

agenda

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM OCR / SUMMER 2015



IN THIS ISSUE:

**A GCSE FOR CYBER SPOOKS –
NEW QUALIFICATIONS ARE COMING!**

**MEET TOM SHERRINGTON, HEADTEACHER
OF Highbury Grove School**

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Welcome to the Summer 2015 issue of **agenda**, OCR's termly magazine which offers a snapshot of our news and views.

With reformed qualifications rolling out from this September - GCSEs in English and Maths and new AS/A Levels in nine subjects - you can read about the support OCR can offer to help teachers. There's guidance on co-teaching the new 'decoupled' AS Level, as well as a taste of the new qualifications we are developing for September 2016. Cyber security and tattoos grabbed headlines earlier this year.

What are exams for? In my view, they should be more than just a memory test. The skills of applying knowledge are just as, if not more, important. If exams are to mirror learning and to assess the skills that we want young people to develop, it's time to consider giving exam students access to internet search engines such as Google. Read my blog on pages 10-11.

We are also delighted to include on pages 8-9 an interview with Tom Sherrington, headteacher at Highbury Grove School, active education blogger and tweeter, and leading light behind the National Baccalaureate Trust.

All this plus school projects to encourage young engineers, an online course to tackle poor English and maths skills using dramatic storylines, our continued support for offender learning and a new Cambridge National in Child Development.

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

Mark Dawe

Chief Executive, OCR

CONTENTS

NEWS



5

GCSE and A Level reform: Getting ready for this September

FEATURES



8

Interview with headteacher Tom Sherrington

COMMENT



14

Paul Steer on the value of creative skills

NOTICEBOARD



15

Diary dates with OCR



BREAKING FREE™
www.breakingfreegroup.com

6

Supporting offender learning



10

Using Google in exams



7

Drama brings TiME to life



12

Co-teachability is key for the new AS qualifications

Cover story: The next generation of cyber spooks

In May, OCR announced a new focus on cyber security, as well as programming skills, in its draft new Computer Science GCSE to be rolled out in schools from 2016. Cyber skills are increasingly in demand not just by GCHQ but by large companies seeking to ensure the security of their systems. Read more about a new GCSE that could be a first step in an exciting career on page 5.



GCSE and A Level reform: getting ready for September



Are you planning to teach one of OCR's new AS/A Level or GCSE qualifications from this September? Whether you are well advanced in your preparations or need to catch up fast, there's lots of support designed to help teachers make a smooth and successful start to teaching our new qualifications.

CPD Events

If you haven't already been to one of our cpd events for your qualification, we are rolling out more this Autumn for all the new 2015 qualifications. Take a look at www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk.

Subject specialists

OCR's subject specialist teams who combine teaching and assessment experience, are devoted to responding to teacher queries, visiting schools and colleges, and supporting the development of cluster groups. If you want to get in touch with a subject specialist about one of the new qualifications, contact details are on the relevant qualification page of the OCR website www.ocr.org.uk.

Resources

There are plenty of downloadable free resources on our website, designed by teachers for teachers, to support the teaching of the next generation of GCSEs and A Levels. We've got delivery guides, transition guides, topic exploration packs and lesson elements, so you can select the best approach for your particular students. We're also delighted that there will be some brand new endorsed textbooks to support our new qualifications from major publishing partners, such as CUP's new Foundation and Higher Student Books for OCR's GCSE Mathematics.

African History prize

OCR announced its vision to broaden school history 'beyond Hitler and the Henrys' when it added ten new topics to its A/AS level History coming into schools this September.

An annual prize is now on offer for students taking the pre-colonial African Kingdoms paper, c 1400 - 1800, which OCR developed with Kings College London. Entries will be jointly judged and awarded by OCR and KCL and the prize will be open to students sitting the paper at AS Level in summer 2016.

A free ebook, written by Dr Toby Green of KCL, is available specifically to support teaching of the African topic, while there are free delivery guides which support teaching of the other new topics such as The Mughals, and Genghis Khan.

A 'Specification Creator' on OCR's website is available to ensure that the combinations schools choose to teach for History A Level meet requirements. It's also helping to build communities of schools teaching the same topics.

Engaging qualifications

With the help of teachers and the wider education community on our subject forums, we've taken the opportunity of qualification reform to put relevant and engaging content into our 2015 AS/A Levels and GCSEs which we are looking forward to sharing with teachers and students alike. The inclusion of tweets by Caitlin Moran and a Select Committee interview with Russell Brand in our new English Language and Literature A Level, developed jointly with the English and Media Centre, provoked debate last year. But there's much more: to take a few examples, we've broadened A Level History, developed a uniquely Positive About Practical approach to the assessment of A Level Science practicals, and put selfies and social media into our new A Level Sociology.

At GCSE, our new set texts for English Literature, together with the eagerly anticipated digital poetry anthology, are sparking interest from teachers. OCR's unique approach to linking unseen texts to set texts has been positively received. The structure of our new English Language GCSE is designed to support the full range of candidate ability in a newly untiered qualification. The straightforward assessment structure also allows teachers to focus on developing reading and writing skills, rather than the mechanics of exams. OCR's new GCSE Maths aims to develop problem-solving, reasoning and fluency skills in the entire ability range. We're excited about the chance to support all students to progress and to develop a sound understanding of mathematical concepts and become confident about interpreting and communicating mathematically. Like all our new qualifications, there's plenty of free resources for teachers and students as well as an interactive planning tool to ensure the successful delivery of the new Maths GCSE.

And last but not least, there are OCR's new Core Maths qualifications, a post 16 initiative in maths spearheaded by OCR, which we have developed with partners and subject experts MEI. www.ocr.org.uk/gcsealevelreform

In brief

Explaining examining to students

How are exams marked?
What's a grade boundary?
How long does it take to create a question paper?

To inform GCSE and A Level students about the basics of examining, OCR has produced a new set of factsheets, available at www.ocr.org.uk/aboutus.

The factsheets cover some of the key stages involved in examining academic qualifications. Written in jargon-free language, a glossary is also available which provides simple definitions of what can be mystifying exam board terminology.

Learning from results

Don't forget to make use of OCR's free Active Results service to review GCSE, A Level and Cambridge National exam performance this summer. It allows teachers to generate a range of reports from results day, including performance by candidate, by cohort or by school. It can drill down to look at results at question/topic level. A useful tool for identifying strengths and weaknesses and for effective planning, Active Results is accessible via Interchange, OCR's website for teachers and exams officers. www.ocr.org.uk/interchange

activeresults

New GCSEs and A Levels for 2016

In developing 47 draft new qualifications for teaching from September 2016, OCR has again taken the opportunity to add new and stimulating content to inspire teachers and students alike. We've continued to identify some key partners in the education community to enable us to offer imaginative support. Here's a taster of what is coming your way in 2016.



GCSE for cyber spooks



A distinctive feature of OCR's draft Computer Science GCSE for 2016 is the focus on cyber security. Students will learn about system security – phishing, malware, firewalls and people as the 'weak point' in secure systems – for the first

time at GCSE level.

Central to the new GCSE is a greater emphasis on 'computational thinking', which represents 60% of the content. To support this greater emphasis, OCR has partnered with a specialist education

technology company, Codio, to provide schools with a cloud-based programming and course content platform where students can learn the theory and apply it in real life situations, in any computing language. Given that 80% of computing teachers called for more training and support in a recent survey, access to Codio's platform will enable young people to learn programming and help teachers to enhance their own computer science knowledge and skills at the same time.

Rob Leeman, Subject Specialist for Computer Science and ICT at OCR, said: "This specification builds on OCR's pioneering qualifications in this subject

area. We have consulted with companies such as Google, Microsoft and Cisco, as well as teachers and higher education academics and organisations like Computing At School (CAS), to ensure that the content is relevant."

He continued: "Whether students fancy themselves as the next cyber-spook, Mark Zuckerberg or Linus Torvalds, our new qualification will be the first exciting step towards any career that requires competence in computing."

www.ocr.org.uk/computing

Au revoir 'le tank top', bonjour 'le tatouage'

OCR's plans to refresh the content of French, German and Spanish GCSEs for 2016 grabbed the headlines when the draft qualifications were submitted to Ofqual for accreditation. In a drive to drop tired topics and make the content more appealing to 14 to 16 year olds, out are the uninspiring 'ma trousse' (pencil case), 'le tank top' and 'my school day' and in are tattoos (les tatouages), music festivals and volunteering abroad. In the new draft German GCSE, there is a film review of the thriller *Lola Rennt* (Run Lola Run), and in the Spanish GCSE, tweets on the Olympic Games.

OCR's new approach is also aimed at bringing back linguistic skills, using the well-established skills learning of EFL teaching. This comes out of a concern voiced by teachers at OCR's forums, that the focus on topics is leading to a

disappearance of skills. "They tell us that students find it difficult to transfer their knowledge of grammar from one topic to another," said Katherine Smith, leading on OCR's MFL reform. "Neglected skills, borrowed from EFL, include grammatical structures such as tenses, connectives, asking and answering questions and infinitive constructions which can be learned and frequently revisited across the new course," Katherine explained.

The inflexible vocabulary lists dreaded by learners are being replaced by a colourful, fun app called Memrise. Based on scientific memorisation theories, students can use the app a minute a day to learn a few words, building up their vocabulary as they go along.

Exploring the oceans

From migrant trafficking and piracy, to rising sea levels and sustainable fishing, students will be able to explore all aspects of the ocean on OCR's draft new Geography A Level for 2016.

The topic is part of a new Geographical Debates section of the A Level. Other major debates include Climate Change, the Future of Food, Disease Dilemmas and Hazardous Earth. Students will have the opportunity to examine topical events happening in the world around them, such as the Nepal earthquake, the Ebola outbreak and Mediterranean migrancy. Fiona Webb, Subject Leader for Geography at Alton College, Hampshire commented: "We are excited about the possibility of implementing and teaching this new and dynamic specification. The topic choices will enable students to read widely around the subject, using the vast array of sources available to them. The fieldwork is a highlight for us, as traditionally we have always carried out four to five days of active fieldwork over the two-year period."



In May, OCR's Head of Policy Paul Steer took part in a live webinar for teachers with the recently re-appointed Education Minister Nicky Morgan, run by Schools Week. Paul outlined some of the biggest changes facing teachers in reformed qualifications this September as well as the impact of technology on learning.

Driving STEM with Jaguar Land Rover

OCR has mapped the Cambridge Nationals in Engineering qualifications to the Land Rover 4 x 4 in Schools Technology Challenge. From next year, learners taking part in the Challenge will be able to achieve all four OCR qualifications.

The Schools Technology Challenge aims to spark interest in engineering among 11 to 19 year olds through the design and creation of a radio-controlled 4-wheel-drive (4x4) off-road vehicle. Over the course of a school year, students work together in teams to research, design and manufacture their vehicles before they compete against teams from other schools. The aim is to create a vehicle that can successfully negotiate a specially designed test track and emulate what a full scale 4x4 vehicle can do.

OCR has worked closely with not for profit Engineering in Motion on the project. David Lakin, Engineering in Motion's UK & International Project Manager, said: "The ambition is to raise awareness, interest and enthusiasm in engineering through the practical application of design & technology, mathematics and science."

Martin Webber, OCR's Sector Specialist for STEM, explained: "We identified where the competition requirements best fitted each qualification and developed activities to access both the competition and each qualification. We know through our experience of working with Siemens and F1 in Schools that delivering curriculum through project based learning really



challenges students and encourages them to take charge of their own learning. It brings core subjects to life and promotes independent study through a desire to learn more."

www.ocr.org.uk/vocational

OCR qualifications support online offender learning

In 2014, virtually every prison in England delivered either an OCR academic or vocational programme. OCR is now working in partnership with the Breaking Free Group, a digital healthcare provider, to develop qualifications for people in criminal justice and community settings who are using the Breaking Free treatment and recovery programmes for drug and alcohol substance misuse.

OCR has accredited two online Breaking Free programmes as part of OCR's Life and Living Skills qualifications. Robert Mills, OCR's Sector Specialist for offender learning, said: "OCR is thrilled to partner with the Breaking Free Group who are innovators in online drug and alcohol interventions. This is a major issue in the rehabilitation of offenders, and the accredited programmes will support individuals to desist from substance abuse and move them towards employment or further education and training."

Glyn Davies, Service Development Director at the Breaking Free Group, commented: "People who are actively addressing their drug and alcohol difficulties put a huge amount of effort into their recovery. OCR's accreditation of these programmes means this effort will be validated

and rewarded through a qualification and certificate in Life and Living Skills. As well as providing an additional incentive for people to achieve their recovery goals, for many our programmes will now also serve as a vital springboard to future learning and self-improvement."

The Life and Living Skills suite is a comprehensive range of qualifications, with no minimum entry requirements. Learners can choose from over 150 units across a wide range of skill areas; including pre-employability, personal and social skills. The accredited Breaking Free programmes have been available to OCR-approved centres in criminal justice and community drug and alcohol settings from April 2015. TIME, another new OCR initiative which provides online training in Maths and English is also



attracting interest from prisons and secure settings.

Rob continued: "Many learners in adult secure settings struggle with the digital world when they leave through the gate. For some, even mobile phones are unfamiliar. Introducing people to learning through these accessible digital platforms serves the dual purpose of supporting them into the digital world while they learn."

Help to plot career path with Plotr

OCR has joined forces with Plotr, a not for profit organisation offering free online careers guidance to 11 to 24 year olds with an emphasis on what real employers need.

At a time when careers guidance is thin on the ground, www.plotr.co.uk provides up-to-date advice on over 750 careers, including emerging sectors. The online platform explains what it is like to work in 25 specific business sectors and showcases over 100 different youth-friendly employers. The new platform, which includes a free psychometric test (the Plotr Game), has a jobs and experience finder for those looking for entry-level jobs, apprenticeships and work experience, as well as a School Zone packed with resources for teachers and parents keen to offer careers guidance.

OCR's focus on improving the employability of young people, through qualifications such as OCR Life and Living Skills and the redeveloped Employability suite, complements Plotr and OCR is delighted to offer its support and guidance to young people via the platform.

Drama brings TiME to life

Extra support for schools, colleges and training providers to help improve maths and English in 16+ students is now on offer in the form of OCR's new course, TiME - Training in Maths & English.

The engaging content that is the hallmark of TiME is accessible via an online platform. Content such as mini soap operas can be used alongside face to face classroom teaching or accessed by learners studying independently, or a combination of both. OCR has tapped into the expertise of TV and film producers as well as professional actors to bring learning to life. From 'the Birthday Party' to 'Record Store', the quirky storylines set in realistic contexts are designed to engage those traditionally hard to reach. East Kent College is currently using TiME with unemployed young learners. "This is not about technology replacing the delivery of teaching, but it is about replacing the motivation a teacher can give," said Nick Holbrook-Sutcliffe, East Kent's Director of Development and Marketing. He continued: "I think this is one of the biggest changes in online learning of English and maths."

Liam Sammon, OCR's Director of Education and Commercial Services, explained: "The content is mapped to nationally recognised OCR qualifications in English and maths, such as Functional Skills and Cambridge Progression. As well as helping improve poor English and maths skills, TiME has been designed to develop communication and employability skills." time.ocr.org.uk

Good news for young entrepreneurs

Being Entrepreneurial is a suite of qualifications to develop and encourage entrepreneurial mindsets of young learners in KS4 and KS5.

We're pleased to confirm that the Level 3 Award in Being Entrepreneurial now attracts 30 UCAS points.



25 years of vocational progress at Progress House



While 2015 marks 25 years since the creation of the World Wide Web and the launching of the Hubble Telescope into space, it also marks 25 years of vocational qualifications at Progress House, OCR's offices in Coventry. Built for the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Examinations Board, it was formally opened by HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh (then President of the RSA) in October 1990.

At that time, RSA had been offering vocational qualifications for 134 years, since its first vocational exams in 1856 (52 candidates took exams

in 17 subjects ranging from Agriculture to Physiology). The RSA Examinations Board subsequently merged with the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), creating OCR and Progress House became OCR's Coventry home. Today, Progress House is the hub for OCR's wide range of vocational qualifications for learners, from the early stage of Entry Level achievement (including the Cambridge Progression range) through to Higher Apprenticeships and Level 7 qualifications.

Charlotte Bosworth, OCR's Director of Skills and

Employment, said: "Progress House truly represents the heritage of OCR. We have seen both the building and organisation expand over the past 25 years and we can be proud of the fantastic qualifications that have been developed and supported by the staff based in OCR's Coventry office."

So what do the next 25 years hold in store for vocational education? You can keep up to date with all the latest vocational news from OCR by following [@ocr_vocational](https://twitter.com/ocr_vocational) on Twitter.

Cambridge National in ICT on performance tables

We are delighted that the Cambridge National Certificate in ICT is now included on the KS4 performance tables for 2017. This reverses a decision made earlier this year by the DfE when the qualification was omitted from the tables. We would like to thank schools and colleges for their patience as this was under review.

Cambridge National in Child Development

A new OCR qualification will be available from September 2016 to help upskill the growing numbers of people going into childcare.

The GCSE in Child Development has been a popular qualification for many years, with over 18,000 students sitting the examination in 2014. With longer working hours and the Government set to increase free childcare to 30 hours, demand for qualified staff will undoubtedly increase. However, following an Ofqual decision, OCR will not redevelop the Child Development GCSE, and therefore the last exam will be in June 2018.

To fill the gap, OCR is developing a Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in Child Development which will follow closely the format of the GCSE and be the same size – at 120GLH.

It will consist of three units; one examined and two internally assessed and externally moderated, comprising 40% for the exam and 30% each for the other two units. Like all Cambridge Nationals, there are two exam sessions a year, with opportunities for resits and the best mark counts.

After consultations with schools and colleges currently teaching the GCSE, we will be including new topics in the Cambridge National, such as internet safety and travel systems, which are not in the GCSE. www.cambridgenationals.org.uk

Tom Sherrington became headteacher at Highbury Grove School in Islington, North London, in 2014. Highbury Grove is a mixed 11-18 comprehensive school with 1,200 students. The school, which has state-of-the-art facilities, has Specialist Music School status.

Tom is a member of the Headteachers' Roundtable think tank and is a regular contributor to conferences and CPD sessions locally and nationally. He regularly communicates on teaching and learning via his headguruteacher blog and on twitter [@headguruteacher](#). Here Tom tells **agenda** about his own career and the challenges he faces.

What has been your path into your current role?

I've been teaching since 1987. I started working as a Physics teacher in Wigan and then in London at Holland Park School – a big, complicated comprehensive school that I loved. I became Deputy Head of Alexandra Park in Haringey when it started with just Year 7; that job gave me the chance to develop a lot of ideas and leadership skills. After a three year stint at the British International School in Jakarta on a family adventure, I was Head of King Edward VI Grammar School in Chelmsford for six years. I learned a great deal about teaching, high expectations, student leadership and giving teachers a high level of autonomy. It was always my dream to lead a London comprehensive so I was delighted to land the job at Highbury Grove. I'm just coming up to the end of my first year. It's been an extraordinary experience. I've never worked so hard – but it's been incredibly rewarding.

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

I love the sense of mission – this really matters! I also like the intellectual and personal challenge of running a large organisation full of the most diverse group of young people trying to succeed and achieve. I love working with teachers and the constant search for ever-better ways to do things. Schools are hives of activity, energy and innovation and quite often it gets emotional; there's a passion for what we're doing that is absolutely wonderful.

Who do you admire in your field?

I admire heads like John Tomsett, Sue Hammond from Billericay School, Vic Goddard and Geoff Barton for their personal integrity and confidence to do things that matter without trying to build empires or toe a safe line. I'm a big supporter of David Weston who runs the Teacher Development Trust; he's made a massive contribution to putting professional learning at the centre of the education agenda. I'm also a fan of Martin Robinson who wrote Trivium 21st C; this has had a big influence on the thinking at my school. I could also list a long line of teachers who I admire for their ability to make magic happen in their classrooms; watching great teachers teach is my favourite part of the job.

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

I always loved school. I loved learning and the feeling of succeeding. One thing I learned was that, ultimately, it's down to you. I did most of my learning in my bedroom at my desk or lying on the carpet reading textbooks. That's not because the teachers weren't inspiring; it just seemed that their job was to tee things up; mine was to actually learn it for myself.

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

I like hanging out with my family and going on big holidays. More typically we're watching Game of Thrones or The Walking Dead – that kind of thing. I also

enjoy writing my blog; I enjoy getting my thoughts down and all the interactions that follow via twitter. Before blogging, there was music – I have a guitar and piano.

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

I'd probably be a scientist. I'd love to have been involved with CERN or NASA. I continue to find particle physics and cosmology completely inspiring.

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

Most obviously it will be managing our budgets. We'll all be trying to keep our schools going, providing a rich curriculum offer, on less and less money. Costs are rising and there's no new money. I'm an educationalist; a teacher – not a finance expert. It's the part of the job I find the most stressful – looking for ways to reduce costs whilst also developing the curriculum I think my students deserve.

The other challenges are to embed curriculum changes from top to bottom, to develop meaningful assessment frameworks and to recruit and retain high quality staff. London is so expensive – there will always be turnover and that's a constant issue for us.

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

Aside from all the data measures and tangible student outcomes, I very often rely on feedback from people. There



are always key weather-vane parents, students and teachers who will tell you honestly how the school is perceived; these are people who really know. I think it's important to be in it for the long haul. I've learned not to expect or trust quick fixes – they don't last long. Over a few years, if you feel the culture has changed, then that's real success.

What achievement are you proudest of?

I like to think I've made an impact in every school I've worked in – as a teacher and a leader. I'm proud to serve as the Head of Highbury Grove; it matters a lot to me that I'm in this position now. To pick one achievement, although it's still early days, I am very excited by the momentum we've managed to build behind the National Baccalaureate for England. We're launching it at my school in September and I'm hopeful that, within a few years, it will be established across the country.

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

1. Protect our budget – so that we don't have to reduce the breadth of our curriculum.
2. Endorse the National Baccalaureate – for the good of the nation!
3. Get rid of Good and Outstanding OfSTED grades; the distinction is a house of cards in validity terms with unhealthy consequences.

To Google, or not to Google: that is the question



Just before the GCSE and A Level exams began this summer, Mark Dawe, OCR's Chief Executive, added his voice to a debate about the use of internet search engines, like Google, in exams. This is a hotly debated topic but at the heart is an important issue about the role and purpose of examinations. Here is Mark's blog:

"Exam time is looming. As the weeks of revision draw to an end, thousands of students will soon be sitting in rows in large exam rooms, ready to pick up their pens and to turn over their papers. "You may begin!"

It's 2015. How much longer can pen and paper exams be the only medium we use to test young people? I don't want to alarm students taking OCR GCSEs or A Levels on 11 May – they will not be asked to use Google – but exams do need to change to complement how education works in the 21st century and the skills that we increasingly expect young people to develop.

Young people grow up using technology to learn yet the format of GCSE and A Level examinations is increasingly disconnected to the variety of learning that goes on. Learning and the assessment of learning is becoming disjointed.

What are exams for? They are not about regurgitating facts. As well as assessing core knowledge of a subject, they are – and should be – about much more than that. We are interested in assessing a young person's ability to interpret and analyse information, to assess their ability to apply their understanding. Researching on the internet is a key skill

in its own right that young people should develop. We do it all the time in our work. (Don't you want the experienced consultant who is treating you to keep abreast of the latest research on the internet in their field?) Skills of judgment, problem solving and decision making are also important qualities that young people need to develop to flourish and succeed. All these are skills that employers expect to see in the workplace all the time. Exams have to be much more than a memory test.

So the use of internet search engines such as Google in exams is, for me, a no brainer. I am not talking about giving students marks for finding the answer to a simple factual question using Google on a tablet during an exam. Those aren't the skills I am talking about and access to the internet would not be appropriate for all exams. I am talking about asking students in a GCSE Geography exam for example to write a report about a third world country's economic development and to use the internet to select appropriate resource materials. Students taking an exam paper on say 200 years of European History might be asked to comment on a new development just outside the period of their study – say voting to leave the EU – and use Google search to

research the details, and compare it to a topic they have learnt.

In maths, we already allow calculators in exams because we assume students have basic knowledge and we want to see if they can apply that. In some situations in maths, such as simulations with large amounts of data or modelling, it is not possible to engage with a realistic model on pen and paper and in the time of a traditional exam. Offloading the processing part on a computer in an exam would allow students to tackle these questions and perhaps to identify a technique that they didn't even know before they went into the exam room.

As an exam board, we already use technology extensively to support assessment. We scan the papers that students take and then mark them online. We develop resources that relate to our qualifications such as MOOCs, but we don't fully incorporate the technology of the modern world into GCSE or A Level exams themselves.

Change won't be easy. There needs to be industry wide agreement on the relaxation of restrictions. The move to internet access needs to be discussed by all parties and carefully piloted. To enable schools to put large cohorts of students into exams with access to the internet,



"In maths, we already allow calculators in exams because we assume students have basic knowledge and we want to see if they can apply that."

the principle of a staggered timetable of testing would have to be introduced. And an exam with the internet should not benefit the fastest touch typist. But the appropriate and skilled use of the internet is what real education is about and we need to make sure that assessment is not in a world of its own."

(This blog was first published in Schools Week.)

Join The Debate

Mark Dawe's comments echo views expressed by a number of people in the wider education community in recent years on this topic. In late 2014, Professor Eric Mazur, Dean of Applied Physics at the University of Harvard, shared his views that assessment should more closely mimic real life. He allows university students to use books and the internet during examinations. "We consider it cheating in that setting but not cheating when they are doing their jobs. So why create this artificial environment?" At a British Council conference in 2013, Sugata Mitra, Professor of Educational Technology at Newcastle University, called for access to the internet in the exam hall, arguing that teaching and learning would adapt to this new system which is not based on memorising information.

Chris McGovern of the Campaign for Real Education is one of those who has voiced opposition to the principle of using search engines. While young people need to know how to use Google, they "need to display substantial subject knowledge as part of the examination process". He voiced fears about an emphasis on testing skills in exams to the exclusion of testing knowledge.

What do you think? Email your views to agenda@ocr.org.uk



CO-TEACHABILITY IS KEY FOR NEW AS QUALIFICATIONS

In January UCAS published its report on different approaches to the new co-teachable, standalone AS qualification. The introduction of the new AS this September was only confirmed by May's election result.

To support schools in their planning for September, OCR has produced guidance on co-teaching new AS and A Levels. As well as general guidance on co-teaching, there are OCR co-teaching guides specifically for new AS and A Levels in Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, English, History, Physics, Psychology and Sociology.

CO-TEACHING THE NEW AS

The new reformed AS Levels will be 'standalone' qualifications in their own right. They will not count towards the final grade of an A Level, where assessment of the whole course will take place at the end of two years' study.

The content of the new AS Level is a subset of the content of the new A Level however, and can be taught in the first year of the A Level course. This allows AS and A Level students to be taught together throughout the first year until AS exams.

The new AS and A Level exams will share some similarities in terms of assessment structures and question types, allowing similar materials to be used for revision and exam preparation.

There is a shared vision for both AS and A Level qualifications and the assessment objectives, aims, outcomes and requirements are the same for AS and A Levels. Unlike the current system, students will not be required to sit the new AS Level before proceeding to the new A Level. If students take the new AS Level (the first exams will be in summer 2016) and then move on to the new A Level (first exams in summer 2017), they will be reassessed on material they have already covered, although the level of demand will be higher. The experience of sitting the new AS Level exam could therefore be useful practice for taking A Level components.

The new co-teachable system allows students the choice of:

- Just taking the AS qualification
- Deciding not to take the AS qualification but to proceed on to the full A Level
- Doing both – taking the AS and A Level but recognising that they will be reassessed on their AS content at a higher standard when they take the A Level assessments.

THE VALUE OF AN AS

We know from our extensive conversations with teachers, HE and employers, as well as with organisations such as the NUS and the Sixth Form Colleges' Association, that the AS is a valued qualification and helps many students to make the right choices for progression to university and beyond. In a survey OCR conducted with the NUS in 2014, 61% of students felt that the lack of feedback from AS results would pose a problem in making rational decisions

"Co-teachable AS qualifications mean schools and colleges will be able to deliver a broad subject offer."

about which course and university to apply for. Co-teachable AS qualifications mean schools and colleges will be able to deliver a broad subject offer and students will be able to continue to take four subjects and choose whether to take the AS qualification. However, school type, preference, and funding restrictions mean these are demanding decisions.

Case study: English Literature A Level

The OCR AS and A Level English Literature qualifications have been deliberately structured so that students are able to follow the same scheme of learning. For example, the Shakespeare set texts for AS English Literature exam 1 are the same as those set for Section 1 of exam 1 at A Level, and the poetry set texts for AS are the same as those set for section 2 at A Level. The prose texts set for AS exam 2 are also set as choices on exam 2 of the A Level and the topic areas are the same. Similarly the post-1900 drama texts set for AS exam 2 may be studied by candidates preparing for the non-examined assessment component for A Level.

English Literature A Level	English Literature AS Level
Exam 1: Drama and Poetry Pre 1900 Shakespeare Drama and Poetry Pre 1900 (Closed text)	Exam 1: Drama and Poetry Pre 1900 Shakespeare Drama and Poetry Pre 1900 (closed text)
Exam 2: Comparative and Contextual Study Close reading (unseen) Comparative and Contextual Essay (Closed text)	Exam 2: Drama and Prose Post 1900 Drama Post 1900 Prose Post 1900 (Closed text)
Non-examined assessment component: Literature Post 1900 Critical piece OR recreative piece with commentary	

The UCAS report identified destination intentions of the cohorts, differing abilities of pupils, school ethos and purpose as among the factors affecting how schools and colleges will approach the new AS.

Listening to the views of our stakeholders, we are concerned about a possible lower take up of A Levels, a narrowing of the curriculum and the loss of predicted grades in university admissions. We know that certain subject areas such as psychology, economics, music and modern foreign languages saw substantial growth when the AS was first introduced. Some other subjects may also see uptake differ between genders.

BROADER BENEFITS OF CO-TEACHABILITY

Co-teachable AS qualifications also help maintain the rationale for the introduction of AS in Curriculum 2000 when too many students were leaving school at age 17 with no qualifications at all. At the inception of Curriculum 2000 the average number of A Levels studied was just two. The intention was to ensure that students took more than three subjects thereby

deferring narrow specialisation.

Co-teachability will allow students who feel they are unlikely to achieve the full A Level qualification at the end of their two year A Level programme, to opt to take the AS qualification only. This will ensure that students on two programmes have a step-off qualification.

On a practical level, co-teachability will be helpful to schools and colleges during the two years from 2015 to 2017 when both old and new A Levels exist in a 'mixed economy' of A Level qualifications and where funding is an issue. It also provides universities with actual grade attainment at AS, if taken in Year 12, and helps address the fear that the HE sector has expressed that teachers have reached a 'record level of optimism in prediction of grades.'

It is however important to note that Ofqual, the qualifications regulator, has stated that no non-examined assessment (coursework) will take place at AS. This doesn't mean that important skills will not be developed while students undertake the AS but they will not be assessed on these skills. For some subjects, such as the sciences, this

will mean that students who take AS qualifications in science will not get a Practical Endorsement certificate.

Whatever route a school takes, a greater understanding of co-teachability helps inform decision making and OCR believes co-teachable AS/A Levels can address some of the real concerns of students, schools, colleges and HE.

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

THE IMPORTANCE OF A BALANCED CURRICULUM

PAUL STEER, OCR'S HEAD OF POLICY, ON THE VALUE OF CREATIVE SKILLS



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Let's face it – hard times are a-coming. Even with the Government's commitment to protect core funding for pupils in schools, money and resources in the education system are going to be even tighter than they already are. And the post-16 sector is bracing itself for some very significant fiscal challenges.

The full impact this will have on the curriculum on offer to young people remains to be seen but there is broad agreement that the curriculum is narrowing down. There will be fewer subjects on offer and young people are likely to study fewer subjects from the choices on offer. The forthcoming Progress 8 school accountability measure gives double points for achievement in English and in the new, supersized Maths GCSE; it is right to make these a priority but they will eat up even more valuable curriculum time. In June, Schools Minister Nick Gibb gave even greater priority to the so-called EBacc subjects - English, maths, science, a language and history or geography - when he promised to consult on plans for all pupils to study them to age 16. Nicky Morgan has subsequently confirmed this will be policy.

There are some softer signals that come from government and elsewhere about what subjects really matter. If we are to rebalance the economy and if we are to have new regional powerhouses, we will need more scientists, more engineers, more computer programmers, all with high levels of mathematical skills. We need more houses, more construction workers, more plumbers and electricians. High level apprenticeships offered by the likes of Rolls Royce are cited as the way forward.

All of this will focus minds on schools' priorities and something will have to give.

It is questionable how much resource will really be committed to those non-examined parts of the curriculum – those really important things about character and resilience, community engagement, nutrition and financial literacy and all the rest. Especially when Prevent strategies and a commitment to developing British values is put to the top of the agenda. Schools and colleges remain committed to a broad education and know that there is more to life than exams but resourcing all these areas will be more of a challenge than ever.

The creative industries are worth £76.9bn per year to the UK economy, a staggering £8.8m every hour. They account for 5.6% of UK jobs.

As we are facing a narrowing of the curriculum, what subjects might be at risk? Anthropology has been snuffed out at A Level before it barely breathed its first. Vocational qualifications must find a home somewhere on the school timetable for the sake of all young people who deserve and should get a more varied diet. Meanwhile, the Church of England has quietly voiced concerns about the future of Religious Studies. Many decisions may simply be driven by the availability of teachers to deliver some subjects or the cost associated with their delivery.

At OCR, we believe that every subject brings something unique and important to the curriculum and each can make a strong case for being on the curriculum. A bit like priorities in the NHS, it's impossible to deliver everything however with limited budgets and performance

targets. The arts are a case in point. They are a vehicle for developing so many skills that the economy and young people need – putting on a performance, for example, requires enterprise, creativity, financial awareness, team building and those precious management skills we are so often told the nation lacks, as well as dramatic and physical skills themselves. Nor should we forget to emphasise the importance of creativity in the sciences and in maths (which many would argue is, in its purest form, a hugely creative subject.)

Creative subjects matter in their own right as well as for the contribution they make to the UK economy through exports, and to civic pride and our communities. Brand Britain is powerful from the Globe Theatre to Glastonbury, from Top Gear to the Olympics opening ceremony. And GCSE and A Level reforms have allowed us to develop a range of exciting new qualifications in subjects such as music, drama and art and design to engage students who we hope will then be able to pursue careers in our vibrant and diverse creative industries.

The creative industries are worth £76.9bn per year to the UK economy, a staggering £8.8m every hour. They account for 5.6% of UK jobs. Our creative industry is above average by every economic measure reported.

Above all, in a fuzzy future where careers are not easily pigeon-holed, we will need people with the full range of skills. Providing a broad and varied curriculum for all is going to be challenging, but if we draw upon our creative skills, we will find a way.

Email your comments to agenda@ocr.org.uk

JOIN OCR AT THESE EXHIBITIONS AND CONFERENCES SUMMER 2015

JULY

5

157 Group Summer Forum

Marriott County Hall,
London

OCR is delighted to support the evening reception for members of the 157 Group, representing up to 30 of the largest, urban Further Education colleges in the UK. The 157 Group provides thought leadership, practice improvement and sets out to influence national policy affecting the FE/Skills sector.

www.157group.co.uk

8

National Enterprise Challenge Final

Alton Towers

For the third year running, OCR is sponsoring the National Enterprise Challenge which is a UK-wide competition for schools involving real businesses setting challenges for pupils to use entrepreneurial skills. The finalists pitch their business ideas to entrepreneurs and celebrities.

www.nationalenterpriseshallenge.co.uk

10 – 12

Association for the Teaching of Psychology Annual Conference 2015

Lancaster University

Come and speak to OCR's subject specialists about our new A/AS Level Psychology at this three day annual conference for psychology teachers. The conference offers updating sessions, presentations and workshops on teaching and learning, as well as opportunities to share good practice.

www.atpconference.org.uk

10 – 12

Schools History Project Annual Conference 2015

Leeds Trinity University

We are delighted to sponsor the SHP Annual Conference this year. Visit OCR's stand to find out more about our new OCR GCSE History B (SHP) which we have developed in partnership with SHP, for introduction into schools from 2016. This exclusive partnership has enabled OCR to develop a distinctive GCSE 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.org.uk



Mark Dawe, OCR Chief Executive, at STEMtech in April 2015

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

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