

# agenda

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM OCR / **SPRING 2012**

## *Supporting teachers and learners*

IN THIS ISSUE:

**"PIONEERING" IN COMPUTING**

**HOW QUALIFICATIONS ARE DEVELOPED**

**INSIDE THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM REVIEW PANEL**

**IMPROVING LIFELONG LEARNING EDUCATION**





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Welcome to this Spring 2012 issue of **agenda**.

*Working in partnership is, I believe, essential to OCR's success in improving what we do, in innovating, and preparing for change in education. There are plenty of examples of productive partnerships in this magazine.*

*As part of Cambridge Assessment, we are already an arm of the University, but you can find out more about how we are engaged with many higher education institutions to develop the next generation of A Levels. Read how we have worked with key partners in the computer industry to create new IT qualifications that are ahead of the field. A case study on the lifelong learning sector shows the benefits of working with key training organisations to improve teacher education. All this, plus an interview with Tim Oates of the Expert Panel on the National Curriculum, and a snapshot of news including eBooks, functional skills and two new vocational ranges.*

*If you would like to get in touch about anything you read here, please email us at [agenda@ocr.org.uk](mailto:agenda@ocr.org.uk). We look forward to reading your comments.*

**Mark Dawe**

Chief Executive, OCR

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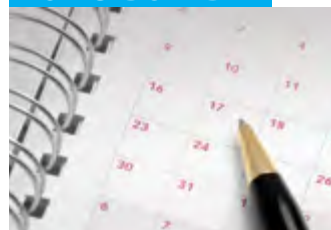
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### Cover Story: Supporting teachers and learners

In a series of dazzling chemistry experiments, Professor "Dr Hal" Sosabowski from the University of Brighton, inspired teachers at the Association for Science Education annual conference in Liverpool, thanks to OCR. Dr Hal's popular show was a celebration of practical science, designed to build teachers' confidence in conducting experiments. For those who didn't see it, highlights from Dr Hal's show are now available on the OCR website.



## Anyone for Chemistry?

The Cambridge Chemistry Challenge goes from strength to strength. Based on the popularity of the competition which was launched in 2011 to mark the International Year of Chemistry, OCR, with University of Cambridge International Examinations, are sponsoring the 2012 competition which runs up until the end of June. The competition, the brainchild of Dr Peter Wothers of Cambridge University's Department of Chemistry, aims to push boundaries and stretch students' scientific knowledge.

The competition takes two forms; firstly, a monthly online challenge which is

open to anyone, of any age, from anywhere in the world. New, five-stage challenges are released on the first day of each month. Will your students be the first to complete all five stages successfully and have their global achievement recognised on the competition website?

There's also a written test in June, targeted at Year 12 pupils in UK schools, which is particularly useful for anyone considering taking chemistry at university. Those who do well in the written paper receive certificates of achievement while the best are invited to a residential course at the

University of Cambridge in August. Last year, the written test was taken by more than 3,000 students in 250 schools.

The Challenge has been endorsed by the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC). Jim Iley, RSC's Director of Science and Education, said: "It is great to see a competition of this kind, which makes chemistry fun for students, stretches their science knowledge, forces them to think outside the box and helps us to identify our young scientists of the future."

To get involved, visit the Challenge website: [www.c3L6.org](http://www.c3L6.org).

### In brief

## High demand for eBooks

eBooks are shaking up the publishing world as big names like Amazon and Apple compete to satisfy global demand. This applies to educational publishing as more countries embrace digital learning.

The free A Level eBooks scheme launched by OCR in partnership with Hodder Education and Oxford University Press last September, has been a runaway success. Over 350,000 A Level eBooks have been ordered. Some sixth form colleges and schools, such as Oldham Sixth Form College, have placed orders for more than 5,000 eBooks. AS and A2 textbooks in biology, maths and chemistry have proved the most popular so far, with those in ICT and psychology close behind.

OCR is planning to build on the success of the scheme for a second year. We'd be interested in hearing tips from teachers and students on how to get the maximum benefit out of eBooks. If you would be prepared to share your tips on making the eBooks work most effectively for teaching and learning, please email us at [research@ocr.org.uk](mailto:research@ocr.org.uk).

Contrary to speculation in the press in recent months, OCR does not profit from its relationships with publishers of conventional textbooks or eBooks. Access to eBooks is part of a package of high quality resources and support designed to help teachers get the most out of OCR specifications.

If you haven't yet ordered your free eBook, find out more at [www.ocr.org.uk/ebooks](http://www.ocr.org.uk/ebooks).

## Moving into top gear for new CPC

The new Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC), essential for anyone managing passenger or road haulage transport, comes into force this month. New Europe-wide reform of transport operator regulations has led to changes to the 'UK only' CPC. Those holding the new Certificate will be eligible to run a transport operation anywhere in the EU.

Rosie Radford, OCR's Qualifications Manager for the CPC, commented: "In the relatively short space of time available to comply with new regulations, we've listened to the view of transport managers and made positive changes."

OCR is currently the only awarding organisation to offer the new 'international' CPC. As a result of feedback from training centres across the country,

OCR has made the content more relevant and introduced a new two-part exam made up of a multiple choice and a written case study paper. From June 2012, there will also be an option of an on-screen, on-demand version of the multiple choice paper. Candidates will be able to carry forward one paper, after re-sitting if necessary, receiving the full qualification when they pass the other. There will still be four exam sessions per year.

Negotiations with the Department of Transport have ensured that current holders of the CPC have up to the end of December 2013 to 'top up' the qualification to the international one. Over 200 road haulage candidates have already seized the opportunity to take the top up paper this March.

# technocamps

OCR Cymru is working with Technocamps on an innovative project to open up university computer science departments to run activities for schools that will help ignite more interest in computing.

Technocamps is a £6 million project led by Swansea University in partnership with the Universities of Bangor, Aberystwyth and Glamorgan that provides workshops and teaching materials for young people aged 11-19 on a range of exciting computing-based topics such as robotics, game development, animation, digital forensics, and much more. The long term goal is to encourage young people to pursue careers in a key part of a modern economy. Since starting

in October 2011, the project has already delivered day long sessions to over 600 young people, introducing them to programming and robotics.

Robin Hughes, OCR Cymru National Manager, is a member of the Technocamps steering group. He said: "We are working with the project team to ensure that teachers are helped to see how these activities can contribute to the teaching of our GCSE in Computing and other qualifications."

Technocamps ([www.technocamps.com](http://www.technocamps.com)) is funded by the EU's Convergence European Social Fund through the Welsh Government.

You can keep up with OCR Cymru on twitter [@OCRCymru](https://twitter.com/OCRCymru).



## "Pioneering work" in computer science

**OCR's unique Computing GCSE anticipates the latest thinking in government about what ICT should be taught in schools.**

When Education Secretary Michael Gove described the current ICT curriculum as "flawed" at a major educational technology conference earlier this year, he called for pupils to be taught how computers work and praised OCR's "pioneering work" in computer science qualifications. A few days later, the Royal Society's report, 'Shut down or restart? The way forward for computing in schools', called for the displacement of "routine ICT activity with more creative, rigorous and challenging Computer Science".

OCR is the only awarding body to offer a GCSE in Computing. The qualification, which was formally launched in September 2011, gives pupils an in-depth understanding of how computer technology works and an opportunity to investigate computer programming, including algorithms. Simon Peyton-Jones, Chair of the Computing at School Working Group (CAS), commented: "OCR deserves considerable credit for taking the initiative in developing the first Computing GCSE." To read more about how the GCSE in Computing was developed, turn to page 9.

The GCSE in Computing prepares learners for progression to OCR's A Level in Computing. It is one of a number of OCR's ICT qualifications that include strong elements of programming, such as the new Cambridge Nationals in ICT and the ICT GCSE qualifications.

Feedback from schools has been very positive. Boys at the Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe, took part in the pilot for the GCSE in Computing. Darren Travi, Head of IT, said: "I think the course is a really positive development in the field. It is welcome that, at last, we have a course at KS4, which teaches the boys not just how to use computers, but also how they work. The course has the right blend of theory and practical application. I hope this develops further and encourages more pupils to take up computing."

OCR is offering six training events over the next few months to support teachers who want to deliver the new qualification, bookable via [www.ocreventbooker.org.uk](http://www.ocreventbooker.org.uk), course code: OITR7.

This recognition of OCR's GCSE was an appropriate start to 2012 which also marks the centenary of Alan Turing, mathematician and Bletchley Park code breaker, who is widely considered to be the founder of computer science.

For more information, take a look at [www.ocr.org.uk/computing](http://www.ocr.org.uk/computing).



The popularity of *The Iron Lady*, the film of Margaret Thatcher's political career, reflects the strong public appetite for history. Meryl Streep's award-winning portrayal of Thatcher may well encourage interest in her and in the period in which she was Prime Minister to grow faster with a new generation.

OCR offers two optional units covering the Thatcher years on its A Level History course. Mike Goddard, OCR Qualifications Manager, commented: "The addition of options on Margaret Thatcher to our A Level in 2007 was immediately popular and we have run specialist CPD events in conjunction with the Churchill Archive Centre, keeper of Lady Thatcher's personal and political papers.

"She makes a fascinating subject for the young historian. She divided opinion so sharply in her time that there is a very good range of evidence to consider and evaluate, while the dramatic changes that she presided over can be considered against today's political, social or economic landscape."



# OCR achieves the double

**OCR has achieved the double by unveiling two new vocational qualification ranges this term: the Cambridge Nationals for 14 to 16 year olds and Cambridge TECs for 16 to 19 year olds. The new ranges, for first teaching from this September, build on the success of the popular OCR Nationals range.**

Both new qualification suites incorporate the recommendations of the Wolf Report and the government's rigorous criteria for high-quality vocational qualifications for school-age learners. They are both designed to recognise the achievements of students who are motivated and engaged by a more practical approach to learning and assessment.

The Cambridge Nationals for 14 to 16 year olds were showcased at BETT 2012, a major educational technology event in January, where over 1000 teachers and advisors attended special briefing events and talked to specialists at the OCR stand.

Following feedback from schools and colleges across the UK, the Cambridge Nationals have been designed to incorporate the most popular elements of the current OCR Nationals – such as the support of visiting moderators – alongside new assessment, content and structure that teachers told us they liked.

The focus is still on applied and transferable skills that motivate students who might not achieve a GCSE. As a flexible joint Level 1/ Level 2 qualification, the qualification suits a wide range of students who can progress upwards either to a Cambridge TEC or to relevant A Levels. Cambridge Nationals are available in Business, Health and Social Care, ICT, Science, and Sport. For all you need to know, take a look at [www.cambridgenationals.org.uk](http://www.cambridgenationals.org.uk).

The brand new Cambridge TEC qualifications, launched this month, are Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds. They have been designed to provide a progression route for students who have completed their compulsory education and wish to continue their learning in a particular sector, with a view



OCR Chief Executive Mark Dawe talking to teachers about the new Cambridge Nationals at BETT 2012.

to progressing either into employment or on to a related higher education programme.

Developed with the standards associated with the 'Cambridge' approach to qualification development, the TEC qualifications are based on popular QCF units combined with high quality OCR support in the form of visiting moderators and in-depth resources which will enable students to engage at a deeper level with their area of study. At the same time, Cambridge TECs have been developed to enhance general maths and literacy skills in 16 to 19 year olds. Cambridge TECs are now available in Business, Health and Social Care, and ICT, with Art and Design, Media, Sport and Science coming soon.

Check out the new qualifications at [www.cambridgetec.org.uk](http://www.cambridgetec.org.uk). Both qualification ranges will be launching in schools and colleges from September 2012.

## A college with Functional Skills in its DNA

**When Walsall College won this year's AoC Beacon Award for Skills, sponsored by OCR, it was obvious they were doing something right with their delivery of functional skills.**



OCR's Functional Skills Specialist, Susan Salter (pictured front left), went to present a cheque to the winning college in January and saw for herself what made the college so successful.

"The college had such an innovative approach to the teaching of functional skills in literacy, numeracy and IT across all its vocational qualifications," Susan commented. "All of the college's 3,500 full time students take a functional skills qualification within their main programme of study. The success rate is 82%. Over 70 staff are also taking functional skills too which has a very positive influence on students. Whether it's in business,

creative industries or hair and beauty, functional skills are flexibly embedded across the vocational curriculum in a way which suits each of the different programmes. It's obvious that the functional skills and curriculum teams have worked together really well."

Jan Myatt, Walsall's Curriculum Manager for Functional Skills (pictured front right), said: "Winning the AoC Beacon Award for Skills was a great achievement, recognising the whole-college approach to functional skills that we have adopted at Walsall College as best practice within the FE Sector."

Examples of Walsall's innovation include film and video learning materials produced by Performing Arts students for use by staff; learners solving real life problems within a vocational setting by using functional skills to support job and UCAS applications; and music students using IT to research artists, bands and instruments.

**Watch this space:** OCR plans to introduce on-screen, on-demand tests for functional skills from September 2012. To find out more about OCR's qualifications, take a look at: [www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/fs\\_2010](http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/type/fs_2010)

# Developing qualifications in a dynamic environment



**"Qualification development has to achieve a number of different goals at the same time," Mara Bogdanovic, OCR's Head of Qualification Development explains.**

"We may be amending existing qualifications or developing brand new ones. Whichever the case, we need to make sure our qualifications meet our own internal high standards and the rigorous standards set externally; they also need to be deliverable for teachers; to inspire students; and encourage progression. That is already quite a complex set of objectives, and there are more!"

OCR's portfolio of 1300+ qualifications spans a wide spectrum of subjects and sectors. This breadth is a result of OCR's unique history which combines the heritage of an academic school exam board (Oxford and Cambridge) with the vocational expertise, since 1998, of the Royal Society of Arts Examinations Board (which is what puts the 'R' into OCR). Alongside 'general' school-based qualifications such as GCSEs and A Levels, OCR also provides over 1000 vocational qualifications in broad areas of work such as customer service as well as highly specialised ones, such as caring for people with dementia.

Regardless of the breadth, every qualification must provide evidence of a learner's achievement at the end

of a programme of learning. Gaining a recognised qualification can have an enormous influence on a person's future. So how are new qualifications developed and how do existing qualifications remain fit for purpose?

Mara and her team are trained to manage the development of both general and vocational qualifications, bringing best practice to both, and pitching in when deadlines are tight, for example on one of the newest OCR qualifications, the Cambridge Nationals. Mara confirms the volume of work involved: "At the moment, there are over 200 different qualifications being worked on by the team."

OCR breaks the long and complex process of qualification development down into seven generic stages: concept,

qualification definition, development, accreditation, launch, delivery and lastly, review. The amount of time and work carried out on each stage can vary, but the process can take up to two years in total, especially as teachers and trainers need advance warning to plan for new courses. Dominique Slade, a senior manager in the team, explains more: "If a development project has a very tight deadline, some of the steps take place concurrently rather than sequentially. At other times and for lots of different reasons, we have to go forward before we have all the answers, which means that at a later stage we might have to revisit earlier decisions. GCSEs and A Levels for example are 'high scrutiny' qualifications which means that the accreditation phase can be much longer than for many



vocational qualifications. A smooth progression through seven clear stages is quite an idealised version of the process."

For a major redevelopment programme such as the Cambridge Nationals, OCR will employ a number of external developers who specialise in different areas such as writing and reviewing content, and developing sample assessment materials. Although OCR has assessment expertise, external developers have up to date subject, sector or teaching experience and reflect current approaches. OCR also needs to have the right balance of experience and freshness within its team of developers and that balance will be different for each development project.

Qualifications are not created from a blank canvas. The art of qualification development is to add distinctiveness, value, interest and relevance to subject content and formats that are often highly pre-determined.

Virtually all school-based qualifications in England already have subject content criteria – setting out the knowledge, understanding and skills students need to learn and develop – determined by the

English exam industry regulator, Ofqual. Since the demise of the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) in 2010, Ofqual has regulated how awarding bodies develop their qualifications. This includes following qualification format criteria which determine the delivery and assessment structure as well as reporting grades. So the regulator, whose responsibility is to maintain standards, is responsible for the framework that determines grades.

For vocational qualifications, there are also strict guidelines to ensure that qualifications are relevant to a particular industry or area of employment. For many years, the national occupational standards that influenced the shape of qualifications have been set by Sector Skills Councils, the employer-led organisations that cover specific economic sectors. Licensed by the government, there are currently 25 SSCs. However the role of SSCs in detailed qualification development is lessening.

OCR is part of a larger group of exam boards, which together make up Cambridge Assessment, the University of Cambridge's international exams group. The 'Cambridge' way of developing

qualifications puts the needs of the learner first. Mara says: "It's all about integrity. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation. Qualifications must be valued and fit for purpose and must recognise the achievement of the learner. The need for and benefit of assessment must be clear. This is our guiding rationale for redevelopment. As part of Cambridge Assessment, we also have access to an amazing research division so we can commission significant and up to date research which helps to shape our work. We recently commissioned a research project seeking information about the needs of the higher education sector to help us with A Level redevelopment."

A vital ingredient that OCR incorporates into qualification development is the expertise of teachers, students, industry leaders and subject associations. This is another distinctive element of the Cambridge approach and OCR goes beyond the minimum regulatory requirements to consult with external stakeholders at various stages of the development process. To create successful and relevant IT qualifications for example, OCR engages with top firms



## CASE STUDY NO.1

### Working with Higher Education

**Close co-operation with the University of Essex's Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities (CISH) has led to a new A Level in Humanities which aims to foster the intellectual skills that universities need.**

Margaret Kerry, OCR's Qualification Team Manager for History and Social Science, takes up the story which starts in September 2010. "The inspiration for an A Level in Humanities came partly from the Humanities Diploma. After this was stopped, we decided to take some of the interesting ideas from the Diploma forward to the A Level.

"The interdisciplinary approach was an unusual idea for an A Level and there were no existing subject criteria to follow but we knew that universities were demanding more of the skills that an interdisciplinary approach fosters. But what does interdisciplinary really mean?"

Through OCR's network of forums, schools, employers such as the British Library, subject associations, and a range of universities were all consulted about the shape and content of the new qualification. It was the University of Essex in particular with whom OCR engaged. "When we first visited CISH, we were able to talk to faculty members and students on the BA Humanities course. We heard from people practising within the disciplines what their needs and aspirations were. This then led to the innovative step of a member of the

academic staff joining OCR's development team as a consultant for a period. This has had a significant impact on the A Level."

The qualification, to be launched in September 2012, has a strong emphasis on skills. At AS, students are required to work with previously unseen sources to answer questions which bring into play the knowledge they have acquired across a range of humanities disciplines. For students who progress through to the A2, there is an independent research enquiry where they can demonstrate the independent learning, research and report writing skills which are highly valued by both HE and employers.

When OCR submitted its qualification to Ofqual for accreditation, Dr Burnett, Dean of the Humanities Faculty at Essex, wrote: "I am impressed by the clarity and thoroughness of the proposal, the care that has been taken to articulate in detail the content and coherence of a scheme that is noteworthy for its attention to the requirements of interdisciplinary study, and its contribution to the acquisition of a sufficient understanding of the demands of the contemporary world."

The qualifications team at OCR is now working on detailed schemes of work to support teachers delivering this new qualification from September.



**CASE STUDY NO.2****Taking advice – breaking new ground**

**When OCR launched a new range of advice and guidance qualifications in Autumn 2010, it was the result of an unusual development process without the normal guidelines and processes set down by a Sector Skills Council.**

In January 2010, OCR took the lead in organising the transition of one set of advice and guidance qualifications from one vocational framework (the NQF) to a new one (the QCF).

OCR Development Manager Gemma Gathercole, explains: "We arranged a series of meetings with other awarding bodies such as City and Guilds and NCFE and managed to get agreement about the way to migrate the qualifications to the QCF to meet Ofqual and funding requirements. Working with a sector specialist consultant and Advice UK – the largest network of independent advice centres across the UK – we worked on the shape and content of the new units.

"Without the development defined and managed by a Sector Skills Council, we followed a more informal route to determine content. With the help of key people, we were able to get a very broad consensus across all awarding bodies on the size, shape and content of the units and on the need for flexible assessment."

Due to the smooth development of these new units, OCR was the first awarding body to launch new advice and guidance qualifications later in the year, without the need for a pilot. The Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications are now being used by a variety of training providers and employers to accredit the skills of those provide information and support to a range of clients in environments such as job centres and social services. Over 2000 learners have achieved these qualifications and OCR has subsequently expanded its portfolio to include careers guidance and legal advice.

**CASE STUDY NO.3****"Pioneering" work in computing science**

**The idea of a GCSE in Computing was first discussed in the process of developing a Computing A Level back in 2007.**

Karen Reid, OCR Qualifications Manager for ICT and Computing, explains: "We did experience some scepticism from the sector who thought there would be no demand from schools, and that this kind of computing expertise was outsourced to India and the Far East anyway. But we had a very positive response when we announced what we wanted to do at the Computing at School (CAS) conference at Birmingham University in 2007. We got the internal go ahead to develop the new qualification on the basis of our proposals in 2008."

There were no subject criteria for Computing. As well as CAS, OCR got input on the content of a new Computing GCSE from a range of organisations including Microsoft, Birmingham and Cambridge Universities, senior assessors and teachers at a series of launch meetings. OCR also sought the feedback of these experts on draft versions of the specifications before submitting them for accreditation to Ofqual.

"The development process took approximately 15 months," Karen explains. "Initially Ofqual wanted us to run this qualification as a two-year pilot as it was new so that the material, structure and content could be trialled within a closed community of schools and colleges. However the pilot proved so successful that it stopped after only one year and there were no changes to the specification when the GCSE was formally launched in September 2011."

At BETT 2012, Education Secretary Michael Gove described OCR's work in this field as "pioneering".

such as Adobe and Microsoft so that what students will cover in a qualification is as meaningful and up to date with the IT industry as possible. One of OCR's newest qualifications, the A Level in Humanities, has just been developed in close co-operation with the Humanities department at the University of Essex so that through the A Level, students develop those skills needed in HE (see Case Study no.1). OCR can draw upon the expertise of over 140 representatives from higher education who sit on subject and sector forums to enhance A Level development.

Education is a dynamic environment and the demand for relevant and fit for purpose qualifications is constant. Irrespective of government policy, Mara and her team at OCR continually review the existing range of qualifications, amending and updating, or monitoring feedback from teachers about delivery and assessment issues as well as feedback from assessors from awarding sessions. OCR monitors the impact of assessment on learners as part of its ethical code. Mara continues: "There is always the need to make sure the content of a

qualification is relevant – think about the rapidly changing world of IT or Science. But all subjects go through major revisions in approach from time to time."

"If one of the Sector Skills Councils alters its industry standards for example, we update our qualifications. However, the biggest single influence on our work over the last five years is changing government policy. In 2008, we altered the structure of our A Levels, reducing the number of units that make up a qualification from six to four, following government recommendations and changes in A Level criteria. In 2009, we developed 'modular' GCSEs, packaging the content into individual units which could be examined and re-taken independently of each other. In response to changes in policy, we are reversing that structure now to make our GCSEs linear again so all exams will be taken at the end of a course. This is urgent work as these linear GCSEs must be available for schools from this September. And soon we will be redeveloping GCSEs again to incorporate the findings of the National Curriculum Review. We have sympathy for teachers keeping up with all these changes too!"

When there are no set subject criteria for a qualification, development requires initiative and judgement. OCR has recently developed two new A Levels – in Humanities and in Film Studies – with no subject criteria. While adhering to its own rigorous standards, OCR has enjoyed the freedom to create something fresh. Equally, OCR's Advice and Guidance qualifications (see Case Study no.2) were developed without the normal guidelines from an SSC.

At one of the team's most recent meetings – held at OCR's Coventry or Cambridge offices each month – the team pores over the fine detail of Ofqual's 2011 General Conditions of Recognition. Having made sure that the implications of the 73-page document are fully understood, Mara and her team are reassured that the way they work is in line with the Conditions. "The challenge is to make new regulations manageable. But as our approach is informed by good practice, it comes as no surprise that we are compliant without having to incorporate anything additional into our processes. ***In terms of how we approach our work, it really is business as usual for OCR.***"



## Tim Oates

led the four-person Expert Panel on the National Curriculum Review which began in January 2011. Last December, the panel published its report which sets out a vision for a curriculum-led revolution.

The report made major recommendations including more detailed programmes of study in core subjects, assessment linked to essential learning outcomes, changes to the structure of KS2 and KS4 to encourage progression, and a curriculum hierarchy from core, foundation, basic to local. Since the panel submitted its report, the government has followed the panel's recommendations regarding a delay in the implementation of changes.

Here, 54 year old Oates tells **agenda** about his role as Chair of the Expert Panel and his hopes for the implementation of his report.

### What is your background?

Over twenty five years in educational research. I joined Cambridge Assessment, which is Cambridge University's international exams group, in 2006 to head the Assessment Research and Development Division. This is my primary job, to expand knowledge about assessment and improve practice. Before that, I was Head of Research and Statistics at the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA), for most of the last decade. I started out as a research officer at the University of Surrey before moving to one of the QCA's predecessor bodies, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, as Head of GNVQ Research and Development.

### How did you get involved in the Expert Panel?

In 2009, the Guardian printed an article by

the journalist Warwick Mansell in which I was critical of the highly generic state of parts of the 2007 National Curriculum. Compared with the 1999 National Curriculum, the statements on what to study at KS3 and KS4 now are very vague. The article attracted the attention of the then Opposition. In late 2010, I published a research paper, 'Could do Better', on the lessons to be learnt from England's past curriculum reviews and from other countries. I was then invited to join the Expert Panel as Chair on a two-day-a-week basis.

### Who are the other members of the Expert Panel?

Professor Mary James, Professor Andrew Pollard, and Professor Dylan William. We share research expertise across curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning. It was important that members of the panel were experienced international comparativists. The report genuinely is a consensus. Naturally we thrashed through various differences of views on some matters, but applying evidence, intensive joint thinking and cogent argument brought us to a common view on recommendations.

### What is the remit of the Panel?

The Panel, which has now submitted its proposals, sits alongside the Review's Advisory Committee. Both report into the Secretary of State. In order to lead on the construction and content of a new National Curriculum, the Panel was asked to develop 'a robust evidence base to inform

the drafting of new programmes of study, and build a detailed framework for the National Curriculum taking account of the requirements set by the highest performing international jurisdictions'. It was also asked to 'reflect the views of teachers, subject communities, academics, employers, higher education institutions and other interested parties'.

### Why do you think this Review is different from previous Reviews?

QCA who managed the last Review has gone and this is now an internal DfE Review. The key difference, this time round, is that the aim is to base the Review on really sound, research-driven principles, which we hope will create a National Curriculum which will persist for a far longer period than previous incarnations. This is important: stability in the National Curriculum will help teachers, exam developers and publishers to produce really sound teaching approaches and materials – there is nothing which undermines quality and holds back system improvement more than unnecessary change.

I really believe that ministers today are profoundly interested in research which includes meaningful international comparisons. They are keen to take on board the most far-reaching recommendations even when they are quite challenging, like the shift of KS4 to three years, if the research shows that it's the right thing to do.



## 8 Expert Panel recommendations

- considerable detail in key subjects
- reduced scope (crucial elements) but increased specificity (greater precision)
- retain statutory breadth to 16 but with less prescription in specification
- importance of curriculum coherence
- change to structure of key stages – KS2 and KS4
- challenge of models of progression in primary phase
- develop coherent curriculum aims, both overall and for individual subjects
- replace level descriptors with more curriculum-linked attainment targets.

### How and why did you look at international models?

Unlike previous Reviews, international comparisons have played a far more significant role. QCA looked at international evidence but not in as much depth. Such comparisons have to be undertaken with huge care and sophistication. Without attending to the complexity and subtlety of the way other systems have arisen and the way that they work, it is easy to make mistakes and lapse into crude 'policy borrowing' or 'cherry picking'.

We recognised that key 'control' factors other than curriculum form and content determine the success of education systems, such as the quality of teaching, the impact of accountability measures and so on. But the job of ensuring that the content of the National Curriculum was right remained the key priority, informed by these observations. Not only were very detailed comparisons made of the content of different nations' national curricula, but there was extensive examination of the history and circumstances of key jurisdictions such as Alberta, Singapore, Finland, Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan. Detailed curriculum mappings helped identify what the focus of the curriculum content was at specific ages and how this related to performance in the big international surveys. If you look at the evidence, we are slipping in league tables not because of declining performance but because we are not improving as rapidly as some other high-performing jurisdictions.

### Has being a parent influenced your findings?

My career in research predates children and I have always been interested in the process of learning and have taken a great interest in issues such as the impact of birth date on attainment. I am the parent of primary-age children who are both summer-born – very bad planning! But my research informs my parenting and my children drive home the realities of learning.

### Did the Panel consult widely enough?

We consulted in three, inter-related ways: through a big, open public consultation programme which got over 4,000 contributions, through learned societies and associations, and through close work with subject experts. I am certain that we have consulted widely.

### What are the limits of the National Curriculum?

The National Curriculum is not the school curriculum. It is only about a small bit of one factor – the content specification of state requirement. The National Curriculum is one of around 14 key factors. One of the most important is good teaching and it is not the role of the National Curriculum to overspecify what that is. Space for design of motivating learning is vital. But the National Curriculum gives us a chance to define our goals, to ask what is really important, what do we want children to be able to do? I believe that current goals are not demanding or clear

*Stability in the National Curriculum will help teachers, exam developers and publishers to produce really sound teaching approaches*

enough. The National Curriculum should not be the totality of the school curriculum. Qualifications focus on providing evidence of attainment but they have increasingly become a curriculum design tool and I'd like to see a reduction in that. There doesn't need to be a qualification involved for something to be part of a good curriculum.

### Why the delay?

From our international comparisons emerged some key limitations of what we do in this country – too great a focus on data handling in primary maths, a lack of emphasis on early acquisition of secure reading in English, an absence of observation and classification in primary science. All these related to content comparisons. But what also emerged were key problems associated with the structure of the curriculum, assessment, and the form of progression in primary. These are huge issues linked to aspects of our system

other than the content of the National Curriculum, but were clearly associated with the higher performance, and system improvement, in other jurisdictions. These need to be worked through, and sound decisions made in respect of the English system – and that's the reason for the change in scheduling of the Review.

### What are the implications of the delay?

The original schedule was to have revised specifications in Phase 1 subjects – English, Science, Maths and PE – in schools in September 2013 for first teaching in 2014, and specifications in all remaining subjects – the Phase 2 subjects – in schools in 2014 for first teaching in 2015. The delay applies only to Phase 1 subjects, so that they will now be introduced to schools in 2014, and implemented in 2015. This has the advantage of allowing consideration, by both the developers and schools, of all curriculum elements – which has the advantage of coherence. However, it massively increases the implementation load on schools and GCSE developers – since everything has to be developed and implemented simultaneously. But nothing in education is either perfect or easy, and both boards and schools are familiar with the challenges posed by wide-ranging system revision.

### The summary of your recommendations is here. Which would you fight for?

Of all the recommendations, the ones about precision and specificity are really important, particularly in primary education. Another area which is really important to me is the discussion of models of ability and models of progression. This issue goes beyond the question of what is stated in the National Curriculum subject specifications. This is really important for 5 to 11 year olds and has been crucial in the success of countries like South Korea. But I am quietly confident that the majority of our proposals will be adopted. The Secretary of State has taken an interesting step of discussing the recommendations extensively with the profession prior to making an official announcement on the report – an unusual process and one which I support very strongly.

### What is your role now?

The Panel has completed its work but I am continuing as a one-day-a-week advisor to the Review and as a member of the Review's 14-person Advisory Committee.

### Hopes for the future?

I hope this Review will lead to a clear and enduring map of key content that will genuinely help teachers and one that won't change without good reason for 30 to 40 years.



# Improving teacher education in the lifelong learning sector

**Improving teaching in the lifelong learning sector is a government priority. This case study explores how In Touch Care – one of the country's leading training providers – the East Midlands Centre for Excellence (EMCETT), and OCR worked together on new qualifications to support the drive towards higher quality teaching.**

Lifelong learning is the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout the life of an individual in a range of environments, including further education, local communities, work-based environments and prisons.

Back in 2003, an Ofsted inspection survey found that initial teacher training in the lifelong learning sector was not meeting the requirements of learners. Based on Ofsted's findings, the government prepared proposals for reform that would eventually lead to a step change in the quality of initial teacher training for the sector. These reforms included the creation of a network of Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs).

Founded in 2007, EMCETT (East Midlands Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training) is one of eleven national CETTs, managed by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) as part of the National Improvement Strategy for the further education system.

"EMCETT was born out of a package of reforms to teacher training in the lifelong learning sector," explained Ian Grayling, EMCETT's Executive Director.

Part of the problem was that most of the delivery of teacher education for the lifelong learning sector was framed around university provision. "A lot of what had been delivered to teachers as Cert Ed and PGCE qualifications was simply unsuitable for teachers working in work-based and voluntary sector learning," said Ian.

"The approach to teacher education was mostly along the lines of a higher education model – a lot of learning theory, but very little in the way of practical skilling. What the sector really needed was people with the practical skills to deal effectively with learners in the classroom."


With its remit to help develop more appropriate and relevant qualifications, EMCETT set about designing new and more creative qualifications from scratch.

"We needed to concentrate on work-based, adult and community learning and recognised that a blended approach, including the use of technology, as well as face to face teaching, was required," explained Ian. "Learners would increasingly be using technology to learn and this needed to be built in. And new approaches to teaching would give people the opportunity to learn in new ways which suited them."

EMCETT's role was to support the wider further education sector to take on this new approach by providing a framework for delivery, establishing training centres through partners, and offering support for training staff across the country. The role of developing professional standards and assessment criteria for learners in the sector had previously fallen to the Sector Skills Council, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK). As for accreditation of the qualifications, EMCETT selected OCR.

"Of all of the awarding bodies, OCR were the most open with their thinking," said Ian. "This allowed us to think more creatively about how qualifications could be designed and delivered, as well as what would constitute competence and the practical aspects of being a teacher."





**A lot of what had been delivered to teachers as Cert Ed and PGCE qualifications was simply unsuitable for teachers in work-based and voluntary sector learning**

OCR's solution was to endorse the development of three new blended-learning versions of the qualifications for lifelong learning – PTLLS, CTLLS and DTLLS:

PTLLS (Preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector) is the first level qualification for new teachers to provide adult learning. PTLLS provides a threshold to teach for all new teachers, trainers and tutors delivering publicly-funded provision.

CTLLS (Certificate to teach in the lifelong learning sector) is an intermediate course for those who train or teach in relatively narrow teaching roles. It also offers some credit transfer towards the Level 5 Diploma.

DTLLS (Diploma to teach in the lifelong learning sector) is intended for those in full-time design, evaluation, management, delivery and/or assessment of learning roles.

These qualifications represented new professional standards for the sector, based on a credit-based teacher qualifications framework. Emphasis was placed on developing skills, knowledge and understanding of the specialist teaching subject or curriculum area. Another aim was to develop stronger links between providers of initial teacher training and those responsible in an organisation for workforce planning and development.

One of the first training providers to engage with EMCETT and OCR was Sheffield-based In Touch Care (ITC), one of the UK's leading providers of training to the health and social care sector. The company is led by founder and managing director, Jo North.

"Jo is a visionary leader in work-based learning and was clearly willing to put a great deal of her time and effort into trialling new qualifications in order to get them off the ground," said Ian.

ITC trialled OCR's courses at centres in Sheffield and Hull with the initial group involving around 28 participants. "The second cohort was larger, involving 125 learners at centres throughout the UK, including Doncaster, Derby, Gateshead, Plymouth, Bristol and Southend-on-Sea," explained Jo.

"We held various meetings with EMCETT's sub-groups to explore and prepare best practice," she said. "We made extensive use of the LSIS Excellence Gateway, which is a website that supports teacher development and has an enormous repository of useful documents, online tools and other resources. We mapped as much of this resource to the new assessment criteria as possible.

"OCR were extremely helpful throughout the process, providing plenty of their time and support to my staff and the learners," said Jo. "It was as much a learning exercise for us as it was for them, and it was particularly useful to have OCR's external verifier involved.

"What shone through was OCR's freer thinking – they were very supportive of how things can and should be done. The newer approach to lifelong learning demanded greater flexibility which they completely understood."

OCR is always looking for ways to improve its qualifications and to build on their success. For more detailed information on OCR's Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector qualifications, visit the OCR website, [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk).

For more information on teaching education for this sector in general, visit [www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/57](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/57).

# THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM REVIEW

**PAUL STEER, OCR'S DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIPS, CONSIDERS THE IMPLICATIONS**



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The Expert Panel's Framework for the National Curriculum report provides a thought-provoking set of proposals for a future National Curriculum. Anybody interested in the future of our education system would be advised to take the time to read it from cover to cover. It poses as many questions as it answers but it sets out the direction of travel.

The report has already scored one success by persuading the DfE to reconsider the timelines for the introduction of a new national curriculum and the redevelopment of GCSEs alongside this. It now looks increasingly likely that new GCSE specifications will be in schools for September 2014, for first teaching in 2015, a year later than originally planned. By the time all the work on the curriculum has been completed, there may still be a very squeezed timeline to finalise the next generation of GCSEs. But at least it offers a breather and time to debate what form the new qualification should take.

The report partially sidesteps the question of what should be in or out of the curriculum. It does this by categorising subject priorities in a hierarchy of core, foundation, basic and local requirements. However, there are still tough choices for someone to make about what to fit into their curriculum. With requirements such as the EBacc and limitations on vocational provision, there may be a lot of homogeneity in the curriculum offered by different schools.

The proposal to express the curriculum in key concepts and essential learning outcomes could provide more freedom to develop a wider range of distinctive GCSEs within subjects. But there will be a lot of to-ing and fro-ing before we establish the exact nature of the relationship between GCSEs and the new curriculum they will support.

There are recommendations to make the development of oral communication skills a priority from the earliest stages onwards. It is important that this is not lost in the mix. All the evidence shows that developing oral skills has a significant impact on cognitive development and self-confidence. This is too important to be a minor bolt-on to English. Speaking needs to be part of every subject, and we must be wary of the risks of concentrating on written assessments alone which can move the emphasis in teaching away from the spoken word.

If the introduction of such a radical new national curriculum is to succeed, it will need buy-in from all involved. This won't be easy – it is rare for major changes in education, especially to the curriculum, to be welcomed with open arms by everyone and the early signs show that this is no exception. Even if there isn't universal agreement, there must be clear understanding of what is to be done and collaboration between all involved. Ironically, this will require awarding bodies to work very closely with publishers – an activity that has been probed by the Education Select Committee inquiry into the examination system.

Despite suggestions that publishers and awarding bodies' links are too commercial, OCR does not profit from its relationships with publishers or have any exclusive endorsement arrangements. When Ofqual issues its report on the qualifications market this Autumn, let's hope for some clarity so the rules are understood by all.

The relationship between awarding bodies and publishers is only one area of the system under the microscope. There is no escaping the fact that the errors in last summer's exam papers were inexcusable though the amount of work that has gone into reviewing and re-engineering our processes has been formidable and further enhancements are being put in place.

Daily Telegraph reports of widespread poor practice from examiners delivering teacher support events have also been damaging and it is of small compensation that after reading hours of transcripts of OCR events, secretly recorded by the Telegraph, we found no evidence of wrong doing, only highly professional people discussing the best ways to help their pupils to appreciate their subjects.

There are deeper challenges facing the exam system. Some are to do with the design of assessments and the extent to which their very transparency and highly structured mark schemes might lead to an atomisation of learning and a narrowing of the curriculum. Balanced against this is a view that specifications and mark schemes actually need to be even tighter to head off any risk of inconsistency in marking – the route to multiple choice A Levels.

The concerns about the 'marketisation' of awarding bodies cannot be easily dismissed. There may well be incentives to make exams as accessible as possible to secure market share. At OCR, in keeping with our charitable mission, we have taken huge steps forward to bring key stakeholders, especially higher education, into the processes of designing qualifications, specifying content and securing standards. This is an important feature of a healthy exam system. Competition is also, we believe, a vital part of ensuring greater efficiency and investment in the education system. But if the new National Curriculum is to be introduced effectively, working in partnership must also be part of the package.

*Have your say.*

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



# JOIN OCR AT THESE EXHIBITIONS AND CONFERENCES SPRING 2012

## MARCH

### 22 **2012 Conference for Teachers of A Level Law** Maddingley Hall, Cambridge

OCR will be exhibiting at this annual conference which gives delegates exclusive access to leading academics, shares best practice and practical advice to make sure your knowledge of A Level Law is up to date. This event is run by the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education.

### 23/24 **ASCL Annual Conference 2012** Hilton Metropole, Birmingham

Visit OCR on Stands 42 & 43 at this annual conference which brings together key decision makers from secondary schools. The event provides the opportunity for delegates to network, debate key issues and share experiences through thought-provoking interactive seminar sessions. Delegates will be able to find out more about the redeveloped Cambridge Nationals, and OCR's brand new Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications – Cambridge TECs. OCR will also be running a special event alongside the ASCL conference as part of the launch of the qualifications.  
[www.ascl.org.uk/events/conferences](http://www.ascl.org.uk/events/conferences)

### 26 **Driving Change in 14-19 Education Conference** Central London

OCR Chief Executive Mark Dawe will speak at Capita's 14th National Conference on Driving Change in 14-19 Education. The conference aims to provide crucial guidance on delivering a balanced curriculum which offers both vocational and academic qualifications and promotes progression to further learning and skilled employment.  
[www.capitaconferences.co.uk](http://www.capitaconferences.co.uk)

### 30/31 **ALL - Language World 2012** University of Manchester

Come and see us on Stand 42 at this essential event for language educators. We will showcase our dynamic portfolio of language qualifications including Asset Languages, and OCR's qualifications specialists will offer expert guidance on the language pathways which can best meet the needs of you and your learners.  
[www.all-languages.org.uk](http://www.all-languages.org.uk)

## APRIL

### 2/4 **UCAS Admissions Conference** Hilton Birmingham Metropole

OCR will host a workshop highlighting findings from its extensive research with HE on improving the next generation of A Levels to ensure successful transition from school to university.  
[www.ucasevents.com](http://www.ucasevents.com)

### 2/5 **Association of Teachers of Maths Annual Conference: Enigmas** University of Swansea

The ATM is returning for their annual Easter Conference with this year's theme being 'Enigmas'. The event will give delegates the chance to explore many things which are puzzling in mathematics education. OCR will be exhibiting at this key maths event where delegates can come and speak to an OCR specialist about our real life approach to maths.  
[www.atm.org.uk/events](http://www.atm.org.uk/events)

## APRIL

### 10/12 **Maths Association Annual Conference** University of Keele

Please come and visit OCR to discover the range of learning pathways in maths and get the latest updates on qualification developments. Delegates will be able to talk to our experts and learn how OCR is bringing maths to life.  
[www.m-a.org.uk](http://www.m-a.org.uk)

### 12/14 **Geographical Association Annual Conference** University of Manchester

OCR will be exhibiting at this key event aimed at geography professionals. Delegates will get the chance to talk to our qualification experts about OCR GCSE and A Level Geography. There will be a range of support available to help you get the best out of teaching and learning geography.  
[www.geography.org.uk](http://www.geography.org.uk)

## MAY

### 11/12 **Historical Association Annual Conference** Penta Hotel, Reading

OCR will be exhibiting at the Historical Association Annual Conference which is the main history event in the calendar. The event offers delegates the chance to discover our range of History GCSEs and A Levels.  
[www.history.org.uk](http://www.history.org.uk)

## JUNE/JULY

### 20/22 **Sixth Form Colleges' Forum Summer Conference** Hope University, Liverpool

OCR is pleased to continue to support this key event for college leaders. The conference will provide delegates with a full programme of current and future developments relating to 16-19 education.  
[www.sfcforum.org.uk/events](http://www.sfcforum.org.uk/events)

### 28/30 **2012 MEI Annual Conference** University of Keele

OCR is pleased to exhibit again this year at the Mathematics in Education and Industry Annual Conference. Please visit Stand 14 to speak to one of OCR's specialists about bringing maths to life.  
[www.mei.org.uk](http://www.mei.org.uk)

### 29/1 **NATE Conference 2012** The Park Inn by Radisson, York

Come and visit OCR who will be exhibiting at this annual event for English teachers.  
[www.nate.org.uk](http://www.nate.org.uk)

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



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