

Decisions on Conditions and guidance for AS and A level Politics



In March 2016 we published a consultation about the rules and guidance we proposed to put in place for new AS and A levels in politics.

The consultation set out draft Subject Level Conditions, requirements and guidance which would apply to all new AS and A levels in this subject.

We have reviewed the responses to the consultation and are now announcing our decisions. We are also publishing a more detailed analysis of the responses alongside this document.¹

Compliance with content requirements

We proposed that all reformed AS and A levels in politics should comply with the subject content requirements published by the Department for Education (DfE),² and with our assessment objectives.

All the respondents who commented on this proposal supported it, and expressed no concerns in relation to it. We have therefore decided to confirm our proposals in this area.

Guidance on assessment objectives

We received a number of comments on our proposed guidance on assessment objectives. In particular:

- One respondent commented that our definition of “political information” would mean that examination papers would test candidates on their ability to analyse political source material. The respondent stated this would create a mechanistic element to the course, and that the focus on analysis and evaluation found in current specifications should be retained.
- One respondent questioned the distinction between “parallels” and “similarities” in AO2, and suggested removing the former. They also raised concerns about the inclusion of “comparative analysis” in both elements of AO2, suggesting this could raise the demand of the assessment relative to current qualifications.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-politics

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-politics

They suggested that comparative analysis should be restricted to aspects of politics, and should not be required for political information, and that our definition of “parallels, connections, similarities and differences” should be broadened.

- One respondent requested clarification of Ofqual’s expectations concerning the assessment of AO1 in relation to comparative politics. They commented that comparative politics necessitates analysis and could not be assessed under the current wording of AO1. They were concerned that this could lead to ‘overloading other sections with knowledge and understanding’.

The subject content for new AS and A levels in politics requires students to:

develop the ability to critically analyse, interpret and evaluate political information to form arguments and make judgments

[...]

comprehend and interpret political information

Given this, students’ ability to analyse, interpret and evaluate political source material needs to form part of the assessments. We remain of the view that it is appropriate for this to include comparative analysis, where this is appropriate to the question/task.

We are not convinced by the argument that comparative politics necessarily involves analysis. Our view is that it is possible to assess knowledge and understanding of comparative politics without analysis. For example, a question which rewards students for simply stating that different countries have different political systems (and/or for giving factual descriptions of those different systems) would clearly fall within AO1.

We have therefore decided to confirm our consultation proposals.

Next steps

We have published the following documents which formally introduce our rules and guidance for AS and A level politics:

- *GCE Subject Level Conditions for Politics*³
- *GCE Subject Level Guidance for Politics*⁴

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-Politics

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-guidance-for-Politics