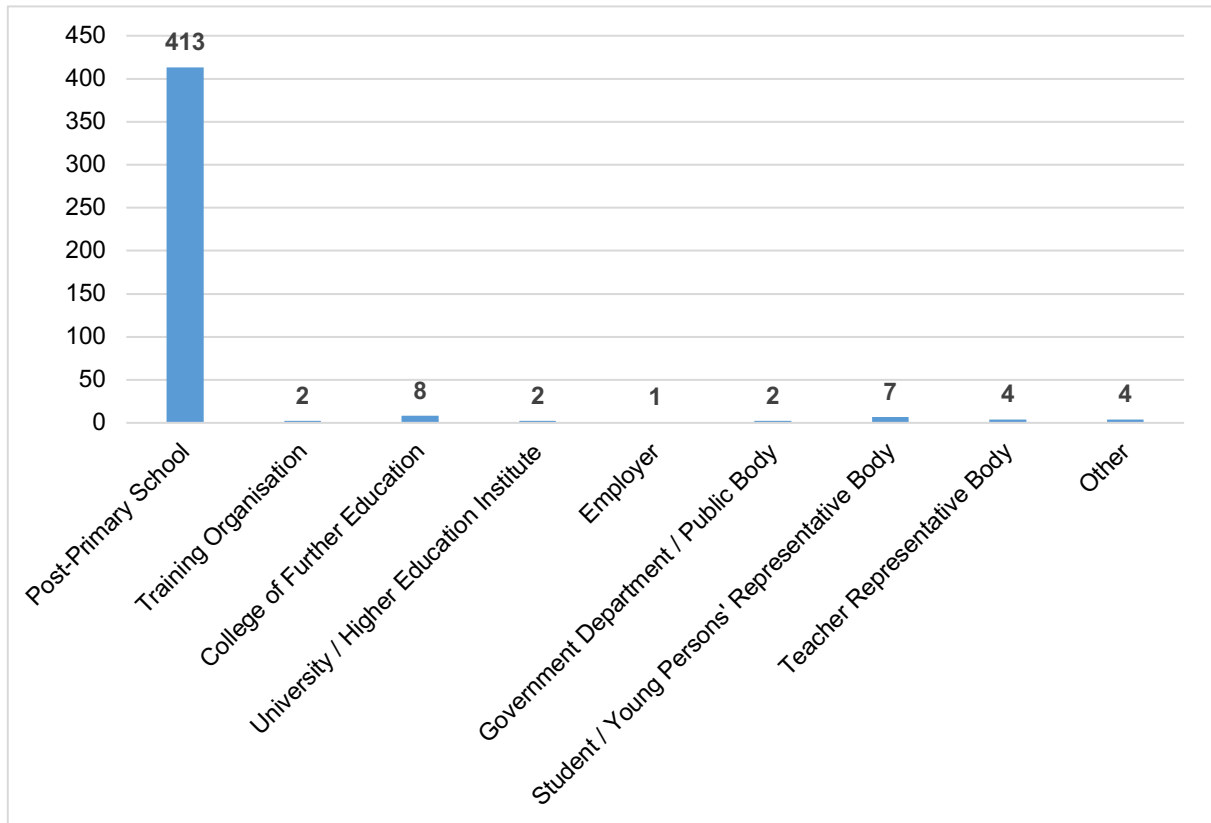
**Figure 1: How are you responding?**



Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

The vast majority of responses to the consultation were provided by individuals (N=6,321, 89.1%), while the remainder was primarily made up of responses on behalf of organisations (N=443, 6.2%). A total of 330 responses (4.7%) were also made by groups of individuals (comprised of approximately 5.8 respondents on average).

**Figure 2: If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, which of the following best describes your organisation?<sup>1</sup>**

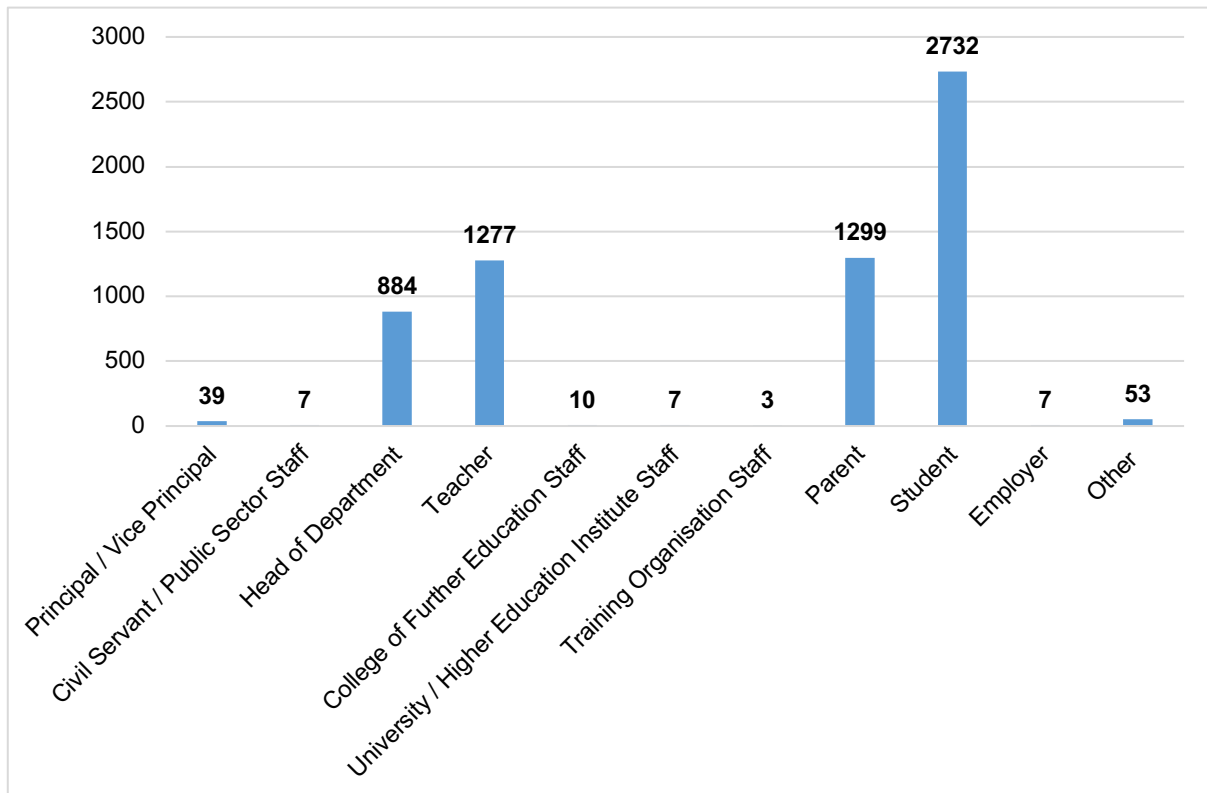


Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

As illustrated in Figure 2, 93.2% (N=413) of organisational responses were made by Post-Primary Schools, while the remaining response is comprised of University/Higher Educational Institutes, Training Organisations, Further Education Colleges, Teacher Representative Bodies, Student/Young Persons’ Representative Bodies, Employers and Government Departments/Public Bodies (N=30, 6.8%). A full list of the organisations who provided a response and consented to being listed is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

<sup>1</sup> Other responses included Diocesan Advisor (N=1), Independent School (N=1), Individual Teacher (N=1) and Irish Language Organisation (N=1).

**Figure 3: Please indicate how you are individually responding to this consultation.<sup>2</sup>**



Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

Parents and students make up 56.8% (N=4,031) of the individual responses to the consultation, while the majority of the remainder is comprised of educationalists<sup>3</sup> (N=2,220, 35.1%).

Please note that the results detailed in the main body of this report are from the total number of individuals, organisations and groups who have provided a response to the consultation. However, it should be noted that, due to the wide range of stakeholders who responded to the consultation, a breakdown of response by type is included in Appendix 2 of this report.

<sup>2</sup> Other responses included Assistant Examiner/Exam Team Member (N=15), Faculty Leader/Senior Leader/Senior Teacher (N=8), Moderator (N=5), Chief/Principal Examiner (N=3), Relative of Student (N=3), Technician (N=3), Member of the Public (N=2), Retired Teacher (N=2), Governor (N=2), EA Teacher of the Deaf (N=1), Education Consultant (N=1), Entrepreneur (N=1), Tutor (N=1), University Lecturer (N=1), SEN Classroom Assistant (N=1) and Not Provided (N=4).

<sup>3</sup> This is an aggregate of Principal/Vice Principal, Head of Department, Teacher, College of Further Education Staff, Training Organisation Staff and University/Higher Education Institute Staff.



## Public Health Adaptations

**Table 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals to implement public health adaptations to CCEA qualifications?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Strongly Agree	2,261	31.9	31.9
Agree	1,988	28.0	59.9
Neither	482	6.8	66.7
Disagree	675	9.5	76.2
Strongly Disagree	1,400	19.7	95.9
Don't Know/Not Applicable	288	4.1	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

As detailed in Table 1, approximately 60% of respondents (N=4,249, 59.9%) agreed with the proposals to implement public health adaptations to CCEA qualifications, while the majority of the remainder disagreed with the proposals to implement public health adaptations (N=2,075, 29.2%).

When split by response type (see Appendix 2), it can be seen that this response is reasonably consistent between the three largest respondent groups: educationalists, organisations and parents/students. However, there was a slightly stronger level of agreement found between organisation and educationalist responses (66.9% and 62.3%) when compared to parents/students (57.2%).

Respondents were also asked to provide any comments they had on the proposed subject-specific amendments, with 4,869 respondents (68.4%) taking the opportunity to provide additional comments.

In total, 4,252, 896 and 1,363 individual comments were received in relation to GCSE, AS level and A level subjects respectively. Subject-specific themes are detailed in Appendix 3 of this report<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Please note that this section also takes into consideration free (written) responses provided as part of the consultation.

## Specification Order

**Table 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that CCEA should provide guidance on the order of unit delivery in a specification?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Strongly Agree	2,882	40.6	40.6
Agree	2,125	30.0	70.6
Neither	608	8.6	79.2
Disagree	484	6.8	86.0
Strongly Disagree	539	7.6	93.6
Don't Know/Not Applicable	456	6.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

The response indicated that just over 70% of stakeholders (N=5,007, 70.6%) were in agreement that CCEA should provide guidance on the order of unit delivery in a specification.

An analysis by response type (see Appendix 2) found that there were no major deviations of opinion with regards to this question. Educationalists, organisations and parents/students all largely agreed with this particular proposal.

**Table 3: Could you suggest any other information that CCEA could provide that may assist delivery planning?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Yes	2,154	30.4	30.4
No	4,940	69.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

In addition to providing guidance on the order of specification delivery, respondents were asked whether they could suggest any other information that CCEA could provide that may assist delivery planning. Just under one-third of respondents (N=2,154, 30.4%) provided additional suggestions. An analysis of these comments revealed the following:

*There was significant concern among respondents due to the consultation being completed after the start of the academic year, especially as many Year 12 and 14 students returned to school at the end of August. Respondents reported being apprehensive that proposed changes may leave schools at a disadvantage if they had wasted time teaching units that would be excluded from assessment. It was stated that recommendations from this consultation need to be urgently communicated to schools, teachers, parents and students. A number of respondents also noted that they were unhappy that guidance previously provided by CCEA differs from what has been proposed in the consultation document.*

*There were a large number of respondents who agreed that CCEA should provide a detailed plan for teaching, including the order in which units are to be taught and the*

*recommended associated teaching times for each unit. It was agreed that this would be particularly useful for subjects that have retained full course content, i.e. GCSE Mathematics and English Language. Respondents argued that, if this is in place, and if further disruptions to the school year take place due to COVID-19, at least it would mean that schools would have covered the same content.*

*Other respondents disagreed that CCEA should provide guidance on teaching order. It was felt that teachers can make professional judgements based on their knowledge of the cohort, as well as their students' understanding of each element of the specification. For example, some unit topics may not necessarily be taught in the order detailed in the specification, and these are decisions only teachers can make. Additionally, it was noted that some subjects cannot be prescriptive, such as Music, and that there is great variation across what has been taught to date in schools.*

*It was suggested that teachers would benefit from having a choice of what to cover, allowing students to choose which exam questions to complete. Additional guidance on topics to be included in the exam was requested, with specific details of unit weightings to allow teachers to effectively plan their teaching.*

*Furthermore, given the reduced teaching time, a number of respondents believed that a reduction in course content is essential. Some respondents felt that full units should be dropped, particularly those with a practical element. However, a number of other respondents recommended that reducing content of all units was more appropriate.*

*In addition to this, given the pressure schools are facing in preparing students for future examinations that may be interrupted due to the current health crisis, it was considered essential that CCEA provides additional resources to assist teachers. Suggestions included textbooks, mark schemes and 2020 exam papers. In the event of further lockdowns, it was stated that teachers would require additional resources to support blended learning.*

*Urgent advice on controlled assessment was also considered crucial, particularly as some of these have to be carried out with restrictions in place regarding student contact (such as Speaking and Listening assessment) and the sharing of equipment (such as Art and Design). Some subjects, such as GCSE Hospitality, were also noted as having no omissions with regards to controlled assessment, which was considered inappropriate given current public health guidance. Therefore, it was stressed that CCEA needs to reconsider and make clear which controlled assessments will go ahead.*

*Finally, it was suggested that consultations with schools should be carried out as a follow-up before any changes are made.*

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

## AS and A Level Assessment Arrangements

**Table 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal that in Summer 2021, students in the second year of their A level studies should be required to take A2 unit assessment only?**

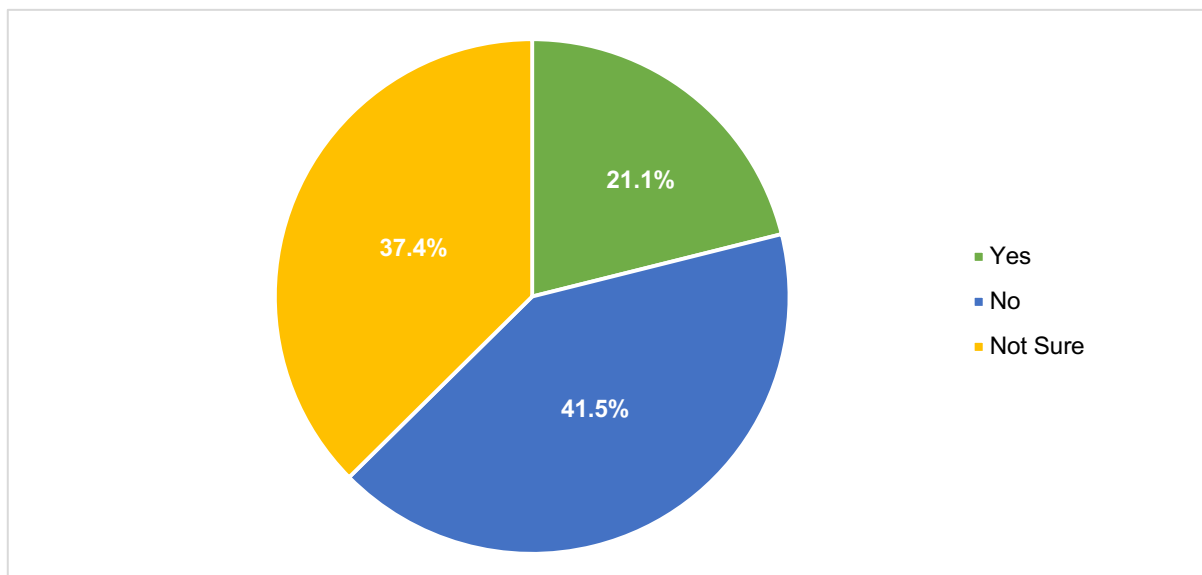
	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Strongly Agree	2,628	37.0	37.0
Agree	1,488	21.0	58.0
Neither	499	7.0	65.1
Disagree	257	3.6	68.7
Strongly Disagree	279	3.9	72.6
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1,943	27.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

Just under 60% of respondents (N=4,116, 58%) agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal that in Summer 2021, students in the second year of their A level studies should be required to take A2 unit assessment only.

When broken down, it was found that there were deviations of opinion between the different types of respondents (see Appendix 2). Around 65% of organisation and 70% of educationalist respondents agreed with the proposal to require students in the second year of their A level studies to take A2 unit assessment only. For parents and students, less than half agreed with this point (N=1,989, 49.3%). However, it should be noted that the majority of the remaining response (over one-third of the total response) was ‘Don't Know/Not Applicable’ (N=1,462, 36.3%).

**Figure 4: Other than public health adaptations, do you think course content should remain largely unchanged at AS and A level at this time?**



Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

Respondents were also asked: ‘Other than public health adaptations, do you think course content should remain largely unchanged at AS and A level at this time?’ The response was split mainly between ‘No’ and ‘Not Sure’ (see Figure 4), with a slightly larger proportion leaning towards disagreement with this proposal (N=2,943, 41.5%).

When response type is considered (see Appendix 2), both organisation and educationalist respondents lean towards disagreeing with this particular proposal, while parents/students either disagree or are unsure in this regard.

**Table 5: Do you have any additional comments on the proposed arrangements for CCEA AS and A level qualifications?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Yes	1,845	26.0	26.0
No	5,249	74.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

Just over one-quarter of respondents (N=1,845, 26%) provided additional comments on the proposed arrangements for CCEA AS and A level qualifications. These comments have been themed below:

*A large proportion of respondents argued that the content of AS and A2 exams should be reduced. It was largely agreed that, given the fluid nature of the current health crisis, there is no guarantee that students will avail of uninterrupted face-to-face teaching during the current academic year. Furthermore, it was noted that current COVID-19 restrictions within schools also limit teaching time.*

*Respondents went on to state that engagement in online learning was low and that some students lack the knowledge and skills necessary for A2, which is normally gained at AS level. Many teachers therefore reported having to repeat lessons from lockdown. It was agreed that reducing content at AS and A2 will assist in accommodating those from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not have had access to appropriate resources for blended learning.*

*Another suggestion made to further accommodate AS and A2 students was to amend/adjust examinations. Suggestions included reducing the number of exam papers, providing greater choice in the exam (i.e. optional questions) and allowing open book examinations. It was also recommended that examiners should be mindful, when marking papers, of how disrupted the academic year has been and the discrepancy in opportunities to develop knowledge and skills that students have had in comparison to previous years.*

*Furthermore, urgent advice regarding a reduction in practical content and assessment was requested. For instance, it was believed that for certain STEM subjects, there are too many practicals to cover given the current health restrictions. Respondents also felt that subjects which have fully removed practicals should also remove the practical exam (for example Geography).*

*A large number of respondents also recommended that AS predicted grades from 2020 should count towards students' overall A2 grade. It was agreed that students are under immense pressure and that basing their final grades on A2 exam performance would only exacerbate this. Student respondents reported feeling that the AS year was a waste of time, particularly for those who were actively engaged in online learning. Teacher respondents also indicated that they were frustrated, as they had spent the time compiling AS predicted grades, only for these not to be part of the A2 grade. Additionally, there was some uncertainty among teachers regarding whether to advise students to sit both AS and A2 exams, and whether this would be beneficial for their overall grade.*

*More generally, schools reported needing urgent clarification on any final decisions made as a result of the consultation and that, as the current health crisis is so unpredictable, CCEA must also have contingency measures in place for every eventuality.*

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

## Changes to Assessment at GCSE

**Table 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that all 2020/21 Year 12 students who started their course in September 2019 should, where possible, be permitted to omit assessment in one unit in each GCSE qualification to be completed by Summer 2021, if they wish to do so?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Strongly Agree	4,008	56.5	56.5
Agree	1,584	22.3	78.8
Neither	277	3.9	82.7
Disagree	296	4.2	86.9
Strongly Disagree	381	5.4	92.3
Don't Know/Not Applicable	548	7.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

The majority of respondents (N=5,592, 78.8%) agreed with CCEA's proposal that all 2020/21 Year 12 students should, where possible, be permitted to omit assessment in one unit in each GCSE qualification, if they wish to do so. This opinion was shared by all response types (see Appendix 2). However, a slightly stronger level of agreement was found between organisation and educationalist respondents.

**Table 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach that, where omission of a unit is possible, CCEA should specify the GCSE units to be taken, with the intention of ensuring consistency, as far as possible, for schools and colleges?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Strongly Agree	2,443	34.4	34.4
Agree	1,780	25.1	59.5
Neither	451	6.4	65.9
Disagree	706	10.0	75.8
Strongly Disagree	1,068	15.1	90.9
Don't Know/Not Applicable	646	9.1	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

In total, 59.5% of respondents (N=4,223) agreed with the proposal that, where omission of a unit is possible, CCEA should specify the GCSE units to be taken, while just over one-quarter of respondents disagreed with this particular suggestion (N=1,774, 25.1%).

When broken down, (see Appendix 2), it was found that there were slight deviations between the responses based on type. Around two-thirds of organisation and educationalist respondents agreed with the proposal that CCEA should specify the GCSE units to be taken, while just over half of parent/student respondents were in agreement with this.



Respondents were invited to freely comment on CCEA's proposal of specifying required examination units for GCSE specifications. An analysis of these comments (N=2,422, 34.1%) revealed the following themes:

*A large number of respondents commented on the fairness of CCEA specifying the GCSE units to be taken. Respondents in favour of CCEA making the decision stated that this would create consistency for all students, as they will all sit the same exam, and prevent any unfairness in terms of lack of knowledge in certain areas, especially if the student plans to study the subject at AS level.*

*Respondents who were not in favour of CCEA making this decision stated that, as centres teach units in an arbitrary order, there will be a division between centres on what units have already been taught. There will be students who have been taught a unit that has been proposed for the omission, and those students would be put at a disadvantage compared to their peers who have studied different units. Furthermore, respondents felt that it could potentially have a demoralising effect on those students, as the work they have done would be made redundant. The most popular suggestion as an alternative was to let the centres make the decision on which units to omit. Another proposal from respondents was to let students make the decision, potentially in the form of an examination paper that has a combination of units with optional questions.*

*Some respondents were worried that, by removing an entire unit, students could lack the necessary knowledge when moving on to further education and suggested that streamlining the units may be an alternative.*

*The wellbeing of students was another concern raised, particularly for those who are studying subjects that don't have any unit omissions and the stress this would entail, while others raised safety concerns regarding students engaging in practical work. Further to this, some respondents also expressed dissatisfaction that CCEA appears to no longer be following the guidelines proposed in April 2020. There have been suggestions to revert to those proposed guidelines and for students to only sit the exams they had planned to in Year 12.*

*Various respondents felt that whatever happens, it needs to be done as soon as possible and that CCEA needs to provide clear guidelines.*

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings



**Table 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the total amount of any qualification adjustment in 2020/21 should not exceed 40% of the specification?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Strongly Agree	1,497	21.1	21.1
Agree	2,355	33.2	54.3
Neither	757	10.7	65.0
Disagree	849	12.0	76.9
Strongly Disagree	1,013	14.3	91.2
Don't Know/Not Applicable	623	8.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

As illustrated in Table 8 above, 54.3% of respondents (N=3,852) agreed with the CCEA proposal to limit qualification adjustment to a maximum of 40% of the specification. Just over one-quarter of respondents disagreed with the proposed adjustment (N=1,862, 26.3%).

When the response was broken down by type (see Appendix 2), it was found that organisations and educationalists were more in favour of this proposal (65.7% and 63% respectively) when compared to parents/students (47.9%).

Furthermore, the following themes emerged from an analysis of the qualitative comments (N=1,567, 22.1%) provided in relation to the above question:

*The qualitative response was split on whether 40% should be the maximum total amount of any qualification adjustment in 2020/21.*

*Respondents who felt that 40% was too high expressed concern that removing too much content may cause an excessive increase in the higher grade boundaries, and that students may end up lacking essential skills and knowledge when moving on to further and higher education. These respondents therefore suggested setting the adjustment limit to 20–30% of the total assessment to minimise the amount of change possible.*

*Respondents who felt that the 40% limit was too low stated that it did not adequately take into account current circumstances, and that for certain subjects it would be unfeasible. A common concern raised was how much of the guided learning hours teachers will be able to provide before the exam period. It was noted that, in the previous academic year, a portion of the teaching was done via remote learning, with some of the students not being able to take part due to various circumstances. It was stated that, should another closure occur, those same students would be adversely affected the most.*

*These respondents went on to state that for the current academic year, the number of guided learning hours provided by teachers will be lower, due to the necessary steps taken to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. A common suggestion from respondents who felt that 40% was too low was to raise the maximum adjustment to 50% of total assessment.*

*Some respondents felt that all subjects should have some form of change, and that changes needed to be applied to all subjects consistently. It was considered unfair that*

*certain subjects such as Mathematics, Religious Studies and Modern Languages did not receive any omissions. One suggestion provided was the possibility of adjusting unit weightings to ensure consistency of change between subjects.*

*In addition to this, the lack of flexibility regarding setting an adjustment limit of 40% was a concern. It was agreed by some respondents that it would not be feasible for certain subjects, as the 40% does not take into account that not all units require the same learning hours and workload. Respondents also raised concerns about the uncertainty of how the pandemic will affect the current academic year with already reduced teaching time due to sanitising between classes, the possibility of future closures and individuals/bubbles going into isolation. Therefore, it was recommended that a flexible approach should be considered, and that contingency plans should be put in place to take account of potential future closures.*

*There were comments from respondents who believed that removing entire units was not the ideal solution and suggested alternatives. These included the use of centre assessment grades (CAGs) for work done in Year 11 and to only be examined on the content covered in Year 12, or to take out some topics from all units and have optional questions.*

*Questions were also raised as to why 40% was the number suggested by CCEA, as some respondents believed it to be arbitrary and unfairly penalise certain subjects, while others wished to know the rationale for the number.*

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

**Table 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the 2021 exams should not include more optional questions than usual?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Strongly Agree	1,283	18.1	18.1
Agree	1,275	18.0	36.1
Neither	857	12.1	48.1
Disagree	1,375	19.4	67.5
Strongly Disagree	1,506	21.2	88.8
Don't Know/Not Applicable	798	11.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

Table 9 indicates that the response was split as to whether the 2021 exams should not include more optional questions than usual. In total, 36.1% of respondents (N=2,558) agreed that examinations should not include more optional questions than usual, while 40.6% of respondents (N=2,881) believed that there should be more optional questions than usual in the 2021 examinations.

This outcome was largely found across all response types (see Appendix 2).

In addition to this, 1,641 respondents (23.1%) provided additional qualitative comments on the proposed use of optional exam questions in the 2021 exams. These comments revealed the following:

*The views of respondents towards the use of optional questions in GCSE examinations in 2021 were broadly split.*

*On the one hand, there were a large number of responses that indicated their favourability towards the use of optional questions based on the flexibility afforded to teachers and students through their incorporation. However, a sizeable proportion of respondents also felt that optional questions at GCSE would lead to increased levels of confusion among some students, particularly lower achieving students and students with special educational needs (SEN) who benefit from the directness and clarity offered by a non-optional examination approach.*

*Most advocating for the use of optional questions sought to emphasise the exceptional circumstances of the 2021 examination series. With the past disruption of the teaching term causing a loss of face-to-face teaching time, and the potential for disruptions to the current academic year, many respondents strongly suggested the need to preserve any opportunity for flexibility in the examination system.*

*This flexibility, many argued, would allow teachers and students to make up for lost teaching time, with teachers able to direct learning towards particular aspects of specifications, which might prove essential if remaining teaching time did not allow for entire specifications to be taught.*

*However, this would, as some pointed out, require clear direction from CCEA on what the optional questions within each GCSE specification would entail and how each examination's structure would change. A smaller number of respondents went further, claiming that, by incorporating optional questions, teachers and students would be empowered to a greater level of decision-making about students' learning. This empowerment could help lessen the strain on students by making them feel more in control of their learning and examination, thereby aiding to preserve the mental health of young people at an already anxiety-inducing time.*

*There was also a significant proportion of respondents who rejected the prospect of using optional questions in examinations in 2021. The reason behind this was that optional questions add undue confusion to examinations, which disadvantages lower achieving students by adding the time-consuming pressure of selecting a question outright and implies that some students may not be equipped to answer all of the questions, thereby limiting their choice compared to that of others. Many of those who highlighted this confusion as a problem preferred the strict omission of topics/units from specifications because it means clarity and consistency can be retained in what is taught to all students.*

*Beyond this, those arguing against the use of optional questions highlighted two practical issues for consideration. First, a substantial number of respondents pointed to the inconsistency such changes in examination structure would create with past papers.*

*Students and teachers indicated that this was problematic as past papers serve as the foremost method of exam preparation for students – a problem that could only be rectified with sufficient instruction from CCEA about the new exam structures and provision of new specimen papers. Second, there were some concerns expressed about the fairness of asking optional questions when it came to marking and standardisation. Some doubted that standardisation would be fair, given students’ options in what to answer may have been limited in the exam by what they had already been taught in class.*

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

**Table 10: Do you have any additional comments regarding GCSE arrangements considered in Section 4 of the consultation document?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Yes	1,012	14.3	14.3
No	6,082	85.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

In total, 1,012 respondents (14.3%) provided additional comments in relation to the GCSE arrangements discussed in the consultation document. The following themes emerged from an analysis of these comments:

*Two specific themes emerged from participant responses to the question concerning Section 4 of the CCEA consultation document.*

*First, many respondents expressed a desire that CCEA prioritises considerations of students’ and teachers’ mental health in their planning for GCSE examinations in 2021. One particular concern was for those students who have already missed several months’ worth of face-to-face teaching time, with the prospect of potentially missing more in the year ahead. Students with SEN and those from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds were highlighted as deserving of specific consideration by CCEA. The uncertainties around the exams, respondents pointed out, only served to exacerbate the stresses normally brought about by examinations in a typical year. There was also concern for the mental wellbeing of teachers, with some responses objecting to the timing of the current CCEA consultation. With teaching having already begun, respondents expressed worries about the lack of consistency in approach that might emerge from this process, and stressed the need for clarity on GCSE teaching and examinations as soon as possible.*

*The second major theme concerned the apparent lack of consistency in CCEA’s approach to the omission of course content across all GCSE specifications. A high proportion of responses indicated a strong desire to see omissions considered for GCSE Mathematics and GCSE English Language, thereby bringing them into line with other specifications.*

*Respondents felt that it was unfair and unrealistic to expect full courses in these subjects to be taught when most other specifications were seeing some variation of reduction in content. There was also a notable number of concerns raised about the lack of*

*omissions in Modern Languages and Religious Studies. Many respondents pointed to this lack of consistency as being unfair on students in Northern Ireland, particularly given that other awarding organisations in the UK (AQA, Edexcel and WJEC) are reducing Modern Language course components for 2020/21.*

*Aside from a lack of consistency, a substantial number of respondents also expressed concern over the increased assessment burden at GCSE if modules that were usually sat in Year 11 now have to be sat in Year 12 – particularly a problem for GCSE Mathematics.*

*Moreover, respondents pointed to the seeming discrepancy between the new CCEA consultation document and the proposed guidance by the Minister of Education in April 2020 concerning students only needing to sit Year 12 units, as opposed to both Year 11 and Year 12 units. There was confusion as to why this suggestion had not been fully taken forward. In this regard, opinions of respondents were divided as to whether students should be given the option to sit all units if they weren't mandated to. Some considered this possibility as an additional stress for students, while others felt that it was important to retain this possibility of completing all unit examinations in order to properly reward all students' learning efforts. Respondents did, however, stress the need for fairness and clarity in whatever approach is taken, with students not disadvantaged for sitting all or only some units.*

*A final concern touched on by several teachers was the role of the new health and safety policies in schools and, in particular, how these would affect controlled assessments for GCSE, including science practicals, public speaking and group work, cooking, and computer-based assessments. These teachers noted how previous methods for in-school assessment and learning were now either much more complicated or even impossible given the changes to health and safety guidelines. They urged the need for CCEA to consider this in its examination planning.*

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings



## GCSE English Language and Mathematics

**Table 11: Do you think that students should be assessed in all elements of GCSE English Language and Mathematics?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Yes	1,470	20.7	20.7
No	4,158	58.6	79.3
Not Sure	1,466	20.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

Almost 60% of respondents (N=4,158, 58.6%) disagreed with the proposal that students should be assessed in all elements of GCSE English Language and Mathematics. The remaining response to this question was roughly split evenly between agreement (N=1,470, 20.7%) and don't know (N=1,466, 20.7%).

When broken down by response type, it was found that around two-thirds of parents and students were in favour of not assessing all elements of GCSE English Language and Mathematics, compared to around half of organisation and educationalist respondents (see Appendix 2).

Respondents were given the chance to elaborate on their answer to the above question. In total, 33.5% (N=2,377) took this opportunity. The emerging themes from these comments are detailed below:

*The vast majority of consultation respondents were unhappy with students being assessed on all elements of GCSE Mathematics and GCSE English Language. Respondents believed that CCEA's treatment of Mathematics and English Language is inconsistent with other GCSE specifications that are receiving content omissions. Many felt that this made the prospect of teaching and examination in English Language and Mathematics both unfair and unrealistic.*

*The main reason for this unfairness noted by respondents was the inconsistent approach to content omission with which English Language and Mathematics were treated in comparison to the majority of other GCSE specifications. Although participants acknowledged CCEA's reasoning that English Language and Mathematics are core subjects at GCSE, this was generally not seen as sufficient reason to treat them in a different way to other content-heavy subjects, like History. Many students and teachers responded by stating they felt that this was therefore a discriminatory approach that would disadvantage these subjects in contrast with others, and that the current CCEA proposals seemed to contradict earlier directives from the Department of Education regarding students not being required to sit exams in modules usually taken in Year 11. Moreover, a number of teachers specifically stated that it was unfair that their teaching workload had not been reduced when that of many of their colleagues would be under CCEA's proposals. This had the potential to cause them increased anxiety and stress, with several mentioning that they would contact their Unions if this pathway was followed.*

*Alongside this lack of fairness, many respondents also claimed that it was wholly unrealistic to see the entire course content of English Language and Mathematics being taught when several months of face-to-face teaching time had already been lost. Trying to fit these courses into a severely reduced timetable would, participants claimed, increase the workload for students which would, in turn, have the potential to increase their anxiety levels at an already stressful time. Beyond this, a considerable number of respondents also pointed out that the loss of teaching time at the end of 2019/20 has caused something of a regression in learning for some young people (particularly in Mathematics), meaning content that was taught in Year 11 will need to be retaught in Year 12. This has a knock-on effect on teaching time in Year 12, meaning it is not simply a case of continuing with content where a class may have previously left off.*

*With the vast majority believing that examining full courses in GCSE English Language and Mathematics is unfair and unrealistic, a high proportion of respondents urged the need for flexibility in examination approach, with the possible streamlining of assessment through the omission of repetitive modular content.*

*For GCSE English Language, the most popular suggestion for streamlining assessment was the omission of a controlled assessment component, specifically Speaking and Listening. This component, many claimed, would be problematic anyway given the new health and safety guidance issued to schools. Others saw giving teachers the choice as to which controlled assessment component to complete as a useful option. Also, it was pointed out by several participants that there is considerable overlap in the skills assessed in Unit 1 and Unit 4 of English Language. If one unit was omitted, the same skills would still be assessed but with a reduced assessment burden. Reducing the workload for individual aspects of units was a further suggestion, with a reduction in the required poetry anthology a popular example provided.*

*For GCSE Mathematics, a considerable proportion of consultation participants saw the potential in omitting earlier units (M1–M4) because the relevant later units (M5–M8) assessed many of the same skills, albeit at a more advanced level. This would at least reduce the assessment burden on students, particularly when many were denied their usual chance to undertake the earlier units in Year 11, thereby getting them out of the way for Year 12. Another suggestion, although less popular, was to retain some additional flexibility in examination for those students also completing Further Mathematics, with the need to do two Applied Mathematics units seen as unnecessary and a potential opportunity for streamlining the examination process.*

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

## Equality

Respondents were asked to outline any potential equality impacts which they felt that CCEA should consider. In total, 3,392 respondents (47.8%) commented on this question.

A common theme within the responses was the vast impact that socioeconomic status played during the COVID-19 lockdown in that not all students received equal opportunities for learning. Many respondents noted that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were largely disadvantaged due to having no access to resources such as the internet or a computer for online learning, little or no parental support, as well as the inability to afford private tuition. Responses noted that consideration needs to be given to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in the context of learning as *'socially and/or economically disadvantaged children who are statistically more likely to struggle and underachieve [are] being expected to perform in the current strained circumstances'*. Furthermore, the impact on students receiving Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) was also highlighted, particularly as lockdown meant that some children *'on FSM did not receive quality meals and this of course impacted their physical and mental health'*.

Along with, but not exclusively linked to, socioeconomic factors, a recurring theme among the responses alluded to the fact that not all students had/have access to appropriate technology at home for accessing online learning resources. This issue was also raised in regards to students from rural and remote communities. This was argued to have had a detrimental impact on their learning during lockdown, with some suggesting that *'students with no computer access during lockdown will need to be retaught parts of their Year 11 course – how can we do this and then have the full Year 12 course to complete as well? This would be very difficult for those students'*.

Many comments also reported concerns that those students who had no access to a computer/internet during lockdown will be at a disadvantage and *'may have fallen behind their peers who did'*. Respondents urged for this to be taken into consideration for the 2021 exam series.

Additionally, another strong issue emerging from the consultation was that many voiced concerns around the imbalance in omissions of units across subjects, with many citing unfairness and that *'If omissions are being made in some subjects and not others, there is clear inequality. Students, teachers and parents can come to no other conclusion than that some subjects will be easier than others. This is unacceptable'*. In particular, GCSE Mathematics and English Language were believed to be unfairly disadvantaged by the changes (or lack of) proposed, as respondents believed it would be *'extremely unfair'* for both teachers and students to have to cover all units considering *'these students have missed four months of learning'* and that this would cause *'undue stress among Maths and English teachers'*.

Religious Studies and Modern Languages were also argued to be unfairly disadvantaged by the proposed changes compared to other subjects. It was also stated that there was unfairness around the proposal to remove units that may have already been covered and how time was wasted on these. Similarly, it was argued that the proposed changes may mean revising material already covered, which would advantage some schools compared to schools only starting such units. However, this was also argued to have a potential negative



*'impact on student motivation and performance'* if students are learning the same material for a second year.

A common thought throughout the responses was that COVID-19 has impacted every student in one way or another, whether it be through the impact on their mental wellbeing, the lack of technology at home, bereavement, being a child of a key worker, vulnerability or simply being out of school for four months. Respondents urged for these factors to be taken into consideration for the 2021 cohort and to accommodate students as fairly as possible as *'all children, regardless of ability, will have been impacted by COVID-19. Their emotional and mental wellbeing must be paramount and utter fairness applied to examining them in 2021'*.

In addition, students with SEN were highlighted as requiring *'a lot of extra support'* and should be *'carefully considered'* when making any or no changes to assessment. Particularly, it was noted that students with SEN would struggle to cover all aspects of GCSE English Language, Mathematics and Religious Studies where no changes to assessment have been proposed.

Finally, it was maintained throughout the consultation that plans and contingencies need to be put in place in case a second/local/school lockdown occurs. Respondents also commented on how to accommodate, and not disadvantage, students who may need to shield (for example ensuring access to online resources), as well as making provisions for those students who would not be able to attend school or sit an examination in a centre.

## Additional Comments

At the end of the consultation questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they had any other comments that they would like to make regarding the consultation proposals, or other potential changes to qualifications. Approximately, one-fifth of respondents (N=1,522, 21.5%) provided additional comments; these have been themed in the box below:

*A major issue arising from the consultation was the impact that COVID-19 and its fallout (i.e. on education) has had on both students' and teachers' health and wellbeing. Respondents urged CCEA to take into consideration students' mental health when making any changes to assessment, with one stating 'I ask you to think not only of their educational development, but their mental health'.*

*Many comments were made regarding course content and how the imbalance in omissions proposed would cause severe stress in many students if they are expected to cover all units. One teacher noted 'units in English Language must be omitted or students' mental health and wellbeing will suffer from the stress of producing too much content and their work will not reflect their full potential'. Similarly, it was noted that teachers' wellbeing would be impacted if they were expected to cover all content, with one respondent stating 'please consider the impact of not changing these qualifications on not only student welfare, but teacher welfare'.*

*The majority of respondents noted that the consultation was carried out 'far too late' and how it would have been a lot more useful to have completed this process earlier and ahead of school starting. Respondents stated that the results from the consultation need to be fed back as soon as possible, with one commenting 'this process needs to be completed as soon as possible, as teachers and students are already in school and teachers need to know what to teach. CCEA should have started this process much sooner'. Responses noted that CCEA will need to provide 'a lot of guidance and support' to schools this year, as well as 'transparency regarding the options being considered should any form of school closure affect learning'.*

*Lastly, it was highlighted that CCEA needs to listen to teachers when making any changes to assessment this year, with one teacher commenting 'we teachers are working with students in class every day. We are the ones delivering the content to students, and we know where changes to exams/units will be best placed' and another noting 'please listen to the people who you expect to deliver the courses!! Listen and act on the feedback from this consultation'. Respondents stated that this consultation process needs to be collaborative and it is essential that feedback is taken on board when altering assessment this year.*

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

## Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be stated that there are areas of general agreement in regards to a number of the proposals included in the consultation document.

In total, around 60% of respondents agreed with the overall proposals to implement public health adaptations to CCEA qualifications. However, in spite of this agreement, there were additional comments made on the proposed subject-specific amendments by 4,869 respondents, with many providing additional recommendations on subject adjustments or amendments (see Appendix 3). The majority of respondents also agreed that CCEA should provide guidance on the order of unit delivery in a specification, as it would provide a consistency of approach between centres and ensure that centres would largely have covered the same content in the event of further lockdowns.

In relation to AS and A level assessment, around two-thirds of respondents either agreed or had no strong feelings in regards to CCEA's proposal that students in the second year of their A level studies should be required to take A2 unit assessment only. However, the response was split regarding whether (excluding public health adaptations) course content at AS and A level should remain largely unchanged at this time, with a slightly larger proportion of respondents leaning towards disagreement. In terms of additional suggestions, reductions in content, changes to assessment and the contribution of AS predicted grades to the overall A level grade need to be considered.

Regarding GCSE assessment, the majority of respondents believed that all 2020/21 Year 12 students should, where possible, be permitted to omit assessment in one unit in each GCSE qualification, if they wish to do so. Relating to this, around 60% of respondents agreed that, where omission of a unit is possible, CCEA should specify the GCSE units to be taken. The response was divided, however, with regards to whether the 2021 exams should not include more optional questions than usual, with respondents agreeing and disagreeing roughly in equal measure. Supporters of optional questions advocated their use, as they felt that they provide flexibility in regards to content coverage, while others believed that they can lead to confusion and disadvantage lower achieving students and those with SEN.

In addition to this, there was one proposal relating to GCSE assessment that most respondents did not agree with. This was the proposal regarding students being assessed in all elements of GCSE English Language and Mathematics. These respondents were unhappy with students being assessed on all elements of these subjects, as they felt that it is inconsistent with other GCSE specifications that are receiving content omissions. Recommendations were made on suggested content amendments, particularly in relation to Units 1 and 2 of English Language and the Year 11 content in Mathematics (see Appendix 3).

Finally, in relation to equality impacts that need to be considered regarding the proposals, respondents strongly recommended that CCEA takes into consideration the impact the lockdown has had on the learning outcomes for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and the difficulties they may have had in engaging with online/blended learning. Furthermore, students with SEN were highlighted as requiring *'a lot of extra support'* and should be *'carefully considered'* when making any or no changes to assessment. Particularly, it was noted that students with SEN would struggle to cover all

aspects of GCSE English Language, Mathematics and Religious Studies where no changes to assessment have been proposed.

Please note that attention should be drawn to the Appendices of this document. These include a breakdown of the consultation response by type and commentary on subject-specific amendments.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – List of Respondent Organisations

<b>Respondent Organisations</b>
Abbey Christian Brothers, Newry
Abbey Community College
All Saints College
Antrim Grammar School
Aquinas Diocesan Grammar
Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
Assumption Grammar School
Ballycastle High School
Ballyclare High School
Ballyclare Secondary School
Ballymena Academy
Banbridge Academy
Banbridge High School
Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College
Bangor Grammar School
Bannside District Beekeepers
Belfast High School
Belfast Metropolitan College
Belfast Model School For Girls
Belfast Royal Academy
Blessed Trinity College
Breda Academy
Cambridge House Grammar School
Campbell College
Carrickfergus Grammar School
Castlederg High School
Christian Brothers Grammar School, Omagh
City of Armagh High School
Coleraine College
Coleraine Grammar School
Cookstown High School
Craigavon Senior High School
Cross and Passion College
Dalriada School, Ballymoney
De La Salle College, Belfast
De La Salle High School, Downpatrick
Devenish College, Enniskillen
Diocese of Down and Connor
Dominican College, Fortwilliam
Dominican College, Portstewart
Down High School, Downpatrick

## Respondent Organisations

Dromore High School
Dunclug College
Dundonald High School
Dunluce School
Edmund Rice College
Enniskillen Royal Grammar School
Erne Integrated College
Fivemiletown College
Fort Hill Integrated College
Foyle College
Friends' School Lisburn
Gael Linn
Gaelcholáiste Dhoire
General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI)
Glastry College
Glengormley High School
Glenlola Collegiate School
Grosvenor Grammar School
Hazelwood Integrated College
Holy Cross College, Strabane
Holy Trinity College, Cookstown
Hunterhouse College
Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)
Kilkeel High School
Kilskeery Independent Christian School
Lagan College
Larne Grammar School
Larne High School
Laurelhill Community College
Laurelhill High School
Lightwork NI
Limavady Grammar School
Limavady High School
Lismore Comprehensive
Lisnagarvey High School
Lisneal College
Loreto Grammar school
Lumen Christi College, Derry
Lurgan College
Magherafelt High School
Malone Integrated College
Markethill High School
Mercy College
Methodist College Belfast
Mount Lourdes Grammar, Enniskillen

## Respondent Organisations

NAHT Northern Ireland
NASUWT
National Education Union NI
Nendrum College
Newry High School
North West Regional College (NWRC)
Northern Ireland Centre for Information on Language, Teaching and Research (NICILT)
Oakgrove Integrated College
Omagh Academy
Omagh High School
Our Lady & Saint Patrick's College
Our Lady's Grammar School, Newry
Parenting NI
Parkhall Integrated College
Portadown College
Rathfriland High School
Rathmore Grammar School
Rockport School
Royal Belfast Academical Institution (RBAI)
Royal School, Armagh
Royal School, Dungannon
Sacred Heart College, Newry
St Colman's College, Newry
St Columb's College, Derry
Saint Conor's College, Kilrea
St John the Baptist's College, Portadown
St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh
Secondary Students' Union of Northern Ireland
Sinn Féin
Slemish College
St Brigid's College
St Catherine's College, Armagh
St Cecilia's College, Derry
St Colman's, Ballynahinch
St Colman's College
St Colmcille's High School
St Colm's High School, Draperstown
St Columba's College, Portaferry
St Columbanus' College, Bangor
St Dominic's Grammar School
St Genevieve's High School
St John's, Dromore
St Joseph's Boys' School
St Joseph's College, Belfast
St Joseph's Grammar School, Donaghmore

## Respondent Organisations

St Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen
St Killian's College
St Louis Grammar, Ballymena
St Louis Grammar, Kilkeel
St Louise's Comprehensive College
St Malachy's College
St Malachy's, Castlewellan
St Mark's, Warrenpoint
St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Belfast
St Mary's College
St Mary's College, Derry
St Mary's Grammar School
St Mary's High School, Belleek
St Mary's High School, Newry
St Mary's Limavady
St Michael's College
St Patrick's College, Banbridge
St Patrick's Grammar School
St Patrick's & St Brigid's College
St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn
St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon
St Patrick's College, Ballymena
St Patrick's College, Dungiven
St Patrick's College, Maghera
St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh
St Patrick's Grammar School, Down
St Patrick's High School, Keady
St Paul's High School, Bessbrook
St Pius X College
Strabane Academy
Strangford College
Strathearn School
Sullivan Upper School
The Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC)
Thornhill College
Ulidia Integrated College
Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU)
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)
Ulster University (UU)
Wallace High School
Wellington College
Workers' Party

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings



## Appendix 2 – Split Response<sup>5</sup>

### Public Health Adaptations

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals to implement public health adaptations to CCEA qualifications?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Organisations	Strongly Agree	181	40.9	40.9
	Agree	115	26.0	66.9
	Neither	33	7.4	74.3
	Disagree	37	8.4	82.7
	Strongly Disagree	72	16.2	98.9
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	5	1.1	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Educationalists	Strongly Agree	736	33.2	33.2
	Agree	645	29.1	62.3
	Neither	120	5.4	67.7
	Disagree	225	10	77.7
	Strongly Disagree	450	20.3	98.0
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	44	2.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Civil Service/ Public Sector Staff	Strongly Agree	2	28.6	28.6
	Agree	2	28.6	57.2
	Disagree	1	14.2	71.4
	Strongly Disagree	2	28.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Parents/Students	Strongly Agree	1,195	29.6	29.6
	Agree	1,118	27.7	57.2
	Neither	310	7.7	65
	Disagree	371	9.2	74.2
	Strongly Disagree	808	20.0	94.2
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	229	5.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,031</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Employers	Strongly Agree	3	42.8	42.8
	Agree	2	28.6	71.4
	Disagree	1	14.3	85.7
	Strongly Disagree	1	14.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

<sup>5</sup> Please note that group responses are not included in these tables, as it was not possible to attribute these to the respondent categories in this appendix.

## Specification Order

To what extent do you agree or disagree that CCEA should provide guidance on the order of unit delivery in a specification?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Organisations	Strongly Agree	198	44.7	44.7
	Agree	122	27.5	72.2
	Neither	45	10.2	82.4
	Disagree	34	7.7	90.1
	Strongly Disagree	35	7.9	98.0
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	9	2.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Educationalists	Strongly Agree	875	39.4	39.4
	Agree	686	30.9	70.3
	Neither	231	10.4	80.7
	Disagree	225	10	90.7
	Strongly Disagree	148	6.7	97.4
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	55	2.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Civil Service/ Public Sector Staff	Strongly Agree	2	28.6	28.6
	Agree	4	57.1	85.7
	Strongly Disagree	1	14.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Parents/Students	Strongly Agree	1,646	40.8	40.8
	Agree	1,216	30.2	71.0
	Neither	289	7.2	78.2
	Disagree	181	4.5	82.7
	Strongly Disagree	323	8.0	90.7
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	376	9.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,031</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Employers	Strongly Agree	4	57.1	57.1
	Agree	1	14.3	71.4
	Neither	2	28.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

## AS and A Level Assessment Arrangements

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal that in Summer 2021, students in the second year of their A level studies should be required to take A2 unit assessment only?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Organisations	Strongly Agree	185	41.8	41.8
	Agree	105	23.7	65.5
	Neither	35	7.9	73.4
	Disagree	27	6.1	79.5
	Strongly Disagree	12	2.7	82.2
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	79	17.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Educationalists	Strongly Agree	937	42.2	42.2
	Agree	620	27.9	70.1
	Neither	148	6.7	76.8
	Disagree	112	5.0	81.8
	Strongly Disagree	65	3	84.8
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	338	15.2	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Civil Service/ Public Sector Staff	Strongly Agree	3	42.8	42.8
	Agree	1	14.3	57.1
	Neither	1	14.3	71.4
	Strongly Disagree	2	28.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Parents/Students	Strongly Agree	1,332	33.0	33.0
	Agree	657	16.3	49.3
	Neither	297	7.4	56.7
	Disagree	100	2.5	59.2
	Strongly Disagree	183	4.5	63.7
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	1,462	36.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,031</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Employers	Strongly Agree	2	28.6	28.6
	Agree	4	57.1	85.7
	Neither	1	14.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

**Other than public health adaptations, do you think course content should remain largely unchanged at AS and A level at this time?**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Organisations	Yes	118	26.6	26.6
	No	195	44.0	70.6
	Not Sure	130	29.4	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Educationalists	Yes	634	28.6	28.6
	No	967	43.6	72.2
	Not Sure	619	27.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Civil Service/ Public Sector Staff	Yes	4	57.1	57.1
	No	2	28.6	85.7
	Not Sure	1	14.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Parents/Students	Yes	619	15.4	15.4
	No	1,604	39.8	55.2
	Not Sure	1,808	44.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,031</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Employers	Yes	3	42.8	42.8
	No	2	28.6	71.4
	Not Sure	2	28.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

## Changes to Assessment at GCSE

To what extent do you agree or disagree that all 2020/21 Year 12 students who started their course in September 2019 should, where possible, be permitted to omit assessment in one unit in each GCSE qualification to be completed by Summer 2021, if they wish to do so?

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Organisations	Strongly Agree	260	58.7	58.7
	Agree	116	26.2	84.9
	Neither	15	3.4	88.3
	Disagree	16	3.6	91.9
	Strongly Disagree	17	3.8	95.7
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	19	4.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Educationalists	Strongly Agree	1,320	59.5	59.5
	Agree	578	26.0	85.5
	Neither	77	3.5	89.0
	Disagree	95	4.3	93.3
	Strongly Disagree	72	3.2	96.5
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	78	3.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Civil Service/ Public Sector Staff	Strongly Agree	3	42.8	42.8
	Agree	1	14.3	57.1
	Neither	2	28.6	85.7
	Strongly Disagree	1	14.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Parents/Students	Strongly Agree	2,203	54.7	54.7
	Agree	798	19.8	74.5
	Neither	176	4.4	78.9
	Disagree	163	4.0	82.9
	Strongly Disagree	265	6.6	89.5
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	426	10.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,031</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Employers	Strongly Agree	4	57.1	57.1
	Agree	1	14.3	71.4
	Strongly Disagree	2	28.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach that, where omission of a unit is possible, CCEA should specify the GCSE units to be taken, with the intention of ensuring consistency, as far as possible, for schools and colleges?**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Organisations	Strongly Agree	152	34.3	34.3
	Agree	140	31.6	65.9
	Neither	19	4.3	70.2
	Disagree	58	13.1	83.3
	Strongly Disagree	60	13.5	96.8
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	14	3.2	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
	Educationalists	Strongly Agree	821	37.0
Agree		622	28.0	65.0
Neither		106	4.8	69.8
Disagree		282	12.7	82.5
Strongly Disagree		295	13.3	95.8
Don't Know/ Not Applicable		94	4.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Civil Service/ Public Sector Staff		Strongly Agree	2	28.6
	Agree	3	42.8	71.4
	Neither	1	14.3	85.7
	Strongly Disagree	1	14.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Parents/Students	Strongly Agree	1,322	32.8	32.8
	Agree	917	22.7	55.5
	Neither	310	7.7	63.2
	Disagree	322	8.0	71.2
	Strongly Disagree	644	16.0	87.2
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	516	12.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,031</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Employers	Strongly Agree	4	57.1	57.1
	Agree	2	28.6	85.7
	Disagree	1	14.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that the total amount of any qualification adjustment in 2020/21 should not exceed 40% of the specification?**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Organisations	Strongly Agree	102	23.0	23.0
	Agree	189	42.7	65.7
	Neither	38	8.6	74.3
	Disagree	54	12.2	86.5
	Strongly Disagree	39	8.8	95.3
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	21	4.7	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Educationalists	Strongly Agree	475	21.4	21.4
	Agree	923	41.6	63.0
	Neither	276	12.4	75.4
	Disagree	248	11.2	86.6
	Strongly Disagree	197	8.9	95.5
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	101	4.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Civil Service/ Public Sector Staff	Strongly Agree	3	42.8	42.8
	Disagree	2	28.6	71.4
	Strongly Disagree	2	28.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Parents/Students	Strongly Agree	822	20.4	20.4
	Agree	1,107	27.5	47.9
	Neither	407	10.1	58.0
	Disagree	491	12.2	70.2
	Strongly Disagree	723	17.9	88.1
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	481	11.9	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,031</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Employers	Strongly Agree	5	71.4	71.4
	Disagree	2	28.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that the 2021 exams should not include more optional questions than usual?**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Organisations	Strongly Agree	94	21.2	21.2
	Agree	89	20.1	41.3
	Neither	55	12.4	53.7
	Disagree	86	19.4	73.1
	Strongly Disagree	81	18.3	91.4
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	38	8.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Educationalists	Strongly Agree	343	15.5	15.5
	Agree	494	22.3	37.8
	Neither	300	13.5	51.3
	Disagree	500	22.5	73.8
	Strongly Disagree	365	16.4	90.2
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	218	9.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Civil Service/ Public Sector Staff	Strongly Agree	4	57.1	57.1
	Agree	3	42.9	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Parents/Students	Strongly Agree	775	19.2	19.2
	Agree	625	15.5	34.7
	Neither	446	11.1	45.8
	Disagree	718	17.8	63.6
	Strongly Disagree	972	24.1	87.7
	Don't Know/ Not Applicable	495	12.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,031</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Employers	Strongly Agree	1	14.3	14.3
	Agree	2	28.6	42.9
	Neither	1	14.3	57.2
	Disagree	1	14.3	71.5
	Strongly Disagree	2	28.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings



## GCSE English Language and Mathematics

**Do you think that students should be assessed in all elements of GCSE English Language and Mathematics?**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Organisations	Yes	75	16.9	16.9
	No	224	50.6	67.5
	Not Sure	144	32.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Educationalists	Yes	388	17.5	17.5
	No	1,162	52.3	69.8
	Not Sure	670	30.2	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Civil Service/ Public Sector Staff	Yes	4	57.1	57.1
	No	3	42.9	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Parents/Students	Yes	933	23.1	23.1
	No	2,576	63.9	87
	Not Sure	522	13	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,031</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Employers	Yes	3	42.8	42.8
	No	3	42.8	85.6
	Not Sure	1	14.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

## Appendix 3 – Subject-Specific Feedback

### GCSE

Subject	Commentary
Agriculture and Land Use	<p>Many centres reported teaching the two examined units for students to sit the exam in Year 11. Respondents stated that to cover both coursework tasks and revisit the exam content in one year will put a huge strain on staff and students.</p> <p>Suggestions were made to retain at least some of Unit 1 (particularly Soils/Crops) and reduce the amount of controlled assessment in Unit 3 (it was recommended that Task 1 could be removed).</p>
Art and Design	<p>In relation to Art and Design, respondents were largely in agreement that the proposal to omit Component 2 and treat Component 1 Part B in a controlled manner is a sensible decision. However, it was recommended that CCEA remove the use of theme from Component 1 Part B, particularly as it may diminish the value and enjoyment of the subject for some students, taking away their personal choice and initiative. Furthermore, it was stated that some centres may have already started working on Component 1 Part B.</p> <p>Respondents also raised concerns around current COVID-19 guidance which states that work should not be carried to and from school. It was stated that it is normal practice for Art and Design students to do work at home, meaning that the amount of work that they will present for assessment will be impacted.</p>
Biology	<p>The response was split on the proposed removal of Unit 1 from assessment. Whilst some felt that the omission of this unit would relieve pressure on teaching time, a larger number of respondents expressed concern regarding the impact that omission would have on progression to Unit 2, as well as A level.</p> <p>The response was split in regards to teaching the practical elements of this course. Some respondents agreed that lab work is going to be very limited within many schools, with restricted access to laboratories each week.</p> <p>It was stated by these respondents that observing a live practical does not require or utilise the same skills as undertaking it. As such, it was suggested that Booklet A should be considered for possible omission, or Unit 3 in its entirety. However, other respondents agreed with the proposals to put in place live demonstrations.</p> <p>A number of respondents also stated that as Booklet B is to be retained, clarity needs to be provided on what will be assessed (i.e. what will be removed and retained for this assessment).</p>

Subject	Commentary
Business and Communication Systems	<p>The majority of respondents were not happy with the proposed amendments to Business and Communication Systems. The proposal to omit Unit 1 was not welcomed, as most schools reported spending considerable time covering the content for the Unit 1 exam.</p> <p>The most common suggestion provided was to allow students to complete their Unit 1 work fully and be assessed on that alongside their Unit 2 examination. Furthermore, respondents requested that Unit 3 should be omitted or reduced due to issues around limited access to ICT facilities and students not having adequate IT or software at home.</p>
Business Studies	<p>It was suggested that Unit 3 should be omitted this year due to practicalities of conducting research and carrying out controlled assessment.</p> <p>A number of respondents were concerned about the removal of Unit 1, as many centres would have already taught this content. Others were concerned that removing this unit may result in a bias of content towards finance and quantitative material in the overall weighting.</p> <p>A small number of respondents also felt that the content of Unit 2 should be reduced, as the incoming Year 12 group may not have the underpinning knowledge to complete the synoptic unit to the best of their ability.</p>
Chemistry	<p>See feedback detailed under Biology.</p>
Child Development	<p>The largest number of respondents agreed with the suggestion to omit Unit 1, as it will relieve pressure on teaching. However, a smaller number of respondents believed that centres should be offered a choice of what units to sit.</p> <p>Others felt that Unit 2 content should be reduced, particularly as many centres would have taught several topics for this unit by this stage to ensure full coverage for the exam. Based on this, it was stated that if optional questions are being considered going forward, teachers must know the options for these questions to allow them to decide which topics can be left out without disadvantaging their students.</p> <p>A small number of respondents also raised concerns about the practicalities of conducting controlled assessment given current health restrictions and access to ICT facilities; these respondents requested a reduction in the amount of assessment carried out in Unit 3.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Construction and the Built Environment	<p>It was suggested that centres should be able to choose what examined units they would like to cover. The current proposals were noted to put students who studied Unit 1 in Year 11 at a disadvantage to those who have already studied Unit 2.</p> <p>Respondents recognised the need to remove the Unit 3 practical element for students. However, it was noted that to replace it with design means adding an aspect to the course which has never been an element before, and students have selected this subject not expecting to need to design.</p> <p>The proposals for students to complete design work in lieu of the practical piece were not welcomed, as it changes the focus of the unit. It was suggested that CCEA could provide marks for partially completed coursework or accept centre assessment grades (CAGs).</p>
Contemporary Crafts	<p>Not enough information to constitute a theme</p>
Digital Technology	<p>Respondents expressed concerns regarding the removal of Unit 1, particularly as it has already been covered. It was felt that this proposed omission does not reduce content for students.</p> <p>It was felt that as the course in Year 12 is worth 70% overall, changes should be made here instead. Respondents were concerned that the absence of omissions in Year 12 leaves teachers and students in a very difficult position in terms of covering course content.</p> <p>The most common recommendation provided was that Unit 1 should be assessed alongside a reduced Unit 3 (Multimedia) and Unit 5 (Programming). It was felt that Unit 1 should provide enough of an underpinning knowledge to allow Units 2 and 4 to be omitted.</p> <p>Other respondents recommended that a reduction in controlled assessment be considered (particularly the database element in Unit 3 and the testing and evaluation section of the write-up in Unit 5), alongside the use of more optional questions in external examinations.</p>
Drama	<p>Respondents mostly welcomed the proposed change to omit Component 1 and adaptations in the specification to allow for monologues.</p> <p>However, guidance was requested by a number of respondents as to what is expected for each component, such as timings and how the element of watching live theatre is to be completed given the current restrictions in place.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Economics	<p>It was agreed that GCSE students having missed four months of valuable teaching time in their course will have a negative impact on them.</p> <p>Respondents agreed with one exam being removed due to welfare/mental health concerns. However, as Economics is a linear course, it was felt that not removing any content still means the whole specification needs to be covered, and this will prove to be very difficult.</p>
Engineering and Manufacturing	<p>Respondents agreed with the proposal that last year's Unit 1 coursework (completed in Year 11) will be carried through to be submitted this year.</p> <p>Unfortunately, it was noted that students do not usually score particularly highly in this unit, and the proposed changes by CCEA will exclude the practical exam where students tend to perform better. Some also felt that this exclusion will mean that students will no longer be assessed in an important skill that is taught via this subject.</p> <p>As such, it was noted that the exclusions that CCEA is proposing will naturally favour more academically minded students.</p> <p>However, in current climates, it was felt by some respondents that the removal of the practical assessment is reasonable.</p>
English Language	<p>It was considered unreasonable to exempt GCSE English Language from omissions. A number of respondents agreed that it was unfair to assess Unit 1 in 2021 as there would not be enough time to cover the remaining content in one year alongside all the other units.</p> <p>A number of suggestions were therefore put forward, the most common being that changes should be made to Unit 2. This was due to the time it takes to cover this content and also the practicalities of facilitating role play and discussions given current public health guidelines.</p> <p>Respondents suggested either omitting this unit or removing the group work and role-play requirements, and only assessing the individual presentation.</p> <p>Respondents also suggested that centres should be allowed to omit one piece of controlled assessment from Unit 3.</p> <p>Furthermore, a considerable number of respondents requested that centres should be given an option to cover either Unit 1 or Unit 4, not both. It was noted that both these units assess the same skills and a centre assessment grade (CAG) could be provided for the unit not chosen.</p>

Subject	Commentary
English Literature	<p>Though a small number of respondents supported the omission of Unit 1, many more raised serious concerns in regards to its removal, particularly as many students had spent most of Year 11 reading and studying their selected prose. Additionally, it was felt that the analysis and interpretation of prose develops useful employability skills.</p> <p>It was largely agreed that the decision to leave the controlled assessment and heavier content of the drama and poetry still to be examined is unfair.</p> <p>The most common suggestions were that Paper 2 should focus on one of its components, i.e. either drama or poetry, or that consideration be given to a reduction in the number of poems that need to be covered. Other suggestions included the complete omission of Unit 2 or Unit 3 (i.e. The Study of Shakespeare).</p>
Food and Nutrition	<p>It was felt that the proposal to reduce the practical element from three to two dishes still poses problems. Respondents agreed that this does not take account of lost teaching time or adequately address workload, as students will still need to carry out the intense preparatory and evaluative work which accompanies the practical.</p> <p>It was also noted that these issues are compounded by the limited availability of ICT facilities and kitchen space in schools due to COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>It was recommended that the written aspect of this controlled assessment task should reflect the reduction, as the current word count for the controlled assessment portfolio is excessive.</p> <p>In addition to this, it was noted that the content of the written paper has not been reduced. This was considered unfair when this subject is compared to other practical subjects which have had practical elements omitted.</p>
French	<p>Respondents were concerned about the absence of omissions from the course. It was noted that the proposals in the consultation document are not in line with those made in England to remove the speaking exam (worth 25%) and instead grade speaking based on class work. Concerns were raised that this would result in Northern Ireland students being disadvantaged.</p> <p>It was therefore recommended that due to practicalities, and to account for the changes made in England, speaking should be either removed or reduced to potentially include just one conversation topic, with fewer contexts to be covered. It was also suggested that additional options for essay questions should be included in the writing examination so students don't need to cover as much content.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Further Mathematics	<p>As in Mathematics, concerns were raised in relation to the lack of adjustments made to assessment for 2021. Many respondents felt that it is unfair for students entered for 50% of their qualification in Summer 2020 to be expected to complete 100% of their qualification in 2021.</p> <p>A number of respondents suggested that as GCSE Further Mathematics requires students to sit three exams worth 50%, 25% and 25%, if the 40% rule was applied, students could sit the pure module and one of the 25% modules (i.e. Mechanics or Statistics).</p>
Gaeilge	<p>It was recommended that Gaeilge content should be reduced. It was noted that students have missed out on four vital months in which they should have been developing their language skills. Respondents indicated that it is not possible to develop these skills and teach the whole syllabus between September and March.</p> <p>The most common recommendation provided was to remove Component 3: Reading in Gaeilge.</p>
Geography	<p>While a small number of respondents welcomed the amendments to Unit 3, a larger number of respondents suggested that Unit 3 should be omitted as students are not getting the practical fieldwork and data collection experience required.</p> <p>In addition to this, respondents felt that omitting physical geography leaves students ill equipped for A level study, as they haven't learned the content required for scaffolding.</p> <p>Others believed that this removal will put centres who concentrated on teaching Unit 1 in Year 11 at a disadvantage, as those who taught Unit 2 in Year 11 will be able to use next year to revise and prepare for examination.</p>
German	<p>Respondents were concerned about the absence of omissions from the course. It was noted that the proposals in the consultation document are not in line with those made in England to remove the speaking exam (worth 25%) and instead grade speaking based on class work. Concerns were raised that this would result in Northern Ireland students being disadvantaged.</p> <p>It was therefore recommended that due to practicalities, and to account for the changes made in England, speaking should be either removed or reduced to potentially include just one conversation topic, with fewer contexts to be covered. It was also suggested that additional options for essay questions should be included in the writing examination so students don't need to cover as much content.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Government and Politics	<p>It was considered unfair to expect students studying Government and Politics to be examined in both units at the end of Year 12, as they have lost a considerable amount of teaching time due to the pandemic.</p> <p>The most common suggestion provided was that students should be given a choice of whether to sit Unit 1 or Unit 2 in Summer 2021. It was felt that this would mitigate the issues brought about by lost learning from March 2020 and the potential lost learning that may occur in this academic year.</p> <p>Other suggestions recommended that CCEA follow the same pattern used for GCSE History by either omitting Unit 2 or removing some of the content, as it was considered to be a particularly content-heavy unit.</p>
Health and Social Care	<p>Respondents felt that the expectation to complete both units is unrealistic and impossible to deliver within the allocated time frame, particularly due to lost teaching time.</p> <p>Recommendations were made in relation to reducing the number of controlled assessment tasks in Unit 2 due to limited time and access to ICT facilities.</p> <p>A smaller number of respondents also suggested removing some Unit 1 topics so that students are covering 60% of the overall subject content.</p>
History	<p>The response for GCSE History was varied. There were a number of respondents who welcomed the proposed removal of Unit 2 from GCSE History. However, there were also apprehensions about this proposal, with many others reporting concerns about the narrowing of the specification and also the loss of an interesting unit that links well into A2.</p> <p>Some believed that this removal will put centres who concentrated on teaching Unit 2 in Year 11 at a disadvantage, as those who taught Unit 1 in Year 11 will be able to use next year to revise and prepare for examination. However, those who taught Unit 1 in Year 11 had their own concerns with regards to repetition of content and disengagement from students.</p> <p>Suggestions focused on providing centres with a free choice to study and sit either Paper 1 or Paper 2 but adjusting the weightings and content in both to be even.</p>



Subject	Commentary
Hospitality	<p>Respondents largely agreed with the decision to omit Unit 1 and examine Unit 2 in 2021. However, a small number were unhappy with the omission of Unit 1, particularly as some centres have to complete Unit 1 content before commencing Unit 2.</p> <p>It was the function adaptations to Unit 3 that were mainly questioned. Although respondents felt that reducing guest numbers to 5–10 will help with social distancing at an event, there was disagreement about whether this will support students enough, as the same workload in terms of written work is expected regardless of guest numbers. It was suggested that this function task be amended or omitted.</p>
Irish	<p>Respondents were concerned about the absence of omissions from the course. It was noted that the proposals in the consultation document are not in line with those made in England to remove the speaking exam (worth 25%) and instead grade speaking based on class work. Concerns were raised that this would result in Northern Ireland students being disadvantaged.</p> <p>It was therefore recommended that due to practicalities, and to account for the changes made in England, speaking should be either removed or reduced to potentially include just one conversation topic, with fewer contexts to be covered. It was also suggested that additional options for essay questions should be included in the writing examination so students don't need to cover as much content.</p>
Journalism	<p>Respondents disagreed with the proposals made that Unit 1 be omitted from assessment. It was felt that this does not adequately reduce the assessment burden as the remaining units are typically delivered in Year 12.</p>
Learning for Life and Work	<p>Most respondents commented that the removal of the controlled assessment task will disadvantage students, as they will lose out on the skills developed during the completion of the task. Furthermore, it was noted that the students typically perform well on the controlled assessment task and a reliance on exams to assess ability will negatively affect secondary school students.</p> <p>A smaller number of respondents reported being in agreement with the suspension of controlled assessment in light of the pandemic, as they could see no way it could be reasonably, consistently and equitably implemented. Nevertheless, these respondents do not agree with testing the students on the three topics.</p>
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	<p>Respondents disagreed with the current proposed omissions. It was stated that students typically perform better in Unit 1 than Unit 2, and to expect centres to deliver Units 2 and 3 in one year is particularly difficult.</p> <p>Recommendations were provided to retain Unit 1 instead and either omit Unit 2 or provide a choice of which of the units to take, and/or to reduce the amount of controlled assessment in Unit 3.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Mathematics	<p>Respondents felt that it was unrealistic to expect teachers to cover the content missed as well as Year 12 content in one academic year. It was agreed that this largely goes against the guidance provided by CCEA in July that students can either sit the units they planned to take in 2021, and have their overall grade based on these units, or sit all the units in Summer 2021, with the higher grade awarded from either route.</p> <p>It was suggested that CCEA should reconsider this proposal.</p> <p>Other respondents recommended that in 2021 M5–M8 should be assessed only. It was felt that prerequisite knowledge of M1–M4 content is required for this content; as such, those four units should give a good indication of mathematical ability and attainment.</p> <p>It was also suggested that a centre assessment grade could be accepted for the M1–M4 content.</p>
Motor Vehicle and Road User Studies	<p>Respondents noted that students who choose Motor Vehicle and Road User Studies do so in order to gain experience riding a moped and completing the practical task. Furthermore, it was noted that this is the section of the course in which students tend to perform well.</p> <p>It was agreed that clarity needs to be provided on the proposals regarding assessment and moderation. It was questioned whether the marks submitted for the unit would be taken into account when calculating students' final grades.</p> <p>Respondents recommended reducing the length of the exam or providing optional questions for Unit 1. However, it should be noted that the proposals for Unit 2, i.e. the use of historical/archival data, was welcomed as a useful time-saving amendment.</p>
Moving Image Arts	<p>While respondents recognised the rationale for removing a significant piece of controlled assessment from the subject (i.e. Component 3), it was felt that the removal of the core film would result in students not being adequately prepared for AS level. It was also agreed that this would remove a main aspect of the course that students enjoy.</p> <p>Additionally, respondents noted that the proposed completion of Component 2 does not fit with the rationale for removing Component 3. It was noted that outstanding tasks will typically require lending of equipment, group work and sharing of resources.</p> <p>As such, the removal of Component 2 was suggested as a preferable alternative.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Music	<p>Respondents felt that the proposed removal of ensemble group performance and stimulus composition is a good idea, as there may be further lockdowns and students may not get the allocated controlled assessment hours in school.</p> <p>Furthermore, though respondents understood and accepted the rationale behind recording performances, it was agreed that standardisation of recording equipment should be implemented to ensure an even playing field.</p> <p>However, it was noted that adaptations need to be made to Component 3 (Listening and Appraising). Respondents largely agreed that this unit needs to be shortened or have optional elements incorporated. It was felt that the number of set works that are examined and covered should be reduced.</p>
Physical Education	<p>Most respondents agreed with the removal of Unit 2 from examination in 2021. However, a small number were concerned about a loss of theoretical knowledge and how it affects progression to A level.</p> <p>Furthermore, the majority of respondents were satisfied with the proposal to reduce the number of performances in Component 3 from three to two. However, the proposal to restrict Component 3 to individual sports was considered to be too severe, as students who have a strong team sports background would be greatly disadvantaged.</p>
Physics	<p>See feedback detailed under Biology.</p>
Religious Studies	<p>It was noted that the proposals made go against the Education Minister's announcement on 16 April regarding GCSEs (i.e. that students would not have to sit modules they were entered for in Year 11).</p> <p>It was recommended that omissions be considered for Religious Studies. Respondents felt that teachers will be under pressure to complete the course content due to lost teaching time.</p> <p>The most common suggestion was that students should only have to sit one unit, similar to the amendments made in other subjects. This was considered to be necessary given the lack of teaching and learning time as a result of the school lockdown. A number of respondents expressed disappointment at having to go over Year 11 content again for exam preparation (e.g. Mark's Gospel).</p> <p>A small number of respondents raised concerns that both modules are worth 50%; as such, given the 40% rule (if it is to be imposed), it was suggested that content should be reduced in both units to account for this.</p>

Subject	Commentary
<p>Science: Double Award</p>	<p>Respondents raised concerns about the proposed omission of B1, C1 and P1 content. It was felt that this made little sense as B2, C2 and P2 content builds on the previous units, which have not been completed due to lost teaching time. Furthermore, a number of respondents felt that this was particularly unfair for students who were assessed on Unit 1 already.</p> <p>The most common argument from respondents was that the proposals for demonstrations are impractical, and they questioned the inclusion of practical assessment when it had been removed from Science: Single Award. It was therefore recommended that Booklet A or Unit 7 in its entirety be considered for omission.</p> <p>Others, however, recommended a reduction in B2, C2 and P2 content as they are considered content heavy.</p> <p>It should be noted that respondents also suggested that, if B1, C1 and P1 are to be omitted, the corresponding practicals from these units should not be examined (Booklet B) – i.e. the practical examinations should only look at practicals from the B2, C2 and P2 content.</p>
<p>Science: Single Award</p>	<p>It was largely agreed that the proposal to drop practical science was a sensible idea, as there were issues raised about centres' ability to carry out the investigations with COVID-19 restrictions in place. Others agreed that for Science: Single Award it is the only feasible option for removing content.</p> <p>However, a smaller number of respondents felt that the decision to remove the practical element disadvantaged secondary school students.</p>
<p>Spanish</p>	<p>Respondents were concerned about the absence of omissions from the course. It was noted that the proposals in the consultation document are not in line with those made in England to remove the speaking exam (worth 25%) and instead grade speaking based on class work. Concerns were raised that this would result in Northern Ireland students being disadvantaged.</p> <p>It was therefore recommended that due to practicalities, and to account for the changes made in England, speaking should be either removed or reduced to potentially include just one conversation topic, with fewer contexts to be covered. It was also suggested that additional options for essay questions should be included in the writing examination so students don't need to cover as much content.</p>
<p>Statistics</p>	<p>Not enough information to constitute a theme</p>

Subject	Commentary
Technology and Design	<p>A number of respondents welcomed the omission of Unit 1 from assessment, as it gives centres an opportunity to focus their attention on their specialism area. However, others felt that it should not be discounted – as students have already studied this unit – and instead recommended reducing or omitting Unit 2.</p> <p>The response was also split with regards to the removal of the practical element in Unit 3. Though many respondents understood the rationale, they noted that this may disadvantage more practically minded students.</p> <p>Furthermore, respondents requested additional clarity as to what is expected in the portfolio of evidence and what will be accepted as part of the design (i.e. technical drawings or CAD – it was noted that the availability of ICT facilities could hinder CAD usage).</p>

*Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings*

## AS Level

Subject	Commentary
Art and Design	<p>Respondents raised concerns around current COVID-19 guidance which states that work should not be carried to and from school. It was stated that it is normal practice for Art and Design students to do work at home, meaning that the amount of work that they will present for assessment will be impacted.</p> <p>Similar concerns were raised in regards to the sharing of equipment and materials, and what this will mean for teaching. It was recommended that CCEA look into reducing content or making adaptations to assist centres with assessment.</p> <p>Furthermore, respondents noted that there are currently restrictions around educational visits, workshops and location visits which are required for, and will therefore have a negative impact on, Assessment Objectives 1 and 3.</p> <p>As such, it was suggested that CCEA consider a reduction in content.</p>
Biology	<p>Though many respondents approved of the proposal to drop the requirement for students to complete practical assessments individually, it was felt that observations of live demonstrations do not require or utilise the same skills as undertaking experiments.</p> <p>As such, the most common suggestion provided was to remove the internally assessed aspect of Unit 3, whilst a smaller number of respondents requested that the entire unit be omitted from study this year.</p> <p>Respondents also requested additional information regarding Unit 3, including a list of selected practicals that CCEA will examine and guidance relating to the order of teaching.</p>
Business Studies	<p>It was suggested that the content should be reduced or streamlined due to a number of reasons, the main reason being that the regulations which are now in place based on government guidance mean that the structure of the school day has changed. This will result in less contact time, meaning that it will be more difficult to cover all of the content.</p> <p>Furthermore, it was noted that during the year there is a strong possibility of disruptions, and not every child will have the same access to being able to learn effectively through distance learning, which may cause inequality.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Chemistry	<p>Respondents were concerned about teaching the practical elements of the specification and noted the current lack of clarity as to whether these should be covered or not. It was agreed that January 2021 is too late for a decision to be made on what should be done regarding Booklet A.</p> <p>Additionally, several respondents noted that observations of live demonstrations will be difficult to carry out with social distancing measures in place. As such, the most common suggestion was to omit Booklet A and only assess Booklet B.</p> <p>It was recommended that a list of practicals be provided for Booklet B.</p>
Digital Technology	<p>Not enough information to constitute a theme</p>
Economics	<p>The response was split in relation to AS Economics.</p> <p>A number of respondents were unhappy that there are no proposed changes to content nor assessment. It was felt that the course is already difficult to cover and that it will be even harder in the current year.</p> <p>A small number of respondents recommended that the Unit 2 section on Factor Markets could be removed to free up teaching time for other areas.</p> <p>Others believed that the course content should remain largely unchanged at AS at this time. However, it was noted that guidance would be welcome on the order in which the content of the AS units should be taught.</p>
English Literature	<p>In English Literature, it was noted that many students were not examined in drama and poetry this year at GCSE and did not have time to cover all of the content. This coupled with the difficulty in covering the course normally, i.e. students study and are assessed on a play, a novel and a poetry anthology, resulted in a general consensus that content should be reduced.</p> <p>It was felt that students keeping on this subject may lack the confidence to write analytical essays on these aspects. It was recommended that in order to spend more time developing these skills, the number of poems in each of the paired poets should be reduced.</p>
Environmental Technology	<p>Not enough information to constitute a theme</p>

Subject	Commentary
French	<p>Respondents indicated that they were disappointed to see no omissions for any of the language units. Respondents called for CCEA to consider that AS language students missed out on several months' worth of study and examination at the end of their GCSE, which has left some students behind in skills development.</p> <p>As a result, it was considered very difficult for teachers to cover the whole specification and give students adequate practice in the time provided. It was suggested that more options for the essay question in Unit 3 should be given so students do not have to prepare for every eventuality.</p> <p>In addition to this, it was suggested that in Unit 1 students should have greater foreknowledge about the topics that they will potentially speak on so that they can better prepare.</p> <p>Furthermore, a number of respondents raised concerns regarding the health implications of having a visiting examiner and noted that this requirement had been omitted in Music but retained for languages.</p>
Further Mathematics	<p>Respondents expressed concern that many students have not engaged in formal teaching since March 2020 and may have missed vital prerequisite knowledge for the AS course from GCSE Mathematics M8 and GCSE Further Mathematics.</p> <p>It was noted that this will now have to be delivered in advance of these students commencing their AS studies. Due to this, respondents questioned where they would make up this time if there is no reduction in content.</p>
Geography	<p>Concerns were raised over the lack of reduction in content. It was noted that as students have not engaged in any face-to-face learning for six months there may be some lead-in time in terms of getting students ready to sit exams. It was indicated that the content of this course is difficult to teach normally within the given timeframe.</p> <p>It was recommended by most respondents that Unit 3 should be omitted. Many responses implied that this unit will be very tedious and difficult for students to cover without getting the first-hand fieldwork experience. However, it should be noted that a small number of respondents welcomed the use of historical/archive data as part of this unit's assessment.</p>



Subject	Commentary
German	<p>Respondents indicated that they were disappointed to see no omissions for any of the language units. Respondents called for CCEA to consider that AS language students missed out on several months' worth of study and examination at the end of their GCSE, which has left some students behind in skills development.</p> <p>As a result, it was considered very difficult for teachers to cover the whole specification and give students adequate practice in the time provided. It was suggested that more options for the essay question in Unit 3 should be given so students do not have to prepare for every eventuality.</p> <p>In addition to this, it was suggested that in Unit 1 students should have greater foreknowledge about the topics that they will potentially speak on so that they can better prepare.</p> <p>Furthermore, a number of respondents raised concerns regarding the health implications of having a visiting examiner and noted that this requirement had been omitted in Music but retained for languages.</p>
Government and Politics	<p>Respondents indicated that content should be reduced in Government and Politics. There were a very limited number of responses on this subject and its proposals. However, some did suggest that individual topics, like 'Pressure Groups' in Unit 2, could be removed.</p>
Health and Social Care	<p>Attention was drawn to the amendments made to Units 1 and 2. Respondents noted that it is unrealistic for some centres to organise speakers in lieu of a placement, as many schools are restricting or not allowing external visitors to come into school due to COVID-19. Furthermore, it was noted that access to family members who work in the sector will only benefit and work for certain students, whilst online interviews were considered impractical and difficult to organise/set up.</p> <p>Regarding amendments, it was suggested that Unit 1 should be reduced by at least one statement (e.g. Statement C). For Unit 2, respondents recommended that Statement E should be removed as it is not possible to complete an interaction in a care setting with the current restrictions in place.</p> <p>Further to this, it was suggested that CCEA provide guidance on how tasks can be completed with current restrictions in place. It was also put forward that CCEA should consider developing a bank of resources for centres to access and use for internal assessment (particularly for Units 1, 2 and 4).</p>

Subject	Commentary
History	<p>Respondents raised concerns regarding the lack of reduced content at AS level in History. It was felt that Unit 1 is particularly content-heavy and requires a significant amount of time dedicated to source-based skills work.</p> <p>A reduction in the number of topics in Units 1 and 2 was recommended. It was suggested that CCEA consider either removing full topics or reducing the number of years that need to be covered as part of a topic, for instance the removal of the Weimar Republic as part of Option 5 (Unit 1).</p>
Irish	<p>In addition to the feedback detailed under French, a larger number of respondents for Irish requested that Unit 3 be removed from assessment as they believed it would not affect the students' Irish grammar or everyday use of the language.</p>
Journalism	<p>Not enough information to constitute a theme</p>
Life and Health Sciences	<p>Respondents requested that for Unit 1 Practical Skills, there should be a reduction in the number of practicals that need to be covered as part of the course.</p> <p>It was stated that there should be a reduction from 12 to approximately 9 practicals.</p>
Mathematics	<p>The response stated that as there are no adaptations, it is unrealistic to assume all the content can be covered adequately as would have been the case in previous years, particularly given that students have not had any face-to-face teaching since March 2020 and may have missed vital prerequisite knowledge for the AS course from GCSE Mathematics (M8) and GCSE Further Mathematics.</p> <p>Concerns were raised that this content will now have to be delivered in advance of students commencing their AS studies.</p> <p>A number of respondents suggested that centres could cover all of the Pure Mathematics content in Unit 1 and then have greater choice with what is covered from Unit 2, being able to choose to study either the Mechanics or Statistics elements for Applied Mathematics.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Moving Image Arts	<p>Moving Image Arts respondents stated that public health guidance needs to be considered regarding the completion of the required portfolio (Unit 1) at both AS and A2. Requiring students still to be able to produce a 3–4 minute film (AS) or 4–7 minute film (A2) was noted as being particularly challenging in the current circumstances, with many centres not being able to lend equipment due to the risk of cross-contamination.</p> <p>In addition, it was noted that should there be localised or full lockdowns, the making and editing of a short film is going to pose particular difficulties to disadvantaged students, who will not have access to the necessary IT.</p> <p>As such, it was recommended that consideration should be given to the acceptance of a shorter final film sequence at both AS and A2 – to reduce the burden on lending equipment and use of ICT facilities – as well as shorter essays and a potential reduction in theory content.</p>
Music	<p>Respondents reported being concerned about covering all of the required set works in reduced time. It was noted that this is already difficult with such lengthy set works. It was largely agreed that there should be a reduction in the amount of content, particularly in the number of set works covered. Suggestions included a reduction in orchestral set works, the sacred vocal pieces and/or the secular vocal pieces.</p> <p>In addition to this, respondents stated that CCEA should take cognisance of the fact that students have missed out on six months of instrumental/vocal lessons, etc., all of which will have an impact on their confidence and skills as performers.</p> <p>However, it should be noted that the decision to omit the visiting examiner was generally welcomed on safety grounds. Nevertheless, some concerns were raised over the consistency of approach across schools if examination is through recording alone.</p>
Nutrition and Food Science	<p>Overall, respondents reported being dissatisfied at the lack of reduction in course content, particularly given the reductions occurring in other specifications.</p> <p>It was noted that there is a lot of content to be covered with little consideration for a potential student/staff absence due to COVID-19. As such, respondents recommended that consideration should be given to reducing some of the content to ensure it is taught effectively.</p>
Performing Arts	<p>Respondents welcomed the adaptations to assessment but raised concerns about the lack of guidance when it comes to putting this into practice, particularly in relation to conducting and facilitating group performances, as required in Unit 1.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Physics	<p>Respondents were concerned about teaching the practical elements of the specification and noted the current lack of clarity as to whether these should be covered or not. It was agreed that January 2021 is too late for a decision to be made on what should be done regarding Booklet A.</p> <p>Additionally, several respondents noted that observations of live demonstrations will be difficult to carry out with social distancing measures in place. As such, it was suggested to omit Booklet A, and only assess Booklet B, or Unit 3 in its entirety.</p> <p>It was recommended that if Booklet B is to be retained, a prescribed list of practicals be provided.</p>
Professional Business Services	<p>It was considered unrealistic to assume that all three units could be delivered in the timeframe. In light of this, it was suggested that an entire unit should be omitted.</p> <p>In particular, concerns were raised over the coursework element of Unit 2. Requests were made for further guidance from CCEA over potential visits to businesses and other sites.</p>
Religious Studies	<p>It was recommended in regards to AS Level Religious Studies that either one module be removed completely or at least one of the topics removed from each of the modules in the specification, in order to be fairer to students.</p> <p>The majority of the respondents did not provide specifics as to what should be removed; however, some respondents suggested the removal of 'other aspects of human experience' (OAHE) questions from examination to reduce student workload.</p>
Software Systems Development	<p>Not enough information to constitute a theme</p>

Subject	Commentary
Spanish	<p>Respondents indicated that they were disappointed to see no omissions for any of the language units. Respondents called for CCEA to consider that AS language students missed out on several months' worth of study and examination at the end of their GCSE, which has left some students behind in skills development.</p> <p>As a result, it was considered very difficult for teachers to cover the whole specification and give students adequate practice in the time provided. It was suggested that more options for the essay question in Unit 3 should be given so students do not have to prepare for every eventuality.</p> <p>In addition to this, it was suggested that in Unit 1 students should have greater foreknowledge about the topics that they will potentially speak on so that they can better prepare.</p> <p>Furthermore, a number of respondents raised concerns regarding the health implications of having a visiting examiner and noted that this requirement had been omitted in Music but retained for languages.</p>
Sports Science and the Active Leisure Industry	<p>The limited number of responses to this particular subject resulted in few themes emerging. However, some concerns were raised with regards to healthcare restrictions and how these will impact opportunities to work with clients or play in team sports.</p>
Technology and Design	<p>Though respondents understood the rationale and largely welcomed the removal of the practical aspects of the course, some noted that this may disadvantage more practically minded students.</p> <p>In addition to this, concerns were raised in regards to access to computer suites (with social distancing restrictions in place) to complete design work. It was suggested that contingency measures should be in place if coursework cannot be completed.</p>

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings

## A Level

Subject	Commentary
Art and Design	<p>Respondents raised concerns around current COVID-19 guidance which states that work should not be carried to and from school. It was stated that it is normal practice for Art and Design students to do work at home, meaning that the amount of work that they will present for assessment will be impacted.</p> <p>Additionally, there are concerns about the sharing of equipment and materials and what that will mean for teaching. It was recommended that CCEA look into making adaptations to assist centres with assessment.</p> <p>Furthermore, respondents noted that there are currently restrictions around educational visits, workshops and location visits which are required for, and will therefore have a negative impact on, Assessment Objectives 1 and 3.</p> <p>As such, it was suggested that CCEA consider a reduction in content.</p>
Biology	<p>Most respondents were satisfied with the proposal to remove the internally assessed element of the lab book.</p> <p>However, it was noted that this does not reduce the amount of content that has to be learned by students in Units 1, 2 or 3. Respondents believed that students will still be overwhelmed with the content requirements of the course. The most common suggestion provided was to remove Unit 3 in its entirety, as students would have missed out on valuable practical experience at AS level.</p> <p>In addition to this, other respondents recommended that the number of topics in Units 1 and 2 should also be reduced.</p> <p>Furthermore, it was suggested that the removal of the synoptic element at A2 would assist teaching and make the delivery of content more realistic, particularly as students would not have completed their AS course.</p>
Business Studies	<p>It was suggested that the content should be reduced or streamlined due to a number of reasons, the main reason being that the regulations which are now in place based on government guidance mean that the structure of the school day has changed. This will result in less contact time, meaning that it will be more difficult to cover all of the content.</p> <p>Furthermore, it was noted that during the year there is a strong possibility of disruptions, and not every child will have the same access to being able to learn effectively through distance learning, which may cause inequality.</p> <p>Respondents therefore recommended there should be reductions in the amount of content covered in both Units 1 and 2, with some respondents suggesting that A2-2 should have sections 1, 2, 3 and 7 omitted from the exam. Additionally, it was suggested that the synoptic element at A2 should also be removed.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Chemistry	<p>Though some respondents expressed concerns regarding the removal of practical skills Booklet A and the impact this would have on progression to Higher Education, many more reported being satisfied with the proposal to remove the requirement to complete this booklet.</p> <p>However, it was noted that this does not significantly reduce the amount of content that has to be learned by students. Respondents believed that students will still be overwhelmed with the content requirements of the course. The most common suggestion was to provide a list of prescribed practicals as soon as possible to reduce preparation time. In addition to this, other respondents recommended that the number of topics in Units 1 and 2 should also be reduced.</p> <p>It was suggested that the removal of the synoptic element at A2 would assist teaching and make the delivery of content more realistic, particularly as students would not have fully completed their AS course.</p>
Digital Technology	<p>Respondents noted that, as teaching time was lost from mid-March, not all of the content was covered for AS Units 1 and 2. It was stated that content from these units is required for the successful teaching of A2, in particular the project. As a result, respondents agreed that this material will need to be covered at the beginning of A2 so that students can complete the project and associated documentation.</p> <p>As this will eat into this year's teaching time, respondents indicated that it increases the content that must be covered and will be detrimental to the students' progress, as they are expected to sit an exam (worth 40%) and complete a project without having all the content covered.</p> <p>A number of respondents requested that some of the content be reduced in Unit 1. Furthermore, it was noted that for Unit 2, it will be very challenging for students to complete the coursework with the current COVID-19 situation (especially if schools have to close). As such, it was recommended that some of the documentation should be cut back. However, it was felt that guidance from CCEA should be provided on how to cut back on unnecessary write-up.</p>
Economics	<p>Respondents noted that they support the proposal that in Summer 2021, students in the second year of their A level studies should be required to take A2 unit assessment only.</p> <p>However, respondents largely disagreed with the rationale for making no reductions in either AS or A2 content at this time. It was stated that, as A2 students have missed teaching time in this course at AS, some AS unit content will need to be covered at the start of the year.</p> <p>This was also considered to be particularly troublesome as A2 units have an element of synoptic assessment.</p> <p>A small number of respondents recommended that the European Union section of Unit 2 could be removed to help to free some time for the delivery of the other areas.</p>



Subject	Commentary
English Literature	<p>Respondents recommended that course content should be reduced. It was suggested that a reduction in the number of poems should be considered and that unseen poetry could be easily omitted from assessment.</p> <p>Furthermore, it was suggested by some respondents that CCEA should consider allowing for open-book examinations in 2021.</p>
Environmental Technology	<p>Most respondents agreed with the reduction in the practical content of Unit 2, requiring students to assess the home in one category of the CFSH instead of two.</p> <p>However, some were concerned about access to sites to carry out this assessment given the current restrictions. It was noted that there may be a case where students will have to assess their own homes, which would penalise students who live in private rental accommodation and do not have access to the whole building. Furthermore, this would also cause issues regarding the lending of equipment.</p> <p>It was therefore suggested that students could be provided with data about a notional home instead.</p>
French	<p>Much like at AS level, respondents indicated that they were disappointed to see no omissions for any of the languages units. It was considered very difficult for teachers to cover the whole specification and give students adequate practice in the time provided.</p> <p>It was suggested that, due to COVID-19 restrictions and the issues around visiting examiners, the speaking test should either be removed, or reduced and facilitated by teachers.</p> <p>In addition to this, it was noted that for Unit 3, a reduction in the number of essay titles should be considered and that topics could be released in advance of the exam. As well as this, a small number of respondents requested that the need to write essays in the target language be removed.</p> <p>Other respondents requested that the literature aspect (i.e. Unit 3) be considered for omission.</p>
Further Mathematics	<p>Respondents felt that it was unrealistic to expect teachers to cover all of the specification's content due to the restrictions schools have in place resulting in reduced face-to-face teaching time.</p>
Geography	<p>Respondents noted that they agreed with the proposal not to assess AS modules in Year 14 as part of the final grade for this cohort.</p> <p>However, respondents felt that there should be reductions in content. The most common suggestion provided was to omit Unit 3.</p>



Subject	Commentary
German	<p>Much like at AS level, respondents indicated that they were disappointed to see no omissions for any of the languages units. It was considered very difficult for teachers to cover the whole specification and give students adequate practice in the time provided.</p> <p>It was suggested that, due to COVID-19 restrictions and the issues around visiting examiners, the speaking test should either be removed, or reduced and facilitated by teachers.</p> <p>In addition to this, it was noted that for Unit 3, a reduction in the number of essay titles should be considered and that topics could be released in advance of the exam. As well as this, a small number of respondents requested that the need to write essays in the target language be removed.</p> <p>Other respondents requested that the literature aspect (i.e. Unit 3) be considered for omission.</p>
Government and Politics	<p>Respondents stated that, as the Unit 1 comparative study of US and UK politics is linear in terms of content, Section B of this paper relies on prior study of the AS unit The British Political Process. As schools closed in March, it was noted that many schools could not complete this unit. Therefore, it was felt that adjustments would need to be made to Unit 1 to account for this.</p>
Health and Social Care	<p>Concerns were raised that the omissions only take into consideration practical elements of the subject and that absence from school, and the loss of face-to-face teaching time, has not been considered. It was recommended that content be reduced, not just for the practical elements of the course but for the academic content as well.</p> <p>Furthermore, concerns were raised in relation to specific unit proposals. For Units 1 and 4, it was agreed that students may struggle to distribute and collect questionnaires based on the current guidelines, which would have a knock-on effect on their chosen research topic.</p> <p>Additionally, it was noted that for Unit 4, students may experience difficulty fulfilling interactive activities based on current restrictions; as such, it was stated that the number of activities for this unit should be reduced. In addition to this, it was recommended by a considerable number of respondents that for Unit 3, the pre-release for 2019/20 should be kept for 2020/21 to reduce both teacher and student workload.</p> <p>It was recommended that the content for Unit 7 should also be reduced due to restricted teaching time. Suggestions for reductions included the number of dietary conditions/disorders that have to be covered and factors influencing food choice.</p>

Subject	Commentary
History	<p>It was felt that the stunted experience of this year's AS students has resulted in many being unprepared to cope with the demands of A2.</p> <p>Respondents requested whether it would be possible to reduce the content to account for any missed time due to further likely COVID-19 outbreaks. It was agreed that the course is very content heavy and it is difficult under normal circumstances to cover all the content.</p> <p>The most common suggestion provided was to reduce the amount of content to be taught in Units 1 and 2 (particularly Unit 2). Suggestions focused on the need to reduce timelines for certain topics; for instance, Unit 2, Option 4: Partition of Ireland 1900–25 could end in 1921.</p>
Irish	<p>Much like at AS level, respondents indicated that they were disappointed to see no omissions for any of the languages units. It was considered very difficult for teachers to cover the whole specification and give students adequate practice in the time provided.</p> <p>It was suggested that, due to COVID-19 restrictions and the issues around visiting examiners, the speaking test should either be removed, or reduced and facilitated by teachers.</p> <p>In addition to this, it was noted that for Unit 3, a reduction in the number of essay titles should be considered and that topics could be released in advance of the exam. As well as this, a small number of respondents requested that the need to write essays in the target language be removed.</p> <p>Other respondents requested that the literature aspect (i.e. Unit 3) be considered for omission.</p>
Journalism	<p>Not enough information to constitute a theme</p>
Life and Health Sciences	<p>Concerns were raised that there does not seem to be any mitigation made for students with regards to A2 Life and Health Sciences, particularly for Unit 1. It was questioned how students could safely access the volume of practical work required in a safe manner given COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>As such, it was suggested that a reduction in the practical components for A2 Life and Health Sciences should be considered.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Mathematics	<p>Respondents agreed that there has been major disruption to the education of all students and that the amount of the specification that has been covered in Year 13 will vary from school to school.</p> <p>Furthermore, it was noted that the amount of content to be covered in each specification was already putting great pressure on time. Respondents agreed that it is not feasible to expect teachers to cover the full specification in the time available. As such, content reductions were recommended.</p> <p>The most common suggestion was that students should cover all of the Pure Mathematics content (Unit 1) and students/centres should have the choice of studying either the Mechanics or Statistics elements for the Applied Mathematics paper (Unit 2).</p>
Moving Image Arts	<p>Moving Image Arts respondents stated that public health guidance needs to be considered with regards to the completion of the required portfolio (Unit 1) at both AS and A2. Requiring students to still be able to produce a 3–4 minute film (AS) or 4–7 minute film (A2) was noted as being particularly challenging in the current circumstances, with many centres not being able to lend equipment due to the risk of cross-contamination. As such, it was recommended that consideration should be given to the acceptance of a shorter final film sequence at both AS and A2, as well as shorter essays and a potential reduction in theory content (particularly to account for loss in practical teaching in the previous academic year).</p> <p>A number of respondents considered it important that centre assessment grades (CAGs) for Year 14 MIA students form part of their overall grade. Not allowing the CAGs may have a negative impact on student morale. Furthermore, the fact that there may be further disruption could mean that this year's work is also greatly impacted, and to base their entire A level grade on their Year 14 work would not be a reliable measure of a student's full potential.</p>
Music	<p>Respondents reported being concerned about covering all set works in reduced time. It was noted that it is already difficult with such lengthy set works. Respondents largely agreed that there should be a reduction in the amount of content. It was recommended that there should be a reduction in the sacred vocal pieces and/or the secular vocal pieces.</p> <p>In addition to this, respondents stated that CCEA should take cognisance of the fact that students have missed out on six months of instrumental/vocal lessons, etc., all of which will have an impact on their confidence and skills as performers.</p> <p>The decision to omit the visiting examiner was generally welcomed on safety grounds. Nevertheless, some concerns were raised over the consistency of approach across schools if examination is through recording alone.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Nutrition and Food Science	<p>Respondents expressed concerns regarding the Unit 2 – Research Project.</p> <p>Respondents questioned how students are going to complete primary research (i.e. distribute and collect questionnaires) with current healthcare restrictions and guidelines in place. The lack of adjustment was considered to have placed pressure on teachers and students. Absences, closures, lack of available ICT facilities, and working online could make it very difficult to complete this piece of work.</p> <p>Adjustments and reductions were suggested for this particular unit, as well as clear guidance from CCEA.</p> <p>Furthermore, it was highlighted by some that the Unit 1 exam is 3 hours long, which is reflective of the amount of content to be covered. Reductions were suggested for this particular unit as well.</p>
Performing Arts	<p>Respondents welcomed the adaptations to assessment, i.e. the removal of the external moderator assessing and using a recording instead.</p> <p>However, concerns were raised about the lack of guidance when it comes to putting this into practice, particularly in relation to conducting and facilitating group performances.</p>
Physics	<p>Like the feedback obtained for Chemistry, respondents were largely satisfied with the proposal to remove the requirement to complete practical skills Booklet A.</p> <p>However, it was noted that as pupils will not have the opportunity to undertake practical work as frequently as they would have done in previous years, Booklet B should either be removed or only assess A2 content.</p> <p>It was suggested that the removal of the synoptic element at A2 would assist teaching and make the delivery of content more realistic, particularly as students would not have fully completed their AS course.</p>
Professional Business Services	<p>It was considered unrealistic to assume that all three units could be delivered in the timeframe, particularly due to lost teaching time at the end of the last academic year.</p> <p>In particular, concerns were raised over the amount of theoretical content in both Units 1 and 2. It was felt that these units are too dense to logistically be covered in the current health climate, specifically with reduced time spent in the classroom. It was agreed that reducing this content would provide teachers with time to catch up.</p>

Subject	Commentary
Religious Studies	<p>Respondents expressed their disappointment at the absence of any adjustments to A2 Religious Studies. It was felt that reductions are necessary.</p> <p>It was recommended that consideration should be given to increasing the choice of examination questions and to reducing the burden of learning by removing some of the subtopics.</p> <p>A common suggestion provided was to completely omit synoptic assessment from the course.</p>
Software Systems Development	<p>It was noted that the current proposals assume full year attendance. Respondents requested clarity as to whether there is a contingency plan for disruption to teaching and learning if students are unable to attend school or in the case of teacher absence. It was questioned whether in this eventuality there would be a reduction in the A2 content or coursework component.</p>
Spanish	<p>Much like at AS level, respondents indicated that they were disappointed to see no omissions for any of the languages units. It was considered very difficult for teachers to cover the whole specification and give students adequate practice in the time provided.</p> <p>It was suggested that, due to COVID-19 restrictions and the issues around visiting examiners, the speaking test should either be removed, or reduced and facilitated by teachers.</p> <p>In addition to this, it was noted that for Unit 3, a reduction in the number of essay titles should be considered and that topics could be released in advance of the exam. As well as this, a small number of respondents requested that the need to write essays in the target language be removed.</p> <p>Other respondents requested that the literature aspect (i.e. Unit 3) be considered for omission.</p>
Sports Science and the Active Leisure Industry	<p>Though respondents generally support the proposal to run virtual events if traditional face-to-face events could not be run, it was noted that there were still concerns regarding a need for a reduction of theory content or a recommended order of learning should COVID-19 affect the closure of schools.</p>
Technology and Design	<p>Though respondents understood the rationale and largely welcomed the removal of the practical aspects of the course, some noted that this may disadvantage more practically minded students.</p> <p>In addition to this, concerns were raised in regards to access to computer suites (with social distancing restrictions in place) to complete design work. It was suggested that contingency measures should be in place if coursework cannot be completed.</p>

Source: CCEA – Proposed Changes to CCEA GCSE, AS and A Level Qualifications for Summer 2021 Consultation Findings



