

# Five year review of standards

A level French

# Introduction

Every summer, the publication of GCSE and A level examination results prompts public interest in the standards of those examinations.

In 1996, Lord Dearing in his *Review of Qualifications for 16–19 Year Olds* made several recommendations to ensure that ‘there is a basis and accepted procedure ... for monitoring and safeguarding standards over time’. In the same year, SCAA (one of QCA’s predecessors) and the Office for Standards in Education jointly investigated standards in English, mathematics and science (chemistry) in 16+ and 18+ public examinations over time.<sup>1</sup>

The outcomes of this work were published in *Standards in Public Examinations 1975 to 1995*. One of the recommendations was that there should be:

‘... a rolling programme of reviews on a five-year cycle to ensure examination demands and grade standards are being maintained in all major subjects. Physics, history, French and German should be included in the programme at an early stage.’

The five-yearly review of standards programme is a response to these recommendations. It is run by QCA in collaboration with the regulatory authorities for Wales and Northern Ireland, ACCAC and CCEA, and is designed to investigate the standards in A level and GCSE examinations. It aims to find out if:

the demand of syllabuses and their assessment instruments has changed over the last 20 years (examination demand);

the level of performance required of candidates at grade boundaries has changed over the last 20 years (grade standard).

Organised to run in five-year cycles, the programme was structured to cover every major subject during its first cycle. Each year, up to 100 independent specialists review around 2,000 exam scripts, drawn from all the awarding bodies, together with their associated syllabuses, question papers and mark schemes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 16+ examinations cover GCE O level and Certificate of Secondary Education (up to 1987), and GCSE (from 1988).

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this report, the general term *awarding bodies* is used to cover both the A level examination boards and the GCSE examining groups.

# Methodology

Each study was organised in two stages:

- stage one – investigating changes in examination demand;
- stage two – investigating changes in standards of performance.

Each covered four sample years: the year of the study and its predecessors from five years, 10 years and 20 years earlier.

## **Stage one: examination demand**

### ***Aim***

The aim of this review was to establish whether the demand of syllabuses and their assessment instruments changed over the period of the review.

### ***Evidence base***

The awarding bodies were asked to supply, for each subject, copies of one major syllabus from the most recent year and its predecessors for the other three years in the study. They were also asked to provide the related question papers, mark schemes, examiners' reports, and details of the procedures in operation at the time of each examination.

In general, syllabuses and question papers were available from all awarding bodies for all years in a study. Unfortunately, prior to 1988, few mark schemes and few documented details about awarding procedures had been retained.

### ***The process***

A coordinator and three reviewers – independent experts from a variety of backgrounds – were appointed for each subject. Each coordinator was given a framework and asked to use it to describe the main differences between the syllabuses from the different years. This description was given to the reviewers, who were asked to study the syllabuses, question papers and mark schemes and independently judge whether the differences between years affected the demand of the examination. After the material had been reviewed, the team for each subject area met and discussed any issues. The coordinator then reported on the findings and identified any conclusions.

## **Stage two: standards of performance**

### ***Aim***

The aim of the second stage was to find out if the level of performance required of candidates at grade boundaries has changed over the period of the study. The review focused on the performance of candidates at grades A and E at A level, and grades A, C and, sometimes, F for 16+ examinations.

### ***Evidence base***

The awarding bodies were asked to provide 15 examples of candidates' work at the defined boundaries for each syllabus studied in stage one. They were asked to submit the complete examination work of candidates, including all examination papers, coursework and any oral examinations.

On the whole, the samples provided for the most recent year of each study were complete. However, the coursework was sometimes missing and work from modular syllabuses presented a problem, in that it was seldom possible to provide the entire work of individual candidates. Usually, several modules from one candidate were provided, supplemented by modules from other candidates to produce the appropriate overall result.

Samples of work from earlier years were much less complete. The awarding bodies could rarely provide work from enough candidates or did not have the complete work of candidates – coursework and orals were usually missing and the work consisted of individual components. No work from the earliest year of the reviews was available.

### ***The process***

A team of up to 12 reviewers was recruited for each subject. The reviewers came from a variety of backgrounds, including universities, selective and non-selective schools, maintained and independent schools, and further education institutions (including sixth form colleges). Some of them had backgrounds working for the various awarding bodies.

The coordinator from stage one was used again in this stage and the syllabus reviewers normally participated.

The review took place over two days. Before the meeting, each coordinator produced a general description of the standards expected for the grade boundaries in the study. Where these were available, published grade descriptions normally formed the basis of the performance descriptors. The coordinators were asked to take into account the fact that they would be looking at borderline performance rather than that comfortably in grade which is the intention of grade descriptions. The performance descriptors were discussed and agreed by the team at the start of the meeting.

Reviewers were each given a batch of scripts for a particular year, grade and awarding body. Working independently, they were asked to judge if the scripts matched the agreed grade description. They could categorise the work as:

- above the expected standard;
- slightly above the expected standard;
- at the expected standard;
- slightly below the expected standard;
- below the expected standard.

They were then given another batch of scripts of the same grade, either from another awarding body or of a different year from the same awarding body. They categorised these scripts and compared them with the first batch to identify any significant differences between candidates' performance. A sampling framework ensured adequate coverage of the sample. A copy of part of one framework is provided on page 6.

At the end of the two days, a plenary session was held and the reviewers discussed their findings and any significant issues. As with stage one, the coordinator reported on the findings and conclusions.

### **Limitations of the study**

Comparing examination standards over time is a complex task, heavily dependent on the evidence available and the ability of reviewers to make valid judgements on it. When considering the findings and conclusions, several limitations need to be kept in mind.

### **Changes in syllabus and examination content**

In some subject areas, syllabuses and examination papers changed radically over the period of the review. For example, in assessing modern foreign languages the relative importance of the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening has changed considerably. Fundamental changes make it difficult for reviewers to make valid judgements about relative standards because they are not comparing like with like.

### **Individual opinion**

Each individual places different values on each part of a subject. Agreed definitions of standards and frameworks show reviewers the standards they should work to, but it is difficult for them to avoid applying their own values. This can lead to differences in opinion about the same syllabus or piece of candidate's work.

### **Lack of evidence**

While reviewers had syllabuses and examination papers (although not always mark schemes) for all the years in the study, they did not have all the evidence they needed to analyse standards of performance. The archiving practices of the awarding bodies vary, each keeping different amounts of evidence for any year. This applies particularly to examination scripts. What tended to be available from earlier years is work for separate components of the examination rather than the whole work of candidates. Coursework and any oral examinations were usually missing.

A national archive of essential evidence on examination standards has been established by the regulatory authorities. This should ensure that difficulties in this area are reduced in future studies.

**Table 1: Sampling framework for part of a typical A level study**

**DAY 1**

8:30	BOARD A, GRADE A	BOARD A, GRADE E	BOARD F, GRADE A	BOARD F, GRADE E	BOARD C, GRADE A	BOARD C, GRADE E
10:00	1996 1-7	1996 1-7	1996 1-7	1996 7-1	1996 1-7	1996 15-8
10:10	BOARD A, GRADE A	BOARD A, GRADE E	BOARD F, GRADE E	BOARD F, GRADE A	BOARD C, GRADE A	BOARD C, GRADE E
11:30	1991 1-3	1991 1-3	1996 8-15	1996 7-1	1991 1-7	1991 15-8
11:50	BOARD A, GRADE E	BOARD A, GRADE A	BOARD C, GRADE E	BOARD C, GRADE A	BOARD E, GRADE A	BOARD D, GRADE A
1:05	1996 1-7	1996 15-8	1996 1-7	1996 8-15	1996 1-7	1996 15-8
2:15	BOARD A, GRADE E	BOARD A, GRADE A	BOARD A, GRADE E	BOARD B, GRADE E	BOARD E, GRADE E	BOARD D, GRADE E
3:30	1991 1-3	1991 3-1	1996 15-8	1996 15-8	1996 1-7	1996 15-8
3:30	BOARD B, GRADE A	BOARD D, GRADE E	BOARD B, GRADE A	BOARD D, GRADE E	BOARD D, GRADE A	BOARD E, GRADE A
4:45	1996 1-7	1996 1-7	1996 15-8	1991 4-1	1996 7-1	1996 8-15
5:05	BOARD B, GRADE E	BOARD D, GRADE E	BOARD B, GRADE E	BOARD D, GRADE E	BOARD D, GRADE E	BOARD E, GRADE A
6:20	1996 1-7	1991 1-4	1996 8-15	1986 4-1	1996 8-15	1991 1-3

**DAY 2**

8:30	BOARD C, GRADE E	BOARD E, GRADE E	BOARD E, GRADE A	EDEC , GRADE A 1996	BOARD F, GRADE A	BOARD A, GRADE E
9:45	1996 7-1	1996 15-8	1996 1-7	7-1	1996 8-15	1996 15-8
9:45	BOARD C, GRADE E	BOARD E, GRADE E	BOARD E, GRADE A	BOARD B, GRADE E	BOARD F, GRADE E	BOARD A, GRADE E
11:00	1991 1-7	1991 3-1	1991 3-1	1996 8-15	1996 8-15	1986 7-1
11:20	BOARD C, GRADE A	BOARD E, GRADE A	BOARD E, GRADE E	BOARD E, GRADE A	BOARD C, GRADE A	BOARD A, GRADE A
12:35	1996 7-1	1996 7-1	1996 8-15	1996 8-15	1996 15-8	1996 1-7
1:45	BOARD C, GRADE A	BOARD E, GRADE A	BOARD E, GRADE E	BOARD E, GRADE A	BOARD C, GRADE A	BOARD A, GRADE A
3:00	1991 7-1	1991 1-3	1991 1-3	1991 3-1	1991 15-8	1991 3-1

# A level French: review of standards 1977–97

## Introduction

Changes in A level French between 1977 and 1997 were influenced by changing attitudes both to the nature of foreign language study and the style of foreign language testing. The aim of language study was increasingly seen as the development of communication skills and the concern of an A level course should therefore be to develop all the language skills, speaking and listening as well as reading and writing. Following those developments, language testing assessed the full range of language skills, and based that assessment on authentic materials closely related to issues in contemporary society.

Other factors that have had a significant impact on A level French include:

- the introduction in the 1980s of a prescribed common core;
- the introduction in 1988 of GCSE with a set of defined national criteria.

## Examination demand

### *Materials available*

The reviewers considered a range of syllabuses, question papers and mark schemes from 1977, 1987, 1992 and 1997. Full details of the materials used in the review are given in Annex A.

Almost 26,000 candidates took A level French in 1997. About 80 per cent of these entered for the syllabuses used for that year in this study.

### *Syllabus changes*

All the awarding bodies provided an increasing range of detailed information over the period of the review. The 1977 syllabuses specified little more than the number of examination papers and their duration. By 1997, the practices of the examination and its underlying ethos were made clear. In this developmental process, and despite differences of emphasis and wording, the awarding bodies shared a common philosophy, which derived from the factors outlined above. The introduction of GCSE in 1988 was the major factor in changing the focus of language courses and assessment. Candidates starting A level courses after this date had a different background of preparation from that provided by O level. The script review confirmed this significant change of emphasis in the different profile of candidate performance between 1987 and 1992.

The principal changes were concentrated in three main areas: the content of syllabuses, the weighting of the skills and the approach to constructing mark schemes. In addition, there was an increasing use of the target language in A level

examinations, including in answers to literary questions. In 1997, however, English was still used for answers to literary questions by AQA/N, CCEA and Edexcel.

### ***Syllabus content***

In A level language syllabuses, linguistic content is largely defined by the nature of the texts used for assessment. In 1977, language content was established by the largely literary register of the passages chosen for translation. By 1997, there had been a shift away from that register, with a wider range of contexts presented in the examination. Prescribed topics or areas of experience also provided a framework for the content without being overly precise. The introduction of coursework options further extended the range of subject matter.

A particular aspect of change in content was found in the cultural component of the examination. In 1977, this comprised almost exclusively the study of a small number of literary set texts. Although literary studies remained available as an option in all the later syllabuses, they were no longer the only form of cultural study. Cultural content was extended to all aspects of contemporary society, covering issues such as the family and patterns of daily life, work and leisure, the media, the arts, the environment and the place of France in the international and francophone community.

Texts therefore offered a far greater range of register and subject matter, while authenticity and contemporary relevance became major concerns of paper setters. One result of these changes of approach was that examination papers became more varied in their layout.

The concern for authenticity of texts and the resulting wide range of language led some awarding bodies to allow the use of dictionaries in examinations.

### ***Weighting across the skills***

The range of skills assessed also increased, significantly affecting the balance of assessment over time. Listening was not even tested by all awarding bodies in 1977, but in 1997 it normally carried around 20 per cent of marks. Weighting for the oral also increased to take between 20 and 30 per cent of marks. Skills such as reading comprehension continued to be assessed, but made much less use of translation from French into English, often requiring the candidates instead to read longer passages for both detailed and gist comprehension. The way writing was assessed also changed, with a wider range of examination tasks in 1997 than the prose translation and foreign language essay of 1977 and 1987. Candidates in 1997 were required to write a great deal more than in the past, and to demonstrate a greater range of linguistic skills, including taking mixed-skill tests that integrated listening and reading with writing in French.

The results of these developments were greater parity between the language skills and the fostering of communication. At the same time, there was a significant increase in breadth as, in all skill areas, candidates in 1997 were faced with demands to demonstrate awareness of a wider variety of styles and registers than was previously the case.

### ***Mark schemes***

Over the period under review, there was a major shift in the approach to marking. Candidates began to be rewarded for what they knew, understood and could do rather than being penalised for their errors. Traditional tests such as the prose translation and the foreign language essay were, in effect, marked on the single criterion of written accuracy, and heavy penalties were incurred for inaccurate handling of the structures of the language. In 1997, accuracy still featured in all mark schemes, both for written and oral examinations, but was seen as only one aspect of communication. Such features as fluency, range and variety were also assessed by 1997. The effect was to increase the validity of the assessment by the range of demands made on candidates' skills in several aspects of language production. These changes were supplemented by steadily increasing detail in the mark schemes used by all the awarding bodies, an improvement which would also tend to increase the reliability of the assessment.

### ***Options within syllabuses***

In 1977, options hardly featured in the syllabuses except through question choice. Over the years covered by the review, a variety of options was introduced by all the awarding bodies, particularly in approaches to testing culture and civilisation. In 1987, WJEC was one of the first to introduce options with a choice between literature or an extended language paper. In the 1992 syllabus, AQA/N introduced an option between coursework or a set-texts examination. AQA/A introduced a similar option in 1997. In 1992, the Edexcel syllabus allowed a choice between topic essays in French and a literary paper with answers in English, with coursework added as a third option by 1997. OCR moved from a choice between a literary and a non-literary option in 1987 to a structure of five options in 1992, and in 1997 to a core of three units followed by options, either within oral assessment (examination or continuous assessment) or between written coursework and topic essay in the examination.

There were variations over the years in the number of essays required and the range of texts or topics to be studied. In addition, there were variations in the requirement between the awarding bodies for productive writing in the cultural component, notably in the recommended length for coursework and the number of essays required in the examination. From a universal pattern, in 1977, of four set texts with questions and answers in English, the cultural component has moved through a variety of changes to the present system of literary and non-literary options. In 1997, for example, AQA/A required either two essays to be written in an examination of two and a half hours or four pieces of coursework totalling between 2,000 and 2,600 words; AQA/N required either three essays in three hours or two pieces of coursework totalling 2,000 words; OCR required either one essay of 450-500 words or coursework totalling 1,000-1,200 words. Such figures must be read in the context of the whole syllabus to appreciate the overall balance of requirements, but they do point to significant differences in this component both between and within awarding bodies.

The existence of such variations presented problems in assessing comparability of demand. Even within an awarding body in a given year, reviewers often found it difficult to judge the comparability, for example, of a choice between a summary, a prose and a report; or between a periodically assessed coursework oral and a

terminal oral examination. So overall, it was considered impossible to arrive at confident judgements about differences in demand either across awarding bodies or over the period under review.

## **Summary**

Judgements about French examinations must be made within the context of the fundamental shifts that have taken place over the period of the review in the perception of what language courses are for and what students should be able to do.

Views about assessment have changed, leading to more equal weighting of skills, positive marking and the reduction of subjectivity in examiners' marks. A greater variety of assessment criteria is used and these are more concerned with a range of usable skills than with the requirements of accuracy in formal written tasks.

Examination components have changed, making direct comparisons over time difficult. The current examinations are different but equally demanding. Candidates are expected to cope with a greater range of tasks, to integrate their skills and to have an awareness of the cultural context and contemporary issues.

The similarities between awarding bodies in 1997 were generally more significant than differences of detail, but there were some differences that affected the examination demands, such as the number of words required for essays and coursework, and access to dictionaries.

## **Standards of performance at grade A and grade E**

### ***Materials available***

The script reviewers had a wide range of scripts available from 1997, with a much more limited selection from 1992/3 and 1987/8. Full details are given in Annex A.

The limitations of what was available and what could be included in the review meant that overall judgements of performance were particularly difficult to make. Even for 1997, it was hard to assess the oral component, since neither were tapes available for all the awarding bodies, nor was there sufficient time to give those that were available the kind of attention needed. In any case, there was no evidence of oral performance from earlier years for comparison. The assessment of listening skills also presented problems, both in terms of lack of evidence from previous years and in the lack of opportunity for reviewers to consider the evidence properly.

Consequently, neither component was included in the review. This meant that the review considered only those skills that had comprised virtually the entire assessment in earlier years, but which were given significantly less weight in recent syllabuses. Paradoxically, therefore, the evidence of performance for 1997 was less complete than for earlier years.

In addition, it proved difficult to make comparisons between coursework and a terminal examination. In particular, reviewers experienced some difficulty in evaluating coursework for OCR, and it was felt, at the end of the exercise, that a separate grade description of performance for coursework would have been helpful.

The descriptions of expected performance used in this exercise were developed from published grade descriptions, adjusted to take into account the fact that the work was from borderline candidates.

## **Standards expected at grade A and grade E**

### ***Grade A***

Speaking was not included in the exercise, so expected standards are not provided in this report.

Candidates demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the literature/topics studied. Relevant, detailed knowledge, views, arguments and insights are presented clearly, logically and with some sophistication. Candidates demonstrate independent judgement using appropriate evidence in well-structured, coherent essays. There is some evidence of original thought and the ability to make qualitative judgements.

Candidates show clear understanding of a wide range of complex spoken and written texts in a variety of registers. They have a very good understanding of tense and mood, and a marked awareness of structure, style and register. They understand the detail of a text but show an ability to infer and appreciate. They respond with insight and imagination where required. When translating, they appreciate the register and syntax of the original and show sensitivity in their style of English.

Candidates are able to communicate information, concepts and opinions clearly. Language and expression are generally appropriate to the subject and sufficiently varied and mature to convey effectively their thought and argument. They use a wide and varied range of syntax and lexis, including technical and specialised vocabulary, with a high level of accuracy and fluency, and they manipulate language with ease. They enrich their style with a variety of idiom and, for the most part, do not find the need for stereotypical all-purpose phrases. The level of accuracy will be high and errors that do occur will normally be minor and may arise from candidates' desire to use more enterprising constructions and vocabulary.

### ***Grade E***

Candidates display adequate knowledge of the literature/topics studied, but do not always make that knowledge relevant. Narration rather than analysis tends to characterise their work and essays may lack appropriate structure. References may be vague or at times misplaced.

Candidates respond to straightforward questions competently and recognise points of view and emotions. They may experience difficulties with abstract or complex language. In answers in the target language they may copy parts of the text through lack of comprehension. In answering questions in English, they may attempt to translate. They understand gist and main points, but grasp of detail may be inconsistent and there may be a limited ability to draw inferences and conclusions. When translating, they manage to transmit the basic message, but often fail to appreciate changes of tense. Their English style is frequently clumsy.

Candidates communicate their ideas in a style which is unsophisticated but appropriate to the purpose, for example, giving factual information and narrating events. Within a limited range of expression, spelling and grammar are reasonably accurate, but are inconsistent and marred by a number of basic errors. They have a limited capacity to express and justify points of view. Vocabulary is likely to be restricted and repetitive and there may be excessive use of simple sentences. They use a limited range of tenses, and have a tendency to use stereotypical phrases and anglicisms.

## **Performance at grade A and grade E**

### ***Cultural component***

Over the whole period of the review, candidates at grade A demonstrated independent judgement using appropriate evidence in well-structured, coherent essays. There was evidence of original thought and the ability to make qualitative judgements, although there was occasional over-reliance on prepared material. Such reliance was much greater at grade E, and descriptive narrative predominated over analysis, with essays often lacking an appropriate structure.

The demands of the cultural component were generally considered constant over time, with one main reservation: a distinction in performance was detected according to whether the awarding bodies required answers to literary/topic questions in English or French. There was evidence that candidates writing in English were more easily able to provide arguments, insights and independent judgements. Candidates at grade A had sufficient fluency not to be significantly affected by the use of the target language, but writing in English allowed weaker candidates a greater facility of expression.

The level of knowledge and expression required in the cultural component was comparable for all the awarding bodies except between options and tasks for WJEC. In particular, one option (A6) led to low performance and simplistic narrative.

### ***Reading comprehension***

Candidates at grade A showed a clear understanding of a wide range of complex texts in a variety of registers. They had a very good understanding of tense and mood and a marked awareness of structure and style. They not only understood the detail of the text but also showed an ability to infer and appreciate. Candidates at grade E could respond competently to straightforward questions, but experienced difficulty with more abstract language. It was also the case that candidates sometimes experienced problems, especially at grade E, in understanding what was required of them in target language tasks. Their response was to copy parts of the text verbatim because of their lack of comprehension. Where comprehension was tested in English, candidates at grade E tended to translate without necessarily answering the question.

Where translation was required, it was done competently at grade A, but very poorly at grade E. Where examinations made use of a range of shorter questions, as with OCR, it was not always evident that candidates were given the opportunity to go beyond understanding of detail or were encouraged to infer and appreciate. There

was a tendency in some papers to reward too generously certain more mechanical tasks reflecting limited aspects of performance.

There was nothing to suggest that candidates' performance in reading had changed over the period of the review, although methods of assessing it had.

### ***Writing***

Writing did not always meet the expected standard of accuracy. This was particularly true at grade E, where writing was clearly the weakest skill and work showed many serious errors, especially in scripts from WJEC. There was evidence that standards of performance in writing had declined over the years, with the strongest performance being found in AQA/A candidates in 1988.

Standards of writing in 1997 were broadly comparable across the awarding bodies. Although prose translation is no longer a feature of all examinations, weaker candidates find this test particularly difficult, as shown by the evidence of CCEA scripts.

### ***Listening***

On the basis of the marks alone, the listening components did not effectively discriminate between candidates at grade A and those at grade E. Moreover, there were some very poor performances in listening from candidates who nevertheless gained an A grade on their aggregated marks, which suggested that this element did not correlate very well with the others.

### **Summary**

Conclusions on performance are necessarily very tentative, given the limited evidence available and the greater range of skills being assessed.

However, despite this greater range, standards were judged to be satisfactory and to have been maintained in most of the elements assessed. The one exception was writing, where there was evidence of a decline in performance since 1987–8.

## Annex A: Materials used in the review.

Table A1 shows the materials available for the review of examination demand.

Awarding body	AQA/A	AQA/N	CCEA	EDEXCEL	OCR	WJEC
<b>1997</b>						
Syllabus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Question papers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mark scheme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>1992</b>						
Syllabus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Question papers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mark scheme	✓				✓	✓
<b>1987</b>						
Syllabus	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Question papers	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Mark scheme				✓		
<b>1977</b>						
Syllabus	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Question papers	✓	✓		✓		✓
Mark scheme				✓		

Table A1: materials available for the syllabus review

Table A2 shows the materials available for the script review.

Year	Grade	AQA/A	AQA/N	CCEA	EDEXCEL	OCR	WJEC
<b>1997</b>	Grade A	15	15	14	15	13	15
	Grade E	15	15	14	15	13	15
<b>1992</b>	Grade A		2			20	
	Grade E		3			20	8
<b>1987</b>	Grade A		8				
	Grade E		7				7
<b>1977</b>	Grade A						
	Grade E						

Table A2: Numbers of sets of candidates' work available for the script review

### Notes:

Coursework was not available for AQA/N or JEC, nor for any awarding body in earlier years.

The AQA/A scripts were from 1993 and 1988 rather than 1992 and 1987 respectively.

The OCR scripts from 1992 covered a range of options.

# Key to the awarding bodies

During the period of the reviews, the number of awarding bodies operating fell. There are currently five: AQA, CCEA, Edexcel, OCR and WJEC. However, the three English awarding bodies came together through a number of mergers and a government requirement for unitary awarding bodies which could offer the range of GCSE, A level and GNVQ/VCE qualifications. This means that the qualifications used in the reviews came from a number of earlier examination boards and examining groups.

For the purposes of the reports the following abbreviations will be used:

AQA/A, AQA/N, CCEA, Edexcel, OCR and WJEC.

AQA/A covers AQA legacy A level syllabuses offered by AEB; legacy GCSE syllabuses offered by SEG; and O level syllabuses offered by AEB.

AQA/N covers AQA legacy A level syllabuses offered by NEAB, NEA and JMB; legacy GCSE syllabuses offered by NEAB and NEA; and O level syllabuses offered by JMB.

CCEA covers A level and GCSE syllabuses offered by CCEA, NISEAC and NISEC; and O level syllabuses offered by NISEC and NIGCEEB.

Edexcel covers A level and GCSE syllabuses offered by Edexcel, ULEAC and ULSEB; GCSE syllabuses offered by Edexcel, ULEAC and LEAG; and O level syllabuses offered by ULSEB.

OCR covers A level syllabuses offered by OCEAC, OCSEB, UCLES and UODLE; GCSE syllabuses offered by MEG; and O level syllabuses offered by OCSEB, UCLES and UODLE.

WJEC has retained the same name throughout the period.

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