LMS Response to Ofqual Consultation: Proposed changes to the assessment of mathematics, physics and combined science GCSEs in 2025, 2026 and 2027
October 2024

Details of the consultation can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-changes-to-the-assessment-of-mathematics-physics-and-combined-science-gcses-in-2025-2026-and-2027

Question 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal that formulae sheets should be provided in the exams for GCSE mathematics in 2025, 2026 and 2027?

Options: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

Response

Strongly agree

Question 2

Do you have any comments on the proposal to provide formulae sheets in the exams for GCSE mathematics in 2025, 2026 and 2027?

Response

We strongly agree with the Department for Education's (DfE's) decision that, in view of the continuing impact of the disruption students may have experienced due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is not necessary for them to memorise formulae for GCSE Mathematics in 2025, 2026 and 2027. Consequently, we strongly support Ofqual's proposal to carry forward, from the summer 2024, the provision of support materials, in the form of a formulae sheet, in the examinations for GCSE Mathematics for 2025, 2026 and 2027.

The disruption due to Covid-19 was cited as the rationale for taking the decision to include a formulae sheet in examinations for GCSE Mathematics in 2022 and 2023. Learners who will be sitting GCSE Mathematics in the years up to and including 2027 will also have had their learning disrupted due to the pandemic, and thus these arrangements should continue for the 2025, 2026 and 2027 examinations.

More generally, a view often expressed by teachers of GCSE Mathematics students, including those who are resitting, is that while higher attainers do not necessarily need or benefit from having formulae sheets, the lower attainers definitely do benefit and value this. More importantly, the provision of formulae sheets can decrease anxiety for lower attainers and increase confidence levels by knowing that these materials will be available. These lower attainers should be supported in a way that will benefit them in

their future life, where they will need to make appropriate use of formulae that they can consult.

This also applies to all learners – using and applying formulae is the approach taken in further and higher education, and in employment.

For GCSE Mathematics examinations in general, we believe it is more meaningful to assess whether students can select the right formula for the problem in front of them, and whether they can use it properly. It is therefore more useful for learners to be assessed on the skills of understanding, selecting, applying, rearranging and using the formulae than on memorising them.

Question 3

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal that equations sheets should be provided in the exams for GCSE physics and combined science in 2025, 2026 and 2027?

Options: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

Response

Neither agree nor disagree

Question 4

Do you have any comments on the proposal to provide equations sheets in the exams for GCSE physics and combined science in 2025, 2026 and 2027?

Question 5

Are there other potential equality impacts that Ofqual has not identified? [Yes or no]

Response

No

Question 6

If yes, what are they?

Question 7

Do you have any suggestions for how any potential negative impacts on particular groups of students could be mitigated?

Question 8

Are there additional activities associated with providing students with formulae and equations sheets in their GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science exams that Ofqual has not identified above? [Yes or no]

Response

No

Question 9

If yes, what are they?

Question 10

What, if any, additional costs do you expect you would incur if students are provided formulae and equations sheets in their GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science exams for 2025, 2026 and 2027?

Question 11

Do you have any suggestions for alternative approaches that could reduce burden and costs?