



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

Report on the performance of awarding bodies for general qualifications in 2007

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Executive summary

As the regulator of the public examination system in England, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is committed to securing a fair deal for learners. QCA regulates awarding bodies and qualifications to maintain public confidence in examination results. This is QCA's fourth 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 practice¹ that awarding bodies must follow. It monitors and reports on the performance of awarding bodies against these expectations and requirements every year. While it currently has an agreed set of performance indicators, QCA continues to raise its expectations of awarding body performance. To this end QCA will review and strengthen the performance indicators to continuously raise the level of service that awarding bodies provide to customers.

This report on the performance of the awarding bodies offering A level and GCSE qualifications in 2007 shows the following:

- **All three awarding bodies provided a satisfactory level of service to centres.** In 2007, the awarding bodies continued to demonstrate high levels of performance against QCA's performance expectations for the quality of service provided to centres. While there was an improvement on the 2006 performance in 2007, none of the awarding bodies met QCA's expectations for producing question papers without errors.
- **Awarding bodies' compliance with the code of practice requirements for the marking and grading of A levels and GCSEs remains satisfactory.** QCA will continue to monitor the performance of awarding bodies against all the requirements of the code of practice, and will also continue to monitor electronic marking at all three awarding bodies to ensure new developments do not have any adverse effects on the quality of marking.
- **The number of candidates with access arrangements continues to increase.** QCA is committed to ensuring that all candidates have fair access to examinations, and centres and awarding bodies are required to ensure suitable access for all candidates.

¹ QCA, *GCSE, GCE, GNVQ and AEA code of practice*, April 2007 (Ref: QCA/07/3082).

The National Assessment Agency (NAA) field support officers have been working with examination officers in centres to increase awareness of centre-delegated arrangements. QCA published a review of access arrangements for GCSE and A level qualifications in November 2007 and will ensure that actions identified in the review are implemented.

- **There has been no increase in the number of candidates penalised for malpractice.** The number of candidates penalised for malpractice in exams or coursework in 2007 was similar to 2006 and remains low, representing around 0.06% of examination results. QCA has drawn attention to the issue of malpractice and worked with awarding bodies to ensure that candidates, parents and centres fully understand the penalties and consequences of malpractice.

This report uses information from QCA's monitoring activities of GCSE and A level qualifications in 2007 including code of practice monitoring and investigations. The findings from these activities provide the basis for identifying the priorities for further regulatory action in 2008. The appendix includes definitions and explanations of the terms, qualifications and performance expectations used in this report.

Introduction

This is QCA's fourth annual report on the performance of the three awarding bodies based in England that provide GCSEs and A levels – 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 2007 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. QCA monitors and reports on the performance of awarding bodies for each of the performance expectations and against the requirements of the code of practice. 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 2007 and information on progress made on the actions identified in the 2006 report on awarding body performance. The final section of this report identifies actions for 2008, the outcome of which will be reported on next year by the interim independent regulator, Ofqual.

QCA and the regulators for Northern Ireland and Wales produce 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. QCA monitors and reports on awarding body performance against these expectations each year.

All three awarding bodies performed at a very high level against QCA's performance expectations for the June A level and GCSE examination series in 2007:

Table 1: Awarding body performance in 2007

	QCA expectation	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
% of question papers dispatched to centres on time	100	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
% of question papers without errors	100	99.6 (99.1)	99.0 (98.7)	98.6 (98.5)
% of examination results issued to centres on time	100	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (99.9)
% 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)	100 (100)	99.8 (99.7)

Equivalent figures for June 2006 are provided in brackets. Percentages are shown to nearest 0.1%.

Question papers

QCA has established two performance indicators on the production of question papers:

- dispatching question papers on time
- issuing question papers that do not need correction.

Providing question papers on time

QCA expects awarding bodies to dispatch question papers and other assessment materials in time for centres to receive them at least one week before the timetabled examination date. As in 2006, all three awarding bodies met this requirement. This involved distributing more than 21.1 million question papers for the June examinations series in 2007, an increase of 5.5 million question papers on 2006 (around a 35% increase). This is largely accounted for by the increase in modular specifications in 2007. Of the 21.1 million papers distributed, around 7.3 million were A level papers and 13.8 million were GCSE papers.

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. These contingency plans remained in place for 2007. However, awarding bodies did not need to issue replacement papers to centres in the June 2007 examination series. Awarding bodies issued revised question papers to two centres, and those centres only, where examination papers had been stolen. No risk to the integrity of the examination in other centres was identified.

Providing question papers without errors

QCA expects awarding bodies' question papers and assessment materials to contain no errors that could affect the candidates' responses. For this performance indicator, question papers requiring correction are defined as those with significant typographical error or those with missing or invalid information that affects the content of the paper or might have a negative effect on candidates' responses.

For the June 2007 examination series, the three awarding bodies in total produced just fewer than 3,000 different GCSE and A level question papers, slightly fewer than in 2006. All three awarding bodies showed a similar level of performance against this expectation, with a degree of improvement on 2006. In 2007, 26 question papers (1.1% of the total) contained errors requiring correction, compared with 36 papers in 2006 (1.2% of the total).

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.

Examination results

QCA has established performance indicators associated with examination results:

- providing examination results on time
- responding to enquiries about examination results.

Providing examination results on time

QCA expects awarding bodies to produce examination results on time for all candidates with valid qualification entries. In 2007, this involved more than 7.4 million A level and GCSE examination results. All three awarding bodies met expectations and provided all results on the agreed publication date for the June 2007 examination series, an improvement on performance in 2006.

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 requires awarding bodies to deal with enquiries of this type within 20 days. All awarding bodies met this performance expectation in 2007, as in 2006.

If asked, awarding bodies will provide copies of A level examination scripts to help centres decide whether to enquire into particular examination results. QCA's requirement is for these scripts to be copied and sent out more than 10 days before the deadline for enquiring about results. In 2007, around 38,500 requests for copies of A level exam scripts were made, an increase of around 6,000 requests on 2006 (around 2% of the total number of A level results in 2007 and 1.7% in 2006). AQA and OCR met QCA's performance expectation, while Edexcel achieved 99.8 per cent of the performance expectation.

In addition to priority enquiries about examination results, QCA expects all post-results marking enquiries to be completed within 35 days and all moderation reviews within 40 days. As in 2006, QCA and the regulators 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 the performance expectations on question papers and examination results, QCA expects all awarding bodies to provide a high level of customer service to centres and candidates throughout the year. The awarding bodies received just over 1 million queries from

centres between September 2006 and August 2007, either by telephone, letter or email, about 200,000 fewer than in 2006. QCA has not established a performance expectation for this area, but awarding bodies dealt with more than 98% of these enquiries within 10 days, an improvement on 2006.

Results of QCA investigations

During 2007 QCA investigated and responded to a range of issues connected with the performance of awarding bodies and the GCSE and A level examination system as a whole. QCA conducted two reviews across GCE and GCSE examinations, one of access arrangements and the other of senior examiner training and question paper setting. QCA also took action to ensure that significant examination administration problems did not adversely affect candidates.

Review of GCE and GCSE access arrangements

QCA carried out a review of access arrangements from 2004 to 2006 for candidates taking GCSE and GCE examinations offered by AQA, Edexcel and OCR. QCA published a report of the findings in November 2007. The review took place before the revision of regulations to meet the requirements of the extension of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 to general qualification awarding bodies.

The review found that different types of arrangements are made to allow candidates with particular requirements to access examinations without undermining standards or compromising the assessment criteria of the qualification. Types of arrangements ranged from the use of a reader or scribe to the use of an alternative examination venue. Some arrangements are approved by awarding bodies while others are approved directly by centres (centre-delegated). Question papers are modified by awarding bodies upon request from centres for visual or hearing impaired candidates, for example the provision of question papers in Braille.

QCA data from 2004 to 2006 indicated a rise in the number of approved access arrangements, which mirrored a similar rise in the number of overall examination entries. In contrast, the number of centre-approved arrangements and applications for modified papers fell between 2004 and 2006.

The review found that awarding body staff who handle applications for access arrangements were appropriately trained and that internal procedures were fit for purpose and carried out professionally. Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) centre inspectors checked that others had the appropriate documents to support the arrangements applied for.

The percentage of late applications for access arrangements by centres was relatively high at between 10–35% across the three unitary awarding bodies. The percentage of late requests for modified papers was at a higher level of 30–50%.

Overall, the review concluded that awarding bodies complied with section 7 of the *GCSE, GCE, GNVQ and AEA code of practice*.

The review contained the findings of a survey of examination officers. This indicated that examination officers were satisfied with the level of help given on making applications, particularly from NAA field officers, though further guidance was requested on implementing approved access arrangements. Feedback indicated some perceived inconsistencies between awarding bodies in approving applications.

The main issues highlighted by centres were practical and logistical in nature, associated with staffing responsibilities and resources. In general, dealing with access arrangements was considered to be a burdensome task for examination officers, though eased by the introduction of more centre-delegated arrangements and the online system for recording arrangements and applying for modified papers.

The final report of this review can be found on the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk/qca_15472.aspx.

Review of question paper setting and senior examiner training

During 2007 QCA began a review of the question paper and mark scheme setting process for GCSE and GCE examinations, together with the training of senior examiners. The findings of the review will be published later in 2008.

The review includes the following:

- an analysis of the policies and procedures within awarding bodies for question paper and mark scheme setting and production, including processes to ensure accessibility of question papers
- an analysis of the policies and procedures within awarding bodies for the training of senior examiners and revisers involved in writing, commenting on and approving question papers
- monitoring of a sample of awarding body question paper evaluation committee meetings and examiner training meetings
- a survey of teachers' views on the quality of question papers.

Compliance with QCA's *GCSE, GCE, GNVQ and AEA code of practice*

In addition to QCA's performance expectations for the quality of service provided to centres, QCA monitors and reports on the performance of awarding bodies against the requirements of the regulators' *GCSE, GCE, GNVQ and AEA code of practice*, April 2007 (QCA/07/3082).

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 GCSE and A level qualifications. Each section of the code of practice sets out detailed requirements that awarding bodies must follow at different stages of the examining process.

This includes detailed process requirements for:

- writing question papers and mark schemes (section 3)
- marking examination papers and coursework (sections 4 and 5)
- grading candidates' work (section 6).

The code also includes detailed requirements for arrangements for candidates with particular assessment requirements and dealing with malpractice. 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 addition to QCA's monitoring programme, awarding bodies are required to evaluate and report on the quality of their own systems and arrangements for GCSE and A level 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.

This report summarises findings from a number of QCA monitoring programme activities in 2007, including:

- the scrutiny programme
- monitoring of electronic marking
- monitoring of awarding and grading
- review of awarding body data on access arrangements and special consideration
- review of awarding body data on malpractice by candidates and centres.

Scrutiny programme

QCA's scrutiny programme is a series of in-depth studies of the examining process 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. 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 is responsible for recruiting, organising and managing the work of these scrutiny teams, coordinating communications with the awarding bodies and drawing together the findings of each scrutiny. A report on each scrutiny specification is produced for the awarding body, which identifies areas of non-compliance and recommendations requiring action. 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.

Specifications are selected for scrutiny based on an analysis of risk. In 2007, QCA scrutinised a number of new specifications:

- the new GCSE science specifications offered by each awarding body for first teaching in September 2006
- applied A level qualifications with high candidate entry in business, health and social care and ICT available for first teaching in September 2005.

The new GCSE science specifications were introduced following the revision of the science key stage 4 programme of study and the GCSE science subject criteria, which place a greater emphasis on candidates' understanding of 'how science works'. QCA will continue to monitor GCSE science in 2008 and will report its findings in 2009. Applied A level specifications involve

the study of a sector of industry and the development of work-related skills and are offered as a single or double award.

Table 2

	Total	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Number of scrutinies	8	3	2	3
GCSE	5	2	1	2
A level	3	1	1	1

QCA observed more than 50 awarding body meetings and activities associated with the scrutiny specifications in 2007, including 28 examiner or moderator standardisation meetings. Other meetings observed included question paper evaluation committee meetings, training meetings for examiners, moderators and teachers, and grade awarding meetings.

2007 scrutiny programme recommendations

For the scrutiny programme in 2007, the number of specifications with recommendations requiring action for each stage of the examining process was as follows:

Table 3

	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Number of scrutiny specifications in 2007	3	2	3
Scrutiny specifications with recommendations on:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing question papers and mark schemes and portfolio tasks 	5	5	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • marking examination papers and coursework 	3	1	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awarding and grading candidates 	2	1	1

In 2007 there was generally a high rate of compliance with the detailed requirements of the code of practice. However, in most cases there was at least one recommendation requiring action for each awarding body on each stage of the examining process. There had clearly been some challenges in setting appropriate question papers and mark schemes for the new GCSE science specifications. In all GCSE and GCE specifications under scrutiny there was at least one aspect of the question papers and mark schemes for the units and components in every

specification where some improvement in quality was necessary.

Awarding bodies' 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. In 2007 the response of each awarding body to recommendations requiring action from previous years' scrutiny reports was monitored in two ways:

- **By considering question papers and mark schemes from the June 2007 examination series.** Checks included issues such as whether the weight given to particular assessment objectives reflected those detailed in the specification; that all language used in question papers was clear, precise and intelligible to candidates; and that, where appropriate, mark schemes were clear about how the quality of written communication should be rewarded.
- **By observing awarding body meetings as part of QCA's code of practice monitoring programme.** Depending on the type of meeting being observed, this included checking that the drafting of question papers and mark schemes took place at the same time; that all new examiners received appropriate training before starting marking; and that awarding bodies retained an archive of marked candidate work at key grade boundaries to inform future grade boundary setting.

Each recommendation has a deadline for action, which depends on the nature of the recommendation. All three awarding bodies implemented action plans to address recommendations in 2007. In 2008, QCA will continue to monitor the performance of awarding bodies in response to relevant scrutiny report recommendations.

Monitoring of electronic marking

In 2007 all three awarding bodies continued to expand their use of electronic marking of examination papers. Over 6 million examination papers for the June 2007 examination were marked electronically (3.7 million by Edexcel, 1.7 million by AQA and 0.8 million by OCR). This was 40% of the total number of papers taken in 2007, and a steady increase on the 3 million examination papers marked electronically in 2005 and the 5 million marked electronically in 2006.

QCA continued to monitor electronic marking to ensure that marking and awarding processes

were conducted in accordance with the code of practice. The increase in the proportion of examination papers marked electronically is likely to continue in 2008 and QCA will continue to monitor electronic marking at all three awarding bodies.

All three awarding bodies have also continued to trial and introduce new technology to standardise examiners and to conduct grade awarding meetings. After trials in 2006, Edexcel conducted 30% of grade awarding meetings online in summer 2007. AQA and OCR also conducted limited trials of online awarding during 2007. QCA has encouraged and will continue to encourage these innovations as positive developments while at the same time monitoring the awarding bodies' work in these areas to ensure that it does not have any adverse effects on the quality of marking and results provided to candidates.

Monitoring of awarding and grading

For each specification a committee of experienced examiners meets to consider candidates' work before establishing grade boundary marks. In establishing grade boundaries the awarding committee seeks to ensure consistency with previous years' standards. In 2007 QCA staff and consultants observed more than 50 awarding meetings against the requirements of section 6 of the code of practice. The selection of meetings observed was based on a number of factors, including specifications that:

- were being awarded for the first time
- had papers marked electronically
- had been identified through risk analysis or from previous monitoring
- formed part of the 2007 scrutiny programme.

These meetings covered a range of GCSE and A level specifications for both the January and June 2007 examination series.

As in 2006, QCA did not identify any significant instances of non-compliance from the observation of awarding meetings this year. 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.

As in previous years, QCA also carried out post-award audits to check awarding bodies' procedures for confirming the grade boundary marks recommended at awarding meetings. A small number of changes to grade boundary marks were made at the post-award stage, all with the support of the relevant chair of examiners.

OCR GCE biology

A significant number of centres experienced problems with an OCR GCE biology practical examination during the summer examination series. Candidates were unable to carry out the A2 practical examination properly because some centres had been unable to obtain the plant required to conduct the experiment. OCR provided these centres with a sample set of data to replace the data that candidates would have generated during the examination.

Some candidates, from centres that had managed to obtain the plant, had difficulties generating the expected results from the practical exercise. While most centres went ahead with the experiment and later informed OCR of the difficulties encountered, some centres provided their candidates with the correct results to enable them to answer subsequent parts of the examination.

QCA asked OCR to set out how the situation would be handled to ensure that all candidates' work was assessed consistently and fairly. OCR put in place procedures to ensure that no candidates were disadvantaged by having to generate the data required to answer the examination questions. Mark schemes were revised to ensure all marks on the examination were available to all candidates regardless of whether they generated the data themselves or were given the data by their teachers. The marks awarded to candidates also took into account the time available to candidates who had generated the data themselves as opposed to those who were provided with the data. Thorough reviews of marking and individual centres' results were undertaken to ensure all candidates were treated fairly. QCA observed the grade award meeting and received regular updates from the awarding body throughout the marking process.

QCA is satisfied that OCR took all necessary steps before results were published to ensure that no candidates were disadvantaged by the difficulties arising on this occasion. OCR has reviewed the process for setting practical tasks to ensure that there is no recurrence of such difficulties for centres and candidates. In 2008 QCA will check that OCR's revised process is implemented successfully.

Review of awarding body data on access arrangements and special consideration

Section 7 of the code of practice requires awarding bodies to ensure candidates with particular requirements 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 them an unfair advantage or undermine the integrity of the qualifications in any way. In addition, the code sets out requirements for awarding bodies for special consideration for

candidates affected by an unforeseen and temporary illness, injury or incident at the time of the examination.

In 2007 awarding bodies dealt with 470,580 requests for arrangements for candidates with particular requirements, including requests for modified question papers and requests for special consideration, an increase on 2006 of around 30,000 requests. QCA is committed to ensuring that all candidates have fair access to examinations, and information on requests for arrangements is collected and reported to monitor change over time.

Awarding-body-approved arrangements

Arrangements are available to ensure access to assessment for candidates with a range of different requirements. Between September 2006 and August 2007 awarding bodies approved 150,173 requests for arrangements for A level and GCSE candidates:

Table 4: Awarding-body-approved arrangements

Year	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	Total
2007	59,962	35,493	54,718	150,173
2006	51,286	31,395	42,433	125,114
2005	42,306	25,526	37,075	104,907

These figures are for the number of awarding-body-approved arrangements for A level and GCSE examinations 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 2007 has risen by 25,059, an increase of almost 20% compared with the equivalent period for 2006.

While the number of approved arrangements has risen there is no direct correlation with the increase (of around 35%) in the number of A level and GCSE question papers distributed in the same period:

Table 5

	Year	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Number of requests approved for:	2007	59,962	35,493	54,718
	2006	51,286	31,395	42,433
	2005	42,306	25,526	37,075
• reader	2007	31,425	18,912	30,461
	2006	27,478	16,270	23,642
	2005	22,606	13,673	19,361
• scribe (including voice-activated computer)	2007	16,031	9,973	14,271
	2006	13,904	9,471	11,446
	2005	11,218	7,305	9,801
• computer/word processor	2007	9,475	5,108	7,130
	2006	7,066	4,358	5,572
	2005	5,821	3,044	5,357
• extra time (more than 25% extra time)	2007	1,142	561	786
	2006	1,220	518	655
	2005	1,312	533	1,538
• alternative venue	2007	1,073	338	582
	2006	1,046	390	512
	2005	709	578	295
• use of signer	2007	242	376	334
	2006	194	198	221
	2005	331	178	433
• practical assistant	2007	398	225	426
	2006	378	190	385
	2005	309	215	290

Equivalent figures for 2005 and 2006 are included for comparison. 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 in 2007, as in 2006, accounting for just over half of all approved requests, was for readers. AQA has seen an increase of 14% on 2006, Edexcel an increase of 16% and OCR an increase of 28%. The number of requests for candidates to have more than 25% extra time and signers both increased again in 2007, having gone down between 2005 and 2006. The use of all other arrangements increased over the three awarding bodies between 2005 and 2007. QCA monitors awarding bodies' procedures for the approval of arrangements for candidates with particular assessment requirements and undertook a review of GCE and GCSE access arrangements from 2004 to 2006. Further information on this review is provided in the 'Results of QCA investigations' section of this report.

Centre-delegated arrangements

In addition to requests for arrangements that are approved by awarding bodies, responsibility for some arrangements is delegated to centres. Centre-delegated arrangements are available for a range of assessment requirements for eligible candidates, and are designed for candidates

with more commonly occurring needs requiring lower levels of assistance. Centres do not have to request approval for these arrangements from an awarding body, but they are expected to inform awarding bodies of these arrangements in advance of the examination. NAA has created an online system to allow centres to record centre-delegated arrangements.

QCA monitors and reports on the number of centre-delegated arrangements each year. However, direct comparison between the number of centre-delegated and awarding-body-approved arrangements is not possible because a centre-delegated arrangement for one candidate can cover a large number of qualifications from different awarding bodies, whereas separate requests for awarding-body-approved arrangements for every candidate have to be made to each awarding body.

Table 6

	Year	Total
Candidates with centre-delegated arrangements:	2007 2006 2005	91,842 78,833 43,869
• extra time (up to 25% more time)	2007 2006 2005	69,226 56,900 35,319
• bilingual dictionary with extra time	2007 2006 2005	8,859 6,286 4,083
• bilingual dictionary without extra time	2007 2006 2005	4,236 9,382 1,680
• supervised rest breaks	2007 2006 2005	5,385 3,539 1,919
• transcript	2007 2006 2005	2,104 1,416 485
• prompter	2007 2006 2005	2,032 1,310 383

Equivalent figures for 2006 and 2005 are included for comparison. These figures are for the total number of candidates with centre-delegated arrangements, rather than the number of arrangements for candidates for each awarding body.

Between September 2006 and August 2007 centres recorded almost 92,000 candidates with centre-delegated arrangements, a rise of just over 13,000 on the number in 2006, to over twice the number with recorded centre-delegated access arrangements in 2005. However, as figures for centre-delegated arrangements are available only if centres make use of NAA's online

system for recording centre-delegated arrangements, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about any year-on-year differences in the use of centre-delegated arrangements until all centres are using this system.

Just over three-quarters of centre-delegated arrangements are for up to 25% extra time, and the number of arrangements in this category increased by 22% on 2006. There was a continued increase in the number of candidates registered with access to bilingual dictionaries, though the number not provided with extra time with the use of a bilingual dictionary has dropped significantly from 2006.

QCA is committed to ensuring that all candidates have fair access to examinations. NAA field support officers have been working with examination officers in centres to increase awareness of centre-delegated arrangements and the JCQ has provided clearer information about centre-delegated arrangements in its materials for centres. There is a requirement for centres to ensure suitable access for all candidates, and more than four-fifths of centres are now using NAA's online system to record details of their centre-delegated arrangements.

QCA will continue to monitor and report on the extent of centre-delegated arrangements in 2008 to ensure that candidates, parents or centres are not making inappropriate arrangements to gain an unfair advantage. The JCQ will continue to carry out inspections at a random sample of centres in 2008 to ensure that it is making appropriate use of centre-delegated arrangements.

Modified question papers

In addition to awarding-body-approved and centre-delegated arrangements, the awarding bodies provided just over 19,000 modified question papers for the June 2007 examination series. Modified question papers allow candidates with a range of visual and hearing impairments to demonstrate their abilities:

Table 7

	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Number of modified question papers:	8,737 (8,970)	4,198 (5,806)	6,139 (5,763)
• modified paper (visually impaired)	5,489 (5,601)	2,490 (3,293)	3,674 (3,225)
• enlarged paper (visually impaired)	1,968 (2,183)	1,019 (1,107)	1,113 (1,245)
• Braille	680 (703)	235 (338)	552 (402)
• modified paper (hearing impaired)	600 (483)	454 (1,068)	800 (891)

Equivalent figures for 2006 are provided in brackets.

The number of modified papers produced for the June 2007 examination series is very similar to 2006 and 2005, if marginally less, at around 0.1% of the total number of examination papers produced in 2007.

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 June 2007 examination series, awarding bodies approved more than 308,000 requests for special consideration, an increase of around 38,000 on 2006:

Table 8

	Year	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Number of requests for special consideration	2007	144,765	89,816	73,551
	2006	134,857	93,225	68,584
	2005	130,971	65,797	70,031
Number of requests approved	2007	139,842	89,036	71,500
	2006	132,051	83,340	59,576
	2005	127,653	60,075	67,472
% of requests approved	2007	96.59	99.13	97.21
	2006	97.9	89.4	86.9
	2005	97.5	91.3	96.3

Equivalent figures for 2005 and 2006 are included for information. These figures are for the number of requests for special consideration (by component) 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 2007 was greater than for the equivalent period in 2006 (308,132 in 2007 compared with 296,666 in 2006 and 266,799 in 2005), an increase of around 3.9%. The number of approved requests represents around 1.4% of the total number of examination papers completed for the June 2007 examination series, or less than one approved request for every 50 examination papers. The proportion of requests approved by Edexcel and OCR was significantly higher than in 2006. Only AQA approved fewer requests than in 2006 and 2005, but maintained the proportion of approvals at around 97%.

Special consideration only allows for relatively minor adjustment to a candidate's mark, of up to 5% 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% of the maximum available mark for candidates with minor illness on the day of the examination.

Review of awarding body data on 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 vary depending on the type of offence and range from warnings and loss of marks through to disqualification from units, components or qualifications. For example candidates who bring a mobile phone into an examination room but do not have the phone at their desk might receive a warning, whereas candidates found using a mobile phone during an examination might be disqualified from the unit or the qualification in the current examination series.

In the June 2007 examination series the overall proportion of candidates penalised for malpractice at A level and GCSE remained extremely low, again at around 0.06% of the number of results, or less than one in every 1,500 results, the same as in 2006 and 2005.

For the candidates penalised for malpractice, the following penalties were issued:

Table 9

	AQA	Edexcel	OCR
Number of candidates with:			
• a warning	732	391	437
• loss of marks (but not loss of aggregation or certification opportunity)	948	323	758
• loss of aggregation or certification opportunity	251	213	205
Total number of candidates penalised	1,931	927	1,400

The proportion of candidates penalised is similar to 2006. Just over one-third of candidate malpractice cases involved warnings for candidates, with no loss of marks. Almost half of candidates penalised for malpractice lost marks for an individual question paper, and around one-sixth of the candidates penalised for malpractice lost the opportunity to aggregate marks from individual units or components or to certificate.

There was no significant change in the different types of malpractice that candidates were penalised for between 2006 and 2007. As in 2006, the most common type of malpractice was the introduction of unauthorised material into the examination room, which again accounted for about two-fifths of the total. Within this category, again around two-thirds of cases related to mobile phones or other electronic communication devices, or just over 1,000 candidates, around one-quarter of the total number of cases of malpractice as in 2006. Similarly, in 2007 almost one-third of the candidates penalised for malpractice were penalised for plagiarism, failure to acknowledge sources, copying from other candidates or collusion.

Awarding bodies provided QCA with information on the different types of malpractice penalised at A level and GCSE for the June 2007 series:

Table 10

	AQA GCE/GCSE	Edexcel GCE/GCSE	OCR GCE/GCSE	Totals
Number of candidates penalised for:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> introducing unauthorised material into an examination room* 	824 (982)	360 (351)	436 (573)	1,620
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> copying from other candidates, collusion and plagiarism (including misuse of ICT) 	576 (757)	266 (373)	459 (397)	1,301
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> behaving disruptively in the examination room (including use of offensive language) 	291 (289)	133 (71)	177 (103)	601
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> including inappropriate, offensive or obscene material in exam papers or coursework 	81 (231)	19 (12)	82 (128)	182
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> obtaining, receiving, exchanging or attempting to pass information that could be related to an examination 	53 (112)	77 (97)	61 (67)	191
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> failing to follow awarding body supervision requirements 	64 (44)	21 (16)	14 (43)	99
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> failing to follow instructions from invigilators, supervisors or the awarding body 	16 (38)	5 (6)	160 (12)	181
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> other† 	26 (21)	46 (30)	11 (4)	83
Total number of candidates penalised	1,931 (2,474)	927 (956)	1,400 (1,327)	4,258

Equivalent figures for 2006 are provided in brackets. 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. *Notes or notes in the wrong format, study guides, materials with prohibited annotations, calculators and dictionaries where prohibited, personal stereos and mobile phones. †Misusing examination materials, deliberate destruction of work, impersonation, theft, altering results documents or other behaviour that undermines the integrity of the examination.

Addressing malpractice

Although the incidence of candidate malpractice remains 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, particularly in relation to plagiarism, copying and collusion.

In 2008 QCA is continuing to raise awareness of malpractice and approaches to preventing and detecting malpractice by candidates, with the involvement of the Plagiarism Advisory Service for higher education.

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 the centre. Awarding bodies may refuse to accept entries from particular centres and centres can be deregistered. The number of incidents of centre malpractice was very low. AQA deregistered one centre, and Edexcel two.

Theft of question papers

During the June examination series AQA and OCR became aware of two cases where schools' secure offices were broken into. Alongside investigations by the police, awarding bodies took action to assess the risk to the examinations system and maintain the integrity of the examination.

Awarding bodies distributed revised papers to the two centres involved, but, because of the local and contained nature of the incidents, awarding bodies in consultation with QCA agreed that it was not necessary to circulate replacement examinations papers to all centres.

Focus for 2008

There will be continued monitoring and reporting on the performance of the awarding bodies offering GCSE and A level qualifications against the expectations in this report and the requirements of the code of practice.

QCA will:

- review and revise awarding body performance indicators
- carry out scrutinies of new GCSE specifications in additional science and in mathematics
- monitor awarding bodies' action plans in response to recent scrutiny reports on applied A levels and GCSE science
- monitor the operation of electronic marking and use of new technology to standardise the marking of examiners and to award grades
- monitor/audit awarding body IT and customer service systems
- ensure actions identified in response to QCA's review of A level and GCSE access arrangements are implemented
- report on the processes for training senior examiners and for writing question papers and mark schemes and ensure that any actions identified are implemented
- monitor the development of question papers for the new A level specifications to ensure they are of high quality
- prepare plans for the monitoring of the diplomas and new A level specifications
- investigate awarding bodies' processes for ensuring the accuracy and quality of marking.

Appendix

Terms used in this report

awarding body	an organisation recognised by QCA for the purpose of awarding GCSE and A level qualifications
centre	an organisation (such as a school or college) accountable to an awarding body for the assessment arrangements leading to a qualification
examination paper	a candidate's response to a question paper
question paper	all assessment materials used in a timetabled examination (question papers are dispatched by secure courier and stored securely at centres until the examination)

Data used to compile this report comes from awarding bodies through NAA.

Terms used in the performance expectations

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

Question papers without errors: question papers with no significant typographical errors, or 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: 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 of receipt: 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 receipt of enquiries about results: a service is available to allow centres to receive copies of examination papers for A level qualifications after the publication of results for the sole purpose of deciding whether to request an enquiry about an A level 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.

A levels and GCSEs

For the purposes of this report, the following definitions of A level and GCSE are used:

- **A level:** GCE single award or double award, AS GCE single award or double award (including applied GCEs)
- **GCSE:** GCSE single award or double award, GCSE short course and GCSE in vocational subject double award.

The figures in this report are based on data provided by awarding bodies for the June 2007 examinations series and do not include GNVQ or advanced extension awards.

For the June 2007 examination series, AQA, Edexcel and OCR produced around:

- 5.43 million GCSE examination results (AQA 53%, Edexcel 25% and OCR 22%)
- 1.97 million A level examination results (AQA 45%, Edexcel 28% and OCR 27%).