

Quality of Marking in General Qualifications - Survey of Teachers 2013

by

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Executive summary

Ofqual's 2012 perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications survey¹ identified that a minority of teachers do not have confidence in the marking of A level exams (18 per cent) or GCSE exams (26 per cent). With this in mind, in 2011 Ofqual committed to carry out a 'programme of work looking into the quality of marking in general qualifications in England' (Ofqual Corporate Plan 2012-15). As part of this review Ofqual carried out research to understand the perceptions of different stakeholders of the marking system. In April 2013, it launched an online survey with teachers and head teachers to gather their views and experiences of marking. In June 2013, this was followed up by a call for evidence from 54 education, subject and teaching organisations.

The survey of teachers was open to all those who wished to comment. As a result, survey respondents are not representative of the wider teaching population, with around half coming from independent schools. The differences between the current sample and the overall teacher population give sufficient reason to be extremely cautious in generalising these findings beyond the specific sample reported here.

In addition to this, whilst respondents were asked to comment on their perceptions of marking, many also focused on grading. For some, there was an apparent lack of clarity between marking and grading issues. However, the data has been presented as it is, to give a fair reflection and illustration of the responses received.

Key findings

Overall perceptions of marking

Respondents were divided in their opinions of GCSEs, 36 per cent had confidence in the quality of marking compared to 54 per cent that did not. Similarly for A levels 38 per cent had confidence in the quality of marking compared to 49 per cent that did not. Respondents from independent schools were least likely to have confidence in A levels, whilst those from comprehensive schools were more critical of GCSEs. Far fewer teachers had experience of the marking of equivalent qualifications, including IGCSEs, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma, the Pre-U Diploma and the International A level. The few that did express a view on these qualifications were more positive and more likely to have confidence in the quality of marking of these.

The single largest reason for a lack of confidence in marking was a perceived inconsistency in the marking process. Teachers were concerned about the effect this had on the final grades of students. Some negative perceptions of marking seemed

¹ [Perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications, 2012 – Wave 11 \(May 2013\) – Perceptions of teachers and the general public](#)

to arise from experiences of grade changes following a review of marking carried out through the Enquiries About Results (EARs) systems.

Perceptions of elements of the marking process

Perceptions of the marking process were divided, with almost as many negative views as positive ones. Overall 54 per cent of respondents agreed that examiners were subject experts compared with 38 per cent that disagreed. The same proportion (54 per cent) agreed that examiners were trained in how to apply mark schemes correctly compared with 40 per cent that disagreed.

Respondents were less likely to believe that examiners' marking was monitored throughout the marking process (44 per cent agreed and 43 per cent disagreed).

Knowledge of marking

Knowledge and understanding of the marking process amongst teachers is mixed. Some teachers have examining experience and therefore have a largely good understanding of how marking works. Others are less informed about the system.

On a scale of one to ten (with ten being high) just under three quarters of teachers ranked their own knowledge of the process that students' scripts go through as being five or higher. Fifty nine per cent rated their knowledge at seven out of ten or higher. However, open responses suggest that in some cases knowledge of marking might be lower than teachers' self-reported scores suggest. The main sources of information for teachers on the marking of external examinations are the exam boards, Ofqual and the TES Forum.

Proposed improvements to the marking system

Few respondents made specific or detailed suggestions as to how the quality of marking of examinations might be improved. The greatest number of suggestions related to examiners themselves (31 per cent). Many respondents suggested that examiners should have more experience and should be subject specialists. Due to the brevity of responses, it is unclear whether these teachers do not believe this is the case currently, or whether they were merely reiterating the importance of these qualities. A further 14 per cent wanted better training for examiners, ten per cent wanted better pay for examiners, and seven per cent suggested more generous deadlines and fewer time constraints for examiners.

Attitudes towards examining

The majority (60 per cent) of respondents had never examined. Those who were examiners or had examined believed the experience had helped them in their teaching profession through a better understanding of exam requirements and of the application of mark schemes.

Nine out of ten assistant, deputy and head teachers stated they encouraged their staff to become examiners and most (87 per cent) reported that they had at least one teacher working as an examiner within their centre.

Introduction

Ofqual's 2012 perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications survey identified that a sizable minority of teachers and head teachers were not confident in the marking of GCSEs and A levels. With this in mind Ofqual started a review of the quality of marking in external examinations in GCSE, A level and equivalent academic qualifications in England (known collectively as general qualifications). These equivalent exams include IGCSEs, International A levels, Pre-U Diploma and the IB Diploma.

As part of this review Ofqual carried out research to understand the perceptions of different stakeholders of the marking system. In April 2013, it launched an online survey with teachers and head teachers to gather their views and experiences of marking, as well as their suggestions as to how the marking system might be improved. In June 2013, this was followed up by a call for evidence from 54 stakeholder organisations.

This report summarises the findings from this survey of teachers and the subsequent call for evidence.

Aims

Both pieces of research aimed to understand the views of different groups of stakeholders of the marking process.

The survey aimed to capture the following information:

- Perceptions of the quality of marking in external examinations in general qualifications
- Teacher attitudes towards the role of examiner
- Levels of understanding of the marking processes in external examinations
- Potential improvements to the marking system

The call for evidence aimed to understand:

- The perceived strengths and weaknesses of the current marking system
- Potential improvements to the marking system

Methodology

The online survey of teachers and head teachers was launched on Monday the 22nd of April and closed on Friday the 14th of June. During this time the consultation was publicly accessible on the Ofqual website via the following link:

<http://ofqual.gov.uk/news/we-want-teachers-views-on-quality-of-marking/>

There was no framework for sampling respondents; all teachers with an interest in the work were able to respond. The link to the survey was shared with teaching associations and unions through the Ofqual newsletter. The consultation was comprised of twenty questions. There were 18 closed questions, ten of which also

gave teachers an option to provide additional comments, plus two open response questions. In total 981 responses were received.

In addition to this survey, a call for evidence was sent to 54 educational organisations and subject associations. This consisted of three open questions. Three responses were received at the beginning of July. Three additional e-mails were also received from two centres and an ex-examiner.

Analysis

In the teacher survey, responses to the 18 closed questions were automatically generated by the survey software and have been presented as counts and percentages in the report.

The range and depth of the open comments in the survey meant qualitative analytical skills and software were necessary in order to allow a methodical and thorough review of the points raised by respondents. Responses were reviewed and categorised against a framework of the main themes using NVivo software.

As only a small number of in-depth responses were received in response to the call for evidence these were individually assessed and analysed for common themes.

All findings in this report have been tested for statistical significance. Where differences between variables are reported (such as the variation in responses given by teachers working in different centre types), these are all statistically significant unless stated otherwise.

For the detailed analysis methodology please see Appendix A.

Data caveats

Analyses of those responding to this survey show a strong bias towards independent schools, staff in management positions and teachers of English or a modern foreign language (MFL). For this reason these results do not reflect the views of the teaching profession more widely.

In survey sampling there is always some inherent bias caused by the characteristics of individuals who choose to respond, but with a sufficiently large sample and appropriate weighting this can be accounted for. However in this case the sample is sufficiently unrepresentative to cause concern. Recent issues may have encouraged personally motivated individuals to respond to this survey rather than a more random sample of teachers.

These differences between the current sample and the overall teacher population, together with the very large difference between the confidence in marking expressed here and that in the randomly drawn 'Perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications, 2012 – Wave 11' (which matches trends in previous years) give sufficient reason to be extremely cautious in generalising these findings beyond the specific sample reported here.

We therefore encourage the reader to give greater weight in considering the consistent or contradictory views expressed between groups than the overall figures.

Knowledge and understanding

While every response is treated equally and all have been included, the qualitative evidence from the survey indicates that some respondents may have held misconceptions about the marking process. Coupled with the short and basic nature of the comments about the marking system, this may indicate that the level of knowledge among some respondents may, in some cases, not have been as high as the self-reported scores featured in the survey.

There were also a high number of responses which discussed issues unrelated to marking, such as grade boundary setting. It is difficult to establish whether this also indicates a limited understanding about the specifics of marking, or perhaps more likely, a desire to widen the discussion when there are related issues of concern. The data has been presented as it is, therefore some of the quotes featured in the report, while not factually correct, have been included as they are a fair reflection and illustration of the responses received.

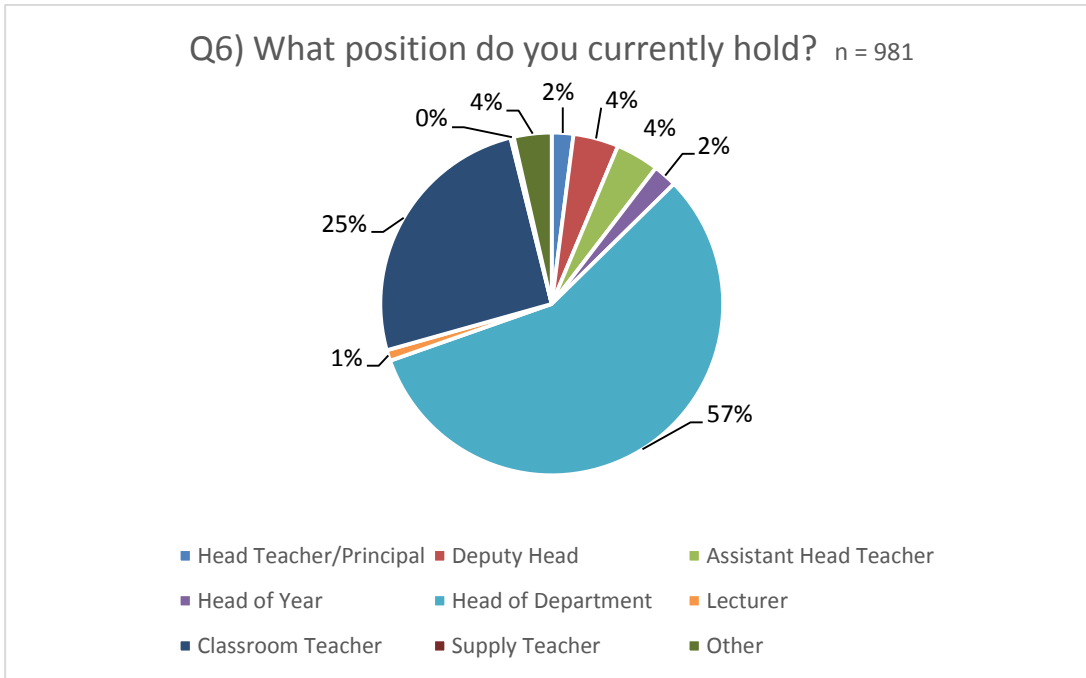
Examiner views

Teacher views, issues and concerns raised within this survey do not necessarily correlate to the views of examiners which have been captured in a parallel survey by Ofqual. Whilst there are common themes, the views and nature of the responses differ considerably. This is of particular relevance in relation to the issues relating to examiners that have been identified by teachers. Therefore whilst this report is informative and exists as a stand-alone piece, further reading of the examiner report is encouraged and is available on Ofqual's website: *Review of Quality of Marking in Exams in A Levels, GCSEs and Other Academic Qualifications - Findings from Survey of Examiners, May 2013*.

Profile of survey respondents

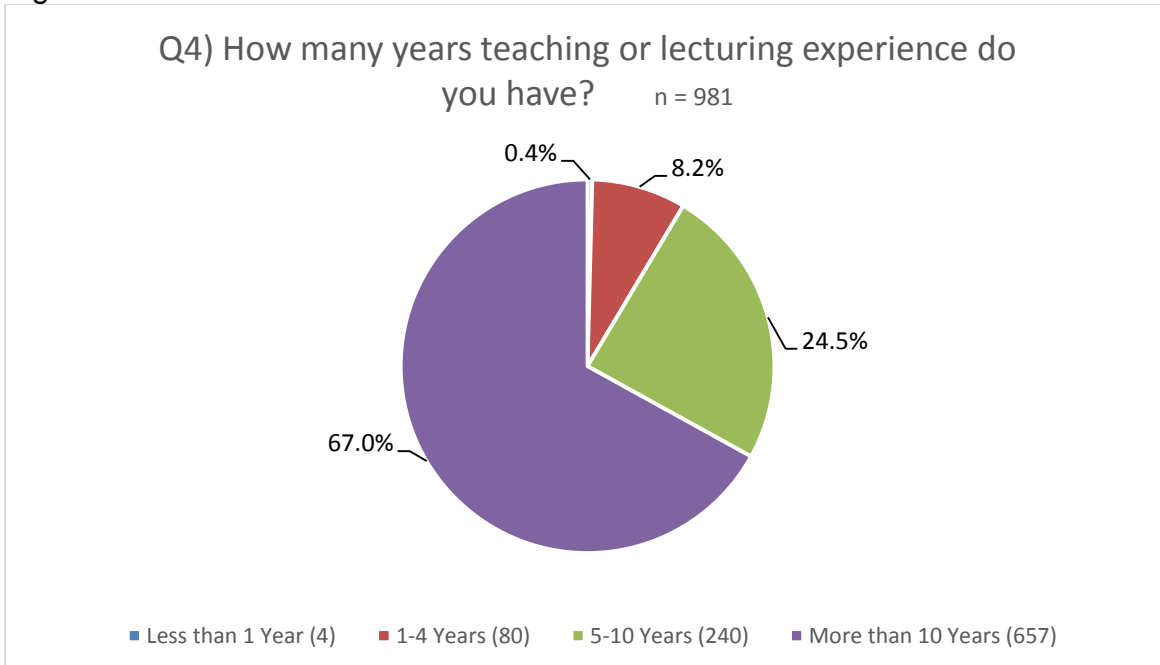
A total of 981 teachers responded to the online survey. Heads of department made up 57 per cent of respondents, 25 per cent were classroom teachers and 12 per cent were head teachers, assistant head teachers or deputy head teachers. Therefore responses came predominantly from senior teaching staff. This may be a reflection of the method of dissemination of the survey. Teachers who have a managerial or strategic view beyond their own classroom may be more likely to be aware and keep up with the movements of teaching associations, unions and the Ofqual newsletter

Figure 1.



Unsurprisingly given the seniority of many of the respondents, 67 per cent had been teaching for more than ten years and a further 24 per cent had between five and ten years of teaching experience. Less than one per cent of responses came from new teachers who had been teaching for less than a year.

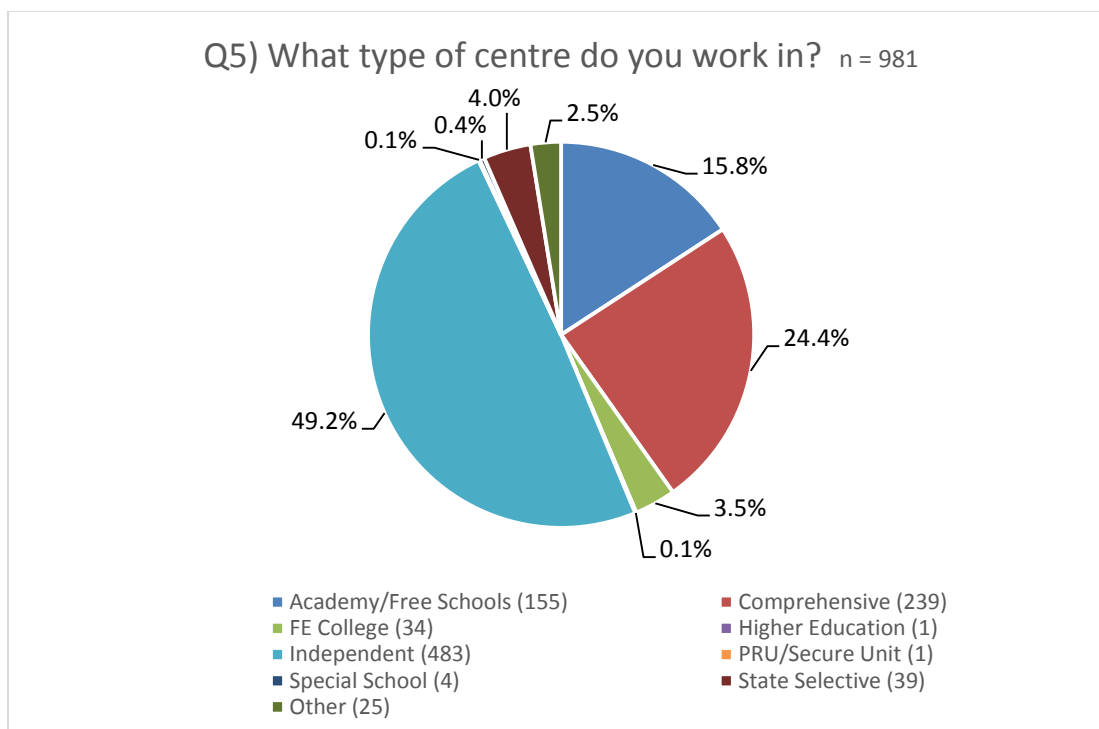
Figure 2.



Almost half of teachers in this sample worked in independent schools (49 per cent). This is not representative of the profile of centre types nationally. Independent school

teachers make up 15 per cent of teachers in secondary education². Again, this could be due to the method of dissemination of the survey, with certain educational organisations working with independent schools being proactive in encouraging their members to participate. However it could also be indicative of particular issues or strong feelings affecting this centre type. This reaffirms the fact that the findings discussed throughout the report are specific to our sample. We cannot assume that they are in any way representative of the perceptions of teachers in general.

Figure 3.



Subjects and qualifications

The three most common qualifications taught by teachers were A levels (80 per cent of respondents), GCSEs (77 per cent) and IGCSEs (25 per cent). Only 46 teachers (five per cent) taught the IB Diploma and 13 (one per cent) taught the Pre-U Diploma.

Respondents were particularly likely to teach one of three broad groups of subjects. These were modern foreign languages (MFL) (35 per cent), other subjects including social sciences and the arts (34 per cent), and English (17 per cent). It is not necessarily surprising that there might be a stronger response from these subject areas in comparison with subjects such as mathematics and science. Mathematics

² Source: Department for Education Schools Workforce SFR15, Independent School Census, LSIS Staff Individualised Record. Figure includes only current teachers/lecturers and exclude teachers/lecturers working in primary/early years, Higher Education and 'other' types of centres.

for instance may have a tendency to be seen by teachers as less subjective and therefore less problematic to mark.

What is perhaps more surprising is the size of the response coming from teachers of MFL, most notably French teachers. Of the 981 respondents, 23 per cent taught GCSE French and 16 per cent taught French at A level. Teachers of other languages; German (12 per cent at GCSE and eight per cent at A level) and Spanish (12 per cent at GCSE and 7 per cent at A level) were also elevated. This could be due to some particularly proactive MFL organisations encouraging their teachers to respond to the survey, or it could be indicative of the strength of feeling towards marking in these subjects.

A full breakdown of each subject area can be found in Appendix A.

Confidence in marking

Teachers were asked to what extent they personally agreed or disagreed with a number of statements about the marking of a range of general qualifications.

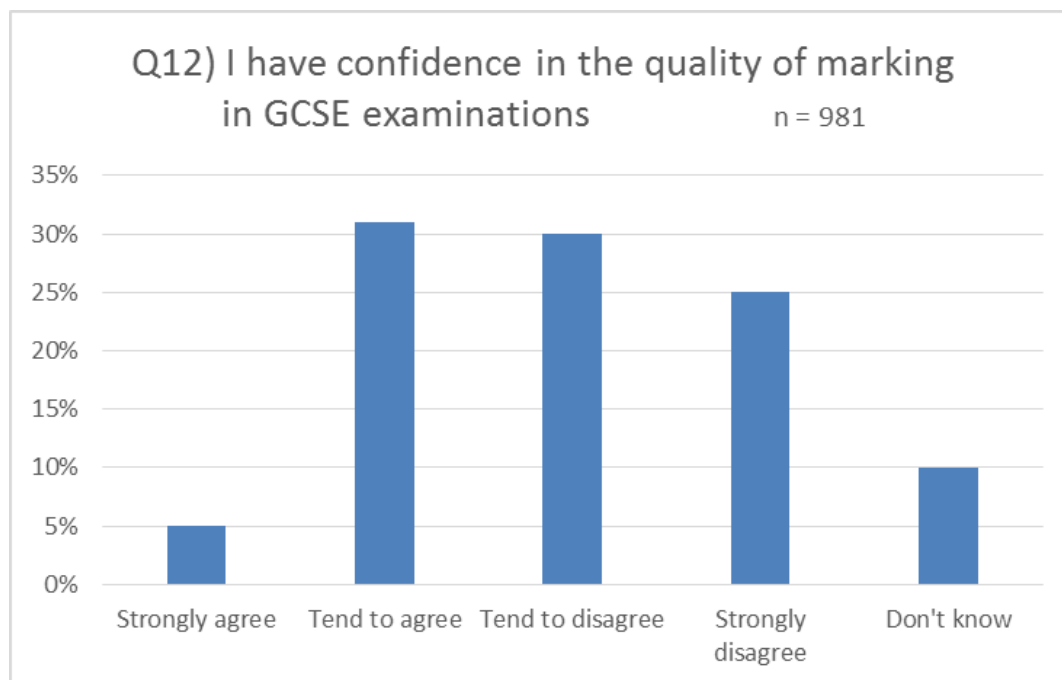
Unsurprisingly given that they are by far the most widespread qualifications, most of the issues raised were in relation to GCSEs and A levels. Views on GCSEs and A levels were broadly similar. This is in contrast to Ofqual's 'Perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications, 2012 – Wave 11' survey, where perceptions of A level marking were more positive than for GCSE marking.

Confidence in the quality of marking in GCSE examinations

Teachers were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'I have confidence in the quality of marking in GCSE examinations'. Perceptions of the marking process were divided. Just 36 per cent of respondents agreed that they had confidence in the quality of marking and 54 per cent disagreed. Teachers in this sample were far more critical of the marking of GCSEs compared to those surveyed in Ofqual's 'Perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications, 2012 – Wave 11' where 59 per cent of teachers had confidence in the accuracy of marking of GCSE papers.

It should be noted, however, that these two surveys are not comparable. There is a difference between the term 'quality of marking' investigated here and 'accuracy' used in the 2012 survey. Additionally the sampling used in the two surveys was very different. Whilst this survey was open to all teachers who wished to contribute, the 2012 study was based on a representative sample. Only this earlier survey can therefore be assumed to be representative of the views of teachers at this time.

Figure 4.



Teachers from those centres with experiences of submitting Enquiries About Results (EARs) were less likely to have confidence in GCSE marking. Of the 96 centres that had confirmed that they had submitted an EAR in the past two years, 62 (65 per cent) disagreed that they had confidence in GCSE marking. Whilst the experience of submitting EARs may reduce confidence in the marking system, it could also be the case that teachers who are less confident in GCSE marking are more likely to submit EARs.

Across centre types, respondents from comprehensive schools and academies were most likely to disagree that they had confidence in GCSE marking (69 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively) compared to independent schools (45 per cent). In the case of respondents from independent schools, the lower percentage here did not mean the majority agreed (42 per cent), as this group in particular had the highest proportion of 'don't know' responses (13 per cent).

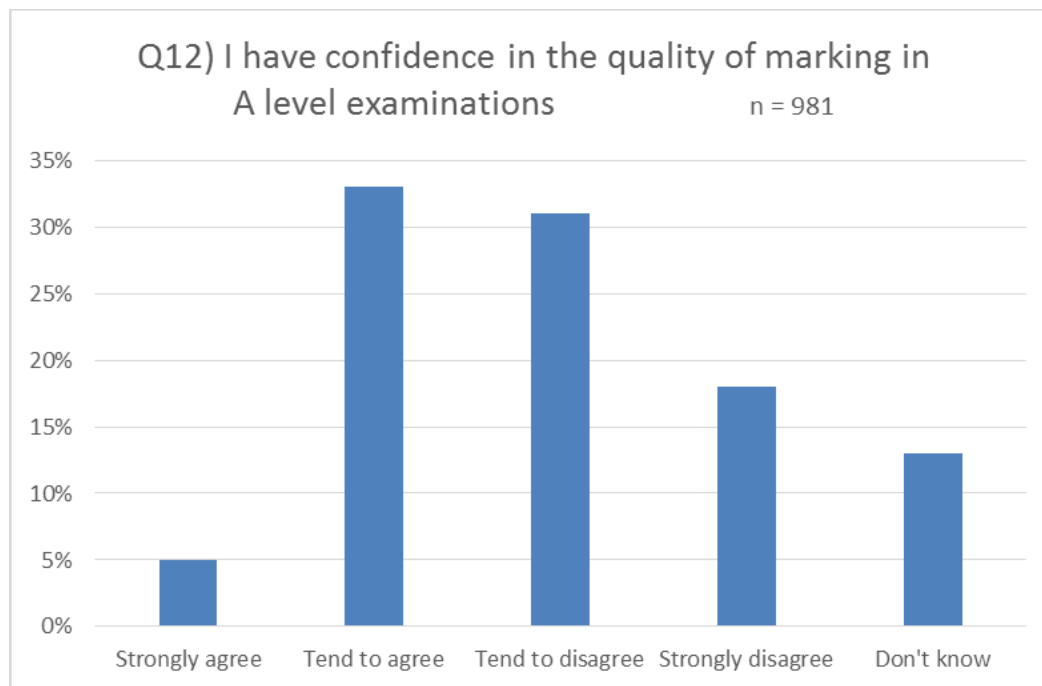
Examining experience also affected teacher confidence in marking. In total 53 per cent of the teachers who were currently examining agreed that they had confidence in GCSEs overall compared with only 31 per cent of those that had no examining experience at all.

Confidence in the quality of marking in A level examinations

Teachers were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'I have confidence in the quality of marking in A level examinations'. Views were again divided with 38 per cent of the sample agreeing they had confidence in the quality of marking of A levels compared with 49 per cent that disagreed.

This is a slightly higher rate of confidence than the teachers expressed for GCSEs (36 per cent). Whilst we can't directly compare these findings with Ofqual's 2012 survey (for the reasons outlined previously), it is interesting to note that in 2012, 67 per cent of teachers and 58 per cent of head teachers had confidence in the accuracy of marking of A level examinations.

Figure 5.



Respondents from centres which had submitted an EAR were slightly less confident in A level marking³. Of the 96 centres that confirmed that they had submitted EARs, 56 (58 per cent) of them disagreed with the statement above.

Respondents from independent schools were significantly more likely to disagree (57 per cent) that they had confidence in A level marking, compared with 45 per cent of those from academies and 34 per cent of those from comprehensives. It is worth noting that there was a far higher rate of 'don't know' responses for comprehensive and academy schools, however.

Once again, examining experience had a significant influence on teachers' perceptions of marking. Fifty five per cent of respondents who were currently examining agreed that they had confidence in A level marking compared with 38 per cent that used to examine and 34 per cent that had never examined.

Confidence in the quality of marking of other general qualifications

Very few teachers in the sample taught equivalent academic qualifications, and as such respondents were far less likely to be able to say whether they had confidence

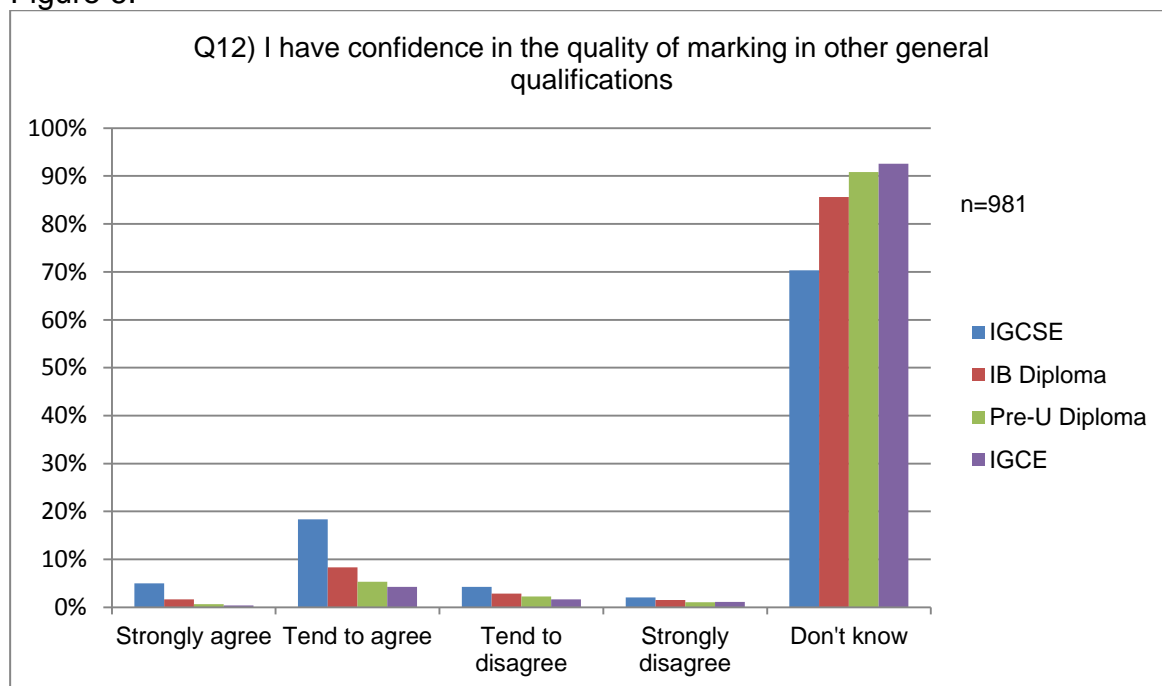
³ This is statistically significant at 90 per cent.

in these qualifications. For all of these other academic qualifications such as IGCSEs, over 70 per cent of respondents said they did not know if they were confident in marking. It is notable that for most of these qualifications, more respondents expressed a view about marking than actually taught the qualifications. This might reflect the high proportion of senior teachers responding to the survey. Head teachers may have a view on the marking of qualifications provided in their centres despite not personally teaching them. In any case, for the minority that did express an opinion, respondents were more positive about these qualifications than they were about A levels and GCSEs.

For those that did express an opinion over 60 per cent expressed confidence in marking. This was highest in IGCSEs (79 per cent, 229) and relatively lower in international A level (63 per cent, 46).

- **IGCSEs** - Seventy per cent of all respondents replied 'don't know' when asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'I have confidence in the quality of marking in IGCSE examinations'. This is perhaps unsurprising given that only 25 per cent of respondents were teaching or had taught IGCSEs. This is a far more positive split than for GCSEs. Of those that did voice an opinion, 229 (79 per cent) confirmed that they had confidence in the quality of IGCSE examinations. This is a far more positive split than for GCSEs.
- **International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma** - Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'I have confidence in the quality of marking in IB Diploma examinations'. The smaller proportion of respondents that gave a view on the marking of IB Diploma (14 per cent) reflects that only a small proportion of respondents (five per cent; 46 in total) had experience of teaching the qualification. Of those that did voice an opinion, 98 respondents (70 per cent) confirmed they did have confidence in the marking of the IB Diploma.
- **Pre-U Diplomas** - Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'I have confidence in the quality of marking in Pre-U Diploma examinations'. Only 90 teachers responded to this question (nine per cent of all those surveyed) reflecting the fact that only 13 teachers (one per cent) were teaching or had taught the Pre-U Diploma. Of those that did voice an opinion, 58 (64 per cent) had confidence in marking.

Figure 6.



Trends in marking quality

The survey asked teachers '*overall, do you feel that the quality of marking has improved over that last few years?*' Just five per cent of survey respondents believed marking of general qualifications had improved 'over the last few years'.

Teacher confidence in marking – qualitative findings

Respondents were given the chance to provide comments to expand on their views of marking of individual qualifications discussed above. A total of 305 respondents (31 per cent) made an additional comment on their confidence in the qualifications discussed above. Of these, 230 (75 per cent) were senior staff, holding at least a head of year, head of department, deputy head or head teacher post. Most concerns were shared across centre types but any anomalies have been noted below.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the low rates of confidence expressed previously, the comments made were mostly negative, however for certain areas there were positive exceptions. These have been examined below.

Comments centred on the most widely used qualifications - A levels and GCSEs. In total 85 (28 per cent) of the 305 comments made here specifically mentioned A levels and 70 (23 per cent) referenced GCSEs.

Of those who commented, 101 (33 per cent) taught MFL and a total of 64 (21 per cent taught) English. Perhaps unsurprisingly 11 of the English teachers specifically made reference to grading issues experienced in the summer of 2012. Whilst not a marking issue, this is clearly an area that some teachers continue to feel strongly

about. For the MFL teachers the concerns ranged across a range of topics and only 12 mentioned subject specific concerns such as oral assessments.

Some teachers chose to make more than one point and so the following responses do not add up to the total number of people that responded. As the quotes below illustrate, many comments were relatively short. The most frequently raised points were as follows.

Inconsistency in marking

The single largest reason given by respondents for their lack of confidence in marking was a perceived 'inconsistency' in the marking process. This was mentioned by 107 (35 per cent) of respondents that chose to comment. This perception of inconsistency tended to be discussed from a personal perspective suggesting that it came from personal experience of inaccuracies in marking. However as many responses were succinct, this is not always clear.

'Too many inconsistencies / anomalies in marking'

Deputy Head, Modern Foreign Languages, Academy and/or Free Schools

'My experience has consistently shown up anomalies and inaccuracies'

Classroom Teacher, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Academy and/or Free Schools

Of those that related marking inconsistency to specific qualifications, 31 mentioned A levels and 31 made references to GCSEs.

'Recent A level marking in my subject has been of questionable consistency.'

Head of Department, Modern Foreign Languages, Independent School

'We stopped doing GCSE because the marking had become ridiculously unreliable and erratic.'

Head of Department, Modern Foreign Languages, Independent School

Lack of confidence in marking

Thirty three respondents made general comments reiterating the fact they did not have confidence in marking but did not give any additional explanation for their view.

'I have absolutely no confidence in the marking of any GCSE or A Level examination marking.'

Head Teacher/Principal, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Comprehensive

Impact of marking on qualification grade

Another 32 respondents mentioned the impact that marking has on students' final grades, with some concerned that students were not getting the grades they deserved. Over half of responses came from MFL teachers (17). Comments were not always specific to marking and often digressed into perceived issues in the grading process.

'Young people and their teachers are being short-changed and the young people's life chances are being destroyed by the unprofessional marking and goal-post-moving that is taking place.'

Head of Department, English, Comprehensive

EAR and appeals process

In total 23 respondents made reference to their experiences with the EARs or appeal processes. Some of these cited their experience of significant mark changes as a reason for their lack of confidence in marking. These comments most frequently came from independent schools (16).

'The number of remarks that have been returned with a significant change in result has increased over the last two years causing me greater concern over the accuracy of marking.'

Assistant Head Teacher, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), State Selective

Grade boundaries

Twenty one respondents made reference to grade boundaries. It is unclear to what extent respondents were confusing the two different processes of marking and grading, or whether they were aware that this is not a marking issue, but used this survey as a means to source their dissatisfactions with grading.

Comments varied from those that thought boundaries were 'harsh' to those who thought grade boundaries were being altered unfairly. As the following example illustrates, however, respondents rarely elaborated on these perceptions.

'The main problem is actually harsh grade boundaries.'

Classroom Teacher, Modern Foreign Languages, Academy and/or Free Schools

Mark schemes

Concerns surrounding mark schemes were mentioned by 17 respondents. The nature of these concerns varied. Some respondents thought mark schemes were overly vague and subjective and some thought they were too narrow and prescriptive. For others it was not necessarily the mark schemes themselves they were concerned about, but the ability of the examiners to apply them.

'Vague and subjective, or narrow and prescriptive mark schemes.'

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), State Selective

'Many examiners know very little about the subject and cannot apply mark schemes'

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Independent School

Deterioration of marking standards

A total of 17 respondents commented that the standard of marking was poor or had declined over the years.

'Marking standards seem to have fallen over the years.'

Head of Department, Science, Independent School

High performing students

Particular reference was made by 17 respondents to high ability students and a perceived inability by examiners to effectively mark more advanced and complex responses. This issue mainly came from independent schools (nine) and academies (five).

'I have to tell students to keep their comments simple. Some of my most capable students write in complex sentences, with technical skill, and tend to do less well than other students who are less capable but 'easier' to mark.'

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Academy and/or Free Schools

Across all the responses, it appeared that many of the sample believed that marking was inconsistent. However, whilst critical, the comments were rarely specific which limits the conclusions that can be drawn from them. There was also some evidence of confusion between marking and grading which makes it difficult to assess how much marking itself is a cause of any dissatisfaction with the system.

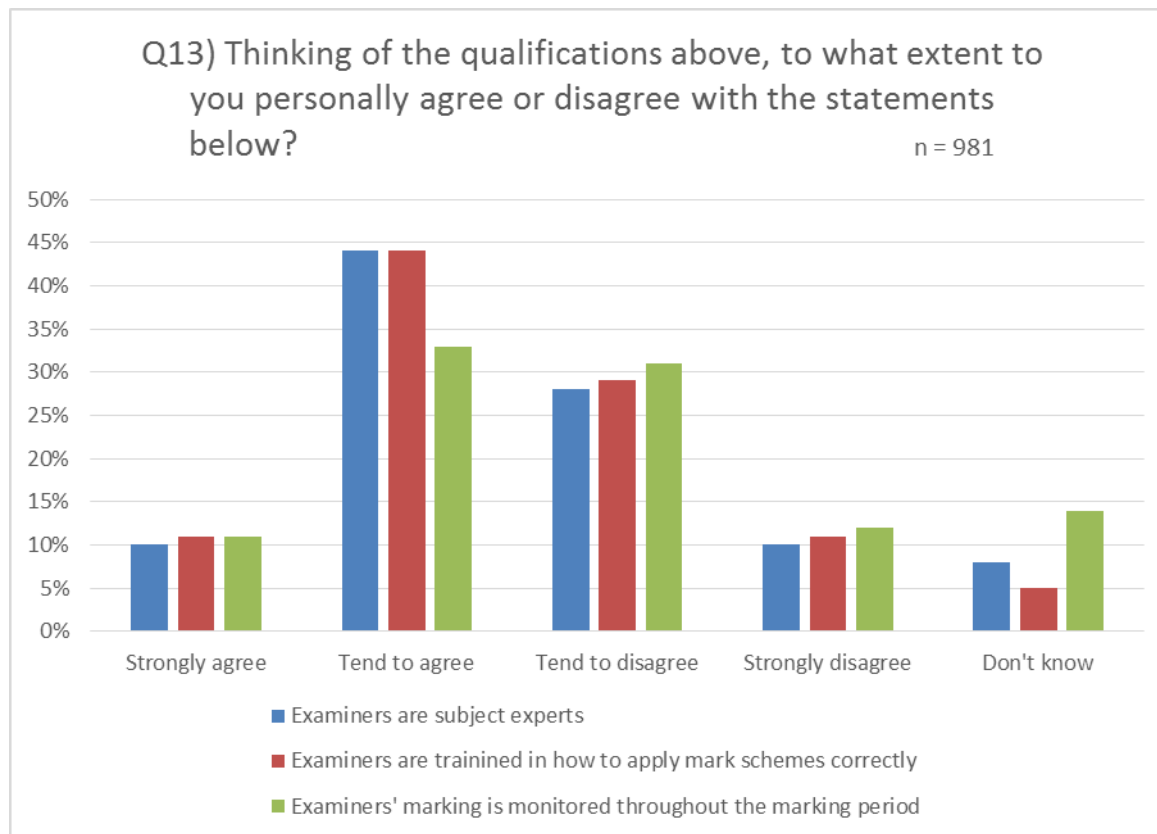
Perceptions of features of the marking process

Examiners are subject experts

From the total of 981 respondents, 54 per cent agreed that examiners were subject experts compared with 38 per cent that disagreed. Responses were similar for most centre types.

For instance, comprehensive and independent schools are more likely to agree that examiners are subject experts compared to FE centres (58 per cent, 54 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively).

Figure 7.



Examiners are trained in how to apply mark schemes correctly

Overall 54 per cent of respondents agreed that examiners were trained in how to apply mark schemes correctly compared with 40 per cent that did not. Again the 'tend to agree' option was the most popular choice for teachers, regardless of centre or examining experience.

Examiners' marking is monitored throughout the marking period

Finally, the survey asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'Examiners' marking is monitored throughout the marking period'. Respondents were less positive about this aspect of the examining process. Only 44 per cent of respondents thought marking was monitored throughout the marking period compared with 43 per cent that thought it was not.

Negative responses to these questions were significantly more prevalent among respondents with no examining experience. A total of 50 per cent of those with no examining experience disagreed compared with only 18 per cent of those who were currently examining.

Teachers were given the opportunity to comment further on the closed questions above and their responses are explored below. A total of 254 respondents made additional comments on the themes above. The most frequently raised points were as follows.

Training

This was the most frequently raised point, made by 41 respondents. Teachers who had never examined accepted that examiners did undergo training but claimed personal experience with marking inconsistencies led them to believe that training was not rigorous enough. It should be noted that whilst all of the references here referred to training, it was apparent that many teachers were actually referring to standardisation.

‘After the January module results I have much doubt as to whether they are trained properly in applying the mark scheme, but would have otherwise expected them to be.’

Classroom Teacher, Other (including Social Sciences or Arts), FE College

Responses from those with examining experience demonstrated that this concern was shared by some respondents. Both current and former examiners frequently emphasised that while they were diligent and happy with the standard of their own work they had concerns as they did not think others had appropriate training or had the experience or skills necessary.

‘I would hope that examiners are experts and receive appropriate training and support. As an IGCSE speaking examiner I feel confident and supported in what I do. However, my experience as a teacher is very different - having had the whole cohort's GCSE writing papers re-marked and some awarded 15 extra marks in the process. I have grave reservations about the quality of the marking.’

Head of Department, Currently Examining, Modern Foreign Languages, Academy and/or Free Schools

Mark schemes

Issues with mark schemes were mentioned by 33 teachers, of which 14 had examining experience and 19 had not. The views of teachers without examining experience were variable with some that thought the mark schemes were too prescriptive and rigid compared with some that thought the mark scheme was not being adhered to consistently.

‘Some marking seems to stick entirely to the mark scheme, rather than take each candidate and applying sensible discretion’

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Independent School

‘The issue is consistency in applying the mark scheme and quality of feedback on scripts.’

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Comprehensive

Responses from current and former examiners however, suggested there may be variation in the application of mark schemes by different examiners.

'... variability can still sneak in at the margin - some examiners can be rather strict in application of the mark scheme, others less so. One difficulty can be where able candidates produce responses outside of the mark schemes that are valid.'

Deputy Head, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Academy and/or Free School

Monitoring

A further 25 teachers made references to examiner monitoring, though the responses varied depending on whether they had examining experience. Teachers who did not have examining experience frequently made reference to their own experience of inconsistencies in marking, making the observation that if monitoring procedures were in place they were not robust enough if mistakes were still being made.

'the number of remarks in all subjects that have gone up in our school suggests monitoring of marking is not as good as it could be'

Head of Department/ Housemistress, Modern Foreign Languages, Independent

Some of the responses from teachers with examining experience suggested that there could be inconsistencies in marker monitoring.

'Monitoring appears to vary considerable across subjects and teams, with some team leaders/ chief examiners just approving examiners and never undertake spot checking.'

Classroom Teacher, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Sixth Form College

Improvements to quality of marking of examinations

All teachers responding to the survey were asked: 'In your opinion, how could the quality of marking of external examinations in England be improved?' All respondents (981) made some comments as to how the quality of marking of examinations could be improved, although it should be noted that comments were frequently short and general, lacking specific details or explanations. The key suggestions that emerged were as follows.

Examiners

The most frequently cited suggestions for improving quality of marking related to examiners themselves. A total of 304 (31 per cent) respondents made suggestions as to the conditions, experience and qualifications they thought examiners should have. Typically, comments were not specific, for instance, where respondents commented that newly qualified teachers should not be eligible to examine, they did not suggest what they thought would be a good minimum period of teaching experience. It was also unclear whether they were aware that exam boards usually specify a minimum level of teaching experience for examiners.

Teachers believed that examiners should be subject experts. However, the very short nature of the responses means that it is impossible to assess whether teachers do not believe that subject experts are currently being employed to examine, or whether they were merely reiterating its importance as a desirable quality. In addition, comments did not establish 'what' might qualify someone to be a 'specialist'.

'Employ subject specialists'

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Independent School

There was a notable overlap between the issue of examiner experience and the suggestion of increasing examiners' pay (see below). A total of 49 (five per cent) of respondents made the connection between using a higher rate of pay to attract good quality professional examiners.

'Pay more so that more experienced examiners are attracted.'

Deputy Head, Science, Independent School

'Approaching more subject experts. Offering greater remuneration.'

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Independent School

The attributes of respondents that made observations surrounding examiners were representative of the whole sample. Comments were not any more or less likely to come from current or former examiners. 56 per cent of teachers that suggested improvements were from independent schools.

Training

A total of 137 (14 per cent) respondents suggested that training for examiners should be improved. It could be argued there is a relationship between those that suggested better training and those that wanted better qualified examiners or subject experts. One group is suggesting exam boards find better qualified examiners whereas the other is suggesting the exam boards deliver the training to get examiners to a required standard. The end result wanted by both is a high quality examiner.

'better training of examiners'

Head of Department, Mathematics, Independent School

Consistency in marking

A further 128 (13 per cent) respondents reiterated their concern regarding marking inconsistencies without making further suggestions as to how this might be improved. This view was particularly prevalent amongst MFL teachers. Of these, 22 suggested that consistency was of particular concern in relation to oral assessments.

Such comments were more likely to come from teachers with no examining experience (74 per cent compared to the survey baseline of 60 per cent). There were also a higher number of comments from teachers in comprehensive schools (38 per cent compared with the survey baseline of 24 per cent).

'More consistency'

Head of Department, Modern Foreign Languages, Independent School

'Consistency in the marking of oral exams.'

Head of Department, Modern Foreign Languages, Independent School

Mark schemes

Mark schemes were mentioned by 118 (12 per cent) respondents in total. Many respondents did not elaborate more than to say they wanted better or improved mark schemes. These comments came slightly more from MFL teachers (44 per cent compared with the survey baseline of 35 per cent).

‘Better mark schemes’

Head of Department, Modern Foreign Languages, Comprehensive

Of those that did make more specific suggestions about improving mark schemes, they were not uniform in their opinions. For instance, some teachers believed that mark schemes should not be adhered to so strictly by examiners, whereas others thought it would be fairer to stick to a prescribed structure and avoid subjectivity as far as possible.

‘Use subject specialists and not rely too heavily on the mark scheme.’

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Independent School

‘Have a mark scheme that is objective, not subjective, and has a clearer structure to it.’

Classroom Teacher, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), FE College

‘The main issue is encouraging examiners not to simply follow the mark scheme’

Lecturer, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Sixth Form

Examiner pay

In total 94 (ten per cent) respondents suggested that examiner pay should be improved. This view was prominent among those with current or previous examining experience (59 per cent).

Furthermore, 63 per cent of teachers making this comment are from independent schools.

‘Pay the exam markers more.’

Head of Department, Science, Other (Social Sciences and Arts), Independent School

Time constraints

Finally, 71 (seven per cent) respondents referred to time constraints on examiners and the short length of the marking period.

‘More generous deadlines for examiners.’

Assistant Head Teacher, Modern Foreign Languages, Independent School

A small number made suggestions as to how more time might be found for marking.

‘Marking could be done during the summer holidays’

Classroom Teacher, English, Comprehensive

‘Time off teaching duties for marking. Residential marking like in Scotland.’

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Academy and/or Free School

Further comments on the marking of examinations

After suggesting improvements to the marking system, respondents were asked ‘Do you have any further comments about the quality of marking of external examinations in England?’

A total of 401 respondents made wide ranging comments, many of which were not related to marking. These ranged from personal observations on the syllabus through to comments relating to stories in the media. Therefore the common topics that emerged are in relatively low numbers compared with the total number of responses here. Key themes are as discussed below.

Inconsistency in marking

This was mentioned by 52 (13 per cent) respondents that commented. This reflects concerns surrounding marking consistency raised previously. Increasing references to a range of specific subjects were made by respondents.

‘We have experienced consistent difficulties with the marking of Advanced level scripts over a number of years within philosophy.’

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Independent School

‘MFL marking is still too subjective and is not consistent enough across the three big languages.’

Head of Department, Modern Foreign Languages, Independent School

‘Very unhappy with consistency of marking in geography’

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Independent School

Lack of confidence in marking

A general lack of confidence in marking was mentioned by 36 (nine per cent) respondents. Of those that did elaborate on reasons for this lack of confidence, some teachers explained that it was caused by their experience of inconsistencies in marking as well as experience of mark changes after an EAR.

‘Used to have confidence but the inconsistency in recent years has reduced confidence’

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), State Selective

‘We no longer have absolute confidence in the integrity of the boards, and expect every year to challenge, and subsequently have altered, a significant proportion of initial awards.’

Head of Department, Modern Foreign Languages, Independent

Many of the other points raised were unrelated to the quality of marking. The most prevalent of these were:

Grade boundaries

A total of 32 (eight per cent) respondents made reference to grade boundaries. There were perceived issues in the comparability of grades from subject to subject. This was most likely to be mentioned in the case of MFL. References were also made to the grading of GCSE English examinations in 2012.

‘Consistency of grade boundaries across subjects, it is much easier to get a A*-C grades in certain subject areas than in MFL’

Head of Department, Modern Foreign Languages, Academy and/or Free School

‘It seems clear to me that grade boundaries are often too severe in MFL’

Head of Department, Modern Foreign Languages, State Selective

‘I have no confidence in the GCSE English Language marking after the fiasco last year. I have no idea what the grade boundaries are and the goalposts are continually changing.’

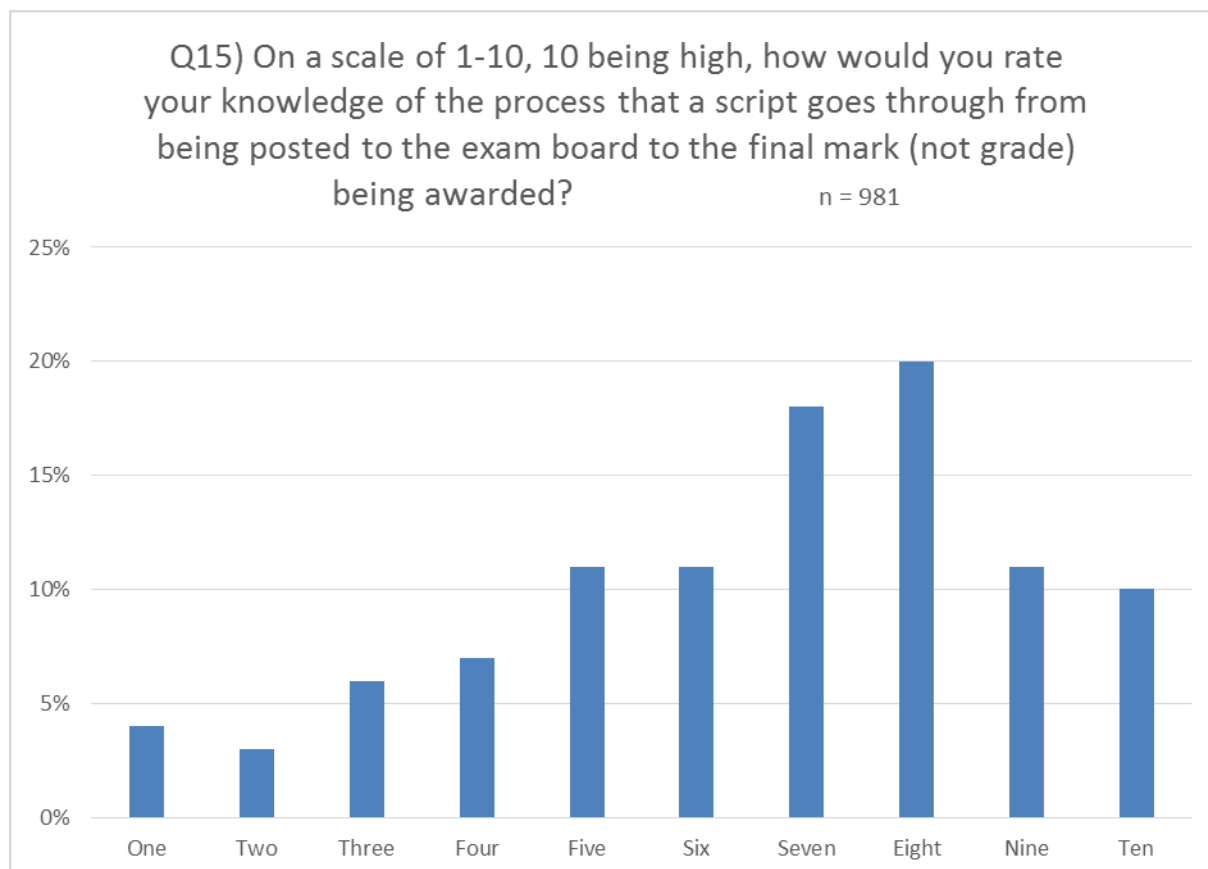
Classroom Teacher, English, Independent

Knowledge and understanding of marking

The survey asked teachers to rate their knowledge of the marking process on a scale of one to ten, ten being high.

As the graph below illustrates there was a spread of responses, however, most teachers felt fairly confident in their knowledge of the marking process. In total 59 per cent rated their knowledge as a seven out of ten or higher and almost three quarters (71 per cent) rated their knowledge as being five or higher. The mean of responses was 6.5 and the most frequent rating was eight out of ten. This accounted for exactly one fifth of the sample. Despite the generally high self-reported scores, this does leave 29 per cent of teachers who rate their knowledge at four out of ten or lower.

Figure 8.



Respondents with examining experience rated their knowledge of the marking process more highly. The mean rating of current examiners was 7.9 out of 10, compared to 7.5 for former examiners and 5.8 for teachers with no examining experience. This demonstrates that personal experience of examining past or present has a notable impact on perceived levels of knowledge.

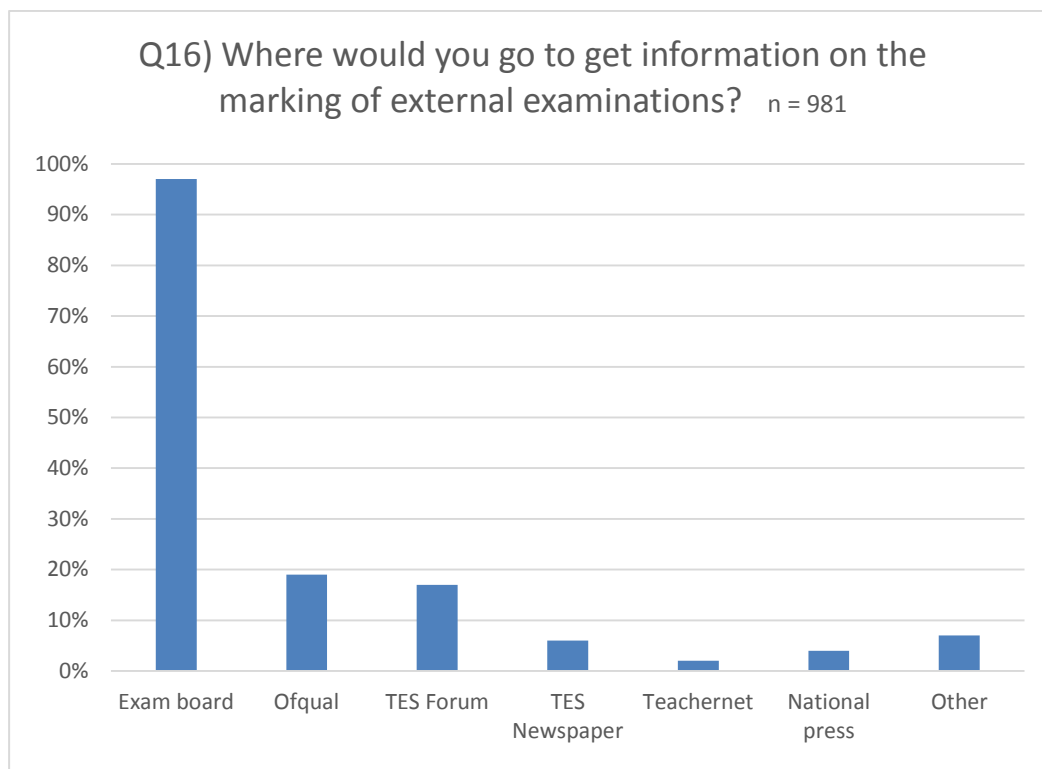
There was more limited variation in self-reported knowledge of the marking process by centre type. Teachers with the highest mean score of 7.2 were those from state selective schools (although it should be noted that this was from a sample of just 39 respondents). This was followed by FE colleges (mean of seven out of ten) and independent schools (6.7). Comprehensives and academies/free schools both had a mean of 6.3⁴.

Sources of information on the marking of examinations

As the graph below illustrates the most popular source of information on marking (from the surveyed total of 981) was from the exam boards (97 per cent). Ofqual (19 per cent) and the TES Forum (17 per cent) were the second and third most popular sources.

⁴ Please note these figures could not be tested for statistical significance.

Figure 9.



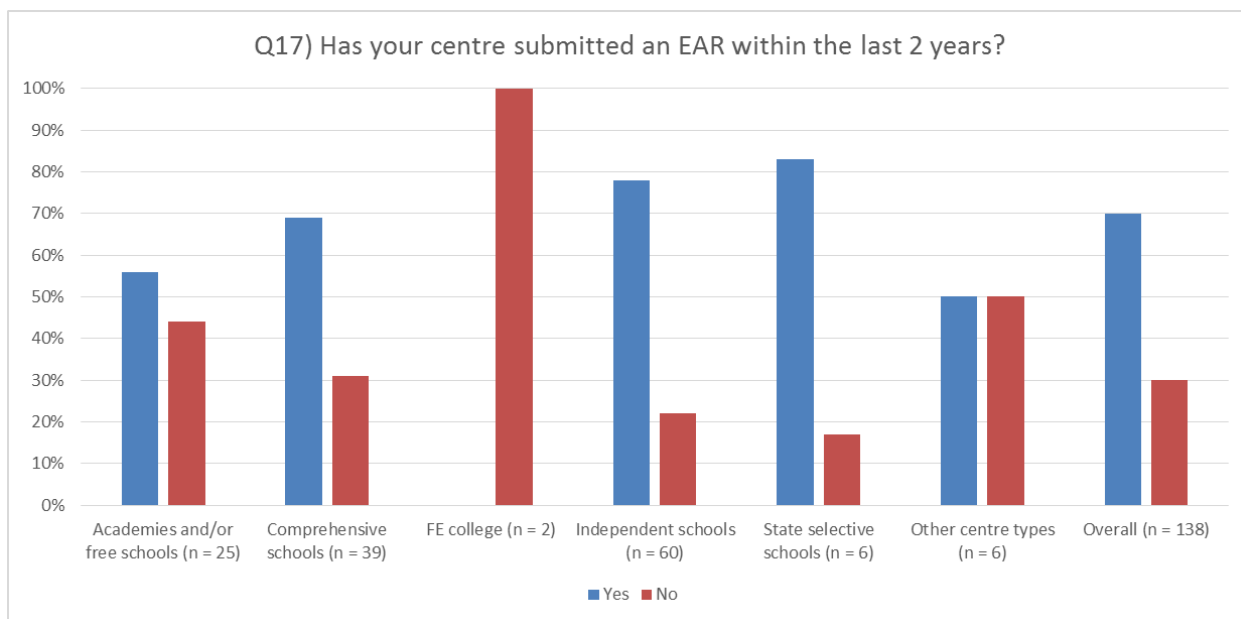
One hundred respondents recorded 'other' sources they use to find information on marking. Of these, 20 said they would ask an examiner for advice, 16 reiterated that they would turn to their exam board followed by nine who would ask a colleague. Finally 14 teachers use websites and forums on the internet.

Experience of Enquiries About Results (EARs)

Has your centre submitted an EAR within the last two years?

This question was only posed to head teachers, deputy and assistant head teachers. There were 138 responses in total. The majority, 70 per cent confirmed their centre had submitted an EAR within the last two years compared with 30 per cent that had not. As the graph below illustrates, respondents coming from independent schools were more likely to have submitted an EAR.

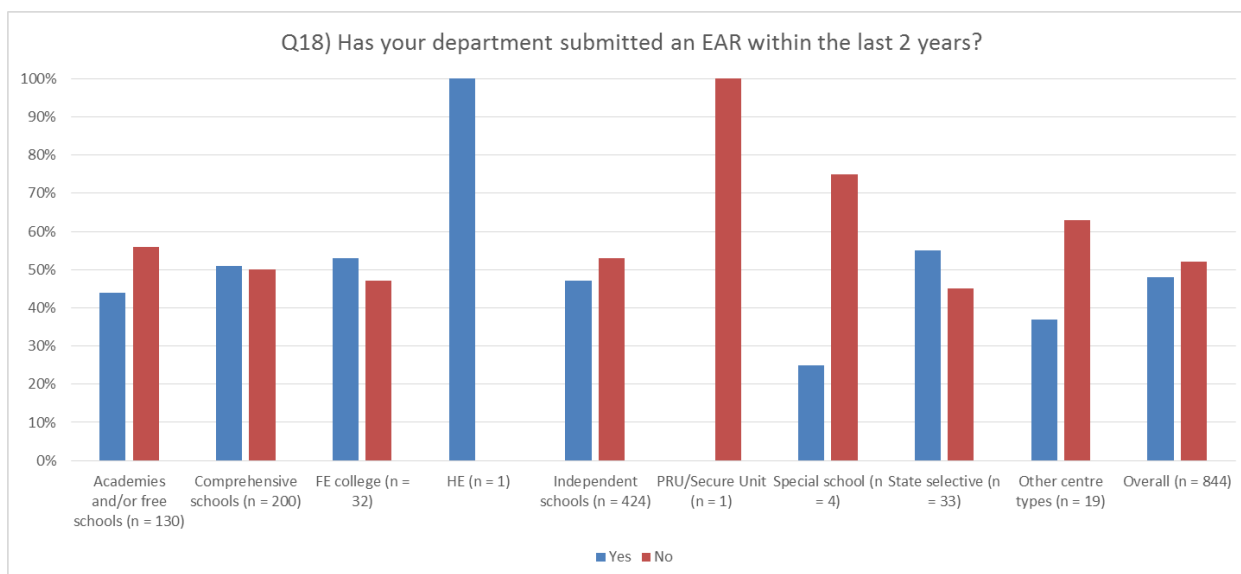
Figure 10.



Has your department submitted an EAR within the last two years?

This question was posed to teaching staff rather than head teachers. There were 844 responses in total; 48 per cent confirmed their department had submitted an EAR within the last two years compared with 52 per cent which had not.

Figure 11.



Teacher attitudes towards examining

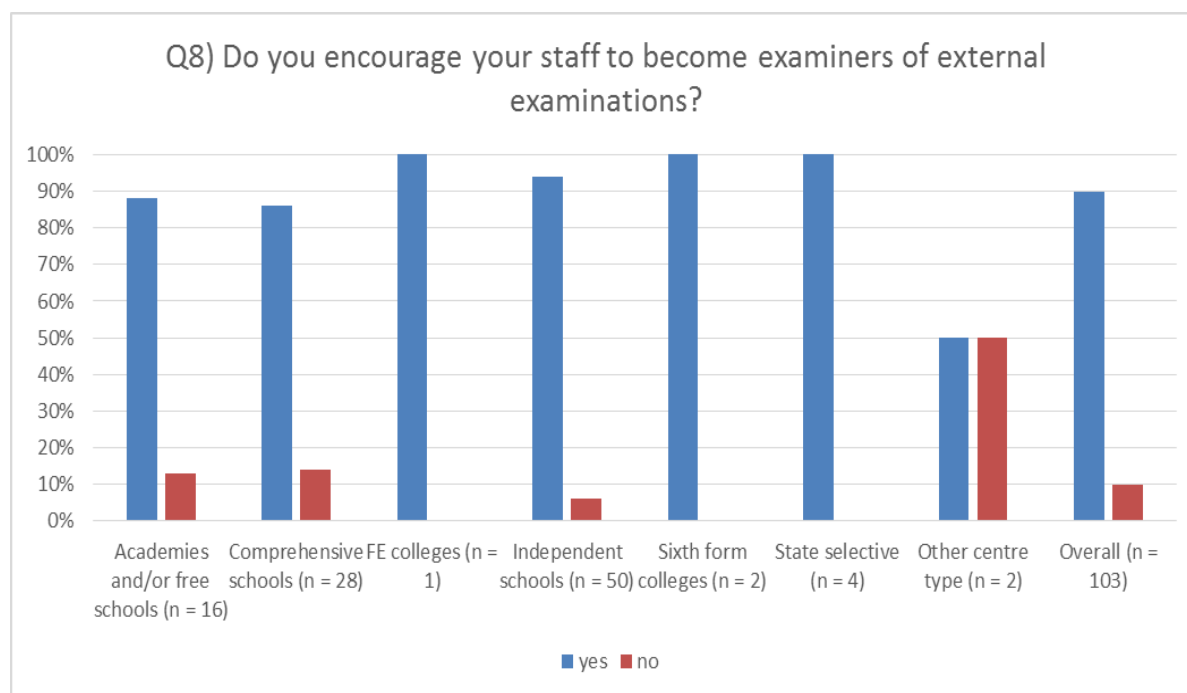
The survey also asked teachers and head teachers about their attitude to the examining role.

Head teacher support for examining

Head teachers, assistant and deputy heads were asked '*Do you encourage your staff to become examiners of external examinations?*' Of the 103 that responded, 90 per cent replied 'yes', and ten per cent said 'no'.

Proportionally independent schools were the most likely to encourage their staff to become examiners, 47 (94 per cent) agree that they did compared to 14 (88 per cent) academies and 24 (86 per cent) comprehensive schools. However, the sample sizes here are small and this is not statistically significant.

Figure 12.



Nine respondents made comments following this question. Three head teachers made reference to the fact that examining can support the professional development of teachers. Four respondents mentioned the time pressures involved. One respondent indicated they encouraged and valued examining experience so much that they offered staff financial incentives.

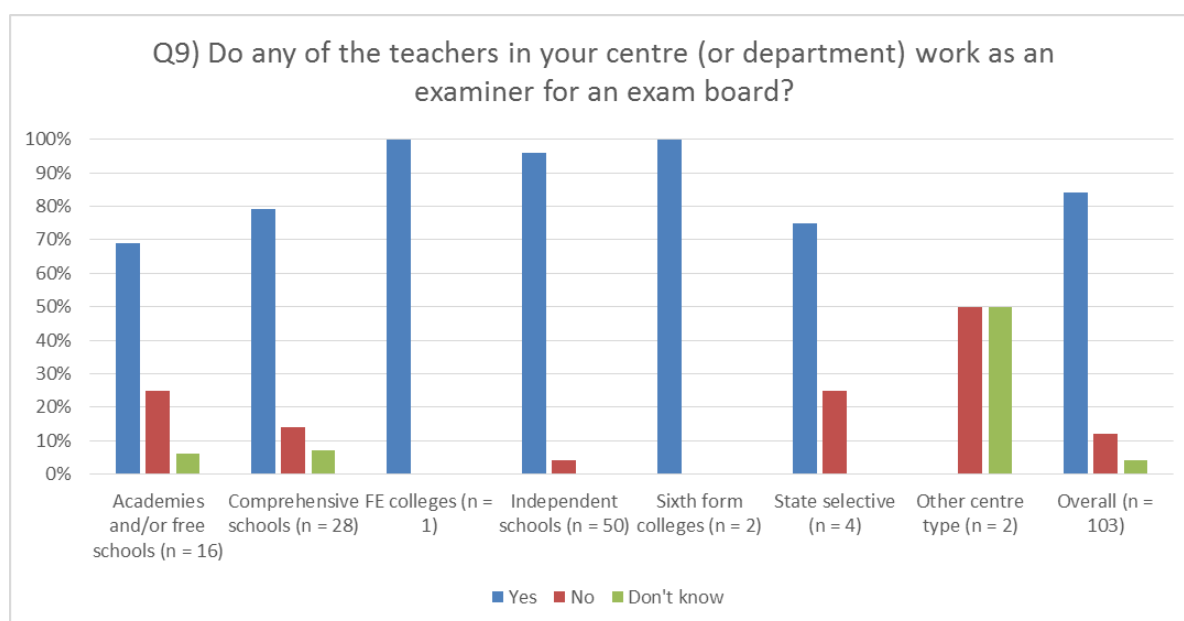
'We offer a £1000 examiner bonus if they examine a paper that we teach at the school.'

Deputy Head, Modern Foreign Languages, Independent School

Do any of the teachers in your centre (or department) work as an examiner for an exam board?

A total of 87 assistant/deputy heads and head teachers (84 per cent of the sample) indicated that they did have a teacher in their centre working as an examiner compared with 12 (12 per cent) that did not and four (four per cent) that did not know. Independent schools were significantly more likely to report having teachers working as examiners (96 per cent) compared with 79 per cent of comprehensive schools and 69 per cent of academy schools. These figures should be viewed with caution as the sample size is low here and as such cannot be said to be fairly representative of centres nationally.

Figure 13.



Assistant/deputy heads and head teachers were asked to indicate whether teachers working as examiners held any benefits for their centre. In total, 102 assistant, deputy heads and head teachers chose to make a comment.

A total of 29 assistant/deputy heads and head teachers commented that teachers working as an examiner gained an increased understanding of the mark schemes and the way in which they are interpreted by examiners.

'They have a better understanding of how mark schemes are applied.'

Deputy Head, Mathematics, Independent School

Of all the respondents, 17 stated the experience would enable teachers to help their students prepare better for upcoming examinations.

'Good feedback on how to prepare students for examinations.'

Head Teacher/Principle, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Comprehensive

A further 17 respondents mentioned examining would allow their teachers to understand expectations from exam boards better. This included a more general sense of being able to understand what they felt exam boards were 'looking for'.

'Inside knowledge of the type of answers the Boards are looking for'

Deputy Head, Modern Foreign Languages, Independent School

Teacher history of examining

Across all of those surveyed, the majority of teachers (60 per cent) had never been an examiner compared with 14 per cent that were currently examiners and 26 per cent that used to examine.

It is worth noting there is a higher proportion of former examiners than current examiners. We are unable to tell how long ago these former examiners were involved in marking and therefore how up to date their views of the system might be.

Current examiners were asked 'In your experience, has being an examiner helped you in your teaching profession?' The majority, 128 (92 per cent), agreed their role as an examiner had helped in their teaching profession compared with only eight (six per cent) who said it had not.

A total of 55 respondents made further comments on this subject. The most frequently raised points are presented below. These closely match the benefits of examining identified previously by head teachers.

Understanding exam requirements

Fifteen respondents said that examining had helped them understand what was expected of students by exam boards.

'I have a much clearer understanding of the requirements of the examinations.'

Deputy Head, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Academy and/or Free School

Increased knowledge of mark schemes

Eleven respondents said that examining had helped increased their knowledge of the mark schemes and how they are applied.

'Working as an examiner helps understand how mark schemes are applied'

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Independent School

Other benefits mentioned by a smaller number of teachers included:

- improved ability to prepare students for examinations (8),
- increased knowledge of the specifications (7),
- improved their teaching practice (6) and
- increased knowledge of the process scripts go through (5).

Reasons for stopping examining

All former examiners were asked 'why did you stop examining?' A total of 251 respondents gave reasons why they have stopped examining. The most frequently made points raised were as follows.

Time constraints

The most frequently cited reason given by former examiners was lack of time or time constraints, mentioned by 108 (43 per cent) respondents here. This was primarily in relation to the marking workload and their ability to manage examining alongside other commitments.

The majority of these comments were extremely generic, for instance 'lack of time'. Therefore, we are unable to ascertain whether this might refer to time restrictions in their personal life, from their teaching role or the length of the marking period.

Of those respondents that did elaborate, 6 referred specifically to the short turnaround time for examining work.

'... the quantity was too much within the dead line.'

Classroom Teacher, Modern Foreign Languages, Academy and/or Free School

Examiner pay

The perceived low pay was mentioned by 79 (31 per cent) former examiners who did not believe the pay was a fair reflection of the workload.

'Remuneration insufficient for the huge amount of time and effort involved.'

Head of Academic Administration, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Independent School

Workload

The size of the workload was mentioned by 44 (18 per cent) of former examiners. The references indicated that a notable degree of strain had been put on examiners as a result of this.

'The workload was excessive...'

Head of Department, Other (including Social Sciences and Arts), Academy and/or Free School

Examining alongside teaching

A total of 34 (14 per cent) of former examiners made reference to the problems they had juggling their teaching and examining roles simultaneously.

'Could not fit marking for an exam board with marking school work.'

Classroom Teacher, English, Comprehensive

'I found it impossible to teach full time and mark properly.'

Head of Department, English, Independent School

Standardisation/online marking

Online marking or standardisation was only mentioned by two former examiners.

Call for evidence

A call for evidence was sent to 54 professional organisations including educational organisations and subject associations. Ofqual asked these organisations to tell them:

- What works well in the marking process for written exams?
- What does not work well in the marking process?
- What improvements are needed and what are the barriers to those improvements?

Responses were received from three organisations:

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), which represents over 17,000 head teachers, deputy head teachers and other senior staff at secondary schools across the UK.
2. The Royal Historical Society (RHS), a subject association that represents 'the interests of history and historians'.
3. The English Association, which 'exists to further knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of English language and literature and to contribute to the development of English studies'.

Three responses were also received from individuals: an academy head teacher; a former head teacher and history examiner; and a current head of sixth form.

Findings

All three organisations noted the importance of consistency and reliability in the marking process. ASCL stated, '*the marking process carries such high stakes both for individual students and institutions*'. This view was echoed by the English Association, which said '*a carelessly marked paper could ruin an applicant's chance of a place at their chosen university*' and by the RHS, which observed that the quality of marking affects '*the life chances of students seeking to maximise their opportunities for both higher level study and employment*'. From the individual responses received, the head of sixth form noted that the importance of exam performance means '*it is no longer uncommon for [teachers] to lose their jobs due to poor results*'

What works well in the marking process for written exams?

The RHS stated its '*considerable confidence*' in the overall reliability of the marking process for general qualifications, although some individual members had expressed concern about the quality of marking of A level history qualifications.

ASCL and the RHS agreed that the introduction of online marking had improved the quality of marking. ASCL noted that online marking meant fewer scripts were lost, and that exam boards were able to monitor the accuracy of examiners' marking continuously throughout the marking period. Both organisations also agreed that item-level marking improved the consistency of marking, with the RHS noting the particular benefits of item-level marking in history qualifications where a single question paper includes questions covering many different historical periods. Item-level marking means that each question can be marked by '*a marker with expertise on that period*'. However, the RHS does not believe that item-level marking alone presents a solution to the issues that can result in inaccurate marking. It also notes that some teachers are concerned that item-level marking may make it more difficult for examiners to '*take an effective overall view of a script*'.

The English Association supported item-level marking for the same reason as the RHS: English question papers can include many set texts and allocating specific questions '*according to marker preference/expertise could result in more accurate assessment*'. However, although the English Association supported item-level marking, it did not support on-screen marking, stating that it is '*putting experienced markers off*' because the need to sit at a computer for long periods of time '*is both fatiguing and inconvenient*'.

ASCL and the English Association both noted that improved access to exam scripts (after results have been issued) has improved the transparency of the marking process. The English Association explained '*teachers can...see where examiners have missed points, failed to award marks or simply marked within too narrow a scale*'. ASCL said that the availability of scripts meant that students and schools were now more likely to challenge instances of what they believed to be poor marking practices.

What does not work well in the marking process for written exams?

Inconsistencies in the standard of marking across the different exam boards and across subjects within exam boards were highlighted in a number of responses. ASCL observed that although some exam boards have '*highly effective quality assurance systems*' that they use to prevent and identify poor marking, these systems are not widespread across all exam boards. ASCL said that exam boards rely too heavily on senior examiners, who '*operate in different ways rather than having a standard approach*'. The RHS points to particular issues in A level history, where schools have described '*students whose results seem inexplicably out of step with predictions*'.

These concerns are echoed in two of the individual responses received. The head of sixth form said that at '*each exam session, colleagues are staggered at the inconsistencies we come across*'. The academy head teacher cited instances where students predicted an A/A* grade have received a C grade, and vice versa.

The replacement of face-to-face standardisation meetings with online standardisation was commented upon by the English Association, which noted that *'there is no substitute for face-to-face meetings'*. ASCL also commented that many of its members *'would be sorry to see the total disappearance of face-to-face [standardisation] meetings'*. The former examiner who responded to our call for evidence said that he stopped marking when his exam board introduced online standardisation, because he no longer had the opportunity to discuss marking issues with the Chief Examiner and other examiners.

Issues with the application of mark schemes were mentioned by all three organisations. The English Association gave examples of mark schemes where there were a very small number of bands, *'with too few marks in each one'*, poorly worded performance descriptors and inaccurate indicative content. In contrast, the RHS was concerned about inconsistent application of the mark scheme by examiners. ASCL did not directly express concern about mark schemes but noted that good mark schemes *'are more likely to lead to more consistency of marking quality'* and that changes to the qualification system itself, with *'unrealistic timescales and changes of direction'* make it difficult for exam boards to ensure that their assessments and mark schemes are well designed.

The RHS and the English Association both raised concerns about high performing students receiving low grades because they fail to provide an 'expected' answer. The English Association attributes much of this issue to the use of overly prescriptive and narrow assessment objectives. The RHS cites ambiguously worded questions that *'create situations in which good students write answers that do not fit the desired template'* and which inexperienced markers *'may mark down'*.

This perception of less experienced examiners as less reliable markers is to some extent echoed by the English Association's response, which notes that newly qualified teachers may be less likely to be familiar with the full range of set texts. However, the English Association also notes that the most experienced examiners may have less up-to-date subject knowledge than more recently qualified teachers. The RHS reinforce that *'in our subject there is no substitute for subject expertise in the marker'*. They go on to suggest that this cannot simply be measured by training in the discipline to degree level, but rather knowledge of the curriculum; or *'reasonable knowledge of the specific period and issues addressed in the questions being marked'*

What improvements are needed and what are the barriers to those improvements?

ASCL makes the case for improving the quality of marking through giving assessment *'a higher profile within the professional framework of the teaching profession'*, and supporting and valuing examining work as part of a professional development programme. To that end ASCL is encouraging its members to take up

membership of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) and use its training programmes.

ASCL also wants more schools to recognise the professional development benefits for teachers acting as examiners, and to be more supportive of teachers who choose to become examiners. It cites the example of one college that provides a secure room where teachers can carry out their marking both in and out of college hours. ASCL also recommends that senior examiners should be subject to the same '*rigorous professional practices*' as permanent full-time staff within exam boards.

ASCL notes the challenge of recruiting sufficient numbers of examiners, particularly for reformed general qualifications that are likely to include more written exams and more extended writing. This applies to examiners of all levels, with ASCL reinforcing that '*only the very best senior examiners should be recruited*'. ASCL believes that there should be more consistency of approach between exam boards in their recruitment, training and performance management of senior examiners.

The challenge of recruiting examiners is also mentioned by the RHS and the English Association. The English Association suggests that the remuneration offered and the time pressures involved make examining relatively unattractive for practising teachers. The RHS also observes the challenge of the limited availability of markers '*with the requisite subject expertise*' (which it considers essential for the accurate marking of history exams) and the limited funds available to '*reward them for undertaking the exacting task of assessing often complex answers*'.

Appendix A: Methodology

The teacher survey responses were analysed in a three-stage process, detailed below.

1. Quantitative review. A basic statistical analysis was carried out of the responses received to the closed-response questions within the consultation, which allowed an initial high-level overview of responses to questions 1 to 18.
2. Qualitative review. The free, open-text responses were coded and analysed following a thematic approach using NVivo software. This process has been outlined below.
3. The quantitative and qualitative analyses have been brought together and form the body of the report.

Qualitative methodology

1. The free, open-text responses for each question were imported into NVivo alongside details of stakeholder type (subject, centre type, etc.).
2. The coding framework was developed, building a thematic framework tree against which to code the responses, which involved several elements:
 - Evidence from consultation respondents – It is vital that a framework accurately reflects the evidence. Therefore an initial coding trial was conducted where nodes were organically created as they occurred in the responses of the consultation respondents.
 - In addition to the original coding tree, as new themes and issues developed through the analysis, these were captured to form new nodes.
3. Each individual survey response was coded, with quality control checks conducted at regular intervals to ensure coherence within each code and to make sure that no evidence was missed.
4. The data for each question was reviewed, as illustrated below:
 - Review of individual themes/nodes. Each node relating to known themes was opened and reviewed. From the evidence in each node it was possible to see the particular theme/issue in isolation and in the context of the question. It was also possible to see how many respondents commented on each theme, which then identified the main points.
 - Review of developing/previously unidentified themes. Where any new themes emerged, including odd one-off themes coded and captured under an 'Other' category, they are reviewed and included in existing themes, or categorised into a new theme.
 - Cross-referencing. Respondents frequently made more than one point in their comments, and the relationships between themes raised were explored. These were identified using two approaches. Firstly, each theme was critically assessed to identify causes, relationships and influential

factors. For popular themes, queries and matrices were used in NVivo to explore relationships and connections to other issues. Secondly a series of matrices were run and mapped across all of the data to help identify any areas which may have been overlooked. For instance, when a response cited an increase in 'pressure on examiners' there could be a strong relationship to 'administrative burden', which could then help to identify it as a potential cause.

- Review by stakeholder group. For each individual question the responses across stakeholder groups were compared to see whether there were any similarities and/or differences in responses.

Supporting evidence - Subjects taught by survey respondents

Please could you tell us which of the following English subjects that you teach and for which qualifications?

	GCSEs	iGCSEs	GCE A levels	iGCE A levels	Pre-U Diploma	IB Diploma	Other
English	81	21	8	0	0	0	2
English Literature	117	22	106	0	2	5	0
English Language	104	28	38	0	0	1	1
English Literature and Language	20	0	18	0	0	1	0

Please could you tell us which of the following mathematics subjects that you teach and for which qualifications?

	GCSEs	iGCSEs	GCE A levels	iGCE A levels	Pre-U Diploma	IB Diploma	Other
Mathematics	36	30	48	0	1	4	5
Further Mathematics	1	2	43	0	1	0	1
Pure Mathematics	1	0	16	0	0	0	0
Additional Maths	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Statistics	9	0	15	0	0	0	0
Decision Maths	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
FSMQ	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Please could you tell us which of the following science subjects that you teach and for which qualifications?

	GCSEs	iGCSEs	GCE A levels	iGCE A levels	Pre-U Diploma	IB Diploma	Other
Science	44	13	3	0	0	0	0
Additional Science	38	6	0	0	0	0	0
Biology	36	22	47	1	0	5	0
Chemistry	28	15	24	1	0	2	1
Physics	24	17	26	1	0	2	1
Computer Science	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Applied Science	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Science in Society	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Please could you tell us which of the following language subjects that you teach and for which qualifications?

	GCSEs	iGCSEs	GCE A levels	iGCE A levels	Pre-U Diploma	IB Diploma	Other
French	229	56	162	0	0	10	7
German	123	32	86	0	4	9	5
Spanish	123	43	78	0	1	8	3
Italian	18	6	11	1	2	4	1
Mandarin	8	0	2	0	2	2	1
Urdu	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
Arabic	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
Latin	17	1	14	0	0	3	1
Ancient Greek	8	0	5	0	0	0	1
Japanese	7	0	6	0	0	2	0
Russian	8	1	6	0	0	2	1

Please could you tell us which of the following 'other' subjects that you teach and for which qualifications?

	GCSEs	iGCSEs	GCE A levels	iGCE A levels	Pre-U Diploma	IB Diploma	Other
Art and Design	18	1	16	0	1	0	1
Business Studies	20	0	28	1	0	0	4
Classical subjects	6	0	8	0	0	0	0
Design and Technology	20	1	14	0	0	2	1
Drama	17	0	13	0	0	1	0
Economics	5	0	26	1	0	1	0
Geography	27	8	31	0	0	1	1
History	46	11	51	0	1	4	0
ICT/Computing	20	6	12	0	0	0	4
Media/Film Studies	6	0	8	0	0	0	1
Music	17	4	18	0	0	2	0
Physical Education	14	2	14	0	0	0	0
Political Studies	1	0	23	1	0	0	0
Psychoogy	5	0	42	3	0	0	0
Religious Studies	34	1	30	0	0	1	0
Sociology	1	0	8	0	0	0	0
Philosophy	0	0	6	0	0	0	0

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