

HIGHER EDUCATION

bulletin

SUMMER 2013

A LEVEL REFORM

REFORMING GCSEs

VOCATIONAL REFORMS

**IN CONVERSATION – VIEWS FROM
THE MAPLE GROUP**

FOCUS ON COMPUTING AND MFL

A NEW FORUM FOR THE ARTS

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OCR 



Welcome to the summer 2013 issue of HE Bulletin.

It is without doubt that all qualifications are high stakes and getting them right is at the heart of what we do at OCR. As we go to print, OCR is in the middle of the awarding of exams and recognising the achievements of young people across the country. Over 390,000 candidates have entered for OCR A Level exams which means that over 960,000 scripts will be marked by examiners through a combination of traditional and on-screen marking.

In this issue, we share with you in Policy Update the latest information on qualification reform. As we get to terms with changes to A Level and GCSE reform the Department for Education (DfE) announced that it is currently undertaking a reform of 16-19 vocational qualifications. Higher Education is again being asked to have a role by providing evidence of support for these qualifications. You can find out more on page 5.

On pages 6 and 7, the newly formed Maple Group of sixth form colleges shares its views on what it sees as the impact of changes for its students as a result of qualification reform.

Partnership continues to be key and you can find examples of our partnership working in computing and modern foreign languages on pages 8 and 9.

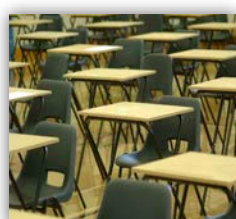
If you would like to get in touch we always welcome your feedback and also any items or discussion points you might like to include or share in the bulletin.

Sally Brown

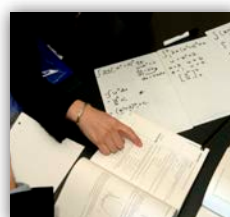
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Policy Update

A Level Reform

At the time of going to press of the last edition of HE Bulletin, Ofqual had just announced its response to Michael Gove's letter of 22 January 2013. Ofqual, although largely supportive of Michael Gove's proposals, has asked for some amendments to the original proposals. These are as follows:

- **Standalone AS**

Ofqual supports the decoupling of the AS from the A Level but has asked that the standard remain that of the current AS rather than, as had been suggested, the standard of the new A Level.

Because of concerns about practicalities of teaching a standalone qualification, Ofqual has suggested that in some subjects, it may be appropriate for the AS to be designed to be co-taught with the first year of the A Level.

The first assessment of this AS could be in June 2016.

- **Extended list of subjects for review**

Michael Gove's original proposal was for the redevelopment only of the so called 'facilitating' subjects. Ofqual has added six new subjects to this proposed list.

The full list under consideration for proposed development in 2015 is as follows:

Maths and further maths, English literature, English language and English literature and language,

biology, chemistry and physics, history, geography, sociology, psychology, economics, business studies, art and design and computing.

The rationale for the extension to the list is that these subjects represent almost 70% of all A Level entries.

- **Timeline**

New A Levels will be linear so assessment of a student's knowledge and understanding of the whole course takes place at the end of two years. The first assessment of two-year courses that start in September 2015 will be in June 2017.

Moving Forward

The awarding organisations, through the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), have been working with Ofqual on a process of subject criteria review of current A Level subject criteria.

Ofqual has asked awarding organisations (AOs) to consider whether there should be no change, minor change or major change to the current subject criteria. AOs have been asked to submit evidence to support their positions.

OCR has used the extensive body of evidence it has gained through its consultative forums, which includes stakeholders from HE, schools and colleges, learned societies, professional bodies and employers, to inform its response.

Learned societies and professional bodies have also been asked by Ofqual to submit their own responses.

A series of meetings took place throughout June in which AOs agreed a common position on changes or not to each subject criteria. This was then presented to a panel of awarding organisations, Responsible Officers and an independent chair, Professor Mark E Smith of Lancaster University. Professor Smith will present his conclusions to the Ofqual board.

OCR would hope to have some direction about the changes to subject criteria for the extended list of subjects by September 2013. Full redevelopment of those A Levels that are deemed by Ofqual ready for development by awarding organisations will then begin.

Wales and Northern Ireland update

Ministerial statements for Wales and Northern Ireland clearly indicate a departure from the reform which will happen in England.

Both Ministers for Education and Skills in Wales and for Northern Ireland have confirmed that:

- AS and A Levels will continue as coupled qualifications, with the AS contributing towards the full A Level.
- Learners will have one opportunity to resit each individual AS and A2 module, and that resits will be available each summer with the best mark counting towards the final award.

- After January 2014, there will be no further January assessment for GCE AS and A Levels.

Both ministers were robust in arguing that the retention of the AS/A2 structure will continue to provide valuable information to Higher Education Institutions on the progress being made by potential applicants.

Policy Update

Higher Education Involvement in A Level Reform

The Russell Group of universities is creating an independent organisation – the A Level Content Advisory Body – to review A Level content and performance. The Group provides us with an update on ALCAB's remit.

What is ALCAB?

The A Level Content Advisory Body (ALCAB) will be a separate organisation with its own Chair, staff and management structures. Board members are yet to be appointed.

• Why the Russell Group?

Michael Gove made clear in his letter to Ofqual that he wanted Russell Group universities to take a leading role in reviewing A Level content.

• What will the relationship be with the awarding organisations?

The Advisory Body will provide advice to Ofqual, not directly to individual awarding organisations. It will be for Ofqual to communicate that advice to awarding organisations.

• How does the work of ALCAB relate to the review of A Level content that the awarding organisations have just done?

There are two processes which will both result in advice for Ofqual. The work that the awarding organisations are doing goes wider than just the eight 'facilitating' subjects and some of it has now finished. ALCAB will have regard to any changes to A Levels, arising from the

awarding organisations' review, when making its recommendations.

• Who will be involved?

The Advisory Body will want to involve subject experts from universities outside the Russell Group in its work, as well as representatives of other organisations such as learned societies.

• What will they look at?

ALCAB will advise on A Level content in some or all of the eight facilitating subjects (English, maths, modern and ancient languages, biology, chemistry, physics, history and geography). They will look at curriculum content rather than the teaching methods or assessment. These are the subjects most commonly required for entry to our leading universities. We want to ensure that prospective students who study these subjects at A Level are well prepared to succeed on related courses at our universities. For many of our degree courses we also welcome applicants who have studied A Levels beyond the facilitating subjects and that will continue to be the case. But we do not envisage the Advisory Body providing advice on a full range of A Level subjects.

• What's the timetable?

We envisage this being a fixed term and limited contribution to A Level reform to be completed by Autumn 2014, so as to inform changes to qualifications for first teaching from September 2016. That means the first exams to be taken that take account of this advice will be in summer 2018 (ie two years after first teaching).

• How will people get involved?

We think there may be a need for the Advisory Body to draw on academic subject expertise in the facilitating subjects, but it will be for ALCAB (once established) to decide how best to do that. It seems likely this will include convening a subject panel to review each subject within an agreed time period. The panels may seek views from the sector more widely - for example through subject associations or professional bodies. It will not necessarily be aiming to reach consensus across all academics, but to provide advice which broadly reflects the needs of most leading universities.

• How can I get in touch with ALCAB?

Once ALCAB is established, its contact details will be available on the Russell Group website.

Reforming GCSEs: the changing landscape

On 11 June 2013, the DfE announced a public consultation on the proposed subject content for GCSEs to be reformed in nine subject areas – maths, English language, English literature, history, geography, physics, biology, chemistry and combined sciences. A parallel consultation on regulatory

aspects of reforming GCSEs, such as criteria and assessment, was opened by Ofqual. The deadlines for responding to these consultations are 20 August and 3 September respectively.

The consultations can be found at <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index>

<http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013/>

The consultations are the culmination of months of discussion with awarding organisations and other stakeholders after Michael Gove announced his intention to reform GCSEs (but to abandon 'one exam board per subject' EBCs) in February.

Policy Update

The date for first teaching of new GCSEs in English, mathematics, science, geography and history is currently proposed for September 2015. Modern and ancient languages are planned to be introduced for first teaching in September 2016.

New GCSEs follow the same proposed structure as A Levels so, will be linear with assessment of a student's knowledge and understanding of the whole course taking place at the end of two years. The first assessment of two-year courses that start

in September 2015 will be in summer 2017.

As with A Level, OCR is working hard to develop a very strong engagement programme with a wide range of Higher Education Institutions, as well as a wide range of schools, to inform our GCSE development work. There are over 140 HE representatives on OCR subject forums, sharing their expertise and helping to guide our development work. We have been looking at A Level and GCSE developments together to ensure

logical progression routes through our qualifications from 14–19.

As part of our preparation for developing new GCSEs, we have also been able to draw upon the research expertise of our parent organisation, Cambridge Assessment, to identify what stakeholders require in the reformed GCSEs and to achieve comparability with the best international jurisdictions. Summaries of Cambridge Assessment's research on a number of issues related to reformed GCSEs are available

www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk.

16 to 19 Vocational Qualifications Reform

Level 3 vocational qualifications for 16-19 year olds are changing.

Following on from the reform of vocational qualifications for 14-16 year olds and tying in to developments around 16-19 Study Programmes and A Level reform, the Government is proposing that advanced qualifications will need to be defined in one of three distinct categories and meet certain characteristics, to be counted in future school and college performance tables.

	Covers	Primary progression	Other routes
Academic	A/AS Levels (+applied and double versions,) Pre-U, International Baccalaureate and AQA Baccalaureate core.	Further/Higher Education	Employment, Apprenticeship
Applied General	For students wishing to continue their general education at advanced level through applied learning.	Further/Higher Education	Apprenticeships, Employment
Technical Level	For students wishing to specialise in a technical occupation or occupational group.	Employment, Apprenticeship	Further/Higher Education

At the core of the reform is a desire to ensure that qualifications taken by learners at Level 3 provide proven opportunities for progression in further learning or employment.

Technical Level qualifications will equip learners with specialist knowledge and skills. They will enable entry into employment and in some cases provide a 'license to practice' or exemption from professional exams. Awarding Bodies will be expected to demonstrate support for their qualifications in this category from trade associations and employers.

Applied General qualifications will equip a learner with transferable knowledge and skills. They will be expected to fulfil entry requirements to a range of Higher

Education courses, either by meeting entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside other qualifications at the same level.

There are two stages to the submission process:

The first stage, in September 2013, will be for existing qualifications meeting an 'interim standard' including criteria on stated purpose and content, size and recognition.

The second stage is to allow a period of development to meet the full standard by September 2015, including synoptic and external assessment, grading, and for Technical Level qualifications, additional employer involvement.

What are we doing?

We are currently working on evidencing the recognition of Cambridge Technicals, by employers, trade associations and Higher Education Institutions in relevant industries and sectors.

Looking for your support

If you accept Cambridge Technicals as fulfilling entry requirements, either on their own or alongside other qualifications at the same level, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

We have prepared a template that your admissions team or head of faculty can complete. If this would be of interest please do contact us at sally.brown@ocr.org.uk.

In conversation



Views from The Maple Group

Ten of the country's leading sixth form colleges have formed a powerful partnership, united by a common interest in maintaining and promoting outstanding teaching and learning for 16 – 19 year olds called the Maple Group. We invite Simon Jarvis, the Chair of the group and Principal of Farnborough Sixth Form College, to share the views of the group.

The Maple Group was formed earlier this year. What brings the group of colleges together? Can you give us some background and the rationale behind its formation?

Maple Group colleges, individually and collectively, make a significant contribution to the nation's economy: together, well over 20,000 youngsters are enrolled at a Maple Group college. In excess of 80% of students from these colleges will progress in to Higher Education, around a third of whom will accept places in the UK's leading Russell Group universities.

The rationale for The Maple Group is simple: our colleges represent all that is excellent about post-16 education. Working together in partnership enables our like-minded colleges to share expertise and ideas; to disseminate superb practice more widely and to provide a commentary on educational developments, informed as we are by years of high performance.

This initiative reinforces our shared commitment to providing the highest quality educational opportunities to thousands of youngsters. In the coming years, members of The Maple Group will

continue to be respected advisers to the country on all matters relating to post-16 education; we expect to play a leading role in supporting the future success of Government initiatives such as the academies programme, specialist maths schools and reforms of the examined curriculum.

The member colleges are a trusted group, widely acknowledged by students, parents, teachers, universities and ministers as being amongst the very best, indeed as world class providers. Maple Group colleges have an unrivalled lengthy track record of high performance, respected for innovation, creativity and leading the development of post-16 pedagogy.

We are beacons of excellence in the country, sharing a passion for learning and an undiluted vision of what constitutes an outstanding education.

We are currently in a period of proposed reform to A Levels with changes such as standalone AS, linearisation of A Levels and reduced resit opportunities. What is the view of the group to the proposals – and how will the group articulate its voice?

Maple Group colleges believe that decoupling the two qualifications:

- is likely to lead to a decline of interest in taking a broadening 'additional subject' in the first year of A Level, i.e. a return to a 3 subject programme of study, and a consequent lack of breadth. Such a narrowing of choice at 16 will force our students to specialise far earlier than their counterparts in Europe;

- would lose for students the valuable opportunity of selecting which of their courses to focus on in the second year of A Level in order to maximise achievement and their potential. By removing this stepping stone at the end of a formative year one, students will be prevented from selecting which of their courses to take forward to A Level. This is especially true of those students from non-traditional academic backgrounds who benefit from the current system. Many are attracted by the possibility of mid-programme review with the security of changing direction midway should their initial choices no longer prove appropriate;
- would reduce the range of externally examined grades available to universities when assessing students at 17, which allow them to make informed offers based both on GCSE performance and an accurate measure of current attainment. A return to the impression of predicted grades could increase the focus on GCSEs and therefore not serve those who come to us from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and schools. It is not unusual for students to be transformed from GCSE to AS Level: indeed, it is a relatively common occurrence, especially for boys beyond the age of 16.
- would mean that students who leave full-time education at 17 after discovering A Levels are not the best route for them will do so without formal qualifications. They would, in effect, have wasted a year. This could be demoralising, lead to disaffection





and all the attendant anti-social dangers which lie therein, and reduce helpful information available to employers, with a consequent impact on employment Levels and the economy.

How will the changes impact on the Maple Group of colleges?

We envisage that the breadth and depth of the curriculum developed since the introduction of Curriculum 2000 will reduce. Maple Group colleges are reviewing their course offer in the context of both A Level reform, changes to GCSE, the greater emphasis on 'facilitating subjects', and of course the worsening funding situation for all sixth form colleges following the introduction of a new funding methodology by the Education Funding Agency this year. Whilst Maple Colleges will retain much of the rich expanse of A Level courses (typically over 40 subjects are offered in Maple Group colleges) which is so attractive to youngsters at age 16, some 'minority' courses will inevitably be withdrawn from the offer.

What is the Maple group's view on the proposed involvement of Higher Education in the development of new A Levels? What could Higher Education learn from a group such as yours when considering development?

We would welcome the opportunity to work with HE on the development of the new A Level specifications. As acknowledged experts in the delivery of GCE A Level with a track record of success extending back for many years,

Maple Group colleges should be working hand in hand with HE and the Boards to design the new specifications. In the ranks of our colleges, in addition to the hundreds of brilliant classroom practitioners, are the experienced examiners and moderators who have worked on assessment issues through periods of change and development.

How important are the 'facilitating subjects' to your students' subject choices? Are you seeing changes to the take up of certain subjects?

Very important. We encourage our students to seriously consider the 'facilitating subjects' in their programme of study though we do not recognise the need (as in reformed performance tables) for three. We have seen recruitment to many 'facilitating subjects' increase significantly in the past two years, a trend we anticipate continuing. The recruitment for example into A Level maths has (in one Maple college) grown from around 500 students studying the subject at A Level four years ago to the current number of 1600 (at AS and A2).

Have you seen any changes in students behaviour as regards going on to study at Higher Education?

Not yet - probably too early to be certain. But as a group of sixth form colleges with a comprehensive mix of students, we often see students with AS grades which are far higher than would have been predicted by GCSE performance. The current AS performance often galvanises students' aspirations and improves achievement at A2, motivating many to pursue Higher Education options which

had previously been considered beyond them. The removal of AS Levels will destroy this possibility for thousands of students; in this sense, decoupling AS from A Level reduces social mobility;

If you were stuck in a lift with a government minister, what three things would you ask for on behalf of the group?

Speak to us – we support many of the current policies and reforms being introduced and believe passionately that the Maple colleges should play a leading role in supporting your initiatives. We have the expertise, skills, innovation, appetite and the specialist resources necessary to enable Government's flagship policies to take flight.

Invest in us – we represent fantastic value for public money by any measure in return for the outstanding results achieved in our colleges year on year.

Champion us – Maple colleges are a success story for the country. We can be trusted to deliver the world class education which is the entitlement of youngsters studying in our care, which Government seeks, Higher Education demands and the country expects.

The ten colleges of the Maple group are: The Sixth Form College Farnborough; Peter Symonds Winchester; Holy Cross College, Bury; Winstanley College, Wigan; St Dominic's Sixth Form College, Harrow; Cardinal Newman College, Preston; Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge; Holy Cross College, Bury; King Edward VI College, Stourbridge and Sir John Deane's College, Northwich.

Focus on Computing

Computing has grabbed the headlines this year with the announcement that computer science is to be included in the National Curriculum, the addition of GCSE Computing to the EBacc performance tables, Google's funding of free Raspberry Pi computers for UK schools and the inclusion of Computing A Level in the criteria review process for new A Levels alongside more traditional 'facilitating' subjects as part of the Education Secretary's current reform plans for A Levels.

OCR has a strong history of supporting computing and a number of recent initiatives reflect this commitment. OCR is the only exam board to offer a ladder of qualifications, from entry level to GCSE and up to A Level, that enables students to make real progress in the subject and prepare them for further study at university or employment.



A partnership between OCR, the Raspberry Pi Foundation, and Cambridge University Press has led to the first online GCSE Computing course

[www.](http://www.cambridgegcsecomputing.org)

[cambridgegcsecomputing.org](http://www.cambridgegcsecomputing.org).

The online course will be based on the OCR qualification and will be made up of a series of short videos, written and presented by computing experts. 'Cambridge GCSE Computing Online' is designed to support and complement teaching, not replace it. The online course could be used with students in the classroom, as revision or self-teaching resources, or to build the confidence of ICT teachers themselves who may not have a background in computing. A taster of 'Cambridge GCSE Computing Online' was unveiled by OCR Chief Executive, Mark Dawe, at the Sunday Times Festival of Education in mid-June and the first wave of the 100 plus videos will be rolled out from September 2013.

Another reflection of the growing significance of computing is its inclusion in the list of subjects for review and its

possible presence in the first tranche of redeveloped A Levels for first teaching in September 2015.

Phill Bryant, OCR's Group Manager for ICT and Computing, is delighted by the plans to include computing in the reform: "I am a passionate advocate of computing within schools and this programme of reform will provide both an opportunity and challenge for us. Computing, especially at Key Stage 5, is important for many reasons. Computing has an immense impact on modern life. The job prospects are excellent and the field is rigorous, intellectually vibrant, and multi-faceted. However Britain is facing a shortage of workers with programming skills. Computing will contribute to the next great leaps in science, medicine, space exploration and tackling climate change.

"I believe that this subject is an excellent choice for students even if they don't intend to pursue a career in computer science itself. It has a wider value to our economy and society - the vast majority of careers in the future will require an understanding of computing." To read Phill's blog on the reform of A Level Computing in full, see <http://ocrblogs.org.uk/phillip/a-level-reform/>.

Keeping in touch with the wider computing community is integral to our work.

In April 2013, OCR contributed to an event at the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) that was discussing the quantity of statistics that should be included across A Level subjects. OCR was there to contribute to this from the perspective of computing.

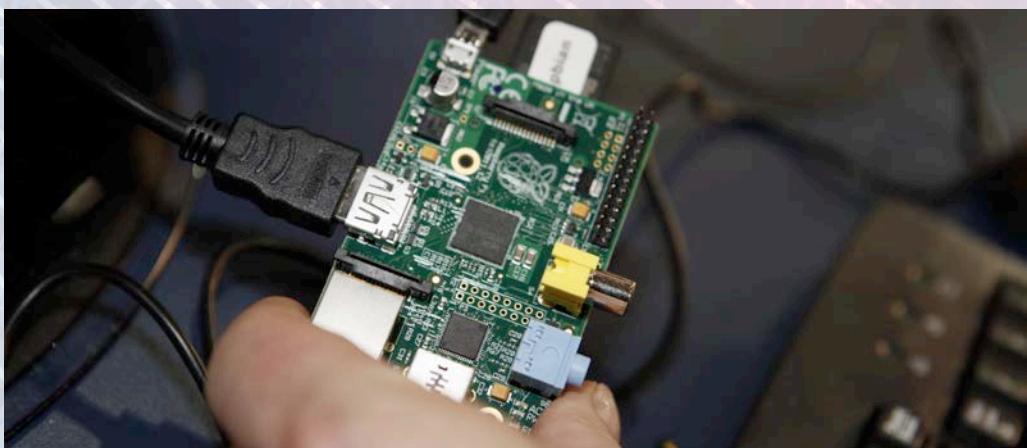
The RSS has recently carried out research entitled 'The Future of Statistics in our Schools and Colleges' www.rss.org.uk, which looked at the position of statistics in the school curriculum mainly through to GCSE, but also touching on A Level. It is now undertaking research entitled 'Identifying opportunities for using statistics across the curriculum' which picks up the baton by taking a closer look at statistics provision across the curriculum at A Level and at the needs of Higher Education as end-users of A Levels.

Our OCR ICT/Computing consultative forum has representation from a range of stakeholders including Higher Education, schools and colleges, employers, and professional bodies. A range of universities are represented including Russell Group, 1994 and million+.

Key topics for discussion include the redevelopment of the A Level and transition issues for users of computing. Getting the next development of A Level computing will be crucial. Evidence from the Royal Society report 'Shut Down or Restart? The way forward for computing in schools.'

<http://royalsociety.org> suggests that the dropout rate from computer science at universities is unusually high, as much as 30% compared with less than 16% in mathematical sciences and physics.

The date of our next forum is Thursday 17 October. If you are interested in being involved, please contact partnerships@ocr.org.uk.



Working together

OCR works with Higher Education to encourage the teaching of Modern Foreign Languages



Over thirty language teachers from across the eastern region came together for a two hour training workshop to showcase new OCR GCSE topic materials in French and German in April in the first of a series of twilight events which are part of a broader initiative to create networks of good practice across the country. The aim of the initiative is to provide modern foreign language (MFL) resources which motivate and engage language learners by using authentic materials, strategies to produce more spontaneous talk and to raise intercultural awareness, all of which are areas for improvement identified by Ofsted in their 2010 report and which are highlighted in the latest Department for Education's GCSE content specification for MFL (June 2013).

The workshop materials focused on OCR's GCSE specification and ideas to stimulate good teaching and learning. The session opened with teachers asked to define an outstanding MFL lesson in less than 10 words and set the scene for an engaging interactive workshop. Delegates went away with many new resources and ideas for producing more spontaneous talk from learners as well as power point presentations



Delegates from over 30 schools at our MFL training session

designed to encourage less reliance on the text book. The materials were well received by delegates. Reaction to the workshop was unanimously enthusiastic with comments ranging from "That was fantastic!" to "I can bring back great ideas about using authentic materials to my class".

This was a collaborative session with *Routes into Languages* based at Anglia Ruskin University and their project manager Sarah Schechter. Sarah was delighted with the response for the workshop; "It was wonderful to twice exceed our numbers limit as registrations flooded in for this twilight session (usually so difficult to recruit for) and according to the feedback, the session certainly lived up to expectations. It was great for *Routes into Languages East* to work with OCR on this inspirational CPD session – we look forward to many more".

Routes into Languages has recently been awarded another three-year contract to work with schools and universities

to engage and increase uptake in MFL in Higher Education and at OCR we are already exploring a new range of initiatives with *Routes East*. One of these is a 'Language Presenter of the Year' competition sponsored by OCR. Students will be asked to present a product of their own invention in a foreign language and will be judged by a panel from industry and education.

Further workshops are planned around the country to widen the reach of OCR's language offer and part of the MFL strategy is to create regional hubs in schools. Our next wave of workshops will be located in Coventry, Suffolk, London and Manchester.

For further details of our workshops and other initiatives please contact **Katherine.Smith@ocr.org.uk**
MFL Curriculum Leader OCR

Working together

A New Forum for the Arts

The omission of the arts from the English Baccalaureate in 2010 caused figures from across the arts world to voice their concern about the value placed on creative subjects in education policy. In April 2012, Darren Henley, Managing Director of Classic FM, completed an independent review of 'Cultural Education in England' to which the government responded with 24 wide-ranging recommendations.

To further support the arts – art and design, and performing arts such as dance, drama and music – OCR has

set up a new consultative Creative Arts Forum. Nearly 60 educationalists, practitioners and employers from across the sector – from theatres, museums and art galleries to performing arts colleges and universities – accepted the invitation to join the Forum.

OCR offers a range of arts qualifications, including GCSEs and AS/A Levels. Engaging with the views of the members of the new forum will inform OCR about fast-moving developments across arts disciplines.

The Henley Review, an Arts Council project backed by the DfE and Ofqual on arts GCSEs, and the wider implications of qualification reform, were all discussed at the first meeting that took place in May. Art and design has been included in the list for review of new A Levels helping to raise its profile. If you are interested in joining OCR's Creative Arts Forum and helping to keep arts qualifications relevant and exciting, please get in touch via partnerships@ocr.org.uk.



NEON in the Spotlight

NEON (the National Education Opportunities Network) is a national organisation which supports those involved in widening access to Higher Education. It was founded in late 2011 as a not-for-profit organisation hosted by London Higher which represents Higher Education Institutions in London.

OCR has been working with NEON to spread understanding of changes in the qualifications landscape. As GCSE, AS and A Levels are reformed and 16-19 vocational qualifications are reviewed, up-to-date knowledge of evolving qualifications and their implications is vital.

In the spring, OCR led a seminar organised by NEON at the University of London to discuss current and proposed changes with a group of widening participation officers, liaison managers and other higher education officials from across the country.

As background, the seminar started with the proposed changes in the National Curriculum and 14-16 issues such as the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), and then went on to the many changes affecting the post-16 phase, which were of most immediate importance to the seminar delegates. These included the 16-19 study programmes applicable from September 2013, which encourage vocational learning including work experience, and the new work-based Traineeships.

Delegates were asked to consider what value should be attached in university applications to:

- the 'facilitating subjects' favoured by Russell Group universities in "Informed Choices"
- specific vocational routes
- English and maths, which are specified in all post-16 programmes, or Functional Skills
- Value-Added measures (or Skills Gain, to use the BIS term) which are gaining in importance
- and of course non-traditional routes.

A second seminar organised by NEON took place in late June at the University of Bedfordshire. As national curriculum policy had moved on since the spring, issues addressed included initiatives such as the Technical Baccalaureate (Tech Bacc) and the recent review of 16-19 vocational qualifications. Concern from the audience was, in the main, around the timetable for change and the potential for confusion for students, parents and users as well as a belief that low participation groups could be further disadvantaged as a consequence. In future, the implications of these developments will be considered alongside the changes in AS and A Levels and their impact on learning and achievement.

If you are interested in finding out more about working with OCR on the widening participation agenda please get in touch with sally.brown@ocr.org.uk.

Interested in getting involved?

OCR runs a series of consultative forums - a Higher Education strategic forum and subject consultative forums. The forums allow OCR to consult with key subject-based stakeholders so that their requirements and expertise can inform OCR's plans and developments.

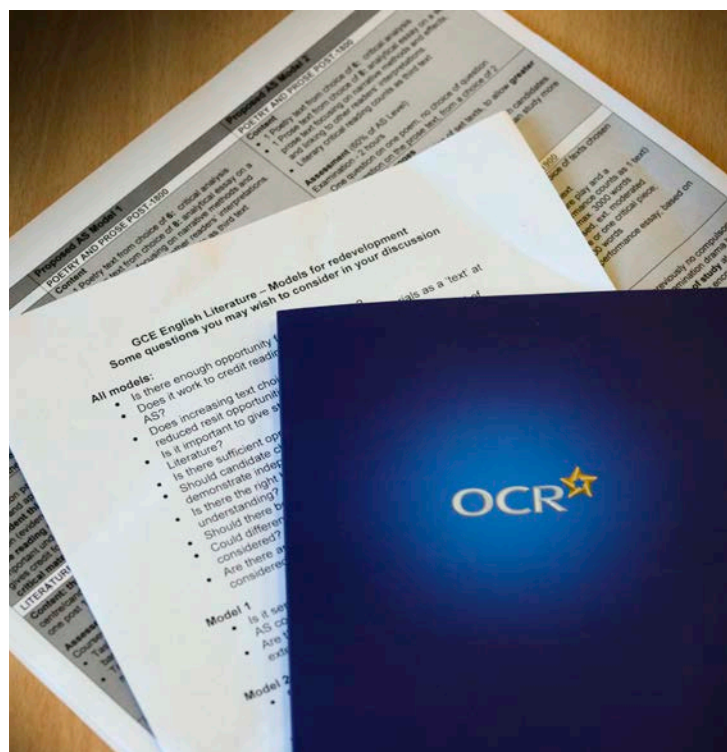
The HE forum runs three times a year and the subject forums twice a year. Membership of the HE forum is solely from HE while the subject forums' membership comprises a range of people from across the subject community including teachers, university academics, representatives from subject and professional associations, learned societies, charitable organisations and employers.

We want to hear and listen to a wide range of views – if you are interested, why not join us at one of our forums:

OCR Consultative Forum Timetable 2013*

Business	21 November
Creative Arts	22 October
Economics	25 September
English	10 October
Geography	23 October
Health and Social Care	28 November
HE Strategic Forum	25 November
History	15 October
IT and Computing	17 October
Maths	8 October
Modern Foreign Languages	18 September
Psychology	2 October
Science	16 October
Vocational Applied Learning	8 November

* Please note, some of these planned dates may change.



If you would like to know more, please contact Sally.Brown@ocr.org.uk or Annette.Allen@ocr.org.uk.





Who we are

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations) is a leading UK awarding body, committed to offering qualifications that engage learners of all ages, at school, college, in work or through part-time learning programmes to achieve their full potential.

- OCR is a not for profit organisation so success, for us, is measured through the impact and reach of our activities and the scale of our contribution to helping learners realise their aspirations.
- Our purpose is to work in partnership with others to provide qualifications that support education in ways which enable all learners to reach their full potential and to recognise and celebrate their achievements.

Each year more than three million students gain OCR qualifications, which are offered by 13,000 centres including schools, sixth form colleges, FE colleges, training providers, voluntary organisations, local authorities, and businesses ranging from SMEs to multi-national organisations.

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