



Consultation on 14-16 Qualification Reform Information Paper

April - May 2014

Department of Education and Children
Rheynn Ynsee as Paitchyn

Consultation on 14-16 Qualification Reform

Contents

- 1. Executive summary**
- 2. The consultation**
- 3. Introduction to GCSE**
- 4. GCSE reform**
- 5. Option 1: Key features of the new GCSEs in England**
- 6. Option 2: Key features of the International GCSE**
- 7. Option 3: Key features of the Scottish Qualifications National 4 and National 5**

1. Executive summary

This document introduces the reforms taking place in 14-16 qualifications in England. GCSEs, which have been the main qualification in schools in the Isle of Man for over 25 years, are about to undergo radical changes in England. Northern Ireland and Wales have rejected these reforms, which will mean the break-up of the so-called "three country award".

It is clear that the 14-16 educational landscape is changing. The Department of Education and Children recognises that we have choices open to us relating to the qualifications we offer to our young people in the future.

This consultation provides an important opportunity for people and organisations who are stakeholders in the education system to contribute in a meaningful way to the decision on the future of GCSE reforms and the Department would appreciate any comments you may have.

All response should be returned by **5pm on Friday, 16 May 2014**.

2. The consultation

2.1 Why is the Department consulting?

The decision on whether to follow the 14-16 qualifications reforms in England is one of the biggest decisions ever faced in Manx education. If the outcome of that decision is to adopt the new English GCSEs it will be the biggest change in education for more than 25 years. If the outcome of the decision is not to follow the reforms in England, it will mean breaking the main educational ties with England in the 14-16 age range and could be considered as an historic step in years to come. The Department is aware that this decision will affect the educational outcomes of our young people and we are seeking information about how the community perceives both some of the changes and some aspects of the options.

- 2.2 The purpose of this consultation exercise is to invite comments on some key statements that relate to the 14-16 qualification reforms. The consultation is open to all those who are interested and we would welcome and appreciate your responses to the 10 key statements and a brief statement of any concerns and preferences you might have in relation to the options open to schools in the Isle of Man.

2.3 **Consultation process**

From 2nd April, the consultation will be available at survey monkey on <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/V3N3CXQ> and via links on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/examreform>

Copies of this the consultation will also be available at <http://www.gov.im/consultations.gov>

Paper copies of the consultation document are available at:

Department of Education and Children, Hamilton House, Peel Road, Douglas, IM1 5EZ

Comments should be submitted by **5pm Friday, 16 May 2014** through survey monkey, in writing, by post or email to: 14-16 Consultation, Department of Education and Children, Hamilton House, Peel Road, Douglas, IM1 5EZ

Telephone: (01624) 685353 Email: consultation@doe.sch.im

2.4 **List of statutory persons, organisations and others to be consulted**

Tynwald Members; Attorney General; Chief Officers of Government Departments, Statutory Boards and Offices; Local Authorities; Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce; Isle of Man Trade Union Council; Headteachers and Principal at Isle of Man College of Further and Higher Education; Teaching Associations; Education Council; Chairs of Governors.

2.5 **Important points to remember**

When submitting your views please indicate whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation or a group of people.

For ease of reference please refer – where relevant - to the standard number in your response.

To ensure that the process is open, transparent, and in line with the Isle of Man Government's Code of Conduct on Consultations, submissions will only be considered where the name of the individual(s) or organisation responding is provided.

Unless you specifically request otherwise, any responses received may be published either in part or in their entirety, including your name.

Please mark your response clearly if you wish your response and name to be kept confidential.

Confidential responses will be included in any statistical summary and numbers of comments received.

Any anonymous, abusive, or offensive responses will be discounted.

2.6 **Steps that will be taken following consultation**

Following consultation, the next steps in the process will be as follows: the Department will review comments received and a summary of the responses will be published on the Government website within 3 months of the closing date for this consultation.

2.7 **Code of Practice on Consultation**

It is the intention of the Department to carry out this consultation in accordance with the Isle of Man Government's Code of Practice on Consultation, which is available at www.gov.im

The consultation period ends at 5pm on Friday, 16 May 2014

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Information Paper

3 Introduction to GCSE

- 3.1 Pupils aged 14-16 years in the Isle of Man have been entered for GCSEs since these replaced O level and CSE qualifications in 1988. GCSEs have provided a single grading system initially from A-G and, in more recent years, A*-G. GCSE entries that achieve A*-G are all counted as "passes". A*-C outcomes are known as higher level, or "Level 2", passes whilst D-G passes are described as Level 1 passes. GCSE entries that do not achieve grade G are counted as "unclassified".
- 3.2 Over the 25 years during which GCSEs have been the core qualification in the education system, there have always been tiered examination papers such that higher-attaining pupils sit higher tier examinations that ask more demanding questions and have more demanding mark schemes. GCSEs have also employed various degrees and forms of coursework or practical work such that they have offered a broader assessment model than simply what a candidate can demonstrate under timed examination conditions.
- 3.3 In 2009, under a Labour government, GCSE reforms saw most subjects become 'modular', or 'unitised' although it was always an option to enter students for exams only at the end of a two year, 'linear' course. In this respect they followed similar changes that affected A levels from 2000. In 2013, under the Coalition government, the modular approach introduced just 4 years earlier was reversed and the assessment returned to a linear format with end-of-course examination papers.
- 3.4 GCSE qualifications are offered through 5 exam boards. Three of these are in England, namely AQA, Edexcel and OCR. The two remaining boards are WJEC in Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland. The grades offered by these five boards carry the same weight in terms of applications for employment or further and higher education. At present, schools in the Isle of Man choose which exam boards they will use. This element of choice is not currently problematic and decisions are often made at subject level. For a variety of reasons, teachers in one school, or one subject, may prefer the specification and examinations developed by one particular board whilst in another school, or another subject, teachers might have a preference for another board. All grades are recognised as equal across the exam boards and there is no barrier to selecting or changing board. At present, most of the Island's entries are through AQA, one of the English exam boards. Edexcel, OCR and WJEC are also used but no school or subject currently enters pupils for GCSEs through CCEA in Northern Ireland.
- 3.5 There are qualifications other than GCSEs that are taught in our schools including applied GCSEs and vocational courses such as BTECs certificates. These applied or vocational pathways will continue to be on offer whichever route forward is chosen for schools in the Isle of Man.

4 GCSE reform

- 4.1 In September 2012, at a time when there were unprecedented concerns about changes to grade boundaries in the August 2012 GCSE results, the UK Secretary of State for Education announced that GCSEs would be replaced by the English Baccalaureate Certificate. The announcement followed the publication of a white paper in November 2010 and came after several months of discussions with Ministers for Education in Northern Ireland and Wales over GCSE reforms. GCSE and A Levels were known as 'the three country awards' on the understanding that the titles were in shared ownership. The discussions had revealed a

greater political desire for extensive reform in England than in either of the other two countries and when the 'English Baccalaureate Certificate' was declared, it appeared to indicate a clear separation of the ways in 14-16 education. Indeed, its very name appeared to exclude the other nations from any participation.

- 4.2 At that point, it seemed that the Isle of Man would be forced to make a choice between, on the one hand, the new English Baccalaureate Certificate, a totally new qualification, and, on the other hand, the GCSEs that appeared likely to continue largely unchanged in Northern Ireland and Wales. Additional alternatives were identified in the form of Scottish qualifications (already undergoing reforms of their own), the International GCSE and the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (although the latter has a grading system that is based on teacher assessment and does not equate to GCSEs).
- 4.3 In February 2013, the plans to launch the English Baccalaureate Certificate were abandoned as having been "...just one reform too many at this time". It had been decided to retain GCSEs in England but to undertake a reform of these, beginning with the removal of modular assessment. It still appeared possible that 'the three country award' would remain intact. The need for the Isle of Man to make any sort of decision about which qualifications our schools should deliver appeared to have been removed.
- 4.4 The reprieve lasted only 4 months. In June, 2013, the UK Secretary of State for Education outlined a series of major and minor proposals to reshape GCSEs in England. Consultation would follow but the reforms would involve all GCSEs becoming linear, the removal of tiered papers in most subjects, substantial changes to the grading system and the restriction of coursework to very few subjects.
- 4.5 These proposals are on track to be introduced for first teaching of the new GCSEs in England in September 2015. Other subjects will follow in subsequent years but the full timelines of the phased introduction of the new GCSEs in England are not yet clear. The new GCSEs will be a completely new qualification with a new grading system. Some consultation is complete but further consultation will take place in 2014.
- 4.6 There have also been consultations in Northern Ireland and Wales. In broad terms, these consultations have confirmed a consensus of support for the continuation of GCSEs largely in their current form and the respective Ministers for Education have rejected the reforms announced in England. The current GCSE is seen, in both Northern Ireland and Wales, as fit for purpose. Consultations are ongoing and some reforms are likely, but it seems that GCSEs will continue to be modular (unitised) in these countries (albeit with fewer exam entry points), will continue to use higher and foundation tier papers, will continue to be graded from A*-G, and will continue to incorporate coursework or controlled assessment.
- 4.7 The Isle of Man is once again in a position where a decision needs to be made. To continue with the main, current practice would involve following schools in England through what is widely seen as one of the most radical reforms of the English education system. Schools in England have no choice but to accept these changes.
- 4.8 In December 2013, the senior leaders in the secondary schools and the senior staff from the Department of Education and Children met to look at the options open to schools in the Isle of Man. Following wide-ranging discussion, it was agreed that the DEC should concentrate on three options:
 - i) follow the new GCSEs in England
 - ii) switch to the International GCSE offered by Cambridge University
 - iii) switch to the Scottish examination system using National 4 and National 5 qualifications.

5 Option 1: Key features of the new GCSEs in England

- 5.1 The first teaching of the new GCSEs in England will start in September, 2015 and therefore will affect all pupils currently in Year 8 and below. This will see the introduction of new GCSEs in English Language, English Literature and Maths.
- 5.2 The new qualifications will be graded from 9 (high) to 1 (low). For the first few years new GCSEs graded 9 to 1 will be awarded alongside the old GCSEs in other subjects graded A*-G. Current intentions are that there will be no equivalence between the new and old qualifications. There has been an indication that the boundary for the "higher grade passes", currently A*-C, will be made more difficult than at present. Fewer pupils than at present are expected to obtain high grades, at least in the first few years of the new qualification.
- 5.3 English and most other subjects will be "untiered". This means that there will not be "higher tier" and "foundation tier" examination papers, and that pupils of all abilities will sit the same examinations. Pupils who may struggle to secure a grade 1 will be required to answer questions designed to differentiate between those pupils aiming for grade 8 or 9. Maths is likely to be treated differently, with the retention of tiered papers.
- 5.4 Coursework and controlled assessment will disappear from most subjects. There will be Science practical assessments worth perhaps 10% of the total mark but other subjects will be assessed solely by examinations at the end of the two-year course. This will return assessment to the format that was last used by O levels prior to 1988.
- 5.5 In 2016, the new GCSEs will extend to include Sciences, Geography, History, Modern Languages and perhaps some other subjects. This will affect all pupils in Year 7 and below. It is not clear how the phased introduction will continue beyond 2016 but it is assumed that more subjects will be included the following year. There has been an indication from Ofqual, the qualification and examination regulator in England, that perhaps subjects that are not currently assessed primarily by end-of-course examinations should no longer be GCSEs. This could include Art, Design Technology, Drama and some other subjects. It is not clear how these subjects would be assessed or what qualification would be awarded. It has also been indicated that there will be increased assessment in Maths requiring some additional teaching time in Maths. Greater emphasis on spelling, punctuation and grammar has already begun in English Literature, Geography, History and RE.
- 5.6 Progression from the new GCSEs in England will be to A Levels. In England A levels are also under reform to make them fully linear. AS levels in England will be decoupled from A levels (they will no longer count towards A levels). The teaching of these revised A levels will begin in September 2015. In Northern Ireland and Wales, A levels will also be linear but AS levels will remain as the first half of A levels. It is expected that the qualifications in Wales, Northern Ireland and England will remain equivalent.

6 Option 2: Key features of the International GCSE

- 6.1 The International GCSE (or IGCSE) was also introduced in 1988 and was designed to mirror many aspects of the GCSE. Where it differs from the GCSE is that it is an international qualification, not only in the sense that it is offered to schools around the world but also because it does not come under the control of any national government. It is offered by Cambridge International Examinations, an exam board that is owned by Cambridge University.
- 6.2 The IGCSE has equivalence to all existing GCSEs. It is graded from A*-G and its grades are recognised by all employers, schools, colleges, universities etc as identical to the other

GCSEs. Schools in the Isle of Man can currently enter students for the IGCSE. Pupils at Castle Rushen and Queen Elizabeth II High Schools are studying IGCSE Maths. English at Ramsey Grammar School has switched to the IGCSE, as has Science at Queen Elizabeth II High School. History students at Ballakermeen High School and English students at the Isle of Man College of Further and Higher Education also sit the IGCSE. Many of the 14-16 entries at King William's College involve the IGCSE.

- 6.3 There are more than 70 IGCSE titles including subjects such as Combined Sciences, Geography, History, Economics, Design & Technology and Drama but also new titles ranging from Development Studies to World Literature. Thirty languages are available including Spanish, French, German and Chinese Mandarin. There are now schools in more than 140 countries using the International GCSE but the overall number entries is not large, with approximately 500,000 entries in 2013. The Isle of Man's secondary schools typically make 8,000 GCSE entries each year, or 1.6% of the total IGCSE entry. There are an additional 500,000 entries for modified IGCSE programmes in countries such as Singapore, which have negotiated examinations for their schools.
- 6.4 The IGCSE offers linear assessment (ie no entries for modules) but it does allow entries for many subjects in November as well as June. There are tiered papers with a two grade overlap (ie higher tier exams offer A*-E grades and lower tier exams offer C-G grades) in most subjects including English, Sciences and Maths.
- 6.5 Finals examinations are the main form of assessment, but coursework is available in most IGCSE subjects. A high level of flexibility is offered so that schools can choose to enter pupils for all exam or exam plus coursework routes of assessment. Where one form of assessment might suit an individual pupil, he or she could be entered for that particular route.
- 6.6 The IGCSE does change over time but this is bottom-up development, following stakeholder consultation. No major reforms are currently planned. The standards of the examinations are maintained through benchmarking against a group of international schools.
- 6.7 Progression from the IGCSEs is to A Levels, although there is also an International A level. In England A levels are also under reform to make them fully linear. AS levels in England will be decoupled from A levels (they will no longer count towards A levels). The teaching of these revised A levels will begin in September 2015.

7 Option 3: Key features of the Scottish qualifications National 4 and National 5

- 7.1 Scotland has always had an education system that is separate from England. In Scotland the "Curriculum for Excellence" has been running in schools and colleges since 2010 and is seen as equipping learners with the new skills, knowledge and understanding they need for the 21st century. It has similarities with the Isle of Man "Essentials for Learning" curriculum. In September, 2013, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) introduced new 14-16 qualifications. The two key 14-16 qualifications are National 4s and National 5s.
- 7.2 The National 4 qualification focuses on learning more than assessment. It is not intended for KS4 pupils across the full ability range. All assessment in the National 4 qualification is undertaken by teachers and is then moderated by the examination board, the Scottish Qualification Authority. The outcomes for the National 4 qualifications are just "pass" or "fail": there are no grades. Teachers can plan assessment as they think appropriate for their students and may include coursework, assignments and case studies as well as examination papers. They must, however, ensure that their assessments will allow students to demonstrate the national standards.

- 7.3 National 5 qualifications are more like GCSEs. Courses are assessed by a combination of external SQA assessment (an examination where appropriate) as well as by coursework assessed by teaching staff. The external SQA assessment will require the learner to apply and/or integrate skills, knowledge and understanding. National 5 qualifications are graded from A–D. Grades A-C are pass grades, D is known as a “first fail”. Anything below grade D is given “no award”. The number of National 5 courses varies with some Scottish schools beginning with 6 subjects in Year 10 (Scottish “Secondary 4” or S4). In Year 11 (Scottish S5) pupils are typically expected to study 8 National 5s but many students will start on their “Highers” in Year 11.
- 7.4 A switch to the Scottish National 4 and National 5 qualifications would also mean a switch from A levels to Scottish “Highers” and “Advanced Highers”. These are university entry qualifications but Highers alone will not open the door to all courses in Scotland and English Universities will usually require Advanced Highers. Both of these qualifications have pass grades from A-C.
- 7.5 Grade A in the Highers carries 80 UCAS points, which is equal to a grade C at A level. Grade A in the Advanced Highers carries 130 points on the UCAS tariff compared with 140 points for a grade A* at A level. Grade C in Advanced Highers carries 90 points, compared with 80 points for a grade C at A level. In effect, Highers are equivalent to grades C to E at A level and some pupils will complete 4 or five of these in Year 11. Advanced Highers are approximately equivalent to grades A-B at A level.
- 7.6 Scottish Higher and Advanced Highers are both undergoing reforms, with new qualifications due to be introduced from 2014. This is slightly ahead of the reform of A levels in England which will be phased in from 2015.