

Board Paper

Paper 26/19

Date

17 July 2019

Title

Chief Regulator's report

Report by

Sally Collier, Chief Regulator

Paper for information**Open paper****Recommendation**

1. The Board is asked to note and discuss the matters reported.

Overview

2. This summer's exams have now finished and exam boards are now marking scripts and will shortly be awarding. Over the coming weeks Ofqual staff will attend a selection (including some high risk awards) of awarding meetings for both general and applied general qualifications.
3. The debate around the uptake of Modern Foreign Languages at GCSE and A level remains prominent. In early July the British Council published its [annual survey report](#) on trends in language teaching in schools in England, in which it claimed the difficulty of MFL subjects was 'putting students off'.
4. I am pleased to report that, following the Board's approval in June, our Annual Report and Accounts will have been laid in Parliament ahead of the Board meeting. I am grateful to all of the staff who have been involved in preparing these.

General Qualifications**Summer series**

5. The last exams of the summer series have been taken. Marking is well underway and by the time of the Board meeting, exam boards will be moving to the awarding phase.
6. We were pleased to see a reduction in the number of exam packages opened in error this year, likely to be at least in part due to the exam boards requiring that

two people sign to say they had checked the package before it was opened (there has long been a two person requirement but no previous necessity to sign a log). We were also pleased to see a reduction in assessment material errors and particularly the severity of the error.

7. There were, however, some serious security breaches. AQA replaced two papers before the exam series started because of a security breach as the exam papers were being delivered to a centre. The media has also reported that two pages from an AQA GCSE religious studies paper were circulating on social media before the exam was taken.
8. Obscured images of two questions from a Pearson A level maths paper appeared on Twitter during the night before the exam was taken. Pearson was able to quickly identify the centre from where the paper was leaked. Pearson replaced a further maths paper that was to have been taken the following week, as the package of that papers at the centre was found to have been opened.
9. We are closely monitoring how Pearson awards its A level maths qualification and we joined a meeting Pearson held with five students who had raised concerns about the impact on students of the incident.

European Qualifications Framework referencing

10. On 11 June we presented, with CCEA Regulation, our updated report referencing the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) to the EU's Advisory Committee on the EQF.
11. The re-referencing process required us to engage with two international experts as we wrote the report and to obtain written comments from committee members from four other countries and from Cedefop (The European centre for the development of vocational training) on the report ahead of the meeting. We are now finalising the report and aim to submit it for final approval, and publication, by the end of the summer.

Summer Symposium

12. We held our summer symposium for stakeholders on 26 June – the fourth year we have done so. During the event we covered:
 - a. Reflections on this year's summer series.
 - b. A summary of recent and ongoing work, such as inter-subject comparability and quality of marking.
 - c. Our evaluation of reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels, including our work to gather views from teachers and our research on the indirect assessment of practical skills in A level Science, on the functioning of GCSE modern foreign language assessments and on the impact of linear and modular qualification design.

- d. Awarding in 2019, including the use of the outcomes of the National Reference Test.
13. With around 40 attendees, most of our main stakeholders were represented. The feedback received to date indicates that the event was well received.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Apprenticeships

14. We have now responded to Sir Gerry Berragan's letter asking for our views on how to optimise the EQA of Apprenticeships, following the Board's steer in May. The Institute has also completed work to strengthen existing EQA arrangements and, on 26 June, launched a new EQA framework.
15. Against this backdrop, our day-to-day work on Apprenticeships continues. Ofqual has now accepted 65 Apprenticeship Standards for EQA through regulation. There are now 80 End Point Assessments (EPAs) on our register, two thirds of which have been through our technical evaluation process. We continue to process further requests for our regulation from Trailblazers (employer groups).
16. EPAOs who are not yet Ofqual-recognised continue to apply and we are responding efficiently to their requests. We have now put our new approach into practice to recognise with special conditions a niche EPAO whose expertise is unique in the sector. We expect this to prove a useful model for recognition in the future as the volume of requests from specialist EPAOs increases.

T Levels

17. The next wave of Technical Qualifications are currently being procured and we are undertaking our recognition reviews in parallel as planned.

Functional Skills Qualifications (FSQs) English and Maths

18. Our process of technical evaluation for reformed FSQs in English and Maths remains underway and we continue to prioritise this work, to engage with AOs where necessary to clarify expectations, and to flex our approach where it will secure greater efficiency. At the time of writing, eight AOs had completed technical evaluation for their FSQ in maths, and eight for FSQs in English.

This section has been redacted, as its publication would be prejudicial to the effective conduct of public affairs.

Digital Skills Qualifications

19. Following publication of our Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQ) Conditions in April, we met with awarding organisations on 13 June to explain our rules and discuss arrangements for technical evaluation. We anticipate that technical evaluation will begin in the autumn so that the qualifications can be available for first teaching in September 2020.

20. Our policy consultation on the regulation of Digital Functional Skills Qualifications was launched on 16 May following discussion of our proposals with the Reform Committee of the Board. The consultation closes on 26 July.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

21. We have begun a long-term programme of work to review our regulation of all English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications.

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AO engagement

23. We continue to work closely with the Federation of Awarding Bodies. They have been supportive of our work on transparency of qualification pricing.

Forward Look

24. Over the next two months, we will be working towards ensuring that the two results days in August go as smoothly as possible. We will be monitoring the awarding of all qualifications, and working with the exam boards and Department should any issues arise.

ANNEXES

- A Confidential Items (Closed)
- B Letter from Sally Collier to Sir Gerry Berragan (Closed)
- C Functional Skills Qualifications technical evaluation status (Open)
- D Qualifications Price Index (Closed)

Paper to be published	YES
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