



ISRSA Response to Consultation

Dear All

Thank you to all who responded to the consultation. I was delighted to be able to share what can only be described as a very impressive set of ideas from a brilliant group of professionals! THANKS for all the care and thought that you put into this. The pressurised life of online teaching is hugely demanding and it is a great testimony to our subject area that so many of you made time to think about this and send over your thoughts.

We have completed the consultation and attach our response below. Where there was disagreement among our members the majority view has been reported, but if you feel that your views are not fully represented you may of course still complete the online consultation as an individual, and we encourage you to do this by using the link below:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/8BYI4T/>

Very many thanks for all you are doing for your students at this time. Stay strong. Better times are to come.

Consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021

Introduction and overview

Please confirm that you have read the accompanying consultation document

I have read the consultation proposals

Your data and rights

Name

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Position (if applicable)

Chair ISRSA

Organisation (if applicable)

Independent Schools Religious Studies Association

Telephone number

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Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the grades awarded to students in 2021 should reflect the standard at which they are performing?

Strongly agree

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the alternative approach to awarding grades in summer 2021 should seek to encourage students to continue to engage with their education for the remainder of the academic year?

Strongly agree

Q3. When would you prefer that teachers make their final assessment of their students' performance? (please select one)

June

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that teachers should be able to use evidence of the standard of a student's performance from throughout their course?

Disagree

Q5. Should there be any limit on the period from which previous work could be drawn?

Yes

Q6. If you answered 'yes', what should that limit be?

Work completed in the previous 6 months

Q7. Do you have any comments on when students should be assessed?

Assessment should be based on the final year of study and possibly only the last 6 months so that their actual level of achievement is evidenced. If we accept work from the first year of study as evidence, this will require an unverifiable work of the imagination to picture how well the candidate might develop.

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the exam boards should provide a set of papers to support teachers in assessing their students' work?

Strongly agree

Q9. Do you think the use of the papers provided by the exam boards should be compulsory or optional, for GCSEs, AS and A levels?

	Compulsory	Optional
All A level	X	
All AS	X	
All GCSE	X	
GCSE English language	X	
GCSE mathematics	X	

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that any papers provided by the exam boards should include questions that are of a type that is familiar to students?

Strongly agree

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that if teachers use exam board papers they should have choice about the topics covered in the questions their students answer, for example through choice of which papers they use with their students from the set of papers provided?

Strongly agree

Q12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that teachers should be required to assess (either by use of the exam board papers or via other evidence) a certain minimum proportion of the overall subject content, for each subject?

Strongly agree

Q13. To what extent do you agree or disagree that teachers should mark any papers their students are asked to complete?

Strongly agree

Q14. Do you have any comments on the use of exam board papers?

There is a strong feeling in our group that while teachers will mark students work, as they do in the ordinary way of things, this should form only PART of the assessment. Exam board papers it is thought should be set and marked by the exam boards. There is a strong view that there needs to be work which remains exam board marked. Teacher workload, and remuneration for providing exam board services were raised as questions. In addition, it was felt that teachers should not be exposed to the pressures of parents/students/senior managers who inevitably will demand of the teacher the desired grade rather than a fair one. Some concerns that since teacher performance is related to exam grades, proposals to make teachers the arbiters of results is going to be unreliable.

Q15. To what extent do you agree or disagree that teachers should take account of a student's performance in any non-exam assessment where that has been completed in full for a subject?

Strongly agree

Q16. To what extent do you agree or disagree that teachers should take account of a student's performance in any non-exam assessment where that has been completed in part for a subject?

Strongly agree

Q17. To what extent do you agree or disagree that teachers should mark their students' non-exam assessments?

Strongly agree

Q18. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the marking of non-exam assessments should not be moderated by the exam boards this year?

Strongly disagree

Q19. Do you have any comments on the use of non-exam assessment and separately reported results and grades?

There should be a proportion of the grade which teachers may assess and a proportion assessed by exam boards. Teachers will need exam board guidance on standards for grade awards, including quantity and quality of content. Boards should sample outcomes across centres. Extended Project Qualification procedure is a good one to mirror.

Q20. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a breadth of evidence should inform teachers' judgements?

Strongly agree

Q21. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the provision of training and guidance from exam boards should support teachers to reach their assessment of a student's deserved grade?

Strongly agree

Q22. To what extent do you agree or disagree that teachers should be able to take into account other performance evidence for a student before submitting a grade?

Strongly agree

Q23. To what extent do you agree or disagree that performance evidence from closer to the time of the final assessment, should carry more weight in determining a student's final grade?

Strongly agree

Q24. Do you have any comments on the use of other performance evidence?

This question really depends on what counts as evidence. We recommend that evidence is only that which can be evidenced!

Q25. To what extent do you agree or disagree that all students should be assessed within a given time period for each subject – whether or not their school or college must or is using exam board papers?

Strongly agree

Q26. To what extent do you agree or disagree that exam boards should publish all of their papers shortly before the assessments in order to manage the risk of some students being advantaged through papers being leaked?

Strongly agree

Q27. Do you have any comments about the assessment period for the use of exam board papers or teacher devised assessments?

An alternative to exam board papers would be online tests. These could be knowledge based, multiple choice and marked by computer. The Australian model is school assessment with a national set of online tests that every student must take. It's a way of moderating school assessment and for achieving parity across schools.

Q28. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the assessments should, if possible, be taken within the student's school or college?

Strongly agree

Q29. To what extent do you agree or disagree that if the pandemic makes it necessary a student should be able to take their assessments at an alternative venue, including at home?

Neither agree nor disagree

Q30. Do you have any comments on the conditions under which students should be assessed?

It depends on the type of assessment being done. There needs to be a reasonable belief that it is the students own work.

Q31. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the exam boards should provide support and information to schools and colleges to help them meet the assessment requirements?

Strongly agree

Q32. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the exam boards should set requirements for school and college internal quality assurance arrangements and provide guidance on these requirements to support centres?

Strongly agree

Q33. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the head of a school or college should make a declaration to the exam board confirming its requirements had been followed and teachers had regard to the guidance and support materials provided?

Strongly agree

Q34. Do you have any comments about internal quality assurance?

Schools have robust procedures in place already for annual exams. Exam board guidance is required to ensure parity across centres.

Q35. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the exam boards should quality assure how schools and colleges are determining grades?

Strongly agree

Q36. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the exam boards should quality assure the overall approach for all schools and colleges?

Strongly agree

Q37. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the exam boards should sample, at subject level, the evidence on which the submitted grades were based?

Strongly agree

Q38. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the exam boards should target their more in-depth quality assurance activities?

Neither agree nor disagree

Q39. To what extent do you agree or disagree that exam boards could only change a student's grade after a review of the evidence and discussion with the school or college?

Neither agree nor disagree

Q40. Do you have any comments about external quality assurance?

External quality assurance is essential. If exam boards mark a subset of the assessment, and put this together with the teacher assessment, they must be able to alter a centres recommended grade. They will not need to target quality assurance so much because it will be built into the system. If schools alone are responsible, then obviously the school must be consulted before any grade changes are made.

Q41. To what extent do you agree or disagree that students should not be told the grade their teacher has submitted before results day?

Strongly agree

Q42. To what extent do you agree or disagree that students should be able to appeal their grade on the grounds that their teacher made an error when assessing the student's performance?

Agree

Q43. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school or college should consider the appeal?

Agree

Q44. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the appeal should normally be considered by a competent person within the student's school or college who was not involved with the original assessment?

Agree

Q45. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a school or college should be able to appoint a competent person from outside of the school or college to consider the appeal?

Neither agree nor disagree

Q46. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a grade should only be changed if it is found not to represent a legitimate exercise of academic judgement?

Strongly agree

Q47. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a student should be able to appeal to the exam board on the grounds that the school or college did not follow the exam board's requirements when it assessed the student's performance?

Agree

Q48. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a student should be able to appeal to the exam board on the grounds that the school or college did not properly consider the student's appeal?

Agree

Q49. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should seek to bring forward results day(s), in order for appeals to begin earlier?

Strongly agree

Q50. To what extent do you agree or disagree that if results day are brought forward, we should seek to decouple when a student is informed of their results, and universities are informed of their formal result for the purpose of admissions decisions?

Agree

Q51. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the exam boards should provide information for schools and colleges on how they should handle appeals?

Strongly agree

Q52. Do you have any comments on the proposed appeal arrangements?

This is a potential nightmare for teachers as SMT, parents and students demand higher grades. The growth industry of appeals shouldn't really be visited upon the teacher. There has to be a better way than this. Handing teachers this gauntlet seems mighty unfair all round. One of our members captured the general fear - *'I would anticipate a deluge of challenges at my school which would likely rattle on for some considerable time... Having examiners mark tests would mitigate this as external standards would be seen to have been applied.'* This was the issue upon which most of our members agreed that the proposal was unreasonable. What do schools do if 'bribed/pressurised/manipulated/repeat challenged' on a grade? One suggested solution was a system whereby a school could report a parent or student for

Q52. Do you have any comments on the proposed appeal arrangements?

trying to influence or manipulate judgements. Workload listed as a further concern if schools are to manage the appeals system (as well as gather evidence, mark tests and manage internal quality assurance).

Q53. To what extent do you agree or disagree that private candidates should be able to complete the papers set by exam boards, with them marked by the exam boards?

Strongly agree

Q54. To what extent do you agree or disagree that private candidates should be able to work with a school or college to produce the same type of evidence as the school or college's other students?

Disagree

Q55. To what extent do you agree or disagree that exam boards should run normal exams for private candidates in summer 2021?

Strongly agree

Q56. To what extent do you agree or disagree that exam boards should run normal exams for private candidates in autumn 2021?

Strongly agree

Q57. Do you have any comments on the options for how grades should be made available to private candidates?

The outcomes for private candidates will need to be determined by a comparable procedure but it's difficult to see how a school could achieve this for candidates they do not know. Schools could enter weak candidates as private candidates to manipulate their results.

Q58. If the preferred option for private candidates is an exam series, should any other students be permitted to enter to also sit an exam?

This sounds like a recipe for chaos.

Q59. Should the exam boards be prohibited from offering GCSE, AS and A level exams in any country in 2021?

No

Q60. If you answered no, which students should be allowed to enter for them?

Students entering the qualification from outside of the UK

Q61. Do you believe the proposed arrangements (any or all) would have a positive impact on particular students because of their protected characteristics?

No

Q63. Do you believe the proposed arrangements (any or all) would have a negative impact on particular students because of their protected characteristics?

No

Q65. Are there additional burdens associated with the delivery of the proposed arrangements on which we are consulting that we have not identified above? If yes, what are they?

It appears to be passing this particular hot potato on to teachers. Pressure from parents, students and SMT for inflated grades to be awarded - this is a burden that is being passed on to teachers who are already exhausted by online teaching.

Q66. What additional costs do you expect you would incur through implementing the proposed arrangements on which we are consulting?

Teacher costs. Teachers could reasonably ask to be paid for doing the exam boards' work. Exam entries do not appear to cost any less this year than in previous years, when all work was examined by the boards. If a competent person (subject specialists?) from outside is appointed this could also be a major financial burden.

Q67. What costs would you save?

na

Q68. We would welcome your views on how we could reduce burden and costs while achieving the same aims.

We are warmly recommending online testing of knowledge using multiple choice questions. These could run along the lines of the driving theory test and to a degree there could be an element of randomness - all schools have computer rooms where these tests could be done under strict conditions on a rolling basis which is covid - secure. The results could be matched against teacher assessment and provide a level of objectivity. It is more difficult to test higher skills in this way but the knowledge base for each subject could easily be tested this way and there could be any number of options for students to take to show what they know. This would remove the burden from teachers and limit the potential for appeals. Once set up it removes a great deal of expense and could future proof the exam system as well.

Your details

Which nation or country are you based in?

England

Q69. How did you find out about this consultation?

Other (please specify):

Invited to respond on behalf of our organisation

Is this the official response from your organisation or your own, personal response?

This is the official response from my organisation

Your details (official response)

Q75. Which of these options best describes your organisation?

Other representative or interest group

Your details (representative group)

Type of representative or interest group

Subject association or learned society

Confidentiality

Do you wish any part of your response to remain confidential?

No

Feedback

We want to write clearly and effectively, putting the reader first. How easy to read did you find this consultation? (Please rate from 1 very hard to read to 5 very easy to read)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very hard to read					X	Very easy to read

Do you have any comments or suggestions about the style of writing?

These are some additional thoughts which were offered by our group:

1. Why not scrap A level exams and ask Universities to do entry tests
2. Concern that with RS and Philosophy the rigour of our subject area may not be fully appreciated when considering assessment.
3. Core problems identified as potential discrepancies between schools and maintaining the integrity of the process.
4. Some viewed this as a total dumbing down of academic exams with the only FAIR way of handling it being a requirement to re-take the year. 'allowing students with 8-9 months of education over two years' to gain qualifications was viewed by a number of members as 'immoral'.