

Response ID ANON-B1Q8-JB73-J

Submitted to Curriculum and Assessment Review
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Foreword from the Review Chair

Background to the Review

Why does the Review matter?

What is in scope of the Review?

About this call for evidence

Who is this call for evidence for?

Section 1: About you

1 Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

Section 1: About you

3 If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, which of the below best describes which part of the sector your organisation represents? [If more than one applies, please select the one that you think is most important to understanding your consultation response.]

Professional association

Please describe:

4 What is the name of your organisation?

Organisation name:

National Association Of Language Advisers- NALA <https://nala.org.uk/>

5 What is your role within the organisation?

Job role:

Member of the Executive Committee.

Members come from across the world of education. NALA provides a range of language resources, an online community and specialist courses and seminars to support the teaching of Modern Languages.

NALA is a long-established association (53 years) for those who provide advice, support, training and inspection in the languages field. NALA is entirely independent but works closely with organisations such as APPG, Ofqual, ALL, ISMLA, UCML, British Academy, examination boards and cultural agencies. NALA is highly regarded nationally for the expertise, experience and judgement of its members and has been influential in the development of national and local languages policy.

A number of members support a wide range of schools across England. Answers to questions are largely based on experiential evidence from working in a variety of schools over recent years. Many issues have also been discussed at the annual conference each year. This is an opportunity to bring together and discuss evidence and research from current practice. Online meetings also provide further opportunity throughout the year to look at specified issues in detail.

Section 1: About you

6 What is your name?

Name:

David Moss

7 What is your email address?[Please note: If you are willing to be contacted about your submission, please provide your email address. You do not have to give your email address, and your views will be considered whether or not you provide this.]

Email address:

dmosse.bestmid@btinternet.com

8 Are you happy to be contacted directly about your response?[Please note: The Review may wish to contact you directly about your responses to help our understanding of the issues. If we do, we will use the email address you have given above.]

Yes

9 Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

No

Reason for confidentiality:

Definitions

Section 2: General views on curriculum, assessment, and qualifications pathways

10 What aspects of the current a) curriculum, b) assessment system and c) qualification pathways are working well to support and recognise educational progress for children and young people?

What is working well?:

As far as teaching MFL is concerned, some serious far-reaching questions need to be asked as to what might be termed 'working well'. The current MFL curriculum and approach to assessment appears to only suit a minority of pupils, evidenced by the continued decline in pupils choosing languages for continued study.

These articles refer to many of the current issues:

Decline of Modern Foreign Languages

<https://www.mflcentral.co.uk/single-post/exploring-the-decline-of-modern-foreign-languages>

Language learning in England: why curriculum reform will not reverse the decline or narrow the gaps - Education Policy Institute

<https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/15043/>

11 What aspects of the current a) curriculum, b) assessment system and c) qualification pathways should be targeted for improvements to better support and recognise educational progress for children and young people?

What should be improved?:

For MFL, the curriculum needs to be relevant to the use of language in society. The curriculum is very academic and exclusive, appealing mostly to pupils in independent schools where languages seem to flourish best. No account is taken of developments in AI, so for example the requirement to translate or use dictation in exams seems irrelevant when all you need to do is use a translation app on a mobile phone.

Section 3: Social justice and inclusion

12 In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any barriers to improving attainment, progress, access or participation (class ceilings) for learners experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage?

Barriers for socioeconomically disadvantaged:

For MFL qualifications there is a long way to go in order to provide a curriculum which is accessible to all. Some improvements have been made but evidence shows that in areas where there is socioeconomic disadvantage, the number of pupils choosing to study languages is very low indeed and at crisis point. Issues are outlined in the report – The Languages Curriculum and Disadvantaged students

<https://nala.org.uk/documents/>

13 In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways are there any barriers to improving attainment, progress, access or participation which may disproportionately impact pupils based on other characteristics (e.g. disability, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion or belief etc.)

Barriers based on protected characteristics:

For MFL, teacher recruitment is a critical issue which disproportionately impacts schools in socioeconomic disadvantaged areas. These schools are also far less likely to have access to visits to other countries or to employ a Foreign Language assistant (the reverse would be true of most independent schools).

The following presentation and article explain the issues in more detail.

YouTube video <https://youtu.be/HPqxcRFCuRo> of our recent talk in the the LAGB Race and Social Justice series "Activism In Progress".

https://www.academia.edu/96179520/Choosing_to_Study_Post_Compulsory_Modern_Foreign_Languages_in_England_Motivations_Sociolinguistic_Trends_and_the

14 In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any barriers in continuing to improve attainment, progress, access or participation for learners with SEND?

Barriers based on SEND:

Many SEND pupils continue to be excluded from MFL teaching. The (flawed) thinking is often that they need to improve their English and will not cope with learning another language.

MFL enriches and embeds what pupils learn in English. Grammar, for example. This is reinforced and through language comparison, pupils recognise how English fits in with other languages.

Please refer to this article

<https://senmagazine.co.uk/content/education/14973/language-learning-for-sen-children-and-why-its-so-important/>

15 In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any enablers that support attainment, progress, access or participation for the groups listed above? [e.g. socioeconomically disadvantaged young people, pupils with SEND, pupils who are otherwise vulnerable, and young people with protected characteristics]

Enablers:

No. The current system has the approach that one curriculum and one qualification suits all.

Section 4: Ensuring an excellent foundation in maths and English

16 To what extent does the content of the national curriculum at primary level (key stages 1 and 2) enable pupils to gain an excellent foundation in a) English and b) maths? Are there ways in which the content could change to better support this aim? [Please note, we invite views specifically on transitions between key stages in section 9.]

English and maths - primary content:

n/a

17 To what extent do the English and maths primary assessments* support pupils to gain an excellent foundation in these key subjects? Are there any changes you would suggest that would support this aim? *These include SATs at the end of key stage 2, the phonics screening check and the multiplication tables check.

English and maths - primary assessment:

n/a

18 To what extent does the content of the a) English and b) maths national curriculum at secondary level (key stages 3 and 4) equip pupils with the knowledge and skills they need for life and further study? Are there ways in which the content could change to better support this aim?

English and maths - secondary content:

n/a

19 To what extent do the current maths and English qualifications at a) pre-16 and b) 16-19 support pupils and learners to gain, and adequately demonstrate that they have achieved, the skills and knowledge they need? Are there any changes you would suggest that would support these outcomes?

English and maths - qualifications:

n/a

20 How can we better support learners who do not achieve level 2 in English and maths by 16 to learn what they need to thrive as citizens in work and life? In particular, do we have the right qualifications at level 2 for these 16-19 learners (including the maths and English study requirement)?

Support for learners who do not achieve level 2 by 16:

n/a

21 Are there any particular challenges with regard to the English and maths a) curricula and b) assessment for learners in need of additional support (e.g. learners with SEND, socioeconomic disadvantage, English as an additional language (EAL))? Are there any changes you would suggest to overcome these challenges?

Challenges with curricula and assessment - changes to overcome these:

n/a

Section 5: Curriculum and qualification content

22 Are there particular curriculum or qualifications subjects* where: a) there is too much content; not enough content; or content is missing; b) the content is out-of-date; c) the content is unhelpfully sequenced (for example to support good curriculum design or pedagogy); d) there is

a need for greater flexibility (for example to provide the space for teachers to develop and adapt content)? Please provide detail on specific key stages where appropriate. *This includes both qualifications where the government sets content nationally, and anywhere the content is currently set by awarding organisations.

Subject content:

Please see comments on socioeconomic disadvantage. This applies to all Key Stages for MFL.

23 Are there particular changes that could be made to ensure the curriculum (including qualification content) is more diverse and representative of society?

Changes to ensure curriculum is more diverse and representative of society:

The current model of language learning requires a complete overhaul if it is to be relevant to all learners in schools.

24 To what extent does the current curriculum (including qualification content) support students to positively engage with, be knowledgeable about, and respect, others? Are there elements that could be improved?

Respect for others:

For MFL, the learning of languages now focuses heavily on the learning of Spanish or French. German has been in steep decline. Community languages are largely ignored.

In each Key stage there is very little focus on the place of languages and knowledge about language and the importance of languages in society at large, be that in the UK or worldwide. This has led to an unhealthy view of the superiority of English and a very limited understanding of how languages work and the importance of all languages.

Please refer to previously listed research on BAME.

25 In which ways does the current primary curriculum support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for life and further study, and what could we change to better support this?

Primary - skills and knowledge needed for life and further study:

For Primary Languages. The curriculum outline is purposefully general to enable schools to develop their own curriculum approach. In theory this sounds good. In reality, most primary teachers lack the experience, expertise, training and support to effectively teach another language. This has led to a piecemeal approach with schools often buying in a commercial online resource to 'solve all their problems'. This of course often does little to provide quality learning and motivation.

26 In which ways do the current secondary curriculum and qualification pathways support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work, and what could we change to better support this?

Secondary - skills and knowledge for life and further study:

For MFL, the curriculum favours an academic approach to learning languages. The curriculum is something to be 'delivered' to pass GCSE and obtain a good grade. Pupils obtain a qualification with limited understanding of how language works and its importance in society. Critical thinking, social and cultural relevance are often lacking.

Again, there is an over reliance on exam board materials and online resources 'to get the best grade'. This in turn deskills teachers and feeds an uninspiring curriculum.

As mentioned above, it would seem that because of the decline in uptake in the state sector for further language study, the curriculum is not fit for purpose and requires a complete overhaul.

27 In which ways do the current qualification pathways and content at 16-19 support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work, and what could we change to better support this?

16-19 - skills and knowledge for life and further study:

The MFL curriculum is disjointed with one Key Stage having little transitional impact into the next.

The MFL curriculum needs to better reflect current UK and worldwide society and culture, considering developments in technology and AI in particular.

Section 6: A broad and balanced curriculum

28 To what extent does the current primary curriculum support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?

primary - broad and balanced:

In Y6 in particular, the focus is on passing the SATs. Other curriculum areas are then often not taught and subsequently devalued. On going Teacher Assessment of all curriculum areas could be achieved if thought through properly. Members have found that this is what happens in most schools. In Y6 they just concentrate on passing the SATs. It has been referred to in Ofsted reports and certainly this would be the experience of other advisers I know. Schools often make no secret about it.

Here are two reports which state this. You have to scroll down to the relevant sections for Primary schools.

Nothing has really changed since these reports were published.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmcis-commentary-october-2017>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/curriculum-research-review-series-languages/curriculum-research-review-series-languages>

29 To what extent do the current secondary curriculum and, qualifications pathways support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?

secondary - broad and balanced:

For MFL, the EBacc has not been a success, largely because of the nature of the GCSE and the 'one qualification suits all' approach. Better ways need to be found to support the learning of languages together with other subject areas, perhaps by linking subject areas together. Business and languages were a possibility years ago. There are many such possibilities.

30 To what extent do the current qualifications pathways at 16-19 support learners to study a broad curriculum which gives them the right knowledge and skills to progress? Should anything change to better support this?

16-19 - broad and balanced:

MFL at 16+ is in sharp decline. The demise of the AS qualification did not help as some students carried on with a language post 16 in this way. Languages integrated into other subject areas would be worth exploring. In the past, AS exams were 'decoupled' from being a stepping stone to A Level. Students often used to choose 4 or 5 AS Levels in Y12. Each one would provide an AS qualification (really helpful for universities). Often a language would feature amongst them.

For some students it would then be a choice to go onto the full A Level as they found they enjoyed studying a language or did well at it. But this stage now no longer exists and the risks of a full MFL A Level are seen as too high by students and schools, who no longer have the teachers with the necessary experience.

31 To what extent do the current curriculum (at primary and secondary) and qualifications pathways (at secondary and 16-19) ensure that pupils and learners are able to develop creative skills and have access to creative subjects?

support for creative skills and access to creative subjects:

The teaching of MFL lacks the development of creative skills. This is another area worthy of review as pupils often enjoy manipulating language to create different outcomes. There are many good examples of creative use of language. They are just not part of the curriculum.

Section 6: A broad and balanced curriculum

32 Do you have any explanations for the trends outlined in the analysis and/or suggestions to address any that might be of concern?

Explanations of trends or suggestions to address:

Largely for the decline in MFL, it would be the nature of the curriculum and the lack of qualified teachers to teach.

The general societal view has been - for quite a while - that there is no need to learn a foreign language, which impacts take up at GCSE. In addition, one reason for the dwindling number of teachers is the result of the Brexit referendum.

Section 6: A broad and balanced curriculum

33 To what extent and how do pupils benefit from being able to take vocational or applied qualifications in secondary schools alongside more academically focused GCSEs?

secondary - benefit from vocational qualifications:

n/a

34 To what extent does the current pre-16 vocational offer equip pupils with the necessary knowledge and skills and prepare them for further study options, including 16-19 technical pathways and/or A levels? Could the pre-16 vocational offer be improved?

vocational offer - equip for further study and improvement suggestions:

n/a

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

35 Is the volume of statutory assessment at key stage 1 and 2 right for the purposes set out above?

volume of assessment at key stage 1 and 2:

No. NALA members who support Primary Languages often find that in Y6, teachers teach to the test and other learning is thus devalued.

36 Are there any changes that could be made to improve efficacy without having a negative impact on pupils' learning or the wider education system?

key stage 1 and 2 assessment improvements:

SATs are not necessary. They provide misleading information, as the focus is so narrow and only provide a limited picture of a child's skills. Consider a core minimum of phonics, vocab and grammar for Primary Languages to aid transition and ensure the foundations are secure. This would need to allow space for teachers to add content appropriate to their context.

37 Are there other changes to the statutory assessment system at key stages 1 and 2 that could be made to improve pupils' experience of assessment, without having a negative impact on either pupils' learning or the wider education system?

key stage 1 and 2 assessment improvements to experience:

Value learning in every year group not just at the end of the Key Stage.

38 What can we do to ensure the assessment system at key stages 1 and 2 works well for all learners, including learners in need of additional support in their education (for example SEND, disadvantage, EAL)?

key stage 1 and 2 assessment works for ALL learners:

Develop a more rounded system of Teacher Assessment where all aspects of a child's learning are valued. Teachers would be seen as professionals with expertise. Ongoing Teacher Assessment is what already happens with English writing in Y6. It would not be too difficult to expand this concept to build a more rounded pupil profile. However, there would be training and time issues related to this, but with care and thought it could be made manageable for all curriculum areas.

There are many such examples which could be adapted.

<https://education.gov.scot/media/y2sjwjo1/p7profilelearner1.pdf>

https://cdn.bdadyslexia.org.uk/uploads/documents/Advice/Webinar-Training/Pupil_Profile_secondary.pdf?v=1554807183

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/article/2024/aug/17/exam-nation-by-sammy-wright-review-testing-times>

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

39 Is the volume of assessment required for GCSEs right for the purposes set out above? Are there any changes that could be made without having a negative impact on either pupils' learning or the wider education system?

volume of assessment at GCSEs:

The 'gold standard' approach of GCSEs needs serious reform. Measuring what a pupil has learnt all in one go at the end of Y11 is indeed a strange approach to learning, particularly as statutory education extends to 18. It now means that for a significant percentage of pupils learning now stops in the majority of subject areas at 16. Lifelong learning is not relevant to many. Many give up on education at this point and the constant promise of the 'opportunities GCSEs will bring' is seen as a lie. Many give up on the education system at a younger age.

40 What more can we do to ensure that: a) the assessment requirements for GCSEs capture and support the development of knowledge and skills of every young person; and b) young people's wellbeing is effectively considered when assessments are developed, giving pupils the best chance to show what they can do to support their progression?

GCSE assessments - support development of knowledge and skills and considers wellbeing:

GCSEs would do well to recognise practical skills as well as academic knowledge. This should be 50/50. Many pupils enjoy the speaking and listening element of language learning, which is a very practical life skill. This would also be the case with community languages, where pupils have the ability to understand and speak the language, but then this is not recognised. Coursework was successful for many pupils. This aspect could be developed a good deal further.

41 Are there particular GCSE subjects where changes could be made to the qualification content and/or assessment that would be beneficial for pupils' learning?

changes to GCSE qualification content or assessment:

For Modern Languages the following points could be considered:

Don't dilute the GCSE word list by increasing the words the board can choose from to the top 3000 because:

- a) this will mean pupils learn fewer of the most useful words and will be able to access fewer texts and are less likely to have the words they need.
- b) There will be greater difference between the exam boards words list so pupils and teachers moving schools, which is most common in disadvantaged areas, will be further disadvantaged.
2. More qualifications and in particular for HHCL, to take into account that pupils reading and writing skills may be less developed than their listening and speaking skills.
3. Consider making the speaking test non examined assessment. It is very stressful for many pupils and teachers and impacts on well-being. It also ends

up dominating teaching and learning time and encourages rote learning even with the new GCSE.

4. Consider no higher and foundation tiering.

5. Reconsider the topics as they draw on personal experience which disadvantages those without relevant experience or who do not feel comfortable for whatever reasons talking about their personal life. A stimulus with a cultural context of the places where the languages is spoken can be used to elicit written and spoken responses and as the source for listening and reading tasks.

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

42 Are there ways in which we could support improvement in pupil progress and outcomes at key stage 3?

support pupil progress and outcomes at key stage 3:

For MFL, it would be the nature of the curriculum and the lack of qualified teachers to teach.

43 Are there ways in which we could support pupils who do not meet the expected standard at key stage 2?

support pupils who do not meet expected standard at key stage 2:

For MFL, it would be the nature of the curriculum and the lack of qualified teachers to teach.

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

44 To what extent, and in what ways, does the accountability system influence curriculum and assessment decisions in schools and colleges?

accountability system influence curriculum and assessment decisions:

The current system wreaks havoc on MFL. School leaders perceive the subject as difficult and do not have the teachers with the expertise to teach it, so they often limit the teaching of the subject and reduce the likely impact on school data.

Please refer to -Many GCSE students still aren't taking modern foreign languages – how to motivate them to consider it.

<https://theconversation.com/many-gcse-students-still-arent-taking-modern-foreign-languages-how-to-motivate-them-to-consider-it-211779#:~:text=The%20declin>

45 How well does the current accountability system support and recognise progress for all pupils and learners? What works well and what could be improved?

accountability system support and recognise progress for ALL pupils:

It doesn't. The current system clearly favours independent schools and those from a more privileged economic background.

Please see Full article: Policy tug of war: EBacc, progress 8 and modern foreign languages in England

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02680939.2024.2328625>

46 Should there be any changes to the current accountability system in order to better support progress and incentivise inclusion for young people with SEND and/or from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds? If so, what should those changes be?

accountability system changes to support SEND or socio-economically disadvantaged:

Yes. Schools should be measured on all aspects of learning and social integration and not just on academic exam data.

Section 8: Qualification pathways 16-19

47 To what extent does the range of programmes and qualifications on offer at each level meet the needs and aspirations of learners? a) Level 3 b) Level 2 c) Level 1 and entry level

extent to which programmes and qualifications meet needs and aspirations of learners:

n/a

48 Are there particular changes that could be made to the following programmes and qualifications, and/or their assessment that would be beneficial to learners: a) AS/A level qualifications b) T Level and T Level Foundation Year programmes c) Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 3 d) Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 2 and below

changes to programmes and qualifications:

n/a

49 How can we improve learners' understanding of how the different programmes and qualifications on offer will prepare them for university, employment (including apprenticeships) and/or further technical study?

improve understanding on how programmes and qualificatoins will prepare them for future:

n/a

50 To what extent is there enough scope and flexibility in the system to support learners who may need to change course?

scope and flexibility to support learners changing course:

n/a

51 Are there additional skills, subjects, or experiences that all learners should develop or study during 16-19 education, regardless of their chosen programmes and qualifications, to support them to be prepared for life and work?

skills, subjects or experiences that all learners should develop or study during 16-19:

n/a

Section 9: Other issues on which we would welcome views

52 How can the curriculum, assessment and wraparound support better enable transitions between key stages to ensure continuous learning and support attainment?

wraparound support enabling transitions between key stages:

The curriculum needs to be planned with transition in mind. Every teacher needs to be fully aware of what has been taught in the previous Key Stage.

Section 9: Other issues on which we would welcome views

53 How could technology be used to improve how we deliver the curriculum, assessment and qualifications in England?

how can technology be used to improve delivery of curriculum, assessment and qualifications :

For the teaching of MFL, technology could revolutionise curriculum content. Scant regard is currently paid to what is available across different platforms across the world.

Section 9: Other issues on which we would welcome views

54 Do you have any further views on anything else associated with the Curriculum and Assessment Review not covered in the questions throughout the call for evidence?

Any further views:

Please look at the curriculum review which has taken place in Wales and in other countries such as Finland. What can we learn from this?