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Corporate report

Ofqual delivery report 2024

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Applies to England

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Executive summary

The summer 2024 series was again delivered as normal following the return to pre-pandemic standards for qualifications in summer 2023. This meant the continuation of pre-pandemic grading approaches and standards. Exams and formal assessments operated in the normal way, with specific support for students in a small number of GCSE subjects.

Considering all the qualifications addressed in this report, the scale is significant - resulting in the award of more than 7 million qualifications to students and apprentices. Ofqual's rules and thorough programme of monitoring helped ensure AOs managed known risks and dealt appropriately with the issues that did arise. Overall, the series was successful and there were no issues which caused significant disruption to the secure and timely delivery of qualifications.

Ofqual embedded the changes to the delivery of vocational and technical qualification (VTQ) results which were introduced in 2023 to secure greater parity of treatment for students across different types of qualification. Thanks to the efforts of teachers, school and college leaders, awarding organisations (AOs), along with the Department for Education (DfE), UCAS and Ofqual, students received their results on time. This is rightly a baseline expectation for students, and Ofqual has [announced that these arrangements](#) will form part of the standard monitoring of VTQs in 2025 and beyond.

The introduction of new T Levels continued this year. Ofqual continued to closely monitor the Technical Qualifications within the T Levels in light of both their newness and the issues that arose within particular T Levels in 2022.

Students sat new, strengthened versions of Tech Awards in 2024. Tech Awards are typically taken alongside GCSEs and support progression to post-16 education. AOs worked with centres to ensure a shared understanding about the new rules in place for these qualifications.

The vast majority of end-point assessments (EPA) in apprenticeships are now subject to statutory regulation. Where Ofqual is the regulator, apprentices are assessed by awarding organisations that have demonstrated that they have the sector knowledge, assessment expertise, governance and resources necessary to deliver assessments to a consistent, high standard. Ofqual has taken a targeted approach to EPA regulation during 2024, which will inform its monitoring approach as the sector continues to develop.

The discovery of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in school and

college buildings led to disruption for some centres this year. Ofqual worked with AOs, the DfE, JCQ, UCAS and Office for Students (OfS) to make sure that all students and schools affected by RAAC, Caledonian Modular or similar building issues could access all possible support in relation to exams and assessments.

There were fewer reported cyber-attacks this year, but improving resilience in the system remains a priority. Ofqual conducted a campaign to remind schools and colleges of the importance of cyber-security after a poll highlighted the risks associated with poor cyber-hygiene.

Ofqual's extensive regulatory monitoring covers a broad range of AOs' processes to ensure that their qualifications are well designed; delivered effectively and securely; and that they are marked and awarded accurately.

This activity is reported here, including the number and impact of assessment material errors, cases of malpractice and maladministration and other delivery incidents. In all instances, Ofqual expects AOs first to take all reasonable steps to prevent such failures and then to address them to negate or minimise any negative effect on students or apprentices, should they occur.

Where incidents did arise, AOs are now reviewing these to inform improvements for 2025. Ofqual intends to undertake further work with AOs in the next reporting period to identify opportunities to increase the resilience of the exam system; reduce assessment material errors with a particular focus on modified papers; and strengthen processes to ensure the timely delivery of results.

Introduction

Scope

This report covers Ofqual-regulated qualifications awarded between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024. All data relates to qualifications taken in England only.

Where reference is made to General Qualifications (GCSE, AS and A level qualifications and those classed as Other Generals such as the IB Diploma) in this report, this relates to assessments in the summer 2024 (May/June) exam series. The report does not cover the November 2024 exam series for GCSE English

language and GCSE maths.

Where the report includes information about Technical Qualifications in T Levels it covers those taken in waves 1, 2, 3 and 4 (see glossary).

It also includes Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs) that feature in government performance tables and are known as Performance Table Qualifications (PTQs) such as Applied Generals and Technical Awards. Information about apprenticeship end-point assessments (EPAs) and Functional Skills Qualifications in English and maths (FSQ) is also included.

Awarding organisations (AOs) deliver all of these qualifications in schools, colleges, training providers and other exam centres (referred to as “centres” in this report).

Background

Scale

This report covers the awarding of more than 7 million certifications in total, across all the types of qualifications in the scope set out above.

Ofqual is the statutory and independent regulator responsible for maintaining standards and confidence in qualifications in England. Ofqual recognises 248 AOs, offering a wide range of qualifications which give students and apprentices of all ages opportunities for progression through their chosen pathways.

Four AOs, AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC (Eduqas), also known as exam boards, offered 370 unique specifications this summer in 149 subjects at GCSE, AS and A level, as well as other qualifications. In summer 2024 more than 1.3 million GCSE, AS and A level students took 1,430 different question papers (and 2,555 modified papers) and produced over 16 million individual exam scripts.

Around 72,000 examiner contracts were fulfilled to undertake marking, and in August the 4 AOs issued approximately 6.5 million results, distributed as follows:

- 5.6 million GCSE results
- 57,294 AS results

- 816,948 A level results

AOs also offer Extended Project Qualifications (EPQs), Core Maths, and the Advanced Extension Award (AEA) and other regulated academic qualifications that are taken alongside AS and A levels in centres such as the International Baccalaureate and Pre-U. These qualifications are collectively referred to as Other Generals.

Some VTQ qualifications, such as those included in performance tables (PTQs), are taken instead of or alongside GCSEs, AS and A levels. Others, such as FSQs and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), are also used more flexibly, including for progression to further or higher education or progression to employment. Many more VTQs test occupational competency or are used as a licence to practise.

Fifteen AOs issued certificates for more than 350 VTQ PTQs, and 3 AOs offered 18 technical qualifications within T Levels. Ten AOs issued certificates for more than 90 FSQs.

For apprenticeship EPAs, Ofqual regulated the EPA in 656 apprenticeship standards in the period up to 31 August 2024. In total, it regulated 153 AOs recognised to deliver 1,886 EPAs. Of these, AOs were actively offering 1,783 EPAs for 572 standards in this period.

For VTQ PTQs and FSQs, there were over 976,000 certificates issued in the 12 months leading up to and including September 2024. For more detail see Ofqual's [vocational and other qualifications quarterly release](#). In spring and summer 2024, AOs issued more than 630,000 certificates for VTQ Performance Table Qualifications (PTQs) and nearly 244,000 certificates for FSQs. For more details see the [FSQ outcomes interactive visualisation](#).

Around 7,340 students received results for the Technical Qualifications within T Levels. For more details see [T Level Technical Qualification \(TQ\) results](#).

For EPAs, assessments are not taken within a fixed period and apprentices can be registered with an AO at any time, typically 6 months prior to the apprentice starting their EPA. Apprentices can only start their EPA once the employer, apprentice and training provider agree that the apprentice is fully prepared. EPA outcomes data was collected from AOs to cover the period March 2023 to the end of February 2024. The data showed that 144,895 EPAs were fully completed, and 411,100 individual EPA components were taken by apprentices. For further data see Ofqual's Apprenticeship End-Point Assessments Statistical Report.

Many VTQs have a flexible approach to assessment, which supports students to complete qualifications as they are ready, taking assessments throughout the academic year. Some assessments are internally assessed (typically set by AOs and marked by centres); others are externally assessed (set and marked by AOs). AOs require centres to make entries in advance for timetabled assessments. Some external assessments are on demand, giving students the flexibility to take an assessment whenever they are ready.

T Levels

Ofqual regulates the Technical Qualifications (TQs) within T Levels, which comprise the core assessments (core examinations and employer set project) and the occupational specialism.

In the academic year 2023 to 2024, the core assessments of the fourth wave of T Levels were available for the first time, alongside the core and occupational specialism assessments for first, second and third wave TQs.

Ofqual has reviewed TQ assessment materials for each assessment series since autumn 2022. These reviews covered all AOs offering T Levels.

Tech Awards

Tech Awards are typically taken alongside GCSEs and support progression to post-16 education. They include subjects such as health and social care, sport studies and IT.

Tech Awards have been strengthened, with the first students completing the new versions of the qualifications in 2024. Ofqual introduced new rules for these qualifications: including that students must now take the external assessment (the examination) at the end of their course, in the series that they are claiming the certificate for. Awarding organisations that offer Tech Awards have communicated with centres about these changes to make sure that centres are clear about the order in which examined units and NEA are taken for these qualifications.

The number of Tech Awards available has changed from 76 in 2023 to 48 in 2024, with some qualifications not being replaced and other new qualifications being introduced. More than 367,000 Tech Award results were issued for the first time in September 2023 to August 2024.

Infographic: the numbers of Performance Table Qualifications, Technical Qualifications within T Levels and End-Point Assessments on Ofqual's Register

Supporting the sector

Throughout the academic year Ofqual met with AOs to monitor their delivery of assessments and discuss policy developments.

Ofqual also met with centre representative organisations and individual schools,

colleges and training providers to gather feedback about communications from AOs and preparation for results. Ofqual shared relevant feedback with AOs so they could address any issues swiftly. Ofqual published materials to help centres and students understand AOs' processes in relation to assessment, including a [Guide for schools and colleges: 2024](#) . See Appendix E for more detail.

In February 2024, Ofqual published its [End-Point Assessment Guide for Apprentices](#) which set out what to expect from an Ofqual-regulated EPA. The guide helps apprentices prepare for their assessment and provides guidance on what they should do if they have concerns about the quality of their EPA.

Delivery of assessments

For this report, the delivery of assessments is divided into 5 phases. They are as follows:

- Phase 1: planning includes information about preparation for the delivery of assessments.
- Phase 2: delivery covers incidents with the potential to affect the delivery of live assessments.
- Phase 3: marking explains the processes around marking, including special consideration.
- Phase 4: grading looks at how AOs arrive at grades after marking is complete.
- Phase 5: results and post results includes information about the volume of results released and reviews of marking, moderation and appeals.

Infographic: the number of AOs delivering VTQ assessments

Phase 1: planning

Awarding organisation readiness

Following the delivery of results in 2023, Ofqual met with AOs for evaluative review meetings during the autumn. Afterwards, Ofqual wrote to AOs to outline the follow-up work AOs were expected to carry out ahead of future series and set out Ofqual's areas of regulatory focus.

By May 2024, Ofqual had conducted annual readiness reviews with 25 AOs. These AOs, including the 4 exam boards, cover most of the regulated market. Ofqual sought assurances from each AO about its:

- governance and capability
- management of a range of operational risks relating to the delivery of its qualifications, such as assessment material production and marking

Ofqual did not identify any serious concerns with AOs' preparations for series delivery. Where Ofqual identified isolated issues within AOs' delivery plans, Ofqual required them to strengthen their controls.

Before the summer series, Ofqual met again with 6 of the largest AOs to review their individual preparations and progress against their plans. Ofqual reiterated the types of incidents it expected to be notified about, the requirement to alert Ofqual swiftly and the factors AOs should consider in managing such issues if they arose. Ofqual made clear the importance of resolving issues quickly and effectively to minimise any impact on students. Ofqual subsequently wrote to a wider group of AOs, including those expecting to issue VTQ results on or before A level and GCSE results days, to confirm these expectations (see Appendix G).

Ofqual monitored marker recruitment closely and sought assurance from the relevant AOs through monthly progress updates from January, when contracting activity was underway, until the end of May. Ofqual also monitored marking progress following exams to ensure that results would be delivered on time for these qualifications, this is discussed in more detail under Phase 3: Marking.

RAAC affected schools and colleges – Assessment mitigations

On 31 August 2023, the Department for Education (DfE) [published information](#) on how to identify reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), and what responsible bodies and education settings were required to do if it was confirmed in their buildings. Ofqual worked with AOs to make sure that all schools affected by

RAAC, Caledonian Modular or similar building issues could access the full range of support in relation to exams and assessments.

Ofqual worked closely with the DfE and AOs to ensure that they all had the necessary information to support affected schools. It also worked with JCQ on its guidance, published in [October 2023](#) and [March 2024](#). This clarified how JCQ's existing special consideration process applies to centres affected by these issues, including the provision of a small number of marks where students experience disruption at the time of taking their exams or assessment.

For non-exam assessments, AOs provided schools and colleges with extensions of up to 45 days to the submission deadline. Where students were unable to complete all the work even with extensions due to disruption at the time of completion, for example where access to specialist equipment for A level design & technology was not possible, AOs considered accepting a reduced quantity of non-exam assessment.

In exceptional cases, where students had studied for but unavoidably could not take the exam or assessment for a particular component of a qualification, their grade could be based on their performance in the exams or assessments that they were able to sit for that qualification. Such cases were agreed between schools and the AO.

Ofqual worked with UCAS and Office for Students (OfS) to ensure that higher educational institutions were aware of the disruption experienced by some students at schools and colleges impacted by RAAC, Caledonian Modular and similar building issues so they could consider this when confirming admissions decisions.

VTQ delivery of results 2024

In 2023, AOs' co-operation with the [VTQ Results Action Plan](#) meant that students received their Level 3 results when they expected to. Many processes introduced through the Action Plan were embedded in Ofqual's series monitoring for VTQs during 2024, so Ofqual could track progress towards delivery of Level 1/2 and Level 2 results as well as Level 3 results which students relied on for progression. Ofqual updated the [VTQ information hub](#) so that exams officers and subject teachers could prepare for the AOs' key dates and deadlines ahead of awarding in summer 2024.

As part of its monitoring of AOs' progress towards delivery of results, Ofqual required AOs to confirm that they had a process to keep details of each centre's

senior designated contact up to date. This followed the strengthening of the Head of Centre declaration in 2023 which meant centres had to supply AOs with details of a senior designated contact should they need a point of escalation in the lead up to delivery of results.

Ofqual continued to work with UCAS to make sure that data sharing between AOs and UCAS enabled tracking of results needed for progression to higher education.

Approach to the regulation of AOs delivering EPA

This year, Ofqual used a variety of tools to regulate AOs delivering EPA and safeguard the assessment of apprentices.

Between September 2023 and August 2024, Ofqual conducted engagements with 127 AOs to monitor the delivery of assessments and/or assessor standardisation and training. These engagements involved in-person, live observations of AO activities and the reviewing of recorded assessment evidence.

Ofqual also reviewed a sample of assessment materials from 34 AOs across 30 apprenticeship standards to ensure they were fit for purpose: delivering valid and reliable assessment of the apprentice in line with the terms of the end-point assessment plan and Ofqual's requirements. Where Ofqual identified issues, either through monitoring engagements or assessment material reviews, AOs were required to rectify these.

In addition, Ofqual conducted a range of thematic monitoring activities to investigate and, where necessary, address the risks identified below. The findings of these activities will be used to inform future regulatory monitoring.

The risks included:

Assessor training – an ongoing programme of work designed to assess how AOs are addressing the risk that assessors may not be making consistent and accurate assessment judgements. Ofqual has completed observations of assessor training or standardisation activities with 118 AOs so far. AOs were required to respond to specific concerns raised and provide further clarifications, or mitigations where necessary, for Ofqual to review.

Provision of EPA – Ofqual engaged with AOs to assess risks related to the availability of EPA, individual AO capacity and capability, and the experience of

assessors and training providers within the EPA process. These projects provided insight into provision within the market, with information collected from 135 AOs, 1,197 individual assessors and 59 training providers. Feedback was provided to AOs and the findings will also be used to inform future regulatory activity.

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

Access arrangements, which include arrangements provided as reasonable adjustments for students with a disability, are provisions generally applied for by centres and agreed by AOs ahead of an exam series to ensure students can be validly assessed and are not unfairly disadvantaged.

In November 2024, Ofqual published [official statistics on access arrangements](#) compiled using data submitted to Ofqual by exam boards in relation to GCSEs, AS and A levels.

These statistics show an increase in approved arrangements over recent years, and a particular increase in approvals for 25% extra time. Ofqual will consider what the data shows and how it should inform our regulatory approach. Ofqual does not currently collect this data for other qualifications but is exploring this possibility for future data collections.

AOs have a legal duty under the Equality Act to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled students. In a small number of exceptional cases where students were unable to sit all formal exams and assessments for a qualification due to their disability, AOs can consider alternative assessment evidence where no other adjustment could be made to enable students to sit exams and assessments. In these cases, awarding organisations use robust assessment evidence provided by centres, with senior examiners using this evidence to determine a grade in line with the national standard.

This year, as at results day 2024, there were a total of 790 GCSE grades awarded to 165 students through use of alternative assessment evidence as a reasonable adjustment, which represents 0.01% of the total GCSE level grades awarded this summer. As at results day in 2023, a total of 473 grades were awarded to 107 students through alternative assessment approaches.

This year, as at results day 2024, there were a total of 75 A level grades awarded to 35 students through use of alternative assessment evidence as a reasonable adjustment, which represents less than 0.01% of the total A level grades awarded

this summer. As at results day in 2023, a total of 63 grades were awarded to 34 students through alternative assessment approaches.

Assessment material production

Ofqual's Conditions require AOs to produce assessment materials that are clear, appropriate, and fit for purpose. Some qualifications also have additional rules about the design of the assessments, such as the nature and balance of content and skills that must be assessed. It is an AO's responsibility to make sure its assessment materials are free of errors and assess the content stipulated in the specification. Ofqual does not review or otherwise vet the content of question papers before students take them due to the confidential nature of the assessments, to maximise their security.

Production of assessment materials typically starts over a year or more before assessments take place. These materials include question papers, stimulus materials and mark schemes, as well as adapted versions of assessment materials to support students with specific needs (modified assessment materials). Centres are required to order these well in advance of assessments taking place because modified papers of all types take time to produce, quality assure and print.

For assessments that are on demand, some AOs use software to generate assessments, from a bank of standardised questions or items, so that each student takes an individualised version of an assessment. AOs tend to update their question banks frequently, adding fresh items to the bank and retiring old ones to ensure the questions are functioning appropriately and to prevent predictability. For EPAs, the required frequency of these question bank reviews is often stipulated within the apprenticeship EPA plan.

AOs produced assessment materials for about 395 unique external VTQ PTQ assessments taken in 2023 to 2024. Additionally, around 815 discrete modified question papers were also produced.

AOs produced assessment materials for about 170 unique external TQ assessments taken in 2023 to 2024. Additionally, around 845 discrete modified question papers were also produced.

For GCSE, AS and A levels, AOs produced nearly 4,000 unique question papers in 2024. This comprised 1,430 standard question papers and 2,555 unique modified question papers.

In addition, for GCSEs in mathematics, physics and combined science, the government decided to continue not to require that students memorise all the formulae and equations expected in a normal year in view of the disruption this cohort of students may have experienced. Following consultation, Ofqual changed its rules for these qualifications to require exam boards to publish formulae and revised equation sheets for use during teaching and learning, and to include clean copies of these sheets with the exam papers. The rules were included in updated [GCSE Conditions](#). For GCSEs in mathematics, this requirement also applied to exams taken in November 2024.

Infographic: the numbers of students at GCSE, AS and A level, the amount of GCSE, AS and A level standard question papers and the amount of discrete

modified papers produced

Phase 2: delivery

Ofqual expects AOs to manage their qualifications so that incidents that could cause adverse effects to the delivery and awarding of qualifications are avoided. However, no large-scale series of exams and assessments passes without incident and while this section of the report summarises those that arose in this reporting period, none was sufficient to pose significant disruption to the otherwise successful delivery of exams and assessments during the 2023 to 2024 academic year.

Infographic: the number of schools and colleges delivering exams and assessments

Infographic: the number of Performance Table Qualification external assessments taken, the number of Technical Qualification Core components within T Levels taken and the number of End Point Assessment components taken

Reported incidents

AOs are responsible for managing, and reporting to Ofqual, any incidents that may have a potential adverse effect on the delivery and awarding of their qualifications. When such incidents arise Ofqual monitors the AOs' actions closely, to make sure

they do all they can to minimise the impact, if any, on students.

Ofqual's immediate priority during assessment delivery is to make sure students take assessments that enable them to demonstrate what they know and can do, and that they get results that reflect their performance and are delivered on time. Once results are released, Ofqual follows up each incident with the relevant AO to make sure they are taking appropriate corrective action to prevent recurrence. The cause of each incident, its impact and how effectively it was managed is also evaluated. Ofqual then decides if any regulatory action is necessary.

An explanation of the different event types and sub-types presented in the tables can be found in appendix A.

There have been some changes to Ofqual's classification of event types in 2023 to 2024. In the comparison data for 2022 to 2023 there are no event types recorded for 'maladministration' and 'centre failure' incidents, because these were previously included in the 'malpractice' and 'other' categories respectively.

GCSEs, AS and A Levels

The chart below summarises the types of incidents reported for GCSE, AS and A levels during the summer 2024 series, compared with summer 2023.

Table 1: GQ incident reports received relating to summer 2024 and summer 2023

Event type	2024	2023
Assessment material error	100	87
Delivery failure	35	27
Cyber attack	6	19
Incorrect results	24	15
Suspected malpractice	6	15
Maladministration	3	0
Issues potentially impacting marking	3	0
Security breach	70	123

Other	5	9
Centre failure	1	0
Total	253	295

While overall there were fewer incidents (253) reported by AOs in the summer 2024 series compared with summer 2023 (295), there was nevertheless an increase in some of the categories which directly concern AOs' own processes such as assessment material errors and the issuing of incorrect results. Though not all of the 100 assessment material errors reported this year had the potential to impact on students, they remain the most common incident and a focus of our regulatory activity. The second most common incident types were security breaches (70), although these have seen a significant reduction since summer 2023 following activity undertaken to increase security control across the sector which are discussed in more detail below.

Other general qualifications

The table below summarises the types of incidents reported for Other General Qualifications during the summer 2024 series, compared with summer 2023.

Table 2: Other General Qualifications incident reports received relating to summer 2024 and summer 2023

Event type	2024	2023
Assessment material error	14	12
Security breach	23	0
Delivery failure	1	3
Cyber attack	2	2
Incorrect results	0	1
Issues potentially impacting marking	0	1
Other	0	1
Total	40	20

More incidents (40) were reported by AOs in the summer 2024 series compared with summer 2023 (20). This includes an increase in security breaches largely driven by reports of students who have completed an assessment taken later by others in different time-zones, discussing the content online. This is against the rules of the relevant AO.

In 2023, incident reports for Other General Qualifications were included in the Vocational and Technical Qualifications section but this has been separated for 2024.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

The table below summarises the types of incidents reported for VTQs during the 2023 to 2024 academic year, compared with the 2022 to 2023 academic year.

There were 245 reported incidents concerning VTQs in the academic year 2023 to 2024; in the academic year 2022 to 2023 there were 145 incidents reported to Ofqual.

Table 3: Incidents reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for VTQs (T Levels, PTQs and FSQs)

Event type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Assessment material error	68	31
Security breach	51	13
Delivery failure	44	46
Suspected malpractice	29	21
Maladministration	17	0
Incorrect results	16	12
Cyber attack	6	5
Incorrect certificates	4	0

Other	5	12
Centre failure	4	0
Issues potentially impacting marking	1	5
Total	245	145

Ofqual has been working with AOs to improve their understanding of what constitutes a notifiable event and while AOs reported more incidents for VTQs in 2023 to 2024, there was not a material increase in high impact incidents.

A breakdown of the main incidents from 2023 to 2024 compared with 2022 to 2023 can be seen in Table 3. The 2 most common types of incidents reported in the year 2023 to 2024 were assessment material errors (68 events) and security breaches (51 events). The 2 most common types reported in 2022 to 2023 were delivery failures (46 events) and assessment material errors (31 events).

Note that the data for 2022 to 2023 differs to previous published figures as Other General qualifications previously included in the data are now reported separately.

Incidents relating to T Levels, PTQs and FSQs are all summarised in this section of the report. Data regarding incidents by qualification type for VTQs can be found in Appendix D.

End-Point Assessments

There were 147 reported incidents concerning apprenticeship EPAs in the academic year 2023 to 2024, which is 47 more than Ofqual received in the previous year. This increase is likely due to the increase in regulated awarding organisations offering EPA throughout the full reporting period and the work done with AOs to improve understanding of notifiable events.

A breakdown of the main incidents from 2023 to 2024 compared with 2022 to 2023 can be seen in Table 4. As in 2022 to 2023, the 2 most common incident types in 2023 to 2024 were delivery failures and incidents categorised as 'other'. The number of reported delivery failures increased from 35 in 2022 to 2023 to 56 in 2023 to 2024. There were 29 reports of other types of events for EPAs, which is an increase of 8 from 2022 to 2023.

Table 4: Incidents reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for EPAs

Event type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Assessment material error	12	9
Centre failure	4	0
Cyber attack	2	0
Delivery failure	56	35
Incorrect certificates	2	2
Incorrect results	8	17
Maladministration	4	0
Suspected malpractice	11	10
Issues potentially impacting marking	4	1
Other	29	21
Security breach	15	5
Total	147	100

Delivery failure incidents

Delivery, in this context, includes a range of processes from printing and dispatch of question papers to issuing results and processing appeals. Ofqual requires AOs to deliver their assessments effectively, efficiently and to set timescales. AOs are required to report any actual or potential delivery incident which could have a potential or actual adverse effect on students.

GCSEs, AS and A Levels

During the summer series, AOs that deliver GCSE, AS and A levels told Ofqual

about 35 incidents where aspects of the delivery of an assessment were or could have been compromised. This was greater than in summer 2023, when there were 27 such incidents reported. There has been an increase in issues relating to IT failures this reporting period. Most of these were due to issues with AOs' systems, for instance those used for the digital distribution of question papers, and Ofqual ensured that they addressed these and took appropriate action to mitigate the impact on students. Some IT failures occurred in centres, and AOs worked with centres to support them and took action to ensure students weren't disadvantaged.

Table 5: Incidents of exam delivery failure relating to summer 2024 and summer 2023

Event sub-type	2024	2023
Missing scripts	5	12
AO missed own deadline	1	5
IT failure	12	4
Process weakness	0	3
Human error	0	1
Conflict of interest	2	1
Information error	6	1
Other	5	0
Exam disruption	3	0
Delayed results	1	0
Total	35	27

Other General Qualifications

Table 6: Incidents of exam delivery failure relating to summer 2024 and summer 2023

Event sub-type	2024	2023
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Missing scripts	1	0
AO missed own deadline	0	1
Process weakness	0	1
Information error	0	1
Total	1	3

Only one incident concerning lost exam scripts was reported in the delivery of Other GQ assessments in summer 2024. This is a reduction from 2023 where 3 delivery failure notifications were made to Ofqual by AOs.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Table 7: Incidents of delivery failure reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for VTQs (T Levels, PTQs and FSQs)

Event sub-type	Number of reports for academic year 2023 to 2024	Number of reports for academic year 2022 to 2023
IT failure	11	8
AO missed own deadline	10	18
Delayed results	10	0
Other	8	1
Process weakness	2	5
Information error	1	2
Exam disruption	1	3
Missing	1	6

scripts

Incorrect content	0	1
Collation / printing error	0	1
Resource capacity	0	1
Total	44	46

IT failures, missed deadlines, and delayed results were the most frequent types of delivery failure reported to Ofqual by AOs for VTQs in 2023 to 2024, compared to missed deadlines and IT failures in 2022 to 2023.

Most of the IT failures were due to issues with AO systems. In all cases, AOs deployed temporary fixes or solutions until the problems with their systems were repaired and took appropriate action to mitigate the impact on students. Some IT failures occurred in centres and when this was the case AOs worked with centres to support them and minimise any disadvantage to students.

Most of the incidents relating to missed deadlines were due to centres not meeting AO deadlines or not following AOs' processes correctly. As in 2023, AOs were also required to notify Ofqual when they did not meet the completion target for the term time checkpoints for the Delivery of Results arrangements; these cases were categorised as a missed deadline. There were fewer cases than in 2023 as AOs and centres become more familiar with the processes.

AOs informed us about the potential for delays to issuing results, while some issues were resolved prior to release of results, others faced delays due to ongoing malpractice investigations or moderation activities. While Ofqual requires AOs to meet their published deadlines for issuing results, they must also prioritise issuing results that are valid and accurate, and Ofqual expects AOs to thoroughly investigate allegations of malpractice. Similarly, if centres request moderation after AOs' deadlines, it may not be possible for AOs to complete all activities and issue results according to their published dates. Therefore, in a small number of complex cases, it is not always possible for AOs to meet their timescales for releasing results.

Overall, the number of delivery failures reported in 2023 to 2024 decreased to 44 events, down from 46 events reported in 2022 to 2023.

End-Point Assessments

Table 8: Incidents of delivery failure reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for EPAs, broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Delayed results	2	0
Exam disruption	3	2
Human error	4	4
Incorrect content	2	1
Information error	3	3
IT failure	8	5
AO missed own deadline	8	3
Other	22	6
Process weakness	1	4
Resource capacity	3	7
Total	56	35

There were 56 reports of delivery failure for EPAs in 2023 to 2024, an increase of 21 from the previous reporting period. Potential non-compliance with the requirements of end-point assessment plan constituted the majority of the incidents categorised as event sub-type 'other'. Examples of non-compliance included assessment timings not meeting the required timeframe as set out within the assessment plan and non-attendance of employer representatives. In these instances, AOs were expected to explain the measures they have taken to ensure future compliance and reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence.

IT failures accounted for 8 of the reported delivery failures for EPAs. These failures caused issues such as difficulty scheduling assessments and inability to access online assessments. Where the failure impacted directly upon assessments, AOs

took action to mitigate the negative impact upon apprentices and safeguard assessments.

Cyber-attacks

Overall, there was a decrease in the number of reported cyber-attacks on centres that AOs had to respond to.

Ahead of this summer series Ofqual clarified that AOs should report instances of cyber-attacks on centres only if their delivery of assessments was potentially affected. This may have led to a reduction in these notifications.

Of the 6 cyber-attacks reported that affected delivery of GCSEs, AS and A levels, one also affected the delivery of VTQs at the affected centre. A further 5 cyber-attacks only affected the delivery of VTQs and there were 2 that affected apprenticeship end-point assessments. All the reported cyber-attacks were directed at schools and colleges, apart from one attack on an organisation affiliated to three AOs. In addition, another attack impacted an AO delivering Other General qualifications.

In response to the risks around cyber-security, Ofqual continues to share good practice with the regulated community and expects them to continue to manage cyber-risks. To improve information security this summer, all 4 exam boards introduced multi-factor authentication (MFA) for their centres as part of a wider set of agreed JCQ minimum cyber-security controls.

Centres are responsible for managing their own resilience in this field although Ofqual encourages all parties across the sector to work together in tackling the evolving risks around cyber-security. This autumn Ofqual launched a campaign to remind schools and colleges of the importance of cyber security (after a poll highlighted the risks associated with poor cyber hygiene) and to direct them to practical support via the [National Cyber Security Centre's school resources page](#).

Security breaches

Within this report the term 'security breach' is used to refer to 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), or an actual security breach (for example, where the content of a live question paper is shared). This means that for a significant proportion of potential security breaches reported to Ofqual, there will have been no evidence that the integrity of the assessment was compromised.

Security breaches may be intentional, but they can also be accidental. For example, a student may accidentally be given paper 2 instead of paper 1 at their centre, or results may accidentally be released early to students by their centre.

Exam boards also worked together to devise and align to common industry logistics standards, in addition to the aforementioned security controls, to mitigate risks of leaks. When there is the potential that the content of a question paper has been leaked prior to the exam, Ofqual expects AOs to identify and investigate the breaches quickly and take steps to prevent the material from being shared. We also expect AOs to consider if additional security controls should be implemented to safeguard the integrity of the remaining assessments in the series.

Where AOs' investigations establish the content of a question paper may have been seen by some students prior to their exam, Ofqual closely monitors the approach taken to mitigate any disadvantage to other students. AOs conduct analysis during and after marking to look for any indications of impact from a security breach. AOs did not report any evidence this series of their awards being affected by security breaches. AOs must consider appropriate sanctions for any students found to have committed malpractice.

Ofqual issued updated [exams officer resources](#), including blogs on keeping mobile phones, smart watches and other internet-enabled devices out of the exam hall alongside analysis of malpractice statistics, to highlight these issues.

Sharing confidential material on social media

AOs closely monitor social media to identify any potential breaches of their assessment materials. If found to be genuine, AOs work with social media companies and law enforcement as part of their investigation into the breach to take down materials to prevent malpractice and avoid students being disadvantaged.

Where assessments are taken internationally, social media can also increase the risk of breaches in confidentiality should students who have completed an assessment taken later by others in different time-zones discuss the content online. Ofqual expects AOs to take all reasonable steps to preserve the confidentiality of their assessments, including in circumstances such as these. Where such activity

was found to have taken place, students received the appropriate sanctions.

Hoax papers on social media

Recent exam series have also seen instances of individuals during and immediately prior to the exam period falsely claiming to have question papers for sale, frequently uploading a doctored copy of the front cover of the question paper as 'proof' of access. In some cases, sellers seek large payments for these hoax papers.

Ofqual undertakes its own monitoring of social media for accounts claiming to have access to confidential question papers, and members of the public are also able to report concerns about such malpractice to us directly. We pass this information on to the AOs and expect them to promptly investigate to establish if they are genuine. Often AOs will already be aware of these accounts from their own monitoring. Ofqual contacted individual AOs on 28 occasions to share information relating to social media accounts claiming to have question papers for sale. All were confirmed to be fake.

Fewer social media accounts were flagged to AOs by Ofqual compared to summer 2023 (34) which may reflect the actions taken by AOs to improve detection and increase awareness of the consequences of engaging in such activity.

AOs employ legal routes, such as court injunctions and disclosure orders, against those who try to undermine confidence in exams. This year court injunctions were employed against individuals behind anonymous social media accounts claiming to have access to their exam papers. These accounts were shut down upon receiving the injunction.

Ofqual reminded students in our blog ['Summer 2024 exams are starting'](#) that if they see offers of exam questions or papers on social media, they will most likely be fake and not to look at them. We warned that even accessing fake materials means students could receive sanctions for malpractice from AOs up to and including disqualification from their qualifications.

In addition, as part of our stakeholder engagement we encouraged representative bodies and other stakeholders to be alert to hoax papers and report them to AOs.

GCSEs, AS and A Levels

Centres normally receive exam papers and supporting materials some weeks

before the exams are taken. For GCSE, AS and A levels, centres must follow the [JCQ instructions on conducting examinations](#), which specifies requirements for the handling and safe storage of assessment materials.

For the summer 2024 series, the exam boards delivered question papers for these qualifications to 5,946 centres in England.

Reported security breaches

Table 9: Security breach incidents by sub-type related to summer 2024 and summer 2023

Event sub-type	2024	2023
Incorrect paper issued for assessment	32	37
Leak of materials (public)	1	38
Leak of materials (centre)	19	16
Results released before results day	3	14
Leak of materials (AO)	3	9
Leak of materials (student)	1	2
Leak of materials (examiner/ assessor)	1	0
Assessment held at incorrect time	7	4
Loss in transit	2	2
Other	1	1
Total	70	123

There were 70 reported security breaches in 2024 for GCSEs, AS and A levels, compared with 123 in 2023. There was a significant decrease in the number of question papers leaked into the public domain via social media immediately prior to the exam this year; one instance compared with 38 in 2023. This reduction was probably the result of AOs taking steps ahead of this summer's exams to mitigate this form of breach.

The largest number of breaches this year (32) was due to centres opening the wrong exam paper. This was down from 37 such cases in 2023. AOs require centres to follow protocols intended to prevent such errors, including having 2 people present when papers are opened. In half of the cases reported, exam papers did not leave the confinement of the secure storage area, or were removed but not distributed to students, but the packet was incorrectly opened and resealed.

Where centre staff open and distribute the wrong exam paper, Ofqual expects AOs to do all they can to minimise the impact on students and on the security of the paper. AOs may accept the paper the student has sat, even if they sat it on the wrong day, and estimate the missing mark of the paper they should have sat, if the student was unable to sit the correct paper in the same sitting. They will also require students and centre staff to sign confidentiality statements confirming they will not disclose the content of the assessment and centres may receive additional scrutiny to ensure that remaining exams are conducted correctly.

Other general Qualifications

Table 10: Security breach incidents by sub-type related to summer 2024 and summer 2023

Event sub-type	2024	2023
Leak of materials (public)	22	0
Leak of materials (centre)	1	0
Total	23	0

There were 23 reported security breaches in 2024 for Other General Qualifications. No security breaches were reported in 2023. The increase in security breaches was largely driven by reports of students who have completed an assessment taken later by others in different time-zones, discussing the content online.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Table 11: Security breach incidents reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for VTQs (T Levels, PTQs, FSQs) broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Loss in transit	24	4
Leak of materials (centre staff)	6	5
Leak of materials (student)	6	1
Other	5	2
Results released before results day	5	0
Leak of materials (AO)	2	0
Assessment held at incorrect time	1	0
Leak of materials (teacher/examiner)	1	0
Leak of materials (public)	1	0
IT/system error	0	1
Total	51	13

In 2023 to 2024 AOs reported 51 security breaches linked to VTQs, compared with 13 in 2022 to 2023. Of these, 24 were due to assessment materials lost in transit between AOs and centres, 17 of which were for on-demand assessments. Due to enhancements in AOs' internal processes, the 2024 data offers a better reflection of the number of scripts lost in transit than those reported in 2023. Most of these were due to courier errors, although some were due to centres not following the AOs' procedures for the return of papers or because papers were lost within the centre. Centres delivering VTQs span a range of organisations from schools and colleges

to prisons, training providers and workplaces. Sometimes one centre can occupy multiple sites, potentially making secure delivery and despatch of papers more complex. The on-demand nature of some VTQs means that assessment materials will be in the postal system more frequently than for series-based qualifications, meaning there is a higher probability that material will be lost.

AOs managed the potential breaches for on-demand assessments by scheduling new examinations with different papers and retiring or pausing the versions that were lost, although analysis by AOs suggests that the potential security breaches were not realised and there is no evidence to suggest the material reached the public domain. AOs are working with centres to encourage better security around the transit of assessment materials and have also committed to improving their own processes, for example, by aligning with JCQ industry standards and logistics and expanding their use of the tracked service used for T Levels, which is similar to the DfE yellow label service (see glossary) and means that exam scripts are traceable.

End-Point Assessments

Table 12: Security breach incidents reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for EPA, broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Leak of materials (AO)	3	0
Leak of materials (student)	2	2
Leak of materials (centre staff)	3	0
Leak of materials (centre)	2	1
Leak of materials (teacher/examiner)	3	2
Other	2	0

There were 15 reports of security breaches for EPAs in 2023 to 2024. Ten of these incidents related to unauthorised access to live assessment materials which posed a risk to the confidentiality of assessment. The causes of these breaches ranged from system errors to incidents caused by human error in which incorrect paperwork was inadvertently shared with apprentices or centres. AOs were required to demonstrate to Ofqual what mitigations they had put in place to ensure that apprentices were not negatively impacted. These mitigations included retiring versions of assessments that had been the subject of the breach and implementing new processes and staff training where necessary to prevent reoccurrence.

Assessment material errors

Ofqual's expectation is for all assessment materials to be error-free, and that AOs' quality assurance processes are robust enough to identify and correct any that may be introduced during the setting process. Where errors do happen, AOs must take action to prevent or minimise as far as possible any impact on students, and to review the causes of any errors and explain how they plan to prevent recurrence. Errors can undermine student and public confidence in regulated qualifications.

When considering the number of assessment material errors by AO, it should be noted that the number of distinct qualifications offered by AOs differs significantly (see Ofqual's [Annual qualifications market report: academic year 2022 to 2023](#)).

Some errors can affect all students, whereas others affect a proportion of those taking the assessment. Depending on the nature of the error, they may also impact a greater or lesser proportion of the total marks available for a qualification. Some errors reported to Ofqual by AOs may not impact on students' ability to respond to a question or task at all.

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

AOs have several options for mitigating assessment material errors identified before the assessment is taken, such as issuing an addendum or an erratum notice, depending on how close to the exam the error is identified.

AOs have a number of options for mitigating assessment material errors, depending on whether different centres have started the assessment once the AO becomes aware of the error. For example, if an error is identified during an assessment window, an AO may be able to re-publish corrected materials and communicate with centres to ensure they are using the correct version.

Some VTQs offer 'on demand' assessments, so centres can choose when students complete an assessment. Consequently, assessment material errors may be identified and reported at any point during an assessment's lifetime; this could be before, during or after students have completed an assessment. Therefore, mitigations applied by AOs will necessarily vary depending on the circumstances of different students. For instance, AOs can 'switch off' a live paper until an error is corrected; they can track centre bookings and completed tests then analyse responses and make adjustments for impacted students during awarding, if needed. In some cases, AOs will refund the entry fee to centres and offer a re-sit to students.

When an error is found after an exam, Ofqual requires AOs to take steps to minimise its impact as much as possible. If the AO has evidence suggesting that the error caused confusion or adversely affected students' performance, they may adjust the mark scheme to accept a range of plausible answers. AOs instruct examiners to identify any unusual responses or those indicating student confusion and, depending on the nature of the error, may conduct more detailed analyses of student responses.

Ultimately, if the error cannot be mitigated in a manner that maintains fairness to students, AOs might decide to award marks to all students or exclude the question. In certain circumstances based on the evidence presented, an AO may award special consideration to compensate students whose performance was affected by circumstances out of their control.

GCSEs, AS and A Levels

The majority (97%) of the GCSE, AS and A level question papers produced were error free. However, there was an increase in the number of assessment material errors (100) identified this summer compared with summer 2023 (87).

Table 13: GCSE, AS and A level reported errors by AO

Event sub-type	AQA	OCR	Pearson	WJEC
Question paper error	22	19	15	9
Supporting materials error	5	1	8	3
Collation or printing error	1	0	1	0
Front cover instruction error	1	0	0	0
Mark scheme or answer key error	3	1	0	1
Non-exam assessment (NEA) error	8	0	0	2

Table 14: Assessment material errors reported by AO and categorisation of impact

Assessment material error category	AQA	OCR	Pearson	WJEC
1	6	3	5	1
2	14	7	11	4
3	17	10	8	10

Table 15: Number and severity of errors in different assessment material types

Sub-type	1	2	3
Question paper error	12	21	32
Supporting materials error	2	10	5
Collation or printing error	1	1	0
Front cover instruction error	0	1	0
Non-exam assessment (NEA) error	0	2	8

There were 65 errors reported in the content of question papers in summer 2024. Twelve of these were of the most severe type (category 1) which could have prevented students from being able to answer the question, while 32 (category 3) were minor and had no impact on their ability to respond.

Of these errors, 26 occurred only in modified versions of question papers or modified supporting materials adapted to make them more accessible to students with specific requirements (for example large print or Braille paper), compared with 14 in 2023. As these errors were introduced during the modification process, they did not appear in the standard version of the assessment. Twelve were identified prior to the exam and replacement materials were issued. The other 14 were identified during or after the exam and the AOs chose to either discount the question or applied special consideration to mitigate any potential impact.

Table 16: Point of identification of question paper errors by AO

AO	Prior to exam	During exam	After exam
AQA	8	0	14
OCR	5	0	14
Pearson	7	5	3
WJEC	1	2	6

Table 17: Mitigations to errors in standard question papers

Mitigations taken	Number of occurrences
Amend mark scheme	11
Erratum	8
Discount question	7
Replacement paper	3
Special consideration (arrangements for candidates)	1

Process improvements	3
Script review (outside of marking)	2

Table 18: Mitigations to errors in only modified versions of question papers

Mitigations taken	Number of occurrences
Replacement paper	7
Special consideration (arrangements for candidates)	8
Discount question	4

Other general qualifications

There were 14 reported assessment material errors for Other General qualifications in 2024, compared with 12 in 2023. Of the 14 reported incidents, 10 related to an error within the question paper, 3 were errors within supporting materials and one related to a mark scheme or answer key error.

Six of these were of the most severe type (category 1) which could have prevented students from being able to answer the question. Another 6 incidents were categorised as category 2 and the remaining 2 were category 3.

Almost all of these were identified during or after the exam and the AOs chose to either discount the question, amend the mark scheme or estimate marks to mitigate any potential impact. One error was found ahead of the exam and a replacement paper issued.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Most of the question papers produced for VTQs were error free. However, there was an increase in the number of assessment material errors during the academic year 2023 to 2024 (68) compared with the academic year 2022 to 2023 (31). As with GCSE, AS and A levels, not all errors affected all the students taking the assessments or had the potential to impact on their performance.

Table 19: assessment material errors reported in 2023 to 2024 for VTQs (T

Levels, PTQs, FSQs) broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	C&G	NCFE	OCR	Pearson	TQUK	VTCT	WJEC
Question paper error	15	5	9	9	0	1	1
Mark scheme or answer key error	1	3	1	0	0	0	1
Supporting materials error	7	2	0	5	0	0	2
Front cover instruction error	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Collation or printing error	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Non-exam assessment (NEA) error	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
IT system error	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

There were 40 errors reported in the content of question papers. Twelve errors were of the most severe type (category 1) which could have prevented students from being able to answer the question, while 22 (category 3) were minor and had no impact on their ability to respond.

Three of these errors occurred only in modified papers and were introduced during the modification process, so they did not appear in the standard version of the assessment. Two of the errors were identified during the assessment and special consideration was applied to mitigate the impact of the errors. The other error was identified before the assessment and the AO replaced the papers so there was no impact on the students.

Table 20: assessment material errors reported in 2023 to 2024 for VTQs (T Levels, PTQs, FSQs) by AO and categorisation of impact

Assessment	C&G	NCFE	OCR	Pearson	TQUK	VTCT	WJEC
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material error category

1	7	0	0	3	1	0	1
2	9	7	8	8	1	1	0
3	7	4	3	5	0	0	3

Table 21: Number and severity of errors in different assessment material types for VTQs (T Levels, PTQs, FSQs)

Sub-type	1	2	3
Question paper error	7	22	11
Supporting materials error	3	7	6
Collation or printing error	1	0	1
Front cover instruction error	0	0	1
Mark scheme or answer key error	1	2	3
Non-exam assessment (NEA) error	0	2	0
IT system error	0	1	0

For all of these errors the AOs implemented mitigations to minimise negative effects on students; in some cases, they were able to replace assessments prior to students taking them. AOs also reviewed their own processes and training as necessary.

Table 22: assessment material errors by point of identification reported in 2023 to 2024 for VTQs (T Levels, PTQs, FSQs) by AO

AO	Prior to assessment	During assessment	After assessment
City and Guilds	8	6	9

NCFE	3	5	3
OCR	0	0	11
Pearson	8	3	5
TQUK	0	0	2
WJEC	1	3	0
VTCT	0	0	1

End-Point Assessments

There were 12 reported assessment material errors for EPAs from 6 AOs in 2023 to 2024, compared to 9 in 2022 to 2023. Of the 12 reported incidents, 5 related to a mark scheme or answer key error, 6 related to an error within the question paper and one was a printing error.

Five incidents were categorised as category 1, with 3 of these caused by errors within the mark scheme for multiple choice knowledge tests. The remaining 2 category 1 incidents involved errors within the questions for multiple choice knowledge tests. AOs implemented measures to ensure that apprentices were not disadvantaged and any resulting errors in grading were corrected. The category 2 and 3 incidents were varied, with most relating to question paper errors identified during AO quality assurance processes.

Malpractice and maladministration

AOs do not have to tell Ofqual about all cases of alleged malpractice or maladministration. They are obliged, however, to tell Ofqual about the most serious potential issues that they believe could either invalidate the award of a qualification or could affect another AO, as well as those that might affect public confidence or include a substantial number of students. AOs must consider appropriate sanctions for any students found to have committed malpractice.

In 2024, maladministration was introduced as an additional reporting event type, having previously been included within the 'malpractice' event type. Please see Appendix F for an explanation of what constitutes malpractice or maladministration.

No AOs informed us about allegations of malpractice or maladministration relating to Other General qualifications.

GCSEs, AS and A Levels

In summer 2024, AOs reported 6 allegations or suspicions of serious malpractice in GCSE, AS and A levels, compared with 15 in 2023 – 3 concerning centre staff and 3 concerning students. One of the 3 cases involving centre staff resulted in action being taken against the member of staff, while 2 of the cases are still being investigated. Of the 3 cases involving students, 2 students received a disqualification, and in one case no malpractice was proven.

Ofqual has issued [official statistics on the number of cases of malpractice for GCSE, AS and A level in the summer exam series](#).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) creates risks to assessments primarily in subjects with Non-Examined Assessment (NEA) and instances of inappropriate use of AI are reported by centres to AOs or identified by AO moderators. These are reported separately within the Ofqual official statistics for Malpractice for GCSEs, AS and A Levels for the first time this series, under the offence of plagiarism misuse of artificial intelligence.

AOs use a combination of different approaches, including detection software, to identify the use of AI in students' work. Where malpractice through plagiarism is confirmed and students receive a sanction, AOs may review other papers or qualifications taken by that student to determine whether similar malpractice has taken place. Ofqual also requires this information to be shared with other AOs that the student may have taken qualifications with.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

During 2023 to 2024 AOs reported a total of 30 malpractice cases concerning VTQ PTQs, T Levels or FSQs, compared with 21 in 2022 to 2023. Eighteen of these cases were concerning centres or centre staff, and 12 were related to student malpractice.

There were 16 instances of maladministration reported during 2023 to 2024. The majority of these instances were due to centre staff errors, such as administering the incorrect non-examined assessment, centres not meeting the Technical Award terminal rule requirement and failing to submit information to AOs in time for results. One instance of maladministration related to AO staff.

In all cases, AOs have investigated and applied penalties, as appropriate. Where

necessary, AOs have required centres to conduct their own reviews into their malpractice procedures.

Ofqual also collects data from AOs on the number of malpractice cases investigated, including offence type and any sanctions applied. During 2023 to 2024 there were more than 1,500 malpractice cases which had at least one penalty issued for VTQ PTQs (Applied Generals, Tech Awards, Tech Levels and Technical Certificates). This is a decrease compared with 2022 to 2023 where there were 1,600 cases.

There were more than 700 malpractice cases which had at least one penalty issued for FSQs in 2023 to 2024, similar in number to 2022 to 2023.

End-Point Assessments

During 2023 to 2024, AOs reported a total of 11 potential malpractice cases and 4 potential maladministration cases concerning EPAs. Of the malpractice cases, 5 related to potential malpractice by apprentices. Four of these were upheld after AO investigation and a penalty applied to the apprentices. These cases included 2 instances of plagiarism, one of inappropriate use of AI and one case of cheating within a controlled testing environment.

The 6 other cases of malpractice and the 4 cases of maladministration concerned centre staff, AO staff and assessors. In these cases, appropriate actions were taken by AOs to mitigate any adverse effects upon apprentices and measures such as additional training, disciplinary action and the update of guidance were implemented to avoid reoccurrence.

Direct reports to Ofqual of alleged malpractice

In addition to reports from AOs, anyone can raise concerns they have about exam or assessment-related wrongdoing with Ofqual. Ofqual is [designated as a prescribed body for whistleblowing](#) for workers, and annual whistleblowing data is reported in Ofqual's Annual Report and Accounts. Allegations of malpractice by other individuals, for example, students and parents, are raised with the relevant AOs and followed up to make sure that the allegations are properly investigated and, where appropriate, that sanctions are applied. Ofqual investigates and acts on any concerns reported to it regarding an AO not following its rules.

Table 23: Malpractice allegations to Ofqual by other individuals

Qualifications and series	GCSE, AS and A Levels, summer 2024	GCSE, AS and A Levels, summer 2023	VTQ PTQs, TQs and FSQs, and EPA, Sep 2023 – Aug 2024	VTQ PTQs, TQs and FSQs, and EPA, Sep 2022 – Aug 2023
Malpractice allegations	51	96	13	7

Ofqual did not receive any allegations of malpractice from other individuals relating to Other General qualifications.

Phase 3: marking

Current AO practices see the majority of externally-examined components marked by examiners 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.

During marking, every examiner's work is regularly quality checked by their respective AO 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 that 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, but their marking is consistent their marking may be adjusted; if their marking is inconsistent, they will be stopped from marking

altogether and the marking they have already completed will be reviewed.

As in previous years, in 2024 Ofqual attended a sample of AO standardisation events (face to face meetings or held online) to observe the process. We attended 48 events: 13 for GCSEs and 8 for A levels, as well as 27 events for VTQs in performance tables and T Levels, to satisfy ourselves that AOs' training and standardisation was in line with expectations and the role of the examiner(s) and the processes they were being asked to complete was clear. Any queries from these events were followed up with individual AOs so that we received the necessary level of assurance for this stage of marking.

Infographic: the number of GCSE, AS and A level scripts, examiners and special consideration requests involved in marking

Monitoring marking and moderation progress

Ofqual required all AOs issuing results in August 2024 to provide data on their progress towards the delivery of these results.

Ofqual applied scrutiny to marking progress for GCSE, AS and A levels in summer 2024 and required the relevant AOs to report marking progress data weekly. Ofqual tracked progress both in terms of items (where AOs marked assessments online in this way) and completion of whole scripts.

For VTQs that are used for progression, AOs were required to submit data which enabled Ofqual to closely monitor progress towards release of results.

For GCSE, AS, A level, VTQ PTQ and TQs in T Levels, Ofqual also monitored AOs' marking and moderation progress through fortnightly meetings. Where progress for marking or moderation was slower than expected, Ofqual discussed with the relevant AO the mitigations they intended to put in place.

All AOs completed their marking and moderation of GCSE, AS and A levels, other General Qualifications, VTQ PTQs and TQs in time to issue results. As in previous years a small number of grades were withheld or pending on results days due to ongoing malpractice investigations or unresolved administrative issues.

Special consideration

In November 2024, we published official statistics on [Special consideration in GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2024 exam series](#)

The academic year 2023 to 2024 was the third year in which Ofqual also collected data from AOs about special consideration for VTQs included in performance tables. AOs received more than 27,100 requests for special consideration for approximately 250 Applied General, Tech Level, Tech Certificates and Tech Award qualifications. Of the over 27,100 total requests, approximately 24,500 requests were made on behalf of students who were present in an assessment but whose performance in that assessment was disrupted, and nearly 2,600 requests were made on behalf of students who were unable to take an assessment for reasons

outside of their control. AOs approved nearly 24,700 of the requests received to mitigate the disadvantages experienced by students.

As with other learners, apprentices can apply for special consideration for their apprenticeship EPAs. AOs are expected to have clear arrangements in place for this provision, however Ofqual does not currently collect data from AOs related to these requests.

Phase 4: grading

Maintenance of standards

One of Ofqual's key responsibilities is ensuring that qualification standards are set and maintained appropriately. This means that students can be confident in their qualifications. The grades they achieve have currency and can be trusted, both now and in the future.

Grades should reflect what students know, understand and can do. They provide evidence that students have the knowledge and skills to enable them to progress to the next stage of their lives.

Marking and grading happened as normal in summer 2024 and this will continue in future years. As in any year, students' exams were marked anonymously by expert examiners. Non-exam assessments were, as usual, marked by teachers and checked by exam board moderators, or marked by expert examiners.

For external exams, grade boundaries were set after students had taken the assessments and once marking was nearly complete. Senior examiners evaluated the quality of students' work and compared it closely with previous years, then recommended grade boundaries based on a range of both judgemental and technical evidence.

Grade boundaries typically change each year to make sure the standard of work needed for each grade remains stable and to reflect any differences in the difficulty of the assessments. This means that this year, the standard of work required to achieve a particular grade is indistinguishable from 2023, and before the pandemic. For VTQs, some assessments are not marked and are graded using pre-set

criteria.

GCSE, AS and A levels in summer 2024

Grading for GCSEs, AS and A levels continued as normal this summer, following the return to pre-pandemic standards last year. Overall, results for GCSEs and A levels were similar to summer 2023. There will always be some small changes in results that reflect changes in the cohort of students entering particular qualifications, and how they perform in the assessments.

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.

Infographic: the number of certificates issued and the breakdown of those certificates into GCSE, AS and A levels

GCSE French, German and computer science

This summer we [required exam boards to award GCSE French, German and computer science more generously](#). The positive adjustments in French and German follow our detailed review of an extensive evidence base as part of our work on inter-subject comparability, and subsequent announcement in 2019, that we would seek [to align grade standards in GCSE French and German with Spanish](#). Exam boards were required to make small positive adjustments in French at grades 7 and 4, and in German at grades 9, 7 and 4. This follows adjustments in both

subjects at grades 9, 7 and 4 in summer 2023. The adjustments were taken into account during awarding and are reflected in results. We did not require exam boards to make a further adjustment at grade 9 in French this summer, as the evidence suggests that there was broad alignment with Spanish in summer 2023.

For GCSE computer science we conducted an [extensive programme of research considering grading standards over time](#), given the changes that have been made to the qualification in the short period that it has been available (the first awards were in 2012). Our research suggests that standards may have become slightly more stringent through the period from 2014 to 2019, likely due to the changes to the qualification and the context during this period. We therefore required exam boards to award more generously this summer at grades 9, 7 and 4, to reflect the findings of the research. These small adjustments were taken into account during awarding and are reflected in results.

National Reference Test (NRT)

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

The [results of the 2024 National Reference Test \(NRT\)](#) were published on GCSE results day. The results show that, in English, there was a statistically significant downward change when compared with 2017 at grade 4 (at the 0.01 level of significance). There was no statistically significant difference at grade 7 when compared with 2017. In maths, there was a statistically significant upward change at grade 7 (at the 0.05 level of significance). There was no statistically significant change at grade 4.

When deciding whether to make an adjustment based on the NRT, we carry out additional analysis to help us interpret the NRT results. This includes analysis to consider the prior attainment profile of the sample of students who take the test. We also consider the findings from the student survey in relation to student motivation and students' views of the importance of the NRT and GCSEs in English language or maths. We [published more information about these analyses](#) on GCSE results day.

While there was a statistically significant downward change at grade 4 in GCSE English language this summer compared with 2017 (at the 0.01 level of

significance), we did not require exam boards to make an adjustment to grade standards. We have always been clear that we would be cautious in using evidence from the NRT to inform awarding. For us to make an adjustment we would need to have been confident that the decline in performance indicated by the results of the NRT reflected a genuine change in the attainment of the GCSE cohort. Given the context in recent years following the pandemic, we did not consider that there was sufficient evidence of a genuine decline in performance such that we should make a downwards adjustment this summer.

In maths, there was a statistically significant upward change at grade 7 (at the 0.05 level of significance). We did not require exam boards to make an adjustment this summer given that the change was only significant at the 0.05 level of significance, and the 2024 NRT results were similar to those seen in 2019. At that time, [we decided not to make an adjustment](#) because we considered that the increase relative to 2017 was likely due to the sawtooth effect and the improvements that we might expect in the first few years that a qualification is available. To make an adjustment now would be rewarding a level of performance that we have previously decided not to (because we were not confident that it reflected a genuine improvement in attainment).

Pearson GCSE English language 2.0

In summer 2023, Ofqual raised concerns with Pearson about their approach to the grading of their GCSE English language 1EN2 specification, specifically about the consistency of standards across its 2 specifications (1EN0 and 1EN2) and its alignment with the consistent standard for all GCSE English language qualifications. To address these concerns, Ofqual made clear to Pearson that improvements would be expected to their approach to aligning standards.

In response, for 2024, Pearson used a group of experienced examiners to judge the quality of work across their 2 GCSE English language specifications to generate evidence to enable the alignment of standards. This involved examiners reviewing and comparing the quality of actual student work from both specifications, using a recognised research methodology called comparative judgement. The result of this work was then used to set grade boundaries appropriately in both specifications to reflect a common standard. The impact of this action to align standards was reflected in overall outcomes and grade boundaries for the 1EN2 specification.

Grade boundaries often change between different exam series. What is different in

this case is that additional evidence (the comparative judgement exercise) was used by Pearson to align the performance standard for this specification with its GCSE English language 1EN0 specification, informing changes to 1EN2 grade boundaries and outcomes compared with last year. This is distinct from the normal variation of grade boundaries, which predominantly reflects inevitable changes in the difficulty of papers year-on-year. The additional evidence used to inform this year's award suggests that the grades in the specification last year were likely to have been generous to some degree.

Ofqual will continue to monitor standards for this specification against other GCSE English language qualifications, to ensure that Pearson maintain the consistent, national standard.

VTQs in performance tables

For those VTQs which are taken alongside or instead of GCSEs or A levels, awarding organisations used established approaches to maintain standards.

New Tech Awards were awarded for the first time in 2024. From this year, there are new rules about the design and structure of the qualifications. These changes have been introduced so that students who take vocational and technical qualifications can be confident their results provide a reliable reflection of their abilities and are valuable in progressing their education and career. In many cases, these changes represent a substantial change to the design and structure for Tech Awards, with some qualifications changing more than others.

Ofqual asked awarding organisations to consider the fact that students and teachers may be less familiar with the new assessments when setting grade boundaries, and to consider accepting a slightly lower quality of work than they might otherwise do. We have taken this approach with other new qualifications. However, it is crucial that these new qualifications are robust and so expert examiners judged that the knowledge, skills and understanding students have demonstrated at each grade was appropriate. The changes to the design and structure of some qualifications, as well as changes to the number of qualifications available, mean it is not meaningful to make comparisons with results from previous years.

As with GCSEs, AS and A levels, on results days in August, Ofqual published resources to help contextualise and explain results for PTQs. These included [interactive visualisations that allow users to explore results information](#) in more detail.

T Levels

This is the second year that T Levels were fully based on formal assessments. AOs were generous in awarding the Technical Qualifications (TQs) within T Levels that were in the first years of awards. This is the custom with new qualifications and has been the approach for TQs in recent years, as students and teachers are less familiar with the assessments.

As for other qualifications, Ofqual published resources to help contextualise and explain results for TQs. These included [interactive visualisations that allow users to explore results information](#) in more detail.

Phase 5 results and post results

AOs and centres carry out a substantial amount of preparation ahead of results release, especially for those VTQs that are taken alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels and are used by students to progress to further or higher education.

Ofqual requires AOs to provide information to students and centres about which results will be released and when.

See Appendix E for links to resources published by Ofqual to support the sector regarding GCSEs, AS and A levels, VTQs, and EPA.

Incorrect results

Ofqual requires AOs to ensure that as far as possible their examiners mark all assessments according to the mark scheme and to issue results that reflect the performance of each student. It is possible for errors to be made, however, and so it is important that when they occur, AOs identify and correct them quickly.

AOs must tell Ofqual promptly if they have issued any incorrect results. Any errors found following an appeal must be corrected by the AO. However, there will be instances where an incorrect result is identified through other routes such as an IT system error or following a quality check. When this occurs, AOs must try to mitigate any Adverse Effect created by the incorrect results, taking note of [Ofqual guidance on making changes to incorrect results](#), when determining how to rectify this. This

guidance explains what AOs 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). AOs must explain to us how they have considered our guidance.

The numbers of incorrect results that were corrected after a successful review of marking or moderation is reported separately in Ofqual's Official Statistics.

Ofqual did not receive any notifications of incorrect results issued for Other General qualifications for summer 2024.

GCSE, AS and A levels

In summer 2024, AOs notified us of 24 instances for GCSEs, AS and A levels where they had issued results which they later found to be incorrect, outside of appeals. Across these 24 instances, 850 centres and 1202 students were affected. The reasons for these included AO staff making errors in inputting data, other administrative errors, and errors in IT systems. AOs took action to identify impacted students and issue correct results as soon as possible, considering Ofqual guidance on making changes to incorrect results. AOs identified the root causes and will take measures to prevent reoccurrence.

Vocational and Technical Qualifications

Between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, AOs told us of 16 instances where they found they had issued results they later found to be incorrect. Nine of these cases were for PTQs, 2 were for TQs within T Levels and 5 were for FSQs. The reasons for these included administrative errors, quality of marking issues and IT system errors.

End-Point Assessments

Between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2024, AOs reported 8 instances of incorrect results being issued for apprenticeship EPAs. Six of these were because of marker or administrative errors, with most linked to cases of misinterpretation of the requirements of the assessment plan related to grade aggregation. AOs corrected the errors and conducted investigations to identify root causes, assuring Ofqual of the measures taken to prevent reoccurrence.

Lost GCSE, AS and A level scripts

Ofqual collects data from AOs 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 scripts can be lost at various points in the process: in a centre before despatch, in transit between centres, markers and AOs, within the AO itself, or at an external scanning bureau.

AOs must notify Ofqual 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 AO will calculate a grade using the student's performance in other assessments in that subject.

Chart 1: Lost scripts by qualification level, summer 2024 and summer 2023

Qualification	2024	2023
A level	243	119
AS	14	8
GCSE	1,487	1,070
Total	1,744	1,197

Following a reduction in the number of lost scripts reported in 2023, numbers have returned to a level comparable with previous years. The total number of lost scripts in summer 2024 is higher than in 2023. In both years losses represent 0.01% of the total scripts marked.

Chart 2: Lost scripts by cause, summer 2024 and summer 2023

Cause	2024	2023
Lost in Transit	75%	79%
Lost within AO	11%	16%
Scanning or IT issue	7%	4%
Lost within centre	7%	2%

In summer 2024, lost in transit remained the most common cause of script loss. There was an increase in the proportion of scripts lost within centres and caused by scanning or IT failures. However, the proportion lost within awarding organisations or in the post has decreased since 2023. Ofqual will continue to monitor the number of lost scripts and require AOs to take measures to minimise any script losses.

VTQ delivery of results 2024

Following an evaluation of the 2023 Action Plan, Ofqual [announced its measures](#) to ensure students taking vocational qualifications got their results on time in 2024 and beyond. These measures meant that most students expecting a Level 1/2, Level 2 or Level 3 result for progression to further or higher education received these by 22 August (Level 1/2 and Level 2) or 15 August (Level 3).

Ofqual monitored 19 AOs who offer VTQs used for progression to further or higher education. The term-time checkpoint meant that AOs and centres had a common understanding of each student’s intention and could track that they were making sufficient progress to achieve a result. AOs also agreed to release results to centres in advance, to give sufficient time for exams officers to check and prepare them for final release. Ofqual monitored the progress of the AOs in scope as they moved towards their results issue date and engaged with them promptly where potential issues arose. This went beyond results day to follow up with AOs where results were not issued, for example, due to unresolved malpractice investigations, withdrawals or deferrals.

Table 24: Reasons for not issuing results in summer 2024

Reason description	Reason total	Reason % of total not issued
Centre deferred or confirmed its intention not to claim/cash in certification for student due to incomplete assessment evidence (for example, the student has failed to complete sufficient assessment evidence to certificate)	33,300	59.7

AO deferred or did not certificate student due to incomplete assessment evidence. The student has failed to complete sufficient assessment evidence to certificate, and the centre did not confirm the student status	3,700	6.6
Centre has withdrawn student from the qualification (for example, student has changed courses or left centre)	18,200	32.6
Results pending after results day, either due to late claims or malpractice investigations	600	1

The data suggests that centres have been much more responsive to AOs in declaring their intentions regarding student certifications. In 2023 AOs agreed with centres to defer 27.52% of results but this year AOs only deferred 6.6% of results. Of the 55,800 results not issued, 51,500 were due to centres confirming that they no longer expected a result (92%).

More than 400,000 Level 1/2 and Level 2 results were released to centres by 22 August and more than 400,000 Level 3 results were issued to centres by 15 August across over 800 VTQs used for progression. The scale of collaboration required to deliver these results in a timely manner demonstrates the commitment of the different sector bodies and AOs to ensuring that students who take VTQs can use their results to progress to the next stage of their lives alongside their peers taking GCSEs, AS and A levels and means the achievements of all students are celebrated on the same day.

Between July and September 2024, Ofqual evaluated the effectiveness of its measures for timely delivery of results in 2024. Feedback was gathered from a variety of stakeholders. While areas for consolidation and improvement were identified, the overall process will remain in place and become part of Ofqual's standard monitoring for VTQs. This was confirmed in the Chief Regulator's [letter to schools and colleges](#).

T Levels

Ofqual has continued to review a sample of TQ assessment materials for each assessment series.

Overall, the reviews showed further improvements in TQ assessments, but Ofqual sought clarification from AOs about some areas ahead of awarding in 2024. Ofqual determined that any issues found in the papers sampled would not have prevented a sufficiently valid form of assessment.

The reviews identified some areas for the AOs to make improvements in future assessments. These included clarity of mark schemes, alignment between Sample Assessment Materials and live materials, and formatting of question papers.

End-Point Assessment outcomes

In January 2024 Ofqual required all AOs with EPAs on the Register of Regulated Qualifications, as of the 1 January 2024, to provide outcomes data for their Ofqual regulated EPAs to cover the period from 1 March 2023 until 29 February 2024. The 2024 collection provided data for 159,875 apprentices across 456 apprenticeship standards and 132 AOs. The data does not include outcomes for EPAs regulated by other regulators.

The data provided insight into overall and component-level (assessment method) pass rates and grade distributions within and across standards. For the second year, Ofqual published this data within a statistical report: [Apprenticeship end-point assessments statistical report](#).

Table 25: Outcomes data for Ofqual regulated EPAs collected in 2024 and 2023

Data type	2024 outcomes data	2023 outcomes data
Apprenticeship Standards covered by data collection	456	388
AOs involved in data collection	132	121
Apprentices reflected in data collection	159,875	124,385

Infographic: VTQ results

Access to scripts, reviews of marking, moderation,

and appeals

Ofqual monitors how AOs implement our regulatory requirements to provide centres with access to scripts for GCSE, AS and A levels.

In summer 2024, 1,562,070 GCSE, AS and A level scripts were accessed for 396,710 students. Scripts are requested at component level so more than one script can be accessed for a given qualification grade. Of these requests, 350,345 (22%) were for AS or A level scripts and 1,211,725 (78%) were for GCSE scripts.

Although T Levels and Project qualifications have similar rules relating to access to scripts, Ofqual does not currently collect data on the number of marked assessment material requests for these qualifications. The cohorts of T Levels are limited in size and EPQs are usually centre marked therefore requests for access to scripts will be rare.

If a centre believes there has been a marking error in a paper marked by an AO, they can seek a review of marking. AOs must also carry out reviews of moderation on request if the moderation resulted in a change to the marks the school or college gave to the work. If a centre has requested a review but is still dissatisfied with the outcome, it can make an appeal to the AO. The AO will review the outcome of the review and/or check that its procedures have been correctly followed. Ofqual requires AOs to offer this service for GCSEs, AS and A levels, EPQs and TQs within T Levels. For other qualifications, AOs may choose to offer these post-results services.

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 AO followed its own procedures correctly and whether it complied with Ofqual's rules. EPRS does not review students' work. This service is available for GCSEs, AS and A levels, EPQs, and TQs within T Levels.

Ofqual has published [statistics on reviews of marking and moderation for GCSEs, AS and A levels](#).

Data on appeals will be published in Spring 2025.

Ofqual does not currently publish data on reviews of marking and moderation in TQs due to the size of the cohort but will consider whether to do so in the future.

Infographic: the number and percentage of grades that were challenged via Reviews of Marking and Moderation, the number and percentage of those challenged grades that were changed and the numbers and percentages of both increased and decreased grades

For all other qualifications, Ofqual requires AOs to permit appeals on the basis that the AO did not apply procedures consistently or that procedures were not followed properly or fairly. AOs must provide for the appeal of:

- the results of assessments
- decisions regarding reasonable adjustments and special consideration

- decisions relating to any action to be taken against a student or a centre following an investigation into malpractice or maladministration.

AOs offering EPAs must also establish and maintain an appeals process to enable the results of assessments to be appealed, however Ofqual does not collect data from AOs related to this process.

Conclusions and next steps

In the 12 months leading up to and including September 2024, AOs issued more than 7 million certificates across the qualifications covered in this report. AOs and centres worked together, to ensure students received results that are reliable and trusted by employers and the education sector, allowing students to progress to the next stages of their lives. The Chief Regulator thanks AOs, teachers and exams officers for all their work.

Grading for GCSE, AS and A Levels in the 2024 summer series again was conducted as normal following the return to pre-pandemic standards in summer 2023. Approximately 6.4 million GCSE, AS and A level results were issued to more than 1.3 million students this year, with results that were very similar to summer 2023. A consistent grading standard that is known and understood by teachers, schools, colleges, higher and further education and employers supports good teaching and learning and helps students make the right choices about their future. This upholds the key pillars of Ofqual's statutory objectives, both in respect of public confidence and fairness over time.

Building on the effectiveness of the 2023 [VTQ Results Action Plan](#), Ofqual embedded many of the same processes into its series monitoring for VTQs in 2024 and expanded the scope to include Level 1/2 and Level 2 as well as Level 3 VTQs. This meant that students [received Level 3 VTQ results](#) when they expected them in August and were able to progress, confirming their university places at the same time as their peers taking A levels. A week later, students taking Level 1/2 or Level 2 VTQs [received their results](#) and could use them for progression to further education.

These processes will remain in place as part of Ofqual's standard monitoring for VTQs and form part of Ofqual's ongoing commitment to ensuring that students taking vocational and technical qualifications have parity of treatment with those taking A levels or GCSEs.

The monitoring and review programme for T Levels will continue in 2024 to 2025. The latest wave of T Levels which cover craft and design; media broadcasting and production; and animal care and management became available to students for the first time in September 2024.

The centralised intelligence and evidence from regulation informed a thematic approach to EPA regulation during 2023 to 2024. Regulatory activity has included ongoing monitoring of the delivery of assessments and assessor standardisation and training and the review of assessment materials to ensure apprentices face valid and reliable assessments. Alongside this work, Ofqual has undertaken a range of projects targeting identified risks, with information gathered from AOs, assessors and training providers to inform analysis of the market. The findings from all these activities will help to inform Ofqual's monitoring approach to EPA as the sector continues to mature.

Ofqual has since monitored the delivery of the autumn series of VTQ assessments and GCSEs, while also looking ahead to the AOs' delivery of assessments throughout 2025, including the summer series. It has written to the AOs setting out areas of regulatory focus for the coming year and the follow-up work they are expected to carry out ahead of summer 2025, which Ofqual will revisit in their annual readiness reviews. These include:

- working with AOs to identify opportunities to increase the resilience of the exam system and qualification delivery
- for JCQ AOs, continuing to implement and evolve information security controls to support the secure delivery of assessments
- further action to reduce incidence of errors in question papers and associated assessment materials, including modified papers
- continuing to work with AOs to address the potential malpractice risks posed by use of AI in assessments, and raise awareness among centres and students
- embedding and strengthening measures to ensure that students get their results on time

Appendix A – Event type and sub-type definitions

Assessment material error

Errors in assessment materials that can affect a student's ability to answer questions as intended, or cause confusion and unnecessary anxiety.

Centre failure

Failure by centre to: - deliver examinations or carry out centre assessed activities in line with requirements - provide appropriate entry processes, results processes and certification processes - maintain communications with the AO - manage incidents or malpractice cases

Cyber attack

Such as a ransomware attack on a centre resulting in:

- Potential loss of student NEA work
- Loss of access to student NEA work
- Loss of access to learning
- Issues with submission of NEA work and marks or grades
- Inability to access exam results

Cyber-attack on awarding organisation resulting in potential disruption or loss of access to systems.

Phishing attacks attempting to access secure information.

Delivery failure

AOs are required to report any actual or potential delivery issue which could impact the validity of the assessment result or delay the issue of results.

Incorrect results

Results issued to students are incorrect, such as wrong marks or grades because of marker error, IT or system error, administrative error, mark scheme error etc.

Maladministration

Mistakes or poor processes that can affect the integrity of the assessment but where there has been no intention on the part of the person responsible to do any harm.

Suspected malpractice

Attempts to gain an unfair advantage by either centres or students. Compared with maladministration, malpractice will generally involve some form of intent.

Note: malpractice also includes non-compliance with regulations.

Marking issues

Issues with marking of assessment materials due to marker or administrative error or IT or system error.

Issues relating to marking progress.

Security breach

The potential for confidential assessment material to be compromised, even where this is not realised.

Other

Events which cannot be categorised into the above event types.

Delivery failure sub-types

- Missing scripts
- Loss of completed student exam/assessment question paper scripts (full paper or missing pages) within the centre, the AO or in transit
- Loss of additional material such as continuation booklets, recordings of speaking exams, video recordings, moderation, and mark sheets etc
- AO missed own deadline
- Certification delay - issues that lead to a delay in the release of certificates to centres and/or students
- Reviews of marking, moderation and appeals not completed within published deadlines

IT failure

AO website or system issues resulting in:

- Centres being unable to access material, assessments or results
- Examiners being unable to access online systems affecting marking or awarding

Delayed results

Issues that lead to a delay in the release of results to students, such as due to unresolved malpractice investigations, missing information from centres or marking not completed.

Process weakness

Administrative issues resulting in AO processes not being followed, such as errors

made, issues not escalated or missed leading to delays.

Conflict of interest

Examiners or AO staff not declaring a conflict of interest potentially impacting on marking or access to confidential information.

Human error

Administrative/reconciliation issues and errors made by AO staff or examiners not picked up by quality assurance checks.

Information error

Incorrect information provided by AO causing confusion, for example, incorrect information regarding grade boundaries.

Incorrect content

Incorrect information contained in assessment material.

Exam disruption

Security Breach sub-types

- Leak of materials (public)
- Unauthorised access or theft of live assessment materials
- Sharing of live assessment materials by a member of the public

Leak of materials (centre)

- Centre mistakenly opening question paper packets ahead of required time
- Centre removing question papers from secure storage outside of requirements
- Centre taking question papers off-site without required permission
- Centre accessing, uploading, or sharing assessment material
- Centre releasing students from exam ahead of required supervision time

Leak of materials (student)

Student sharing confidential content from an assessment they have taken, for example via social media.

Leak of materials (AO)

Secure assessment material shared or accessed due to IT system issues/incorrect permissions. Question paper packaging issues resulting in confidential information being visible or packages containing incorrect papers.

Incorrect paper issued for assessment

Centre distributed incorrect exam question paper.

Assessment held at incorrect time

Exam held at incorrect time - ahead of permitted times as per JCQ regulations.

Loss in transit

Exam papers missing due to logistics issue.

Results released before results day

Exam or assessment results accessed ahead of scheduled release date/ time due to:

- AO or centre IT system issues
- AO or centre permissions issues
- Results released in error

Assessment Material Error sub-types

Question paper error

Errors in:

- exam or assessment question papers
- on-screen tests
- controlled assessments, for example science practical instructions

Including typographical and spelling errors; missing words, prompts, brackets, keys, or symbols; incorrect information including data, dates, instructions, translations in Modern foreign language papers; incorrect, titling.

Supporting materials error

Errors in additional assessment materials, such as preliminary or pre-release materials, teacher instruction materials, speaking assessment photocards and role plays, glossaries, source booklets, equation or formula booklets, or audio files that may affect students' ability to complete a question.

Collation or printing error

Printing error including:

- Missing pages
- Missing questions
- Missing information in pdf files for centre printing

Collation error:

- Question paper pages out of order or missing

Front cover instruction error

Error in instructions on front cover of question paper (information or instructions only).

Mark scheme or answer key error

Error in the framework for assigning marks.

Specification error

Error in qualification specification.

Appendix B – Data table: Number of students (GCSE, AS and A levels) summer 2023 and 2024

Table 26: Number of students who took GCSEs, AS and A levels in summer 2023 and 2024 (England only figures)

Exam series	GCSE (all)	GCSE (age 16)	AS (all)	AS (age 17)	A level (all)	A level (age 18)
2024	998,118	667,421	31,115	22,729	313,021	282,608
2023	936,171	643,187	32,735	24,436	306,488	279,699

Appendix C – Data table: Online vs traditional marking for GCSEs, AS and A levels

Table 27: Data for online vs traditional marking

Qualification	Exam series	Papers marked online	Scripts marked online	Papers traditionally marked	Scripts traditionally marked	F M
AS or A level	Summer 2023	695	2,272,950	115	64,875	
AS or A level	Summer 2024	695	2,342,130	115	63,295	

GCSE	Summer 2023	580	13,358,970	45	309,985
GCSE	Summer 2024	575	14,010,515	40	313,150
Total	Summer 2023	1,275	15,631,920	165	374,860
Total	Summer 2024	1,270	16,352,645	155	376,445

Appendix D – Additional data tables by qualification type for VTQs and EPA

Table 28: Incidents reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for VTQ PTQs

Event type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Assessment material error	41	19
Security breach	17	6
Cyber attack	5	0
Delivery failure	28	37
Incorrect certificates	3	0
Incorrect results	9	7
Maladministration	14	0
Suspected malpractice	17	5

Marking issues	0	2
Other	3	5
Total	137	81

Table 29: Incidents reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for T Levels

Event type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Assessment material error	20	10
Delivery failure	9	12
Suspected malpractice	5	9
Security breach	3	1
Cyber attack	2	0
Incorrect results	2	3
Maladministration	2	0
Incorrect certificates	1	0
Marking issues	1	3
Other	0	2
Total	45	40

Table 30: Incidents reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for FSQs

Event type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
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Security breach	31	6
Assessment material error	7	2
Suspected malpractice	8	7
Delivery failure	7	2
Incorrect results	5	2
Centre failure	4	3
Other	2	2
Total	64	24

Table 31: Incidents of delivery failure reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for VTQ PTQs, broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Delayed results	8	0
Exam disruption	1	0
IT failure	6	4
AO missed own deadline	8	18
Process weakness	1	2
Other	4	1
Total	28	25

Table 32: Incidents of delivery failure reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for T Levels, broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Other	3	0
IT failure	2	3
Delayed Results	1	0
Information error	1	1
Missed deadline	1	0
Process weakness	1	3
Resource capacity	0	1
Collation / printing error	0	1
Exam disruption	0	3
Total	9	12

Table 33: Incidents of delivery failure reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for FSQs, broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
IT failure	3	1
Delayed results	1	0
AO missed own deadline	1	0
Missing scripts	1	1
Other	1	0

Total	7	2
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Table 34: Security breach incidents reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for VTQ PTQs, broken down by sub-type

Event sub type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Results released before results day	4	0
Assessment held at incorrect time	1	0
IT/system error	0	1
Leak of materials (AO)	1	0
Leak of materials (student)	0	1
Leak of materials (centre staff)	3	0
Leak of materials (centre)	0	4
Leak of materials (teacher/examiner)	1	0
Loss in transit	6	0
Other	1	0
Total	17	6

Table 35: Security breach incidents reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for T Levels, broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in	Number of reports in
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	2023 to 2024	2022 to 2023
Loss in transit	1	0
Leak of materials (centre staff)	1	1
Results released before results day	1	0
Total	3	1

Table 36: Security breach incidents reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for FSQs, broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Loss in Transit	17	4
Leak of materials (student)	6	0
Other	4	2
Leak of materials (centre)	2	0
Leak of materials (public)	1	0
Leak of materials (AO)	1	0
Total	31	6

Table 37: assessment material errors reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for PTQs, broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in	Number of reports in
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	2023 to 2024	2022 to 2023
Question paper error	27	7
Supporting materials error	6	5
Mark scheme or answer key error	5	1
IT/system error	1	0
Collation or printing error	1	1
Non-exam assessment (NEA) error	1	2
Specification error	0	2
Front cover instruction error	0	1
Total	41	19

Table 38: assessment material errors reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for T Levels, broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Question paper error	8	3
Supporting materials error	9	6
Mark scheme or answer key error	1	0
Front cover instruction error	1	1

NEA	1	0
Total	20	10

Table 39: assessment material errors reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for FSQs, broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Question paper error	5	1
Collation or printing error	1	0
Mark scheme or answer key error	0	1
IT system error	1	0
Total	7	2

Table 40: assessment material errors reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2022 to 2023 for EPAs, broken down by sub-type

Event sub-type	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
Collation or printing error	1	0
Mark scheme or answer key error	5	1
Question paper error	6	5
Specification error	0	3
Total	12	9

Table 41: Assessment material errors for EPAs reported by categorisation of impact

Assessment material error category	Number of reports in 2023 to 2024	Number of reports in 2022 to 2023
1	5	3
2	5	6
3	2	0

Appendix E – Resources provided for centres and students

To help centres and students better understand how grades would be awarded in 2024 and what their results meant, Ofqual published bespoke resources for centres and students, including but not limited to:

- [Guide for schools and colleges: 2024](#)
- [End-point assessment guide for apprentices](#)
- [Summer 2024 exams are starting – The Ofqual blog](#)
- [Resources to help support exams officers in their roles](#)
- [Ofqual Student Guide 2024](#)
- [A letter to students from Ofqual and UCAS](#)
- [Blog: Looking ahead to level 3 results day for AS, A level, T Level and vocational and technical qualifications](#)
- [Blog: Looking ahead to results day for GCSE and level 1/level 2 vocational and technical qualifications](#)
- [Guide to GCSE results for England, summer 2024](#)
- [Infographic: GCSE results 2024](#)
- 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 [Ofqual - Analytics](#)

- [Research and analysis: The National Reference Test in 2024](#)
- [Guide to the 2024 Level 1, Level 1/2 and Level 2 qualification results for VTQs in England](#)
- [PTQ outcomes dashboard - level 1, level 1/2 and level 2](#)
- [Infographic: vocational and technical qualification results 2024](#)
- [Guide to the 2024 Level 3 qualification results for VTQs in England](#)
- [Infographic: Level 3 vocational and technical qualifications 2024](#)
- [PTQ outcomes dashboard - level 3](#)
- [Apprenticeship end-point assessments statistical report: March 2023 to February 2024](#)
- [Letter to schools and colleges October 2024](#)

Appendix F – Glossary

Access arrangements

These 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 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.

Access to scripts

GCSEs, AS and A Levels, Extended Project Qualifications and Technical Qualifications within T Levels have specific rules in place regarding access to scripts. These include requiring that AOs make marked scripts or assessments

available to centres prior to the deadline for requesting a review of marking enabling them to make informed decisions as to whether to seek a review.

Adverse effects and reporting

AOs must promptly notify Ofqual of any actual or potential incident which could have an impact on standards, public confidence in qualifications, or the AO's ability to develop, deliver or award qualifications in a way which complies with our rules. AOs 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](#). For apprenticeship EPAs, this is required under [EPA qualification level condition EPA3](#).

Appropriate and prompt management of these events and incidents is crucial to making sure students are treated fairly across qualifications, and between AOs and centres.

Ofqual actively monitors the events and incidents that are reported by AOs to assess the impact of the issues and to evaluate AOs' management of them. This determines not only whether Ofqual needs to take any formal action, but also feeds into the ongoing monitoring of AOs.

Assessed grade

Where a student is absent from an exam for a reason beyond their control, centres can request a qualification award. If eligible, the AO will determine the student's grade for the qualification based on their performance (compared to all students') in other assessments in that subject. Some AOs refer to this as a 'calculated grade'.

Centre

In an educational setting, a centre refers to an organisation that delivers qualifications and assessments on behalf of an awarding organisation. This could be a school, college or training provider.

A centre is responsible for ensuring that the qualification is taught according to the requirements set by the awarding organisation, managing the assessments and examinations and maintaining the integrity and quality/security of the qualification. The centre typically works under the guidelines and regulations set by the AO and the Joint Council for Qualifications.

Awarding organisations are required to have centre agreements in place with their approved centres. These agreements must outline the responsibilities and expectations of centres, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements.

For EPA, 'centres' are more commonly referred to as 'providers.' Providers do not usually undertake assessments and thus Ofqual's requirements for these relationships differ to those for general qualifications and VTQs. Alongside the employer, these organisations deliver training to apprentices to prepare them to undertake their end-point assessment with their selected AO, the requirements of which are set out within the apprenticeship occupational standard and assessment plan. In most cases, providers remain independent of the EPA and do not play a role in the assessment process.

Institute for Apprenticeship and Technical Education (IfATE)

IfATE works with employers to develop, approve, review and revise apprenticeships and technical qualifications. It is responsible for developing and publishing end-point assessment plans.

Malpractice and maladministration

Everyone involved in the delivery of an assessment has a role to play in preventing and reporting malpractice, so that users of qualifications can be confident that individual students' outcomes genuinely reflect what they know, understand, and can do. Ofqual takes all allegations of malpractice extremely seriously.

Ofqual's rules apply to instances of both malpractice and maladministration. Maladministration generally constitutes mistakes or poor process that can affect the integrity of the assessment but 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.

AOs must investigate all allegations of malpractice and maladministration where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that malpractice or maladministration has taken place. AOs require centres and examiners to report all suspected incidents and to co-operate with any subsequent investigation. Where proven, the AO will act against those responsible.

Readiness review

During the planning phase, prior to the delivery of assessments Ofqual meets with senior staff from AOs to review an AO's plans and assess their readiness for delivering assessments. The focus is how the AO intends to manage its specific risks and how it plans to secure the timely delivery of fair results.

Reasonable adjustments

These are changes made to an assessment or the way it is conducted that reduce or remove a disadvantage caused by a student's disability. The [Equality Act 2010](#) requires AOs 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).

Reviews of marking (ROM)

For GCSE, AS, A level and Technical Qualifications within a T Level, schools and colleges can ask AOs to review whether there were any errors in the AOs marking of any exam or non-exam assessment. AOs only accept review requests through centres (except for private candidates) and require consent from the student. Ofqual requires AOs to accept review requests directly from private candidates, who may not have the same relationship with a centre as other students.

The 3 post results services for reviewing students' assessments each AO 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 AO also does a full administrative error review. Ofqual regulations require AOs to provide the reasons for review of marking decisions automatically, rather than on request.

AOs operate a priority service which centres can request if a quick response is required, for example because a university or higher education place is at stake. All AOs offer this service for AS and A levels, T Levels and some offer it for GCSEs.

Reviews of moderation

A school or college can ask for the outcome of an AOs' moderation to be reviewed by the AO if the moderation resulted in a change to the marks the school or college gave to the work. Awarding organisations do not provide reviews where the marks given by a centre were not changed following moderation. The request for a review of moderation must be made on behalf of the whole of the school or college's cohort for that component. AOs must carry out reviews of moderation on request. The judgement of the moderator is reviewed using 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 because of the moderation.

Special consideration

Where a student's ability to take or perform in an assessment 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 AO on their behalf. [A guide to the special consideration process](#) (published by JCQ) allows for percentage adjustments to the mark given for a student's work, according to a tariff. Changes to the way assessments are taken for students with temporary injury or illnesses are also provided as a form of special consideration.

T Level waves

T Level qualifications have been made available in different 'waves'. The first wave became available in September 2020 and comprised: Digital production, Design and Development; Education and Early Years and Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction.

In September 2021 the second wave of T Levels were introduced. These were: Digital Support Services; Digital Business Services; Onsite Construction, Building Services Engineering for Construction; Health; Healthcare Science and Science.

In September 2022, the third wave of T Levels were available for the first time. The third wave is made up of: Management and Administration; Finance; Accounting; Engineering and Manufacturing Design and Development; Maintenance, Installation and Repair for Engineering and Manufacturing and Engineering, Manufacturing, Processing and Control.

In September 2023, the fourth wave of T Levels became available for first teaching. Wave 4 is made up of agriculture, land management and production and legal services. In total, 18 T Level qualifications were available in September 2023.

Yellow label service

This is a traceable exam scripts dispatch service funded centrally by the DfE for centres in England. Exam centres can use the service to send unmarked exam scripts, coursework and controlled assessments to examiners. It covers externally assessed general qualifications, functional skills and other eligible accredited qualifications. This service offers a high level of security for pre-arranged collections from exam centres. More information can be found at [Dispatch of exam scripts: yellow label service](#).

Appendix G – Letter to AOs ahead of the 2024 summer exam series

Dear Responsible Officer,

As you enter the summer series this letter confirms Ofqual's reporting expectations and how we will monitor your delivery of assessments 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 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 you to seek assurance on your readiness to deliver assessments this series. Following that review, we wrote to you highlighting areas of risk specific to your organisation and others which concern all exam boards. Ofqual expects you to manage those risks effectively, and any other risks you may identify over the course of the series.

For this series exam boards have worked together to devise common JCQ minimum security controls and industry logistics standards which you have committed to adopting. Ofqual welcomes the introductions of these minimum standards but recognises that there is the potential for events to occur in these areas that will be outside of your control and for which you cannot wholly mitigate. We would emphasise the need for early notification should such events happen, and an Adverse Effect could have or has been created.

Where an incident involves or could potentially involve other exam boards, we would strongly encourage JCQ members to adopt a collaborative approach to considering and implementing mitigations.

External influences

There continues to be a risk that external factors, such as a cyber-attacks, extreme weather, measles, RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete) or industrial action, may disrupt the delivery of the summer series. Ofqual expects that contingency plans are in place for these eventualities and that you continue to be

alive to these risks during the series and keep the effectiveness of these plans under review.

Contingency Incident Group (CIG)

Should you encounter an exceptional circumstance, or incident, that potentially impacts other exam boards, you should consider whether to contact Ofqual to convene the Contingency Incident Group (CIG). Ofqual should be contacted either by a 'Contact the Regulator' Portal message or by contacting relevant Ofqual staff, as identified in this letter.

An exceptional circumstance is defined as a UK-wide national event, or an event that causes significant emotional or operational impact, resulting in large-scale disruption to national infrastructure. CIG may be convened for exam boards to discuss and consider any necessary response(s) which may have consequences for the planned delivery of summer 2024 General Qualifications (GQ) exams and assessments and/or results.

CIG may also be convened in response to a significant incident experienced by one exam board that would have consequences for the sector and may require a sector response. As per the Terms of Reference of CIG, once invoked, we would ask that the impacted exam board circulate a summary of the issue to CIG members 24 hours in advance of the meeting where circumstances allow.

Timely release of results

Ofqual recognises the intensity of the work involved in 2023 to ensure students taking Vocational & Technical Qualifications (VTQs) got the results they needed to progress. This was an important step towards parity of treatment for VTQ students. A similar approach for 2024 onwards was announced on 12 October 2023. Ofqual will monitor your implementation of these measures, however, we would expect a notification via the Portal, should you have any concerns about your ability to meet these measures which lead to the conclusion that there is the potential for an Adverse Effect

Please also ensure that you are aware which students centres are expecting to certificate in summer 2024; this includes meaningful checks on registrations with

particular focus on students who require results to progress into higher education.

Assessment material errors

Ofqual expects exam boards to have processes in place to ensure that assessment material errors are detected and prevented, including in modified papers. However, should errors occur, prompt notification under Condition B3 is expected for all instances, including where you consider that you have already taken steps to mitigate the potential Adverse Effect – e.g. where an advisory notice, erratum notice or replacement paper has been issued. You should continue to notify Ofqual of errors that come to light after the summer series, including in modified papers.

Errors will be categorised using the definitions below. When notifying Ofqual of error please ensure that the relevant portal fields (for example, the number of marks effected and the type of modification(s) affected) are also completed:

Category 1: Assessment material errors which could or do make it impossible for learners to generate a meaningful response to a question / task.

Category 2: Assessment material errors which could or do cause unintentional difficulties for learners to generate a meaningful response to a question / task.

Category 3: Assessment material errors which will not affect a learner's ability to generate a meaningful response to a question / task.

Provision of assessment materials

Thank you for agreeing to upload GCSE, AS and A level assessments and any additional materials (source booklets, erratum notices, etc) following the exam(s) being sat. We would be grateful if these could be uploaded as promptly as possible once the exams have been sat. For other qualifications, Ofqual will give notice to provide any assessment materials where we identify a need for them.

Marker recruitment and marking progress

This summer, Ofqual has continued to collect marker recruitment data and will be collecting marking progress data for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications. However, for either GQ or VTQ qualifications, we would expect a notification via the Portal should concerns about recruitment, moderation or marking for a particular specification lead to the conclusion that there is the potential for an Adverse Effect.

Notifying us about events

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

In additions to Ofqual's Conditions and Guidance, when considering whether to make a notification to the regulator(s) about events occurring during delivery this summer exam boards will also wish to consider the following:

- Any out of the ordinary events, or event affecting a number of centres, which requires specific action by awarding organisations or their centres to address the potential Adverse Effect (for example, unusual disturbance or disruption to the delivery of an assessment).
- Notifying Ofqual where you are aware of any potential for, or actual, media or social media coverage that could have an Adverse Effect. This includes where the volume of coverage causes you to take some form of action to monitor or respond to the potential issues that are being raised.
- Where cyber-attacks affecting centres are reported, we appreciate that at the point at which you initially become aware it may not be evident if delivery of assessments has been affected. However, you should consider notification when:
 - you will be unable to meet a published date for the issue of results or the award of a qualification (B3.2e))
 - The evidence underpinning an assessment may be affected (GCoR H5.1)
 - There has been a loss or theft of, or a breach of confidentiality in, any assessment materials (GCoR B3.2(b))
- Note that where non-exam assessment (NEA) is lost or potentially lost, we would expect to be notified of the cyber-attack, even where you have used, or plan to

use, established Special Consideration processes to mitigate any Adverse Effect.

Should you wish to discuss an emerging issue which you do not yet consider to be notifiable, or any live event notification, you should approach your named contact (either by telephone or through the 'Contact the Regulator' facility on the Portal) to arrange a conversation. Ofqual will respond as soon as possible, and if required, will schedule a meeting within 24 hours.

Associate Director of Qualification Delivery for Vocational Qualification, Siobhan Cummings, or Director of Delivery and Performance for GQ, Jonathan Clewes, can be contacted directly should the nature or the urgency of the issue warrant it.

Submitting an event notification

Ofqual aims to minimise any unnecessary and time-consuming exchanges. Therefore, where all relevant information is not available at the time of an event 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 to aid Ofqual's understanding of how you are dealing with any issue and Ofqual's subsequent reporting.

For each Event Notification submitted, you will need to consider whether you have not complied with your General Conditions of Recognition, and the relevant Qualification Level Conditions or Subject-Level Conditions. Please complete the non-compliance Portal declaration, at the appropriate point, to indicate where you are declaring non-compliance. For this series, Portal improvements have been made, to allow more granular reporting of non-compliance against the appropriate sub-condition(s).

Ofqual's approach to monitoring delivery issues

Ofqual will acknowledge and continue to monitor any notifications made.

We will allow you to focus on managing the event once we have the necessary

information about the nature, scale, and potential impact, and have 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, that any Adverse Effect has been sufficiently prevented or mitigated, and appropriate steps have been taken to prevent reoccurrence in the future. Further work may be carried out or action taken after the summer to address any outstanding thematic or compliance issues.

We may intervene if we believe your approach is inadequate, inappropriate or believe that you are likely to breach your Conditions. Depending on the nature of the event and the urgency with which it must be dealt, we may:

- Give you the opportunity to review your approach in light of our concerns; and/or
- Direct you to take a specific course of action.

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

Through the GQ Responsible Officers' Regulatory Group (RORG) and VTQ Delivery Oversight & Regulatory Approaches Group (DORAG) we will provide exam boards with interim updates on any observed trends and patterns and discuss collective delivery risks and issues. Organisation specific issues will not normally be discussed at meetings where other exam boards are present.

Ofqual will also hold fortnightly RO meetings with you where we will discuss risks and issues specific to your organisation and may ask for further information on the way in which you have delivered the summer series.

Setting and maintaining standards

It will be important to ensure that the awarding of qualifications this summer supports the maintenance of standards over time, and, where appropriate, alignment between awarding organisations in a subject. As in any year, there will be separate discussions relating to this, where relevant.

Observing standardisation and awarding

Ofqual will arrange to observe standardisation and awarding meetings with you as part of our normal cycle of monitoring. Ofqual may ask for other colleagues to observe the meetings for development purposes only, and if possible, we would appreciate your support with this.

Delivery report

In line with Ofqual's regulatory approach, a report will be published on the issues that occur during the academic year with a focus on the summer exam series. Where we use your data, we will give you an opportunity to provide feedback on the report's factual accuracy before it is published. We will share a complete version of the draft report (unredacted - so each awarding organisation'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 every success in your assessment delivery for the remainder this year.

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