

Consultation on proposed changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2021

This consultation ran from  
2 July 2020 to 11:45pm on 16 July 2020

Name **Thomas Roper**

Position (if applicable) **The Chair of Council**

Organisation (if applicable) **Mathematical Association**

Telephone number **0116 221 0013**

Email **executiveofficer@m-a.org.uk**

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

**No**

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

Strongly agree

**Agree**

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

2. Do you have any comments on the use of optional exam questions in the 2021 exams?

The MA believes that optional questions wouldn't benefit students studying GCSE as students have studied such a disparate variety of topics, it would be difficult to introduce optional questions so late in the course delivery.

The MA also feel that optional questions could lead to a narrowing of the GCSE maths curriculum that could have unintentional consequences.

The MA would support some adaptations to the A level mathematics exams. Providing students with some elements of optionality within the mechanics and statistics assessments would provide students that have missed in depth teaching of some mechanics and statistics topics the chance to demonstrate their ability whilst freeing up teaching time to address the lost learning that has affected all students to differing degrees.

We believe that students should be allowed to choose from a combination of mechanics questions and statistics questions making up a total of 100 marks (50 marks Mechanics and 50 marks Statistics)

### Changing the number and the length of the exams

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the number of exams taken for each subject in 2021 should be the same as usual?

Neither agree or disagree

Value Count

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 1 |
| 5 | 0 |

4. Do you have any comments on the number of exams taken for each subject in 2021?

The MA believe it would be desirable for the exam season to be as short as possible in 2021 to maximise the potential teaching time.

We feel consolidating GCSE mathematics to 2 exams may be beneficial as long as it didn't require any changes to the syllabus.

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the exams taken in 2021 should not be longer than usual?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Value Count

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 0 |
| 4 | 1 |
| 5 | 0 |

6. Do you have any comments on the length of exams in 2021?

We believe that making any changes to length of the 2021 assessments would disadvantage the students who are preparing for the exams using past papers.

Changes to the exam timetable

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the GCSE timetable should start after half term in 2021 if results can still be released on 26 August 2021?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Value Count

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | 3 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 1 |
| 4 | 0 |
| 5 | 1 |

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the GCSE timetable should start after half term in 2021 even if this necessitates a delay in the release of results?

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree or disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

Value Count

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 1 |
| 3 | 1 |
| 4 | 2 |
| 5 | 1 |

9. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of delaying the start of GCSE exams in 2021?

The MA believe delaying the exams will give teachers a greater opportunity to teach the full mathematics syllabus to their students but this should not be at the expense of reducing the quality of exam marking.

Some members of the MA raised concerns that delaying the exams could affect the quality of marking of GCSE and A-Level's. The MA believes that exam boards need to secure the best quality GCSE and A-Level examiners possible to ensure that exam boards mark every candidates exam papers to the same high standard but discussions across the mathematics community suggest that a high proportion of teachers who mark exams will not do so if this means giving up the majority of their summer holiday for marking. We feel if this was to happen that the standard of marking would decline to the detriment of students sitting the 2021 exams.

If there were delays in releasing exam results, this would add to pressure that students are already under, as students should be afforded an equal amount of time as previous year's to reflect on their grades before taking the next steps in their careers.

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the A level and AS timetable should start after half term in 2021 if results can still be released on 19 August 2021?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Value Count

1 3

2 0

3 1

4 0

5 1

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the A level and AS timetable should start after half term in 2021 even if this necessitates a delay in the release of results?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Value Count

1 1

2 1

3 1

4 2

5 1

12 What would be the advantages and disadvantages of delaying the start of A level and AS exams in 2021?

The MA believe delaying the exams will give teachers a greater opportunity to teach the full mathematics syllabus to their students but this should not be at the expense of reducing the quality of exam marking.

Some members of the MA raised concerns that delaying the exams could affect the quality of marking of GCSE and A-Level's. The MA believes that exam boards need to secure the best quality GCSE and A-Level examiners possible to ensure that exam boards mark every candidates exam papers to the same high standard but discussions across the mathematics community suggest that a high proportion of teachers who mark exams will not do so if this means giving up the majority of their summer holiday for marking. We feel if this was to happen that the standard of marking would decline to the detriment of students sitting the 2021 exams.

If there were delays in releasing exam results, this would add to pressure that students are already under, as students should be afforded an equal amount of time as previous year's to reflect on their grades before taking the next steps in their careers.

#### AS and A level further maths

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed assessment arrangements for AS and A level further maths in 2021?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Value Count

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 1 |
| 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 |

15. Do you have any comments on the proposed assessment arrangements for AS and A level further maths in 2021?

Further Maths students may find the exams less accessible depending on their socio-economic background. Schools only have a limited capacity to support Further Maths students so students that can afford additional tutoring will be at a considerable advantage to other students.

### GCSE maths

16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed assessment arrangements for GCSE maths in 2021?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Value Count

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 4 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 |

17. Do you have any comments on the proposed assessment arrangements for GCSE maths in 2021?

Maths teachers are professionals and will adapt to cope and prepare students the best they can in these turbulent times but steps should be taken to tackle 'emerging gap' in inequality caused by lockdown. The Sutton Trust have shown how the Covid-19 pandemic is magnifying the attainment gap that has always existed in education. <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/social-mobility-and-covid-19/>

18. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed assessment arrangements for AS and A level maths in 2021?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Value Count

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 |

19. Do you have any comments on the proposed assessment arrangements for AS and A level maths in 2021?

Pupils will always need further teaching time and there is only so much you can do so happy with the proposed option.

20. Are there other potential equality impacts that we have not explored? What are they?

We are concerned that all disadvantaged groups will be affected by the closure of schools to a greater extent than their more affluent peers. We are concerned that school closures will negatively affect social mobility.

21. We would welcome your views on how any potential negative impacts on particular groups of students could be mitigated.

We feel there will be negative impacts on most disadvantaged groups but without more fundamental changes to education system such as extending the length of exam courses there are no simple mitigations to make exams accessible to students from all socio-economic backgrounds.

22. Are there additional activities associated with changing the exam and assessment arrangements for students taking the qualifications in summer 2021 that we have not identified above? What are they?

23. What additional costs do you expect you would incur if the proposed changes to the exam and assessment arrangements were introduced for summer 2021?

N/A



24. We would welcome your views on any suggestions for alternative approaches that could reduce burden and costs.1 response

N/A