

**OFQUAL consultation September 2014:  
Developing new GCSE, A level and AS qualifications  
for first teaching in 2016**



**Crafts Council response**

**GCSE in design and technology**

***Question 11: To what extent do you agree or disagree that for GCSEs in design and technology 50 per cent of the available marks should be allocated to exams, and 50 per cent to non-exam assessment?***

***(X) Disagree***

The Crafts Council strongly recommends maintaining the 60:40 split on non-exam to exam-based assessment of the Design & Technology GCSE. Moving the balance on exam / written assessment could disadvantage those who learn, and best demonstrate their skills, through practical doing and making.

The increased focus in content on technical and theoretical understanding of materials does not necessarily mean that an exam is the best method of assessment. Such understanding could be tested through other means, including practical making.

Given the expansion of the range of materials to be covered (and the pleasing incorporation of the iterative design process within the qualification), tangible experience and understanding of materials, and the production of prototypes and products, should be a core underpinning of the subject area. This also provides a strong rationale to retain the current 60:40 ratio.

Should the balance still, as proposed, be changed to 50:50, we would wish to see mitigating steps taken against the qualification becoming less accessible for pupils with learning styles that are more visual and tactile, including those with protected characteristics such as dyslexia.

***Question 12: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in design and technology should not be tiered?***

***(X) Strongly agree***

We fully agree that the best way to study design & technology is without tiering. The opportunity to learn alongside, and work in product teams with, fellow pupils of different learning styles and different abilities can only enhance the awareness of different project approaches, technical and practical solutions and communication styles, and will further help to build the flexibility so valuable in both study and professional practice of this subject.

**Question 13: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in design and technology?**

***(X) Neither agree nor disagree***

The new assessment objectives are clear, and match the revised subject content proposed in the parallel DfE consultation.

However, assessment should emphasise the importance of physical, tactile, and practical understanding and manipulation of materials and development of products.

Materials are only fully understood when they are experienced and worked with physically. The development of this tactile understanding, and the haptic skills developed in hand making, are not only complementary but integral to a complete understanding of materials, design and making.

As noted in *Our Future is in the Making: An Education Manifesto for Craft and Making* (Crafts Council, November 2014), education through making nurtures the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills of collaboration, communication, creativity, problem-solving and resilience that are prized by employers across the economy.

It would be valuable if these skills were also highlighted in the assessment objectives, to fully reflect their status as key aspects of the accompanying subject content.

***Question 14: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSE qualifications in design and technology?***

***(X) Neither agree nor disagree***

The weightings seem appropriate, but interpretation for assessment, and, therefore, the guidance provided to support this, will be crucial. The high weighting for understanding must be sufficiently expressed and assessed through the non-exam assessment of project work, with tangible outputs.

As stated in our response to question 11, we believe the 60/40 ratio of non-exam to exam-based assessment should be retained. We would also suggest that the scope for practical exam-based assessment be considered, in order that assessment has an emphasis on the tangible, practical nature of the subject.

**Question 15: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?**

**(X) Yes ( ) No**

As noted in *Our Future is in the Making: An Education Manifesto for Craft and Making* (Crafts Council, November 2014), as well as in *Studying Craft 2* (Crafts Council November 2014), the UK is a world leader in craft, and craft and making generates £3.4bn for the economy; 150,000 people are employed in businesses driven by craft skills.

However, this status is at risk. In six years, 2007-2013, student participation in craft-related GCSEs fell 25%. Within the 3 relevant subject endorsements (Resistant Materials, Textiles Technology, Graphic Products), there was a 36% fall in participation over the same period, from 181,620 to 116,180.

It is crucial that the configuration of the revised Design & Technology GCSE has both the appeal to reverse this trend, and the rigour – rooted in practical experience of making – necessary to safeguard the skills required to maintain and expand this economic contribution.

We also note that it is important to find through the revision of the qualification, expanded opportunity for skilled designers and makers, and relevant businesses, to support both the teaching and potentially the assessment of the qualification, through contribution of skills in the classroom, visits and work-placements.

Though beyond the scope of this consultation and the Department for Education's parallel one, this would also enable such professionals to contribute to careers information, advice and guidance; and strengthen the progression routes from GCSE study to employment, apprenticeships, and continued learning in FE and HE.

### **Equality impact**

*Question 27: We have identified a number of ways the proposed requirements for reformed GCSEs, A levels and AS qualifications may impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any other potential impacts we have not identified? If so, what are they?*

**(X) Yes ( ) No**

As noted above, we welcome the broadening of the range of theoretical materials understanding that pupils will be required to develop, but it is important to ensure that this, and the proposed decrease in the percentage of marks awarded on the basis of non-exam based assessment, do not impact upon the appeal of the subject to pupils with protected characteristics such as dyslexia, nor upon the attainment of these pupils whilst undertaking the qualification.

*Question 28: Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact from resulting from these proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic? If so, please comment on the additional steps we could take to mitigate negative impacts.*

**(X) Yes ( ) No**

The consideration given to whether some pupils with physical disabilities might be disadvantaged by the material nature of the subject is important. In 4.18, the consultation document emphasises the fact that the proportion of marks available on the basis of practical assessment cannot be further reduced. This feels correct, though - as noted above - the Crafts Council strongly recommends that the balance of marks available should remain at 40:60, exam to non-exam.

In terms of making the qualification more accessible, it is important to emphasise the way in which emergent technologies increasingly available in schools, such as Computer Aided Design (which is included in the subject content proposals) and 3D-printing and other forms of digital fabrication (which are not), may help to reduce barriers to the development of practical work which may have existed for some pupils in the past. Where an individual school lacks this technology, there may be opportunities for partnership with local Higher Education Institutions, Further Education colleges or even local make-spaces in order to provide such technology for pupils.

We also note that, as design is an internationalised practice, there may be greater scope to encourage the participation of some pupils with protected characteristics on the basis of heritage or nationality,

by encouraging the opportunity to explore both historic and contemporary practice and contexts other than those found in the UK and the wider West.

*Question 29: Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?*

**(X) Yes ( ) No**

We note that, owing to the cost of equipment and materials, pupils whose families or carers are unable to afford additional materials and technological equipment/software could, in some cases, be disadvantaged.

To prevent the disadvantaging of any pupils on the basis of socio-economic status, it is essential that individual schools ensure, through their own budgets and protection of facilities, and through the partnerships formed with industry, Higher Education Institutions and other appropriate organisations, that every child has access to the resources and facilities needed to succeed in this subject.