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Research and analysis

GCSE, AS and A level summer report 2022

Published 15 December 2022

Applies to England

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Introduction

Summer 2022 saw a full exam series for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications delivered for the first time since 2019.

This is a significant achievement for all in the sector, particularly in light of the various changes to exams to recognise the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The summer 2022 exam series marks an important first step towards pre-pandemic assessment arrangements.

The series was possible because of the substantial efforts of everyone involved. This included teachers, exams officers, school and college leaders and support staff and, above all, students themselves who have shown considerable resilience in the face of disruption to their learning. Exam boards also implemented new assessment arrangements on a significant scale, and at pace, with input from Ofqual and the Department for Education (DfE).

Ofqual employs a range of approaches to achieve our goal of regulating on behalf of students of all ages, making sure that GCSEs, AS and A levels are good quality, and ensuring exam boards treat students fairly if problems arise. We determine whether it is best to set rules and provide advice to the exam boards, monitor, or make regulatory interventions depending on the context.

As with any summer exam series, there were some issues to manage. Some of these related to the aspects of qualification delivery which were new this year, such as advance information, where there was greater potential for things to go wrong because of their untested nature and the way in which they differ from normal exams. Others concerned routine aspects of exam delivery.

Overall, there were fewer incidents reported in exam boards' normal delivery processes in summer 2022 than in 2019, although the number of issues is comparable when novel aspects of delivery such as advance information are included.

While there were some issues with the advance information notices, the majority of these were addressed ahead of the exams. There were 4 question paper errors resulting from the advance information this summer, 2 of which had the potential to significantly impact students.

This report includes a summary of those issues. It describes how Ofqual monitored the delivery of the series, the actions Ofqual took and the resulting actions by exam boards. It includes issues identified in the lead up to, during and immediately after students took exams and exam boards issued results for summer 2022.

This report focuses on GCSE, AS and A level qualifications offered in England in summer 2022, and all data concerns exams taken in England only. The report does not cover the November 2022 exam series for GCSE English language and GCSE maths.

Assessment arrangements differed considerably in 2020 and 2021 when summer exams did not take place. Comparative figures in this report are generally therefore from 2019, the last year in which summer exams took place in these qualifications. It should be noted, however, that the package of support provided to students in 2022 meant that the context was different from previous years where assessment was by exam. For this reason, it is not always possible to draw direct comparisons with 2019. Where this is the case, we explain why.

The [unprecedented package of support for students taking exams in 2022](#) created some extra challenges for delivery, over and above the usual production, distribution and processing of exam scripts. These included:

- changes to non-exam assessment in many subjects to take account of the public health restrictions in place at the time students were completing the work
- some choice of content taught in some GCSE subjects
- production of advance information, which exam boards published on 7 February
- delivery of formulae and revised equation sheets for students to use in class and during their exams in GCSE maths, physics and combined science

These adaptations added to the complexity of the summer exam series and increased the risks to the secure and timely delivery of results.

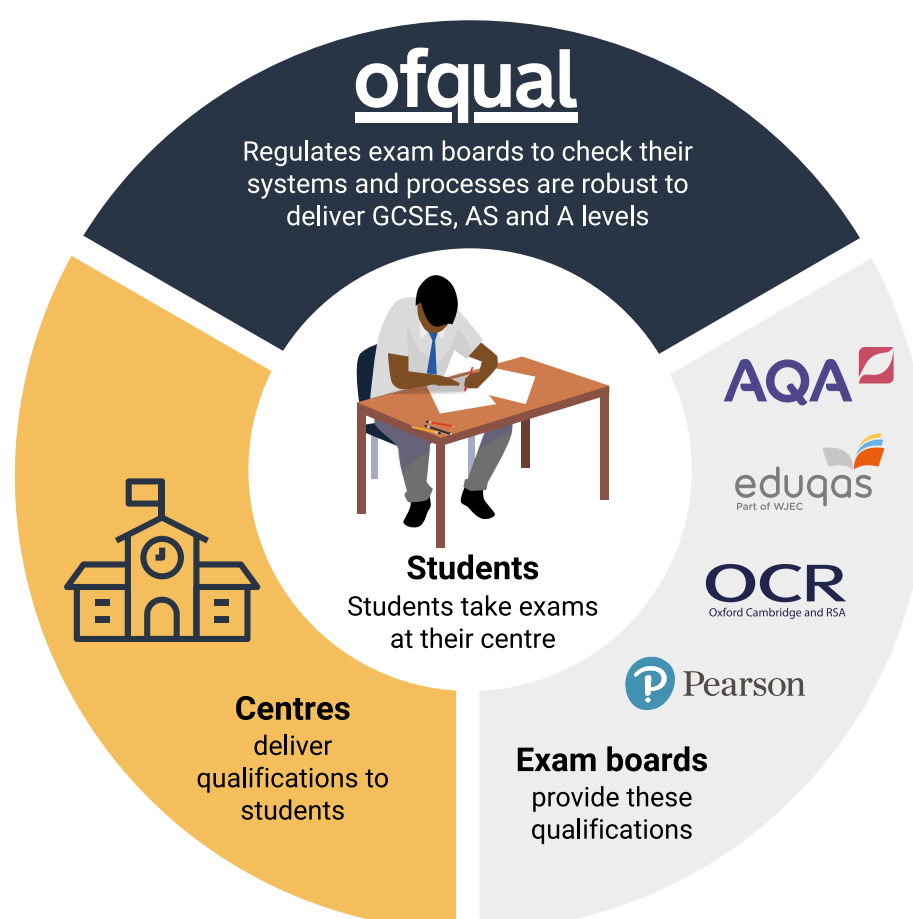
Each exam board is responsible for managing, and reporting to Ofqual, any issues with the delivery of their qualifications. Such issues can occur at any time but they are more likely to occur in the run-up to, and during, the summer exam series. When such issues arise, Ofqual monitors the exam board's actions closely, to make sure they do all they can to minimise the impact on students.

Ofqual's immediate priority during the summer exam series is to make sure students get results that are delivered on time and reflect their performance. But it is also important to make sure exam boards take action to minimise the possibility of an issue recurring. Once results are released, Ofqual follows up each incident with the relevant exam board to make sure they are taking appropriate corrective actions. We also evaluate the cause of each incident, its impact and how effectively it was managed. We decide if any regulatory action is necessary at this point.

Background: the 2022 context

Ofqual regulates the 4 exam boards that award GCSEs, AS and A levels in England. The exam boards – AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC (Eduqas) – provide these qualifications to schools, colleges and other exam centres. These are referred to as 'centres' in this report.

These centres, in turn, enable students to take the qualifications. Ofqual monitors each stage of this process in the interests of students, so that the results they receive are a fair reflection of what they know, understand and can do.



The roles of Ofqual, exam boards and centres in the delivery of GCSEs, AS and A levels

A return to exams in summer 2022 was a big step towards normality. There were some changes made to the summer 2022 assessment arrangements, however, to recognise the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning during the 2-year courses of study students would have followed.

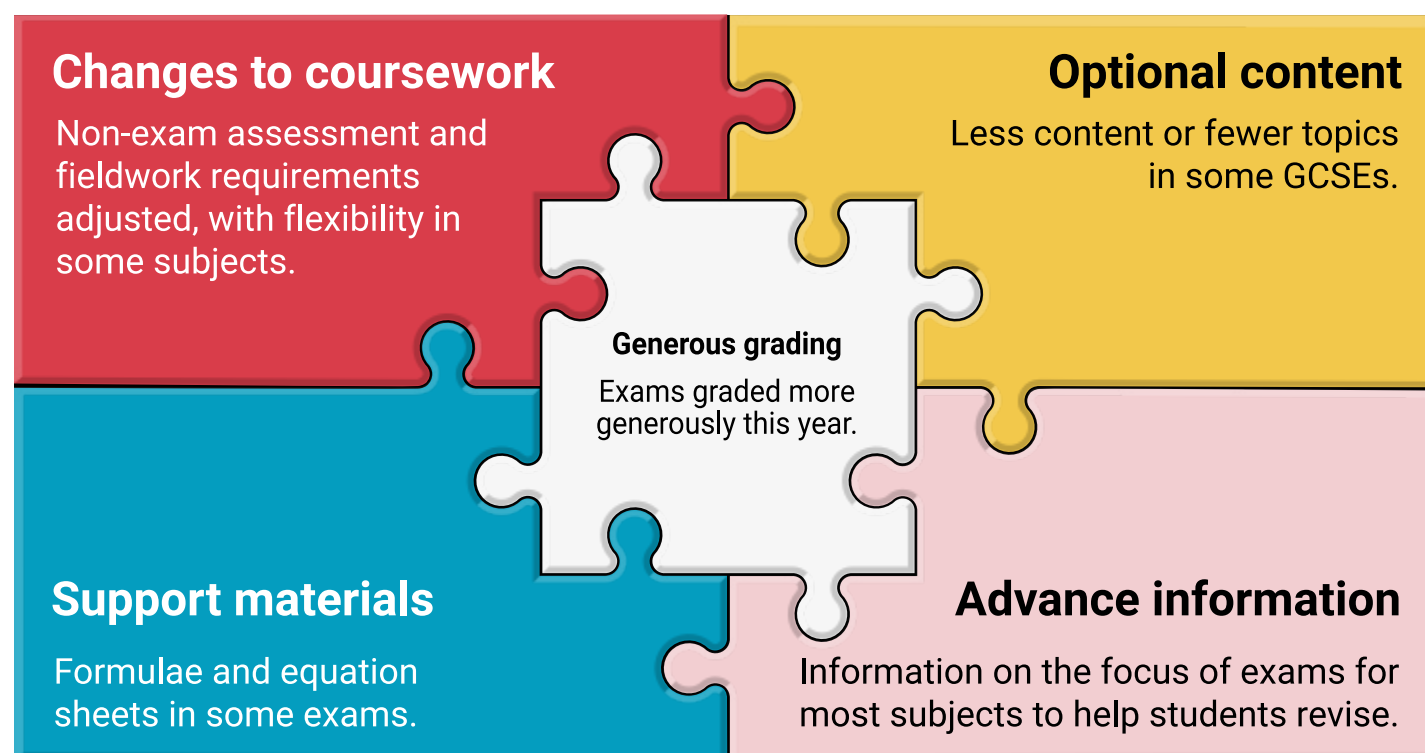
Chief Regulator's listening tour

Ofqual's Chief Regulator, Dr Jo Saxton, visited schools and colleges across the length and breadth of the country, from Blackpool to Plymouth, to hear directly from students, teachers and school leaders.

Dr Saxton spoke to more than 100 senior staff and more than 200 students from more than 60 schools and colleges. These visits allowed the Chief Regulator to hear feedback directly from students and apprentices and sit alongside a range of school and college visits undertaken by other colleagues across the organisation.

Students up and down the country consistently said they wanted to sit exams and assessments. They wanted the chance to show what they know, understand and can do. They were also clear that the support arrangements put in place were helpful. During the visits we were able to address misconceptions and concerns of students, their teachers and sometimes parents and carers directly. Their feedback has helped us understand additional advice students, teachers and leaders would like, and led us to commission materials on how to revise and manage exam preparation, for example.

In September 2021, Ofqual and DfE announced [changes to the 2022 assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels](#), following a joint consultation on proposals, for which there was broad support. These changes were in addition to [changes to non-exam assessment \(NEA\), fieldwork requirements and arrangements for GCSEs in modern foreign languages \(MFL\)](#) announced in June 2021.



Adaptations to GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2022

See Ofqual's postcard on [additional help for students sitting exams in 2022](#) for an accessible version of this image.

Exam boards also made changes to the ways they delivered exams in 2022, working collectively through the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). These included:

- changing the exam timetable to reduce the likelihood of students who were ill or required to self-isolate missing all assessments in a given subject
- changing the minimum threshold required for students absent from exams with good reason to receive a grade
- greater flexibility over invigilator-to-student ratios to address recruitment issues

The summer exam series for GCSE, AS and A levels is a large-scale operation. From first exams in May until results are issued in August is approximately 14 weeks. This year, in that time, 1.2 million students took nearly 1,500 different question papers (and over 4,000 modified papers) and produced approximately 15.7 million individual exam scripts. These were marked by around 69,000 examiners, and in August exam boards issued approximately 6 million grades [\[footnote 1\]](#), broken down as follows:

- 5.2 million GCSE grades
- 61,355 AS grades
- 776,625 A level grades

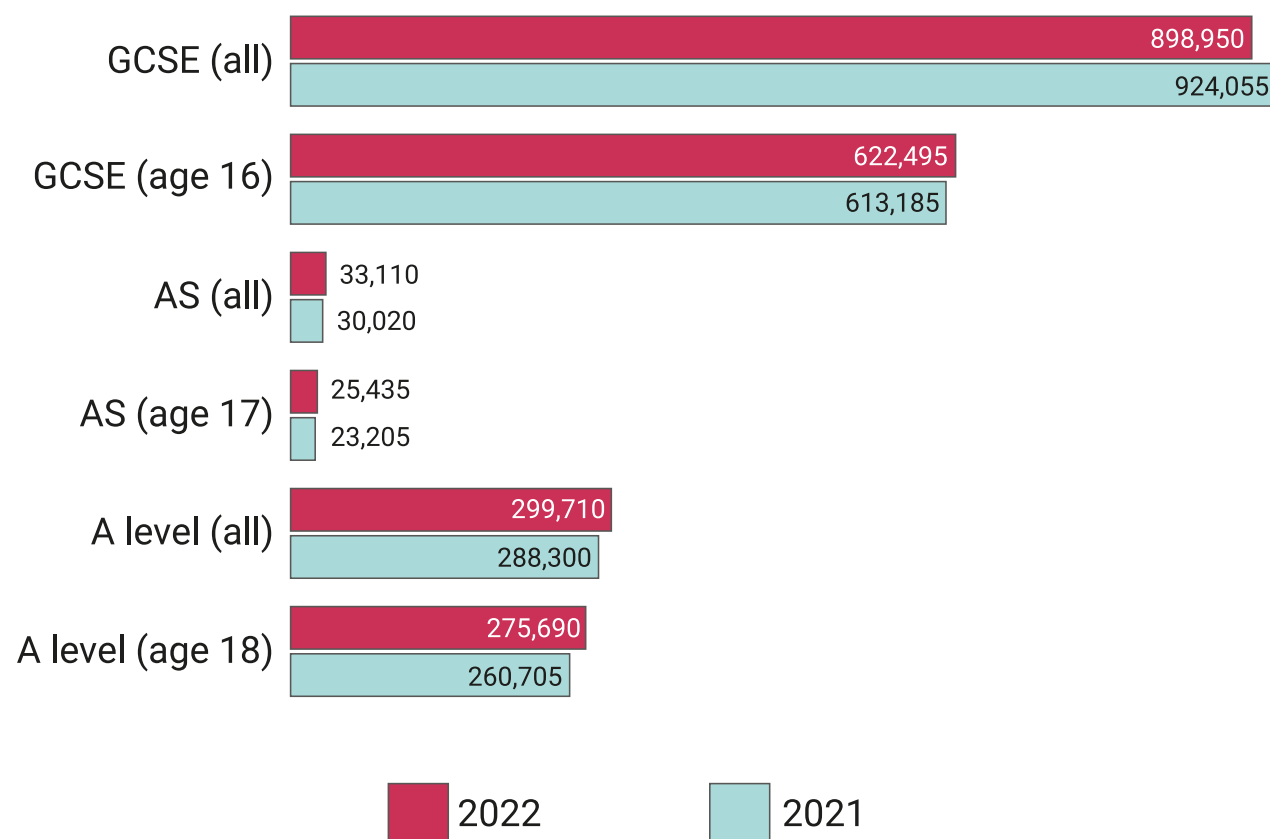


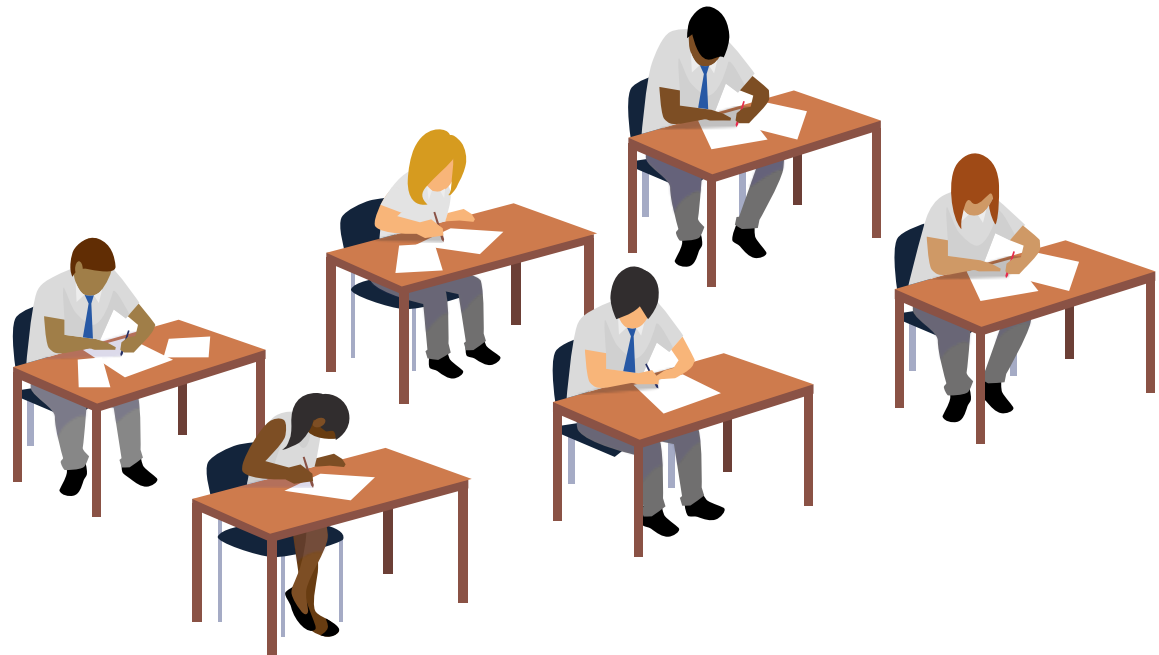
Figure 1: Student numbers by qualification, 2022 compared with 2021

The return to exams for 2022 meant a return to normal for Ofqual too, to some extent. We closely monitored exam boards' preparation for, and delivery of, the summer exam series. Our monitoring priorities were to ensure that:

- standards were set in line with the grading approach for 2022, and aligned between exam boards
- exams (including adaptations) were fit for purpose, with results being issued on time and reflecting the performance of students

It was not, however, a complete return to normality. Ofqual adapted its approach because we knew that a 2-year pause on a large-scale exam series, coupled with adaptations to some qualifications, increased the challenges of delivery.

Our monitoring this year reflected this context.



Incidents

Exam boards must promptly notify Ofqual of any actual or potential incident which could have an impact on standards, public confidence in qualifications, or an exam board’s ability to develop, deliver or award qualifications in a way which complies with our rules. Exam boards must also show how they have mitigated any impact. These are referred to as [Adverse Effects](#) under [Condition B3 of our General Conditions of Recognition](#). Reporting of these incidents is crucial to making sure students are treated fairly across qualifications, and between exam boards and centres.

In this report we include all incidents reported in relation to the delivery of GCSE, AS and A level qualifications for the summer 2022 series in England as of 28 November.

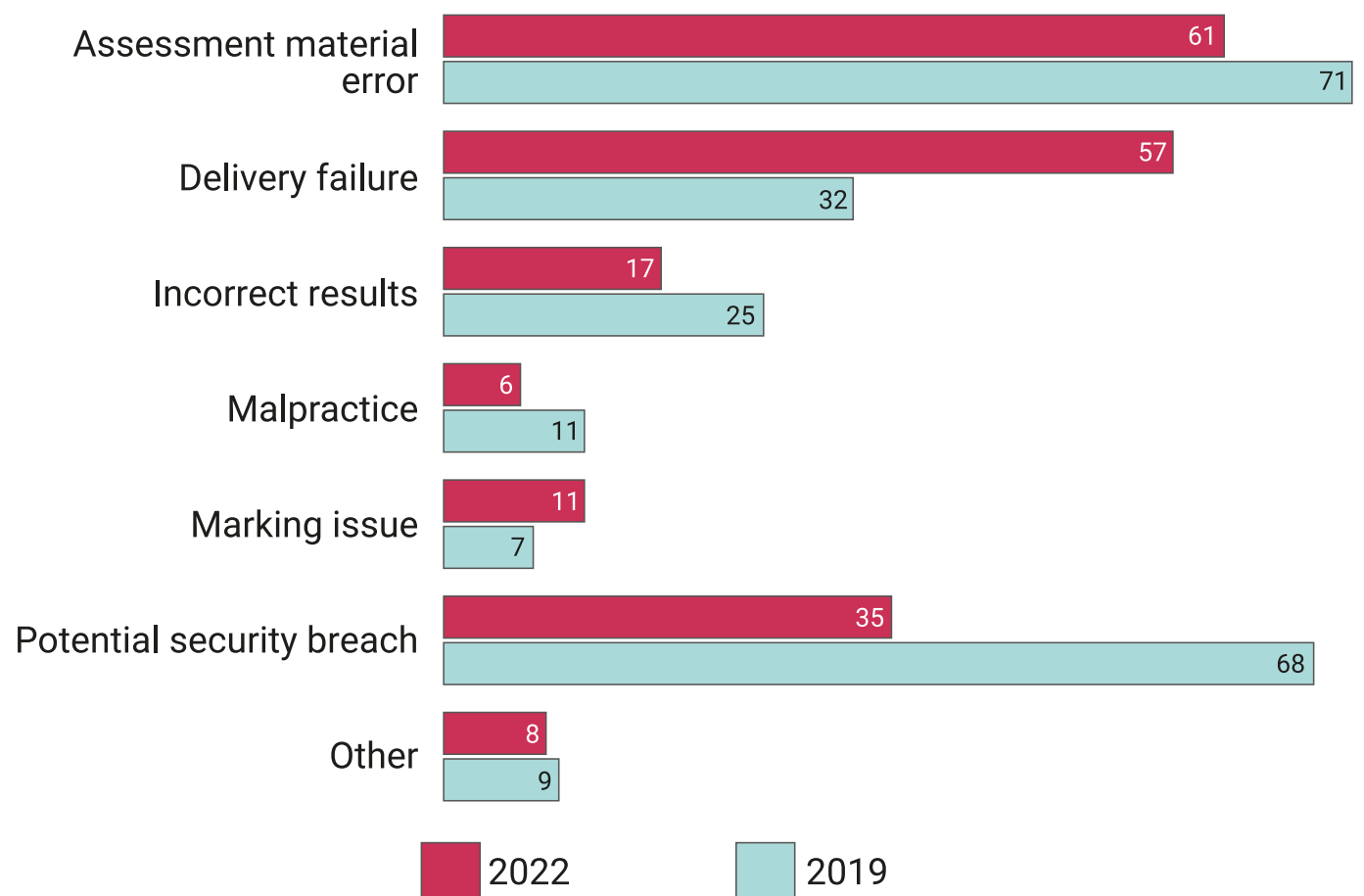


Figure 2: Incidents reports received by exam year

The advance information provided for most GCSE, AS and A level assessments was

a new requirement for summer 2022 exams. It created new opportunities for errors and uncertainty.

There were a small number of issues where the advance information notices were not sufficiently clear, or where the question papers did not reflect the content of the advance information. The issues in question papers were potentially more serious as the way in which advance information was released ahead of the series meant that there was time to address any mistakes in the advance information notices.

In total there were 35 issues with the advance information provided this series. Of these 29 were in relation to the content of the advance information notices rather than the assessment materials themselves and were identified before the exams were taken. Many were relatively minor, but where necessary, exam boards issued revised advance information. There were 4 errors that were not identified until students took the exam. Two of these were more serious, as the advance information indicated aspects of specification content which would not be assessed, but which did appear on the paper. In both cases, exam boards gave all students full marks for those questions.

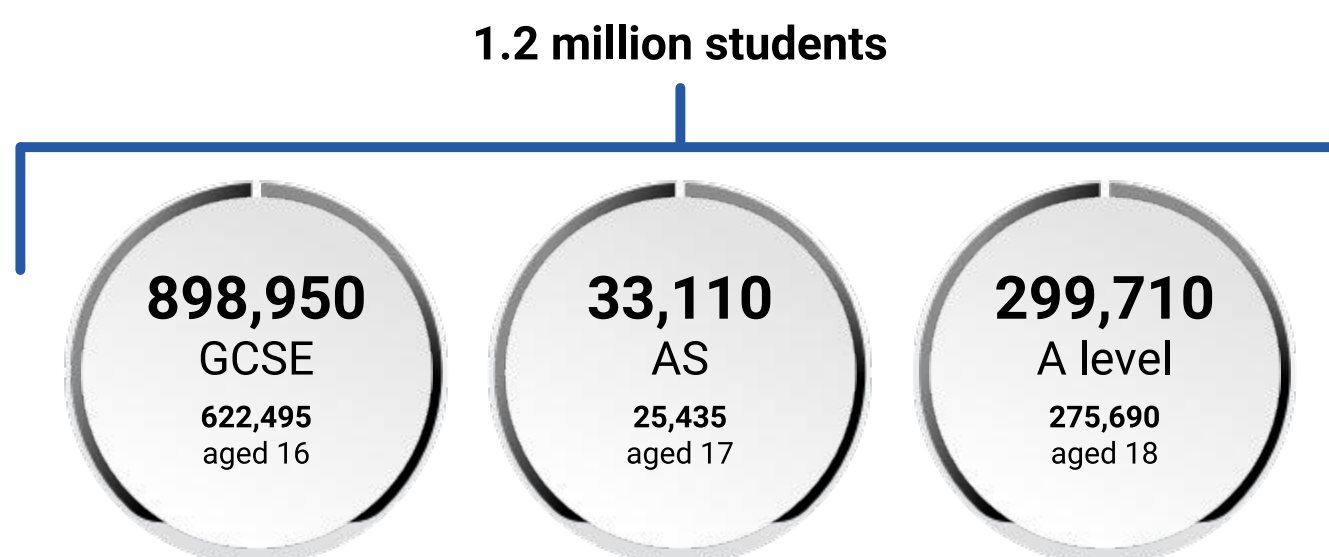
We discuss issues that arose with advance information in more detail later in this report.

Fewer incidents (195) were recorded in exam boards' normal delivery processes in 2022 than in 2019. When issues with advance information are included, the number is similar to 2019 (230 in summer 2022 compared to 223 in summer 2019).

This report is structured to reflect the 6 phases of exams delivery in summer 2022:

1. Planning
2. Implementing advance information
3. Exam delivery
4. Marking
5. Grading
6. Results and post results

Phase 1: Planning



Infographic: The numbers of students entered for GCSEs, AS and A levels for

Planning the adaptations

Ofqual carefully considered the arrangements for each GCSE, AS and A level subject and exam board specification in light of the challenges caused by the pandemic. Ofqual consulted subject experts, held multiple meetings with exam boards and met with teaching and subject associations representing teachers of these qualifications to understand the specific issues and to seek feedback on our proposals for how those might be mitigated.

The government's overall policy intention was that every effort should be made to maintain the standard and rigour of the qualifications so that students taking exams and assessments could progress successfully to the next stage of their education or employment. This included not changing the subject content that forms the basis for these qualifications. In 4 GCSE subjects, however, the government agreed exam boards should provide a degree of optionality, meaning teachers had some choice of topics beyond a common core identified for each exam board specification. Ofqual met with exam boards to agree how this content and topic optionality could be introduced across specifications with different assessment structures.

For subjects with practical work, public health restrictions meant that it was not possible for teachers and students to carry out activities in the usual way. For each subject, Ofqual considered changes that could be made to the qualification and assessment arrangements so that students were not disadvantaged. Overall, these changes gave teachers some flexibility to decide how best to support their students given their facilities and the public health restrictions in place at the time. For most subjects with non-exam assessment, Ofqual made changes to the amount and type of evidence students needed to produce, and how this evidence could be marked and moderated. This meant that marks from non-exam assessment could still contribute to students' grades in the normal way, and that each qualification represented the same balance of knowledge, skills and understanding in 2022 as in other years.

Practical work in GCSE, AS and A level drama and theatre

For GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in drama and theatre, students are usually expected to demonstrate their ability to create and produce aspects of theatre, both individually and as part of a group, in final theatrical performances that are recorded. Public health restrictions limited students' opportunities to take part in performances and for group and collaborative work more generally. Ofqual changed the requirements so that exam boards could allow students to work individually and produce alternative evidence of their theatrical skills. This meant that if students were unable to access equipment or appropriate workspaces in their school or college, exam boards could accept, for example, prototypes or annotated sketches or photographs of set or costume designs, or remotely recorded videos of students acting alone without the need for a fully designed set, lighting or costumes.

Practical work in GCSE, AS and A level design and technology

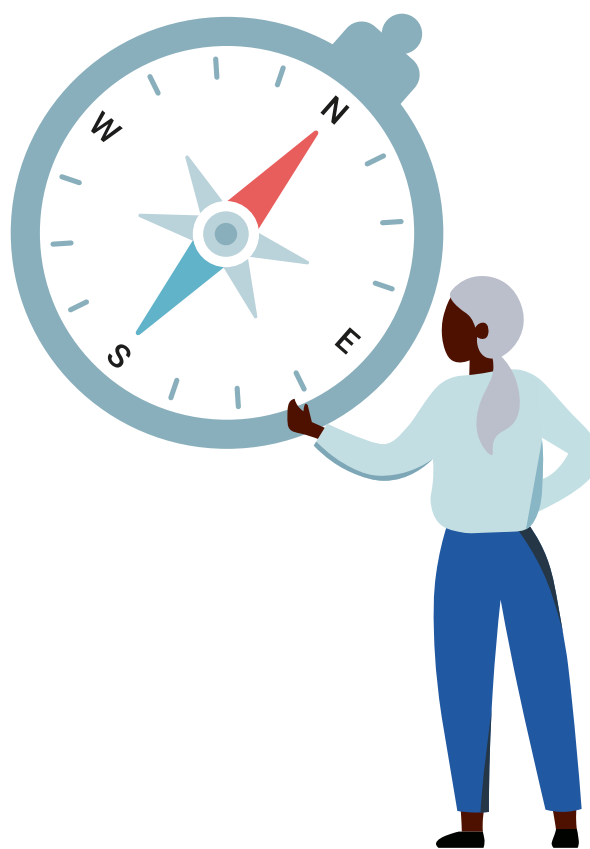
For GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in design and technology, students are usually expected to design and make a prototype, using specialist

techniques, tools and equipment. Public health restrictions limited students' access to equipment and safe working spaces in centres. Ofqual changed the requirements so that exam boards could allow students who were unable to work in the usual way to submit a mock-up or detailed intentions for the prototype, in place of a full prototype, and to allow teachers to demonstrate the use of machinery, tools and processes to support students' understanding and preparation for their written exams.

In a minority of subjects, Ofqual required exam boards to make further modifications to assessments. This applied to specific activities in GCSE food preparation and nutrition, AS and A level music technology and GCSE and AS geography, where it was not possible to establish viable alternative evidence or be certain all students would be able to carry out the practical work. In the circumstances, Ofqual did not wish students to be disadvantaged in their assessments if they had not been able to carry out the usual activities. Centres were encouraged to engage with these activities, if possible, to support students' preparation for their written exams and for progression for further study.

Fieldwork

For GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in geography and geology, and A level environmental science, Ofqual removed the requirement for centres to ensure all students had undertaken fieldwork outside the school or college premises on a mandated number of days or occasions. In GCSE and AS geography, Ofqual also required exam boards to change their exam papers to remove questions that asked students to write about fieldwork they had done themselves. Exam boards were still required to include questions about fieldwork more generally.



AS and A level music technology

In AS and A level music technology, students are usually assessed on their ability to use music technology to capture sound (including from musical

instruments), and to edit and produce recordings. Public health restrictions limited the opportunities for students to record other musicians playing live music, so Ofqual removed the requirement for students to be directly assessed on this specific activity. Instead, Ofqual required the exam boards to provide sample recordings, or to approve sample recordings selected by centres, that would be suitable for students to show their ability to edit and produce audio recordings.

Contingency arrangements for GCSE modern foreign languages

Ofqual published contingency arrangements for GCSEs in modern foreign languages in case public health restrictions meant it was not possible to conduct formal speaking tests. These arrangements set out assessment criteria that could be used by teachers to determine a grade (pass, merit or distinction) for students so that their spoken language performance could be awarded as an endorsement alongside their 9 to 1 grade. The contingency arrangements were not needed, however, and formal speaking tests were able to take place in April and May 2022.

In all these cases, Ofqual consulted publicly on the proposed changes and additionally with exam boards on what those changes would mean for the rules they had to follow. For all affected subjects, Ofqual published updated [GCSE Conditions and Guidance](#) and [AS and A level Conditions and Guidance](#). Ofqual required exam boards to submit details of the changes they were making to their assessment arrangements. Ofqual reviewed the proposed changes to ensure they were fit for purpose, and to understand how the exam boards intended to implement the changes and communicate these to schools and colleges. This included considering how question papers for GCSEs in English literature, history, ancient history and geography would be restructured to reflect the optional content and topics being offered, and the specific evidence that would be accepted for non-exam assessment activities in each exam board's specification.

Throughout the planning phase, the exam boards collaborated through JCQ to provide consistent guidance and support to centres, in line with government policy and our rules.

In addition to changes for individual subjects, the government decided that students could be given advance information about the focus of the content of exams for most subjects (except those with topic optionality) and formulae and revised equation sheets for exams in GCSE maths, physics and combined science.

To put in place such a significant change to the assessment arrangements, Ofqual had to make further changes to its rules. Following consultation, we introduced new rules applicable for summer 2022 only, which required exam boards to provide advance information and to ensure their exams were consistent with that information. Ofqual also worked with exam boards and DfE to develop high-level principles to guide the exam boards in preparing their advance information. These principles related to the integrity of the assessments, fair results, and student progression, and were included in our new rules. These rules also required exam boards to publish formulae and revised equation sheets for GCSE maths, physics and combined science. The rules were included in [updated GCSE Conditions](#) and [updated AS and A level Conditions](#).

Ofqual made sure that exam boards worked together to plan how these novel arrangements for advance information and formulae and revised equation sheets would be delivered, and to ensure there was sufficient capacity and expertise in

place to do so.

Following the published principles, the exam boards agreed a common approach to advance information for each subject. The aim was that, as far as possible, students taking a subject would get a similar level of support, regardless of the exam board they were entering with. Each individual exam board then decided how best to approach advance information for each of their specifications within this common framework.

Unusually, we joined the exam board subject-specific meetings, to make sure that the approaches aligned with the principles set out in our rules. We did this because the adaptations represented such a significant change to the assessment arrangements. In September 2021, exam boards shared with Ofqual their proposed approaches to advance information for each of their specifications. To avoid any breaches of security of the live 2022 papers, these approaches were modelled on past papers or sample assessment materials rather than live question papers.

Ofqual reviewed the proposals and provided feedback which exam boards took into account when drafting their advance information for 2022 exam papers.

Exam board readiness

Ofqual's expectations of exam boards in summer 2022 were in line with those in previous years when exams have taken place. As a consequence, most of the exam boards' processes and procedures used this year were closer to those used pre-pandemic. Ofqual also put in place extra rules to reflect the adaptations to exams and assessments, as described above. These required exam boards to adapt other processes and procedures to deliver the package of support for students.

In December 2021 exam boards published guidance on advance information. JCQ also produced [guidance for students and parents](#). This sat alongside Ofqual's [Student guide to exams and formal assessments in 2021 to 2022](#).

Information and guidance for students

Ofqual provided a range of resources to give information to students and their parents or guardians on the arrangements in place for 2022. Central to this was the publication of the [Student guide to exams and formal assessments](#). Ofqual's Chief Regulator, Dr Saxton, also wrote a [letter to students](#) outlining the arrangements for exams and assessments in 2022.

Ofqual also produced a range of [media resources to support students](#) who were taking formal exams for the first time. Ahead of GCSE, AS and A level results days, Ofqual produced [blog posts so that students knew what to expect](#), and also [worked with UCAS to provide a letter to students receiving results](#) with information about next steps.

Ofqual worked with mental health charities to share information to support students and listened to their feedback about the mental health of students. We also communicated directly with students, for example through the student guide, [Coping with exam pressure - a guide for students](#), and [Ofqual blogs](#).

As part of early joint planning work, Ofqual had identified two areas of increased systemic risk to exam boards' delivery of GCSE, AS and A level results for summer 2022.

The first of these was examiner recruitment and training. With no exams in summer 2020 or 2021, teachers or former teachers (who together make up 99% of examiners) may have been less willing to take on marking in 2022. The absence of exams had also meant there were no opportunities to recruit new examiners to replace those who had left the community. In addition, the deliberate spacing of exams to minimise the possibility of a student missing all exams in a subject reduced the marking time overall, so exam boards needed to recruit and train more examiners. Given that much of the marking takes place in school and college summer holidays, there were also concerns that the lifting of travel restrictions may have meant teachers might not have chosen to take on examining work.

The second, related, area of increased risk was the ability of exam boards to complete marking on time once exams had started. With the changes to the timetable already reducing the marking time in some subjects, it was also possible that advance information and other adaptations would mean students writing more, which would mean their scripts would take longer to mark.

Exam boards also had to manage extra challenges given that this was the first summer exam series in 2 years, including staff turnover since 2019, the need for refresher training and ongoing hybrid working. The pandemic was also expected to have a direct impact on exam boards' capacity in the lead up to and during exams delivery, for example through increased staff illness during critical periods and extra work to support centres through complex, changing circumstances.

As in previous years, monitoring of exam boards' preparations for the summer series started early in 2022. In February, senior Ofqual officials met individually with senior staff from each of the 4 exam boards. The purpose of these meetings was to review each exam board's plans and assess their readiness for the summer 2022 exam series. Each meeting focused on how the exam board would manage its specific risks and, in particular, how they would secure the timely delivery of fair results in light of the 2 areas of increased systemic risk. We sought assurance, for example, that they were on track to recruit, train and supervise sufficient subject specialists to mark exams fairly. In the context of the additional package of support for students, it was also important for us to be confident that each exam board would be able to manage any additional processes required.

Ofqual did not identify any serious concerns with exam boards' preparations for the summer series but followed up with each board individually, noting the actions they were taking and presenting observations for their consideration.

In April, Ofqual colleagues met again with representatives from each exam board to review their individual preparations for the summer and progress against their plans. We explained the types of issues we expected to be notified about and how we expected each board to manage these if they arose. We stressed the importance of managing issues quickly and effectively to minimise any impact on students. We reminded exam boards that they should alert Ofqual quickly to any issues. We subsequently wrote to exam boards to confirm these expectations (see Appendix C).

To minimise the risks to safe delivery throughout summer 2022, Ofqual also worked closely with DfE, the exam boards and JCQ to:

- discuss delivery progress against plans
- identify and manage systemic risks and issues
- coordinate support and guidance wherever possible.

Ofqual monitored exam boards' examiner recruitment closely. All the exam boards provided updates to Ofqual colleagues at weekly meetings. We also reviewed progress with each board individually, on a fortnightly basis, until the end of May. Ofqual also monitored marking progress closely once it started. This is discussed in more detail under Phase 4, Marking.

This extra oversight and close working were necessary to minimise the additional risks of running summer exams, with adaptations, for the first time since 2019.

Entries

Centres submit entries to the exam boards for each qualification their students will take. For the 2022 summer series:

- GCSE entries decreased slightly, falling by 0.3% on 2021 (5,219,550 in 2022 compared to 5,236,860 in 2021)
- A level entries for summer 2022 increased by 3% on 2021 (776,625 in 2022 compared to 752,555 in 2021)
- AS entries increased by 8% on 2021 (61,355 in 2022 compared to 56,560 in 2021) reversing a trend seen in these qualifications since reforms decoupling them from A levels

Information on final entry numbers for GCSE, AS and A level subjects in summer 2022 can be found in the [results tables published by JCQ](#).

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

As in any other examination series, exam boards made some changes to exam arrangements for individual students and allowed centres to make other necessary adjustments. These were to allow students to be assessed fairly by meeting their specific access needs and must be agreed before they take the exams or assessments. In summer 2022 the deadline for centres to submit applications for access arrangements via JCQ's Access Arrangements Online portal was 31 March.

Ofqual requires exam boards to publish clear information about what arrangements may be put in place and who qualifies for these arrangements. There is more information about access arrangements and reasonable adjustments in our [Guide for schools and colleges 2022: GCSEs, AS and A levels](#).

Access arrangements

Access arrangements are provisions made for students to ensure that they can be validly assessed and are not unfairly disadvantaged due to a disability, temporary illness or injury, or if their first language is not English.

Access arrangements granted for disabled students are provided as reasonable adjustments. Changes to the way assessments are taken for students with temporary injury or illnesses are provided as a form of special consideration.

Access arrangements include the provision of modified papers – exam papers or assessment tasks which have been adapted to make them more accessible for particular students (for example, a larger font size or papers provided in Braille). Centres were required to order modified papers by 31 January to allow exam boards time to prepare them individually for students according to their needs.

Access arrangements can be provided for any students taking exams or non-exam assessments who are eligible. Individual students may require more than one form of access arrangement.

Reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires exam boards to make reasonable adjustments to assessments for disabled students (defined as those that have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities). Reasonable adjustments are changes made to an assessment or to the way an assessment is conducted that reduce or remove a disadvantage caused by a student's disability. There is a wide range of adjustments based on individuals' needs that might include 25% extra time, or the use of a reader or a scribe.

The exam boards choose to administer reasonable adjustments through JCQ. They published revised guidance for centres applying on behalf of their students for [Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#) in the academic year 2021 to 22. This guidance set out important changes effective from 1 September 2021, including, for example, changes to the evidence requirements needed for 25% extra time arrangements.

Access arrangement statistics

In November 2022, we published official statistics on [Access arrangements for GCSE, AS and A level: 2021 to 2022 academic year](#).

When the summer 2021 exams were cancelled on 4 January 2021, the deadlines for centres requesting access arrangements were imminent and centres were encouraged to continue to submit applications. The data gathered for the 2020 to 2021 academic year is, therefore, used here as reference for 2021 to 2022. Comparisons are also made to data from 2018 to 2019 as the most recent academic year in which exams went ahead.

For the 2021 to 2022 academic year in England, there were 512,085 access arrangements approved, up by 14.4% (from 447,555) and up by 26.6% (from 404,600) compared with 2020 to 2021 and 2018 to 2019 academic years respectively.

There were 5,485 centres (92.9% of all centres) that had access arrangements approved for one or more of their students this year, compared to 5,175 centres (88.2% of all centres) in the 2020 to 2021 academic year. In 2018 to 2019, 5,420 centres (91% of all centres) had access arrangements approved for one or more of their students.

Among the types of access arrangements, 25% extra time remains by far the most common, making up 65.3% of all arrangements approved in 2021 to 2022, compared to 65.8% in 2020 to 2021 and 63.4% in 2018 to 2019 academic years respectively.

Ofqual will evaluate the use of extra time in assessments provided to disabled students as a reasonable adjustment, as set out in our [Corporate Plan](#).

There were 61,125 requests for modified papers in summer 2022, up 4.9% on summer 2019. With no exams in 2020 and 2021 data on modified papers was not collected.

Ofqual will continue to collect and review exam boards' data on access arrangements to better understand how they are used to support students who need them.

Question paper production

Exam boards typically write assessment materials for upcoming exam series a year

or more before they take place. These materials include question papers, stimulus materials and mark schemes. Ofqual's Conditions require exam boards to produce assessment materials which are clear, appropriate and fit for purpose. It is an exam board's responsibility to make sure its papers are free of errors. Ofqual does not review or otherwise vet the content of question papers before students take them.

Due to the introduction of advance information (see Phase 2) and other adaptations, exam boards had to revisit all of the assessment materials they had already produced to ensure they complied with the new requirements in place for summer 2022. Where exam boards determined that the use of advance information might make it challenging to replace either specific questions or complete assessments should there be a security breach, we asked exam boards to commission further assessment material to address this risk.

In 2022, exam boards produced over 5,000 unique question papers. This comprised approximately 1,500 standard question papers and more than 4,000 discrete modified question papers^[footnote 2].

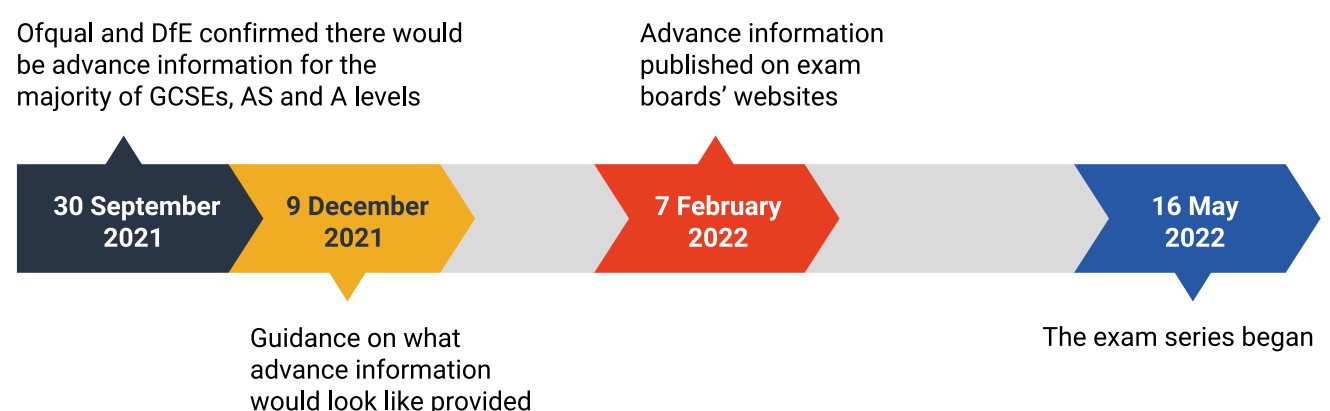
These figures do not include the number of supporting materials that exam boards were required to produce for advance information, such as guidance and advance information notices. The implementation of advance information is discussed in more detail in Phase 2.

Phase 2: Implementing advance information

The adaptations provided as part of the package of support for students taking exams in summer 2022 were unprecedented. The use of advance information in particular represented a significant change to the assessment arrangements. This had not previously been tested in any exam series, let alone at scale in a summer series. For this reason, Ofqual worked closely with the exam boards as they put the policy into practice.

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GCSE, AS and A level specifications for which advance information was provided



Infographic: A timeline of key dates for advance information

Purpose of advance information

Advance information was produced to help students focus their revision and to make exams less daunting. It was not intended to reduce the amount of content that must be studied or assessed. In many subjects, it did not cover all of the exam papers or sections within them. That is why Ofqual, as well as the exam boards, JCQ and DfE, emphasised that students should still study the whole course and revise accordingly for each of their exams.

In any given year, exam papers will not include questions on every content area in the specification. Instead, exam papers ask questions about a sample of the content in the specification to test what a student knows, understands and can do overall.

Advance information generally did not change the exam papers this year, as exam boards had already written their papers before they produced the advance information. In a small number of cases, however, exam boards needed to make changes to individual questions or parts of question papers, including to make it possible to provide replacements that matched the advance information in case a question paper was compromised.

Advance information looked different between subjects and exam boards' specifications in the same subject – this reflected the differences that already exist in the design and structure of individual specifications and their assessments. Advance information was tailored to suit each individual specification. Except for GCSE sciences, none of the advance information for any subjects indicated any content or topics that would be excluded from the exams.

Scale of advance information

Advance information was provided for all but a handful of GCSE, AS and A level subjects. The exceptions were art and design (where there are no written exams) and GCSEs in English literature, history, ancient history and geography (where DfE had already decided there could be some optional topics or content).

Exam boards produced advance information for 354 different specifications across GCSE, AS and A level.

In December 2021, JCQ and the exam boards published guidance for teachers and students to explain what to expect from advance information, prior to its publication date. The exam boards' guidance included a description of how advance information would work for each of their individual specifications.

The exam boards published all their advance information notices on their public websites on 7 February 2022.

Issues with advance information

Advance information was provided for one or more papers in 354 separate GCSE, AS and A level specifications in summer 2022. In 35 of these, there were issues: either errors or insufficient clarity in the advance information notice, or a discrepancy between the advance information and the question paper. As advance information had not been used before, there are no comparative figures for 2019.

Table 1: Advance information issues by exam board, summer 2022

Exam Board	Number of advance information issues
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AQA	16
OCR	4
Pearson	11
WJEC	4
Total	35

Overall, issues arose in approximately 10% of the specifications which used advance information this year. The majority (8%) occurred in the advance information notices exam boards published rather than the assessments themselves. Four errors (2 which were significant enough to lead to part of the assessment being discounted to avoid disadvantaging students, 2 more minor) were reported in assessments as a result of issues with advance information, equating to 1% of GCSE, AS and A level specifications where it was used.

Issues in advance information notices

Of the 35 issues reported in advanced information assessment materials, 29 were issues or ambiguities in the advance information notices themselves (as distinct from issues with question papers). Of those, 25 were corrected and reissued by exam boards shortly after publication. The other 4 notices were not corrected as the potential impact on students was low because they concerned minor typographical errors. The exam boards decided not to make any changes as there was deemed to be a greater risk of confusion to students through replacing the material.

Where corrections were made, there was a risk that some students and teachers might not be aware of these. We monitored the situation closely to ensure any corrections were sufficiently visible to all, including private candidates (see: re-issuing of advance information).

Re-issuing of advance information notices

Immediately following the publication of advance information notices on 7 February 2022, it was identified that a small number of the notices contained errors and/or were not sufficiently clear. In some cases, these errors and ambiguities were minor, but in others they could have affected students' preparation for their assessments. We were concerned that, if the exam boards simply issued replacement advance information notices, some students (or their teachers) would not see them and could be disadvantaged when they sat their exams.

We worked closely with exam boards to determine when they should issue replacement notices. We monitored exam boards' implementation so that it was clear where notices had been reissued and to make sure that exam boards had done enough to communicate the changes to teachers and students.

In a limited number of cases, the exam boards decided not to make any changes or issue communications at that point, as this could have made the situation worse. We were satisfied that in these instances this was the approach least likely to disadvantage students but expected boards to consider if changes to their question papers, to ensure they aligned with the notices, needed to be made instead.

Advance information errors impacting assessments

One issue identified prior to the exam related to an advance information notice not correctly indicating which parts of the assessment the advance information related to, rather than there being an error in the content set out. This advance information notice was not replaced due to the risk of causing confusion to students. This error was in a subject where students were still expected to cover all subject content (as opposed to the few subjects where advance information indicated specific aspects of the specification that would not be assessed) and concerned low tariff questions only. Once the exam had been sat, the exam board reviewed student performance in line with our expectations for the management of errors. The exam board did not find any evidence of a negative impact and so concluded that the questions had functioned as intended, despite the error.

Three other advanced information assessment material errors were not identified until the exams were sat. These errors therefore had the potential to affect students as there were discrepancies between the content of the question papers and the advance information.

Of these 3, 2 were more significant. They were in subjects where the advance information directly or indirectly indicated specific aspects of the specification that would not be assessed, but in these cases, those aspects did appear in the question papers. In both instances, the exam board awarded all students full marks for the affected questions.

Table 2: Point at which advance information issues were identified, by exam board

Exam Board	Prior to exam	During exam	After exam	Total
AQA	12	2	2	16
Pearson	11	0	0	11
OCR	4	0	0	4
WJEC	3	1	0	4
Total	30	3	2	35

The other advance information error occurred in an optional section of a question paper where students could have answered other questions. We made sure that the relevant exam board reviewed the potential impact on student performance, and the exam board's analysis led them to adjust the marks of a small number of students.

Other advance information issues

Two additional reports from exam boards concerning advance information were made after the exams on the grounds of a potential risk to public confidence, because of the perception that there had been failings in the implementation of advance information. However, neither case actually constituted an error. In both instances, the relevant exam board published a statement to explain this. These 2 notifications are discussed in more detail in the 'AQA A level law' and 'AQA A level physics' sections.

AQA A level law

Concerns were raised with us that AQA's A level law paper 2 included a 30-mark question on a topic (public nuisance) that was not listed in the advance information.

AQA's advance information said it included "some aspects of the major focus of the content of the exam" and that it applied to "a selection of the questions with a tariff of 5 marks and above", not including multiple choice questions or synoptic questions. Ofqual reviewed the exam paper, supported by subject experts, and concluded that it was consistent with the description in the advance information notice.

However, AQA's December 2021 guidance indicated the higher tariff questions in the exam paper would draw on the topics listed in the advance information. Students and teachers reading this guidance alone, and not the detail in the advance information, might have expected both 30-mark questions to have been on topics included in the advance information whereas it applied to only one of the 30-mark questions, plus a selection of questions worth 5 or more marks.

We closely monitored AQA's response, mindful of the potential impact on students and public confidence in advance information. AQA confirmed they would review student performance on the paper and take action to minimise any impact, if necessary.

[AQA issued an apology](#) for any confusion caused, and later wrote to centres to explain that their [analysis of student performance](#) suggested that students had found paper 2 more challenging and therefore grade boundaries for paper 2 were lower to reflect this.

AQA A level physics

Following the paper 2 exam for A level physics, AQA notified us of complaints and criticism on social media regarding the inclusion of questions on electric fields and capacitance, topics which had not been included in the advance information notice.

Unlike at GCSE, the A level physics advance information was not exhaustive and did not exclude other areas from being assessed. It was also not intended to cover all of the topics that would appear in the exam as this could have led to predictable questions. [AQA issued a statement explaining that low tariff topics had not been included in the advance information](#) and that this was in line with the principles agreed with the other exam boards.

We closely monitored AQA's handling of this issue and reviewed the question paper and advance information notice, supported by a subject expert, and concluded that this was not an error.

Phase 3: Exam delivery

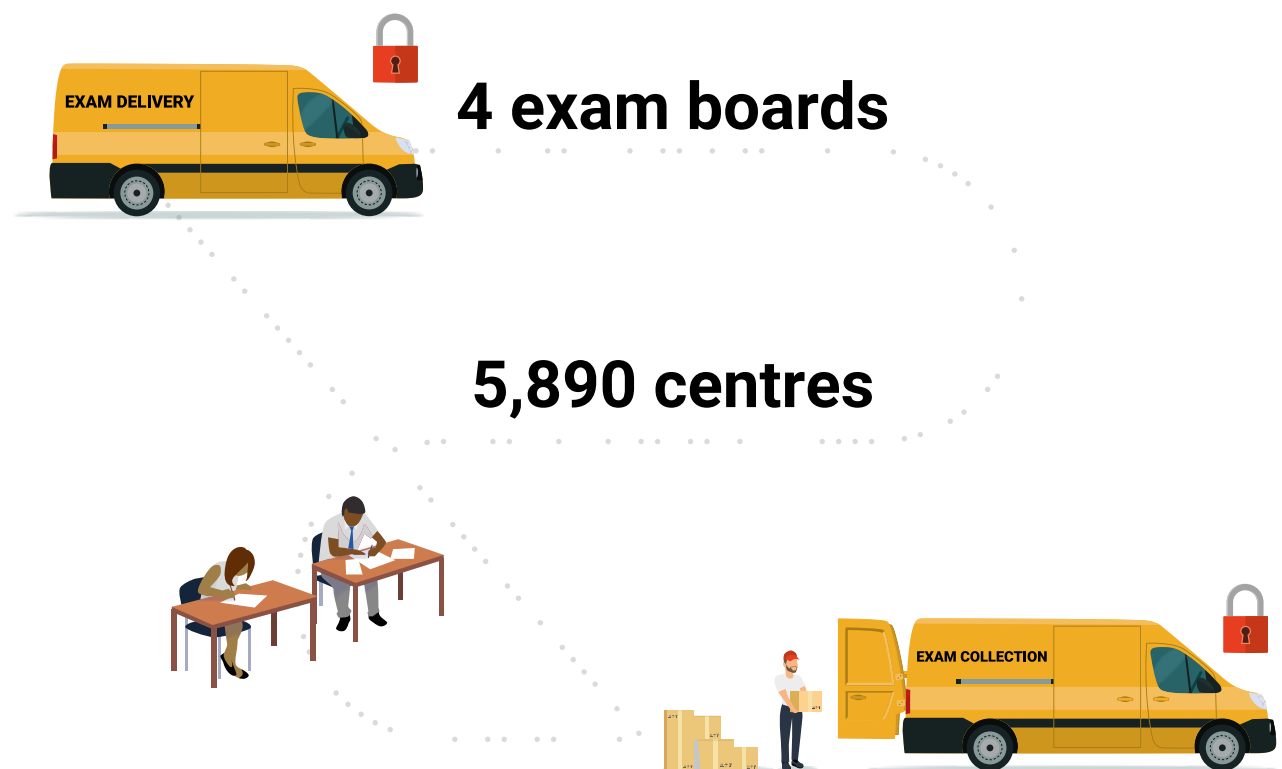
Exam boards provide training, instructions and guidance to centres about how they should conduct exams. For summer 2022 only, following discussions with Ofqual and other stakeholders, JCQ made changes to these instructions to support centres

who were still experiencing disruption and shortages of support and temporary staff due to the pandemic.

The changes included:

- allowing centres to start the examination later than the exam board's published exam start time, as a result of disruption caused by the pandemic
- relaxing the usual invigilation rules, so that fewer invigilators could be used, or a teacher of that subject could invigilate, subject to extra conditions
- allowing remote invigilation in exceptional cases where all other options had been exhausted and an individual student would otherwise have been disadvantaged

These arrangements were a temporary way to ease pressure on centres in summer 2022. From September 2022, centres must follow the normal [JCQ instructions on conducting examinations](#).



Exam delivery involves 4 exam boards delivering question papers to 5,890 centres and collecting the scripts after exams have taken place

Question paper dispatch and storage

The security of question papers is in everyone's interests, so that the exam system is fair for all students. Centres normally receive exam papers and supporting materials some weeks before the exams are taken.

Following security issues described in the [2019 summer report](#) and to help alleviate storage constraints in centres, some exam boards made changes to question paper dispatches so that papers were received nearer the date of the exam. For some qualifications and centres, special arrangements were put in place for papers to be delivered on the day of the exam.

Security breaches

Exam boards are required to report to Ofqual when there has been an actual or potential security breach of confidential material. Within this report, we use the term

'security breach' to refer to an actual security breach (for example, where the content of a live question paper is shared) and a potential security breach (for example, where procedures are not followed and there is the potential for the assessment to be compromised, even where this is not realised).

Where a breach happens, we expect the exam boards to investigate the extent of the breach, if any, and take all reasonable steps to mitigate its impact.

Security breaches can be accidental, for example, if a student is accidentally given paper 2 instead of paper 1, or if results are accidentally released early to students. Breaches can also be deliberate, for example where papers are leaked or stolen.

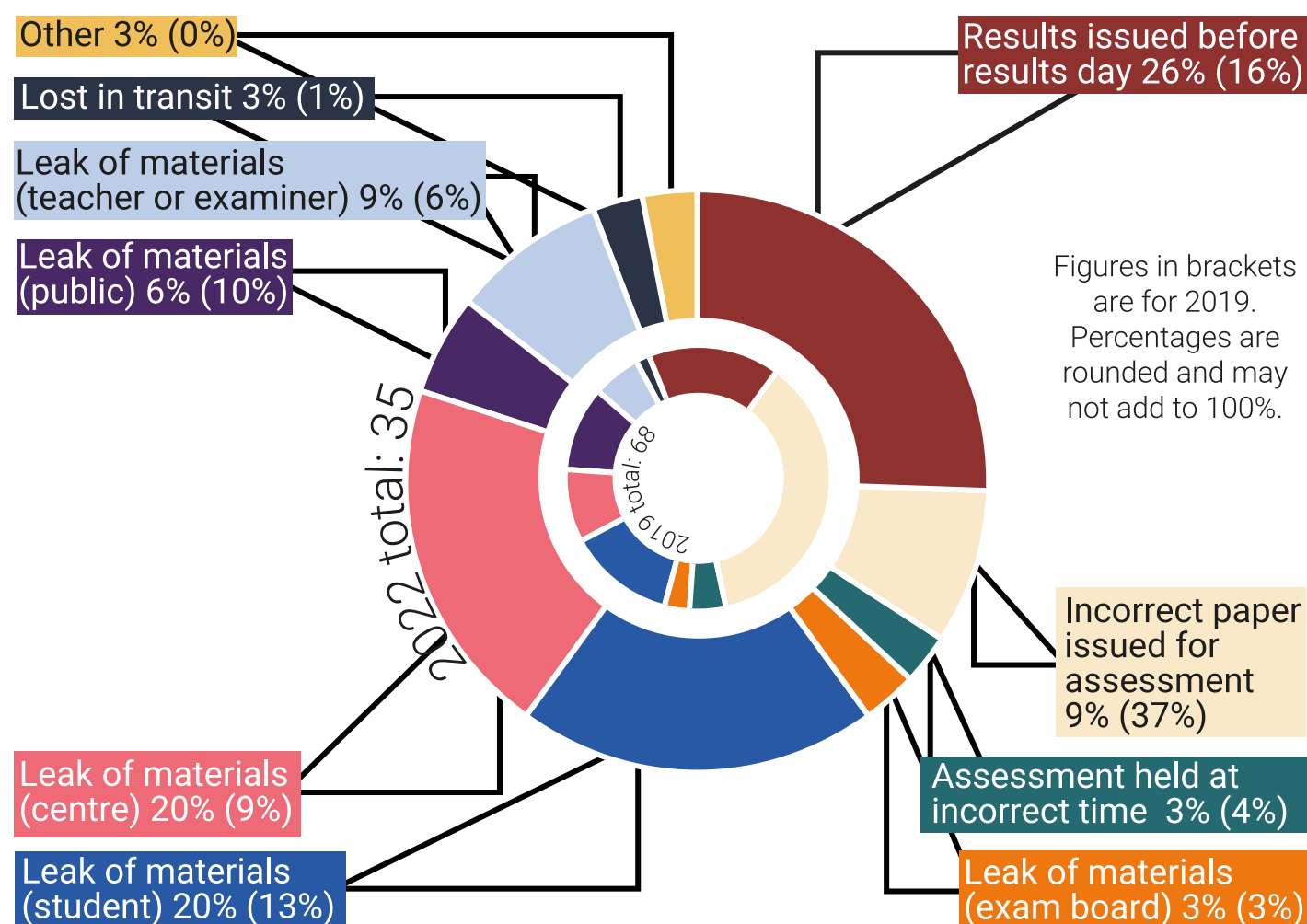


Figure 3: Security breaches by category in summer 2022 and summer 2019

There were 35 security breaches in 2022, compared to 68 in 2019. The largest number of breaches (9) related to results being issued earlier than the permitted release times to students. Following these breaches, the exam boards provided assurances that the affected centres have undertaken IT system changes or process improvements to stop this happening again.

A small number of the security breaches resulted in confidential exam material being shared more widely among students or via social media. Any leak of assessment materials is a serious matter, and Ofqual takes any incidents of this nature extremely seriously.

Ofqual closely monitored the awarding process for qualifications where there had been a breach to make sure that students taking those qualifications were not disadvantaged compared to those taking equivalent qualifications with other exam boards.

Pearson GCSE mathematics

Pearson was contacted by an individual who reported that they had seen on social media an image of one question of the GCSE maths paper 1 before the exam. Pearson acted immediately to investigate the source of the image.

Working with the social media site, Pearson were quickly able to identify the individual involved in circulating the question. They were also able to identify

the exam centres linked to that individual and arranged for immediate inspections and extra supervision of exams. Sanctions issued following malpractice hearings ranged from loss of all marks for a component to full disqualification from the qualification, depending on the actions of the individuals involved.

AQA A level chemistry

AQA's A level chemistry paper 2 was stolen from a delivery van on its way to a centre. This paper was subsequently offered for sale on social media. AQA explained that [when the breach occurred](#) there was not sufficient time available to replace the paper with a suitable alternative for the full cohort. AQA reported the theft to the police and disqualified a small number of students who they had identified had full access to the paper before the exam.

[AQA subsequently issued a statement](#) explaining their actions to manage the breach. AQA reviewed performance across all three A level chemistry papers as well as looking specifically at the performance of individual students who were alleged to have seen the paper ahead of the exam, concluding that no further students had been unfairly advantaged by this incident.

Opening the wrong papers

Exam boards set out how centres must store and open question paper packets to maintain security. These rules routinely require centres to:

- store question papers securely at all times
- make sure 2 people check the time and date before each packet is opened, and confirm they have done so
- only open question paper packets within 60 minutes of the published exam start time (9.00am or 1.30pm)

Following 2 years when summer exams did not take place, exam boards and JCQ reminded exams officers and heads of centre of these rules ahead of the series.

In summer 2022, exam boards were aware of 3 security breaches due to centres opening and distributing the wrong exam paper. This compares to 25 cases in 2019.

Where centre staff open and distribute the wrong exam paper, we expect exam boards to do all they can to minimise the impact on students and on the security of the paper. Wherever possible, exam boards will accept the paper the student has sat, even if they sat it on the wrong day, and they will scale up their marks if the student could not take the paper they should have sat. They will also ask students and centre staff to sign confidentiality statements confirming that they will not disclose the content to others.

Sharing confidential material on social media

The immediacy of social media and instant messaging apps can make a security breach in one centre more difficult to contain. To mitigate this, exam boards have sophisticated monitoring in place and have developed links with some social media companies. This means that when breaches occur which lead to secure content being shared on social media, they aim to have the post swiftly taken down.

Hoax papers on social media

This year saw more examples of individuals on social media claiming to have question papers and mark schemes for sale. In some instances, sellers were seeking large payments for these hoax papers, often via cryptocurrencies which are more difficult to trace.

During the exam period we noted a substantial number of these hoax papers, with the seller frequently uploading a doctored copy of the front cover of the question paper as 'proof' of access.

We issued a warning on our website to students on the dangers of hoax papers, making clear that trying to buy or share exam questions or papers, whether real or fake, is malpractice and could mean they are disqualified from some or all of their exams.

Exam delivery failures

This year exam boards told us about 57 incidents where aspects of the delivery of an exam were or could have been compromised. This is an increase compared with 2019, when there were 33 such incidents.

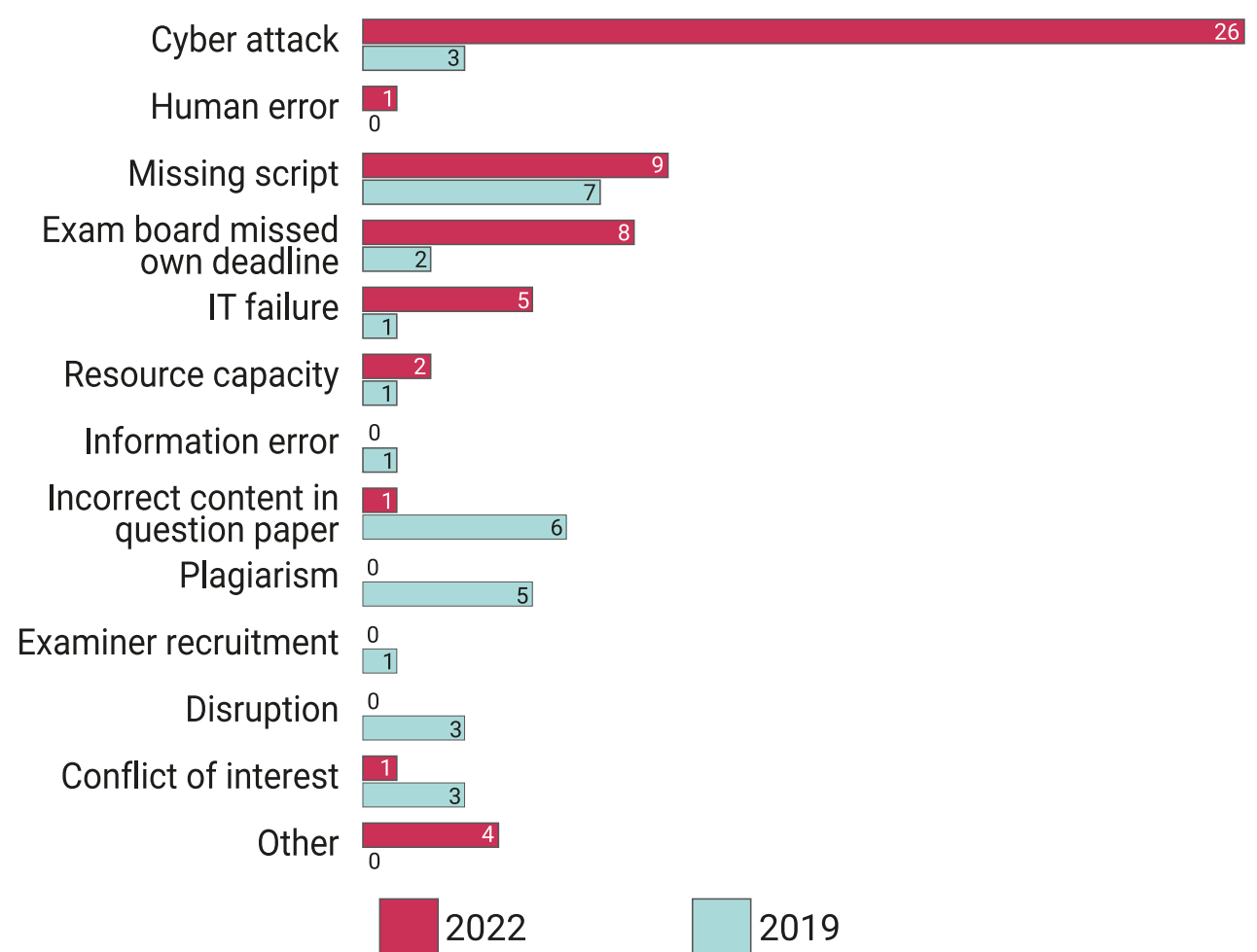


Figure 4: Incidents of exam delivery failure in summer 2022 and summer 2019

The largest increase was in cyber-attacks, which increased from 3 in 2019 to 26 in 2022. All of these instances were cyber-attacks on centres aimed at denying access to their systems or students' work, which could either have impacted on their ability to access exam board administrative processes such as applications for reviews of marking and moderation or to submit NEA. Exam boards sought to mitigate the impact on students through providing alternative access to their processes, flexibility over administrative deadlines or the provision of special consideration.

It should be noted, however, that since schools and colleges often enter with more than one exam board, some of these attacks are counted more than once where multiple exam boards made notifications. In total, the 26 reported cyber-attacks

related to attacks in 14 separate schools and colleges. There were no cyber-attacks on exam boards reported.

Assessment material errors

Errors in question papers or tasks can affect a student's ability to answer questions as intended, or cause confusion. Even where an error does not affect the student's ability to answer the question, it can cause unnecessary anxiety and undermine student and public confidence. Errors in mark schemes, while not apparent to students, can lead to marking errors.

Ofqual's view is that any error, whether in an exam paper or a mark scheme, is unacceptable and we expect exam boards to do everything they can to avoid them. Where they do happen, we expect exam boards to take action to minimise the impact on students. We also expect them to review the causes of any errors and tell us how they plan to prevent recurrence.

Exam boards produce a range of different material to support assessments. This includes not only the question papers or mark schemes themselves but also adapted versions of questions to support students with specific needs as an access arrangement, tasks or other stimulus material required for the completion of non-exam assessment and supporting material such as resource booklets or formulae and equation sheets.

This report presents the assessment material errors reported this series as a whole, and also by the following categories depending on where they occurred:

- question paper errors
- modified assessment material errors
- NEA errors
- supporting material errors

Figure 5 shows the total number of errors across all of each board's assessment materials (including standard and modified papers, associated assessment materials, NEA tasks and mark schemes):

Figure 5: Categorisation of assessment material error type by exam board

Compared to 2019, the last time that exams were taken, there were fewer

conventional assessment material errors in GCSE, AS and A level assessments this year (discounting those related to the provision of advanced information discussed above). Exam boards reported 71 errors in 2019, and 61 errors in 2022.

Ofqual categorises errors by their potential level of impact on students:

- Category 1 – assessment material errors which could or do make it impossible for students to generate a meaningful response to a question or task
- Category 2 – assessment material errors which could or do cause unintentional difficulties for students to generate a meaningful response to a question or task
- Category 3 – assessment material errors which will not affect a student's ability to generate a meaningful response to a question or task

Overall, 10 of the assessment material errors not related to advance information reported this summer fell into the most serious category, compared to 21 errors in 2019. The number of category 2 errors reported this series was 45, an increase from 33 in 2019. Finally, instances of the least serious errors, category 3, reduced significantly this series from 17 in 2019 to 6 in 2022.

Figure 6 breaks down the assessment material errors from this series reported by each exam board by categorisation of impact:

Figure 6: Number and severity of assessment material errors by exam board

This reduction in the frequency and severity of errors indicates exam boards' efforts to reduce the likelihood of errors have made headway despite the pandemic and 2 years without a summer exam series. We expect exam boards' papers to be error-free and we will continue to hold exam boards to account for the impact of errors that do occur, expect them to take action to mitigate any adverse effect and monitor how they do so, and seek assurances about how they will prevent them from happening again in the future.

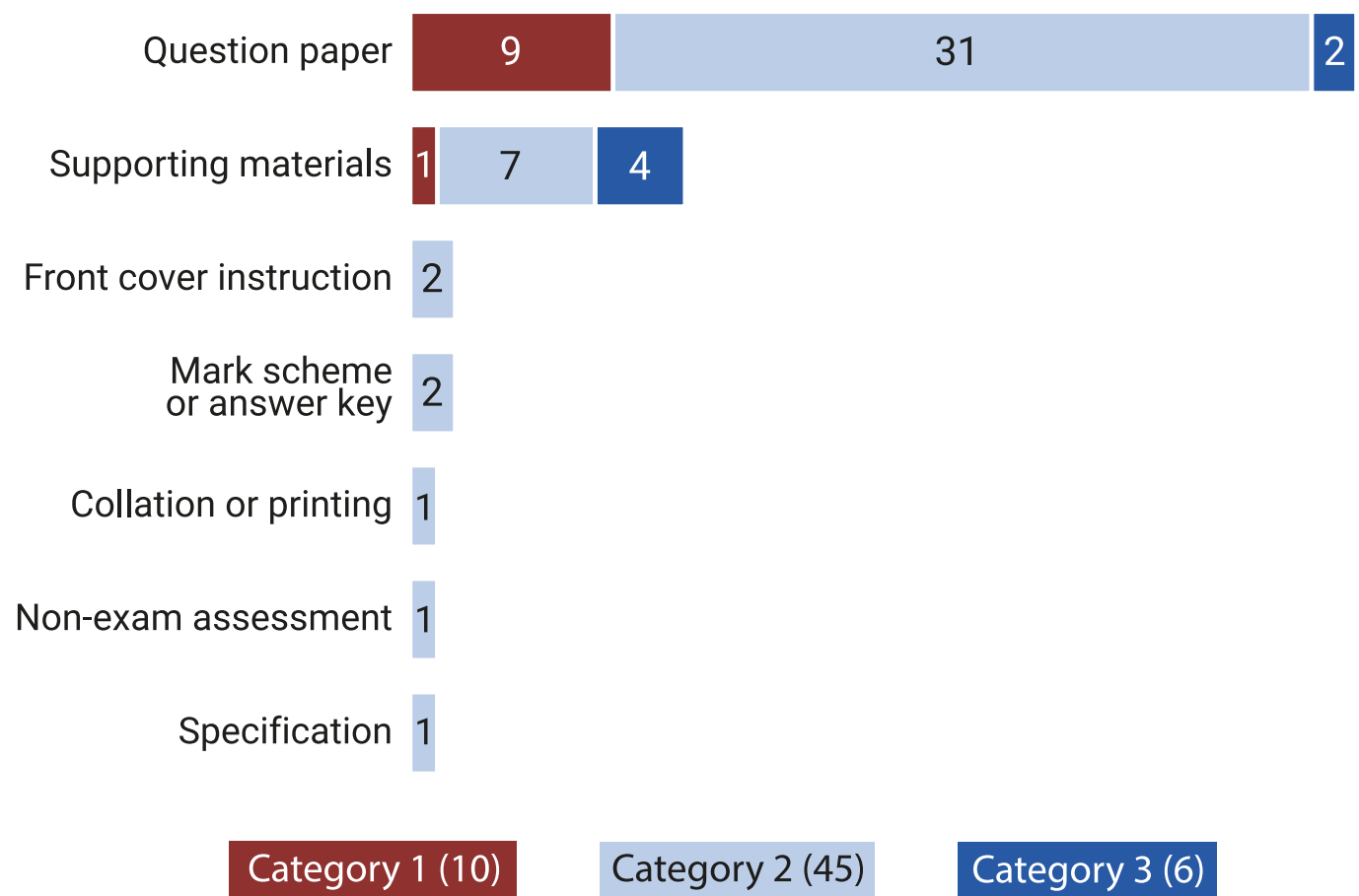


Figure 7: Number and severity of errors in different assessment material types

Errors in question papers

This year there were 42 errors reported in the content of question papers. 97% of the GCSE, AS and A level question papers produced by exam boards for summer 2022 were error free and not all errors that did occur affected all the students taking the assessments or had the potential to impact on performance. We do, however, expect all question papers to be error-free and that exam board quality assurance processes are robust enough to identify and correct any that may be introduced during the setting process.

Of the 42 reported question paper errors, exam boards identified 11 (26%) before exams took place. Where possible, exam boards will replace the assessments or issue a correction (known as an erratum) ahead of the exams being taken. In summer 2022, 5 errata were issued and 3 papers with errors were replaced prior to dispatch. In one instance, an error was subsequently identified in an erratum notice.

Four errors were reported by students or centre staff during or immediately following the exams. The majority of assessment material errors (27) were identified after the exam period, including during marking.

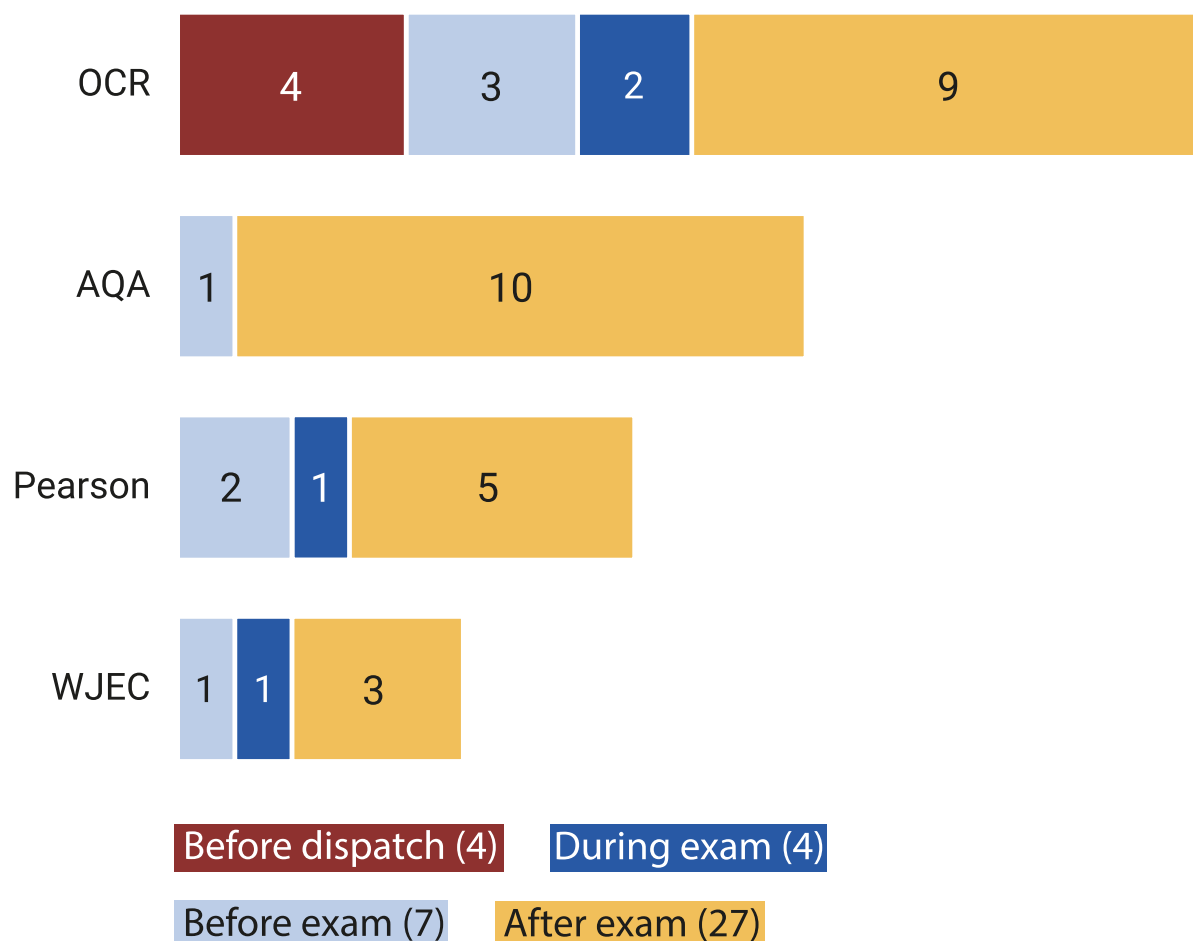


Figure 8: Point of identification of question paper errors by exam board

Where an exam board identifies an error at the time of or after the exam, we expect it to consider the possible impact of the error and to mitigate the effect of it as far as possible. Exam boards advise examiners to flag any unusual answers or those which suggest students were confused and, depending on the nature of the error, may carry out more detailed analyses of students' responses.

When exam boards consider, or have evidence to suggest, that the error caused confusion or impacted on students' performance, they might adjust the mark scheme to take into account different possible responses. This adjustment might be to award the marks to all students, or award special consideration to specific students (for example, in cases where the nature of the error meant that only some students were impacted).

Figure 9 outlines the mitigations taken in response to errors in standard question papers:

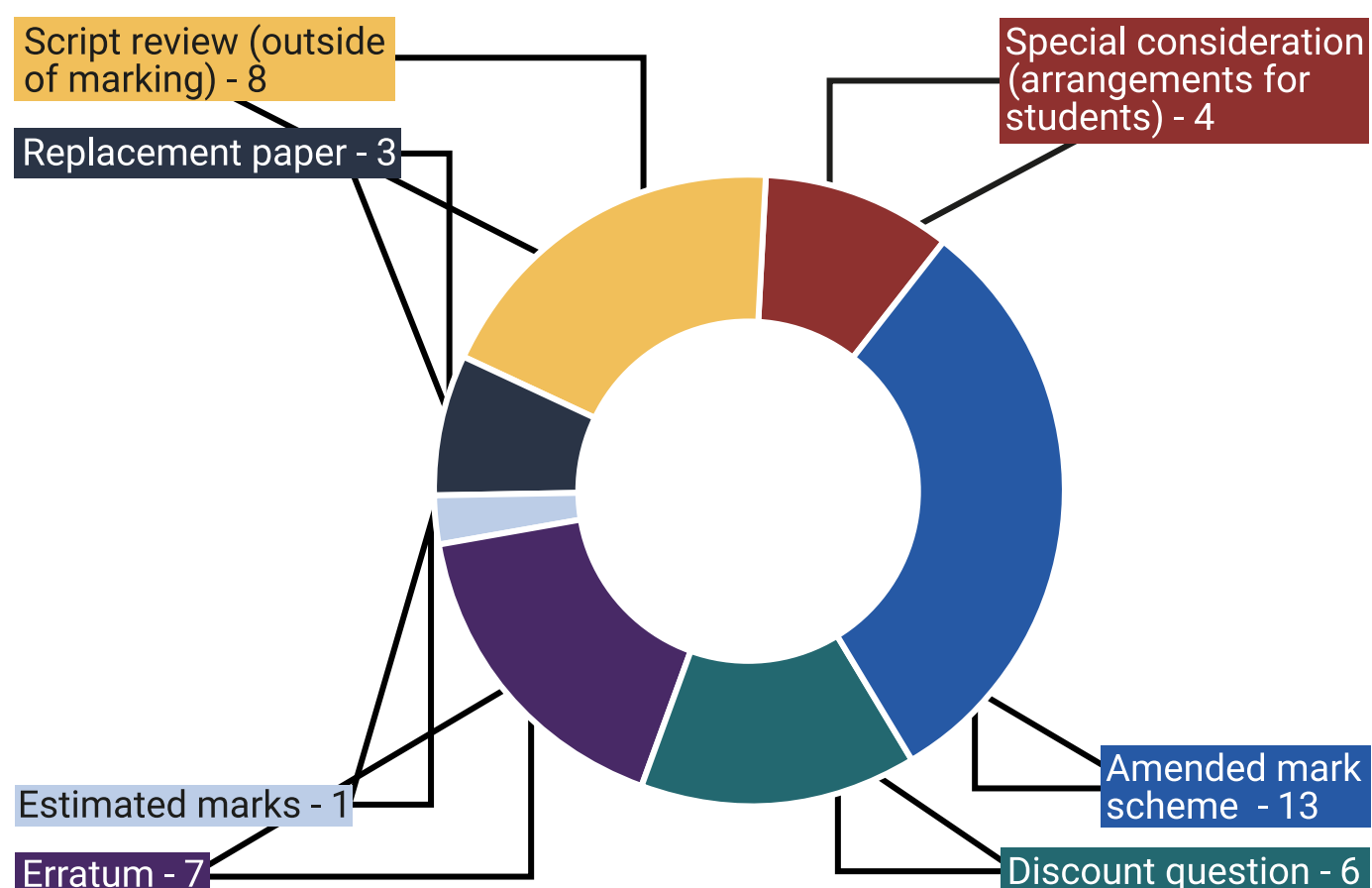


Figure 9: Mitigations in response to question paper errors

Errors in non-exam assessment (NEA)

There was one assessment material error reported this year in relation to non-exam assessment. This concerned a mistake in the composition brief for a GCSE music qualification, although the use of the brief was optional in 2022 as part of the adaptations for this qualification. The mistake was identified and corrected with no impact on students.

Errors in supporting material

Twelve errors this year appeared in supporting materials (for example, resource booklets) which accompany question papers. Of these, 6 were identified prior to the exam being sat. This number does not include errors in advance information support materials (including in the advance information notices) discussed earlier in this report. In 5 cases either a correction or communication to centres was issued. In one case the potential impact on students was low and the exam board decided not to make any changes as it was too close to the exam. They received no correspondence from centres following the exam.

Pearson GCSE geography B

Pearson made an error in a GCSE geography exam where a map in a resource booklet mislabelled Gabon as the Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville).

[Pearson issued a statement shortly after the error became apparent](#) and they changed the mark scheme to accept references to either country. Pearson received very few complaints from centres. Pearson's review of students' responses found no evidence that the error had affected students' performance.

We closely monitored Pearson's response. Pearson have outlined the steps they plan to take to prevent similar errors from happening again.

Errors in modified assessment materials

The errors reported above include those that occurred only in the modified papers or modified supporting materials adapted to make them more accessible to students with specific needs (for example large print or Braille paper). As these errors were introduced during the modification process, they did not appear in the standard version of the assessment.

This year, 11 errors were identified in modified assessment materials, compared to 6 such instances in 2019. These constituted 7 of the 42 errors in question papers and 4 of the 12 errors in supporting materials. One of the modified assessment material errors this year was identified prior to the exam being sat, and an erratum was issued. The others were identified during or after the examination.

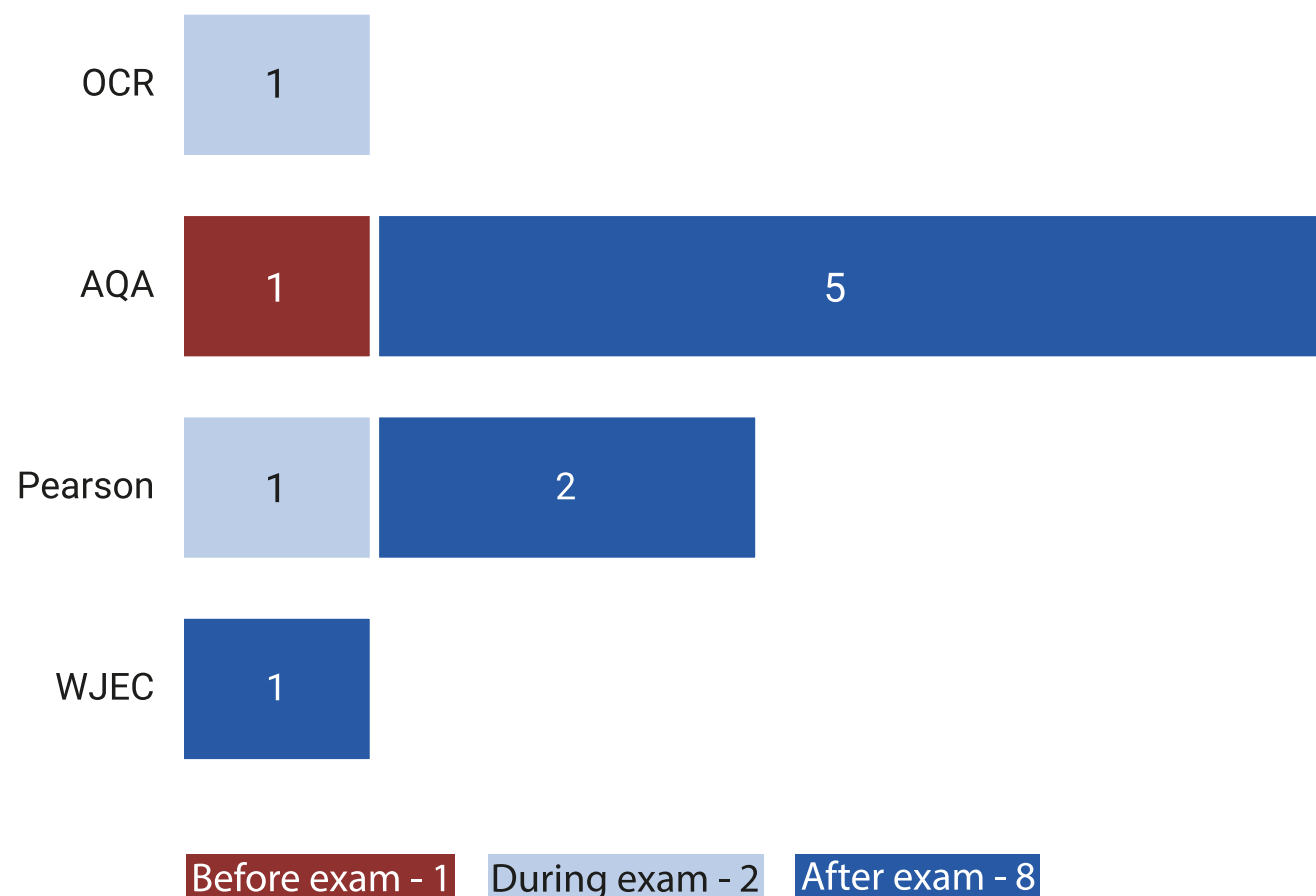


Figure 10: Modified assessment material errors by time identified

Exam boards consider how best to mitigate the effect of these errors. Of those that were identified during or after the exam, 5 of the 11 incidents this year resulted in students receiving special consideration, 2 led to the question being discounted, in 2 instances scripts were reviewed following marking and another led to students receiving estimated marks for that paper.

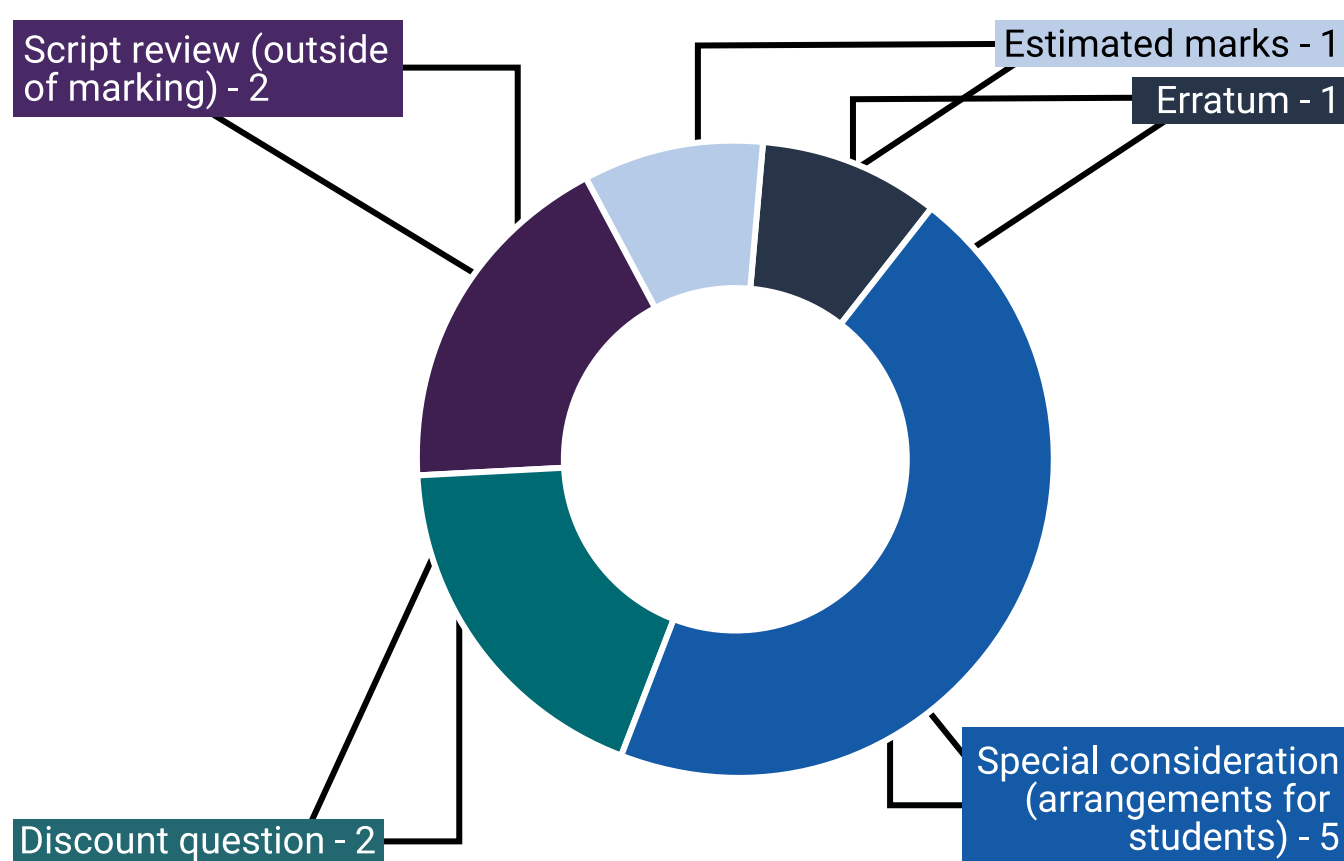


Figure 11: Mitigations in response to modified assessment materials errors

Malpractice and maladministration

Everyone involved in the delivery of an exam has a role to play in preventing and reporting malpractice, including teachers, students, and examiners. We take all allegations of malpractice extremely seriously and we expect exam boards to do the same.

Our rules apply to instances of both malpractice and maladministration. Maladministration generally constitutes mistakes or poor process where there has been no intention on the part of the person responsible to do any harm. By contrast, malpractice will generally involve some form of intent. It may also include circumstances where an individual has been negligent or reckless as to the consequences of their actions.

Exam boards must investigate all allegations of malpractice and maladministration and require centres and their own examiners to report all suspected incidents and to cooperate with any subsequent investigation. Where proven, the exam board will act against those responsible. Exam boards do not have to tell us about all cases of suspected malpractice or maladministration, but we do expect them to tell us about the most serious issues, including those that might affect public confidence due to their impact on a substantial number of students or awarding organisations.

In summer 2022 exam boards reported 5 allegations or suspicions of serious malpractice, compared to 11 in 2019.

Exam boards also provide us with data about the total number of malpractice and maladministration investigations they are both conducting and have completed.

For GCSEs and A levels we publish [data on the number of offences identified and the penalties imposed by exam boards](#).

In summer 2022, 4,335 penalties were issued to students, an increase of 42% from 2019 (3,040), and representing 0.03% of entries (compared to 0.02% of entries in summer 2019). As in previous years, the most common type of student malpractice was taking a mobile phone or other communications device into the examination room.

A very small proportion (0.1%) of the nearly 360,000 secondary school teaching staff in England received penalties, fewer than the last time exams were taken (340, down from 450 in 2019). The most frequently issued penalty to schools and colleges was for maladministration, with breach of security the second most common offence.

We will continue to work with exam boards on communicating clearly to students, centres, teachers, and exam officers the rules on taking and administering assessments.

Whistleblowers

In addition to malpractice cases investigated by the exam boards, Ofqual also receives direct reports of alleged malpractice relating to centres and exam boards from students, teachers, parents, and others.

Ofqual is [designated as a 'prescribed person' for whistleblowing](#), and we report data annually. As in previous years, we will report whistleblowing data for April 2022 to March 2023 in our 2023 Annual Report and Accounts.

Anyone can raise concerns they have about exam or assessment-related wrongdoing with Ofqual. We always raise any allegation with the relevant exam boards. We follow up where necessary to make sure that the allegations were properly investigated and, if appropriate, that sanctions were applied.

Ofqual investigates any concerns reported to it regarding an exam board. For summer 2022, 22 individuals who were concerned about malpractice in their workplace (whistleblowers) raised allegations with us. This compared to 14 reports in 2019 when exams last took place. We also received 98 concerns of malpractice raised by others, compared to 36 in 2019. Of the 98, 36 were from students and members of the public reporting the AQA A level chemistry paper leak.

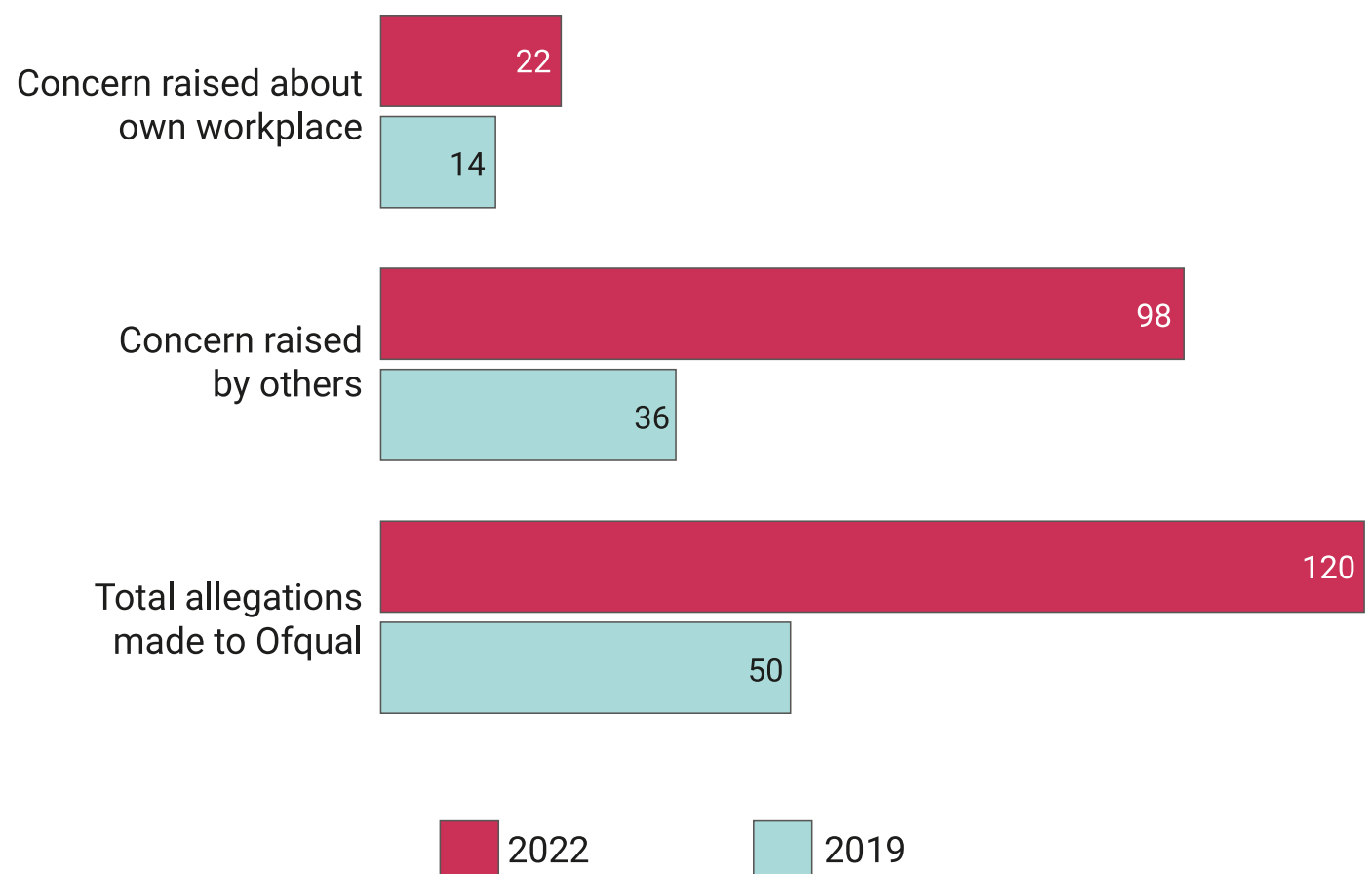


Figure 12: Nature of whistleblowing allegations to Ofqual in summer 2022 and summer 2019

Phase 4: Marking

Most marking now takes place online. Online marking can be by item (an individual question or several related part questions) or at whole paper level, depending on the type of paper. Marking at item level means that many different examiners will mark each student's work.

Every paper has a team of examiners. Before marking starts, examiners are trained on the mark scheme for the paper. They must complete their training satisfactorily before they can start marking, to make sure they understand and can consistently apply the mark scheme. Examiners who do not pass the training will not be allowed to mark.

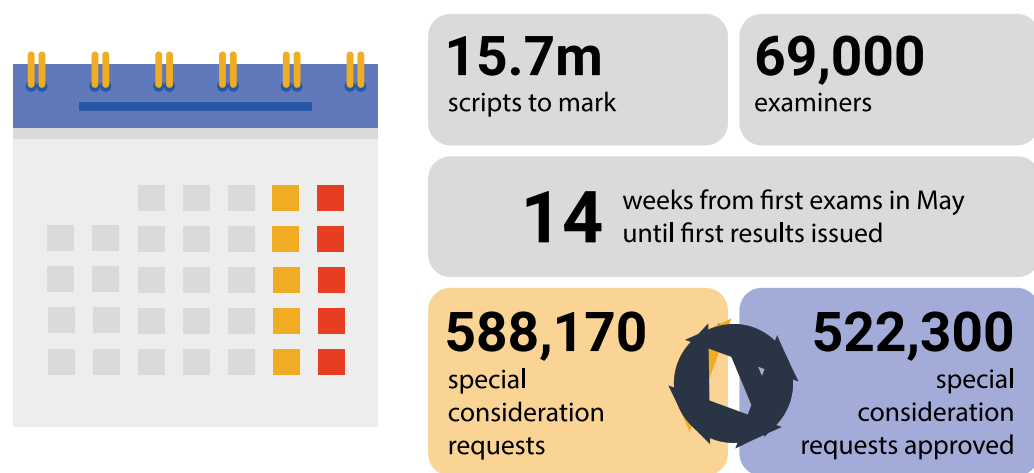
As in previous years, in 2022 we attended a sample of exam board training events (face to face meetings or online) to observe the process. We attended 20 events across all exam boards, 11 for GCSEs and 9 for A levels.

During marking, every examiner's work is regularly quality checked by their respective exam board to ensure their marking is consistent and continues to meet the required standard.

Where marking is online, quality checks include a check each time an examiner logs on to the marking system, as well as random checks while they are marking. If examiners do not mark the quality assurance items to the agreed standard, they will be stopped from marking until their supervising examiner is confident they understand the mark scheme.

Where marking is on paper, examiners send samples of their marking to a more senior examiner for checking.

If an examiner is not marking to the required standard, they will be stopped from marking altogether, and the marking they have already completed will be reviewed.



An infographic with key statistics on the marking phase.

Monitoring marking and moderation progress

As set out in the planning section, Ofqual judged that marking was potentially more challenging in 2022.

Consequently, Ofqual monitored marking progress more closely than in previous years. We required exam boards to report regularly and collected progress data weekly. We tracked progress both in terms of items (where exam boards marked assessments online in this way) and completion of whole scripts.

Where progress was slower than expected, Ofqual colleagues discussed with the exam boards their expectations of progress and the mitigations they intended to put in place. Ofqual also monitored exam boards' moderation progress against their expected completion dates through fortnightly meetings.

All exam boards ultimately completed their marking and moderation of GCSE, AS and A levels in time to issue results. As in previous years when exams took place, a small number of grades were withheld or pending on results days, due to ongoing malpractice investigations or unresolved administrative issues.

AQA GCSE geography accessibility

During the series, we noted concerns from teachers and others on social media about the accessibility for colour blind students of a question requiring reference to a map in a GCSE geography paper. We followed up this issue with AQA to determine whether students could have been unfairly disadvantaged.

AQA received very few complaints from centres, and none of these concerned students who took the assessment. AQA received special consideration requests relating to this issue for 35 students out of a total of 200,000 who took the paper. AQA approved all of those requests. We sought, and have received, assurance from AQA that they will review this issue as part of their continued work to improve accessibility in the design and production of their assessments, in particular for geography.

Ofqual will work with the exam boards, together with the organisation Colour Blind Awareness, to consider the challenges of accessibility for colour blind students and to identify areas for improvement and existing good practice.

Special consideration

Where a student's performance in an exam is affected by an event outside of their control such as illness, injury, or bereavement at the time of the assessment, centres can request special consideration from the exam board on behalf of the student. If eligible, exam boards can apply a mark adjustment for the student's affected exam. Guidelines published by JCQ allow for percentage adjustments to the mark given for a student's work, according to a tariff.

Where a student is absent from an exam for a reason beyond their control, centres can request a qualification award. If eligible, the exam board will determine the grade for the qualification by scaling up their marks in other assessments for the subject. Exam boards refer to this as a 'calculated grade'.

In previous years, exam boards required a student to have completed at least 25% of the assessment for a qualification to be eligible to receive a calculated grade. For summer 2022, as a response to the pandemic, [JCQ reduced the eligibility requirement](#) so that students who had completed at least one assessment within a qualification could receive a grade even if this amounted to less than 25%.

Ahead of the summer 2022 series, JCQ provided a revised [guide to the special consideration process](#) that provided information for centres seeking to apply for special consideration on behalf of a student.

As in any year, to be eligible for special consideration, students must have been fully prepared for the assessment and have covered the whole course. Disruption to a student's learning (due to the pandemic or for any other reason) does not qualify as a reason for special consideration.

In December 2022, we published official statistics on [special consideration requests for GCSE, AS and A levels in the summer 2022 exam series](#).

In total there were 588,170 special consideration requests in summer 2022, similar to the number in 2019, the last time summer examinations were held.

Exam boards approved a total of 552,300 special considerations in 2022, meaning there was an approved special consideration request for 4% of all assessments, similar to 2019. The majority of special consideration requests (94%) were approved, with the proportion increasing slightly on summer 2019 (92%).

The majority of the approved special consideration requests were for mark adjustments although the number in 2022 was lower than in previous years. Mark adjustments accounted for 91% of all special consideration requests in 2022, compared with 96% in 2019. Most mark adjustments (75%) were for tariffs of either 2%, 3% or 4%. A higher proportion of students (9%) received the highest tariff of 5% in summer 2022 than in 2019 (6%), although the 2022 figure is more in line with previous years.

The number of approved qualification award requests (50,135), however, was higher this year than in 2019 (21,260). This increase could in part be explained by more students being unable to attend some of their examinations due to them following [UK Health Security Agency guidance](#). Those students were considered to be absent for acceptable reasons.

Greater spacing of the timetable to reduce the likelihood of students missing all assessments in a given qualification, and extending eligibility to students who had completed at least one assessment instead of a minimum of 25%, may also have meant that more students who missed exams for an acceptable reason were eligible for qualification awards compared with previous years.

Phase 5: Grading

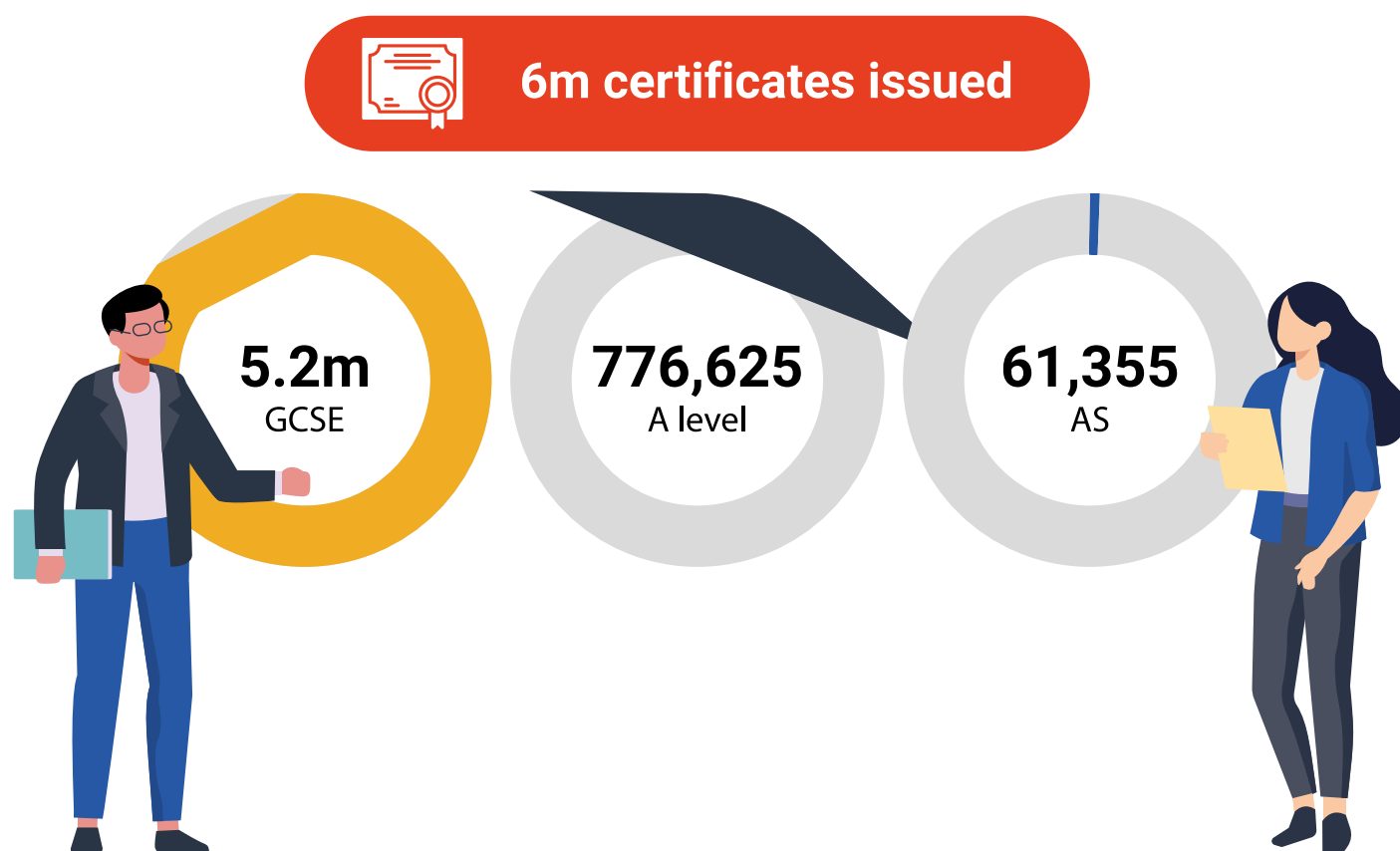
Grading in summer 2022

In September 2021, Ofqual announced its approach to [grading of GCSE, AS and A levels in summer 2022](#), that results would reflect a midpoint between summer 2019 and 2021. Overall results were higher than in 2019 when summer exams were last sat, and lower than in 2021 when alternative assessment arrangements were in place.

On results days in August, Ofqual published resources to help contextualise and explain results. These included [interactive visualisations that allow users to explore results information](#) in more detail.

As in any year, grade boundaries in summer 2022 were set based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence. Exam boards used data as a starting point for grading, to facilitate alignment between exam boards in a particular subject. This is important to ensure that students are not advantaged or disadvantaged due to the exam board with which they enter. This also ensured that any inevitable differences in advance information (due to different specification structures) did not make it easier, or harder, for students to get a particular grade in summer 2022.

There was also an important role for examiner judgement in grading. As in any year, senior examiners reviewed the quality of student work over a range of marks, before recommending grade boundaries based on all of the available evidence. Exam boards are responsible for setting grade boundaries in line with any regulatory requirements, and Ofqual monitors this closely.



An infographic breakdown of certificates issued in summer 2022

GCSE French and German

In 2019, Ofqual announced the intention to [better align grade standards in GCSE French and German with Spanish](#), following the conclusion of inter-subject comparability work. We required exam boards to make an upward adjustment in summer 2022 to both French and German at grades 9, 7 and 4, in line with our previously announced policy. This was taken into account during grading and is reflected in the overall results for these subjects.

Summer 2022 was a transition year, as we return to pre-pandemic grading standards in summer 2023. Ofqual will therefore be requiring exam boards to make the same adjustment next summer to GCSE French and German. We will review our approach following summer 2023 to consider whether any further action is needed.

National Reference Test

The [results of the National Reference Test \(NRT\) for 2022](#) were published on GCSE results day. The NRT, taken by nearly 13,000 students from over 330 schools in England in February and March 2022, provides important evidence on the performance of 16-year-old students in English and maths. The first live NRT in 2017 was benchmarked against the first awards of the reformed GCSEs in English language and maths, and subsequent tests compare the performance of students with those in previous years.

The NRT results for 2022 were compared to the results in 2020 because this was the last year of the NRT that was unaffected by the pandemic (the NRT took place prior to the closures of education settings in March 2020). In English, results showed no statistically significant difference when compared to 2020 at any of the key grades. In maths, results showed a statistically significant downward change when compared to 2020 at each of the key grades.

The NRT provides an additional source of evidence for exam boards when setting grade boundaries in GCSE English language and maths. Where there is a statistically significant difference in performance, Ofqual can require exam boards to adjust the grade standards when setting GCSE grade boundaries.

In summer 2022 the aim of awarding was to seek a midpoint between summer 2019 and 2021. While outcomes for the NRT in maths were lower than in 2020, Ofqual decided not to implement a downward change because this would have undermined the wider policy intent of more generous grading to reflect the disruption caused by the pandemic.

The NRT for 2023 is due to take place in February and March 2023.

Phase 6: Results and post results

Results days and the run up to these can be a worrying and anxious time for students. Ofqual recognise this and we issued information ahead of A level and GCSE results day [sharing ways for students to prepare for receiving their results](#).

In addition, to help centres and students better understand how general qualifications would be awarded in 2022 and what their results meant, Ofqual published bespoke resources for centres and students in the run-up to and on GCSE and A Level results days:

- [Guide to GCSE results for England, summer 2022](#)

- [Infographics about this year's GCSE results](#)
- [Interactive visualisations of outcomes](#) by centre type, variability in school and college GCSE results, GCSE outcomes in England, an interactive map of England showing GCSE results in different subjects by grade and county and GCSE grade combinations
- [Results of the 2022 National Reference Test](#)
- [Blog: Looking ahead to GCSEs, Level 1 and Level 2 vocational and technical qualifications results](#)
- [Blog: Looking ahead to AS, A level, T Level and level 3 VTQ results](#)

Incorrect results

Ofqual expects exam boards to mark all assessments according to the mark scheme and to issue results which reflect the performance of each student. It is possible for errors to be made, however, and so it is important that when they occur, exam boards identify them, and correct them quickly. We also expect exam boards to try and mitigate any adverse effect for the student created by the incorrect results.

Exam boards must take note of [Ofqual guidance on making changes to incorrect results](#). This guidance explains what exam boards should consider when deciding whether to re-issue results to correct an error, including any potential negative impact (for example, if the correct result is lower). Exam boards must explain to us how they have considered our guidance.

Ofqual takes the issue of incorrect results, regardless of their cause, very seriously. Exam boards must tell us promptly if they have issued any incorrect results. In summer 2022, exam boards told us of 17 cases where they had issued results which they later found to be incorrect. The reasons for these included exam board inputting or administration errors and IT system errors. These cases often covered more than one student and/or more than one qualification.

The numbers of incorrect results that were corrected after a successful review of marking or moderation is reported separately in our Official Statistics. These are shown below in the section on reviews of marking, moderation and appeals.



An infographic showing statistics on reviews of marking.

Lost scripts

Ofqual collects data from exam boards on the number of GCSE, AS or A level scripts (or other assessment materials) which have been lost at any point in the exam process.

Exam boards must notify us of all instances where a script or other evidence is lost and explain how they will make sure the student receives a fair result. Usually, an exam board will issue a calculated grade based on the student's performance in other papers in that subject.

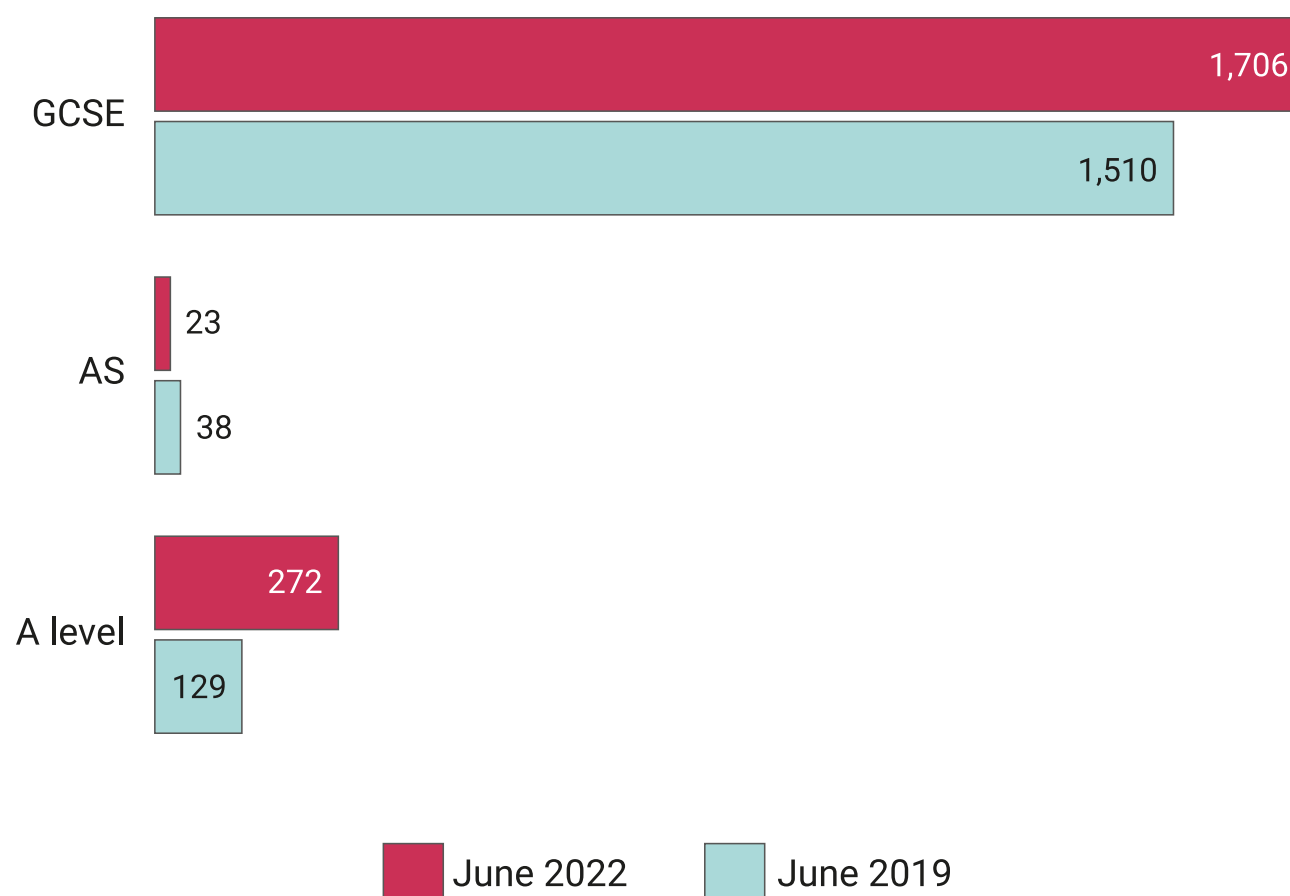
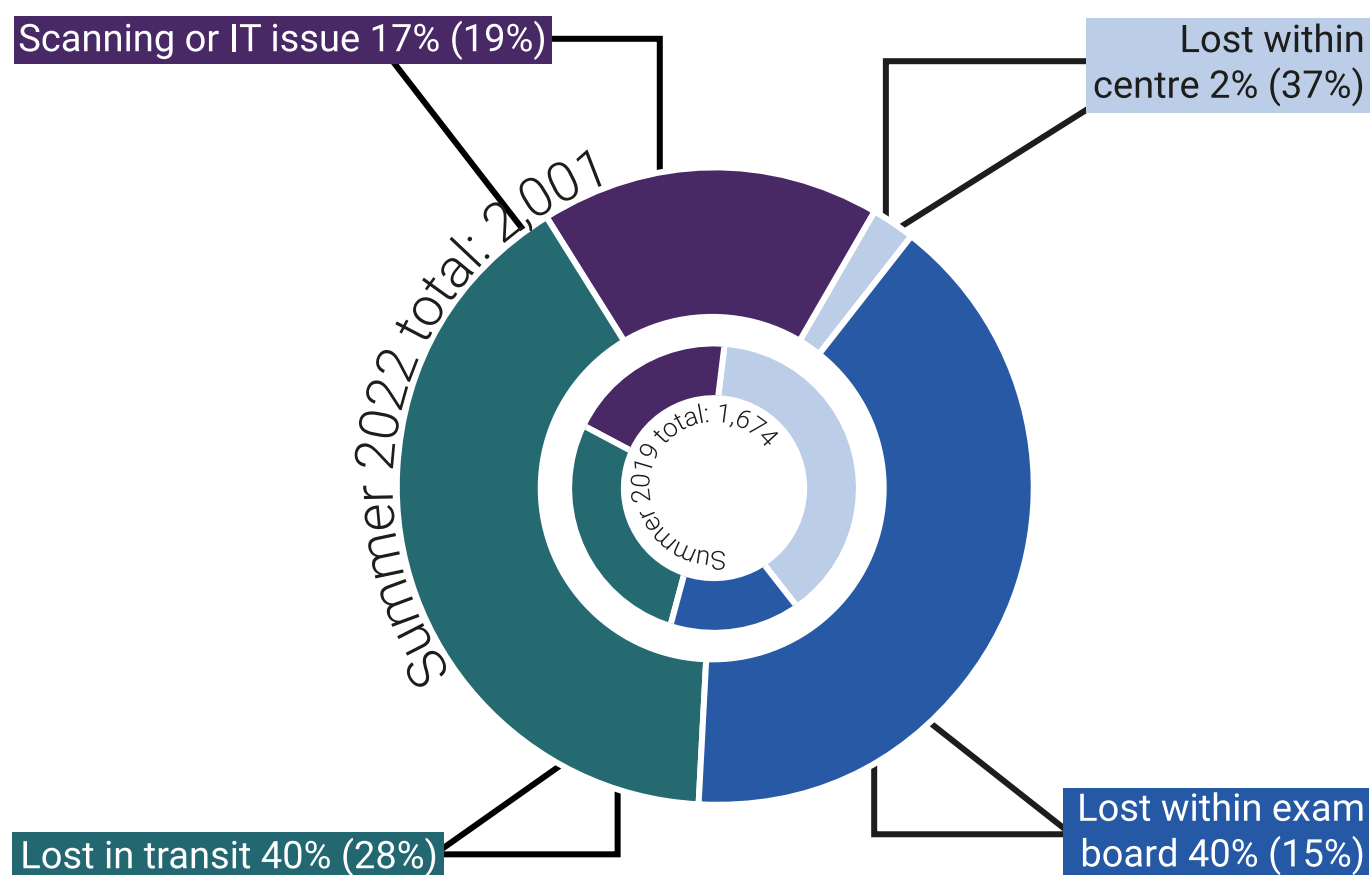


Figure 13: Lost scripts by qualification level, summer 2022 and summer 2019

The total number of lost scripts represents 0.01% of the overall scripts marked in summer 2022. The number of lost scripts in 2022 is higher than in 2019.

Assessment evidence can be lost at various points in the process: in a centre before despatch, in transit to the exam board, within the exam board or at an external scanning bureau. Scripts marked on paper can also be lost when the examiner receives or returns them to the exam board.



Figures in brackets are for 2019.
Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100%.

Figure 14: Lost scripts by cause, summer 2022 and summer 2019

In summer 2022 a greater proportion of scripts identified as lost went missing within the exam board. During the series, all boards reported a significant increase in the volume of additional assessment material returned by centres – including word-processed responses – which are put through separate manual processes and where there is a greater risk of human error. We intend to look further into the causes of the rise in lost scripts in summer 2022.

Reviews of marking, moderation and appeals

If a centre believes there has been a marking error, they can seek a review of marking. Exam boards only accept review requests through centres and require consent from the student. Ofqual requires exam boards to accept review requests directly from private candidates, who may not have the same relationship with a centre as other students.

With the return of exams in 2022, the usual range of post results services was available. The 3 post results services for reviewing students' assessments each exam board offers are:

- an administrative error review for an individual assessment
- a review of marking for an individual assessment
- a review of moderation of the centre's internal assessment

An administrative error review is a check to make sure that every question has been marked and the total number of marks is correct.

A review of marking considers the marking of the original examiner to determine whether the marking included any marking errors. The exam board also does a full administrative error review. Exam boards operate a priority service which centres can request if a quick response is required, for example because a university place is at stake. All exam boards offer this service for AS and A levels, and some offer it for GCSEs.

Exam boards can also carry out reviews of moderation. Exam boards will review the original sample of students' work, to determine if there were any errors with the initial

moderation or with any adjustments made to the centre's original marks as a result of the moderation.

If a centre has requested a review but is still dissatisfied with the outcome, it can make an appeal to the exam board. The exam board will review the outcome of the review and/or check that their procedures have been correctly followed.

If a centre still has concerns following the appeal, it can request a review from Ofqual through the [Examination Procedures Review Service](#) (EPRS). Ofqual will consider whether the exam board followed its own procedures correctly and whether it complied with Ofqual's rules. EPRS does not review students' work.

We have published official statistics on reviews of marking and moderation in GCSEs, AS and A levels for summer 2022. As there were no reviews of marking or moderation in summer 2020 and summer 2021, comparisons for summer 2022 are made to summer 2019 instead.

This year, the proportion of GCSE grades awarded that were challenged decreased compared to the last time these exams were taken (down to 3.7% from 5.4% in summer 2019). Of the 191,955 GCSE grades challenged in summer 2022, 43,530 (23%) were changed, compared to summer 2019 where 279,925 GCSE grades were challenged and 56,680 (20%) changed.

Overall, a small percentage, 0.9%, of all GCSEs awarded in summer 2022 were changed (compared to 1.1% in summer 2019). In the majority of cases (76.5%) there were no grade changes made following a review. When grades were changed at GCSE, they were most commonly changed by 1 grade (97.8% of grades changed, similar to summer 2019 where it was 98.6%).

At AS and A level the proportion of grades challenged also decreased, at 4.9% of all grades awarded compared to 7.4% in summer 2019. Of the 41,755 AS and A level grades challenged in summer 2022 10,230 (25%) were changed, compared to summer 2019 where 63,980 AS and A level grades were challenged and 13,070 (20%) were changed.

As at GCSE, a small percentage (1.2%) of the total number of AS and A level grades awarded in summer 2022 were subsequently changed (this compared to 1.5% in summer 2019). Again, in the majority of cases (75%) there were no grade changes made following a request for a review, and when grades were changed at AS and A level in summer 2022, they most commonly changed by 1 grade (98.9% of grades changed, in line with summer 2019 where it was 98.6%).

At GCSE and at AS and A level, we note that the number of grades awarded that have been challenged has decreased since summer 2019 and there has been an increase in the proportion of grades challenged that have changed. This may reflect an improved understanding by centres that marks, and therefore grades, will only change at review if a marking error is identified. In addition, Ofqual has introduced rules that require exam boards to make marked scripts available to centres before requesting a review of marking (see the section on 'Access to Scripts'). Our intention in changing our rules was to improve visibility of marked scripts to allow centres to make better informed decisions about when to request a review. This may be borne out in these figures. We will be undertaking work next year to understand how exam boards have implemented the Access to Scripts requirements.

It is also possible that the decline in the number of grades challenged this year reflects the different approach to grading compared to summer 2019. Grading was more generous than pre-pandemic, and overall results were midway between those of 2021 and 2019. While marking and grading are separate, we know that students who are unhappy with their grade often seek a review of marking. It is therefore possible that the approach to grading in 2022 has affected decisions about whether to request reviews of marking in some cases.

However, this grading approach was only part of the additional package of support for students this year which also may have had an impact on decisions to apply for a review of marking or moderation. Therefore, caution should be made in drawing any comparisons with summer 2019 as the arrangements were not the same.

Access to scripts

This year [Ofqual required exam boards to make marked GCSE scripts](#) available to centres before the deadline for requesting a review of marking. We also required exam boards to provide the reasons for review of marking decisions automatically, rather than on request. These requirements were originally intended to come into effect from summer 2020, but in the absence of summer exams in 2020 and 2021, they applied for the first time this series. Some exam boards chose to implement access to scripts prior to the required deadline.

Exam boards reported differing levels of uptake of this provision. Ofqual will review their approaches and any planned developments in this area, ahead of summer 2023.

Discussion groups

Ofqual commissioned a series of discussion groups in July and September this year to hear from students who took their GCSEs and A levels in 2022, and parents of students who took GCSEs and A levels in 2022, about the arrangements in place for assessing and grading students this year. In total, this involved 24 parents and 24 students from the London, Birmingham and Manchester areas.

Overall, both parents and students were supportive of the return to formal exams. They felt this was a fair way of assessing ability and knowledge. Students felt informed about the arrangements that had been made to assess them, and that the measures to make the stepped return-to-normal were reasonable. Both students and parents welcomed that students were being offered a 'helping hand' through more generous grade boundaries than had been in place before the pandemic, and the support students received in the exams. Students often spontaneously reported that advance information had a positive influence on them, largely because it helped guide their exam revision. However, reservations were also reported by students and parents. Many students reported feeling confused and disappointed when topics appeared in exams that they were not expecting based on their reading of the advance information.

It is important that students and parents are able to understand the arrangements that impact them. Our discussion groups allowed us to hear from these groups directly about the messages we use to communicate about exams and grading. They gave us recommendations of what language and level of detail was important and useful to them, and ultimately supported our communications over the summer in being clear to them and effective.

Conclusions and next steps

Six million GCSE, AS and A level results were issued on time to 1.2 million students in 373 different qualifications this year, despite the risks to delivery presented by 2

years without exams and the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

The 2022 summer series was an important step back towards normality. We have heard from students, parents, and centres through our various engagement activities, and they were supportive of the return to exams. They felt that exams were important to measure what students know, understand and can do, that the arrangements in place were as good as they could have been given the circumstances of the pandemic, and that students generally got fair results. There was also trust in marking for 2022, in that they felt confident that examiners marked exams correctly.

Ofqual's Chief Regulator recently announced how this move towards normality will continue into summer 2023, with [a return to pre-pandemic grading standards but some additional protection for students](#). Consultation decisions have also been confirmed regarding other aspects of 2023 GCSE, AS and A level assessments, including arrangements to support resilience in the exam system, and maintaining some aspects of support for students such as formulae and revised equation sheets in GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science.

Ofqual is now looking ahead to the exam boards' delivery of the summer 2023 series. We have written to the exam boards setting out areas of regulatory focus for the coming year and the follow-up work they are expected to carry out ahead of summer 2023, which we will revisit in their annual readiness reviews. These include:

- increasing resilience in marking and moderation processes through improved recruitment and retention of examiners. We are also considering what role Ofqual and others could play in encouraging qualified individuals to examine.
- reducing the potential risk of loss or error in the processing of exam scripts posed by the rise in additional material being submitted by centres.
- evaluating exam board approaches to implementing the requirement for access to marked GCSE scripts and automatic provision of reasons for review of marking and moderation decisions which came into effect this year.

We also plan to evaluate how awarding organisations have responded to Ofqual's [Statutory Guidance on designing and developing accessible assessments](#), published in May 2022. The evaluation will focus on understanding whether awarding organisations have made changes to their existing processes and what further work they may have planned in this area.

Appendix A – Data table counterparts for charts and graphs

Data corresponding to images of charts and graphs displayed in this report.

Figure 1

Number of students who took GCSEs, AS and A levels in summer 2021 and 2022 (England only figures)

Exam series	GCSE (all)	GCSE (age 16)	AS (all)	AS (age 17)	A level (all)	A level (age 18)
2022	898,950	622,495	33,110	25,435	299,710	275,690
2021	924,055	613,185	30,020	23,205	288,300	260,705

The figures give the count of unique students after removing those with -2, Q, and X grades, where:

-2 = Grade missing/unknown/not applicable

Q = Grade pending

X = Student absent from assessment

The figures are rounded to the nearest 5

Figure 2

Incidents reports received by exam year

Incident type	2019	2022
Assessment material error	71	61
Delivery Failure	32	57
Incorrect Result	25	17
Malpractice	11	6
Marking issue	7	11
Other	9	8
Potential security breaches	68	35
Total	223	195

Figure 3

Security breaches by category in summer 2022 and summer 2019

Types of security breach	2019	2022
Results released before results day	11	9
Incorrect paper issued for assessment	25	3
Assessment held at incorrect time	3	1
Leak of materials (exam board)	2	1
Leak of materials (student)	9	7
Leak of materials (centre)	6	7
Leak of materials (public)	7	2
Leak of materials (teacher or examiner)	4	3
Lost in transit	1	1

Other	0	1
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Figure 4

Incidents of exam delivery failure in summer 2022 and summer 2019

Types of delivery failure	2019	2022
Cyber attack	3	26
Human error	0	1
Missing scripts	7	9
Exam board missed own deadline	2	8
IT failure	1	5
Other	0	4
Resource capacity	1	2
Information error	1	0
Incorrect content in question paper	6	1
Plagiarism	5	0
Examiner recruitment	1	0
Disruption	3	0
Conflict of interest	3	1
Total	33	57

Figure 5

Categorisation of assessment material error type by exam board

Type of error	AQA	OCR	Pearson	WJEC	Total
Question paper	11	18	8	5	42
Supporting materials	4	3	5	0	12
Front cover instruction	2	0	0	0	2
Mark scheme or answer key	1	1	0	0	2
Collation or printing	0	0	0	1	1
Non-exam assessment	1	0	0	0	1
Specification	1	0	0	0	1
Total	20	22	13	6	61

Figure 6

Number and severity of assessment material errors by exam board

Error category	AQA	OCR	Pearson	WJEC	Total
1	3	4	2	1	10
2	16	16	8	5	45
3	1	2	3	0	6
Total	20	22	13	6	61

Figure 7

Number and severity of errors in different assessment material types

Error type	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Total
Question paper	9	31	2	42
Supporting materials	1	7	4	12
Front cover instruction	0	2	0	2
Mark scheme or answer key	0	2	0	2
Collation or printing	0	1	0	1
Non-exam assessment	0	1	0	1
Specification	0	1	0	1
Total	10	45	6	61

Figure 8

Point of identification of question paper errors by exam board

Exam board	Before exam	Before dispatch	During exam	After exam	Total
OCR	3	4	2	9	18
AQA	1	0	0	10	11
Pearson	2	0	1	5	8
WJEC	1	0	1	3	5
Total	7	4	4	27	42

Figure 9

Mitigations in response to question paper errors

Mitigation taken	Number
Amended mark scheme	13
Discount question	6
Erratum	7
Estimated marks	1
Replacement paper	3
Script review (outside of marking)	8
Special consideration (arrangements for students)	4
Total	42

Figure 10

Modified assessment material errors by time identified

When error identified	AQA	OCR	Pearson	WJEC	Total
Before exam	1	0	0	0	1
During exam	0	1	1	0	2
After exam	5	0	2	1	8
Total	6	1	3	1	11

Figure 11

Mitigations in response to modified assessment materials errors

Mitigations taken	Number
Special consideration (arrangements for students)	5
Discount question	2
Script review (outside of marking)	2
Estimated marks	1
Erratum	1

Figure 12

Nature of whistleblowing allegations to Ofqual in summer 2022 and summer 2019

Nature of allegation	2019	2022
Concern raised about own workplace	14	22
Concern raised by others	36	98
Total allegations made to Ofqual	50	120

Figure 13

Lost scripts by qualification level, summer 2022 and summer 2019

Exam Series	A level	AS	GCSE	Total	% All scripts
June 2019	129 (0.005%)	38 (0.011%)	1510 (0.011%)	1677	0.010%
June 2022	272 (0.012%)	23 (0.017%)	1706 (0.012%)	2001	0.012%

Figure 14

Lost scripts by cause, summer 2022 and summer 2019

Cause	2019	2022
Lost within exam board	250	808
Lost in transit	476	808
Scanning or IT issue	324	345
Lost within centre	624	40
Total	1674	2001

Appendix B – Data for online vs traditional marking

Qualification	Exam series	Papers marked online	Candidate scripts marked online	Papers traditionally marked	Candidate scripts traditionally marked	Pap Mar Tot:
AS and A	2019	915	2,158,095	205	91,775	1,11

level						
AS and A level	2022	695	2,211,135	140	71,500	835
GCSE	2019	570	12,410,230	80	316,815	650
GCSE	2022	615	13,078,260	75	379,850	685
Total	2019	1,485	14,568,325	285	408,590	1,77
Total	2022	1,310	15,289,395	210	451,350	1,52

Appendix C – Letter to exam boards ahead of the 2022 summer exam series

Dear Responsible Officer,

With the return to a full exam series this summer, this letter confirms Ofqual's expectations for this series and how it will monitor your delivery of exams and results. Many of your qualifications are available to learners in Wales and Northern Ireland, and the regulators in these jurisdictions (Qualifications Wales and CCEA Regulation) share Ofqual's expectations.

Ofqual recognises the challenges all exam boards have faced preparing for a large-scale exam series after a two-year hiatus, while concurrently preparing to be ready to implement contingency arrangements. While this summer marks a return to exams for GCSE, AS and A levels, it is also not entirely a return to the pre-pandemic arrangements due to the additional support which is being provided to students – including adaptations to assessments and a transitional grading standard.

Ofqual and exam boards share the desire for every exam series to run smoothly. This will be particularly important this year, however, due to the heightened scrutiny which will come with the return to assessment by examination. Ofqual expects you to have already taken all reasonable steps to identify the risks associated with the summer series and to have appropriate contingency plans in place to prevent or mitigate any Adverse Effect that may arise, and to deal with issues promptly and effectively.

Management of risks and incidents

Earlier this year Ofqual met with your senior leadership team to seek assurance on readiness to deliver the summer exam series. Following that review, Ofqual wrote to you highlighting a number of areas of risk for this summer, including those specifically related to the resumption of exams at scale after two years. Ofqual expects you to manage those risks effectively, and any other risks you may identify over the course of the series.

Notifying us about events

You are reminded that in accordance with the General Conditions of Recognition (GCR), awarding organisations must tell Ofqual promptly if they believe an event has occurred, or is likely to occur, that could lead to a potential or actual Adverse Effect (GCR B3). Ofqual's Guidance sets out when notification should be made of an event and you should have regard to this. Notifications should be made through the Portal.

We have previously written to exam boards to highlight particular types of issues which it considers notifiable, and the expectation that they should make notifications

promptly about issues that arise. This year this includes, but is not limited to:

- Any out of the ordinary events, or an event affecting a number of centres, which requires specific action by the awarding organisations or their centres to address the potential Adverse Effect (for example, unusual disturbance or disruption to the delivery of an assessment).
- Cyber-attacks on centres which could impact on an awarding organisation's ability to issue results for a qualification. Ofqual's letter of 26 April 2022 restated expectations for submitting notifications for cybersecurity incidents and the Conditions which may be engaged. We recognise that awarding organisations are not responsible for centres' cyber-security arrangements, but we expect to be notified where there is the potential for an Adverse Effect – e.g., where evidence for non-exam assessment is lost or inaccessible.
- Where scripts are confirmed missing (e.g., destroyed or stolen) before the issuing of results, or where this is identified before a review of marking or moderation. We would not expect you to inform Ofqual of instances where missing scripts became apparent before you have completed searches for them.
- Any potential for, or actual, media or social media coverage that could have an Adverse Effect. This includes where the nature or volume of coverage causes an awarding organisation to take some form of action to monitor or respond to the potential issues that are being raised.

Ofqual aims to minimise any unnecessary and time-consuming exchanges.

Therefore, where all relevant information is not available at the time of notification, please set out when it is expected that further details will be provided. If the event is complex and it would be easier to have a discussion, we are happy to discuss the matter. You should then provide the necessary notification or information via the Portal.

It is important that the fields on the Portal are completed as fully as possible, and in particular that there is a link to the relevant qualification from the Register. In terms of vocational qualifications included in performance tables, it is important that we can accurately identify the relevant titles as being included in these categories when events are assessed and managed. This will help consideration of how you are dealing with any issue and Ofqual's subsequent reporting.

Assessment material errors

Ofqual considers any assessment material errors in assessments for GCSEs, AS or A levels or in any of the four categories of vocational qualifications in the DfE performance tables to constitute a 'substantial error' and therefore notifiable in accordance with Condition B3. As such, the expectation is that you make prompt notification of all assessment material errors in these assessments, including those for which an erratum notice or replacement paper is issued. You should continue to notify Ofqual of errors that come to light after the summer series.

This year there is additional potential for errors due to the interaction between assessment materials and the advance information provided in some qualifications and subjects. Please continue to consider whether it is necessary to make notifications regarding any issues in relation to your advance information under Condition B3, via an Event Notification, as per Ofqual's message of 10 February 2022 and the Portal article about advance information in VTQ.

Errors will be categorised using the definitions below. To reflect the assessment context this summer, a separate category for errors relating to advance information has been added.

- Category 1 Assessment material errors which could or do make it impossible for learners to generate a meaningful response to a question or task
- Category 2 Assessment material errors which could or do cause unintentional

- difficulties for learners to generate a meaningful response to a question or task
- Category 3 Assessment material errors which will not affect a learner's ability to generate a meaningful response to a question or task
 - Advance Information Category Assessment material errors where the advance information has contributed to the error, for example, this could be because there is a mismatch and/or missing information between what is stated in the advance information and the actual assessments

Provision of assessment materials

You have confirmed that you will provide GCSE, AS & A level exam assessments and any additional materials (source booklets, erratum notices, etc.) as per Ofqual's request of 12 April.

These will be uploaded twice daily, on the day of the assessments after they have been sat. These assessments will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of advance information in 2022 as well as other areas of Ofqual's regulatory work.

Please upload these via the link provided. Should the review be extended to any mark schemes, these will be requested separately.

For other qualifications, Ofqual will give notice to you to provide the assessment materials on a case-by-case basis where we identify a need for them.

Marker recruitment and marking progress

Given the heightened risks in this area this summer, marker recruitment and marking progress are being monitored through data collections to provide assurance that marking is on track.

Ofqual understands that all exam boards have established procedures and mitigations to address risks to marking progress. However, should concerns about recruitment or marking for a particular specification lead to the conclusion that there is the potential for an Adverse Effect, a notification would be expected via the Portal.

Indications of when you may consider an issue to be notifiable under Condition B3 could include:

- normal activity to increase recruitment or marking progress has not resulted in the same progress at the same pace as in previous years
- marking is not expected to be completed to schedule
- the situation likely requires system level intervention *the required percentage of marks may not be reached to allow a qualification to be awarded on the date scheduled

Special Consideration and RoMMA

In Ofqual's engagement with you prior to the series, heightened risks were discussed in relation to potential volumes of special consideration requests and applications for reviews of marking and moderation. This might arise because of students' experiences in recent years. Ofqual would expect to be notified promptly should numbers prove significantly higher than expected or planned for or should there be indications they will not be processed to the required timescales.

Ofqual's approach to monitoring delivery

Ofqual will acknowledge and continue to monitor any notifications made.

Ofqual will leave you to focus on managing the event once it has the necessary information about the nature, scale, and potential impact, and has sufficient assurance that it is being managed appropriately. The event notification will be closed as soon as it is clear that the event itself has been contained, and that any

Adverse Effect has been sufficiently prevented or mitigated. Further work may be carried out or action taken after the summer to address any outstanding thematic or compliance issues.

Ofqual may intervene if it believes your approach is inadequate or inappropriate, or believes it is likely to breach its Conditions. Depending on the nature of the event and the urgency with which it must be dealt, Ofqual may:

- give you the opportunity to review its approach in light of Ofqual's concerns; and/or
- direct you to take a specific course of action

Where appropriate, Ofqual will monitor your delivery in a coordinated way with the other qualification regulators to minimise unnecessary burden.

Through GQ Policy and Implementation Board and VTQ Policy and Implementation Advisory Group Ofqual will provide exam boards with interim updates on any observed trends and patterns and discuss collective delivery risks and issues. In fortnightly meetings, Ofqual will discuss risks and issues specific to you and may ask for further information on the way in which it has delivered the summer series. Board specific issues will not normally be discussed at meetings where other exam boards are present.

Setting and maintaining standards

It will be important to ensure that the awarding of qualifications this summer is as fair as possible to learners. Ofqual will write to you separately about this.

Summer report

In line with Ofqual's normal regulatory approach, a report will be published on the issues that occur during the summer exam series. You will be given an opportunity to provide feedback on the report's factual accuracy before it is published. Ofqual will share a complete version of the draft report (unredacted - so each exam board's data is visible) with all exam boards, unless concerns are raised about this approach.

Further clarification about any of the expectations outlined in this letter can be provided if required. We wish you a successful exam series.

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1. Figures taken from JCQ GCSE, AS and A level summer 2022 results tables, England only.↵
 2. Exam boards issue more modified papers than standard papers as they create different types of paper for different disabilities.↵

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