



## JCQ Common Timetable, June 2019 examination series

### **Background**

The JCQ Common Timetable is based upon a Standing Agreement which is reviewed each year. The Standing Agreement, which is essentially a series of operating rules, sets out the principles upon which the timetable will be constructed. The document may be downloaded from the JCQ website:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/key-dates-and-timetables/construction-of-the-common-timetable---fsmq-gce-and-gcse-qualifications>

The JCQ Common Timetable Working Group, which consists of representatives from AQA, CCEA, OCR, Pearson, WJEC and JCQ, is responsible for producing common provisional and final examination timetables for the November and June examination series. The awarding bodies, in turn, use the common timetable to produce their provisional and final examination timetables.

### **Opportunity to comment**

Every year the awarding bodies' provisional timetables are subject to a period during which comments can be made – 28 February to 30 April.

The period is highlighted through various channels including JCQ events, website and twitter; regulator seminars; and large events held by *The Exams Office*.

The awarding bodies have their own mechanisms for informing centres of the timetable consultation. OCR, for example, alerted centres to the publication of provisional examination timetables through Exam Officer Network Meetings and its newsletter *Exams Officer Update*.

## Outcome

Comments received by the JCQ	Number of centres	Type of centre
63†  †Comments were received from three teachers using a private e-mail address	54*  *Four centres submitted two separate responses  *One centre submitted three separate responses	46 Schools  8 Further Education Colleges  6 Sixth Form Colleges

## Principal comments

- **GCSE English Language and Mathematics examinations being timetabled against GCE AS and A-level examinations**

3 comments – (2 Further Education Colleges and 1 School)

## Response

The JCQ Common Timetable Working Group is acutely aware of the logistical challenges faced by Further Education Colleges when conducting GCSE English Language and GCSE Mathematics examinations, often involving very large numbers of candidates. We fully appreciate that colleges were simply not built to accommodate such substantial cohorts sitting examinations.

Unfortunately it is not possible to timetable GCSE English Language and Mathematics examinations in isolation.

GCE AS examinations need to be timetabled within the first two weeks of the timetable. Large entry A-level examinations need to be timetabled ideally within Weeks 2-4 of the timetable in order to facilitate timely processing, marking and awarding.

To timetable GCSE English Language and Mathematics examinations in isolation would either lead to very significant timetable clashes for A-level candidates and/or large entry A-level subjects being timetabled in Week 6 which is simply not sustainable for the awarding bodies.

- **Earlier timetabling of GCE A-level examinations**

General comments as to the earlier timetabling of A-level examinations:

7 (3 Further Education Colleges, 3 Sixth Form Colleges and 1 school)

Subject-specific comments:

Classical Civilisation	(2)
Economics	(5)
Geography	(1)
Government & Politics	(1)
History	(2)
Physics	(6)

Four schools submitted comments in relation to more than one subject:

Classical Civilisation and Government & Politics  
Economics and Geography  
Economics and Physics  
History and Physics

One of the schools submitted two comments in relation to A-level Physics.

### **Response**

Subject entries for AS qualifications in England have declined dramatically following the introduction of new reformed linear qualifications.

In addition, the reform of A-level qualifications has seen an increase in the number of timetabled written examination papers.

It is immensely challenging for the awarding bodies to have large entry A-level subjects being timetabled in Week 6 and even to a certain extent in Week 5.

All awarding bodies wish to see the utilisation of Weeks 2 and 3 for A-level examinations.

The reasons for this are three fold:

The dramatic decline in AS examinations means that a large number of candidates in Year 12, or the Lower Sixth Form, will not be sitting examinations and will not therefore be on study leave preparing for their AS examinations. Schools and colleges should be in a position to deliver A-level specifications in a timely manner.

The earlier timetabling of A-level examinations, albeit by one week, has seen a significant reduction in timetable clashes for A-level qualifications next summer. Timetable clashes are challenging for both candidates and centres. If administered incorrectly they can lead to security breaches which adversely affect the integrity of an examination question paper.

Additionally, the slightly earlier timetabling of A-level examinations further ensures the timely and accurate publication of A-level results, ensuring awarding bodies' compliance with the high standards of marking and awarding as naturally expected by the qualification regulators.

### **A-level Economics**

This subject has been beset by examiner recruitment issues in recent years. The awarding bodies collectively agreed that A-level Economics examinations should be timetabled earlier in 2019 in order to facilitate timely processing, marking and awarding.

We will however review the timetabling of this subject for the June 2020 examination series.

### **A-level Physics**

The Committee noted the six comments from centres regarding the earlier timetabling of A-level Physics in 2019. Again, we will review the timetabling of this subject for the June 2020 examination series.

- **Afternoon sessions for all three GCSE Geography examinations**

Six comments were received highlighting that all three GCSE Geography examinations were in the afternoon session.

### **Response**

The JCQ Common Timetable Working Group noted the strength of feeling expressed and was able to swap the afternoon session of Wednesday 12 June 2019 with the morning session of Thursday 13 June 2019.

The third GCSE Geography paper is now scheduled for the morning of Thursday 13 June 2019.

- **Timetabling of A-level Computer Science with A-level Further Mathematics on the morning of 3 June 2019, with A-level Physics in the afternoon session**

Four centres expressed concern as to this combination of A-level subjects on one day.

### **Response**

The timetabling of A-level Computer Science with A-level Further Mathematics in the morning session of 3 June 2019 would, based on statistical data, potentially affect 902 candidates across the United Kingdom. This is not a significant timetable clash.

We believe that just over 2,600 candidates would potentially sit A-level Computer Science in the morning session and A-level Physics in the afternoon session, which is not a particularly significant figure.

Over nine thousand candidates would however potentially sit A-level Further Mathematics in the morning session and A-level Physics in the afternoon session.

This timetabling arrangement and the combination of subjects may be remedied for the June 2020 examination series in light of reviewing the timetabling of A-level Physics examinations.

**19 July 2018**