



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

Report on the performance of awarding bodies for general qualifications in 2005

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Executive summary

QCA's regulation and standards division is committed to effective regulation of awarding bodies to secure a fair deal for learners. This is our second annual report on the performance of the three awarding bodies based in England that offer A level and GCSE qualifications. QCA has established performance expectations for the quality of service that awarding bodies provide and published a detailed code of practice that awarding bodies must follow. QCA monitors and reports on the performance of awarding bodies against these expectations and requirements every year. QCA uses this information to identify where further regulatory action is required, ensuring that the examination system is robust and maintaining public confidence in examination results. This report on the performance of the awarding bodies in 2005 shows that:

- **all three awarding bodies provided a satisfactory level of service to centres.** In 2005, the awarding bodies demonstrated high levels of performance against all of QCA's performance expectations for the quality of service provided to centres. QCA will continue to monitor and report on these performance expectations in 2006, and will review, strengthen and introduce new expectations as required to ensure high levels of customer service and satisfaction continue
- **there were no significant concerns about the awarding process for A levels and GCSEs.** The level of compliance with the requirements of section 6 of QCA's code of practice for these qualifications continues to be satisfactory. However, there were some delays with the marking of examination papers at Edexcel, particularly for GCSE religious studies. QCA will continue to monitor the performance of awarding bodies against all the requirements of the code of practice in 2006, including those for electronic marking
- **more instances of candidate malpractice were penalised by awarding bodies.** The number of candidates penalised for malpractice in exams or coursework in 2005 increased by around 27% from 2004, but the proportion of candidates involved remains low, representing around 0.06 per cent of examination results. Procedures for penalising candidate malpractice are becoming more effective, and QCA is working with awarding bodies in 2006 to ensure that centres, candidates and parents fully understand the penalties and consequences of malpractice
- **more detailed information about arrangements for candidates with particular assessment requirements is required.** In 2005, awarding bodies provided QCA with detailed information on arrangements for candidates with particular assessment requirements, although it was not possible to compare the number of awarding body-approved and centre-delegated arrangements. QCA is working with awarding bodies on a system for centres to provide more detailed information on access arrangements and will monitor awarding bodies' processes in 2006 to help ensure that no candidate is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged.

Introduction

This is QCA's second annual report on the performance of awarding bodies. It provides details on the performance of the three awarding bodies based in England that offered GCSEs and A levels in 2005 – AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance), Edexcel and OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations).

As the regulator of the public examination system in England, QCA is committed to securing a fair deal for learners. This means making sure that awarding bodies provide a high-quality service so that learners can be confident that examination results are accurate and reliable. QCA regulated these awarding bodies throughout 2005 in a number of ways, including specific activities in response to particular concerns that arose during the year. The findings resulting from these regulatory activities are published in this report.

QCA has established performance expectations that awarding bodies must meet and has published a code of practice that they must follow. These ensure that learners and centres receive the highest levels of customer service and that examination standards are consistent over time. If an awarding body fails to meet these requirements, QCA takes firm action to raise the performance of the awarding body. QCA regularly reviews the performance expectations and the code of practice to continue to improve awarding body performance.

This report contains information on actions that QCA has taken during 2005 and information on progress made on the actions identified in the 2004 report on awarding body performance. The final section of this report identifies some actions for QCA in 2006, the outcome of which will be reported on next year.

QCA and the regulatory authorities for Wales and Northern Ireland are producing a separate report on the extent of changes to examination results as a result of enquiries and appeals.

Quality of service provided to centres by awarding bodies

QCA has established performance expectations for the quality of service that awarding bodies should provide to centres. These performance expectations allow QCA to monitor and report on awarding body performance each year. All three awarding bodies performed at a very high level against QCA's performance expectations for the June 2005 A level and GCSE examination series:

	QCA expectation	Performance in 2005		
		AQA	Edexcel	OCR
% of question papers dispatched to centres on time	100	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
% of question papers without errors	100	99.0 (98.7)	98.0 (97.5)	99.2 (96.7)
% of examination results issued to centres on time	100	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
% of priority enquiries about examination results completed within 20 days	100	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
% of examination papers copied and sent out at least 10 days before the deadline for enquiries about results	100	100 (100)	99.8 (100)	100 (97.8)

Equivalent figures for June 2004 are provided in brackets. Further information on these performance expectations is provided in the appendix.

Providing question papers on time

QCA expects all awarding bodies to dispatch question papers on time and, as in 2004, all three awarding bodies met this requirement. For the June examinations series in 2005, this involved distributing more than 20 million papers (more than 7 million for A level and 13 million for GCSE). As a result of previous security breaches, QCA expects awarding bodies to have contingency plans in place that allow them to react swiftly if any question papers are stolen and to maintain the integrity of the examination process. Awarding bodies' arrangements for maintaining the security of question papers worked well, with the very small number of replacement papers required this year being issued in good time.

Providing question papers without errors

QCA expects awarding bodies to make sure that question papers do not contain any errors that might affect candidates. If a question paper does contain an error that requires correction, awarding bodies are expected to send an erratum notice to centres before the examination to make sure candidates are aware of the error. QCA also expects awarding bodies to take any errors in the question paper into account when marking candidates' work and awarding examination grades.

For the June 2005 examination series, the three awarding bodies produced more than 3,300 different question papers for general qualifications, nearly as many as in 2004. However, 40 of these question papers (1.2 per cent of them) contained errors requiring correction. This figure is lower than in 2004

when 2.4 per cent of question papers contained errors requiring correction. As in 2004, centres were informed about nearly all of these errors before the date of the examination. AQA and OCR issued errata notices for all question papers requiring correction, but Edexcel failed to issue errata notices for nine of its question papers. This represents 0.27 per cent of the question papers produced for the June 2005 examination series, very similar to the equivalent period for 2004 (0.26 per cent).

Providing examination results on time

QCA expects awarding bodies to produce examination results on time for all candidates with valid qualification entries. As in 2004, the awarding bodies provided all results on the agreed publication date for the June 2005 examination series. This involved more than 6.9 million individual AS, A level and GCSE results. The accountable officer for each awarding body must notify QCA about serious problems with the processes for marking candidates' work and awarding grades. None of the accountable officers informed QCA about any issues for the June 2005 examination series.

Responding to enquiries about examination results

The awarding bodies provide a priority service for centres to enquire about examination results that could affect candidates' places in higher or further education. QCA now requires awarding bodies to deal with enquiries of this type within 20 days. As in 2004, all three awarding bodies met this performance expectation.

If asked, awarding bodies will provide copies of A level examination papers to help centres decide whether to enquire into particular examination results. QCA's requirement is for these papers to be copied and sent out more than 10 days before the deadline for enquiring about results. This year, just over 32,000 requests for copies of GCE or VCE examination papers were made. AQA and OCR both met QCA's performance expectation. There was a slight delay in sending out copies of 30 Edexcel examination papers.

In addition to priority enquiries about examination results, QCA expects all post-results marking enquiries to be completed within 35 days. As in 2004, QCA and the regulatory authorities for Northern Ireland and Wales are producing a separate report on the extent of changes to examination results as a result of enquiries and appeals.

Responding to enquiries from centres

In addition to dealing with enquiries about examination results, QCA expects awarding bodies to provide a high level of customer service to centres and candidates throughout the year. The awarding bodies received more than 1.1 million queries from centres between September 2004 and August 2005, either by telephone, letter or email. Although QCA has not established a performance expectation in this area, awarding bodies dealt with more than 97 per cent of these enquiries within 10 days.

Results of QCA investigations

During 2005, QCA investigated and responded to a range of issues connected with the performance of awarding bodies and the examination system as a whole. This included publishing a report into coursework and an investigation into the suitability and experience of examiners used by Edexcel to mark some examination papers.

Review of coursework arrangements

QCA published *A review of GCE and GCSE coursework arrangements* in November 2005. The review considered the role of coursework in current specifications and the effectiveness of coursework in teaching, learning and assessment. It also investigated issues relating to the authentication of marking and moderation of coursework and the arrangements in place to minimise the potential for malpractice. Views were gathered from candidates, teachers, parents, senior examiners and moderators, and awarding body staff.

The review found that coursework is an important motivator for many candidates. However, there is not agreement among teachers, examiners and candidates on its value in different subjects in teaching and learning, and in evaluating skills and knowledge that cannot be assessed in examinations. The review established that: the level of help and advice offered to candidates by teachers and parents varies; that guidance detailing what is permitted is limited, and that teachers have a limited understanding of what constitutes malpractice. The review identified the internet as a powerful aid to learning, but also acknowledged the need to control the potential for plagiarism arising from its use.

As a result of the findings, QCA and the regulatory authorities for Northern Ireland and Wales are requiring awarding bodies to take a common approach to handling coursework. The awarding bodies must report on action taken in 2006 to detect suspected malpractice in coursework and on the penalties applied.

In response to the review QCA has:

- established a task force to produce guidance for teachers on the authentication of coursework for the June 2006 examination series
- agreed to produce guidance for parents on the scope for legitimate support for coursework, the nature of plagiarism and collusion, and the consequences of malpractice
- invited Professor Jean Underwood of Nottingham Trent University to advise the regulatory authorities on the technical aspects of detecting internet plagiarism
- established a project steering group to manage the implementation of those actions that the awarding bodies must take forward.

The findings of the review will also be taken into account in the current development work on updated A level and GCSE qualifications.

Concerns about marking

QCA investigated concerns about the suitability of some examiners used to mark Edexcel's GCSE religious studies question papers in summer 2005, when these were marked electronically for the first time. This involves scanning an examination paper and sending it electronically for marking rather than sending the paper to an examiner by post. This system enables more than one person to be

involved in marking one examination paper. Expert examiners – typically experienced teachers – are employed to focus on the marking of complex questions that require subject knowledge, and questions that produce simple and straightforward answers are marked by clerical markers. While these markers are trained and supervised, they do not need subject expertise.

Issues arose in the management of both the electronic marking process and the examiners. This resulted in a substantial shortfall of examiners late in the marking process. To ensure papers were marked on time, additional examiners were recruited, many from Edexcel's own staff. Allegations were made that staff without the necessary level of expertise performed the role of expert examiners. QCA required Edexcel to provide information regarding the qualifications of the additional examiners it had employed. Edexcel reported that graduate staff had undertaken all additional expert marking of GCSE religious studies, and that more than 50 per cent of the Edexcel staff used to mark were qualified teachers.

Following this investigation, QCA was satisfied that the combination of the close checking of examiners' accuracy by the electronic marking system and the calibre of the additional examiners used meant the public could have confidence in the final results. However, QCA required Edexcel to review its management processes and procedures and put in place measures to prevent a recurrence of similar problems.

Compliance with QCA's code of practice for general qualifications

In addition to QCA's performance expectations for the quality of service provided to centres, QCA also monitors and reports on the performance of awarding bodies against the requirements of the regulatory authorities' code of practice for general qualifications.

The code of practice

The code of practice covers aspects of the examination system that cannot be monitored or reported against numerical targets. It contributes to ensuring quality, consistency and fairness in assessment and awarding for general qualifications. Each section of the code of practice sets out detailed requirements that awarding bodies must follow at each stage of the examining process. This includes detailed requirements on the processes for:

- writing question papers and mark schemes (section 3 of the code of practice)
- marking examination papers and coursework (sections 4 and 5 of the code of practice)
- grading candidates (section 6 of the code of practice).

The code also includes detailed requirements for on-screen marking and arrangements for candidates with particular assessment requirements, malpractice and enquiries about results and appeals. QCA revises and updates the code of practice every year in response to changes in the examination system and will continue to monitor the performance of awarding bodies against the code of practice.

Code of practice monitoring activities

QCA carries out a programme of activities each year designed to assess the performance of awarding bodies against the requirements of each section of the code of practice. Where awarding bodies have not fully complied with the code of practice, QCA identifies and monitors any issues that require action in current and future examination series.

In 2005, all three awarding bodies demonstrated a high level of compliance with the requirements of the code of practice. There were some instances of non-compliance, but these did not represent a significant threat to the integrity of the examination results.

This report provides information on findings from QCA's monitoring programme activities in 2005, including:

- scrutiny programme
- electronic marking of examination papers
- review of coursework arrangements
- observation of awarding meetings
- arrangements for candidates with particular assessment requirements
- malpractice by candidates and centres.

The report also includes details of action taken in response to monitoring programme findings in 2004.

QCA will produce a separate report on the results of enquiries, complaints or appeals about examination results once the appeals for 2005 have been completed. QCA will also publish an annual report on awarding body performance in 2006.

In addition to QCA's monitoring programme, awarding bodies are required to evaluate and report on the quality of their systems and arrangements for general qualifications. As part of this self-assessment process, each awarding body must develop an action plan to promote continuing improvement and to address any weaknesses identified. QCA will continue to review findings from self-assessment reports alongside other monitoring programme findings to inform the monitoring programme in future years.

Scrutiny programme

The scrutiny programme is a series of in-depth studies across a range of specifications each year. It is designed to evaluate the performance of awarding bodies against the requirements of the code of practice, particularly those covered by sections 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Specifications in the scrutiny programme are selected on the basis of an analysis of risk, which considers factors such as: the number of candidates, the length of time since the previous scrutiny, and the number and nature of complaints from centres. QCA completed scrutinies on 18 general qualifications in 2005, six for each awarding body:

	Total	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Number of scrutiny reports	18	6	6	6
▪ GCSE	10	4	2	4
▪ GCSE in vocational subjects	4	1	2	1
▪ GCE	4	1	2	1

Each scrutiny involves a team of consultants with subject expertise observing and monitoring awarding body meetings, analysing question papers and mark schemes and reviewing candidates' work. QCA observed more than 140 awarding body meetings and activities for the scrutiny specifications in 2005, including over 70 examiner or moderator standardisation meetings. QCA also observed 12 visits to centres by examiners or moderators, as well as question paper evaluation committee meetings and training meetings for examiners, moderators and teachers.

A report on each scrutiny is produced for the awarding body, which identifies recommendations on any areas of non-compliance. If an awarding body complies with all the requirements of the code for a particular stage of the examining process, the scrutiny report will not include any recommendations on that section of the code of practice.

Scrutiny programme recommendations

For the scrutiny programme in 2005, the number of specifications with recommendations requiring action for different stages of the examining process is:

	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Number of scrutiny specifications in 2005	6	6	6
Scrutiny specifications with recommendations on			
▪ question papers and mark schemes	5	6	6
▪ marking examination papers and coursework	4	6	5
▪ grading candidates	4	5	3

In 2005, there were a number of specifications for which the awarding bodies met all the requirements of the code of practice, particularly for the awarding process. However, there was at least one recommendation requiring action for each awarding body for each of these sections of the code of practice. As in 2004, the most common areas of non-compliance relate to ensuring that all question papers and mark schemes are of consistently high quality for all units and components, and that every examiner is fully trained before marking candidates' work.

Awarding body response to scrutiny programme recommendations

At the end of the scrutiny programme, each awarding body must produce an action plan outlining how it will address the scrutiny report recommendations. Each recommendation has a deadline for action, which depends on the nature of the recommendation. These include:

- recommendations requiring immediate action, where awarding bodies must take action in time for the first June examination series following the publication of the scrutiny report
- recommendations requiring action in future series, where awarding bodies are not able to revise question papers for the first June examination series as they have already been written.

QCA monitors how well awarding bodies have implemented their action plans in subsequent examination series and until QCA is satisfied that the recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed. If QCA is not satisfied that the action taken by an awarding body meets the requirements of the recommendation, QCA requires awarding bodies to take action to maintain the integrity of the examinations.

In 2005, the response of each awarding body to recommendations requiring action from scrutiny reports from 2003 and 2004 was monitored in two ways:

- by considering question papers and mark schemes from the June 2005 examination series
- by observing awarding body meetings as part of QCA's code of practice monitoring programme.

All three awarding bodies implemented action plans to address relevant recommendations in 2005. In 2006, QCA will monitor the performance of awarding bodies in response to relevant recommendations from the 2004 and 2005 scrutiny reports.

Electronic marking of examination papers

In 2005, detailed requirements for the operation of electronic marking of examination papers were included in section 4 of the code of practice for the first time. More than 3 million examination papers for the June 2005 examination were marked electronically (2.9 million by Edexcel and 0.4 million by AQA). This was around one-sixth of the total number of papers taken in 2005, and a large increase on the 1 million examination papers that were marked electronically in 2004. QCA monitored electronic

marking by these two awarding bodies to ensure that the marking and awarding processes were conducted in accordance with the code of practice requirements. The number and proportion of examination papers marked electronically is likely to increase in 2006. OCR is planning to introduce electronic marking this year and QCA will continue to monitor electronic marking at all three awarding bodies.

Review of coursework arrangements

Section 5 of the code of practice outlines requirements for marking and moderating coursework. In addition to monitoring this section of the code of practice in scrutiny specifications, QCA published a detailed report on coursework in 2005 (see page 5).

Observation of awarding meetings

Section 6 of the code of practice sets out detailed requirements on awarding and grading processes. A committee of experienced examiners meets to consider candidates' work before establishing grade boundary marks to maintain standards over time. In 2005, QCA staff and consultants observed more than 110 awarding meetings against the requirements of the code of practice. Representatives of teacher associations also observed a small number of awarding meetings. These meetings covered a range of general qualifications for both the January and June examination series, including awarding meetings for the scrutiny specifications. QCA also carried out post-awarding audit visits to each awarding body before the issue of results for the January and June examination series.

Observation of awarding meetings findings

As in 2004, QCA did not identify any significant instances of non-compliance from the observation of awarding meetings. Overall, all awarding bodies established grade boundaries using professional judgement based on the quality of candidates' work and informed by relevant technical and statistical information. QCA's monitoring shows that the awarding process for these established qualifications is stable.

As already noted in this report, the introduction of electronic marking did create some delays in the marking process for Edexcel, which meant some awarding meetings were postponed. QCA was satisfied that appropriate action was taken by the awarding body to ensure there could be confidence in the fairness and accuracy of the final results. QCA also carried out post-award audits to check awarding bodies' procedures for confirming the grade boundary marks recommended at awarding meetings. As in 2004, all changes to grade boundary marks at the post-award stage were made with the support of the relevant chair of examiners.

Awarding body response to observation of awarding meetings findings

In 2004, QCA identified a lack of suitable samples of candidates' work at some awarding meetings, often for portfolio units for the new GCSEs in vocational subjects. This was sometimes due to the small number of candidates for the specifications, but in a few cases the problem related to obtaining examples of candidates' work from centres. QCA required awarding bodies to ensure they had sufficient samples of candidates' work for all awarding meetings in 2005. The findings from the observation of awarding meetings show that awarding bodies have made efforts to address this, although this continued to be an issue at a small number of meetings.

Arrangements for candidates with particular assessment requirements

Section 7 of the code of practice requires awarding bodies to ensure all candidates can demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding, for example by providing modified question papers for candidates with visual impairments. However, the code makes clear that arrangements must be based

on the needs of individual candidates and must not give candidates an unfair advantage or undermine the integrity of the qualifications in any way. In addition, the code includes details for special consideration for candidates affected by an unforeseen and temporary illness, injury or incident at the time of the examination.

In 2005, awarding bodies dealt with more than 350,000 requests for arrangements for candidates with particular requirements and requests for special consideration. QCA collects and reports information on requests for arrangements to monitor any change over time. QCA is also working with awarding bodies on a new system for registering requests and information on different types of arrangement, and this system should allow for more detailed year-on-year comparison from 2006 onwards.

Awarding body-approved arrangements

Between September 2004 and August 2005, awarding bodies approved more than 100,000 requests for arrangements for GCSE and GCE candidates:

	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Awarding body-approved arrangements	42306 (41673)	25526 (32625)	37075 (29520)

Equivalent figures for 2004 where available are provided in brackets. These figures are for the number of awarding body-approved arrangements rather than the number of candidates as an individual candidate may require a number of arrangements and may take examinations from more than one awarding body.

The total number of awarding body-approved arrangements for 2005 was very similar to the equivalent period for 2004 (104,907 in 2005 compared with 103,818 in 2004). These awarding body-approved arrangements are available to ensure access to assessment for candidates with a range of different requirements:

	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Number of requests approved for	42306	25526	37075
▪ reader	22606	13673	19361
▪ scribe (including voice-activated computer)	11218	7305	9801
▪ computer / word processor	5821	3044	5357
▪ extra time (more than 25 per cent more time)	1312	533	1538
▪ alternative venue	709	578	295
▪ use of signer	331	178	433
▪ practical assistant	309	215	290

These figures are for the number of awarding body-approved arrangements rather than the number of candidates as an individual candidate may require a number of arrangements and may take examinations from more than one awarding body.

The most frequent arrangement, accounting for more than half of all approved requests, is for readers. A small proportion of the arrangements are for candidates to be permitted more than 25 per cent extra time. In 2006, QCA will monitor awarding bodies' procedures for the approval of arrangements for candidates with particular assessment requirements.

Centre-delegated arrangements

In addition to awarding body-approved requests, responsibility for some arrangements is delegated to centres. Centres do not have to request approval for these arrangements from the awarding body, but they are required to inform awarding bodies of these arrangements in advance of the examination. Centre-delegated arrangements are available for a range of assessment requirements for eligible candidates. For example, the use of a bilingual translation dictionary and extra time is available for candidates with English as an additional language, who have been in England for less than two years at the time of the examination.

Between September 2004 and August 2005, there were more than 43,000 candidates with centre-delegated arrangements:

Candidates with centre-delegated arrangements	43869
▪ extra time (up to 25 per cent more time)	35319
▪ bilingual dictionary with extra time	4083
▪ bilingual dictionary without extra time	1680
▪ supervised rest breaks	1919
▪ transcript	485
▪ prompter	383

These figures are for the number of candidates with centre-delegated arrangements rather than the number of arrangements for candidates for each awarding body.

As centre-delegated arrangements are designed for candidates with more commonly occurring needs requiring lower levels of assistance, the number of centre-delegated arrangements should be greater than the number of awarding body-approved arrangements. From these figures, it appears that centre-delegated arrangements are under-reported in comparison with awarding body-approved arrangements. However, the information in this report is the number of candidates with centre-delegated arrangements, rather than the number of arrangements for these candidates for each awarding body. As a result, it is not possible to make direct comparisons between the number of awarding body-approved and centre-delegated arrangements. QCA is working with awarding bodies on a system for centres to provide more detailed information on access arrangements from 2006. QCA will monitor awarding bodies' access arrangements procedures in 2006 to ensure that candidates are not unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged.

Modified question papers

In addition to awarding body-approved and centre-delegated arrangements, the awarding bodies provided more than 20,000 modified question papers for the June 2005 examination series to allow candidates with a range of visual and hearing impairments to demonstrate their abilities:

	AQA	Edexcel*	OCR
Number of modified question papers	13351 (12646)	2562 (3364)	4433 (6027)
▪ modified paper (visually impaired)	8092 (7083)	1479 (1949)	2549 (2710)

▪ enlarged paper (visually impaired)	3040 (2235)	874 (978)	760 (1103)
▪ Braille	1181 (1018)	112 (175)	415 (596)
▪ modified paper (hearing impaired)	1038 (2310)	97 (262)	709 (1618)

Equivalent figures for 2004 are provided in brackets. *The Edexcel figures are for the number of candidates requiring modified question papers, rather than the total number of modified question papers produced. Edexcel will provide information on the number of modified question papers produced in 2006 for the next annual report.

The number of modified papers produced for the summer 2005 examination series is very similar to 2004, around 0.1 per cent of the number of examination papers completed for the June 2005 examination series.

Special consideration

All awarding bodies have procedures for centres to request special consideration for candidates. This covers candidates who were absent from an examination or disadvantaged as a result of a temporary illness, injury, indisposition or other unforeseen incidents immediately before or during the examination period, and candidates for whom awarding body-approved and centre-delegated arrangements had been approved but not implemented. For the summer 2005 examination series, awarding bodies approved more than 250,000 requests for special consideration:

	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Number of requests for special consideration	130,971	65,797	70,031
Number of requests approved	127,653 (128,495)	60,075 (81,310)	67,472 (61,046)
% of requests approved	97.5	91.3	96.3

These figures are for the number of requests for special consideration rather than the number of candidates, as an individual candidate may require special consideration for a number of examination papers and may take examinations from more than one awarding body.

The total number of requests for special consideration in 2005 was slightly lower than for the equivalent period in 2004. It represents around 1.2 per cent of the total number of examination papers completed for the June 2005 examination series, or less than one approved request for every 80 examination papers.

Special consideration only allows for relatively minor adjustment to a candidate's mark, of up to 5 per cent of the maximum mark for the question paper, and is designed to be fair to candidates without compromising standards. The maximum adjustment is reserved for exceptional cases, for example candidates disadvantaged by a recent death of an immediate family member. Most adjustments for special consideration are smaller, for example 2 per cent of the maximum available mark for candidates with minor illness on the day of the examination.

Malpractice by candidates and centres

Section 8 of the code of practice covers requirements for awarding bodies' procedures for dealing with alleged and suspected malpractice. This includes any breaches of regulations that might undermine the integrity of an examination, from deliberate attempts by candidates to communicate with each

other during an examination to inadvertent failures by centre staff to comply with awarding body instructions. Centres must report all incidents of malpractice, and the code of practice requires awarding bodies to investigate any cases of suspected malpractice.

Candidate malpractice

The penalties for candidate malpractice range from warnings and loss of marks through to disqualification from individual components or units, or from all qualifications. A small number of candidates were disqualified from all qualifications due to malpractice in the June 2005 series, and the awarding bodies penalised more than 4,500 candidates for malpractice in examinations and coursework:

	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Number of candidates penalised for	1897 (1608)	888 (847)	1762 (1118)
▪ introducing unauthorised material into an examination room	877	355	655
▪ failing to acknowledge sources properly / plagiarism	206	138	176
▪ copying from other candidates (including the misuse of ICT)	127	110	247
▪ obtaining, receiving, exchanging or attempting to pass information that could be related to an examination	303	67	65
▪ collusion	100	96	214
▪ disruptive behaviour in the examination room (including the use of offensive language)	61	67	172
▪ including inappropriate, offensive or obscene material in exam papers or coursework	114	14	80
▪ failing to follow instructions from invigilators, supervisors or the awarding body	20	7	106
▪ failing to follow awarding body supervision requirements	55	18	21
▪ behaviour that undermines the integrity of the examination	24	3	5
▪ altering results documents, including certificates	0	3	10
▪ deliberate destruction of work	4	0	6
▪ personation	0	9	0
▪ theft (where the candidate's work is removed or stolen)	6	1	0
▪ misusing examination material	0	0	5

These figures are for the number of candidates penalised by awarding bodies. An individual candidate may be penalised for more than one examination paper and by more than one awarding body.

For the June 2005 examination series, the number of candidates penalised for malpractice increased by around 27 per cent from 2004. However, the proportion of candidates involved in penalised malpractice is low, representing around 0.06 per cent of examination results, or less than one in every 1,500 results. The most common type of malpractice, accounting for about two-fifths of the total, was

the introduction of unauthorised material into the examination room¹, and around three-fifths of these cases related to mobile phones or other electronic communication devices. The presence of mobile phones accounted for around 1,100 candidates being penalised for the summer 2005 examination series, around one-quarter of the total. Overall, around one-third of penalised candidates were involved in plagiarism, collusion or copying another candidate's work.

Although the incidence of candidate malpractice remained low, it is essential that it is actively addressed to ensure that learners, parents and employers can continue to have confidence in the examination system. QCA is working with awarding bodies to ensure that centres, candidates and parents fully understand the penalties and consequences of malpractice, especially for coursework.

Centre malpractice

In addition to candidate malpractice, awarding bodies are required to investigate and penalise centres and centre staff involved in malpractice. The penalties for centre malpractice include warnings and increased inspection, supervision or observation by awarding bodies at these centres. Awarding bodies may refuse to accept entries from particular centres and centres can be de-registered. The number of incidents of centre malpractice was very low, and two awarding bodies de-registered a centre in 2005.

¹ This includes notes or notes in the wrong format, study guides, materials with prohibited annotations, calculators and dictionaries where prohibited, personal stereos and mobile phones.

Actions for QCA in 2006

As regulator of the three awarding bodies for A level and GCSE qualifications based in England, QCA monitors and reports on the performance of each awarding body every year. Information from our monitoring activities in 2005 has been used to identify priorities for further regulatory action.

In 2006, QCA will continue to monitor and report on the performance of awarding bodies for general qualifications against the expectations set out in this report and the requirements of the code of practice. In addition, QCA will:

- monitor the performance of awarding bodies in response to scrutiny report recommendations
- monitor the operation of electronic marking in each awarding body
- ensure actions identified in response to QCA's review of GCE and GCSE coursework arrangements are implemented
- ensure centres, candidates and parents fully understand the penalties and consequences of malpractice
- ensure awarding bodies check the authenticity of candidates' coursework and report the number of cases of coursework malpractice
- monitor and report on awarding bodies' processes for candidates with particular assessment requirements, including the use of centre-delegated arrangements
- monitor the provision and success of new qualifications as they are introduced.

Appendix

Terms used in this report

general qualifications	GCSEs, GCSEs in vocational subjects, GCE AS and A levels, VCEs, AEAAs and GNVQs
awarding body	an organisation recognised by QCA for the purpose of awarding accredited qualifications
centre	an organisation (such as a school or college) accountable to an awarding body for the assessment arrangements leading to a qualification
question paper	all assessment materials used in a timetabled examination. Question papers are dispatched by secure courier and securely stored at schools and colleges until the examination
examination paper	a candidate's response to a question paper
priority enquiry	a priority service for candidates whose place in higher or further education depends on the outcome of an enquiry about an examination result

Terms used in the performance expectations

Question papers dispatched to centres on time: refers to assessment materials for use in timed examinations that were received at least a week before the timetabled date of the examination.

Question papers without errors: refers to question papers with no significant typographical errors, missing or invalid information. This does not include question papers with minor typographical errors (such as missing full stops) or sporadic printing errors that will not have implications on the content of the paper or any influence on candidates' responses.

Examination results issued to centres on time: refers to examination results at unit and/or qualification level issued to centres on the agreed publication date. This target only relates to results for candidate entries submitted by centres on or before the agreed closing date for entries. It does not include examination results for candidate entries submitted by centres *after* the agreed closing date, for example late or 'pirate' entries.

Priority enquiry about examination results completed within 20 days: a priority service is provided for enquiries about examination results for candidates whose place in higher or further education depends on the outcome of an enquiry about a result. The services available include clerical checks and re-marking of candidates' work. Enquiries about results may result in candidates' grades being confirmed, raised or lowered.

Examination papers copied and sent out at least 10 days before the deadline for enquiries about results: a service is available to allow centres to receive copies of examination papers for GCE and VCE qualifications after the publication of results for the sole purpose of deciding whether or not to request an enquiry about a GCE or VCE examination result (at unit and/or qualification level). Requests for examination papers must be dispatched in time to arrive at the awarding body no later than eight days after the publication of results.

Qualifications covered in this report

AQA, Edexcel and OCR are responsible for providing nearly all general qualifications for candidates in England. The market share for each of these awarding bodies has changed very little in the past year, and for the June 2005 examination series these three awarding bodies produced around:

- 5.23 million GCSE examination results (AQA 55 per cent, Edexcel 23 per cent and OCR 22 per cent)
- 1.72 million GCE AS and A level examination results (AQA 47 per cent, Edexcel 27 per cent and OCR 26 per cent).

In addition, the awarding bodies also produced around:

- 424,000 short course GCSE examination results
- 143,000 GCSEs in vocational subjects examination results
- 33,000 double award VCE examination results
- 43,000 VCE examination results
- 20,000 AS VCE examination results
- 10,000 AEA examination results.

Despite the introduction of GCSEs in vocational subject areas in 2004, the total number of examination results for GCSEs in vocational subjects is very small in comparison to the number of examination results for GCSEs (around 2.5 per cent), although this represents an increase from the previous year. Similarly, the number of AEA results is small in comparison to the number of A levels (around 1.3 per cent), although AEAs are designed for the top 10 per cent of the candidature. QCA will continue to monitor the provision and success of new qualifications as they are introduced.