

News Release
20 January 2014

For immediate use

University of Cambridge, Guild HE and Association of Colleges urge OFQUAL to retain Y12 assessment for students in England in all subjects taken.

The University of Cambridge, the Association of Colleges (AoC) and Guild HE are urging OFQUAL to give young people the best chance of getting in to the right university for them by retaining public examinations at the end of Year 12 for all students in all subjects.

Responding to the OFQUAL consultation on A Level reform, they have reaffirmed the value of AS, linked to the full A-Level, to students, schools and colleges, and higher education institutions.

“At present, AS acts as a vital progress-check that helps students make appropriate choices for HE in terms of both subject and institution, and helps universities make objective judgements about potential. Such judgements are at the heart of fair admissions,” said a spokesman.

“If de-coupling of AS and A-level is to go ahead as proposed, we believe all students should be able to sit four fully-funded AS-Levels at the end of Year 12.

“If the government does not wish these exams to feed into final A-Level results, so be it, so long as there is funding sufficient to ensure that all students can sit exams in this way.”

“We are advised by schools and colleges that so-called co-teachability of AS Level and Year 1 of A Level, in which students intending to take AS and those intending to skip the examination will be taught together, is likely to involve practical difficulties in the run-up to AS examinations unless all students routinely sit AS-Levels in all their subjects.

“Despite these concerns, if decoupling is to go ahead, we would rather have universal co-teachability than no or partial co-teachability. There would then at least be a chance that Year 12 exams might survive in England.”

In its consultation response, the University of Cambridge also points out that the proposals risk significantly disadvantaging students at English schools by removing their ability to present evidence of recent academic achievement when applying to universities. The Welsh and Northern Irish Governments have committed to retaining the AS at the end of Y12, and students in Scotland sit Highers before making their university applications.

ENDS

About the AoC:

The Association of Colleges (AoC) exists to represent and promote the interests of Colleges and provide members with professional support services. As such, we aim to be the authoritative voice of Colleges – based on credible analysis, research, advocacy and consultation with Colleges – and the first choice destination for guidance and advice for members.

AoC was established in 1996 by Colleges themselves as a voice for further education and higher education delivered in Colleges at national and regional level. Our membership includes General and Tertiary Further Education Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges and Specialist Colleges in England. We work with and represent Colleges in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland through affiliation of AoC and partnership with sister bodies in both countries via the UK Council of Colleges.

As AoC is a not for profit organisation created by Colleges for Colleges; subscription and commercially generated revenue together sustain its work in representing and promoting the interests of Colleges, and in the provision of support services.

AoC's structure includes a busy national office in London, an active network of nine regional offices which work closely with Colleges and Government agencies in their regions, and a very wide range of member networks, through which College staff , Governors and students inform and shape AoC policy and activity.

About GuildHE:

GuildHE is a recognised representative organisation within the higher education sector. It was founded in 1967 as the Standing Conference of Principals, registered as a company in 1992 and became GuildHE in 2006.

GuildHE is an inclusive body, with members across universities, university colleges, specialist institutions and other providers of higher education. It is a key advocate for institutional diversity within the higher education sector and a champion for the distinctive and high quality higher education provided by its member institutions.

GuildHE's vision is of a sustainable, diverse and dynamic higher education sector which plays a full part in the development of a well-educated and socially inclusive nation; enhances the UK's economic competitiveness; and fosters cultural engagement, knowledge creation and exchange in a global context.

Further information and a full membership list can be found on our website www.guildhe.ac.uk