

Consultation on regulating Advanced Extension Awards (AEAs)

Response of the Association of School and College Leaders

- 1 The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents nearly 19,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million young people in more than 90 per cent of the secondary and tertiary phases, placing the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
- 2 ASCL welcomes Ofqual's consultation regarding advanced extension awards and its proposal to maintain comparability with previous qualifications and retain this suite of qualifications within the choice offered to students.
- 3 As AEAs are designed to stretch the most able students in an A level subject we agree with the proposal to develop these awards only where there is a corresponding reformed A Level.
- 4 Given that all reformed A levels have had their content updated, we agree with the proposal that reformed AEAs are also based on the Department for Education's subject content for an A level in the corresponding subject.
- 5 However given that it is only in England where the reforms to subject content have been determined by the DFE, this may mean that some AEAs are slightly less accessible to students taking A levels in Wales and Northern Ireland should the curriculum content differ. We would hope that the content development for AEAs will also be accessible to students in Northern Ireland and Wales.
- 6 Currently requirements to differentiate AEAs from A Levels require them to be more demanding by requiring the use of the skills of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis. As these elements are now a key element in the assessment for reformed A levels, we agree with the proposal for the differentiation between AEAs and A levels to require a greater emphasis on the skills of analysis and evaluation than the corresponding A level.
- 7 We support the principle of qualifications using whichever method of assessment is the most valid and to include non-exam assessment in certain individual subject if that is deemed appropriate, as is currently the case with the reformed A Levels.
- 8 ASCL supports the proposals involved in requiring awarding organisations to set grade boundaries using similar principles to those adopted in the formed A Levels. In practice this will involve using an appropriate range of evidence to set both grade boundaries the standard going forward following the first awarding of the qualification.
- 9 Whilst we welcome the commitment to align Advanced Extensions Awards within the suite of qualifications, due to the pace and nature of constant changes to qualifications

post-16 and the growth in university admissions tests, it is difficult for schools and colleges to identify capacity to support pupils in their preparation for these awards

- 10 Other than in paragraph 5 and the potential impact on students in Wales and Northern Ireland, we have not identified any other impacts (either on students who share protected characteristics or more widely) which would result from Ofqual's proposed changes.
- 11 I hope that this is of value to your consultation, ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

Suzanne O'Farrell
Association of School and College Leaders
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