

Textbooks: Risks and Opportunities

Research on the Risks and Opportunities Arising
from Current Arrangements for Provision of
Textbooks and Other Learning Resources for
GCSEs and A levels

Action Plan



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Executive Summary

1. As a key part of the work we have launched on healthy markets, we said we needed to determine the issues and potential problems associated with conflicts of interest in the qualifications sector in particular in relation to study aids such as textbooks and training services. This work has focused on the resources available to support GCSE and A level qualifications.
2. The research we undertook was designed to provide evidence on the risks the current arrangements for publishing textbooks and other resources present to the standards of qualifications, to a healthy qualifications market and, more broadly, to the style of learning. This report summarises our analysis of this evidence and the Action Plan we have developed as a result.
3. We found limited evidence that textbooks are impacting on the standards of qualifications although we will be undertaking further work as explained in this report. Examples of breaches in confidentiality (such as a question from an awarding organisation-endorsed or produced textbook repeated in a live assessment) are very rare. Existing research into whether textbooks are a factor in the predictability of assessments is limited and *we want to consider the findings from the exploratory work we commissioned as part of our overall work programme on predictability (to be completed by June 2013)*.
4. We did find evidence supporting concerns about the quality of learning resources generally. In particular, a rather formulaic approach, influenced by current endorsement processes, is resulting in textbooks that can be over focused on exam preparation at the cost of subject content and sign posting to wider and more in depth reading.
5. Balanced against this there is international evidence that supports the principle of the alignment of textbooks to exams on the basis of curriculum coherence and its role in high-performing countries. *We plan to undertake further work to review awarding organisations' endorsement processes and see if these can be adapted to improve the quality of learning resources available to teachers. This will include consideration of whether there are alternatives to awarding organisation endorsement (we aim to publish our final conclusions by August 2013)*. The research has highlighted a lack of agreement of what a 'good' textbook looks like and establishing benchmarks for this will be an important aspect of this review.
6. Particular concerns continue to be raised about the apparent close alignment between Pearson's publishing and awarding activities. Pearson's awarding

organisation and educational publishing function sit in the same governance structure. Our regulatory requirements require Pearson to manage any conflict of interest arising from their structure. *We will be launching a review of this aspect of Pearson's arrangements focusing on the effectiveness of the business separation measures between the awarding organisation and publishing activities (we intend to publish our findings in February 2013).*

7. The predominant pattern in recent years has been for exam board-endorsed textbooks to be written by senior examiners. The exam boards have put contractual arrangements in place so that examiners cannot disclose their links to exam boards when authoring books. Examples of breaches in confidentiality are very rare. However, the link between examiners and textbook authoring is perceived as a significant conflict of interest and is damaging confidence in the sector. *We will in the context of a wider review of the roles of examiners set out what role examiners should have in writing textbooks whilst they are employed as examiners (we will publish our final conclusions by April 2013).*
8. Finally, we found some evidence of marketing practices by publishers for some endorsed textbooks that clearly undermine confidence in the exam system. *We will therefore be working with the publishing sector and others to encourage them to develop better controls on how textbooks and other resource materials are marketed (we intend to complete this work by March 2013).*

Introduction

9. As a key part of the work on healthy markets¹ we said we needed to determine the issues and potential problems associated with conflicts of interest in the qualifications sector, particularly relating to study aids such as textbooks and training services. We announced our intention to undertake this work in our exchange of letters with Ministers on healthy markets where we said we would publish an action plan in October 2012. The Education Select Committee announced an inquiry on 12th September 2011 into the administration of examinations for 15-19 year olds in England. Its report was published on 3 July 2012. We have taken into account evidence presented to that inquiry on the role of examiners in training and textbooks and the links between exam boards and publishers in developing our Action Plan. We have now completed the research and evidence-gathering phase of this work.
10. The current arrangements for provision of textbooks and other learning resources, including the links between exam boards and publishers, are varied. We can categorise support material and services that support the teaching and assessment of qualifications in several ways:

By type of resource:

- teacher support materials
- textbooks – printed and online
- revision and study guides – printed and online
- training resources, teacher guides and lesson plans – primarily for teachers.

By type of producer:

- published by the exam board
- publishers that are part of the same organisation as the exam board
- publishers that have exclusive contracts to work with exam boards

¹ Letter to DfE and BIS regarding Healthy Markets and Letter from DfE and BIS Regarding Healthy Markets, 28th November 2011.

- publishers that have particular resources ‘endorsed’ by an exam board
- publishers with no links to exam boards

Endorsement:

- materials are endorsed by exam boards
 - materials carry no endorsement by exam boards
11. The potential conflicts of interest including any risks to our objectives will, in part, depend on the precise nature of the arrangements for specific exam boards. Our action plan reflects this and identifies areas where action may be required on an industry-wide basis. The specific current arrangements for the provision of text books and other resources for the exam boards offering GCSEs and A levels are set out in Appendix A.
12. This report:
- explains the research approach we adopted;
 - summarises the concerns and risks presented to Ofqual’s objectives by the current arrangements;
 - sets out our key findings;
 - sets out the principles that have guided the development of our action plan;
 - sets out the action plan and associated timelines;
 - summarises the evidence supporting our action plan.

Approach

13. The research has included:
- a) A public call for evidence (completed April 2012);
 - b) A survey and case studies of schools carried out by Host Researchers to gather evidence on schools' purchasing behaviours in relation to qualifications, learning resources and training events and views on the quality of textbook provision (completed August 2012);
 - c) An analysis of published responses to the Select Committee Inquiry (Select Committee report published in June 2012);
 - d) An analysis of previous written reports and publicly expressed concerns about the current market arrangements for publication of textbooks and other learning resources;
 - e) A review of a sample² of written textbooks undertaken by Taylor Minnis consultants as exploratory work to see if textbooks are a factor in the predictability of assessment (completed July 2012).
14. A summary of the evidence base³ is published separately to this report. We have also published a summary of the School Survey⁴ undertaken by Host Researchers on purchasing behaviours and the Executive Summary of the Taylor Minnis findings⁵ based on exploratory work on the predictability of assessments. All of this evidence has been systematically coded to inform the development of our Action Plan. This has allowed us to identify key areas of

² The sample included AQA GCSE Mathematics (modular); Edexcel GCSE Mathematics B (modular); AQA GCSE Science A Biology content (modular); OCR GCSE Science A Biology content – 21st Century Science suite; OCR AS/A Level English Literature; Edexcel AS/A Level GCSE English Literature.

³ www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2012-11-07-textbooks-risks-and-opportunities-summary-of-evidence.pdf

⁴ www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2012-11-07-textbooks-study-aids-and-support-services-research-summary.pdf

⁵ www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2012-11-07-textbooks-specifications-and-materials-research-standards-impact.pdf

additional evidence that may be needed as we take this work forward. These evidence gaps are set out in Appendix B.

Concerns about the current arrangements

15. For a number of years there has been general disquiet among stakeholders about the arrangements for the textbook provision. There is a concern that the current involvement of exam boards in the textbook market is impacting negatively on the quality of published teaching material, confidence in the exam system and ultimately on qualification standards.
16. The DfE's response to the Select Committee earlier this year summarises its concerns as:
 - a) examiner authorship and whether there is evidence of textbooks giving inappropriate indications of exam content;
 - b) the impact on competition in the publishing market (exclusive endorsements and the close alignment of exams and publishing at Pearson);
 - c) the branding and marketing of endorsed textbooks;
 - d) the variable quality of endorsed textbooks;
 - e) the potential narrowing of focus on teaching and learning (and whether material is more geared to assisting in examination preparation than it is to supporting engaged and effective learning).
17. In addition, specific questions have been raised about:
 - a) whether textbooks and study aids could be impacting on standards of candidate performance by encouraging more narrowly defined and/or more predictable assessments than is acceptable.
 - b) whether the textbooks produced and/or endorsed by exam boards are considered to be the only material candidates need to consider in preparing for exams ('the official text'), leading to an undesirable narrowing of learning.
 - c) whether the current arrangements are stopping innovation and good quality alternative products coming to the market, restricting access by students to the most appropriate resources;

Risks arising from current arrangements

18. Building on these concerns, the research was designed to provide evidence on the following risks:
 - To standards – through textbooks compromising the confidentiality, integrity or predictability of the assessment process
 - To a healthy qualifications market – through, for example, unfair approaches adopted by exam boards in bundling and marketing resource packages alongside qualifications.
 - To the style of learning – through the overall quality of learning resources and whether material is more geared to assisting in examination preparation than it is to supporting engaged and effective learning.
19. Collaboration with publishers' partners and the endorsement of other publisher materials would fall under the definition of a connected activity under section 149 of the ASCL Act. This allows us to review these activities.
20. Our recognition conditions place the responsibility on awarding organisations to manage any risks arising from conflicts of interest, allowing Ofqual to take action relating to specific concerns. In relation to textbooks conflicts of interest may arise from:
 - individuals with access to privileged information, such as chief examiners also writing textbooks;
 - awarding organisations operating in joint ownership as publishers;
 - awarding organisations operating exclusive arrangements with publishers;
 - awarding organisations' processes and procedures for endorsing resources from publishers.

Key Findings

Purchasing behaviours

21. Heads of department in schools tend to make decisions on which awarding organisation's specification to use. Teachers tell us that they choose specifications according to awarding organisations demonstrating a good understanding of the specification and assessment and also familiarity with the awarding organisation.
22. Just over half of the schools surveyed saw support material as a significant factor in choosing an awarding organisation and, significantly, 65 per cent use materials endorsed or provided by their awarding organisation. The close coverage and relationship to the specification is the most significant reason for this. Only 3 per cent of teachers said they did not use textbooks. In addition, there is evidence that teachers in a high-stakes exam culture will switch between specifications if their students' achievement rates are falling.
23. According to the Publishers Association the average secondary school spent around £26K⁶ on textbooks in 2010-2011. Printed textbooks published or endorsed by exam boards as relevant for a particular specification are popular with teachers, although they are not the only resource used in schools. However, alternative textbooks are more likely to be single purchase items where teachers copy examples for particular lessons supplementing the main textbook purchased. The evidence gathered suggests that in recent years there has been a significant increase in volume and variety of online and digital educational content and support materials some of which are provided free by exam boards. In the school survey, textbooks were ranked 2nd in levels of importance by teachers, behind past papers, but ahead of their own developed resources and online materials.
24. Experienced teachers say they do not feel pressurised to buy endorsed books and that teachers supplement books with other resources. So while a particular textbook might focus on exam preparation this is only part of the package. There is also good evidence to suggest that as experience grows, teachers'

⁶ House of Commons Education Committee, (2012) *"The administration of examinations for 15–19 year olds in England"* First Report of Session 2012–13 Volume II : Oral and written evidence

reliance on a single textbook, or a set of structured materials, declines leading to a far wider set of textbooks and materials in use. Of the respondents to the HOST survey, 85 per cent had been teaching for 10 years or more and over 65 per cent for more than 15 years. One of benefits of highly structured support materials linked to the specification may be the value this provides for less-experienced teachers.

25. Other evidence suggests that school budgets, changes in teaching practices, the nature of high-stakes testing and awarding organisations' approaches to bundling⁷ all create pressures on teachers to buy awarding organisation-produced or endorsed resources. We found that one of the key uses of textbooks or study aids is to support work undertaken at home, and endorsed materials are currently used to support this. This can avoid the need for parents to purchase some prohibitively expensive revision guides for home use.

The predictability of assessments

26. There will be an acceptable degree of predictability in all exams or assessments to ensure that students know what will be expected of them. Preparing students for a test or exam should not, in itself, be a problem if the exam is developing the skills and knowledge required and standards are maintained.
27. The evidence suggests that a combination of factors can contribute to an unacceptable degree of predictability of assessment and that can create a perception that standards are being compromised. Factors include:
 - a) the examination cycle, in which topics are covered over a period of time. Working from past papers this cycle might be predictable.
 - b) the use of questions, contexts and case studies in examination papers which are very similar to those in textbooks.
 - c) The style and construction of questions in the exam being replicated in the textbooks so students become familiar with these.
 - d) worked examples in textbooks illustrating how particular styles of questions should be answered to gain maximum marks.
 - e) The role of examiners in authoring textbooks, providing seminars and other general training, and as teachers.

⁷ This is a where qualifications and other products and services relevant to the delivery of the qualification are offered as a package.

28. Taylor Minnis' exploratory work highlights that some features of textbooks may contribute to, or reinforce, the predictability of assessments and suggests there is variation in these features between exam boards and potential inequality of access to different types of support materials. Examples of factors that may contribute to predictability include the use of a defined 'house style' when used consistently across support materials and exam questions and the use of specimen questions in support materials.
29. Differences in these features across support materials has not previously been flagged as a significant factor affecting grade distributions in other scrutiny and monitoring exercises and it is a complex issue requiring careful investigation to ascertain if comparative standards are impacted. This needs to include an understanding of the wider context in which support materials are used in schools and colleges to determine their impact. This was not part of the Taylor Minnis methodology.
30. There are only what appear to be isolated occasions of support materials containing example questions that reappeared in almost the same form in actual exam papers and/or used similar contexts. Where these breach the integrity of the exam then this is clearly unacceptable.

Endorsement arrangements

31. We found mixed evidence on whether there has been a decline in quality through awarding organisation textbooks.
32. The research highlighted a lack of understanding of what a 'good' textbook looks like, which might include criteria around the balance between exam preparation and content, as well as clearly signposted wider reading options.
33. The awarding organisations have a sophisticated view on the demand for textbooks, recognising a key driver that materials cover the relevant content. Awarding organisations' endorsement processes are important in providing confidence to schools on this and are designed to deliver resources that are a very close match to the content of specifications. Endorsed textbooks remain popular and are a significant influence in the classroom.
34. A wide range of stakeholders expressed concerns about endorsement by awarding organisations of textbooks for particular specifications. Concerns are wide-ranging: impact on competition in the publishing market; choice in resources in schools; and quality of textbooks, in particular that they focus excessively on exam preparation and contain errors.
35. These concerns are not always shared by teachers who emphasise they use a wide range of resources to supplement the textbook. These resources are

written by those with a close understanding of the ability levels of target students and exam demands. Teachers are more likely to express the benefits of competition, including increased choice and lower prices.

36. Textbooks are developed to support particular demands in the curriculum and assessment and it is crucial that assessment rewards the demonstration of the right skills by the student. Regulatory changes limited to the nature of textbooks could not address any narrowing of learning or teaching that is inherent in the testing and assessment regime itself. This issue whilst important was outside of the scope of this research.
37. Specifically, however, we found that the use of highly structured materials to support the testing regime is prevalent for most GCSE subjects. The standout concern is that the link to particular specifications is resulting in textbooks that best reflect the test and at the expense of potentially broader subject content. There is strong evidence to support the view that textbooks and support materials have become increasingly tied to the specification and, more significantly, assessment (exam preparation).
38. Exceptions appear to be art and design or English literature where textbooks play a less prominent role. Particular concerns have been raised about the development of skills in Science and Mathematics and how textbooks for these subjects may contribute to this. We found the rather structured and test-focused approach of textbooks in GCSE is steadily being adopted for A levels and there is a concern that these materials are not sufficiently focused on developing independent thought and the breadth required in higher education.
39. Balanced against this there is a strong defence of the principle of alignment of textbooks to exams on the basis of curriculum coherence and its role in high-performing countries. In addition, it is probable that the awarding organisation link with publishers has made access to the support materials, including for examination preparation, more widely available and affordable to most schools or parents. The use of awarding organisation-endorsed textbooks for home study could also be seen as reducing the advantage provided by differential quality in teaching or resources in schools.
40. The Select Committee is quite sceptical about current processes and has suggested endorsement might be approached differently to strengthen curriculum coherence. Some stakeholders believe that awarding organisations should not be allowed to endorse or produce textbooks. Teachers, parents and pupils have expectations about the assurance that endorsement provides but it is not clear whether this is consistent with current endorsement approaches.

41. Overall, the evidence collected suggests there are pros and cons with current endorsement processes. The relationship between curriculum and resources has changed over time in a climate of increasing use of exam results for accountability, resulting in a very formulaic approach to textbook development supported by current endorsement processes and market pressures.

The role of chief examiners writing textbooks

42. The predominant pattern in recent years has been for exam board-endorsed textbooks to be written by senior examiners. The exam boards have put contractual arrangements in place so that examiners cannot disclose their links to exam boards when authoring books. However, in a number of our recent complaints about textbooks and from reviewing more informal evidence such as blogs and student sites the link between these roles is clearly known and is perceived to be a major conflict of interest.
43. Examples of breaches in confidentiality are very rare. There are moves to tighten contract by awarding organisations and there are recognition conditions covering conflicts of interest that the exam boards must comply with. However, the perceived conflict of interest is damaging confidence in the sector.

The integration of publishing and assessment

44. In our call for evidence, specific concerns were raised about the apparent close alignment between Pearson's publishing and awarding activities. Pearson's awarding operation and educational publishing function sit within the same governance structure. Concerns have been raised about the alignment of Edexcel specifications and Edexcel-branded resources, and in particular about:
- marketing and branding approaches that create the perception that Edexcel-branded resources are the official necessary text, which limits resources available to students
 - a common house style used in assessments and textbooks, as a factor that may impact on the predictability of assessments
 - a lack of even-handedness of treatment of Edexcel branded and the endorsed resources from other publishers on the Edexcel website, through promotion in specifications and at marketing events
 - the speed to market of Edexcel-branded resources (the in-house publisher being given earlier access to new specifications than external publishers)

- the effectiveness of the business separation measures between awarding organisation and publishing activities, in particular, regarding joint sales and marketing functions.
45. Some of these may be historical issues. Pearson has already announced plans to strengthen their management of any conflicts of interest between its awarding and publishing arms. However, we think these warrant further investigation by us.

Marketing Practices

46. We have found evidence of marketing practices used by publishers to market some endorsed textbooks that clearly undermine confidence in the exam system. Examples include: "...proven to help improve grades..."; "... seen a big 18 per cent increase in C+" (comments from a teacher); "... the only book you'll need."
47. The Select Committee has expressed serious misgivings about the language used to market some endorsed textbooks and has urged exam boards and publishers to move away from marketing textbooks in this way.
48. Current textbook marketing methods and publishers' claims are impacting reducing confidence in the system.

Next steps

Principles in developing our Action Plan

49. Our next steps are underpinned by the following principles:
- The arrangements for provision of learning resources should not contribute to the over-predictability of an assessment or undermine the standard of an assessment.
 - Our approach to regulation, including on connected activities, should support curriculum coherence, recognising the importance of supporting high-quality teaching.
 - We have a legitimate regulatory interest where a connected activity is impacting on trust/public confidence in the qualifications system.

- Arrangements for provision of learning resources should contain adequate controls around examiners to ensure the integrity of assessment and confidence in the qualifications system.
 - We have assurance that awarding organisations are properly managing any conflicts of interest that arise from the current arrangements for the provision of learning resources, which vary across the awarding organisations.
 - Any changes in the arrangements for the provision of learning resources should be introduced in a way to manage unintended consequences.
50. The Action Plan comprises projects that are aligned with the principles set out above. We provide an indicative timeline for each project which recognises that any changes to our regulations should align as far as possible with the A level and GCSE reform programmes (although timelines here are acknowledged not to be fixed). The timelines recognise the need to allow time to manage any impact on awarding organisations and adjacent industries such as publishing.

Action plan projects

- *Predictability of Assessments* – we will continue to examine the features of textbooks and other resources that may contribute to the level of predictability of an assessment as part of an overall programme of work on predictability. This programme of work is aimed at developing principles for the degree of predictability of assessment that is necessary to secure standards.
 - Develop and pilot methodology (December 2012)
 - Implement methodology (early 2103)
 - Report findings (June 2013)
- *Awarding organisation endorsement processes* – we will undertake further work to review awarding organisations' endorsement processes to see if these can be adapted to improve the quality of learning resources available to teachers. This will include consideration of alternative approaches to endorsement of resources by awarding organisations as well as any specific issues that have been identified for particular subjects, such as Maths.
 - Review in detail current endorsement criteria and awarding organisation processes (December 2012)

- Engage with awarding organisations and publishers (complete April 2013)
- Publish conclusions (August 2013)
- Provide new resources against any revised criteria/new approach (from September 2013)
- *The role of chief examiners writing textbooks* – we will, in the context of a wider review of the roles of examiners, set out what role examiners should have in writing textbooks whilst they are employed as examiners.
 - Consolidate and review existing evidence and engage with awarding organisations (January 2013)
 - Publish conclusions (April 2013)
 - Implement proposals and manage transition risks (new arrangements fully in place September 2014)
- *The integration of publishing and assessment* – we will undertake an investigation of the firewalls at Pearson between publishing and assessment.
 - Agree scope of review (November 2012)
 - Complete review (January 2013)
 - Publish findings (February 2013)
- *Marketing practices* – we will work with the publishing sector to encourage them to develop tighter controls on how textbooks and other resource materials are marketed, including any links that are made to authors in their chief examiner role.
 - Start dialogue and engage with publishing sector/Chartered Institute of Marketing (November 2012)
 - Introduce Code of Practice (March 2013)

Appendix A

Current arrangements for provision of textbooks and other learning resources

Edexcel

Edexcel, an awarding organisation, is part of Pearson, which is the largest provider of teaching resources in the UK

Pearson develops resources that support Edexcel qualifications, which are then endorsed by a team separated by a firewall from Pearson's publishing staff. Edexcel textbooks are published by Heinemann and Longman. Other publishing brands owned by Pearson include:

- BBC Active (joint venture between Pearson and BBC Worldwide)
- Rigby
- Ginn
- Payne Gallway
- Causeway Press.

Edexcel endorses other publishers that produce resources in support of their qualifications. Excluding Pearson products there are more than 400 endorsed resources for Edexcel qualifications on the market. Over the last five years, Edexcel has endorsed more than ten different publishers. Pearson also produces resources to support qualifications from other awarding organisations and, where possible, seeks endorsement for these.

AQA

AQA does not develop or publish textbooks for students and no longer exclusively endorses textbooks. It previously had an exclusive relationship with the publisher Nelson Thornes to provide resources for GCSEs, A levels and Functional Skills. Since summer 2011, its approach is to endorse textbooks from a range of publishers on a cost-only basis.

OCR

OCR provides resource materials and services in the following ways:

- OCR-produced teacher and student support materials
- Textbooks and support materials produced in partnership with publishers
- Endorsed textbooks and support materials.

OCR works in collaboration with three publisher partners:

- Hodder Education – Maths (GCSE, Functional Skills and Entry Level), ICT and Computing, Business, Leisure and Recreation, Arts, Media, Life and Work, Health, Public Services and Care, OCR Nationals, Diplomas, Skills and Employment
- Heinemann – History, Social Sciences, Sciences (A level)
- Oxford University Press– English, Maths (GCSE, Functional Skills and Entry Level), Modern Foreign Languages, Classics.

The publisher partnerships are not exclusive and OCR endorses other publisher materials.

CCEA

CCEA's qualification specifications include a section on resources which it says is an indication of books and other resources which teachers and students may find useful in teaching and studying a course based on this specification. The text in the specification on resources also says that and that it is not intended to be a list of prescribed texts, nor is it intended to be an exhaustive list of all available resources. Textbooks published for CCEA specifications are by a range of publishers including:

- Cambridge University Press
- Collins
- Hodder Murray
- Letts
- Longman
- Murray
- Nelson Thornes

- Oxford University Press

WJEC

WJEC provides a catalogue of educational resources that are produced and retailed by WJEC in support of its specifications. These are produced by a range of publishers.

Appendix B

Additional evidence

We have identified the following as areas of additional evidence that may be necessary as part of implementing the action plan.

Ofsted

In two subject reports on Maths and History, Ofsted made reference to the issue of awarding organisation-endorsed textbooks. These reports raise concerns about the impact on these textbooks on the quality of teaching and learning. Further evidence-gathering, linked through Ofsted and exploring subject differences and across levels, is relevant to the review of endorsement processes and the proposed work on predictability.

Ofqual's scrutiny exercises

A potential source of evidence is to explore further whether the support materials of the awarding organisations are impacting differently on the predictability of assessment. This could be gathered as part of our scrutiny and monitoring of standards programme. Consideration of this will form part of the proposed work on predictability.

Minority subjects

There is a marked difference in the volume and availability of support materials for minority subjects and modules with high-volume subjects. We need to gather further evidence in order to review endorsement processes, including how any changes might impact on minimum packages of resources.

New teachers

Of the respondents to the HOST survey, 85 per cent had been teaching for 10 years or more and over 65 per cent for more than 15 years. A possible benefit of highly structured support materials linked to the specification is the value this might provide less-experienced teachers. Any changes to the system for textbooks may impact more heavily on less-experienced staff and therefore some work to explore this aspect will inform our work on the review of endorsement processes.

What constitutes high-quality textbooks?

While there is significant comment on the potential narrowing of focus in awarding organisation materials there is very little that defines what good or best practice might look like. In order to help the review of endorsement processes and the predictability work, further evidence needs to be gathered to inform a view on what 'good' textbooks look like.

Online resources

There is limited evidence currently available about the impact of online materials. A better understanding of the role and availability of online resources will be needed to inform the work outlined in our Action Plan.

Students and parents

The perceptions of these stakeholders is lacking in the evidence gathered. Students might be best placed to provide a view on what they actually use or on the quality of what is provided. They will also have much higher awareness of social media and online materials linked to their studies. Significant changes in support materials will impact on students, and their views will be important to inform the work outlined in the Action Plan.

We wish to make our publications widely accessible. Please contact us if you have any specific accessibility requirements.

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