

Feedback to AQA on the GCSE

1. **Will AQA be running any further CPD for these new courses?** There will be more webinars running in the Autumn term and beyond. These will be mainly after school and will cost £110.
2. **Will it be possible to have the same format for the two papers?** Unfortunately, it is not possible to have the same format for the two papers yet – AQA are developing new software that will hopefully result in this for the future. However, in the meantime it is hoped that now teachers are aware of the format, steps can be taken by schools to ensure that pupils are prepared for this. In addition, in order to provide further help, the two papers will be a week apart next year.
3. **There was some confusion for students with the question number boxes. Will this be corrected?** I will follow this up with the Operations department at AQA.
4. **There was confusion about the way in which SPAG marks were to be awarded. Could this be corrected?** This will be covered in future training. Although these were changed during the last academic year, it is not envisaged that there will be changes to the SPAG now.
5. **Teachers are very concerned and confused about what is required for the 12 mark questions. Would it be possible to clarify this further? In particular, could there be more clarification on:**
 - How much detail or AO1 content is required;
 - What is the preferred evaluation style;
 - How they show logical chains of reasoning;
 - How they demonstrate whether an argument is persuasive or sound;
 - Whether a conclusion is needed and how this should be structured.

The 12 marked questions will be covered in future training – GCSE Exam Feedback and AO2 specific webinars will both address this. There will also be feedback in the examiner's report.

6. **Could there be more exemplars of what a 12 marked response would look like?** More exemplars will be on the website next term (exact date tbc).
7. **There have been rumours that the evaluation questions are being marked more harshly on the religions paper than the themes one. Is this true?** I am not aware that there are differences in the marking style of the 12 marked questions between the two papers. There are many procedures in place to ensure that this does not occur. If anyone has a concern, please do contact AQA.
8. **There is confusion surrounding what does and what does not count as a quotation/source of wisdom the 5 mark question and for using these in the 12 marked one. Could there be greater clarity regarding what this should be?** This will be addressed in the examiner's report and also in future training.
9. **Students were really thrown in the Islam paper with the use of the word alms in the question. Are you therefore requiring them to be familiar with every single word and its various connotations in the syllabus?** This wording was in the specification and therefore it can form part of any examination question that is asked. It is hoped that teachers will now ensure that all words off the specification are covered so that further confusion will not arise in the future.
10. **Many teachers feel that there is simply too much content in the GCSE and not enough time to cover this or develop the skills pupils require to handle such information. Some feel that religious literacy is being equated with knowledge of facts rather than skilful engagement with**

material. Is there any way this could be addressed? There is very little that can be done here as this the content that has been included in the specification was a requirement from Ofqual. However, I will try to think about ways in which it could be possible to make this clear (i.e. that it is not an exam board decision but Ofqual one).

11. **Some of the questions on the paper appeared to try to catch students out as they only focus on a very minor part of the course. For example, the alms and Jummah prayer question on the Islam paper. Teachers are concerned about this and wonder if this could be rectified in the future?** The questions can be set from any aspect of the specification and these can be covered in a 1 mark to a 12 marked question. It is hoped that teachers will pay careful attention to all aspects of the specification and that moving forward this will become less of an issue.
12. **Many teachers work in schools where there is very little money for CPD and they have requested whether there could be more free training. Would this be possible?** Unfortunately, AQA do have to charge for webinars, however teachers should be aware that all materials appear on the e-AQA website later on and these can be accessed for free (via e-AQA). Also if you have any concerns or questions please do contact me as I am happy to answer these.

Feedback on the A level:

1. **The new A level is far too content heavy. Many teachers feel that students are being tested on what they can remember rather than what they have learnt and that there is not enough time to teach the whole course. Some feel the volume of material is unprecedented and is beyond what is required of undergraduates and they are concerned that numbers will decline. Is there any way that this could be rectified?** As with the GCSE, there is very little that can be done here as this the content that has been included in the specification was a requirement from Ofqual. However, I will try to think about ways in which it could be possible to make this clear (i.e. that it is not an exam board decision but Ofqual one). Further feedback and training will be provided to help teachers in the delivery in the Exam Feedback meetings.
2. **Many teachers are facing problems with the teaching of the dialogues section of the course. They feel that it requires greater knowledge than proposed in the main body of the specification and that it needs teaching as a separate entity. Could there be extra support here and is there any way that changes could be made?** The Dialogues CPD materials are available on e-AQA from the separate webinars that were run on this in the last academic year. More exemplars will be added to the website next term. It is also hoped that further training will be offered in this area.
3. **Some teachers feel that there is a bias towards Christianity being picked as the religion as there are more resources available for this faith. Could this be addressed?** Unfortunately the publication of text books is not the remit of AQA it is under the control of the different book companies such as OUP and Hodder
4. **Teachers would like the AO2 part of the question should be based on an evaluation of what has been asked in the AO1 question. Could this be changed?** It is a requirement of Ofqual that this should be the case as they have to cover the full range of specification content. However, I will explore ways of trying to make this clear to centres so that they are aware of what is and what is not within their control (as with the content that is to be included in the specification).
5. **Teachers would like a choice of questions in all parts of the examination and not just in the dialogue section. Is this something that could be done?** This is something that will be reviewed in future specification reform, but it is unlikely to be changed in this current specification.

6. **Teachers are reporting that pupils cannot access the specification on different levels. Could AQA offer further support here?** There are suggested ways to approach content within the Getting Started CPD materials on e-AQA. Attending further training is also an option here as is contacting myself through the AQA website.
7. **Teachers feel that there is a bias on the dialogues paper towards the ethics side of the course rather than the philosophy. Please can there be a fairer split?** Students answer the same value question (45 marks) on each section, the spec content for this section is as balanced as possible given the nature of the subject matter
8. **Is there any way that the length of the paper can be reduced as pupils are struggling with a three-hour paper?** It is not really possible to change this and also the concern is if it is changed, centres may not like this as by the time this occurs, they will have gotten used to the three-hour paper. However, this will be reviewed moving forward for future reforms.