

# Report of the working group on building examiner capacity and culture

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## **The working group**

The working group on building examiner capacity and culture was formed in April 2015 and comprised representatives of the following organisations:

AQA  
ASCL  
CCEA  
City & Guilds  
HMC  
JCQ  
NAHT  
OCR  
Pearson  
WJEC

Discussions with other stakeholders, including the Department for Education, Ofqual and teachers' associations, also helped to inform this report.

## Foreword

Teachers are the backbone of the exam system. The thousands of dedicated teachers who also serve as the cadre of examiners who work with awarding organisations make it possible for our young people to obtain their qualifications.

Having enough expert, high-quality examiners is essential to achieving reliable results, and reforms to qualifications mean that we will need to increase the number of examiners and continue to improve their quality. There are numerous benefits to teachers, their students and their schools and colleges, that come from being an examiner. Many teachers are increasingly realising that examining is directly beneficial to their classroom practice and to their students' education. We need to bring more teachers into the examining profession and begin a long term cultural change to ensure that every teacher and school and college leader sees examining as a valuable and important activity.

This working group brings together the school and college leaders' associations ASCL, HMC and NAHT, along with the major exam boards and the Joint Council for Qualifications, to address this challenge collectively. Over the past year, the group has reviewed the incentives, disincentives and barriers to teachers becoming (and remaining) examiners, and considered the development of examiners as professionals and the impact of examining on teachers' classroom practice.

This report summarises the group's work, discussions of shared views and areas of difference, and the commitments made by our organisations to improve the system. It is published alongside a website for teachers and school and college leaders, and two new award schemes to recognise the contribution both of individual teachers who examine, and those schools and colleges who actively support this important work.

We believe that this work can serve as the start of a renewed commitment throughout the education system for us all to play our part in ensuring that the qualifications system continues to improve and to build the capacity for it to meet future challenges. That will help to ensure that young people receive grades that are a fair and accurate reflection of their work – and that the assessment expertise developed by teachers participating in the process also improves the quality of education they receive.

*Mike Buchanan, Chair, HMC*

*Patrick Craven, Director of Assessment Policy and Quality, City & Guilds UK*

*Michael Crossan, Examinations Business Manager, CCEA*

*Sharon Hague, Senior Vice President, Pearson Qualification Services*

*Andrew Hall, Chief Executive Officer, AQA*

*Russell Hobby, General Secretary, NAHT*

*Gareth Pierce, Chief Executive, WJEC*

*Leo Shapiro, Chief Executive, OCR*

*Malcolm Trobe, Interim General Secretary, ASCL*

*Michael Turner, Director General, JCQ*

## **Executive summary**

Thousands of teachers are relied upon to mark millions of exam papers each summer, to allow exam boards to award students the qualifications they deserve. The system depends on experienced, expert teachers, who are thoroughly trained and monitored to ensure that a high standard of marking quality is maintained throughout the process. Sophisticated online systems have increased the quality of this training and allow exam boards to monitor examiners' performance in real time.

There are many roles that teachers can play in the examinations system, from marking and moderating through to qualification development, question paper writing and standard setting. These 'senior examiner' roles can offer an alternative or parallel career for those who wish to use their subject and assessment expertise outside the classroom. Examiners, and the school or college that employs them as a teacher, are paid in accordance with the amount and type of work they undertake.

Becoming an examiner is an excellent form of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers. Through examining, teachers develop their assessment expertise and strengthen their knowledge of the specification and subject content. Schools and colleges can maximise this benefit by encouraging their teachers to consider become examiners, supporting those who are, and sharing good practice across their institution.

Although the exam system is fundamentally fit for purpose, there are a number of challenges. Reforms to qualifications are likely to increase the number of examiners needed and their skill level and quality. Workload concerns and competing priorities can discourage teachers from becoming examiners. There are also myths about how the system works, such as the move to online marking being interpreted as a move to automation that removes the need for teachers' professional expertise, when in fact current reforms to qualifications make this more important than ever.

Too often examining is not seen as a prestigious, professional endeavour, or as a crucial part of professional teaching or an individual teacher's career. This perception needs to change, since assessment expertise is a core part of excellent teaching, and examining is one of the most accessible and practical ways for teachers to develop their expertise in assessment.

Schools and colleges could do more to encourage their teachers to consider examining and to support those who do, building on the excellent practice seen in some institutions. They can recognise examining as valuable CPD and an important aspect of a teacher's career, and ensure that examiners' expertise is used to greatest effect across a whole subject department or an entire institution.

Exam boards can also do more by improving training, developing communities of practice, formally recognising the importance of the examining and the commitment of those who do it, and improving the perception of examining as a professional endeavour.

The organisations represented on the working group have made a number of commitments in response to these findings, including the launch of two new award schemes to recognise the contributions to examining of individual examiners, schools and colleges, and the creation of a new website for teachers and school leaders interested in learning more about becoming an examiner, sharing their staff's examining expertise and best practice, and supporting their staff to be examiners.

## 1. Introduction

Each summer, 8 million qualifications are awarded to 15-19 year old students at schools and colleges in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. This complex system depends on an estimated 34,000 examiners – the vast majority of whom are practising teachers – to mark and moderate the assessments for each of those qualifications.

Reforms to qualifications have created new challenges for the system. While there is likely to be an overall reduction in the number of examinations sat, some aspects of the reforms will increase the number and quality of examiners needed.

The examinations system is entirely dependent on teachers. Without their expertise and commitment to marking and moderating, exam boards could not award qualifications to our young people. There are also considerable benefits to those teachers who participate in the system. Examining is an effective form of CPD, improving teachers' assessment expertise and their knowledge and understanding of the subject content in the qualifications they are teaching. This can directly impact on classroom practice, improving the quality of teaching and, ultimately, students' results. Some schools and colleges make the most of this expertise by sharing good practice throughout their institution, to ensure that all teachers and students can benefit. They encourage their staff to consider becoming examiners, and recognise their examining activity as meaningful CPD.

Although the system works effectively overall, there are challenges. This working group has sought to identify those challenges and consider what can be done to address them so that more teachers will want to become and remain examiners, to the benefit of both the qualifications system and to education more broadly, through the impact on those teachers' own professional practice.

The major exam boards and school and college leaders' associations have come together in recognition of the opportunity for improvement and the need to be proactive to ensure that qualification reform does not jeopardise the delivery of accurate and timely results for students. In light of potential future risks, the organisations that can make a difference are collectively committing to developing the capacity that the system needs as it becomes necessary, rather than waiting for a problem to emerge.

But these challenges cannot be met without the teachers who have the expertise to serve as examiners, and school and college leaders to support them and disseminate good practice throughout the system. Working together, we can refresh and grow the pool of examiners and ensure that the expertise developed through examining is used to improve the quality of teaching in schools and colleges to the benefit of the young people we are all here to serve. The members of the working group have each committed to changes that can help to bring more teachers into the examining profession. Over the long term, we hope to build a culture where examining is even more valued and valuable, and where every teacher and school and college leader recognises both the importance of playing their part and the benefits examining can bring to their classroom practice and their students' education.

## 2. How examining works

Each summer, around 2 million students sit around 16 million exam papers and, a couple of months later, they are awarded qualifications designed to reflect their performance in those exams. What is much less well known is what happens in the time between students sitting their exams and receiving their results.

This system depends on an estimated 34,000 individuals – the vast majority of whom are practising teachers – to mark those papers, and more still to moderate non-exam assessments that are marked by teachers in schools and colleges. These professionals play a number of key roles, from marking itself to producing question papers, and from standard setting to qualification development. Rigorous training and robust processes aim to ensure that standards are consistent and that the quality of marking is high so that, ultimately, every student receives grades that are a fair reflection of their performance.

### *How marking happens*

Before any papers can be marked, exam boards have to recruit their examiners. Each board's requirements vary slightly, but in general markers are required to have significant, recent teaching experience in the subject, at the level of qualification they will mark. Teachers apply directly to the exam board they wish to work for and will be appointed if they meet these requirements, or placed into a holding pool if there are more applicants than marking positions available.

No marking takes place until these examiners have received specialised assessment training, in a process known as standardisation. This takes place either face-to-face in groups or, increasingly, online, which evidence shows maintains the consistency of marking quality.<sup>1</sup> An experienced examiner – often the person who wrote the paper – will take examiners through each question, using exemplar student answers to show how to apply the mark scheme consistently. This is also an opportunity to deal with any flaws, errors or omissions in the mark scheme, and to ensure that unusual answers are dealt with consistently.

Once standardisation has taken place, each examiner is given an allocation of scripts. This will vary depending on the board and subject, and the experience and capacity of the examiner, but each might typically receive around 200 to 300 scripts.

Most marking now takes place online rather than using hard copy scripts. The online marking systems show a scan of the paper (or an individual question) on screen, exactly as in hard copy, and allow the examiner to record their mark and annotate the paper if they so wish. This is faster and more secure than sending millions of hard copy scripts around the country by post. Online marking systems can also be used to send different questions to different examiners, rather than examiners marking whole scripts; this can improve marking consistency and also allows questions that require specialist knowledge to be targeted at examiners with the necessary expertise.

Online marking also allows exam boards to monitor marking quality in real time and to intervene if an examiner is deviating from the agreed standard. Different systems do this in different ways, but generally the system will spot if an examiner is repeatedly out of line with the average mark for a given question or paper. When this happens, that examiner's work will be escalated to a more senior colleague, who will

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<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain, S. and Taylor, R. (2011), "Online or face-to-face? An experimental study of examiner training", *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 42: 665–675.

check that the mark scheme is being applied correctly. If it isn't, that examiner will be taken off live marking and will receive additional training. They are only allowed to return to marking students' scripts once they have demonstrated that they are marking at the correct standard – and if they fail to do this, they are taken out of the process entirely. Any scripts previously marked by this examiner would be re-marked by an experienced examiner – before the student gets their result.

After the marking period is over, every examiner is given a rating by the exam board to reflect the quality of their work. The small number who do not meet a minimum standard are not permitted to mark the following year.

### **Examining roles**

Other parts of the process, such as question paper production and moderation of non-exam assessments, take place throughout the year, while activities such as qualification development or reform happen on a periodic basis. All of these activities involve various roles grouped under the broad title of 'examining'. The entire qualifications system depends on high-quality examiners with the necessary professional expertise.

'Senior examiners' are those who develop qualifications, set question papers and determine grading standards in the awarding process. These can be time-demanding roles and many are taken by part-time or retired teachers, or those who have moved into senior examining roles as an alternative route to progressing their career within teaching itself. Senior examining can become an alternative career in itself for those who wish to use their subject and assessment expertise outside the classroom.

While each of the boards define and name the roles slightly differently to fit into their own specific processes, some typical roles are set out in the table below.

<b>Examiners</b>		<b>Moderators</b>	
<b>Senior Examiners</b>	<b>Examiners</b>	<b>Senior Moderators</b>	<b>Moderators</b>
<b>Chair of Examiners *</b>	<b>Examiner</b>		<b>Moderator</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains the standard at subject level.</li> <li>Generally experienced senior examiners who have "come through the ranks" to take on additional duties.</li> <li>May have a deputy chair for ad hoc help.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marks candidates' scripts / responses to exam questions in accordance with a pre-defined mark scheme.</li> <li>Adheres to the Code of Practice and examination procedures.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews centres' assessment of candidates' work, in accordance with agreed criteria and procedures.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Chief Examiner *</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains the standard at specification or qualification level.</li> <li>• Supervises principal examiners.</li> <li>• Is a principal examiner or moderator for one unit within the specification.</li> <li>• Reports to the chair of examiners.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Visiting Examiner</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examiners who visit centres to mark performance-based components, rather than scripts.</li> </ul>		<p><b>Visiting Moderator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderates performance-based components</li> <li>• Checks a centre's marking of candidate performance, rather than moderating assessments marked by a centre.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Principal Examiner</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains the standard at unit or component level.</li> <li>• Acts as both lead assessment writer and lead examiner, unless the role is split.</li> <li>• Reports to the chief examiner.</li> <li>• Larger subjects may also have an assistant principal examiner to share the load.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Team Leader (examiner)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marks candidate scripts and guides and co-ordinates a team of examiners to ensure they are marking to the agreed standard.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Principal Moderator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures units that are assessed by centres meet the required standard.</li> <li>• Reports to chief examiner.</li> <li>• Larger subjects may also have an assistant principal moderator to share the load.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Team Leader (moderator)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderates centre assessments and guides and co-ordinates a team of moderators to ensure they are moderating to the agreed standard.</li> </ul>
<p>* The Chair and Chief Examiner are responsible for maintaining standards across both examined and moderated units within a specification.</p> <p>All roles are held by teachers or former teachers with expertise in a subject.</p>			

Most senior examiners will begin their examining career as an examiner or moderator alongside their full-time teaching role. Some will then choose to take on more responsibility, for example as a team leader, and in due course may progress to one of the senior roles responsible for question paper production, standard setting or qualification development. This career path, alongside a teaching career, can present teachers with an opportunity to broaden their skills and knowledge behind the classroom and give longevity to their teaching career as they move towards retirement, or if they are simply looking for a more flexible working arrangement.

## ***Remuneration***

Examiners receive a contract in advance of their appointment which outlines the rate of payment they should expect to receive for the work they will carry out within the engagement period. This information is available in different formats, depending on the nature of the work, for example a fee per script or question marked, an hourly or daily rate or a total contract payment.

Some examiners receive additional fees in recognition of their level of responsibility but generally all examiners receive the same payment for assessing candidates' work. Examiners' employers receive a standard teacher release payment if examiners are absent from their school or college on a normal working day. The teacher release payment is a standard payment agreed by the exam boards and is paid directly to the school or college.

Examiners are paid regularly, in arrears, for the work they have completed. All boards aim to pay their examiners within 30 days of the work having been completed. Payments for attending meetings or for undertaking online training are made as soon as possible after the meeting has taken place. Similarly, when assessing candidates' work, payments are made in stages throughout the assessment period.

There are standard fees that apply across all subjects, such as attending meetings or delivering training. However, there is variance across subjects in relation to question writing or the development and quality assuring of assessment materials and the marking of those materials, depending on the complexity of the subject, the length of the paper and the style of questions. The setting of marking fees can also be influenced by market forces, especially in areas where there is a perceived shortage of good quality examiners.

A typical examiner can expect to earn around £500 to £1,000 per exam series, depending on the type and volume of work, with those in senior examining roles generally earning considerably more.

### **3. Professional benefits of examining**

Becoming an examiner is an excellent form of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers. Through examining, individual teachers develop their assessment expertise including knowledge of the specification and strengthening of their subject content knowledge. They gain experience of the practical application of the mark scheme and see common errors made by candidates which can, in turn, improve the ways they support pupils in their understanding of how to answer questions and apply their knowledge and skills in the exam.

Aspects of teachers' workload can become easier to manage as examining experience enables teachers to more easily develop exam style questions, create model answers and closely focus marking and feedback of pupils work to the requirements of the specification and mark scheme, making that process quicker.

#### ***Benefits for the whole school***

There are also wider benefits for the subject department and ultimately the whole school or college. A teacher can act as their department's expert on the specification and mark scheme, sharing their expertise to disseminate best practice as well as improve internal moderation processes.

Examining can have a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across a school or college and can improve the progress pupils make. Some of the benefits can include:

- improvements in assessment and moderation processes
- improved reliability of internally-produced data, including grade predictions
- improved quality of feedback given to pupils
- greater collaboration between departments and between schools
- more continuity and progression of knowledge and skills through Key Stage 3 to Key Stages 4 and 5.

By supporting their staff to consider becoming examiners, and encouraging heads of department to use and share this expertise, schools and colleges can also demonstrate the priority given to CPD for their staff and the direct impact and value of this on classroom practice.

#### ***Case studies***

"Marking and moderating is a huge asset," says Jayne Phillips of Great Barr Academy in Birmingham. She is now a senior examiner and has worked as an examiner for many years, and explains that examining is an excellent way of consolidating your subject knowledge and understanding of the qualification. "I absolutely regard the work of examining and moderating as part of my CPD. It makes me a better teacher. It makes me a much better professional and practitioner in the classroom."

She explains: "Imagine you're marking 250 papers – the specification and the requirements go straight in. That means that when you are teaching, the knowledge of the specification is there straightaway so it just becomes second nature in your delivery." She argues that this also significantly boosts teachers' confidence in the classroom.

Ian Young of Alcester Grammar School agrees. He says that there is a direct impact on students' results that comes from teachers understanding the skills needed in the exam – which is more than just the teaching the subject content. “It is that ‘how’ that enables a student to attain the higher grades.” He believes that the increase in expertise and impact in the classroom makes teachers “more motivated in themselves and is highly likely to keep them not only in your school but in the teaching profession full stop. Everyone gains from that.”

Jayne Phillips says that “as a head of department, if I’ve got four members of staff teaching the same course I will make sure that the standards are adhered to across the department.” She says that examining helps her and her team to understand the required standard and spot ways to improve their teaching. “I can pick up on good and poor practice... I’ve thought ‘I’m going to do it this way’. Equally, poor practice becomes very evident so I’m able to relay to the teaching staff in the department to avoid all of these pitfalls. I impart that onto my students so that they know the requirements.”

The opportunities for progression in an examining career are highlighted by Ian Young. “I gradually worked my way up to become a team leader, principal examiner and then chief examiner.” He says that with linear qualifications, fitting examining in around the teaching workload is easier than ever as it happens at the quietest time of the year. “I think there is a misconception that examining gets in the way of the school’s timetable,” he says.

#### **4. Challenges in the system**

Although the examinations system is fundamentally fit for purpose,<sup>2</sup> there are a number of challenges with regard to how the system operates now and how it is changing. There are also practical challenges for teachers who are or wish to become examiners.

##### ***Qualification reform***

Reforms to GCSEs, A-levels and technical and applied qualifications in England are driving a change in the required examiner cohort. The move from modular to linear general qualifications reduces overall demand for examiners since resits and multiple entries are decreasing and most exams will now be taken in the summer – although this also means there is increased demand for examiners during the peak summer marking period.

However, the reforms also reduce the amount of non-exam assessment and increase the amount of examination overall. For example, most reformed GCSEs have 3.5 hours of exam assessment compared to typically around 2 to 2.5 hours in their predecessor qualifications. Moreover, a reduction in assessment of knowledge recall and a move towards assessing higher-level skills increases the proportion of assessments that need to be marked by a highly skilled subject expert.

These changes are likely to drive an overall increase both in the number of examiners needed and in their skill level and quality. The changes and their likely impact are explored in more detail in Appendices B and C.

##### ***Teacher shortages***

National challenges with teacher recruitment, particularly in some subjects, may have a knock-on effect on examiner recruitment. Since examiners can only be recruited from the available pool of practising and recently retired subject teachers, a shortage of teachers in a particular subject is also likely to cause a shortage of examiners in that subject.

##### ***Teacher workload***

Despite the views of those involved that examining has significant benefits for schools, colleges, teachers and students, it is often not seen as a priority, particularly in the context of accountability from Ofsted and performance tables. Teachers may be concerned about taking on additional work given an already heavy workload.

##### ***Perceptions and myths***

Many teachers have negative perceptions of examining, which can impact on the recruitment of examiners. Some of these might bear little or no resemblance to how the system actually works, but can nonetheless discourage teachers who might otherwise be interested from applying to become examiners.

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<sup>2</sup> Ofqual (2014), *Review of Quality of Marking in Exams in A Levels, GCSEs and Other Academic Qualifications: Final Report*. “Our findings show a complex and highly professional system, supported by expert examiners and improving technologies. The marking system in England is unusual in its scale, but it is well organised and tightly controlled, particularly at the most vulnerable points in the process. Fundamentally, we believe this is a system that people can have confidence in.”

Some of these perceptions are rooted in valid concerns, which exam boards can do more to address. For example, payment of examiners on a per-script or per-question basis can create an impression that examining fees are 'piece rates', more an administrative job than one for skilled and experienced professionals. It can also make it difficult for prospective examiners to understand how much they will be paid and to value their time appropriately.

Other perceptions, though, are simply not correct. For example, anecdotal feedback from teachers suggests that the move to online marking is understood by some to mean *automated* marking – i.e. marking by computer, undermining the role of teachers' expertise and professional judgement in the examining process. In fact, the online systems used for marking are simply a medium to allow candidates' scripts to be presented more easily to examiners and to create other benefits described in section 2 of this report. These myths serve as a barrier to examiner recruitment as well as undermining confidence in the system overall.

## **5. Improving the system**

The working group has explored all of the challenges above in detail and has considered a number of potential changes and solutions. We believe that some of these are achievable and will have a positive impact, and these are set out as recommendations and commitments later in this report. This section sets out some of the ideas discussed by the working group and how they could be implemented.

### ***Professionalisation and culture***

One of the biggest challenges in improving examiner recruitment, retention and quality is that of professionalization: too often examining is not seen as a prestigious, professional endeavour. Much of this perception stems from myths and misconceptions, but some is based in the nature of the relationship between examiners and exam boards, which is explored below.

It is also often not clear how examining fits as part of the teaching profession and an individual's career. We know, as discussed earlier in this report, that examining can have a positive impact on teaching, learning and assessment in the classroom, and is an excellent form of CPD for teachers.

But it is more than that. Exam boards can sometimes be seen as separate to and distant from teachers, when the reality is that exam boards can only deliver exam results thanks to the tens of thousands of teachers who are directly involved in the process as examiners. Exam boards and teachers share a common objective for their students: that the results they receive in their qualifications are a fair reflection of their ability and performance in the assessments. This entirely depends on there being enough skilled examiners to accurately mark those assessments. Teachers' participation in the qualifications system is a prerequisite to that system delivering the right results for their students.

Examining can also serve a fundamental purpose in the teaching profession itself. Assessment is a core part of teaching, and assessment expertise is a core part of being an excellent teacher. This follows from the need for high-quality formative and diagnostic assessment to inform teaching and learning, but is increasingly the case in England given the move to linear qualifications and the removal of National Curriculum levels necessitating ongoing measurement of students' progress, and an increasing focus from Ofsted on ensuring that schools' assessment of their students' progress is valid and reliable. Being an examiner is one of the most accessible and practical ways for teachers to develop their assessment expertise.

### ***Examining as part of a teaching career***

Many of those teachers who serve as examiners know that doing so can support their career progression as a teacher. Examining builds their own expertise and confidence, and some employers recognise the value in this. Individual teachers, schools and colleges, and the qualifications system as a whole, would all benefit from every teacher and every school and college leader understanding the important role that examining can play in every teacher's career. Seeing examining as a natural step to be taken at some point during a teaching career would improve the exam system as a whole and have a wide impact on the level of assessment expertise in the classroom.

We also need to develop a wider understanding in the teaching community of the career progression opportunities within the examining profession itself. Only a small

number of examiners will ever choose to take on senior examining roles and become more deeply involved in the process of delivering qualifications – but for some individuals this can be an exciting and meaningful way of using and further developing their subject, assessment and teaching expertise – particularly for those who do not wish to progress to management roles within a school. Many senior examiners will come to these roles towards the end of their teaching careers, but many take up a role alongside part or even full-time teaching, or take a break from teaching and develop specialist expertise that can then be taken back into the classroom. Cultivating an understanding of the career opportunities will help to ensure that examining is seen as a substantive, professional endeavour.

### ***How schools and colleges can support and benefit from examining***

Schools and colleges can also ensure that they are encouraging their staff to consider becoming examiners, and supporting those who do. In addition to the benefit to each individual's teaching practice, we have seen earlier in the report how some schools are actively using this expertise to improve practice across departments – and, ultimately, students' results.

The value of examining to a teacher's career and expertise can be reflected within the processes a school already has in place. Examining can be recognised and encouraged as part of discussions about professional career paths. Schools and colleges can also recognise examining as valuable CPD: institutions where staff are required to undertake CPD could recognise examining as one way of satisfying the requirement, while those which support their staff with CPD entitlements such as CPD days could allow them to be used for examining activity.

A strategic approach can help to ensure that examining has the maximum impact across an institution. School and college leaders considering how best to ensure their teachers are prepared to deliver reformed qualifications may wish to suggest that their staff could consider examining as a simple and effective way of engaging with the detail of new specifications and assessments. They may want to ensure that there are examiners among the staff across their key subject areas, or within specific target areas for improvement, and encourage whole-department CPD based on sharing the expertise of the examiners in the team.

School and college leaders could also consider simple ways to encourage examining and maximise its benefit. Designated "assessment champions" can act as advocates for good practice across an institution, for example by supporting subject departments in the design and standardisation of high-quality internal assessments.

### ***Support from exam boards***

The exam boards can also further professionalise examining. Each board is continually seeking to extend and improve training for examiners, to further develop the expertise of the examining workforce over time. Boards could also seek to develop communities of practice among examiners and to improve opportunities for peer support and networking – especially given increasing use of online standardisation, which can remove a point of face-to-face contact. Although all new examiners receive training from experienced examiners, more could be done to support recently-qualified teachers who become examiners, for example by giving them enhanced access to senior examiners to boost their knowledge and confidence.

Examining is a skilled and valuable activity but does not always attract the professional prestige it deserves. In some cases boards offer formal, structured or

certificated training opportunities. Collectively, the boards could formally recognise the importance of examining and to acknowledge the contribution and expertise of those teachers (and schools and colleges) who commit to it.

Boards can further improve the perception of examining as a professional endeavour and to ensure that there is greater transparency for current and prospective examiners about their roles, the commitment involved and the remuneration. Some boards are introducing more focused and specialised examiner roles, which makes it difficult to formally harmonise examiner roles and job titles across the boards. They could, however, work to improve clarity about the different roles and to promote a better understanding of both the examining system and the roles within it.

Similarly, while competition law rightly prevents the boards from harmonising their examiner fees, all would benefit from further professionalisation. All boards should work towards ensuring that their fees are evidently fair and consistent. Fee structures could be simplified over time, with greater transparency so that examiners are clear on what they are being paid, for what work.

We know that workload concerns and short marking windows can in some cases be a barrier to the recruitment and retention of examiners. Fundamental changes to the deadlines within the system are not possible, since A-level and GCSE results are required for university, college and sixth form entry. However, the boards could take into consideration which subjects are particularly challenging to mark, when scheduling each summer's exam series. JCQ, which coordinates the timetabling of exams, will ensure that this becomes an explicit consideration in timetabling future series.

### ***Support from elsewhere in the system***

Given the importance of assessment expertise as a central facet of excellent teaching practice, those organisations that seek to improve the quality of teaching should ensure that promoting professional development in assessment – including through examining – features in their work.

Work undertaken on behalf of the Department for Education on teachers' professional standards and CPD helpfully recognises the key role of assessment expertise in teaching.<sup>3</sup> Schools and colleges should ensure that examining is recognised as an ideal way of meeting these aspects of professional practice and development.

Encouragingly, the teaching profession is increasingly seeking to take responsibility for its own improvement. Initiatives such as the Chartered College of Teaching are an ideal way to promote good practice in assessment. Providers of initial teacher training, whether school or HE-based, should also ensure that their curriculum includes a focus on assessment and that trainee teachers are introduced to the workings of the examinations system, the role they can play in the system, and the positive impact this can have on their classroom practice.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards>;  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standard-for-teachers-professional-development>

## **6. Commitments and recommendations**

### ***Commitments from exam boards***

The exam boards represented on the working group will:

- Recognise individual examiners' and schools' and colleges' contributions to examining through two new award schemes (see Appendix D).
- Launch a new 'one-stop shop' website for teachers, middle leaders and school leaders interested in learning more about becoming an examiner, sharing their staff's examining expertise and best practice, and supporting their staff to be examiners ([www.examining.jcq.org.uk](http://www.examining.jcq.org.uk)).
- Provide additional support for examiners who are no longer teachers, to ensure that they are encouraged to examine for the reformed specifications.
- Pilot additional opportunities for recently-qualified teachers to have more in-depth engagement with senior examiners.
- Improve training to develop the expertise of the examiner workforce over time.
- Ensure that fee structures are simple and transparent, and improve clarity around the job titles for different examining roles.
- Seek to build and improve communities of practice, peer support and networking for examiners to further their professional development.

### ***Commitments from headteachers' associations***

The school and college leaders' associations represented on the working group will:

- Encourage schools and colleges to promote examining to their staff.
- Encourage schools and colleges to consider providing practical support for teachers who are examiners, for example by organising fewer meetings during the main examining period.
- Encourage schools and colleges to acknowledge and recognise examining as an effective form of CPD.

### ***Recommendations for others in the system***

- The Chartered College of Teaching should seek to become a centre of excellence in assessment and should promote and recognise examining as an ideal mechanism for teachers to improve their assessment expertise.
- Providers of initial teacher training should ensure that the importance of assessment is properly recognised in their curricula, and should introduce trainee teachers to the workings of the examinations system and the way in which participation can improve teachers' professional practice.

## 7. Conclusion

The examinations system is fundamentally fit for purpose. But it can improve, and it needs to in order to ensure that it will be able to meet the challenges of the future, particularly those arising from qualification reform.

To do this, we need to build capacity in the system – recruitment and retention of teachers as examiners, and development to continue to improve their assessment expertise. This will be sustainably achieved by developing a culture in which all teachers and school and college leaders understand the value in examining. Cultural change cannot happen quickly, and the work of this group is intended to be the start of that process, not the end.

There will always be challenges in recruiting, retaining and developing high quality examiners. Teachers and schools and colleges will always have competing pressures and priorities. Examining will always be additional work, requiring an extra commitment on top of the considerable effort involved in teaching itself.

But that effort has its rewards. It is essential for the exam system to function – young people cannot get the results they deserve without the commitment of teachers who choose to serve as examiners. And it can make a meaningful and significant difference to the classroom practice of those teachers, and so to the education of their students.

There is, therefore, an opportunity to secure those benefits, if everyone in the system commits to playing their part. This report sets out the commitments of the exam boards and the headteachers' associations to making change happen.

We hope that this work will help to address some of the myths around the exam system and will raise awareness of the benefits of examining and the ways in which schools and colleges can support their staff and make the most of the expertise they develop through examining. We also hope that it will encourage others in the system to recognise the importance of assessment expertise and the way in which examining can develop this capability throughout the education system. Working together, we can ensure that the qualifications system is able to face future challenges and that it has the maximum positive impact on young people's education.

## **Appendix A: Working group terms of reference**

### ***Background***

ASCL, HMC and NAHT, representing school and college leaders, and JCQ, representing the major exam boards (AQA, CCEA, City & Guilds, OCR, Pearson and WJEC) share the view that increasing schools' and colleges' recognition of the importance of teachers having a greater understanding of assessment best practice will lead to improved educational outcomes.

These same organisations also share an understanding of the need to build and develop the pool of markers available to exam boards, and that the support and training this provides to teachers can be a significant help in promoting this greater understanding of assessment best practice.

### ***Overarching aim***

To ensure adequate high-quality examiners for all major qualifications taken in schools and colleges across England, Northern Ireland and Wales and, in doing so, develop capability and capacity in assessment in the teaching profession as a whole. To embed examining and related activities as a vital part of the education system and professional development of teachers, particularly in the eyes of school and college leadership teams and the teaching profession.

### ***Working group terms of reference***

Overall, to produce a proposition for the education system, to present to the Government, that provides a sustainable examination system supported by school and college leadership and by the exam boards

To achieve a common understanding, in academic and vocational qualifications commonly taken in schools and colleges by 15-19 year olds, of the current examiner population, demand and supply, and attitudes, incentives, disincentives and barriers to examiner recruitment and retention for teachers and for schools and colleges

To determine the key requirements for examining over the next 5 to 10 years, including numbers and skills required

To improve understanding of the full range of examiner and other assessment roles, how the qualification system works and examiners' roles and progression within it

To identify and draw on best practice currently in place from both exam boards and schools and colleges in supporting teachers to be examiners and ensuring effective feedback of their assessment knowledge to inform classroom practice

To set out the proposition to schools and colleges: the benefits to the senior leadership team of having an appropriate proportion of staff as examiners

To set out the proposition to teachers: the benefits in being an examiner – in particular the CPD and development of assessment expertise – and how these might relate to the professional development / requirements of the teaching workforce

To determine what falls within a system-wide proposition, and what should be left to individual exam boards

## Appendix B: Estimates of future examiner requirements for general qualifications (GCSE, AS and A-level)

A range of factors arising from the design criteria for new GCSEs and AS/A-levels in England are set to impact on the community of examiners who work with exam boards to mark papers and moderate non-exam assessment (NEA). This analysis looks at these individually and, recognising these are inter-related, considers the aggregate effect.

The estimates in this and the following appendix are based on illustrative, generalised and high level assumptions that follow from the reforms to general, technical and applied qualifications in England. They are provided to give an indication of the issues that may impact on future examiner requirements and the possible nature and scale of those requirements at system level. They do not accurately represent changes to each awarding organisation's specifications.

### **Reduction in NEA components**

A key premise of the new specifications is that NEA is used only where skills cannot be assessed through written papers. In subjects such as GCSE English Language, controlled assessments previously marked by teachers and moderated by exam board assessors have been replaced by written papers. Whilst there is some overlap between the skill sets of a marker and a moderator, our experience is that teachers have a personal preference and we cannot assume that those who have previously moderated for a subject will be as keen to undertake marking. More pertinent is that the resource required to mark an entry is greater than the resource to moderate an equivalent sized entry.

We have modelled this change, as a theoretical example, for an A-level English Literature specification, where currently there are similar size entries for a written and a NEA unit to demonstrate the difference. In addition, we have modelled the change in requirement between the current and new structures of a GCSE Geography specification.

Component	Current Method	Entry	Current No. of Markers	Projected No. of Markers
English Lit Unit 2	Cont. Assmnt.	25,602	75	145
Geog Unit 3	Cont. Assmnt.	92,130	131	494

*Modelling impact of marking all scripts, rather than sampling using current model for controlled assessments. Quota adjustments, team sizes, decline rates and withdrawal rates remain the same.*

### **Increase in specification demand**

The increase in cognitive content demand in new specifications will require markers to spend more time considering students responses to examination questions on that content. We have made a simple assumption that the demand factor will increase the time to mark an individual paper by 10%. This extra time will require us to reduce individual allocations. We have modelled an example for A-Level English.

Component	Current Method	Entry	Current No. of Markers	Projected No. of Markers
English Lit Unit 1	Examined	27,868	161	180

English Lit Unit 3	Examined	15,115	86	95
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*Assumed 10% increase in time required to mark exams and quotas reduced accordingly. Quota adjustments, team sizes, decline rates and withdrawal rates remain the same.*

### **Subject-specific, targeted changes in demand**

For some subjects there have been targeted changes to content. These include the expanded GCSE Maths and the focus on 19th century texts in GCSE English Literature. Current English teachers are generally not used to teaching – and therefore examining – 19th century texts. There is a need to consider this impact on allocation size as markers get used to texts, potential responses and expectations. In mathematics we have an increased focus on problem solving, where students may apply different methods which need to be followed through by the examiner. At a basic level, an increase from two written papers in GCSE Mathematics to three increases the marker demand by 50%.

### **Increases in examining time**

Whilst the replacement of NEA with written assessment increases resource demand, there is also an underlying theme of longer exams. This will again lead to smaller allocations per marker. We have modelled this for two subjects that do not have controlled assessment: A-level Economics and GCSE English Literature.

Component	Current Method	Entry	Current No. of Markers	Projected No. of Markers
Economics Unit 2	Examined	21,333	117	150

*Assumed 20% increase in exam time & quota reduced accordingly. Quota adjustments, team sizes, decline rates and withdrawal rates remain the same.*

Component	Current Method	Entry	Current No. of Markers	Projected No. of Markers
English Lit Unit 2H	Examined	227,024	882	1515

*Assumed 45% increase in exam time & quota reduced accordingly. Quota adjustments, team sizes, decline rates and withdrawal rates remain the same.*

### **Changes to structure of qualifications.**

The decoupling of AS and A-level means that for many subjects we are examining 5 rather than 4 units. Whilst schools and colleges are currently determining their policy on AS entry any trend is unclear. We have modelled the impact of 75% of the current A-level cohort taking 2 AS units and 100% of cohort doing 3 A-level units versus current A-level entries. Across an average AS and A level subject the impact would be as follows:

#### *Current specifications*

AS entry volume is 1.5 times A-level entry

Assume 3 hours AS exams and 3 hours A2 exams

Total amount of exam time would be 1.5 x 3 hours (AS) plus 1 x 3 hours (A2) which equates to 7.5 hours

#### *New specifications*

For modelling purposes we assume that AS will be 3/4 of A-level entry (i.e. half the current AS entry).

On that basis, under new specifications assessment time equates to: 3 hours AS exams and 6 hours A-level exams

Total amount of exams time would be 0.75 x 3 hours (AS) plus 1 x 6 hours (A2) which equates to 8.25 hours

The total increase would therefore be three quarters of an hour, or a 10% increase in exam marking because of the decoupling of AS-level, even taking into account expectation that AS entries will fall significantly (e.g. by half). AS entries would have to fall to a third of the current entries before there was no increase on the amount of exam marking.

### ***Shift to from moderation to externally-marked NEA***

There are some significant increases potentially in some subjects with NEA being externally marked, often from video and portfolio evidence or from live performance. Subjects in this category currently include Music and Dance at A-level, Drama for two components at all levels, MFL speaking at A-level and GCSE, and A-level Geography, although marking methods are yet to be confirmed.

For subjects where visiting examination is being introduced such as Drama, instead of sampling a selection of candidates' performance all candidates will have to be assessed. This will increase the amount of time an examiner needs to be in the centre compared to a moderator assessing performance. This impacts on the logistics of visits, leading to each moderator visiting fewer centres. This causes us difficulty as there are limits to the number of days that we can ask examiners to commit to this work, particularly when the desire is to use practising teachers who are familiar with the subject and types of students. Their own schools and colleges limit the number of days they can be away from their own classroom. Again we see a pattern of an increased number of markers who will need to spend significant amounts of time considering individual performances.

Whilst visiting examining poses logistical constraints any move away from teacher-marked to board-marked will lead to a significant increase in time to assess the work and hence the demand for examiners. For example, given the proposal that A-level Geography fieldwork should be externally marked, we have estimated the time needed to assess an individual script for A-level Geography as 30 minutes. Modelled using a total entry of 8,329, this requires a total of 4,165 examining hours. Assuming that 40 hours is a reasonable amount of time for any examiner to spend on marking during the marking window, this entry would require 105 examiners, up from 48 previously.

### ***Endorsements***

Whilst the arrangements for monitoring endorsements are still being worked through, we should recognise that there will be some examiner resource demand associated with their use in English Language, A-Level Sciences and potentially GCSE Geography, GCSE Science and GCSE Citizenship.

### ***Conclusion***

The factors above point to an increasing demand for a pool of high quality examiners at a time when demands on teachers in schools and colleges are unprecedented. To attract the right quality, the benefits of examining need to be clear to teachers and

the requirements of the role have to be realistic. Inevitably there will be a significant number of new examiners joining the system as reform qualifications are introduced. Larger examining panels require more team leaders and we have built these changes to senior examining structures into our model. Additionally, we need to recognise the smaller workloads that are traditionally allocated to those new in role and the demands on senior examiners as they train those new in role alongside training their teams on the new elements of their specifications.

This analysis has looked at the factors associated with structural changes to reformed qualifications. It makes no attempt to consider demographics or changes in entry behaviour. It draws out the risks which need to be addressed collectively across the industry. These drivers of changes to resource requirements play out differently by subject; however, some of the subjects most significantly impacted are those where examiner recruitment is already more challenging, such as Geography. Whilst the total number of subjects offered at GCE and GCSE will be less, with some subjects being dropped, it is unlikely that many of those examiners will be able to transfer without the relevant subject expertise.

We predict that overall, taking all factors into account, there will be fewer panels of markers required but greater volumes in each panel and, recognising that no two subjects will be the same, the demand for markers is likely to go up by an average of approximately 20%.

## Appendix C: Estimates of future examiner requirements for technical and applied qualifications

### **Qualification: Level 1/2 Technical Awards**

**Change: Increase from 25% to 40% externally examined**

#### *'Worst' Case Scenario*

An increase of 60% in the externally examined requirements (difference between 25% and 40%) means a 60% increase in the number of examiners required. The range of moderated components remains the same so only a small reduction in moderators is possible, it is estimated that this also means a 10% reduction in moderators.

The table below forecasts the cumulative change to examiner numbers in the next 3 years, using 2015/16 as a baseline, based on one board's figures. Overall this results in a 24% increase in examiner and moderators numbers.

Year	Examiner Position Cumulative % Change	Moderator Positions Cumulative % Change
2016/17	51%	-9%
2017/18	56%	-10%
2018/19	60%	-10%

#### *Likely Scenario*

Taking account of the fact that the papers may not increase in length by 60% and the one-resit rule means fewer entries. In this scenario it is estimated that the number of examiners required increases by 30% and the number of moderators reduces by 20%.

The table below forecasts the cumulative change to examiner numbers in the next 3 years, using 2015/16 as a baseline. Overall this results in a 5% increase in examiner and moderators numbers.

Year	Examiner Position Cumulative % Change	Moderator Positions Cumulative % Change
2016/17	26%	-17%
2017/18	29%	-20%
2018/19	30%	-20%

### **Qualification: Level 2 Technical Certificates**

**Change: Increase from 0% to minimum 25% externally examined**

Level 2 Technicals are likely to be multiple choice question papers that don't need a subject specialist to mark. Depending on the guidance the marking can be automated, either through computer based test or data input. Therefore this will have no impact on the required number of specialist examiners and moderators, it will be easier to source data input administrators.

### **Qualification: Level 3 Technical Levels**

**Change: Increase from 0% to minimum 30% externally examined**

Given that there are 650,000 17 year-olds in England and 18% are enrolled in at least one Level 3 course, we can surmise that Technical Level entries should equal 115,000 entries per cohort.

Taking the following assumptions:

- On average each is doing a 2 A-level equivalent (1x Diploma or 2x Extended Certificate) then this would be 4 exams per student over the course of the 2 years.
- All first time exams are sat in June, resits are in January
- The examiners recruited will cover both June and January series, while there will be lower entries for January the shorter marking window means a similar demand for examiner numbers for both series

There will be 460,000 exams sat per June series. Using a standard allocation of 200 scripts per examiner this would mean an additional 2,300 examiners across the sector to mark the externally examined elements of Technical Levels when the changes are fully implemented.

It is not known how many moderators are currently employed for Technical Levels across the sector and how that number will change following the introduction of examined elements. It cannot be assumed that current moderators can automatically transition to being examiners as the skill sets are different and moderators may not have experience of marking external scripts.

## **Appendix D: Award schemes for examiners and centres**

### ***JCQ award for examiners***

The award gives formal recognition to examiners, moderators and those in other examining roles who have made a sustained contribution to examining. The award will be made to recognise three or more, five or more, or ten or more consecutive academic years' active examining service with the same exam board, as at Summer 2017 and then each subsequent year.

The award will be made automatically each year by each exam board to eligible examiners. Recipients will receive a certificate jointly branded by JCQ and the participating exam boards.

### ***Pilot JCQ award for centres***

The award gives formal recognition to recognise schools and colleges committed to encouraging and supporting their staff to become examiners. The award will be made to centres that demonstrate evidence of meeting a number of criteria around encouraging staff to become examiners, using the experience of examiners to support CPD across the centre, and supporting staff to remain as examiners.

The award will be piloted in 2016/17, with centres invited to self-nominate against specified criteria, supported by a statement from a teacher examiner at that centre. Nominations will be reviewed by the working group and the award will be made by JCQ to all eligible centres. Recipients will receive a certificate jointly branded by JCQ and the participating exam boards and school and college leaders' associations.