

Corporate Plan Activity	Business Lead	Projects Previous Status (Nov)	Projects Current Status (Jan)	Update since last report noting areas you regard as good practise and areas of significant concern
1.1.1. Ensure grade standards are maintained in GCSEs, AS and A levels.	Cath Jadhav			In December we published the Summer Report and Infographic. Alongside this we published a report and detailed data on inter Board comparability. We have continued technical discussions with the Exam Boards via STIG to reach agreement ahead of writing our regulatory requirements for Summer 2017. We intend to publish a series of blogs which seek to debunk some of the myths about setting standards and grade boundaries for the education sector. This is a strategy we plan to continue.
1.1.2. Monitor exam board quality of marking.	Emma Scott			We are undertaking an audit into Exam Boards quality of marking controls and developed a test plan to be implemented in the coming months. SRR are using data from the Boards to augment the audit test plan. We have data from one board and data from the other boards is due by the end of the month.
1.1.3. Evaluate exam boards' mechanisms for quality assurance of marking.	Emma Scott			In addition an audit is being conducted into Exam Boards recruitment and performance monitoring of examiners. We are monitoring the implementation of Review of Marking / Moderation and Appeals (ROMMA) to determine the extent to which mark changes are indicators of issues with the quality of marking.
1.1.4. Complete work to revise regulations for exam boards' reviews of marking and appeals systems.	Kate Evans			Recommendations to the Chief Regulator will be made at the end of January in line with planned deadlines. This will allow us to 'activate' some existing conditions by the close of the financial year. This would be in line with our proposed plan. This area of work will be reflected in our Corporate Plan for 2017-2018.
1.1.5. Research the impact of native speaker candidates on standard setting in A level French, German and Spanish.	Rachel Taylor			We have completed preliminary analysis considering the performance of native speakers compared to non-native speakers and the potential implications for maintaining standards. We are drafting a report due for publication in March along side publications on inter subject comparability. Stakeholders had expected an early publication on our position.
1.1.6. Formalise our position on inter-subject comparability, following our engagement with stakeholders.	Dennis Opposs			The Board agreed our position on inter subject comparability at the November meeting and plans are in place for announcements to be made in March. An implementation programme will begin in the next financial year.
1.1.7. Complete the development of the National Reference Test and consider its future role in setting standards in GCSEs.	Tim Leslie			Preparations for the test in schools (20th February - 3rd March) are well advanced with the required number of schools in place and a suitable number of test administrators and markers recruited. Work continues with Exam Boards to develop approaches that will enable information from the NRT to be used in GCSE awarding. We have stated that the first time NRT data might be used will be in 2019.
1.1.8. Continue to conduct research into improved methods for the maintenance of standards.	Dennis Opposs			Each of the four GCSE Exam Boards have agreed to carry out research which we will be coordinating. This research will aim to develop new approaches to awarding which improve the maintenance of standards over time. These will be medium-long term projects.
1.1.9. Review the effectiveness of our rules on exam board support materials, marketing and teacher events.	Emma Scott			The mystery shopper programme of work continues to be rolled out. We are following up some indicators of poor practice with Exam Boards. GQ Policy have reviewed the requirements in this area and plan to consult on revised guidance in March 2017. We will also publish our interim report on the mystery shopper findings at this time.
1.1.10. Compare methods of maintaining performance standards against alternative methods, including those used in other countries.	Dennis Opposs			We have provided feedback to the authors of the international symposium papers in advance of the event in March 2017. Final arrangements for the symposium are being agreed.
1.1.11. Audit exam boards' systems related to malpractice.	Emma Scott			The findings from the malpractice audit have been shared with Exam Boards. In the main Exam Boards had appropriate processes and procedures in place. Several Exam Boards have made representations in response and these are being considered by Legal. Any resultant regulatory action will be implemented by April 2017.
1.1.12. Evaluate the potential for statistical methods to spot anomalous scores that may indicate malpractice.	Emma Scott			Evaluation has been completed. Next steps to be decided.
1.1.13. Review exam board provision of special considerations and reasonable adjustments and their impact on fair outcomes.	Emma Scott			An audit of has been delayed but is expected to be completed by May 2017. The delay is due to a change in scope of other audits and reflecting burden on Exam Boards.  We have discussed the recent official statistics related to this area with Exam Boards and challenged them to provide reasons for the increase in some provision of access arrangements. We have also discussed with other interested stakeholders. We are reviewing the latest Exam Board Centre Inspection Report and will be requesting additional information from the Exam Boards on their follow-up actions.  We are considering what additional data analysis can be undertaken to aid our understanding of provision of both reasonable adjustment and special considerations. We are meeting with SEN stakeholders to discuss further.
1.1.14. Review our regulatory approach to general qualifications, other than GCSEs, AS and A levels.	Richard Garrett			We have completed the review of our regulatory approach. Work in preparation of beginning work in priority areas including reviewing assessments taken in Core Maths qualifications and considering any statement we may make about the relationship between GCSE and IGCSE® ahead of Summer 2017. We have announced the withdrawal of the criteria for Entry Level qualifications.
1.1.15. Continue to research factors that affect validity.	Beth Black			Work continues on a collaborative research project with Oxford University looking at the move from modular to linear qualifications. This is a long and deep project. We have augmented our work on level based mark schemes into the programme of marking reliability studies where two strands of research will look at factors that may impact on validity. The moderation project will complete, as planned, by the end of March. We have scoped a new project on predicating predictability with the main data collection taking place in April and March which will lead to the development of a taxonomy of predictability. EAR reviews for 2016 will be published at the end of March.
1.2.1. Set regulatory requirements for qualifications to be taught from 2018.	Richard Garrett			We began a consultation on 1st December on the remaining foreign languages to be reformed. We have advised DfE on the changes needed to subject content for ancient languages to allow for qualifications in biblical Hebrew to be developed.
1.2.2. Accredited qualifications that will be first taught from 2017.	Alison Tonkin			The majority of subjects submitted in the early round are due to complete by April 2017. Pearson have picked up two subjects dropped by AQA (History of Art and Statistics). These will move to a first submission. These will aim to be completed by the end of July. Further Mathematics remains outstanding as Boards are trying to accredit Maths A Level first. Only one Maths A Level has been accredited to date. This will delay Further Maths. The pace of accreditation in Maths has been expressed as a concern by the Minister. Most subjects with the exception of Further Maths, Media and some languages have one accreditation each.

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1.2.3. Monitor the delivery of reformed qualifications taught from 2015 and 2016 as they start to be assessed.	Emma Scott			We are carrying out a "Readiness Review" to seek assurance that each Exam Board has identified and is adequately managing any risks to delivery for Summer 2017. This will involve some external expertise and is planned to complete by end of February 2017.  Audits of GCSE English and A Level Science Non-Exam Assessment arrangements may be delayed until September 2017 due to resourcing issues.  We continue to review changes to assessment strategies.  We are putting in place our monitoring programme for those first assessed in Summer 2017.
1.2.4. Monitor exam board standard setting at first awarding.	Cath Jadhav			See update in 1.1.1
1.2.5. Put in place the regulatory requirements for how exam boards will set GCSE grades 9-1.	Richard Garrett			Consultation on 9-1 closed on 6th January 2017 and we are now analysing the outcomes with a view on making an announcement on the final requirements in February 2017.
1.2.6. Continue to provide information to students, teachers and parents, employers, business and other stakeholders about changes to reformed qualifications, using their feedback to tailor our approach.	Sian Sankey			We have met with a number of subject associations and spoken at a number of events including the Teaching Schools Council Conference, Beyond Levels Conference and Association of School and Colleges regional events. Wider intelligence has been provided on assessment and teaching practise in schools including a focus on science subjects. We have also developed a new approach of taking stands at Conferences which has allowed for a new way of engaging with stakeholders. This approach has proven a good way of gathering intelligence which we are using to continue improving our approach. We are continuing with the 9-1 campaign. Over the past two months we have completed and analysed our first wave of market research, worked with an agency to produce a number of promotional videos and initiated our social media strategy.
1.2.7. Monitor pricing of reformed qualifications and associated services.	James Gordon-Cumming			We have completed a review comparing legacy and reform prices and continue to track when Exam Boards publish this information
1.2.8. Continue a programme of research to evaluate the effect of qualification reforms, including the effect on teaching and learning of separately awarded assessment of practical science at A level.	Beth Black			We have now gathered all the data related to the Strand 1 of A level science practical research and are in the process of writing this up for publication and conferences. Research for Strand 2 will have concluded by June 2017. We have undertaken interviews with teachers related to A level science and will the aim of publishing our findings in March 2017 and this will also be presented at the British Educational Research Association Conference in September 2017.
1.2.9. Provide information on the similarities and differences between the GCSEs, AS and A levels available in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.	Richard Garrett			We published a statement on similarities and differences on 29th November. The final draft statement was included at the last Board meeting.
1.3.1. Monitor, evaluate and report on risks to validity in National Assessments.	Paul Newton			We have created the methodology and carried out initial meetings with the STA to explore their approach to content sampling. We have also sent invitations to potential participants who were nominated by various stakeholder groups including the STA to gather subject specialists in primary maths and English.
1.3.2. Once standards are set for new Key Stage 1 & 2 tests this summer, set out how we will monitor the maintenance of those standards over time.	Julie Swan			SRR have commenced a project to review the validity of KS2 Maths and Reading Test. We have observed three STA training delivery with local authorities on moderation. We are currently recruiting for a permanent member of staff to lead on this area of work and in the interim this area of work is being undertaken by staff within GQ.
1.3.3. Provide independent scrutiny of the process by which standards are set and maintained.	Julie Swan			
1.3.4. Provide a view of the Standards and Testing Agency's technical advice to Ministers on changes to National Assessment arrangements.	Julie Swan			We have reviewed an early draft of the STA consultation on proposed changes to the assessment arrangements and fed back to STA. STA plan to release this at the end of January 2017.
1.3.5. Maintain risk-based oversight of National Assessment delivery.	Julie Swan			A paper is being prepared for discussion at the Board Strategy day.
2.4.1. Review current Functional Skills qualifications and use this to inform regulatory proposals for their replacements.	Catherine Large			We have developed a policy position which will be presented to the Board on the 25th January. We held an event with awarding organisations in December which informed this policy position. We have strengthened our project management and governance approach to functional skills reform to meet the timescales outlined by the Department. We have given advice to the Department about digital functional skills and expect to be invited to further discussions about the reform of these qualifications.
2.4.2. Scrutinise awarding organisations and their qualifications: • used to support occupational entry, including those used as a 'licence to practise' or as part of apprenticeships. • at level 6 & 7 eligible for Tier 4 visas. • awarded in high volumes, to recognise skills gained on 'short courses' in areas including first aid and health and safety. • that are vocational and vocationally-related and taken in schools and colleges, including those changed to meet new performance table requirements.	Bryan Horne			In the context of the VTQ baseline review and strategic priorities agreed by SMG work has been focused on 14-19 vocational qualifications appearing in Department for Education performance tables. Related to this area of work we have carried out a number of technical evaluations for qualifications in response to specific DfE queries. A number of research activities are underway looking at the setting and maintaining of standards of Applied General Qualifications. With regard to the area specifically outlined in the Corporate Plan we have taken the approach that we will respond to issues when they present dependant on scale, scope and risk in line with the new strategic priorities. The security sector report will be published in January 2017 and focuses on a sector which is primarily short course-high volume.
2.4.3. Evaluate how awarding organisations: • secure user support for qualifications. • set and maintain standards. • establish controls in colleges and training providers.	Bryan Horne			The 2016 audit programme has been brought to a conclusion and this has fed into the baseline review in VTQ. This has supported the development of a 2017 plan of audit and research.  TQT continues to be reviewed and we are focusing on where risks have been identified including concerns with regards to ECDL.  Analysis of the 2016 Statement of Compliance returns has been completed and this has led to some membership bodies being included in the 2017 baseline audit plan.
2.4.4. Regulate the quality of end-point assessments within reformed apprenticeships where we are asked to do this.	Catherine Large			We have applied the same strengthening approach as with functional skills reform to our project management and governance. We have commissioned a risk analysis of apprenticeships to inform our policy approach which will be brought to the next Board Strategy Away Day. At the last Technical Advisory Group, in December, we considered four new assessment plans through our EQA approach. We have met with other EPA providers and are developing our approach with them.
2.4.5. Promote validity and comparability by providing awarding organisations with information, including additional guidance on our Conditions.	Christine Forde			We have begun a targeted high level review of our general conditions consulting with colleagues from across the organisation. This will seek to identify if we have issues with the current framework that require addressing and where further guidance may be helpful. Guidance relating to the provision of training (G4.2) is in train and our approach to Direct Claim Status is likely to focus on producing guidance.

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2.5.1. Improve the usefulness of our Register of Regulated Qualifications, including the range and quality of information provided.	Jan Roszkowski			We have reviewed our work planned for the Register and identified priorities up the end of March in consultation with our developer. This work has now commenced on projects including building an application programming interface to allow our data to be available more widely. We will also improve the search functionality to make finding qualifications easier for all users. Improvements will be made to the back end technology to take advantage of new features available to us which will improve the overall usability of the Register.
2.5.2. Seek employer and other views on high volume qualifications used for occupational entry and apprenticeships in a sample of sectors – beginning with engineering, construction and hair and beauty – and use this to inform our approach to regulating occupational qualifications.	Catherine Large			This project has been completed since the last update to the Board. We decided not publish employer guidance and this area of work was subsumed by developments in our approach to the Skills Plan.
2.5.3. Continue to collect and use feedback from qualification users, stakeholders and representative groups.	Catherine Large			We have met with a range of key stakeholders in the last two months including IFA, AELP and AOC. Please refer to strategic relationships paper to the January Board with reference to our engagement with conferences and engagement with sector bodies. These engagements have informed our approach to reform. We have completed a review of end users of Applied Generals.
2.5.4. Develop a research programme into vocational assessment.	Paul Newton			We have undertaken initial exploratory analysis in the relationship between Direct Claims Status and validity. This has been discussed with Legal and VTQ to inform next steps including research and audit. We are due to commence a call for evidence related to Direct Claims Status. We have continued to survey the literature related to developing proficiency specifications in VTQ.
2.5.5. Review evidence of the quality of vocational assessment skills in colleges and other providers, and consider whether action is needed	Byran Horne			A review of Assessor qualifications will be included in 2017 activity.  We remain a member of the ETF group responsible for the development of assessor and teaching qualifications.
2.5.6. Enhance our new IT Portal to extend the efficient exchange of information from and to awarding organisations.	Jan Roszkowski			We have designed new architecture which is now in testing. We have also built a 'bulk edit' function which make it easier for awarding organisations to make mass changes to qualifications. This development was requested by the awarding organisations. The launch date for the enhancements will be at the end of January 2017.
2.5.7. Align the approaches of qualifications regulators in the devolved administrations to minimise burden on awarding organisations.	Catherine Large			We have signed a MOU with CCEA. We are preparing for the annual 5 countries framework owners event in February 2017 to which we will be submitting a number of papers. We are still working on getting into place information sharing protocols.
3.6.1. Develop our people, particularly to strengthen our assessment and regulatory capability.	Rebecca Hadley			We are sending twenty staff on the LSE Short Course on Regulation training in March this CPD will continue to be rolled out across the organisation. We have further supported staff CPD with additional staff completing a Level 5 BTEC in Complaint Handling and Investigation and APM Introductory Certificate in Project Management.
3.6.2. Complete recruitment to our operating model.	Rebecca Hadley			The number of vacancies has remained stable for the last two months at seventeen. We continue to review the business need for these vacancies as we identify resource requirements through business planning.
3.6.3. Plan for and invest in long term workforce capability.	Rebecca Hadley			Talent management and succession planning is now on a 15 month priority list. This need has been identified by staff in the recent staff survey. We have held focus groups in response to some of the issues raised with regards to staff development in the staff survey and management have agreed an overall RCS action plan.
3.6.4. Begin to implement location independent working.	Marc Baker			A draft smart working document is in place and is out for comment by the RCS management team who are being encouraged to implement wider across the directorate. This initiative is red as SMG have postponed further consideration until the new financial year when the future accommodation strategy is clearer
3.6.5. Align corporate and personal objectives and improve performance management.	Rebecca Hadley			Further work is required on appropriate objective setting to achieve consistency across the organisation including a clearer definition of what 'exceeded' and 'must improve' categories look like.
3.6.6. Build our bank of external subject experts, particularly in vocational assessment	Pete Arnold			Our bank of experts has remained stable since the last update. We are about to enter a renewal period over the next few months, as three-year contracts are up for review, and the number of experts is expected to decline. Some experts may choose not to re-new and some may be unable to provide sufficient evidence of maintaining their subject expertise over the three years. We have not made further progress with recruiting vocational expertise and are seeking to address this by working in partnership with VTQ.
3.7.1. Implement a five-year budget that delivers the £1.1m savings expected by 2020 in our Comprehensive Spending Review settlement.	Paul Bird			Current assumptions have been reviewed and judged to be not sustainable. We expect to develop a budget plan to meet our remaining three year plan. We have continued with budget training for managers to improve ownership of financial management. Our 2017-2018 budget will include programme reductions of £1.6M and £270K in core funding.
3.7.2. Identify our long term space requirements and determine accommodation options available when our current lease ends in March 2018.	Marc Baker			We have identified our long term space requirements but not their location. The DfE have proposed a business case to extend the lease at the SFA offices and use this as the single location for a cluster of education civil servants in Coventry. This draft proposal would require some other government departments including Department of Health to be moved out of the building. The DfE business case is due to be submitted by the end of January. If the DfE business case fails we will progress our case to extend the lease at Spring Place by the end of February. The DfE delays are impacting on our planned schedule to resolve this issue.
3.7.3. Migrate business processes to more efficient digital platforms.	Jan Roszkowski			In December we commenced with developing a new document centre. Phase One will end at the end of March and will deliver the core documents centre plus a Risk Centre to make available the Single View of Risk (SVR) to Standards teams. The core document centre will provide a template to develop approaches and functions for other teams over the course of the next financial year.

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3.7.4. Continue to streamline and reduce cost in our IT provision.	Jan Roszkowski			The continued successful take up of technology means that our costs have increased with additional licence costs. This has been balanced against improvements in working practises such as a two-third reduction in the use of paper documents. The overspend is being controlled and should now come in under the new forecast to be reviewed at Star Chamber in January. SMG has given approval to adopt Azure Resource Manager which will improve how technology is managed and reduce costs into the next financial year.
3.7.5. Support wider access to our data by the research community and implement improved data sharing with other Government bodies.	Jan Roszkowski			Noted above in 2.5.1 work has now commenced on projects related to the register including building an application programming interface to allow our data to be available more widely. We will also improve the search functionality to make finding qualifications easier for all users. We are also using the data catalogue to publicise the data sets we hold in the data warehouse with PowerBi being attached to these data sets to provide analysis and insight.