

Computer science consultation

Response from the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)

- 1 The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents more than 18,500 heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of maintained and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL has members in more than 90 per cent of secondary schools and colleges of all types, responsible for the education of more than four million young people. This places the association in a unique position to consider the consultation from the viewpoint of the leaders of secondary schools and of colleges.
- 2 ASCL believes that the changing of course requirements in mid-year is extremely frustrating for both teachers and students. However the association acknowledges that there are risks inherent in this type of assessment. We therefore urge Ofqual to ensure there is due diligence in respect of other qualifications given we are in an era when the ubiquity of online information makes this form of assessment extremely vulnerable.
- 3 In this case ASCL accepts that the integrity of the non-examined assessment task within the computer science GCSE has been compromised by the widespread availability of solutions online. There is a need to find a solution which is fair to all candidates: - those who have completed the whole task, those in the middle of it and those yet to start.
- 4 ASCL's preferred option is Option 2 as set out in the Ofqual consultation document as this is the fairest option for all students entered for the qualification for awarding in summer 2018. We believe the steps Ofqual are proposing in respect of Option 2 will deliver fairer and more reliable results than would otherwise be the case. We are in agreement that the GCSE for 2018 will be assessed, equally weighted, 50%-50%, on the 2 terminal papers.
- 5 The association accepts it is important for exam boards to be able to set the standard for the first award of the qualifications based on all candidates' exam performance; it is important that this is not compromised by an element of non-examination assessment which may not be a true reflection of candidates' ability given the circumstances. Teachers and leaders need confidence that the standard has been set appropriately and therefore

assessment based, 50%-50%, on 2 terminal papers in 2018 enables that to happen.

- 6 Some students choose to study computer science in part due to the programming task and we support Ofqual's proposal within option 2 that all students will still complete the programming task. It is right that exam boards will, through their monitoring visits, verify that this programming task has taken place. Completing the task in this way ensures students can develop and apply their programming skills and that the whole of the subject content is covered.
- 7 ASCL accepts there would be no need for teachers to formally mark the task, or submit marks to the exam board. Exam boards would also not need to moderate teachers' marking. This would significantly reduce burden on schools, colleges and exam boards.
- 8 Beyond 2018 our members consider that, going forwards, 20 hours is too long for a NEA that makes no contribution to overall marks in year 11 when teachers and students will be wanting to concentrate on studying for the 2 final exams. Paper 2 Computational Thinking also requires teachers to ensure they are teaching programming concepts so a shorter version of the NEA would be our preferred option. The other option would be to look at multiple smaller programming tasks.
- 9 In conclusion Option 2 can be implemented quickly without undue risk and it reduces the burden on teachers and is our preferred solution.
- 10 ASCL hopes that these comments are helpful and is willing to be consulted further on this matter.

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