[News story: Future assessment of GCSE computer science](#)

Ofqual today (5 November) [launched a consultation on long-term arrangements for the assessment of programming skills in GCSE computer science](#).

Earlier this year, following consultation, we [changed the assessment arrangements for GCSE computer science](#) because of evidence that the confidentiality of some of the programming tasks had been compromised. These revised arrangements mean that for students taking exams in 2019 and 2020 their GCSE computer science grades will be based on their exam performance alone.

We discussed with teachers and subject associations the ways by which students' programming skills could be assessed in the longer term. We concluded that it is not possible to use non-exam assessment in the qualification to assess programming skills in a way that is manageable, reliable and fair. We also concluded that exam boards could assess programming skills in different and potentially innovative ways under exam conditions, and that our rules should require them to do so.

For students starting their courses in 2020, who will be taking their exams in 2022, we propose that:

- all assessment, including that of programming skills, is conducted by exam.
- the assessments will require students to complete the 4 steps of designing, writing, testing and refining a program to achieve a task or solve a problem as separate or combined activities.
- the original assessment objective weightings for this qualification are reinstated, to reflect the importance of practical programming skills.

Today's consultation also proposes that the current short-term arrangements remain in place for students starting courses next September and sitting exams in this subject in 2021. This will allow exam boards to put in place revised assessments and allow teachers time to prepare. The current arrangements mean students have 20 hours set aside in their timetables to complete a programming task, and their programming skills are assessed during the exam.

Sally Collier, Ofqual Chief Regulator, said:

> Practical programming skills are an important aspect of the computer science GCSE and we have carefully considered how best to assess them. Reflecting on how programming could be effectively assessed, previous experience with this qualification, and the views of those within the sector, we believe that in order to secure valid assessment and manage the risk of malpractice,

programming skills should be assessed by examination.

We are keen to encourage innovation and in our consultation, launched today, we propose granting exam boards discretion over the form of exam assessment they offer. We are proposing a timetable that ensures exam boards have sufficient time to determine their approach and that teachers can select and prepare to deliver the approach that best meets the needs of their students. I encourage anyone with an interest in GCSE computer science to respond to our consultation.