

# agenda

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM OCR / SUMMER 2016



OCR at  
your service

IN THIS ISSUE:

**SIX CHECKS ON MARKING**

**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF  
OCR'S CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE**

**CASE STUDY ON A LEVEL PHYSICS**

**TEXTBOOKS FOR YOU**



**// The OCR English Language A Level is an incredibly engaging subject to teach with the freedom for teachers to go about planning the course how they wish... We have found that our student numbers have grown for A Level English Language //**

Lucia Aguilar-Gomez,  
Head of English Language, Suffolk One

# **YOUR PASSION, THEIR SUCCESS**

With teaching of the new English specifications well underway, we're delighted that teachers are sharing their positive experience of the new OCR specifications.

We're focused on providing the ongoing support and creative, practical new resources you need; so if you're enjoying teaching and have confidence in our new qualifications, your students will do too, maximising their achievements in English.

To find out more about our English qualifications  
call **01223 553998** or visit **[ocr.org.uk/english](https://ocr.org.uk/english)**

**OCR**  
Oxford Cambridge and RSA



Welcome to the Summer 2016 issue of **agenda**, OCR's termly magazine which offers a snapshot of news and views from OCR.

At this time of year, thousands of examiners and hundreds of OCR staff are working hard to mark and grade exam papers so students get the results they deserve. It's vital that teachers and students feel confident in our marking processes. On pages 12-13, you can read about the industry-leading checks that OCR has introduced to ensure consistent standards in marking so every student's performance is fairly recognised and rewarded.

We also take support very seriously. One element of support is our Customer Contact Centre. Find out about the range of calls that we respond to on a typical day during the exam season in our feature on pages 8-9.

You can also catch up on the latest on qualification reform. We're offering 37 new OCR qualifications for teaching from September 2016, and working hard to support teachers to get off to a flying start. We're also delighted to share the experiences of the Head of Physics at Kingsbury High School in North London who is successfully delivering OCR's new Physics AS and A Levels.

All this plus our free exam results analysis service, changes to AS Level results, and how students taking Cambridge Nationals can also enjoy fast cars.

Do get in touch via [agenda@ocr.org.uk](mailto:agenda@ocr.org.uk). If you would prefer to receive an online version of **agenda**, please send us your email address.

**William Burton**  
Chief Executive, OCR

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### Cover story: OCR at your service

Call centres can have a bad name but not OCR's Customer Contact Centre. OCR's staff are on hand throughout the year to respond to enquiries from teachers, exams officers, students, parents, and the general public as a whole. Read what's occurring on a busy day at the height of the summer exam season, on pages 8-9.



# Reform Update:

## The latest on new GCSEs and AS/A Levels



**Having created 37 new qualifications that were introduced into classrooms in September 2015, and a further 37 for first teaching from September 2016, OCR is now entering the final phase of qualification development for September 2017.**

We are developing 30 new qualifications which we're submitting to Ofqual between May and August this year, for first teaching in September 2017. These include GCSEs in Design and Technology, Business, Economics, Psychology, Ancient History, Classical Civilisation, Film Studies and Media Studies, and AS/A Levels in Design and Technology, Maths and Further Maths, Ancient History, Classical Civilisation, Law, Film Studies, Media Studies, and Geology.

GCSE Film Studies, for example, is an exciting new addition to our portfolio, and completes our suite of Media Studies and Film Studies qualifications, which includes Cambridge National and Cambridge Technical Media qualifications.

For our new AS/A Levels in Maths and Further Maths, we are continuing to offer students and teachers a choice of two specifications, one of which is developed in partnership with MEI (Mathematics in Education and Industry).

In addition, we're also working on our reformed Entry Level qualifications, planned for launch in September 2016, which will provide additional transition support from KS3 to KS4 and a path to GCSE. These will include Science, Computer Science, Maths and English.

For all our new GCSEs and AS/A Levels, we've worked in collaboration with teachers, academics and subject stakeholders to create distinctive and engaging new qualifications, within the criteria set by DfE and Ofqual.

Draft specifications and sample question papers are uploaded to our website as they are submitted to Ofqual, and you can sign up for updates to alert you when they are available online and when they are accredited.

### Supporting Teaching

It's that time of year when teachers are also preparing to teach the new OCR qualifications for September 2016, which includes Ancient Languages, Art and Design, Citizenship Studies, Computer Science, Food Preparation and Nutrition, Sciences, Drama, Geography, History, Music, PE, and RS. We're supporting teachers with free teaching and learning resources, our scheme of work builder, and online delivery guides, as well as CPD (both face to face and online) and Q&A webinars in which OCR's Subject Specialists can answer your questions about teaching the new specifications. To book your place on any of these courses, please visit [www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk](http://www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk).

### In brief

## GCSE Drama in the spotlight

The key to OCR's new GCSE Drama that will be introduced into schools from September is flexibility for teachers and students. The GCSE offers a free choice of text for the non-examined assessment, as well as a range of stimulating set texts ranging from Mark Wheeler's *Missing Dan Nolan* to more familiar texts such as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* for the written exam. The flexibility to study digital performances, as an option alongside visits to the theatre, stirred debate in the press. Here, our Subject Specialist for drama, Karen Latto, explains the role of digital performance.

"Nothing beats live theatre. Live performance is a critical part of the study of drama at every level, and we have built this experience into our new specifications in order to emphasise its significance. However, OCR is committed to equality of provision for all our students, and the flexibility to include digital theatre productions is in place to ensure that every student can access live theatre, regardless of the constraints of affordability or geographical accessibility. It's an option designed to expand access to live theatre, not replace it."

[www.ocr.org.uk/drama](http://www.ocr.org.uk/drama)

## Demystifying Examining

Why is there a hard question on a good exam paper? Is every topic on an A Level covered every year in the exam? These are just some of the issues covered in a new short video, 'Creating an exam paper', designed to inform GCSE and A Level students.

This, along with other videos such as 'What is Online Marking?' and new factsheets featuring statistics on examining, are all part of our drive to build understanding and knowledge of the processes of examining in jargon-free language. Another new video, 'OCR's Six Checks on Marking' highlights OCR's use of data to ensure marking is consistent and mark schemes are applied accurately (for more on this, see pages 8-9). Take a look at what's available on the OCR website: [www.ocr.org.uk/about-us/explaining-examining](http://www.ocr.org.uk/about-us/explaining-examining).



New 'Creating an exam paper' video

## AS Level results – what’s changing this summer?

At the end of May, Ofqual wrote an open letter to schools about the new linear AS Levels that are the first reformed qualifications to be examined this summer. Ofqual’s statistics, based on provisional entry data, showed that entries for all AS subjects in 2016 fell by 14% compared to 2015, though entries for reformed subjects were 22% lower overall. The new AS Levels are ‘decoupled’ from the A Levels; they are separate qualifications, no longer contributing towards the A Level grade.

To minimise any disadvantage for the first year group taking a brand new qualification, Ofqual confirmed that exam boards

will be using the ‘comparable outcomes’ approach. Ofqual also warned that ‘individual school or college results will be more variable than in recent years’, as is often the case when new specifications are introduced, and schools adapt to the changes in different ways.

Students’ results statements for the reformed AS qualifications this summer will look different due to the fact that they will no longer receive UMS marks. Unlike the modular system, students take all the assessed units (known as components) of a linear qualification at the end of the course, so there’s no need to combine marks from assessments taken on different

occasions. Marks for all the new AS components taken by students are just added together (allowing in some cases for weighting of certain components) to get the total mark. It is this total mark that will determine the student’s grade.

Grade boundaries also work in a slightly different way for linear qualifications. For modular qualifications, grade boundaries are set at unit level because each unit is a standalone assessment potentially taken at different times in the course. For linear qualifications, where the components are taken at the same time, they are set at qualification level. The grade for the overall qualification is

then issued according to the qualification grade boundary. It’s useful for students and teachers to understand how their performance in a particular AS component contributes to the overall qualification grade. For this reason, we will publish ‘illustrative’ or ‘notional’ grade boundaries at component level on our website, which show what grade the component mark would equate to.

Here’s a useful rule of thumb: modular qualifications involve units, and use UMS; linear qualifications – like the new AS Levels – involve components, and use raw marks only (not UMS).



**In April, over 80 food teachers from around the country gathered to enjoy a day of inspiring training sessions, delivered with the help of Heston Blumenthal and his team of chefs from the Fat Duck and the chefs from the Waitrose Cookery School in North London.**

The training day was put together to support teachers of OCR’s new GCSE in Food Preparation and Nutrition which will be introduced into schools in September 2016.

There was a variety of sessions and demonstrations from culinary skills like fish filleting and sauces, a cooking practical with teachers making steak tagliata (pictured) or meringues, as well as sessions on sensory analysis and food provenance, all of which complement the content of OCR’s new GCSE.

Jade Watkins (pictured second left), from Cirencester Kingshill School, commented: “I wanted to explore different ways of approaching the new GCSE to motivate myself and my students. Collectively, it’s been a really inspiring day. The chefs are so passionate about ingredients and today has reminded me why I love my subject.”

Heston Blumenthal’s natural curiosity and scientific approach to cooking complements OCR’s new GCSE. He said: “For me, the most important outcome of the new Food Preparation and Nutrition GCSE, is to encourage kids not to just think about the cooking, but to learn new skills that will help them create an enquiring and open mind, thinking of the bigger picture and even provoke them to think more creatively about questions in everyday life.”

OCR’s Subject Specialists have also been visiting schools around the country and reaction to the new GCSE has been very positive. Gill Taylor said: “Teachers like our clear and easy to follow specification which has been designed with all types of school and student in mind.”

To get in touch with the team about OCR’s new GCSE, email [food@ocr.org.uk](mailto:food@ocr.org.uk).

## Textbooks for you

To support teachers and students, we're delighted to be working in partnership with Hodder Education on a range of new textbooks and digital resources for our Level 3 2016 Cambridge Technicals vocational qualifications.

The first of the new range of Technicals textbooks will be available in August, for IT, Digital Media and Performing Arts. Textbooks for Health and Social Care, Sport and Physical Activity, and Laboratory Skills will follow shortly after.



Alongside textbooks for Cambridge Technicals, there are also a range of high quality textbooks from major publishers to support the teaching of OCR's reformed GCSEs, AS and A Levels.

Hodder Education has published textbooks for new OCR History qualifications (at AS/A Level and shortly for GCSE History), and for Psychology, Sociology, Business and Economics at AS/A Level. There will also be Hodder Education textbooks for the following OCR GCSE, AS and A levels to be taught in classrooms from September: Geography, Religious Studies, PE, as well as to support the new GCSEs in Citizenship Studies and in Food Preparation and Nutrition. Lastly, look out for Hodder textbooks in AS/A Level Law, GCSE and AS/A Level, AS/A Level Media Studies and Design and Technology, and for GCSEs in Business, Economics and Psychology, to support teaching from 2017.

Textbooks to support the teaching of OCR's extensive range of Science qualifications and for English qualifications at GCSE and at AS/A Level are available from Oxford University Press, while new textbooks to support the teaching of GCSE and AS/A Level Computer Science, GCSE Maths and for AS/A Level Maths (which is being introduced in 2017) are supplied by Cambridge University Press.

We are delighted also that there are a range of resources for GCSE, AS and A Levels from specialist publishers Thames & Hudson to support Art and Design, and Rhinegold for Music, as well as the expertise of Bloomsbury to help teaching and learning of Ancient History, Ancient Languages in Greek and Latin, and Classical Civilisation.

Jenni Welch, OCR Resource Programme Manager, said: **"OCR is committed to working with publishers to ensure the availability of high quality resources so teachers can get off to a flying start with new qualifications."**

## Inspiring RS teachers

**OCR has continued to roll out an impressive range of 'premier' events in 2016, to inspire teachers about their subjects above and beyond a specific qualification. These are often held in impressive locations – such as the Royal Institution for Science or the Globe Theatre for English.**

In late April, OCR was lead partner in an innovative training event for Religious Studies teachers. In partnership with Academy Conferences, a group of almost 100 teachers were welcomed by the Theology and Religious Studies Faculty at Oxford University. Over a period of two days, there were six keynote talks by Oxford academics such as Professor Keith Ward. Teachers were given first class inspirational talks around the topics for teaching from September 2016 and appreciated the opportunity to network, share ideas and meet colleagues, and gain insights from academics.

Michelle Webb, OCR Subject Specialist for Religious Studies, said: "This event gave teachers a chance to build confidence around the topics within OCR's new RS qualifications. Our GCSE is designed to help learners develop an understanding of religions as well as non-religious beliefs and attitudes – and the dialogue between the two. We've retained much of what made our AS/A Level RS the most popular with schools around the country which is a combination of philosophy of religion and religion and ethics. The new area of study, 'Developments in religious thought', also provides an opportunity for the systematic study of one religious tradition.

"If you missed the event in Oxford, don't worry, there's lots on the website or come along to an event we are holding in the Autumn. If you have a query, email [Religious.Studies@ocr.org.uk](mailto:Religious.Studies@ocr.org.uk).

[www.ocr.org.uk/religiousstudies](http://www.ocr.org.uk/religiousstudies)

## OCR staff share careers expertise

**OCR has built up strong links with Sidney Stringer Academy in Coventry over the years and is paired with the school through the Business in the Community (BITC) initiative.**

The school, named after a former mayor of Coventry, has over 1300 students on roll, aged 11 to 18. One of the latest activities as part of the BITC relationship has been for OCR staff from Progress House in Coventry to share their expertise in careers and employability with Year 7 students.

OCR offers qualifications in careers advice and guidance and four members of OCR staff recently helped as part of the school's 'Careers Lab' programme for Year 7s. Over three weeks, OCR's team delivered the 'Inspire' element of the programme and got the students to think about their interests, skills and qualities,

and how these might relate to future occupations.

Matthew Hicks, Head of Year 7 at Sidney Stringer Academy said, "This was also a great opportunity for our students to meet our OCR visitors and quiz them about their jobs, careers and the wider world of work. We really appreciate them giving their time to come to the school and are delighted to hear they found it such a positive and enjoyable experience"

David Summers, OCR Sector Manager, commented, "This was our first time working on Careers Lab and we were really impressed with it. Both the teachers and the students were really engaged with the approach we took."



Photo: Flock London

## Inspiring the next generation of engineers

The BLOODHOUND Project is an international education initiative focused around a 1,000mph World Land Speed Record attempt.

The primary aim is to inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers by showcasing these subjects in the most exciting way possible, by designing, building and testing the ultimate jet and rocket powered racing car. Over 7000 schools from across the UK, and many more internationally, have signed up to BLOODHOUND's Education Programme.

OCR and BLOODHOUND have together mapped the BLOODHOUND challenge activities and outcomes with the four Cambridge Nationals in Engineering qualifications in a project approach and have added additional suggested activities to support teachers

in delivering the curriculum. A range of essential and optional elements have been developed to meet the context of the school timetable, reducing the amount of extracurricular time required. For schools taking part in the BLOODHOUND challenge, both the qualification and challenge can be delivered using the same programmed curriculum time.

BLOODHOUND Education Director, Aulden Dunipace, said: "Our partnership with OCR has enabled the development of a unique and exciting STEM qualification that is and will remain relevant to a new generation of engineers." He continued: "It will equip them

with the skills to forge careers in this exciting industry."

Students will be able to follow BLOODHOUND's engineering adventure through its Blast learning portal and across social media, where the team share all the science and engineering that underpins the car, as well as the highs and lows as they face the challenges of setting a new World Land Speed Record in 2017 and 2018.

[www.ocr.org.uk/cambridgenationals](http://www.ocr.org.uk/cambridgenationals)



## Learning from results – analysis at your fingertips

OCR offers a free online results analysis service that gives teachers the tools to scrutinize the exam performance by school, class or individual student across GCSEs, AS/A Levels and Cambridge Nationals.

'Active Results' provides in depth, downloadable reports based on specification, unit/component and individual

student results, allowing teachers to drill down and compare results even at question and topic level. This includes analysis of exam performance at 'component' level for the new linear AS qualifications taken for the first time this summer. Active Results is also designed to give teachers insight to inform their planning

and decision making, by helping to identify student and teacher strengths and weaknesses. This free results service is accessed via Interchange, OCR's secure website for teachers and exams officers.

Log into [www.activeresults.ocr.org.uk](http://www.activeresults.ocr.org.uk).

[activeresults](http://www.activeresults.ocr.org.uk)

## Migration competition for GCSE History students

OCR and the Migration Museum Project – dedicated to opening the UK's first ever Migration Museum – have launched a national history competition for 14 to 16 year olds. The challenge for school history students is to design an exhibition on the theme of migration.

The competition is exclusively available to school students taking migration as part of OCR's new History GCSEs starting this September. Both OCR's new History GCSEs (A and B – Schools History Project) give students the option to study the long history of migration into Britain.

Clare Broomfield, Head of History at Villiers High School in Southall, said: "A competition with an exam focus that keeps SLT happy and develops students' analytical writing is a winner for me. It's also a fantastic opportunity for the students to develop independent research skills, whilst engaging with their own past and placing it in the grand narrative of British History."

Deadline for entries is March 2018. For more details, see [www.ocr.org.uk/history](http://www.ocr.org.uk/history).

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF OCR'S CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE



**“Can you help me? The exam starts at 9am and I can’t find the exam papers.” This is one of the first calls into OCR’s Customer Contact Centre just after the phone lines open at 8am on a typical day in the second week of June.**

Vaneesa, one of nine staff on the early shift during the exam season, is calm in response to the caller. “I’m sure we can help. I can see that you’ve got a stop on exam paper deliveries due to your refurbishment and change of address. Can you confirm your centre number and who you are, and I can get the exam paper you need loaded onto Interchange [OCR’s secure website for exams administration] so you can download and print it off in time for the 9am exam.” The caller, an exam officer from London, is relieved.

Within the first 15 minutes, there are over 20 calls. Emergency requests for exam papers to be downloaded and last minute entries for exams are typical in the hour before the first exams are taken by students at a variety of schools, colleges, training organisations and workplaces around the country. OCR offers a mix of general and vocational qualifications and students may range in age from early teens to mature adults.

Today, there is a range of exams taking place including GCSEs in English Language and Religious Studies, and A Levels in Biology, Latin and Greek. And there are vocational qualifications such as Functional Skills that take place throughout the year. While it’s the heart of the summer exam season, it’s also a time of enormous qualification reform so staff in the Customer Contact Centre are prepared for anything.

Vaneesa’s next call is from a teacher. “Hi there, yesterday afternoon, my students were given two papers in the wrong order and I’m wondering if it might have confused them and if there is any help you can give.” All exam boards offer a mechanism called special consideration if students have been disadvantaged due to illness or unavoidable circumstances beyond their control at the time of an exam, and a small percentage can be added to the raw mark. Numbers of

applications for special considerations are on the rise each year. In this case, Vaneesa checks with her manager and confirms that the swapping of the order of the papers given to students does not count. “Those papers can be taken in any order so it’s not a disadvantage to the students. It’s an internal matter for your school,” she advises the teacher.

By now, the full team of 29 staff are at their desks, headphones on, each facing two screens, and busy answering calls. Vaneesa has worked at OCR for nine years. She’s got extensive knowledge of OCR’s wide range of general and vocational qualifications but the amount of reform means she has to continually refresh her knowledge. There are also two dedicated teams on hand within the Customer Contact Centre (CCC) who look after complex queries from examiners or requests for technical support (there’s a lot of technology in examining nowadays), though there is no time limit on any calls into the CCC.

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*By now, the full team of 29 staff are at their desks, headphones on, each facing two screens, and busy answering calls.*

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Another member of the team, Peter, who has worked in the CCC for 4 years, is advising a head of department from a large FE College about the new Cambridge Technicals, OCR’s Level 3 vocational qualifications. She is planning for September 2016 and wants to know if the qualifications will receive performance points. Peter checks with his training officer colleague and confirms that the 2016 range will get points in 2018 DfE performance tables.

Peter’s next call is from an exams officer at a London school who is worried that the

school does not have the papers it needs for the GCSE Physics exam in two days’ time. “We made very late entries you see.” Peter checks with the couriers and sees that the papers are out on despatch. “You’ll receive them by close of play today.” The exams officer is grateful. “That’s a huge relief – thank you.”

**By 10.50am, the CCC has received over 300 calls.** The first GCSE exam of the day is nearing an end. After exams officers, the most frequent callers are examiners (90% of OCR’s examiners are teachers or ex-teachers), who are keen to get going on their marking. They want to know if the relevant mark scheme is available for the exam yet so they can start marking or where to find the forms they will need to claim expenses. A vital part of the system, they get all the guidance they need from the CCC team including advice on loading their moderation marks onto OCR’s online system.

At 11.30am, another member of the team, Russell, receives a call from a teacher about places on a training course for one of the new reformed GCSEs, in this case Religious Studies. The teacher is keen to get training during the summer term for teaching the new qualification from September. Russell checks what’s available. The training for RS is so popular there are waiting lists in June so he advises the teacher to take the next space on a course in July instead. Russell has worked in OCR’s CCC since 2009 and has extensive knowledge of OCR’s broad range of qualifications. In his next call, he helps an exams officer to make sure that students are registered for the right vocational qualification.

Another call comes in, this time from a head of department, about teaching the new Art and Design A Level. “Will the A Level exam next summer be graded 9 to 1?” Russell confirms that all the new A Levels will retain the A\* to E grading system.



Russell



Lisa



Peter



John

**By 12.30pm, the CCC has received over 550 calls.** Thankfully the morning's big GCSE exam has gone smoothly and there are few calls coming in about it. Krystyna Pasik, who runs the CCC, explains that a new system has been introduced in time for the summer exams to make it quicker for callers to ring through and get the help they need by simplifying the options. Call volumes can vary wildly from day to day. When the calls quieten down, the team tackles emails so they resolve as many issues as quickly as possible.

John is one of the two members of the Technical Support team. Before joining OCR, he worked for two other exam boards so he's got lots of experience in supporting the range of exam board customers. During the early afternoon, a call is put through to him about Functional Skills (FS). A school in London needs help offering these on-demand online tests which are available through another portal. John helps them to access the assessments smoothly and reassures them that they still have time during the window for the tests. "I'm available to support the taking of these all-year-round tests like the Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) which is a qualification for road haulage companies, or FS."

When the phone line is quiet, he tackles an email from a school about a female student who wants to be known as a male, with a different name. The school wants to know what they need to do as far as changing names for exam entries and on certificates. John contacts the exam entries team who advise that this will only need a name amendment to Interchange. This is the first public exam that the candidate will take so this change can be made in advance. If the candidate had already taken a public exam and had a certificate, a deed poll would be needed to make these name and gender changes.

After emailing the school, John recounts an incident about a parent's personal request. "I remember one year getting a call from a parent whose child had died. They wanted to get hold of a GCSE paper their child had taken. Normally, schools get to see photocopies only but in this case, I think we were able to let the parents have the real documents which were significant to them."

At 3pm, every member of the team is on a call. The afternoon's exams are coming to an end. Lisa gets a reform-related call from a PE teacher. 'I'm half way through teaching the GCSE course. Which exam will be available next year? Lisa confirms that the teacher's students will be taking the legacy GCSE exams for her subject next summer.

Another PE teacher from a school in South London rings wanting to switch to teach OCR's PE GCSE in September. "I can't seem to find the OCR specification documents though," he states. Lisa responds: "They've been despatched to your school but I'll get the subject specialist to send you a spare one." "Amazing, thanks," says the teacher.

Two more calls come in from examiners. Lisa helps one who is a science moderator unravel a mix up on Interchange made by the school where marks have been loaded for the wrong subject. Another examiner is chasing marks from her moderation. Lisa explains: "The school has not submitted enough of its marks yet. Until it has, we cannot select the sample."

At 3.15pm, another member of the team, Bernie, who has worked in the CCC for four years, takes an urgent call from an exams officer about the afternoon's A Level exam that has just finished. "A student got mixed up and he thought the exam was tomorrow. Can we let him take it in isolation straight away?" Bernie asks the school if there has been any contact with other students. "No, his mobile had run down so he hasn't got any of our messages

and he hasn't been in contact with other students." Bernie advises the school: "It's policy for all exam boards that schools are allowed to make this decision so in theory yes he can take the exam."

After 4pm, there's another flurry of calls. "These are usually about the exams for the morning but it can be anything," Bernie comments. The next call is from an exams officer needing support for a candidate to be transferred. The student has very recently moved – for child protection reasons – from one area of the country to another and the school wants to make sure they can take exams at the new school in two days' time. Bernie speaks to OCR's team handling access arrangements who are able to give the school the go ahead and that the papers will be available for downloading and printing off for the candidate via Interchange on the morning of the exam. The exams officer thanks OCR for a quick response in a difficult situation.

**At 4.27pm, the 1000th call of the day comes in.** It's another one about a candidate taking an exam at another location. "These changes are most often done when students are ill and have to take exams at a hospital," Bernie explains.

There are a few more calls from examiners during the last hour of the day. The CCC has taken over 500 calls from exams officers alone. Of the 1063 calls, 98.3% were answered and 847 were resolved on first contact.

At 5.30pm, the answer machine automatically picks up messages and the ringing of phones finally stops. The office is quiet for the first time in nine and a half hours.

### Any questions?

Call us on **01223 553998** about general qualifications or **02476 851509** about vocational qualifications.



# OCR'S NEW AS AND A LEVEL PHYSICS: TRIED AND TESTED

Daniel Danaher is Head of Physics at Kingsbury High School in North London, a large and successful secondary school with academy status for approximately 2000 students, aged 11 to 18. The science team began teaching OCR's new Physics and Biology AS and A Levels in September 2015.

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*"The most valuable support so far has been the monitoring visit. We had a chance to ask questions about how we have been carrying out the practical work and to get feedback on what we were doing."*

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**In this case study, Daniel shares feedback on teaching OCR's new Physics AS and A Levels, including successfully adapting to Practical Endorsement, the new approach to practicals for science that has replaced controlled assessment.**

'At Kingsbury, 38 students took Physics AS this year and 15 took the A Level. For Biology, there are 53 students for the AS and 31 for the A Level. The majority of students taking science in the sixth form progress on to university, mostly studying maths, engineering or biomedical sciences.'

**How did you choose to teach OCR's new AS and A Level Physics specifications from September 2015?**

'We worked as a department to look at the specification, exam structure, Practical Endorsement and support available to come to a decision. We were looking forward to teaching the Practical Endorsement rather than the controlled assessment of practical skills as we felt that it was a more realistic way of carrying out experimental work and would be of greater benefit to the pupils. The three top aspects of OCR's new AS and A Levels for me were 1) Practical Endorsement rather than controlled assessment of practical skills, 2) the stretch and challenge provided by a unified physics paper/problems and 3) assessment by exams rather than coursework/practical work.'

**Why did you continue to teach the AS?**

'We wanted an examination result based on national standards to assess the progress of our pupils before starting Year 13. We also wanted to ensure that Year 12 pupils had a focus to their learning.'

'In general, the new curriculum provides a good level of challenge for our most able pupils and they enjoy solving problems which require knowledge of different areas of the subject. The clear links between practical work and theory also enables our pupils to get a better understanding of how different concepts can be understood using experimental work.'

**PRACTICAL ENDORSEMENT**

**How have you made the transition to the new approach to practical assessment in Science?**

'As a department, we started off by looking at the requirements and completing the online training provided by OCR. We discussed each of the CPACs and discussed how to use the Physics tracker to record our assessments. We then developed a lab book for Year 12 pupils which combines experimental instructions with assessment records, activities, information and the practical skills handbook. We also ran a series of lectures on experimental work to provide some of the background theory. As the course has progressed, we have



*Daniel Danaher demonstrating how to make a capacitor to store electrical energy out of a bin bag and sheets of tin foil with his Year 12 Physics students.*

*“The pupil reaction to Practical Endorsement has been really positive. There is less pressure on the practical work now and they have time to work things out for themselves, to make mistakes, and to improve over the course of the year.”*

met regularly as a department to compare feedback and to share best practice.’

### **Have there been any hurdles that you have had to overcome with the new approach to practicals?**

‘I would identify one hurdle regarding equipment. There are some practicals that required equipment that we only have one set of (for example PAG 5.2 Finding the speed of sound using a resonance tube). We wanted every pupil to use the equipment so to overcome this, we organised times throughout the lesson for pupils to use the equipment and record data, whilst the rest of the class was completing an activity about resonance or analysing their data. This worked pretty well and we will use the same approach next year.’

### **What aspects of OCR’s new Physics AS and A Levels have your students enjoyed most so far?**

‘Being able to use their theoretical knowledge to understand experimental work is one thing. We have more time to do practical work now that it is more closely linked to the specification. The pupil reaction to Practical Endorsement has been really positive. There is less pressure on the practical work now and they have time to work things out for themselves, to make mistakes, and to improve over the course of the year.’

### **SUPPORT FROM OCR**

‘OCR has provided INSET for subject leaders and online training which can be accessed by the whole department. The most valuable support so far has been the monitoring visit. We had a chance to ask questions about how we have been carrying out the practical work and to get feedback on what we were doing. This gave us confidence in what we had been doing so far and also some ideas on how we could do things better.’

### **Any advice for other schools that may be considering teaching OCR’s AS and A Level Sciences?**

‘My advice would be to speak to OCR and to attend some of the training events so that you have a better understanding of the course and what it involves.’

[www.ocr.org.uk/science](http://www.ocr.org.uk/science)



# WE'RE ON YOUR MARKS

## OCR's unique approach to ensuring quality of marking

**Every summer, OCR marks over 3 million GCSE and A Level exam papers, taken by around one million students. We know how important it is for students and schools to feel confident in the quality of marking so exam performance is fairly recognised and rewarded.**

99% of OCR's written GCSE and A Level exam papers are now marked online. This means that after a student takes an exam, the paper is scanned and then downloaded onto the computer of an examiner who marks it on screen.

OCR has developed a series of six checks, using the data generated by online marking, to ensure marking by OCR examiners is consistent and the mark scheme is applied accurately.

From checks that show an examiner is up to standard every year before they can start marking, to checks at the other end of the process when 90% of examining has been completed, we can continuously monitor marking by all our examiners.

Together, these six quality checks help OCR to ensure marking is consistent and accurate, so students' performance in exams is properly recognised and rewarded.

### Take a look:

#### Check no. 1



**Everyone examining for OCR is tested every year before they can start marking.**

First they practise on exam papers that have been pre-marked according to the mark scheme, by our senior and most experienced examining team. Following this practice run, every potential examiner is tested on a second set of pre-marked papers to prove they can apply the mark scheme accurately.

Every examiner must pass these tests to mark for OCR.

#### Check no. 2



#### 100 check

**OCR ensures every examiner is correctly applying the marking scheme with the '100 check'.**

After an examiner has marked 100 papers, which are anonymous and drawn from a random mix of schools, we compare their marking against the marking by others for that exam. The marks given by each examiner should follow a similar pattern to that of other examiners. If they do (**Fig 1** above), the examiner continues marking. If they don't (**Fig 2** above), an alert leads to a review of marking by a senior examiner. The examiner may then be stopped from marking and all their papers re-marked.

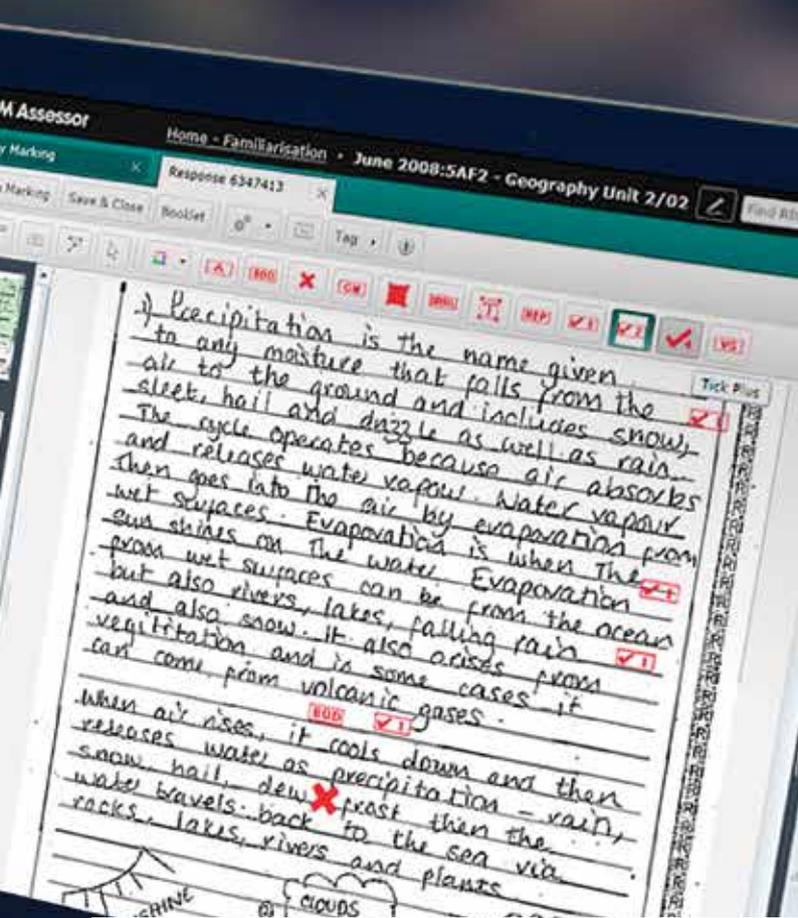
#### Check no. 3



#### 1 in 20

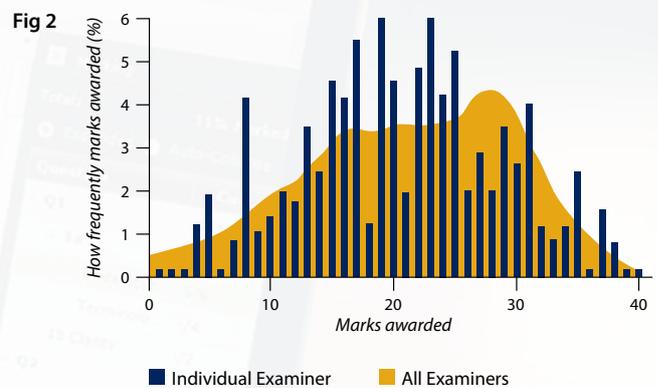
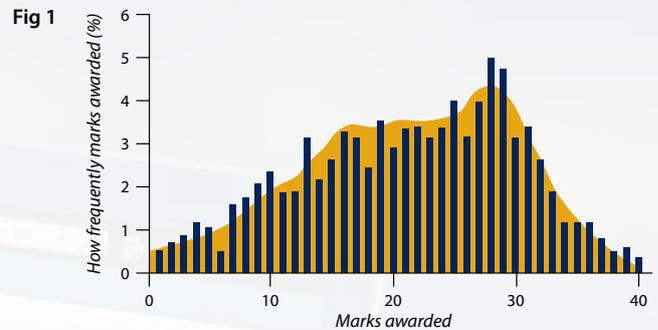
**OCR monitors marking with the '1 in 20' check.**

Whenever an examiner downloads the next batch of exam papers to mark, 1 in every 20 has already been pre-marked by senior examiners. We monitor that the examiner is correctly applying the mark scheme, time after time. If the marking of an examiner does not follow the standard of the pre-marked papers, an alert is sent to a senior examiner to review marking. The examiner may then be stopped from marking and all their papers re-marked.



## Check no. 2

Marking pattern of one examiner versus marking of all examiners



■ Individual Examiner ■ All Examiners

### Check no. 4 40% check



#### Next is OCR's '40% check'.

When the team of examiners has completed 40% of the marking, a senior examiner compares the pattern of each examiner's marking against the pattern of marking by the whole team. If marking is in line, the examiner continues. If not, the examiner is stopped from marking and their papers re-marked.

### Check no. 5 90% check



#### OCR's '90% check' comes into effect when the team of examiners has completed 90% of the marking.

Again, a senior examiner compares the pattern of marks given by an individual examiner against the pattern of marking by the whole team. As in Check 4, an examiner whose marking is not in line with the marking of others fails and all their papers will be re-marked.

### Check no. 6



#### For some subjects such as English Literature, with many optional questions, OCR has an additional essay-based question check, on top of the checks 1 to 5.

Throughout marking, senior examiners randomly review batches of essay-based exam papers, to make sure the mark scheme is correctly applied across an even wider range of papers. If a problem is identified, the examiner is stopped and their papers re-marked.

These six quality checks help OCR to ensure marking is accurate from the first day of marking to the very last.

# IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO...



**“ PAUL STEER, OCR'S HEAD OF POLICY, LOOKS AT SOME OF THE COMMON MYTHS ABOUT THE EXAM SYSTEM AND OFFERS SOME POTENTIALLY MYTH-BUSTING REFLECTIONS.**

## “People have to sit too many exams these days”

What is striking about current GCSE and A Level reforms is how they are leading to a significant *reduction* in the number of examinations. There are fewer resits and this, combined with the introduction of linear qualifications, will actually cut the amount of exams sat by a third. Advocates of the linear approach say this frees up more time to teach the subject. Those who read blogs by Cambridge Assessment's Tim Oates will know that countries from Singapore to Finland routinely assess their pupils' progress to a far greater extent than the UK does. The downside to fewer exams, though, is fewer resit opportunities and fewer progress checks along the way.

## “Exams are narrowing the curriculum”

The range of qualification choices at 14 and 16 in England is unparalleled. Most countries that deliver any kind of examination at the end of lower secondary tend to examine the home language, maths, some sort of science, a foreign language, history and geography. According to Cambridge Assessment, England is the only jurisdiction that gives its students such a wide choice – some 51 different GCSE subjects – and there are thousands of vocational qualifications approved for delivery to 14 to 19 year olds as well. The degree of specialisation at A Level is equally striking however compared to other countries.

On the other hand, the EBacc and Progress 8 measures have a massive impact on the choices made available. And in the unlikely event that the EBacc should go away any time soon, there are plenty of advocates for other kinds of frameworks and baccalaureates to shape young people's choices with an alternative set of priority subjects and activities.

## “The exam system is always changing”

Undoubtedly, we are seeing some big changes. But where's the *real* change underneath all this turbulence? Someone sitting in an exam hall in the 1950s – perhaps even the 1850s – transported to 2016 would find surprisingly little difference in the overall experience of sitting written tests. Even the names of some of the qualifications would be familiar. The most remarkable difference would be the massive increase in the proportion of the population sitting exams.

Meanwhile, the OECD is considering creating a new sort of PISA test to look at how well pupils can navigate an increasingly diverse world, with awareness of different cultures and beliefs. It will be interesting to see how in the longer term globalisation and a digital world impacts on the exam system. The loyalty to the traditional paper format for exams is staggering given the impact of technological change in our lives over the last 25 years.

## “Exam results are a lottery”

More than ever is being done to secure consistent, high quality marking. Technology assists greatly with this and – as you will have read – OCR checks data from online marking to make sure examiners are all marking to the same standard. The exam regulator has also been immensely thorough in monitoring exam board processes. Reformed qualifications bring the uncertainty of the new – and with that uncertainty it will be harder to predict individual results, but the established approach of using 'comparable outcomes' will smooth out the effects of these changes, maintaining achievement rates, as appropriate, from one year to the next.

Ofqual has warned of a common misconception that there is a single 'right mark' for more extended questions. Disagreement is to be expected where judgement in subjects such as English and

history is required. Furthermore, a recent report on volatility in exam results suggests that the major cause of unexpected results is not the quality of marking, but candidates not doing themselves justice on the day.

## “There's too much emphasis on exam results these days”

Well, this is probably true. Exam results are incredibly useful – taken in the round they are a reliable indicator of a young person's preparedness for future study or employment. But they aren't supposed to tell you everything about an individual – a well-qualified doctor can still be a bad doctor; Sir Alan Sugar left school at 16 with few qualifications.

It's true that those who 'fail' at GCSE are most likely to struggle later in life – the basics really matter. But those who like to design career pathways and routes must avoid creating a system where the course of people's lives is set immutably by the subjects they take and the grades they achieve at a young age. Life is, and should be, messy, filled with second chances, alternative routes to fulfilment and even a bit of serendipity. Exam results also give an indication of how a school or college is performing – although anyone who has looked closely at Progress 8 will know that performance measures based on exam results can't deliver pinpoint accuracy and *always* need contextualisation. And there is evidence that this new measure is already driving perverse behaviours in some schools gaming for performance points.

Placing too much importance on exam success, for institutions, and individuals can be dangerous. As always, this is a matter of balance. If we take the education system as a whole, then examinations are an important component, but at OCR we believe that external assessment has a role to support teaching and learning but must not be allowed to dominate everything else.

[Email your comments to agenda@ocr.org.uk](mailto:agenda@ocr.org.uk)

## JOIN OCR AT THESE EXHIBITIONS AND CONFERENCES SUMMER 2016

### JULY

#### 5-6

##### Association for Physical Education National PE and School Sport Conference

###### St George's Park, Burton upon Trent

OCR is delighted to showcase its impressive range of new sport qualifications at this lively event. OCR's range includes new GCSEs and AS/A Levels which provide excellent stepping stones for science-based areas of sport such as sports psychology, physiotherapy, nutrition or elite coaching.

For those interested in more 'hands on' practical roles, such as personal training and fitness instructing, leisure management or sports development, OCR's Cambridge Nationals and Cambridge Technicals offer a clear progression route.

[www.afpe.org.uk](http://www.afpe.org.uk)

#### 7-8

##### Design & Technology Association Summer School

###### University of Warwick Campus, Coventry

OCR's Subject Specialists will be on hand at this key Design and Technology Association event to inform and support teachers preparing to teach OCR's new GCSE. The D&T Summer School is designed to provide teachers with hands on experience and a chance to develop both their subject and teaching knowledge and skills.

[www.data.org.uk](http://www.data.org.uk)

#### 8-10

##### Schools History Project Summer Conference 2016

###### Leeds Trinity University

We are delighted to sponsor the SHP Annual Conference this year. Our team will be there to help teachers preparing to teach OCR's new History B (SHP) GCSE which has been developed in partnership with SHP. This is an exclusive partnership and OCR is pleased to be able to offer a distinctive GCSE for teaching from September which reflects SHP's principles.

The SHP Conference offers a wide range of inspiring workshops, plenary sessions, fringe events and a resources exhibition.

[www.schoolshistoryproject.co.uk](http://www.schoolshistoryproject.co.uk)

#### 8-10

##### Association for the Teaching of Psychology Annual Conference 2016

###### University of Sussex

Come and speak to OCR's Subject Specialists about any aspect of our new Psychology AS/A Levels at this key three day event in the teaching calendar. The conference offers update sessions, presentations and workshops on teaching and learning, as well as opportunities to share good practice.

[www.atpconference.org.uk](http://www.atpconference.org.uk)

If you want to find out what CPD events we are providing to support teaching in 2016/17, take a look at [www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk](http://www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk).



To join OCR at these events, visit [www.ocr.org.uk/events](http://www.ocr.org.uk/events) to find out more

# GETTING AHEAD

# IN A DIGITAL WORLD

An estimated 9.5 million UK adults lack the minimum digital skills needed in most of today's jobs. Many day-to-day tasks such as completing job applications, paying bills and even shopping require a level of digital knowledge.

Up-to-date and unique to us, **Digital Employability** will equip your learners with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in today's workplace and digital world.



Get online to find out more  
[ocr.org.uk/lifeskills](https://ocr.org.uk/lifeskills)

**OCR**  
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

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