

agenda

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM OCR / AUTUMN 2015



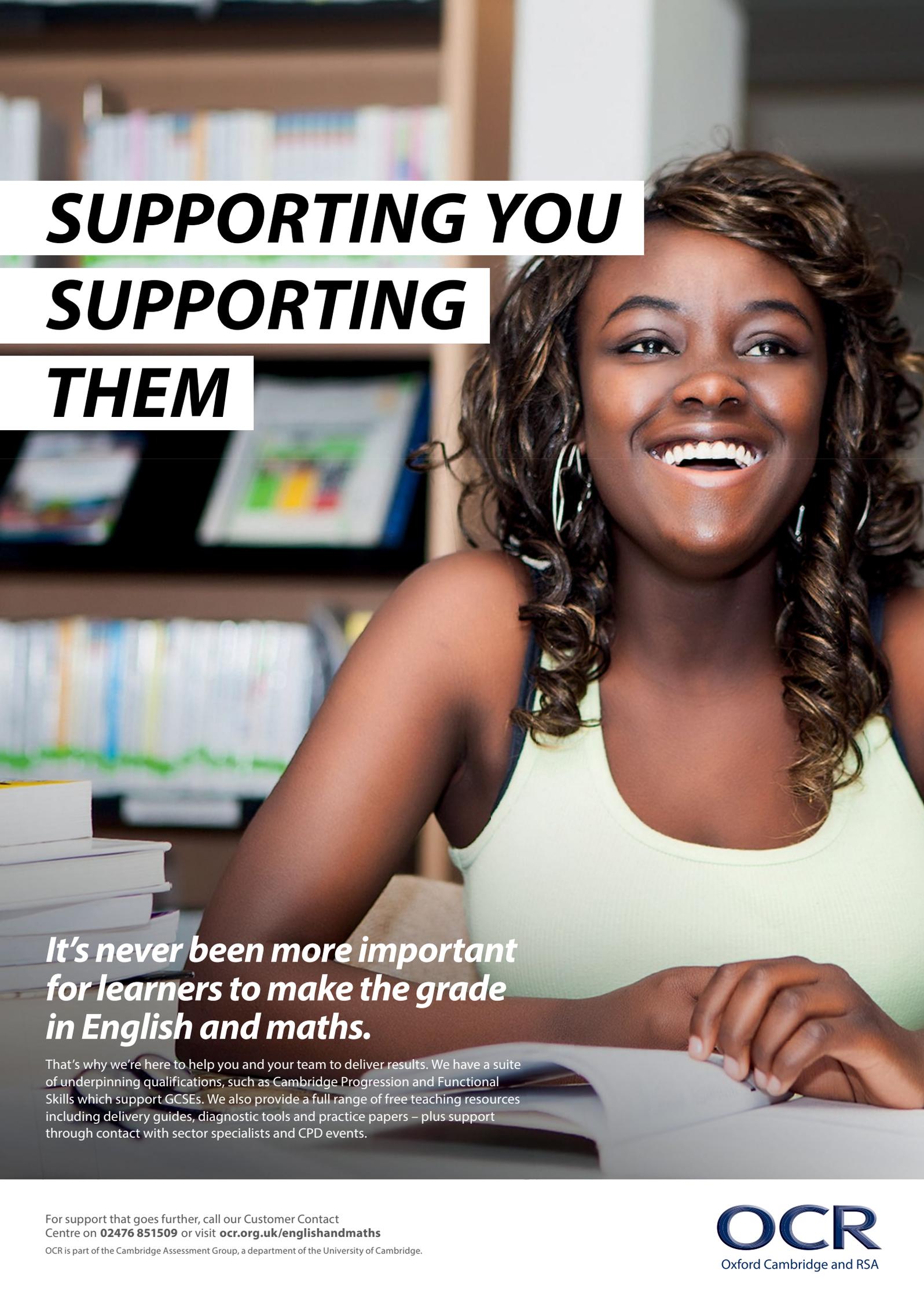
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**A NEW WAY OF SEEING THE PAST
– SPOTLIGHT ON HISTORY**



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THEM

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OCR is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group, a department of the University of Cambridge.

OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA



Welcome to this Autumn 2015 issue of **agenda**, OCR's termly magazine which offers a snapshot of news and views from OCR.

Since I joined OCR, I've been struck by the range of OCR's activities and expertise. At the same time as developing new, high quality Level 3 Cambridge Technical vocational qualifications to provide real choice for post-16 students, our teams are preparing to roll out 47 new GCSEs and A Levels from September 2016.

The summer exams – when OCR marked three million exam papers – went smoothly and we have ensured priority 'Enquiries About Results' are turned around faster this Autumn. But it's the individuals behind the statistics that count – like the impressive West Midlands students (see page 4) awarded OCR bursaries towards their undergraduate studies at Cambridge.

All this, plus an interview with Ian Pryce, Principal of Bedford College and feedback on teaching a new A Level history topic.

To get in touch about anything you read here, email agenda@ocr.org.uk.

William Burton
Chief Executive, OCR

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Cover story: Heston Blumenthal

The award winning chef is helping to support OCR's new Food Preparation and Nutrition GCSE. He will be engaging with teachers via events - one is planned for Spring 2016 - as well as adding his expertise to resources and videos. Read more about our secret ingredient on page 5.

Exceptional students collect OCR bursaries for Cambridge University

Nine outstanding students from across the West Midlands have been awarded bursaries towards their studies at the University of Cambridge by OCR.

Having completed their A Levels at schools and colleges in Alcester, Birmingham, Hereford, Rugby, West Bromwich and Wolverhampton, the students were presented with their awards on 25 September at OCR's Coventry offices. Liam Sammon, OCR's Director of Education and Commercial Services, congratulated the bursary winners.

Liam said: "We are once again thrilled by the rich pool of highly talented and conscientious students across the West Midlands. They are worthy winners of OCR bursaries, not only because of their academic

achievement and potential but because of their positive impact on others. Attending Cambridge is a fantastic achievement and we hope these bursaries will enable them to flourish in their next steps with less financial pressure."

Liam was joined by Simon Lebus (pictured second from left), Chair of OCR and Chief Executive of OCR's parent organisation, Cambridge Assessment, to present the awards. Recipients of the OCR bursaries receive £3,000 for each year of their undergraduate studies which they can use for living or tuition costs, or a



combination of both. The award fund, which arises from OCR's historical association with the West Midlands Exam Board, enables talented students in the region to make the most of their studies at the University of Cambridge. This is the 12th year that OCR has funded the bursary scheme.

The talented students will be studying a range of subjects including Natural Sciences, Medicine, Economics and Modern and Medieval Languages. Barney Fidler

(pictured third from right), who will be studying Natural Sciences at Christ's College, said: "I'm hugely excited to go to the University of Cambridge and will never forget how happy I was when I received my results. However, the debt that comes with higher education was a concern for me. Having access to this financial support means I can get the most out of my time at university without the burden of debt being even greater. I am really grateful to OCR for the opportunity it has given me."

Explaining examining in 3.10 mins

What happens to a student's exam paper after they leave the exam room? And how does OCR arrive at a student's final grade? 'Explaining examining – from exam to results day' is a new video designed to explain to GCSE and A Level students how OCR marks and grades exams.

The video follows an exam paper through scanning, online marking and awarding, including how the standardisation process ensures examiners 'sing from the same hymn sheet'.

Sylke Scheiner, OCR's Director of Assessment Standards, said: "We wanted to provide learners with a greater understanding of the assessment process. The colourful animation provides a simple, jargon free and hopefully fun overview of what goes on 'behind the scenes.'"

Take a look at the video, as well as factsheets on the basics of examining, on the OCR website:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/about-us/explaining-examining/>



The future for examining

On 15 October 2015, OCR launched a report in Parliament on why teachers examine and how to grow the pool of examiners. At the event, representatives from the DfE, Ofqual, teacher unions such as NASUWT, NUT and ASCL, as well as the JCQ and other exam boards, debated some of the key findings on this topical issue.

OCR's report – entitled 'The future for examining' – explores what motivates teachers to get involved in examining and offers solutions to ensure the supply of examiners at a time when teacher workload is increasing and more examiners are required at one point of the year. It is based on independent research by the think tank LKMco who surveyed nearly 1,000 teachers. It also incorporates feedback from OCR examiners and from head teachers, as well as discussions at a panel debate held at the RSA in July 2015.

Recommendations include more differentiated training, working with the College of Teaching to include examining as part of a 'subject expert' pathway, and promoting progression routes within examining.

In the foreword, Brian Lightman, General Secretary of ASCL, welcomed the report's 'innovative and practical' suggestions for overcoming some of the pressures in the system. 'It points the way ahead to ensuring that everybody can have confidence in the capacity of the system to produce the timely and accurate assessments which are essential to the futures of millions of young people.'

Sylke Scheiner, OCR Director of Assessment Standards, said: "Examiners do a great job. As the report states, they are the unsung heroes of the education system. However, we need to build examiner capacity and culture. I believe this report is a vital first step and will contribute to the work of a cross-industry working group which includes the major exam boards, as well as interested parties such as NAHT, ASCL and HMC." (See photo right.)

New GCSEs and AS/A Levels for 2016

Recipe for success

Award winning British chef Heston Blumenthal is OCR's secret ingredient to support its new Food Preparation and Nutrition GCSE for 2016.

To mark his support Heston, and a team of chefs from The Fat Duck in Bray, took part in a workshop with enthusiastic pupils at St Michael's Catholic College in London, shown on BBC Breakfast, to demonstrate some of the cooking methods that students will learn as part of OCR's new GCSE.

He said: "My own passion for food began with questioning everything about the science behind cooking – which is what we need to encourage kids to do in schools. Helping them to understand why eggs make a soufflé rise or why liquid nitrogen produces smoother ice cream makes a

massive difference. It's how they get engaged, learn and develop the confidence to experiment and get creative in the kitchen."

Blending Heston Blumenthal with OCR's draft Food Preparation and Nutrition GCSE makes perfect sense, according to OCR Subject Specialist, Sandra Marsh (pictured above left): "Heston's natural curiosity and scientific approach to cooking complement the new GCSE perfectly and will enthuse students as they discover the essentials of food science, build strong practical cookery skills and a good understanding of nutrition. His enthusiasm and



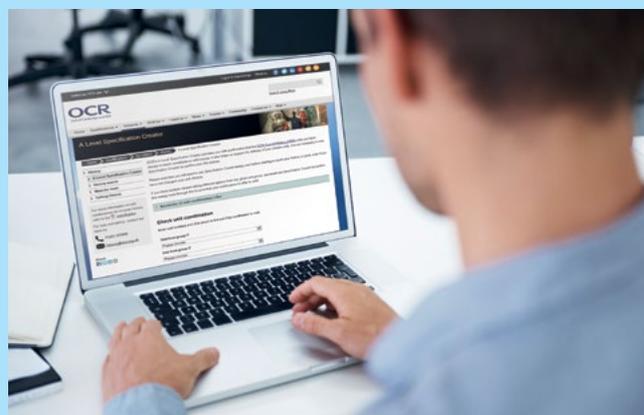
his input in developing new resources is fantastic." She continued: "The OCR qualification aims to support teachers and students to explore the relationship between food as a life skill and a science, as well as helping them to understand the huge challenges that we face

globally. Support for teachers will include opportunities to engage with the top chef via social media, videos of Heston demonstrating relevant skills plus training events with the chef, the first of which is in Spring 2016. A new Hodder textbook to accompany the GCSE will also be available."

In brief

New Scheme of Work builder

There's plenty of support available to help teachers and students to get the most out of OCR qualifications. We offer CPD (www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk) and a large team of subject specialists (contact details are on the relevant subject page on www.ocr.org.uk) to respond to teacher queries about new (and old) qualifications and to visit schools and clusters. Our range of support materials is huge, from OCR's own free resources, such as delivery and transition guides, to endorsed textbooks from big name publishers. Did you know that we've also created a 'Scheme of Work' builder to help you to get to grips with teaching the new 2015 qualifications, enabling you to link the relevant resources and activities to the whole specification? The Scheme of Work builder is available for all the new 2015 GCSEs and new AS/A Levels, except Art and Design. Find the support to suit your teaching style: www.ocr.org.uk/gcselevelreform.



Did you know?

- OCR's website had over **6 million** 'visitors' last academic year (nearly **twice as many** as 5 years ago!)
- The **6 million** visitors looked at over **30 million** pages in total
- Over **26,000** different pdfs were downloaded **22 million** times
- Our **most popular pdf** – on unit level raw mark and ums grade boundaries – was downloaded over **150,000** times
- **Science** question papers are our next **most popular** downloads

OCR launches report on examining in Parliament





New GCSEs and AS/A Levels for 2016

Here's a taster of more of the 47 draft new qualifications that OCR has developed for first teaching from September 2016. We've been able to develop the qualifications – and supporting resources – only with the enthusiastic input and expertise of partners from across the wider education community. All our qualifications are subject to accreditation by Ofqual. As well as our new Heston-enhanced Food GCSE, we've hit the headlines with the following:

Smart Sport

OCR's new hi-tech GCSEs and AS/A Levels in PE reflect the way modern sport has become more scientific. The draft qualifications put more emphasis on the anatomical, physiological and psychological factors that affect competitive edge in sport. They also include the latest techniques for training smarter, not just harder.

Gender issues and cultural barriers to participating in sport will also be up for debate. It's not all theory, with students taking part in three sports including a team sport at GCSE. At AS/A Level, students have the option to undertake coaching. Sara Mallet, OCR's PE Subject Specialist, said: "Whether students dream of captaining England's women's football team like Steph Houghton, winning a Paralympic gold medal like Jonnie Peacock or coaching the England rugby team to victory in the next World Cup, these new qualifications will boost their chances of success."



A new generation of citizens

The new GCSE in Citizenship Studies is designed to inspire the legal eagles, politicians, community heroes and global citizens of the future. 50% of the new GCSE is focused on 'Citizenship in Action'.

According to Subject Specialist, Grant Robertson, this taps into "a growing interest among young people in social action, contrary to public opinion". The new GCSE will contribute to the new school performance measure, Progress 8, and schools can use the GCSE to meet Ofsted inspection requirements for Spiritual, Moral, and Cultural Development (SMSC), 'British Values' and as part of their work on Prevent. Scott Harrison, Chairman of the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT), commented: "Teaching Citizenship in schools and colleges is more vital than ever. A GCSE promotes active citizenship and helps young people to get to grips with the rigour of politics and law."

Lady Gaga and OCR's five reasons to study the arts



"OCR's creative subjects know no borders," according to Paul Steer, OCR's Head of Policy. "They take inspiration from the best of British as well as the greatest of global," he continued. And they are not an easy option. "Creative subjects take really hard work and require students to dig deep."

OCR has developed new creative GCSEs and AS/A Levels that feature Jean Paul Gaultier to Bach, stage lighting to Lady Gaga, and curating to Frantic Assembly.

In celebration of the importance of the arts, our subject specialists for art, music and drama identified five reasons why creative subjects at school matter:

- **The arts make self starters and develop emotional intelligence**
- **The arts are stretching**
- **Arts students are highly sought after by employers**
- **Arts 'reach the parts other subjects can't reach'**
- **Arts 'reach the students other subjects can't reach'**

Going green with Cambridge Technicals in Engineering

The new range of Level 3 Cambridge Technicals will be available in a total of nine subjects from 2016 (read more on page 10-11), but OCR's Cambridge Technical in Engineering is already out of the starting blocks.

To provide relevant and hands-on learning, an engineering challenge run by the Greenpower Education Trust to design, build and race a single seat electric race car, using just one set of batteries to compete in a 60 minute race, has been mapped to the electrical and engineering pathway of the new Engineering Technical.

Students who take part in the competition – the Greenpower IET Forum 24+ class competition – will get to grips with a range of design techniques, circuit design and simulation software, and will develop practical construction and fault finding skills relevant to electrical and electronic engineering.

OCR's Mara Bogdanovic, along with Sector Specialist Martin Webber, recently attended the Greenpower 2015 International Final at Rockingham Speedway to see some of the green cars in action (pictured right). Mara commented: "This is the first work-relevant project we have mapped to our new Cambridge Technicals. The project approach makes learning more credible, and helps develop a real understanding of how skills and knowledge link together in a working environment."

Greenpower CEO, Jeremy Way, said: "We're delighted that OCR recognise the value of participation in the Greenpower programme, so much so that learners can now use the design and build of their car to support their studies for a Cambridge Technical in Engineering Level 3, adding huge value to their involvement."



English workshops for Education and Teaching Foundation

OCR is behind a new action learning workshop and webinar programme for FE tutors and trainers delivering English qualifications such as Functional Skills and Stepping Stone qualifications (from Entry up to Level 2). The programme is available as part of the Education and Training Foundation (www.et-foundation.co.uk) English Pipeline. The workshops aim to support teachers and trainers in a range of settings in the FE and training sector to drive up the standards of English by targeting learners' problem skills and supporting tutors' knowledge to be able to successfully deliver these skills through interactive resources. The first of the new workshops kicked off in early November. OCR's Matthew Alvarez commented: "We are committed to improving learner outcomes by helping to develop high quality training." See the ET Foundation website for further details.

Let's get to work

The Luminary Bakery project in East London helped vulnerable young women to get ready for employment and achieve an OCR Life and Living Skills qualification at the same time. Now OCR is supporting a programme in Tower Hamlets to help young people at risk of becoming NEETS to make that successful transition to employment. The young people will work towards achieving a recognised OCR qualification – the Level 1 Award in Employability Skills.

The charity SkillForce has begun the pilot programme in Tower Hamlets this Autumn, thanks to the generous support of the JP Morgan Chase Foundation. The 'Your Future' programme aims to encourage skills and personal qualities for the world of work, support progress towards career goals and aspirations, prepare young people for interview and support the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

As well as gaining the OCR Employability Skills qualification, young people will undertake a work placement, receive careers advice and meet employers such as Citibank and BA and training providers to understand more about what's required from a new employee.



OCR attends Party conferences



At this year's party conferences, OCR held fringe events asking the simple question, 'Do we have the correct equation for English and maths in our schools and colleges?' Margaret Kerry, OCR's Chief Development Officer, (pictured here with AoC's Martin Doel and Schools Minister Nick Gibb at the Conservative Party Conference), outlined the need for an alternative, flexible GCSE to meet the specific needs of post-16 learners.

Ian Pryce became Principal of Bedford College in 1998. The College is a member of the 157 Group of the UK's largest FE Colleges and was judged outstanding by Ofsted in 2009. Over 14,000 students attend Bedford College courses at campuses across the area including Milton Keynes, Luton, Rushden and Bedford. The College also engages with the local community through a sixth form centre and is supporting a new Academy school due to open in 2016.

Ian was the first Finance Director in the FE sector to be made a Principal. Here he tells *agenda* about his own career and the challenges he faces.

What has been your path into your current role?

I started adult life as a medical student in Manchester before realising it isn't a career for the squeamish, and so switched to study maths, which had always been my main interest. I wanted a career that involved public service, lots of responsibility and the chance to make real things happen. I have always enjoyed being part of something big so large organisations have always appealed. I always wanted to end up as a Chief Executive but would never have predicted it would be in further education. I didn't set foot in a college before 1993. My career was largely finance based to start with, working at Liverpool City Council in the Derek Hatton era, keeping the city solvent, then moving into the newly nationalised electricity industry developing new clean power stations. I then moved into electrical retailing as Finance Director, before switching into Further Education with the FEFC on incorporation in 1992. I joined Bedford College in 1996 and became the first Finance Director in the sector to be appointed a Principal in 1998.

What do you like about working in the field of education?

I have the best job in Bedford! Education is a great public service. I particularly enjoy the intellectual challenge and variety in my role. I love the way we help

people fulfil their ambitions for a better life, especially those who have struggled before.

Who do you admire in your field?

I keep a list of my personal heroes on Pinterest. They include a number of educators, mathematicians and leaders. The ideal dinner party for me would be Augustus, Nelson and Evariste Galois, though it would probably end up in a duel. I was inspired to work in a college by Dame Pat Morgan-Webb and Professor Alison Wolf.

Was your own experience of education a positive one and what lessons did you learn from it?

Education made me what I am. As someone from a traditional working class background, with a grandmother who was a Barnardo's baby but parents who wanted their children to get opportunities they never had, I benefited from an intensely academic and broad Catholic grammar school education. I'm not sure it prepared me that well for university, and my initial error in choice has made me passionate now about good guidance. Further Education has taught me that everyone wants a good life for themselves and their family, and education offers the best route to that. I have also learned that, just as we don't assume an A Level student taking French and History wants to be a French

historian, we shouldn't assume someone choosing Construction wants to become a builder.

What do you do when – if – you have time off?

In my spare time I run and play guitar in various bands. The running allows me to indulge in periodic CAMRA Beer quests, the last one being to visit 20 CAMRA Heritage pubs across the country in 2014.



If you weren't a teacher, what would you be?

I am not a teacher, but if I weren't an educator I would probably have been a civil servant (I love understanding and watching the use of power and influence) or gone back into retail.



“Just as we don’t assume an A Level student taking French and History wants to be a French historian, we shouldn’t assume that someone choosing Construction wants to become a builder.”

What are the greatest challenges faced by colleges such as your own over the next five years?

The biggest challenges over the next five years are managing to continue to provide the broad and excellent range of educational programmes we do on much less money. The biggest educational challenge is addressing the weak maths and English skills of many of our students. Only 1% of our students studying below advanced level test at level 2 in maths, despite many of the others possessing a GCSE grade C.

As a college principal, how do you know when you are doing a good job?

I know we are doing a good job by actively asking everyone I meet in our community – employers, students,

community leaders, government – how we are doing. When I started here 20 years ago I used to dread people telling me they had been a student because it was followed by a criticism. Now at least 95% of people who talk to me say our staff are wonderful. I am much more interested in what our customers think of us than what Ofsted think of us and wish we weren’t so obsessed with Ofsted judgements.

What achievements are you proudest of?

The majority of our students come to us having not done well at school. I am really proud that despite that we send more people to university than any other local institution, state or private, and last year 51% of students leaving the college went into higher education.

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

I would ask the minister:

- Why is the education of adults being seen as a cost that needs cutting rather than an investment with a high return?
- Why is government so critical of a sector that is a success story, and that has grown in popularity and quality consistently over 20 years?
- What can we do for you?



THE RISE AND RISE OF CAMBRIDGE TECHNICALS

- 9 key subjects
- 4 sizes – max 720 GLH
- Common content across Applied General and Tech Level
- External assessment
- Two free moderation visits
- Choice of moderation formats
- UCAS points
- Employer-backed content
- New textbook
- Free training events

From science to sport, engineering to enterprise, OCR's Cambridge Technicals' range has been redeveloped to offer a modern, agile alternative to veteran qualifications, in a bid to tackle the UK's skills, productivity and income gaps.

The government's report, 'Fixing the foundations' published in July 2015, referred to UKCES research that by 2020 the UK's ranking for intermediate technical and professional skills, which are linked to Level 3 qualifications, will fall to 28th out

9 subjects, 4 sizes... OCR's Level 3 vocational range has been overhauled to tackle the UK skills gap and provide real choice in post-16 education from September 2016

of 33 OECD countries. The same research cited that Germany's economic success, by comparison, is based on a high proportion of intermediate skills in the labour force. The report also notes that raising the level of UK productivity to that of the US would boost GDP by 31% – equivalent to £21,000 for each household.

OCR will tackle some of the UK's most acute intermediate skills shortages with its new Level 3 Cambridge Technicals across nine subject areas: Art and Design; Business; Digital Media; Engineering; Health and Social Care; IT; Performing Arts; Science for Technicians; and Sport and Physical Activity.

EMPLOYER SUPPORT

The new Cambridge Technicals have been developed to meet the needs of top employers, as well as FE colleges, universities and industry experts. In pharmaceuticals, the UK's most successful research-based industry, OCR has worked closely with companies like Astra-Zeneca's biologics research and development arm, MedImmune, to identify key skills for the Science for Technicians qualification. Similarly, OCR worked with IBM to develop components of its new Cambridge Technicals in IT.

Other employers that OCR has worked with to develop the new range of qualifications include: the Alzheimer's Society, Anglian Water, Barclays, Bouygues UK, BT, Cisco, Coventry University, Jagex, King's College NHS Foundation Trust, Mencap, Pfizer, Richer Sounds, Sports Coach UK, Sports Leaders UK and the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute.

The partnership with employers extends beyond aligning content to make it relevant to industry needs. It includes input into new resources throughout the lifetime of the qualification so teachers get a complete package of support.

SIZE MATTERS

All the new qualifications for 2016 are available in 4 sizes, up to a maximum of 720 hours. This approach means that young people no longer have to make the stark choice aged 15 or 16 between a purely academic or vocational route but can combine the two. With smaller teaching units for OCR's new Cambridge Technicals, students can combine both vocational and academic study as part of a more flexible and diverse curriculum. This is a breadth sought by employers and universities alike.

Let's kick off with sport

With focus on the Rugby World Cup and next year's Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, OCR's new Cambridge Technicals in Sport and Physical Activity have been designed with reversing the general decline in grassroots sports participation, getting more people active and improving the nation's health in mind.

While elite sports continue to thrive and the UK's £20 billion sports sector is growing, Sport England's latest figures indicate Britain is becoming more sedentary with almost two thirds of adults doing no regular exercise and concern that the 2012 Olympic Legacy has faltered. The Cambridge Technicals in Sport and Physical Activity have been developed with leading UK sports bodies with grassroots sports participation at their heart. By shifting the focus from

elite sportsmanship, the new Cambridge Technicals will equip more of the 70,000 young people who study sport post-16 with the broader more practical mix of skills they need to progress into employment, apprenticeship or continued study. The UK sports and leisure industry needs more Joe Publics with skills to work as coaches, fitness instructors, personal trainers and managers to build a nation fit for the future.

Colin Huffen, Coaching Network Manager of Sports Coach UK, said: "We are delighted to have been a key partner in the development of a new suite of Cambridge Technicals. This will ensure that all learners on the programme have the opportunity to understand the fundamental 'how to' skills of coaching. The content taught will align with and

incorporate UKCC Level 2 Club Coach standards. Sports organisations who have welcomed the new qualification include: BodyPower, the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMPSA), CPSport, English Federation of Disability Sport, IQL UK, Limb Power, Mencap Sport, Northamptonshire Sport, Powerbreathe, Rounders England, Royal Yachting Association, Sports Leaders UK, Sports Coach UK, Tennis Foundation, The Gym, UK Athletics, UK Deaf Sport and Youth Sport Trust.

Working in partnership with IQL, for example, means that taking the Cambridge Technicals in Sport will count towards qualifying as a life guard.

Charlotte Bosworth, OCR Director of Skills and Employment (and Skills Commissioner) said: "While there is much attention in education on inspiring future captains of industry, Nobel Prize winners and elite entrepreneurs, employers told us they need more people like Jade and Joe Public with the core professional and technical skills needed to support business growth, deliver high-quality public services and boost the UK's productivity."

With smaller teaching units for OCR's new Cambridge Technicals, students can combine both vocational and academic study as part of a more flexible and diverse curriculum.

She added: "The dangers of the UK's chronic skills shortage are well-documented and it's time for a real choice in post-16 education. Existing 'blockbuster' qualifications with over 1,000 teaching hours can steer 16-year-olds to specialise too early and limit their future options. By contrast, smaller teaching units will enable learners to mix and match core subjects and better prepare them for success at work, in an apprenticeship or at university."

TRIED AND TESTED

OCR originally launched a Cambridge Technicals range in 2012. The catalyst for change was government reform of vocational education shaped by the Wolf Report which recommended an externally assessed element in vocational qualifications. OCR seized the opportunity to overhaul content and structure.

Apart from Art and Design, all new Cambridge Technicals courses for 2016 will include externally assessed content and comply with the Department for Education's technical guidance for inclusion on the Key Stage 5 performance tables.

However alongside the new 2016 suite, OCR will continue to support teaching of its 2012 Cambridge Technicals (which don't have an externally assessed element), enabling FE colleges to manage a smooth phased transition that best suits their students' requirements. Nearly 20,000 students were awarded Level 3 Cambridge Technicals this year alone.

OCR was also able to learn from the redevelopment of the Cambridge Technicals in Engineering as it was introduced a year ahead of qualifications in the eight other subject areas. The new Engineering qualification provided a model which was successfully piloted in FE centres in 2014-15. Having proved successful and popular in practice, the trial paved the way to make the whole suite available for teaching from September 2016.

Vocational Heritage

It is fitting that this initiative comes in the year that OCR celebrates its vocational heritage. 25 years ago, virtually to the day, OCR's parent, the RSA examinations board, moved into Progress House in Coventry. At that time, RSA had been offering vocational qualifications for 134 years, since its first vocational exams in 1856 in 17 subjects ranging from Agriculture to Physiology. Just a few years later Progress House became the home of OCR's vocational operations when UCLES and RSA Examinations merged to form OCR. Dr Kim Howells MP, the then Minister for Lifelong Learning, pronounced on the merger in the House of Commons on 26 November 1997: "OCR combines the best elements of British education and training. OCR brings together two exam boards with 400 years of experience of setting standards with the modern and creative approach which will equip our students for the 21st century in ways that will recognise the achievement of students of all abilities and aptitudes."

Over the last two decades, OCR has built on its RSA heritage with a range of well known vocational qualifications taken by millions – OCR Nationals, CLAIT, to name a few. And in the last couple of years, OCR developed Cambridge Progression qualifications to fill the gap left by Basic and Key Skills. In 2015, OCR issued over half a million certificates across more than 500 vocational qualifications.

CASE NOTES: A NEW TERM, A NEW WAY OF SEEING THE PAST

Many teachers are getting to grips with new AS/A Level and GCSE qualifications introduced this September. Change is refreshing but demanding and so OCR has developed support in the form of resources, training and a team of subject specialists to make the transition to new qualifications – and in some cases to OCR – as simple and straightforward as possible.

OCR took the opportunity of qualification reform to broaden A Level history 'beyond Hitler and the Henrys'. We introduced 10 new options for our AS/A Level History, with the help of historians with expertise from the wider education community. While there is still plenty of continuity on offer, schools have an opportunity to take a brave step and teach one of the new exciting topics to refresh their A Level History courses, alongside more familiar subjects.

The principle of broadening school history is an approach favoured by many historians, including Professor Peter Mandler, President of the Royal Historical Society.

Professor Mandler said: "The aspect of recent reforms to GCSE and A-Level most widely greeted with approval by academic historians has been the push to broaden the curriculum beyond the 20th century. History tells us not so much about who we are as about who we have been and what we might yet be. We welcome efforts by the examination boards to bring recent academic research on hitherto under-explored histories within reach of school pupils. It is particularly important not to tell the history of the

non-Western world solely through its contact with the West."

The 10 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

We kept favourites such as the Tudors and modern European history, but introduced new units including India and Japan. Our oldest topic is the Rise of Islam c550-750 and our most modern is Britain 1951-1997. **OCR is the only board offering a ground-breaking new topic on pre-colonial African Kingdoms.**



One teacher's story – teaching African Kingdoms from September 2015

The new African Kingdoms topic for OCR's A Level History was developed with the help of Dr Toby Green of Kings College London. The topic covers the kingdoms of Kongo and Benin, and the empires of Songhay and Dahomey and Oyo, all of which had great wealth and power in the 15th century.

Julie Curtis, Head of History at The Piggott School, Berkshire, is teaching African Kingdoms for the first time and tells us how she got on.

What's new about the African Kingdoms topic? This course looks so differently at Africa. It gives us the impression of a people more in charge of their lives and not as victims, which is the stereotype. We also are used to seeing Africa as one country, but the truth is very different and this topic challenges that view. In the West, we have a preconception as Africa being poor where the people are passive – whether becoming slaves, being colonised or receiving aid.

How have you found teaching the topic so far? My students are really enjoying this topic and so am I. It is good to be teaching something really different, and something that changes your perceptions. I feel like we are exploring the history of a hidden continent.

Have there been any surprises for you or your students? Students have been surprised to discover examples of Africans being in charge, for example how advanced the Songhay Kingdom – part of the Mali Empire – was during the 15th and 16th centuries. Parts of Africa were more developed than most

of Europe – in fact European scholars travelled to the University of Timbuktu to study. They were even doing cataract operations in the Sahel in that era! We were also surprised to find there was already an internal slave trade in some places, and that the art and culture were very advanced.

Why is this a good topic for A Level history? The topic's an excellent preparation for higher education. Students taking it will really stand out when they apply for university. There are not many source materials for the period, nor accepted views of the topic to influence them. This puts more onus on students to conduct research and develop their own views.

What are your highlights? One of the most enjoyable moments so far was a discussion about which of the leaders in the Songhay and the Askia Dynasty achieved the most. We had to be led only by the evidence we had in front of us. We have had a lot of lively discussion!

Have you encountered any problems? One slight drawback is the small amount of source materials. There is a small e-book, but it's not like the big fat textbooks the students are used to, so it can make them feel a bit insecure. On the other hand, it does make them think



more for themselves, so having fewer resources is a double-edged sword.

How do you plan for such a varied syllabus? We will combine African Kingdoms with the topic on the 1930s and Churchill, to get a good spread of time and place. A few years ago, we studied the First Crusade, which was a very different approach from the usual topics, such as the Russian Revolution and Hitler. This time I wanted to study a completely different time and place.

For further information visit www.ocr.org.uk/history

From summer 2016, OCR is offering an annual prize for AS Level students taking the African Kingdoms paper. Entries will be jointly judged and awarded by OCR and Kings College London with whom OCR developed the new topic.



Michael Goddard
OCR's Head of History

"Julie's experience with this course so far suggests that it is being successful in three of our main aims: challenging received notions of modernity (recognising the legitimacy and achievements of other civilisations), challenging our understanding of history as a discipline (using other types of sources and evidence), and, importantly, making history fun, interesting and fresh. All of these have been argued for during our consultations with historians. We congratulate Julie for her willingness to take on this challenge, and to learn alongside her learners – that is what good historians, and teachers, do."

There's a 'specification creator' tool on the OCR website so teachers can check that the topics they've chosen meet the new requirements for A Level History, ie. the earliest date studied in any unit group must be separated by at least 200 years from the latest date studied in any unit group. At both AS and A Level, students must study the history of more than one country or state, including at least one outside the British Isles.

EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION.



Simon Lebus, Group Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment, on a linguistic study charting our growing obsession with education and some surprising stats on the gender gap at GCSE

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As the new term starts and the autumn weather closes in, newspapers are full of back to school stories. The policy debate is also hotting up, with Labour announcing a commitment to abolish academies and continue discussion about the exam system.

The late Mike Baker, the BBC's education correspondent for many years, once gave an interesting talk in which he related the increase in the amount of press coverage of exam results from the 1970s onwards, noting that there was virtually zero interest to begin with but that coverage increased rapidly from 1990 onwards. Interestingly, a new study by researchers from Cambridge University Press and Lancaster University reveals that education also features more frequently in everyday conversation. Comparing a 1990s data set with recordings of present day conversations, they identify that 'education' crops up 42 times per million words compared with only 26 times per million in the 1990s.

What could be behind this? The answer may lie in another finding of the research in which it was identified that we've also started talking in particular about qualifications twice as much as in the 1990s, with GCSEs in particular featuring five times more in the contemporary conversations that were analysed.

One potential explanation for this is the impact of globalisation; another is the general decline in levels of trust in public institutions. The impact of both of these has been to increase the importance of formal, externally validated qualifications. As people have more varied careers and very often pursue employment opportunities across national borders it becomes more important for them to have formal certification that employers understand and that those

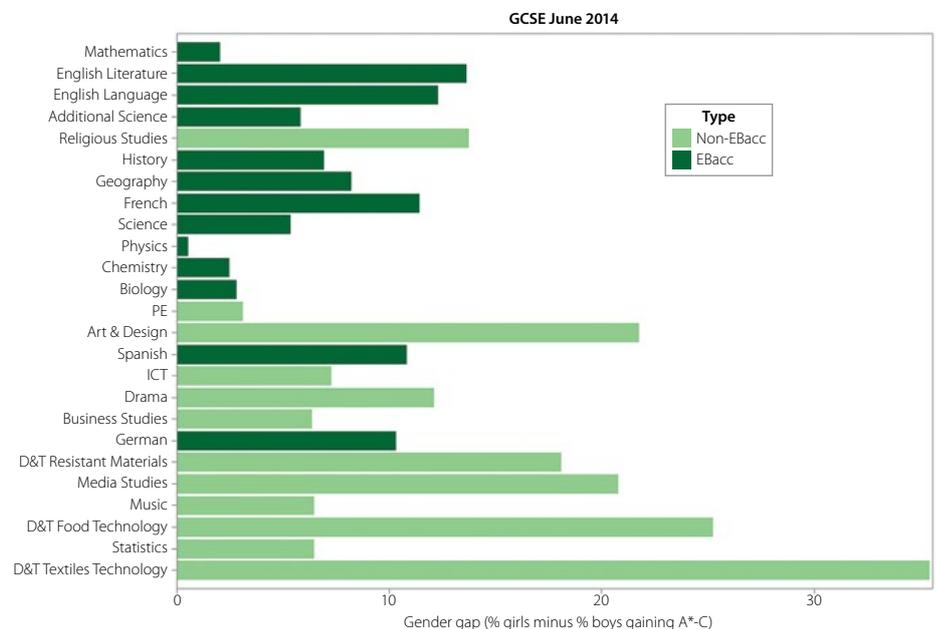
employers can equate with consistent and well-established skill levels. It is also true that we are less ready as a society to rely on non-externally validated professional judgement, as a result of which certification of learning and skills levels relying purely on internal school and teacher reporting is as a rule often less well-trusted than externally awarded qualifications.

Another possible explanation for this increase in the number of conversations featuring education is the simple fact that more people stay in education longer, a consequence of a societal change that has occurred in most industrial economies and which has been supported by a doubling in the amount of public spending on education.

The same period has also seen a huge shift in gender attainment at GCSE across a wide range of subjects. My colleagues Tom Bramley and Carmen Vidal Rodeiro in our Research Division recently produced a

graphic (below) showing the difference between the percentage of girls gaining grade C or above and the percentage of boys achieving the same grades in a wide range of GCSE subjects. The proportion of girls gaining A* to C grades was higher in all subjects shown in the graph and in particular, right across the range of Ebacc subjects, which are shown in the darker green colour. The difference was not as striking in maths and physics but was still there; an interesting outcome given concerns about the number of female students pursuing STEM subjects in higher education, and which poses the question of what is happening to these superior performing 16 year old girls between GCSE and when they go to University, as this represents a significant loss of opportunity and human capital both for the country as a whole and those individuals involved.

This and other interesting questions to do with gender differences in education were the theme of a Cambridge Assessment conference on October 29th in London.



JOIN OCR AT THESE EXHIBITIONS AND CONFERENCES AUTUMN/WINTER 2015/16

NOVEMBER

10, 19 & 24

Geographical Association: New Geography GCSEs and A Levels

London and Manchester

OCR subject specialists will be on hand at these one day events run by the Geographical Association on new Geography GCSEs or A Levels for 2016. We can offer advice on the aims, structure and distinctive features of OCR's new Geography specifications. There will be opportunities to exchange teaching ideas and to attend workshops throughout the afternoon.

www.geography.org.uk

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Westminster Education Forum: Where Next for Apprenticeships?

Congress Centre, Great Russell Street, London WC1

OCR's Director of Skills and Employment, Charlotte Bosworth, will be joining a programme of topical discussion among key policy makers and stakeholders including raising awareness of apprenticeships among young people and parity of esteem with HE.

www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk

NOVEMBER

12-13

Whole Education Annual Conference

King's Place, London N1

OCR is delighted to sponsor the 6th annual conference of Whole Education. This not-for-profit organisation brings together schools, organisations and individuals committed to giving young people a fully rounded education and developing the skills, qualities and knowledge that young people need today. The theme of this year's conference is 'Seizing the Agenda: From Raising the Floor to Raising the Ceiling' and will be facilitated by Professor Sir Tim Brighouse and Lord Knight.

www.wholeeducation.org

17-19

AoC Annual Conference

ICC, Birmingham

OCR is again supporting this key event in the FE sector's calendar. We look forward to welcoming visitors to Stand 61. We will be delivering a breakout session on our whole solution to maths and English measures, including how our tools can impact maths and English results.

www.aocannualconference.co.uk

19-21

The Skills Show

NEC, Birmingham

Come and talk to OCR at the University Technical Colleges' (UTC) stand at 'the nation's largest skills and careers event'.

www.findafuture.org.uk/the-skills-show

NOVEMBER

27

MathSpeak Conference

America Square Conference Centre, London EC3

Visit our maths experts at this annual event which provides a forum for maths teachers to share experiences, best practice and understand the latest developments in the teaching of maths. OCR's Eddie Wilde will be on the MathSpeak panel as well as on our stand.

www.mathspeak.co.uk

JANUARY

7-9

ASE Annual Conference

University of Birmingham

OCR's subject specialists are looking forward to returning to this key event in the science education calendar. This year's conference offers over 400 CPD sessions presented by teachers, scientists, researchers and education organisations. OCR's team will be on hand at our stand to discuss all aspects of OCR's new qualifications and the new approach to practicals.

www.ase.org.uk

14

Westminster Education Forum: Reforms to Vocational Qualifications

Central London

OCR's Director of Skills and Employment, Charlotte Bosworth, will be part of a panel during this packed programme to discuss raising the profile of vocational education.

www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk

JANUARY

20-23

BETT SHOW 2016

ExCel, London

OCR will be participating at this global event on all things about education technology. Join us at daily Learn Live sessions on Computer Science in the Secondary Theatre. Then head over to one of our daily sessions at the Learn Live Hands-on Theatre, to interact with our resources designed to support Computing and ICT.

www.bettshow.com

EXPOs for the new 2016 Cambridge Technicals suite

From November to February, OCR will be running half day events in Bristol, London, Birmingham and Leeds, to bring teachers and tutors up to date with our new Level 3 Cambridge Technicals range. The events are aimed at senior managers, teachers and exams officers. You can speak to our development and sector specialists, find out about resources and support for our new qualifications in the following subject areas: Art and Design, Business, Engineering (first teaching 2015), Health and Social Care, IT, Media, Performing Arts, Science and Sport.

www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk

To join OCR at these events, visit www.ocr.org.uk/events to find out more

YOUR SUBJECT IS HER PASSION



Meet Daniele Gibney. Science aficionado. Former University Challenge contestant. OCR Subject Specialist. If you're a teacher with a question about OCR Science – there really isn't anyone better.

For support that goes further, call Daniele or one of our other 60 Subject Specialists on **01223 553998** or visit ocr.org.uk/subjectspecialist
OCR is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group, a department of the University of Cambridge.

Bringing learning to life

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Email general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

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