

## Findings – Effects of the proposed changes on teaching and learning

Section A of our survey asked for respondents' views on how the proposed changes to the GCSE would affect their teaching of ML, and the motivation and outcomes of different categories of students. A summary of the key findings can be found in Table 1. It can be seen that there is a predominance of negative responses on each item, with the mean response always being below 4 (the neutral option): in other words, respondents generally felt that the changes would have a detrimental impact on teaching and learning languages. That was felt to be particularly the case for learners with SEND.

**Table 1. Respondents' views on the impact of the proposed changes on teaching and learning in ML<sup>1</sup>.** *Note: the grey shaded column represents the neutral option (no change).*

	Response options (1=most negative; 4 = neutral; 7=most positive)							Mean	Median
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
1. Will the proposed changes improve or harm your teaching of languages?	27	20	34	25	17	7	8	3.3	3
2. Will the proposed changes increase or decrease uptake of GCSE in Modern Languages?	24	25	27	38	18	6	1	3.2	3
3. Will the proposed changes increase or decrease motivation for language learning, for the following groups of pupils?									
a. Learners overall – on average	26	19	33	28	24	7	1	3.2	3
b. Learners with SEND	37	17	21	35	22	5	2	3.1	3
c. Learners with EAL	22	17	23	53	17	4	2	3.4	4
d. Socially disadvantaged learners	28	19	22	36	26	5	1	3.2	3
e. Learners with high prior attainment	25	19	27	37	15	9	6	3.4	3
f. Learners with lower prior attainment	22	21	31	26	27	10	1	3.4	3
4. Will the proposed changes increase or decrease learners' language learning outcomes for the following groups of pupils?									
a. Learners overall – on average	16	23	31	24	29	11	4	3.5	3
b. Learners with SEND	28	24	22	28	28	5	3	3.3	3
c. Learners with EAL	18	23	19	44	20	7	3	3.5	4
d. Socially disadvantaged learners	25	19	29	30	25	7	2	3.3	3
e. Learners with high prior attainment	22	16	20	36	21	15	6	3.6	4
f. Learners with lower prior attainment	24	19	28	26	29	6	3	3.3	3

<sup>1</sup> Note: There were very few missing responses to individual questions (ranging from 1 to 5 respondents) and so these are disregarded in the data presentation that follows.

We next asked respondents how well-prepared they currently feel to teach learners taking an exam based on these proposed changes, for first teaching in September 2023. Responses to this question were on a six-point scale. Responses were generally negative, with a mean response of 2.5, well below the midpoint of 3.5. A third of respondents (n=46) chose option 1, indicating that they felt 'not at all prepared' (Table 2). 118 respondents said they would need new resources to help them better prepare; 110 said further training; and 86 said new textbooks.

**Table 2. Respondents' preparedness to teach to the proposed new GCSE**

	Response options (1=not at all prepared; 6 = extremely well prepared)						mean	median
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
How well-prepared would you feel to teach learners taking an exam based on these proposed changes, for first teaching in September 2023?	46	33	26	19	9	5	2.5	2

Respondents were presented with the overall stated aims for the GCSE, as follows:

*Through studying a GCSE in a modern foreign language, students should develop their ability and ambition to communicate in speech and writing with speakers of the language for authentic purposes and about subjects which are meaningful and interesting to them. The study of a modern foreign language at GCSE should also broaden students' horizons, encourage them to step beyond familiar cultural boundaries and develop new ways of seeing the world.*

*It is important that students should be taught the language in the context of the countries and communities where the language is spoken. As they learn the language, students should become familiar with aspects of the contexts of the countries and communities in which the language is spoken.*

*This is because an appreciation of the culture, history, geography and working environments of these countries and communities is an integral part of a well-designed language course and is likely to be motivating and interesting for students. Such contexts will be referenced in assessment tasks as appropriate.*

They were then asked to indicate how compatible or incompatible various aspects of the proposed changes were with this aim, on a scale of 1-6. As well as tabulating teachers' levels of agreement with each statement, we also collapsed these responses into two larger categories: teachers who felt the aspect was compatible with the aim (selecting 6, 5 or 4) and those who felt it was incompatible (selecting 3, 2 or 1). We also calculated the mean response to each item. As the mid-point score, a mean of 3.5 indicates a neutral response to an item; anything below or above 3.5 a negative or positive response, respectively.

Table 3 shows the results, ordered by levels of perceived compatibility (the grey-shaded column), from lowest to highest. It should be noted that 89% of respondents answered this question in relation to 'the proposed changes as a whole', but only two-thirds (approximately 66%) did so for the more detailed aspects of the proposals.

**Table 3. Respondents' views on the compatibility of the proposals with the stated aim of the GCSE**

How compatible is the stated aim with:	Incompatible (%)	Compatible (%)	Mean rating
<i>There will be no prescribed Themes and Topics</i>	78	22	2.35
<i>The Assessment Objectives</i>	73	27	2.79
<i>The proposed changes as a whole</i>	71	29	2.84
<i>Students will be expected to undertake dictation exercises from short spoken extracts, with credit for accurate spelling</i>	67	33	2.66

<i>Students will be expected to know 1200 lexical items at Foundation Tier and 1700 at Higher Tier for the examination</i>	66	34	2.94
<i>Written texts in the examination will comprise the defined vocabulary and grammar for each tier; at higher tier, 98% of words used in texts will have to be from the defined list</i>	64	36	3.01
<i>Students will be expected to read aloud, using clear and comprehensible pronunciation, short sentences from the written form of the language and demonstrate understanding of them (for example by answering questions)</i>	64	36	3.04
<i>At least 90% of words selected for inclusion in the examination must be from the 2,000 most frequent words</i>	63	37	2.95
<i>The 2% of words not from the defined list must be glossed i.e. there will be no requirement for learners to infer or deduce meaning of unfamiliar language</i>	60	40	3.14
<i>Students will be expected to undertake role play simulating a context such as a social conversation where instructions are unambiguous and there are no unexpected questions</i>	60	40	3.35
<i>Spoken texts will comprise defined vocabulary and grammar for each tier which are delivered at a pace which is no faster than a moderate pace, where each word is clearly discernible, and which do not contain extraneous distractions or interruptions</i>	55	45	3.31
<i>Students will be expected to develop and use their knowledge of grammar throughout their course. The grammar requirements for GCSE are set out in two tiers: foundation and higher. Students will be required to use their knowledge of grammar from the relevant lists, appropriate to the language studied and to the relevant tier of entry.</i>	50	50	3.45
<i>Where questions are designed to test comprehension of written and spoken texts in the assessed language, these comprehension questions will be in English. Other types of question will be in English or the assessed language as appropriate to the task. Rubrics will be in English</i>	48	52	3.70
<i>Students will be expected to write text in the language in a lexically and grammatically accurate way, based on simple and familiar stimuli.</i>	41	59	3.69

Ranking the statements instead by mean response gives a slightly different ordering, but both forms of analysis present a very similar picture. All but two of the proposed changes received a mean score of below 3.5, and were perceived to be less compatible than compatible with the exam aims (i.e. more than 50% of those who responded thought they were incompatible.). proposed changes around the use of English in comprehension questions and writing in a lexically and grammatically accurate way were the only items perceived as being more compatible than incompatible with the stated aim, and then only marginally so. The absence of proposed topics was perceived to have the lowest degree of compatibility with the exam aims under both forms of analysis. Likewise, the following received the lowest compatibility score however the analysis is presented: the proposed changes as a whole; the Assessment Objectives; dictation assessment tasks; students expected to know 1200 lexical items at Foundation Tier and 1700 at Higher Tier for the examination. In other words, by and large teachers did not feel that the changes would allow the aims of the GCSE to be met.

Finally, we asked teachers to consider the impact of the proposed changes as a whole on learners beyond GCSE classes– i.e. primary school language learning, languages at Key Stage 3, and uptake for languages at A-level. They responded using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 represented ‘a very negative impact’, 4 ‘no impact’, and 7 ‘a very positive impact’. We also collapsed these responses into three larger categories: teachers who felt the impact would be negative (selecting 1, 2 or 3), those who thought it would have no impact (selecting 4) and those who felt the impact would be positive (selecting 5, 6 or 7). Table 4 presents

responses ordered by mean rank, from lowest to highest. The items were each answered by 92% of respondents.

**Table 3. Respondents' views on the impact of the proposed changes**

Impact of the changes as a whole on:	A negative impact (%)	No impact (%)	A positive impact (%)	Mean
<i>Uptake for languages at A level</i>	62	13	25	2.91
<i>Language teaching at Key Stage 3</i>	66	8	26	3.15
<i>Language teaching at primary school</i>	39	49	12	3.40

As before, respondents were more negative than positive about the impact of the changes, especially with respect to uptake for languages at A-level.

## REFERENCES

- Wall, D. (2000). The impact of high-stakes testing on teaching and learning: Can this be predicted or controlled? *System*, 28, 499-509
- Woore, R., Graham, S., Kohl, K., Courtney, L., & Savory, C. (2020). *Consolidating the evidence base for MFL curriculum, pedagogy and assessment reform at GCSE: An investigation of teachers' views*. <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:1f797d25-98b4-4b89-863a-779b2348ae20>