

HIGHER EDUCATION bulletin

SUMMER 2014



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HAVE A SAY**

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Welcome

Welcome to the summer 2014 issue of HE Bulletin. Summer is a very busy time for OCR with our minds very much on students sitting exams. Over 390,000 students have entered for exams and we expect to mark nearly one million scripts. Making sure we get this right for students and delivered on time for you to ensure a successful admissions cycle is of course critical.

As we concentrate on the current exam series, our minds are also on making sure we have engaging, stretching and appropriate new qualifications as part of our qualification reform programme. On pages 10-12 in the first of a series of articles on our new qualifications we give an insight into what our new A Levels in English Language and Literature and History will look like. The qualifications have been built in partnership with key stakeholders including higher education.

The changes being made to practical work in science A Levels are also attracting attention. On pages 8 and 9, Dr Steve Evans provides an overview of the new arrangements.

Students are at the heart of qualification reform and we want to listen to their views and understand their concerns. On pages 4 and 5 we share some key findings from our survey conducted with the NUS. Students' concerns are understandable and it has highlighted the need for us to provide up to date relevant information and involve students more in our work.

We are also aiming to help keep you as up to date with changes to qualifications as we can. Included in this issue is a supplement detailing the timeline for reform to both academic and vocational qualifications.

As always, we are keen to hear your views and opinions and we welcome your feedback.

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Policy Update

A Level and GCSE Reform – what next for other subjects?

A Level and GCSE subjects for first teaching in 2015 and 2016 have now been confirmed and are currently being developed by all awarding organisations. The full list of qualifications and the timelines for teaching and examination dates can be seen in the attached Qualifications Reform supplement.

A number of GCSEs and A Levels have yet to be reformed and these will need to be reviewed. Examples of such subjects include government and politics, law, accountancy, media studies and health and social care.

Ofqual has published a consultation 'Completing GCSE, AS and A Level Reform'.
<http://ofqual.gov.uk/documents/completing-gcse-level-reform-june-2014/>
 The consultation ends on 30 July 2014.

The consultation addresses how core content and assessment of the remaining subjects should be determined. It also outlines which subjects it suggests should be discontinued and which subjects will go forward for reform.

The government has been clear that it does not intend to develop content for any subjects outside of those forming the National Curriculum. The rationale for the consultation is to limit how long the old and new qualifications will run in parallel. Ofqual proposes that all subjects that go forward for reform should do so by 2017 and is proposing a cut-off date of 2018 for the last award of all 'unreformed qualifications'.

There will be no change to the policy direction, so A Levels and GCSEs in other subjects will be linear qualifications with examination being the default method of assessment. AS will continue to remain as a standalone qualification and GCSEs will have the new grading structure of 9-1.

Following the consultation, Ofqual will set out the process exam boards will have to follow if they want to develop and award GCSEs/AS/A Level qualifications in a subject that hasn't been included in the first and second tranche of qualification reform development.

Ofqual is proposing to establish a collaborative regulatory framework to enable exam boards to collectively develop core subject content, a decision it believes will strike a balance between the range of subjects which will be developed and Ofqual's ability to maintain standards of qualifications. Exam boards will be tasked with demonstrating evidence of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

Ofqual acknowledges that it is possible that some subjects which are currently offered may not be offered under the new regulatory framework.

Ofqual consultation on new grading arrangements for GCSEs

Ofqual is currently consulting on the way the grade standards of new GCSEs will be set:

Consultation on Setting the Grade Standards of new GCSEs in England (<http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/setting-the-grade-standards-of-new-gcse-april-2014/>)

From September 2015, new GCSEs will be graded 9-1. The proposals in the consultation are as follows:

- In the first year, grade boundaries would be set so that those who would have previously been awarded a C or above would be awarded a grade 4 or above.
- This would provide a reference point for how the new grades relate to those currently in use, and allows greater differentiation at higher grades, with six grades (4-9) available rather than the current four (C-A*).
- Grade 5 would be benchmarked against the standards required for similar exams in countries where students perform well in international tests.
- A grade 9 could be set so that it was achieved by half the percentage of students previously awarded A*.
- The proportion of students given a grade 1 would be about the same as that which currently achieves either F or G.

The consultation closes on 30 June 2014.

Qualifications (similar or overlapping subjects) Ofqual is proposing to discontinue

GCSE	AS	A Level	Alternative
Expressive Arts			Dance, Drama
Applied Art and Design	Applied Art and Design		
Performing Arts	Performing Arts	Performing Arts	Dance, Drama
	Performance Studies	Performance Studies	Dance, drama and theatre studies
	Economics and business	Economics and business	Economics; Business studies
	Applied Business	Applied Business	Business studies
Catering			DT: Food technology
Home Economics	Home Economics	Home Economics	DT: Food technology
Electronics			DT: electronic products
Manufacturing			DT: Product design
Engineering	Engineering	Engineering	DT: systems and control technology
Humanities	Humanities	Humanities	History, Geography
Applied Science	Applied Science	Applied Science	Sciences
Environmental Science	Environmental studies	Environmental studies	Sciences
Human health and physiology	Human Biology	Human Biology	Sciences
Additional Applied Science	Science in Society	Science in Society	Sciences
Environmental and Land based science			Sciences

Students have a say

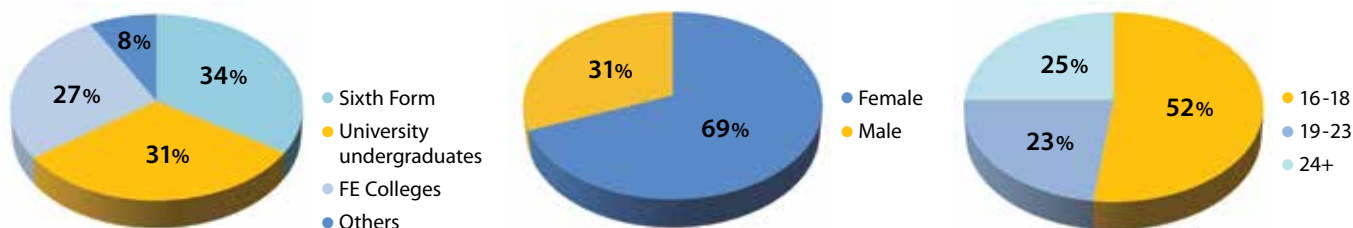
Reforms to qualifications at Level 3 will have most impact on the students taking them. OCR was keen to hear their opinions on reform. Nearly 1,800 students responded to a joint survey from OCR and the NUS.



Key themes that emerged from the findings were:

- Students want to make rational well-informed choices about what they study at Level 3.
- They feel that the value that higher education (HE) places on qualifications is critical in helping them make decisions about what to study.
- The main concerns they have about changes as a result of the reforms are the decoupling of the AS, the focus on exams and the lack of opportunity for second chances.
- A perception that new A Levels will be harder and as such they are less likely to study STEM subjects.
- A real concern that those students who may already be disadvantaged will be even more so by the reforms.

The students who took part:



A Level Reform

THE DECOUPLING OF THE AS

Respondents emphasised students' fears over the 'decoupling' of the AS Level. (Currently the AS Level comprises 50% of a students' final grade. However under the Government's reforms the qualification will be completely freestanding.)

Over three quarters (73%) of respondents would only find the standalone AS Level useful if they were included in offers from universities. The removal of feedback on academic progress, currently provided by AS results, was identified by the majority of students (61%) as a problem for students making rational decisions about which courses and universities to apply for. The implication is that in the new system, future sixth form students will follow a much narrower programme of study focused on just three subjects rather than four.

POLAR analysis (Participation of Local Areas is a classification of areas across the UK) of the responses revealed big differences in likely uptake of AS Level. Half of those from areas with high participation in HE would take an AS Level out of enjoyment or interest. Yet only one in five from areas with low participation would take an AS Level for this purpose.

73%

would only pick a standalone AS if universities included them in offers

60%

Six in ten said that without AS results as an indicator of progress it would be more difficult to apply to university

8%

Fewer than one in ten said the reforms would make A Levels more attractive to students



LINEAR EXAMS AND SUBJECT CHOICES

From September 2015 'new' A Levels will be taught as linear qualifications, with assessment taking place at the end of the course only. Compared to the current system, six in ten said that the reformed A Levels would not be better preparation for university and almost seven in ten (68 %) said they would be no better preparation for a job.

Over three quarters (76 %) of survey respondents were opposed to A Levels consisting of exams only at the end of a two year course. 69% said that the main disadvantage of assessment in this form is that there will be no feedback on how well they are doing until their course is completed. There was also considerable opposition to the reduction in the opportunity to resit the A Level, as students will have to wait a full year before they can resit. (January exams are removed under the new format). 89% said that this will unfairly penalise students who have faced significant upheaval in their education and need a second chance.

Subject choice patterns are likely to change in reformed qualifications. There was a perception that new A Levels will be harder and that students may choose to move away from STEM subjects. For example, 32% of respondents who have taken or are

taking mathematics currently said they would be less likely or a lot less likely to take mathematics A Level ; for physics this figure is 53%. This has big implications for the supply of A Level students to STEM university courses and into employment.

51% of students stated that the biggest influence on subject choice was ensuring they were able to progress to their university or career of choice.

32%

32% of respondents who have taken or are taking maths currently said they would be less likely to take a new maths A Level

53%

For physics the figure is 53%

INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE, AND SECOND CHANCES

Respondents raised concerns over the potential for limitations to be placed on their subject choices by the reforms. They also communicated worries over the removal of second chances as students lose the opportunity to 'drop' an AS Level and review their progress after one year of study.

42% said that they did not receive enough Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) about career choices and choice of study before they made their A Level subject choices. As a result 41% of respondents changed their mind about which subjects to drop at AS Level.

There was also a significant difference between those from areas of high levels of HE participation and low areas, in terms of the quality of IAG they received. Just one quarter of those from POLAR 1 said they received enough advice before they chose their A Levels, compared to 44% in POLAR 5.

This trend in self access to 'academic resources' is mirrored in the disparity between those students who said they had read around their subjects independently, away from their school or college, and those that hadn't. In the areas of highest HE participation, 60% said they had done some independent academic reading, in contrast to 31% in the group of lowest participation.

70%

Seven in ten agreed or strongly agreed that the age of 16 is too early to be making subject choices that could define their future path

This joint research indicates that students are keen to make rational, informed decisions about their subject choices and career paths, but have concerns that changes to qualifications may make this more challenging.

In conversation

Charlotte Bosworth is Director of Skills and Employment at OCR and has a focus on the vision and execution of plans for all vocational provision.

Charlotte has spent much of her career working in partnership with thought leaders in education to influence curriculum delivery and development. Much of Charlotte's work has included building relationships with and interpreting the needs of employers. She is a member of The Royal Society of Arts and is a member of a number of groups that influence education policy within the UK.

There are some well-known brands for vocational qualifications. What can you tell us about OCR's own brand, Cambridge Technicals?

Cambridge Technicals are vocational qualifications at Level 2, 3 and 4, targeted at students aged 16+ in either a school or further education (FE) environment.

We have designed our qualifications to be deliberately flexible in order to engage learners, give them choice in the career pathways they wish to take and to enable the development of skills needed to succeed within employment.

The qualifications are wholly internally assessed and have UCAS points to support progression to higher education (HE). They can be achieved on a full-time or part-time basis – making them an attractive option for people in work who want to up-skill in order to improve their career prospects. Cambridge Technicals are offered in Art and Design, Business, Health and Social Care, IT, Media, Performing Arts, Science and Sport. We have recently developed Cambridge Technicals at Level 4 to provide a progression route from Cambridge Technicals at Level 3.

Vocational qualifications are currently undergoing reform. What are the key changes that will be achieved as a result of reform?

In response to a consultation on 16 to 19 vocational qualifications, the government is requiring significant changes to Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications in order for them to contribute to performance tables. A lot of the changes will be familiar to anyone who has knowledge of Key Stage 4 vocational qualifications, as the reforms have already been delivered at that level.



Charlotte Bosworth
Director of Skills & Employment

"I think it's vital that all young people have access to quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) about all of their options post-16. It is never the case that one size fits all."

Charlotte Bosworth

The Department for Education (DfE) has identified 10 characteristics that Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications will need to demonstrate to be categorised as substantial Level 2 qualifications or Technical Level qualifications, respectively. There is a further category of qualifications at Level 3, applied general qualifications, which have to meet 9 of the 10 characteristics. The intention is that these categories make it easier for learners to understand where their qualifications lead. Technical Level qualifications lead predominantly to employment and training in a recognised occupation or to HE. Applied General qualifications lead to FE and HE.

One of the key changes to come out of these reforms is the introduction of external assessment. Whilst we, of course, support the need for high quality assessments, we're concerned about the pace of reform. We will be taking time to ensure that the form of external assessment that we implement is fit for purpose for the subject and that the sector has time to plan effectively for this change.

What would you like to see happen as a result of reform to vocational qualifications?

I think it's vital that all young people have access to quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) about all of their options post-16. It is never the case that one size fits all, so we need to ensure that young people have as much access to information about vocational qualifications – what they cover, where they lead to, what style of learning they support – and A Level or other academic qualifications. However, it's not just about providing information for



young people. I also think it's important for providers and higher education institutions (HEI) to have access to detailed information about the range of qualifications available to young people.

For us, at OCR, vocational education is not just about results. We feel passionately that we need to develop the values, habits and attitudes that enable individuals to succeed in education and work. So one of the key impacts I would like to see from vocational qualification reform is that vocational qualifications and vocational programmes allow young people to develop vital skills that will support them in the next stage of their learning career. That is why we have developed a flexible English and maths provision that can be delivered, in a contextualised way, as a more holistic programme. We have also developed Being Entrepreneurial qualifications to encourage a stronger enterprise and entrepreneur culture in the UK, that will drive an even more robust economy.

Mary Curnock-Cook has recently said that leading HEIs could no longer afford to ignore sixth-formers leaving school with vocational qualifications. UCAS has predicted that 40,000 more students will enter HE with vocational qualifications. How is OCR supporting schools and students to achieve this?

We have developed, and are continuing to develop, qualifications and resources that support teaching, learning and assessment that enable providers to build and deliver an innovative and engaging curriculum. However, we know that we can always do more.

For our Cambridge Technicals suite we have developed a range of resources to support students, including a skills guide and lesson element presentations aimed directly at learners. We're also continuing to develop the range of units that we offer in specialist pathways to ensure that these qualifications support progression to a range of FE and HE programmes. We're also going to be adding to our range of subjects so more learners can access these qualifications to progress to university or into an apprenticeship.

What do you see as the role of HE in the development of new vocational qualifications?

Engagement with HEIs is very important for us. Young people aged 16-19 are preparing for an important decision – "What is my next step?"

Having input from HEIs into our developments is critical and key to ensuring we provide learners with the skills to progress in HE.

Vocational qualifications that lead to HE must be informed by what HEIs need from entrants. We must ensure that young people taking vocational qualifications are as well prepared as they can be for that step to HE.

How does OCR input into the debate on vocational qualifications?

We use lots of different mechanisms to input into the debate. We have regular subject and sector forums to discuss areas of common interest, we have a Policy and Public Affairs function that feeds into government departments, and we regularly respond to consultations.

Most recently we have run a number of roundtable sessions in Parliament debating particular areas of interest and we also sit on a number of government groups that are looking directly at proposed government policy. This includes the Skills Commission and various national taskforce groups.

What would be your key messages to 16 year olds considering taking vocational qualifications?

Think about where you want to go next, think about how you want to learn, think about what interests you. Ask questions; if you're not sure, ask more questions. Find out about all the different providers in your area and what they offer. If you're interested in vocational qualifications, my advice would be to do them!

If you are interested or would like more information on our Cambridge Technical qualifications please get in touch:

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Practical Assessment in Science

Concerns have been expressed about the new arrangements for practical work in A Level sciences. In a letter to *The Times*, SCORE (which represents the Royal Society, Institute of Physics, Royal Society of Chemistry, Society of Biology and Association of Science Education) implored Ofqual “not to separate practical marks from core A Level grades.” Their concern is that practical work in science will be sidelined from the curriculum.

OCR’s Head of Science Development, Dr Steve Evans, sets out what the arrangements are for practical science at A Level and why OCR is confident that students studying science will gain from the new arrangements. Steve gives an overview of the background to the Practical Endorsement and what OCR thinks this will become in the new A Levels (note: the Practical Endorsement only applies to A Level, not AS).

The proposals by Ofqual are that the Practical Endorsement should:

- **promote good teaching and learning, and inspire students;**
- **emphasise development of skills;**
- **be an intrinsic part of the course;**
- **result in a similar experience for the student regardless of which Awarding Organisation (AO) is offering the qualification.**

Ofqual’s proposal to achieve this aim is to separate the reporting of practical performance into two strands for the purposes of assessment:

- **what can be assessed in written examinations;**
- **what can only be assessed by teachers (the Practical Endorsement).**

The Practical Endorsement is to be reported separately on the certificate alongside the A Level (details, including the grade scale, are not yet confirmed by Ofqual).

Whilst the Practical Endorsement does not technically count towards the A Level grade, at least 15% of the marks available on question papers will be based on practical skills.

Assessment of practical (in written assessments and within the Practical Endorsement) will run from a common core list for each science that must be carried

out by all students during the two year A Level course (this list is common across all Awarding Organisations (AOs), see Table 1 opposite). The items listed within Table 1 have to be covered within the Practical Endorsement through a minimum of 12 practical activities (again this is set as a common rule across all AOs).

The Practical Endorsement is focused around encouraging a wide range of practical activity and developing skills in practical work. It is intended that by carrying out a set minimum number of practical activities, students acquire a level of competence in practical work which is rewarded within the Practical Endorsement and aspects of their understanding of practical work are assessed within written papers.

In short

- There will be a 15% weighting for assessment of practical within written papers.
- There will be a common core list of practical ‘skills’ that must be developed during the two year A Level course.
- This core will be assessed within the Practical Endorsement through a minimum number of practical activities, but candidates can also be assessed on their understanding of these activities within the written papers.

“At a time when the UK needs to be cultivating a scientifically skilled workforce, we’re standing on the verge of depriving our children of a grounding in hands-on scientific experimentation.”

Dr Steve Evans



Subject: Biology	Subject: Chemistry	Subject: Physics
<p>Candidates must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use appropriate apparatus to record a range of quantitative measurements • use laboratory glassware apparatus for a variety of experimental techniques to include serial dilutions • use a light microscope at high and low power • produce scientific drawings from observations • use qualitative reagents to identify biological molecules • separate biological compounds using thin-layer/paper chromatography/electrophoresis • safely and ethically use organisms to measure plant/animal responses and physiological functions • use microbiological aseptic techniques • safely use instruments for dissection of an animal/plant organ • use sampling techniques in fieldwork • use ICT such as computer modelling, or data logger to collect data, or use software to process data 		
<p>Candidates must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use appropriate apparatus to record a range of measurements (mass, time, volume, temperature) • use a water bath/electric heater/sand bath for heating • measure pH • use laboratory apparatus for a variety of techniques including: titration, distillation, qualitative tests for ions and organic • functional groups, filtration, recrystallisation • use melting point apparatus • use thin-layer or paper chromatography • set up electrochemical cells and measure voltages • safely and carefully handle solids and liquids • measure rates of reaction by at least two different methods 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use appropriate analogue and digital apparatus to record a range of measurements • use methods to increase accuracy of measurements • use stopwatch/light gates for timing • use of callipers and micrometers for small distances • design, construct and check circuits using DC power supplies, cells, and a range of circuit components • use a signal generator and oscilloscope • generate and measure waves • use a laser or light source to investigate characteristics of light, including interference and diffraction • use ICT such as computer modelling, or data logger with a variety of sensors to collect data, or use of software to process data use ionising radiation, including detectors 		

Table 1: Overview of practical endorsement requirements common across all Awarding Organisations

Neil Dixon Advanced Skills Teacher South Bromsgrove High School

"I am delighted to see that Ofqual has acknowledged that the current method of assessing students' practical skills in A Level sciences is flawed and has decided a new model must be introduced. I am one of the vast majority of chemistry teachers who passionately believe that students learn best when they are taught chemistry with hands-on practical experiences embedded into the teaching sequence, contextualised against the theoretical aspects of the course. These students come to understand that sciences are practical subjects, and they appreciate the reciprocity between practicals and theory.

"Sadly, teachers like me have been under ever-increasing pressures to generate the best possible assessment outcomes for students by teetering near to that horrid grey area that lies between 'supporting your students in preparing for a practical assessment' and 'good practical teaching'. It is like asking someone to referee their own football match. This is fine when the stakes are low. But would you ask professional footballers to referee their own match? There is too much at stake. Teachers cannot (in the current educational climate) be expected to robustly assess their own students."

John Perry Lecturer in Science Education Keele University

"Hands-on practical work is, in my opinion, the essential pedagogy through which the rigour and beauty of science can be appreciated, and the essential nutrition for the curious minds of the next generation of scientists. It can provide ownership, challenge, concept reinforcement and development, and links the scientific model to the real world, essential for future technological development. It can also be very satisfying and great fun – ask the group of A Level students who won the box of chocolates for working out the distance a dart fired from a toy crossbow would travel, and then hitting the target positioned according to their prediction."

Tim Oates Group Director of Assessment Research and Development Cambridge Assessment

"The first part of the problem is the way we think about the science curriculum. Repeatedly, teachers are saying that 'if it's not an assessed part of qualifications, practical work will collapse'. This is a result of the extent to which qualifications have come to dominate curriculum thinking.

"Practical work shouldn't be done because it contributes marks to GCSE and A Level grades, but because it's a vital way of engaging young people, helping them towards gaining deep, secure scientific understanding, and encouraging acquisition of important skills."

Brand, 'Bonkers' and Benin

Work has been underway for nearly a year on redeveloping new A Levels in line with the reforms outlined by the current government. New A Levels will be submitted to Ofqual in the summer and, once accredited, will be available to schools (it is hoped) in September 2014, ready for first teaching in September 2015.

OCR has taken an innovative approach to its development and in the first of a series of articles on what to expect from our new A Levels we take a look at two A Levels, English Language and Literature and History.

A LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

OCR and the educational charity The English and Media Centre (EMC) have developed a new A Level in English Language and Literature. It's the first time the two organisations have worked together to create an English A Level. English Language and Literature will be one of three English A Levels available to students.

EMC, which works closely with English teachers, has put its expertise into content and resources while OCR has led on all aspects of assessment. Both organisations believe that English Language and Literature combined deserves a higher status as a subject than it currently holds.

The range of texts to be studied is the most diverse yet for any English A Level. It ranges from classics such as the poems of Emily Dickinson and William Blake to memoirs like *Twelve Years a Slave* and contemporary works including poetry from Jacob Sam-La Rose, Jez Butterworth's stage play *Jerusalem*, fiction by Jhumpa Lahiri and Russell Brand's evidence on drugs policy presented to the House of Commons.

The aim is for students to develop the skills to analyse any text, whether spoken or written, literary or nonliterary, in the most appropriate way. For a play such as *The Importance of Being Earnest*, students will be expected to discuss not only literary elements such as form, structure and dramatic techniques, but also linguistic

points, such as register and type of utterance, lexis and morphology. Students reading the transcript of the BBC Newsnight interview with Dizzee Rascal may be asked to comment on mode, purpose and audience.

Another unique feature of the qualification is the interplay between reading and writing. Students will be expected to apply their knowledge of literary and linguistic analysis from reading to their own original writing. They will also be encouraged to use their experience of creative writing to sharpen their analysis of texts. There is plenty of opportunity for original writing including a non-examined component for which students produce an original work of non-fiction writing.



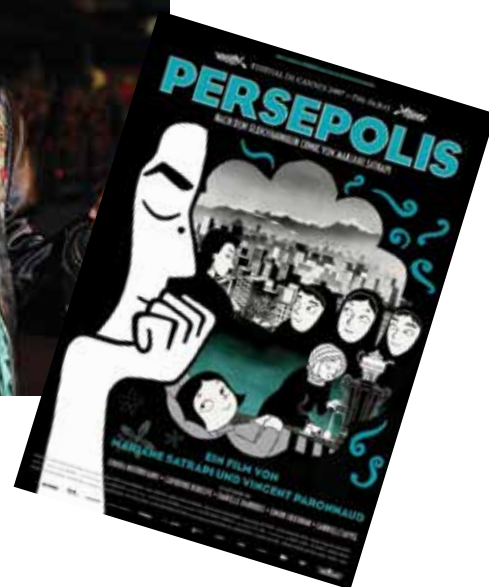
Content structure in brief

Component 1: Exploring non-fiction and spoken texts This unit will examine an OCR/EMC anthology of 20 spoken and written texts across different time periods, types of text and contexts.

Component 2: The language of poetry and plays This is an examined component in two sections, with one question in each. Both sections of this section are closed text, with an extract from the set text printed on the paper.

Component 3: Narrative – Reading as a writer, writing as a reader This is an open book examined component, with two sections. The focus is on ideas about narrative, including use of voice, point of view, time and chronology, dialogue, characterisation, genre, symbols and motifs, structure and settings.

Component 4: Non-examined component This gives candidates an opportunity to work independently to develop an expertise that builds on an area of study from the course. It will comprise two tasks: an analytical comparative essay comparing two texts, one chosen from a set list and one chosen by the candidate, and a piece of original writing in a non-fiction form.



The range of English Language and Literature texts varies from William Shakespeare (bottom left), Russell Brand (top left), Dizzee Rascal (top right) and Persepolis (right)

A LEVEL HISTORY

Hester Glass, OCR Subject Specialist for English Language and Literature, said: "Historically, English Language and Literature A Level has lacked a clearly defined identity. By creating a new model with a linguistic approach to literary texts, we aim to transform the A Level into a more valuable, distinctive qualification. It will provide a firm grounding for university and improve employability in any field that requires an ability to use language in a practical, agile and articulate way – from science, business or politics to the arts."

Barbara Bleiman, Co-Director of the English and Media Centre, said: "Developing the new A Level specification gives us an extraordinary opportunity to excite and inspire teachers with the sheer power of the English Language. The new A Level will introduce new approaches and scope for more creative writing, while offering teachers and students the flexibility to explore an extremely broad variety of styles, methodologies and genres."

"Taking on board feedback from teachers, we've created a specification with a superb choice of texts, from familiar names like George Orwell, Shakespeare and Charlotte Brontë to fresh voices including Grayson Perry, Allie Brosh and poet Jacob Sam-La Rose. From graphic novels like Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, to comedy scripts, TV screenplays and journalism, the course offers great diversity, within a set of broad parameters. Plus, there will be plenty of support and dynamic new resources to help teachers successfully introduce it in class."

OCR has taken the opportunity of reform to build on our reputation for choice in our History A Level. We've increased what we are offering and, in a re-structure, have dropped a few options. Our rationale is that we want to broaden the history curriculum alongside the teaching of traditional/familiar topics including British History. The A Level History subject criteria requires a 200 year range of study and the study of more one state. OCR is offering a range of topics over nearly 1700 years.

OCR's ten new topics are:

- Alfred and the Making of England 871-1016
- The Early Anglo-Saxons c400-800

- Genghis Khan and the Explosion from the Steppes c1167-1405
- Japan 1853-1937
- African Kingdoms c1400-c1800
- The Rise and Decline of the Mughal Empire in India 1526-1739
- The Rise of Islam c550-750
- The Ascendancy of the Ottoman Empire 1453-1606
- China and its rulers 1839-1989
- The Middle East 1908-2011, Ottomans to Arab Spring

/continued...

Genghis Khan is one of the new topics in the History A Level



The topics are being developed in conjunction with colleagues from HE. Dr Toby Green of King's College, London has worked on the African kingdoms topic.

“By giving students an appreciation of history of the rest of the world it enables them to question what the subject of history is.”

Case studies in precolonial West African Kingdoms is a study of four large nations in the West African region, Songhay, Benin, Dahomey & Oyo and Kongo. By the early 15th century these communities had grown in wealth and size and were a serious power in West Africa. The Kingdom of Songhay, for example, was the city of Timbuktu, famed for its culture and learning, which became one of the world's leading cities for a time.



The City of Timbuktu, famed for its culture and learning, is part of the African Kingdoms topic

Current Overview	Assessment Overview	
	Marks	% of A Level
British Period Study and Enquiry Candidates study one of the 13 options available, each of which constitutes a substantial and coherent element of British History. The Enquiry is a source-based study which immediately precedes or follows the outline period study.	50 Marks 1 Hour 30 Minutes paper	25%
Non-British Period Study Candidates study one of the 24 options available, each of which constitutes a coherent period of non-British History.	30 Marks 1 Hour paper	15%
Thematic Study and Historical Interpretations Candidates study one of the 21 options available. Each option comprises a thematic study over a period of at least 100 years, and three in-depth studies of events, individuals or issues that are key parts of the theme. Candidates will develop the ability to treat the whole period thematically, and to use their detailed knowledge of the depth study topics to evaluate interpretations of the specified key events, individuals or issues.	80 Marks 2 Hour 30 Minutes paper	40%
Coursework Candidates will complete a 3000-4000 word essay on a topic of their choice, which may arise out of content studied elsewhere in the course. This is an internally assessed component.	3000-4000 word essay	20%



The project, Shaping Tomorrow, was designed not only to inform OCR's strategic planning in the coming years but also to add to the general pool of knowledge in the growing area of global change in education.

**“How will learners learn?
How will teachers teach?
What will be assessed,
and by whom?”**

- Identify early warning of change so that we can adjust our strategies and tactics
- Spot opportunities early so that we can seize upon them
- Identify and reduce exposure to uncertain risks
- Make better informed choices by putting decision makers in touch with key issues, topics and drivers
- Challenge accepted norms by encouraging staff to think about change and how it might affect them
- Look beyond the here and now at the longer term horizon.

Out of 23 potential influencers, **two key drivers, the impact of global change and the rate of technology change** were considered the most significant and will create the most uncertain influences on learning and assessment.

For more information or to discuss any of the findings please get in touch
sally.brown@ocr.org.uk



From A Level to higher education...

Using resource materials to aid the transition

As part of the current reform of A Levels and GCSEs, OCR has taken a new approach to the development of teaching and learning resources. We have worked with experts at all levels within the education system to develop exciting new materials and functionality to allow teachers to interact with our resources.

CAPTURING THE EXPERT VOICE

Our new teaching and learning resources are being written by teachers, experts from higher education (HE) and other members of the education community. Our collaboration with representatives from HE has been particularly fruitful in the development of a new style of resources called Transition Guides.

Transition guides focus on how a particular topic is covered at two different key stages or levels within the education system and provide information on:

- Differences in the demand and approach at the different levels;
- Useful ways to think about the content at the lower key stage which will help prepare students for progression to the next level;
- Common student misconceptions in this topic.

Transition guides also contain links to a range of teaching activities that can be

used to deliver the topic content and are designed to be of use to teachers of both key stages or levels. Central to each transition guide is a Checkpoint Task which is specifically designed to help teachers determine whether students have developed deep conceptual understanding of the topic and assess their 'readiness for progression' to tackle the topic at the next educational level.

Transition guides have been developed for Key Stage 3-4 and Key Stage 4-5 and have received positive feedback from teachers. **However, this format of resource appears to be most powerful at Key Stage five to HE where it assists in bridging the gap for Key Stage five teachers, allowing them to fully understand how best to prepare their students for progression to HE courses.**

Our Key Stage 5 to HE Transition Guides are written by lecturers at named higher education institutes and have received positive feedback from both teachers and those who work in HE.

Dr David Read, Head of the Education Group and Director of Outreach (Chemistry) at the University of Southampton, has worked with OCR to produce a number of resources including a Key Stage 5 to HE Transition Guide on Chemical Bonding.

Dr Read explains: "I'm delighted to see OCR addressing the challenging issue of KS5-HE transition. The transition guides help teachers to provide students with

the sort of challenge that is required to develop the higher order thinking skills that are essential for success at degree level in any discipline."

New resources are being produced all of the time and we would welcome any feedback on our new approach resourcesfeedback@ocr.org.uk.

A wide range of sample materials have been released for the subjects being redeveloped for first teaching in 2015 (links to the materials can be found here: www.ocr.org.uk/reformresources) and more resources will be released over the next year as teachers prepare to deliver the new qualifications.

Our new approach to resources involves a strong focus on quality and drawing on education research both in terms of how students learn and how we can best present our resource materials. Our own research division within Cambridge Assessment has carried out a number of research projects ranging from looking at international models of curriculum support to exploring how best to provide differentiated resource materials in particular subjects. Our aims are to provide options that enable teachers to construct a curriculum that supports progression for students of all abilities. Teachers themselves are the experts on how their particular students learn and we are using research evidence to support them in removing barriers to progression for all students.



OCR runs a series of consultative forums, a higher education (HE) 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.

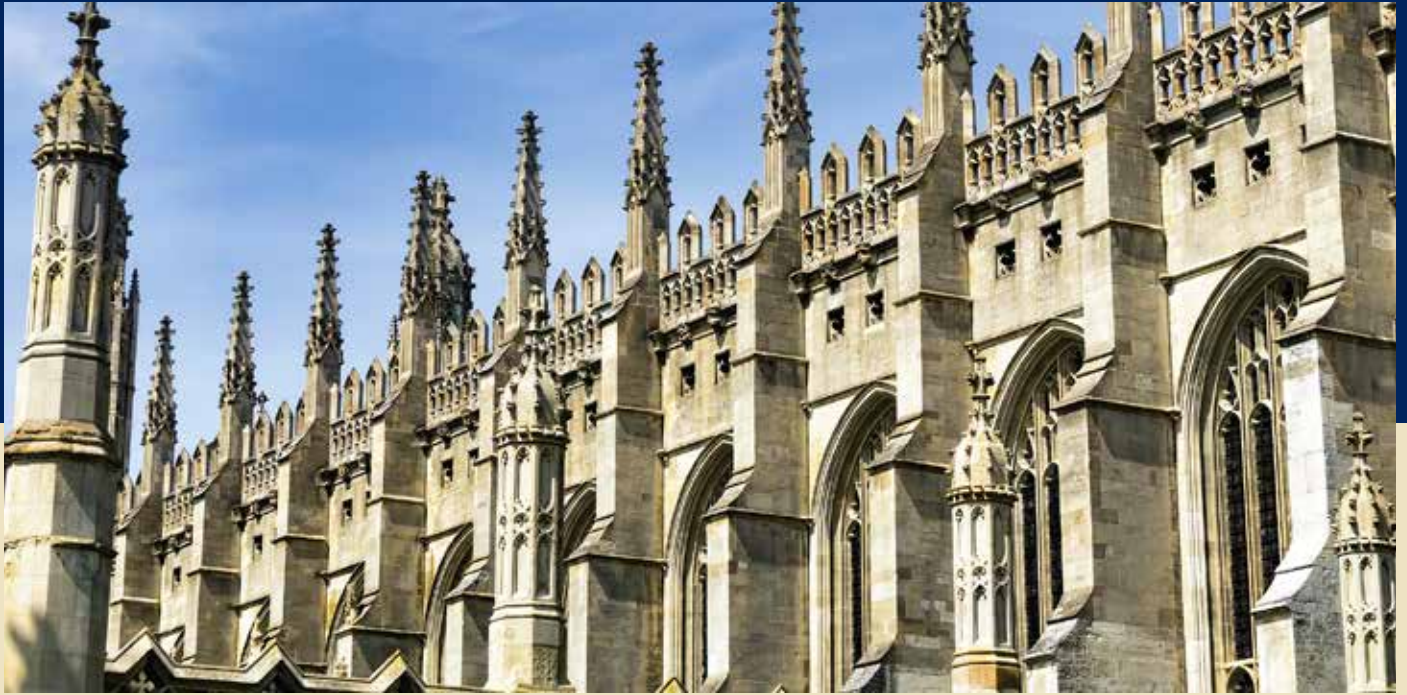
The HE forum is run three times a year and the subject forums twice a year. Membership of the HE forum is solely from HE while the subject forums' membership comprises a range of people from across the subject community including teachers, university academics, representatives from subject and professional 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?

For further information please contact Annette Allen at annette.allen@ocr.org.uk.

OCR Consultative Forum Timetable Autumn 2014

Business	20 November
Classics	01 October
Creative Arts	18 September
Economics	15 October
English	02 October
Geography	25 November
Health and Social Care	23 September
HE Strategic Forum	26 November
History	15 October
IT and Computing	12 November
Maths	09 October
Modern Foreign Languages	11 November
Psychology	08 October
Physical Education	21 October
Religious Studies	22 October
Science	05 November
Sociology	15 October
Vocational Applied Learning	13 November



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.

OCR is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, a department of the University of Cambridge. The Cambridge Assessment Group incorporates three major exam boards: Cambridge International Examinations, Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) and Cambridge English Language Assessment.

In the UK, the Cambridge Assessment Group is the only public examination board affiliated to a university. It plays a leading role in researching, developing and delivering educational assessment to eight million learners in over 170 countries every year.



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
Local Examinations Syndicate

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