

Welcome to the second edition of Ofqual's newsletter. We welcome any feedback on its content, please click the [link](#) to share your feedback.

### Malpractice

As summer exams and assessments as well underway, please continue to remind students of the penalties for taking a mobile phone or other communication device into the exam hall. In 2025, there were 2,225 cases where a student was caught - 545 of these resulted in disqualification and 1,240 in loss of marks. Further detail can be found in this [press release](#) from the Chief Regulator.

### Formulae and equation sheets – consultation outcome

Following the Department for Education's decision that students are not required to memorise and recall formulae and equations, and having consulted publicly with overwhelming support, we are requiring exam boards to continue providing FES for GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science. Students sitting these exams from 2028 onwards, including resits, will have access to these sheets for the remaining lifetime of the current specifications. You can read more about this decision [here](#).

### Understanding marking and grading

As the summer exam series progresses, questions are often raised about how exams are marked, how grades are determined, and how standards are maintained over time.

Exam papers are marked by trained examiners using detailed mark schemes. Examiners are trained to the same mark scheme before marking begins to ensure consistency, and marking is monitored throughout. Senior examiners carry out quality assurance checks and review samples of scripts to ensure fairness and reliability.

Grades are awarded based on the quality of a student's work in their assessments. There is no predetermined quota for grades, no cap on the number of top grades, and no student is advantaged or disadvantaged by the year in which they sit their exams.

Because the difficulty of exam papers can vary between years and between exam boards, grade boundaries are set each year after exams have been taken and marking is nearly complete. If a paper is easier, grade boundaries will be higher; if it is harder, grade boundaries will be lower. This ensures the standard of work required for each grade remains comparable over time.

For GCSE English language and maths, exam boards are supported by evidence from the National Reference Test, which allows Ofqual to monitor national performance over time and supports the maintenance of standards.

To support understanding, Ofqual has published a toolkit for teachers and headteachers, which includes classroom and assembly [resources](#) to help explain GCSE and A level grading to students. The toolkit is available [here](#).

## Seeking your feedback on recent publications and surveys

We recently published a statistical report on the [number of proven cases of malpractice in selected vocational and technical qualifications](#) (often called 'performance table qualifications') covering the 2024-2025 academic year. This is the first year of a new methodology for reporting these statistics and we are keen to gather feedback on how the information is used and how we can improve our reporting to better meet your needs. Please send us your feedback and comments [through this survey](#) by Friday 29 May.

In addition, we have published the [2026 survey into perceptions of A levels, GCSEs and other qualifications](#) and as part of our aim to continually improve the practicality of our research, we would also be grateful if you would [send your feedback and comments](#) on this survey to us by Friday 12 June.

## Update on Ofqual's Apprenticeship Assessment framework

Following the consultation, Ofqual published its final [regulatory framework for apprenticeship assessment](#) in April 2026. Ofqual has confirmed it will implement the framework largely as proposed, introducing a new set of conditions covering areas such as assessment design, content and standard setting. The framework supports greater flexibility in assessment, including the potential for elements to be delivered during the programme and, where appropriate, by training providers under awarding organisation oversight. At the same time, awarding organisations will be required to set out clear assessment strategies and ensure alignment with occupational standards and assessment plans, maintaining confidence in assessment outcomes. The changes will be introduced alongside updated assessment plans, with implementation phased as reforms take effect.

## Qualification Reform

Ofqual has recently published its [qualification reform hub](#) to share the latest updates on changes to vocational qualifications. Please share these links with any colleagues that are interested in understanding Ofqual's role in reform.

In April, we launched our consultation on how we propose to regulate new post-16 qualifications including V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates. The consultation sets out our proposed regulatory approach, the rules and expectations we would place on awarding organisations, and how we intend to support confidence in the quality and standards of these new qualifications. The consultation is open until 2 July 2026, and we encourage stakeholders with an interest in these reforms to read the [consultation and respond](#).

We will be attending a number of engagement events in coming weeks. Alongside this, we are

hosting an additional webinar on 15<sup>th</sup> June at 12:00pm to outline our proposals, which will be a chance to ask questions and provide feedback. Please register for the event [here](#).

## Talking to students about AI in coursework

[Ofqual's latest blog](#) highlights the importance of early, clear conversations with students about the use of AI in coursework, as tools become embedded in everyday study. It stresses that submitting AI-generated work as one's own is malpractice with serious consequences and also emphasises the wider risk that over-reliance on AI can undermine the development of essential knowledge and skills needed for progression. Alongside the blog, Ofqual has published [a lesson plan](#) and [senior leadership team briefing pack](#) to help schools and colleges hold these discussions confidently and consistently.

We encourage you to read the blog and share it with colleagues to support a joined up, sector-wide approach to AI and assessment integrity.

## Recent publications

### March

- Guidance: [FSQ outcomes: guide to the data submission process](#)
- For information: [Statistics: annual qualifications market reports](#)
- Official statistics: [Annual qualifications market report: academic year 2024 to 2025](#)
- Guidance: [AI in coursework: resources for schools](#)
- Blog: [Talking to students about AI in coursework: why the conversation matters](#)
- Consultation outcome: [Proposed changes to the assessment of mathematics, physics and combined science GCSEs](#)
- Guidance: [Assessment material resilience – advice note](#)

### April

- Open consultation (closing 2 July): [Regulating post-16 vocational and technical qualifications at levels 2 and 3](#)

### May

- Statistics: [Malpractice in vocational and technical qualifications](#)
- Research and analysis: [Malpractice in vocational and technical qualifications: 2024 to 2025 academic year](#)
- Consultation outcome: [Decisions: Proposed changes to the assessment of mathematics, physics and combined science GCSEs](#)
- Statistics: [Perceptions of A Levels, GCSEs and other qualifications: wave 23](#)