

**Techniques for monitoring
the comparability of
examination standards**

**Edited by: Paul Newton, Jo-Anne Baird,
Harvey Goldstein, Helen Patrick and Peter Tymms**

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Paul Newton, Lead Editor.

Foreword

Our examination system is unique. Students have a wide choice of subjects at both GCSE and A level. For most of these subjects there is a choice of which examination board to select. The students' achievements are then reported using a grading scale. That means that almost all students end up with a unique set of certificated results. Yet the same students will use these sets of results to compete against each other for places in educational institutions or in the jobs market. That competition is only fair if there is confidence about the comparability of standards across these examination results. Comparability of examination standards is therefore of prime concern to QCA.

This situation perhaps explains why there has been so much work about comparability in England in the last few decades. However, there has been no attempt to bring it all together in one place. That is what we have now done.

In publishing this book QCA is hoping to help advance and stimulate thinking about comparability as well as to make widely available expert commentaries on the techniques used to monitor it. We have attempted to make the book as readable as possible so that it is suitable for a wider audience than this subject normally attracts.

In September 2007, Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, announced the Government's intention to legislate to create a new independent regulator of qualifications and tests, taking over the role of QCA as regulator, and reporting directly to Parliament rather than to Ministers. An interim regulatory organisation will be in place, within QCA, in the spring of 2008, to prepare for those changes. We intend to use this book as a focus for the interim regulator to hold the ring for expert debate about the comparability of standards in qualifications.

QCA is very grateful to all the experts who have contributed to this book. We hope that assessment organisations, academics and others in this country and beyond will find it an invaluable reference and a source to inspire further thinking and practice.

Isabel Nisbet
Director, Regulation and Standards, QCA

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