

Date

27 November 2019

Title

Chief Regulator's Report

Report by

Sally Collier, Chief Regulator

Paper for information and decision

Recommendation

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

Overview

2. Since the Board last met, we have finalised the current phase of some substantial pieces of work. Earlier this month we announced our decision to adjust grading standards in some GCSE modern foreign languages alongside a review of content by the DfE. We also published details of a major enforcement case concerning AQA relating to reviews of marking which resulted in our largest fine of £350,000, and compensation to affected Centres of £735,750.
3. On 6 November the pre-election period (also known as purdah) began ahead of the General Election on 12 December. In line with Cabinet Office guidance we have revised our publications and engagement schedule.
4. Between 6 and 8 November, I visited our fellow regulators. I met CCEA in Northern Ireland with Qualifications Wales, and then SQA in Edinburgh.

General Qualifications

5. The exam boards have announced to schools and colleges the change to the summer 2020 timetable so all A level mathematics papers will be taken in the afternoon. This will allow the exam boards to take extra steps to protect the security of those papers. The boards are preparing to pilot or introduce a range of measures to protect the security of exam papers more generally. We will update the Board on these measures and on the discussion at the DfE's committee at the meeting.
6. In October we published a Notice of Intention to impose a monetary penalty and notice of intention to accept a settlement proposal in respect of AQA's reviews

of marking and moderation in 2016, 2017 and 2018. The proposed monetary penalty is £350,000. AQA's proposed settlement includes compensation by way of a credit note to the centres affected by its breach of condition of a total value of £735,570. At the same time we published a notice of intention to impose a monetary penalty on AQA in respect of an error in one of its 2018 A level French papers. The proposed amount is £50,000. In November we published an undertaking given to us by OCR in respect of its handling of reviews of marking and moderation (the same issue as for AQA) and a letter of concern from me.

A level Maths investigation

7. Our investigation into the appropriateness of grading standards in the reformed version of A level maths in 2018 has progressed significantly. The investigation is composed of three strands: 1) statistical analysis of candidate attainment in the first two years of the specification and across the transition to the reformed version, 2) comparative judgement of assessment difficulty in 2018 and 2019, and 3) comparison of candidate performance, based on script evidence, across 2018 and 2019. All experimental phases of work have been completed. We are currently interpreting the results and formulating the investigation findings.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

T Levels

8. The contracts for the Wave 2 Technical Qualifications (there are seven of these, scheduled for first teaching in September 2021) have been let to NCFE (for five of the TQs) and City and Guilds (for the remaining two).

Reformed Functional Skills Qualifications (FSQs) in English and maths

9. The large majority of the reformed FSQ project is now complete. We are continuing work to implement our plan for the ongoing regulation of FSQs including monitoring AO invigilation arrangements; setting and maintaining standards; and evaluating the effectiveness of the reforms.

Accountability for Awards (Moderation and verification of centre assessment judgements)

10. We published the decisions for our Accountability for Awards policy consultation on 19 September, alongside our technical consultation on the Conditions, requirements and guidance we plan to put in place to implement this policy. Our technical consultation closed on 14 November, and we plan to bring the outcomes to the Board early next year.

Higher Technical Qualifications (L4/5)

11. DfE's consultation on 'Improving Higher Technical Education' closed at the end of September. We published our [response](#) to the consultation where we outlined the importance of having a common understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of DfE, Ofqual, the Institute for Apprenticeship and Technical Education (the Institute) and the Office for Students (OfS), and explained the

regulatory tools available to us that could be applied to the proposed system of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs).

Strengthening KS4 Performance Table Qualifications

12. Our work on strengthening the regulation of vocational and technical qualifications on school performance tables is progressing as planned, and we published our proposals for a new regulatory framework on 21 October.

Monitoring of delivery of Applied General and Technical Qualifications (AGTQs)

13. There are 514 Applied General and Technical Qualifications counting in the 2019 DfE performance tables. We have been monitoring the delivery of these qualifications, focusing in particular on the external assessments, throughout the year.

Forward Look

14. Later in December we intend to publish our annual report on this year's summer exam series, and also the outcome of our investigation into the grading of the 2018 maths A level. We also look forward to the exam boards' interim report on action taken following the Joint Council for Qualifications' independent review into malpractice earlier in the year, which will be published in December.
15. As the calendar year comes to a close, I am grateful for the efforts of the organisation for delivering a significant programme of work over the past year. Amongst other achievements, we have overseen the smooth delivery of the summer series and begun new strands of work on innovation in qualification delivery and awarding. We will see whether there are any new challenges and opportunities for us following the Election next month.

ANNEXES

- A Confidential Items (Closed)
- B Strategic dashboard (Closed)