

# Ofqual publication scheme



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# 1. Introduction

## What is Ofqual?

Ofqual, the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator, is the new regulator of qualifications, exams and tests in England. We ensure that children, young people and adult learners get the results their work deserves, that standards are maintained and that qualifications count now and in the future. We also make sure that the qualifications available meet the needs of learners and employers.

The government will be bringing in legislation to establish Ofqual as the regulator of external qualifications. Until this legislation is passed, Ofqual will operate as part of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Afterwards Ofqual will be accountable to parliament rather than to government ministers.

Ofqual supports the government's Five Principles of Good Regulation,<sup>1</sup> one of which is: 'Accountability: regulators must be able to justify decisions and be subject to public scrutiny.'

## What do we do?

Ofqual makes sure that learners, parents, teachers and employers are confident that qualifications and assessments are of a high quality, and that the whole qualifications system has integrity. We do this by:

- making sure that organisations that offer and deliver qualifications (awarding organisations) have good systems in place, and that they are held to account for their performance
- making sure that all qualifications offered by awarding organisations are fair and are comparable with other qualifications
- monitoring standards in qualifications, exams and tests, and reporting on our findings
- ensuring that there is fair access to qualifications for all candidates
- ensuring the quality of marking of exams, tests and other assessments to make sure that learners get the results they deserve.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/brc/publications/principlesentry.html>

- making sure that the qualifications market provides value for money and meets the needs of learners and employers
- encouraging debate about important topics, such as standards of exams and qualifications.

As a regulator, we step in and exercise our regulatory authority where there is a risk to the integrity of the system or to a learner. We aim to be consistent in our decision making and to make our decisions clear and understandable.

We do not regulate the industry in isolation. We work with the regulators of external qualifications in Wales (DCELLS), Northern Ireland (CCEA) and Scotland (SQA).

We also conduct market research to help us understand learners' and employers' priorities and views.

## 2. Ofqual and freedom of information: the publication scheme

### What is a publication scheme?

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) gives the public the right of access to information held by public authorities and requires public authorities to make this information available. The intention of the Act is to increase visibility of the work of public bodies, and to ensure that policy-making processes are fair, democratic and open. It places a requirement on public bodies to produce a publication policy.<sup>2</sup>

This scheme has been produced in accordance with the Information Commissioner's guidelines. It sets out the types of information that we publish and explains how we make this information available.

Ofqual's aim is to publish as much information as possible, and to be open and transparent about our work. We have looked at past requests for information on regulatory matters, and considered whether or not we can include this information in our scheme.

This publication scheme will be reviewed and updated as necessary, with a formal annual review.

The types of information that Ofqual will publish are set out in detail in section 4 of this document. They are:

- information about Ofqual
- outcomes of our work
- speeches and statements
- press releases
- complaints and queries.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/publicationscheme/Introduction.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/publicationscheme/Introduction.aspx)

## **Has the Information Commissioner agreed the publication scheme?**

Not yet. We will be using this scheme, which is based on guidance provided by the Information Commissioner and best practice in the sector, and will be submitting this policy to the Information Commissioner in due course. We must also comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

### 3. Accessing the information we publish

#### How do we make information available?

Our helpline is open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Our staff can help you with telephone, written and email enquiries.

Most people who want information from us use our website at [www.ofqual.gov.uk](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk). You will find most of the information described here on the website. If you cannot find something that you think we publish please contact us. Our contact details are:

Ofqual  
Spring Place  
Coventry Business Park  
Herald Avenue  
Coventry  
CV5 6UB

Tel 0300 303 3344  
Textphone 0300 303 3345  
Helpline 0300 303 3346  
Fax 0300 303 3348

Website: [www.ofqual.gov.uk](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk)  
Email: [info@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:info@ofqual.gov.uk)

#### Costs

Most of the information referred to in this publication scheme is available free of charge from the Ofqual website. Some documents on the website are published in Adobe Acrobat's Portable Document Format (PDF). To view or print PDF documents, you will need the Adobe Acrobat Reader software, which you can download free of charge from the Adobe website.

If a document is not available free of charge this will be stated, along with advice on how to access a copy. Anyone who does not have access to the internet can contact our helpline for further guidance.

Publication schemes are intended to encourage public organisations to be proactive in making information they hold more readily available to the public, and to contribute to a culture of greater openness. Not all of the information held by Ofqual can or should, however, be included in this scheme. Certain information may be exempt under the requirements of the FOIA, which means that it will not be made available to

the public. Such information may be edited out of documents published under this scheme.

## 4. Types of information

### What sorts of information do we keep?

In drawing up our scheme we had to think about the sorts of information that we keep and the categories it falls into (types of information). These categories are described below:

- information about Ofqual
- outcomes of our work
- speeches and statements
- press releases
- complaints and queries.

### Information about Ofqual

The Ofqual website contains information about our role, the scope of our work and our structure. This information is reviewed and updated on a weekly basis. When the legislation establishing Ofqual's statutory independence is in place, there will be a link to the legislation on the website.

- **Annual reports** – an annual report on Ofqual's work will be published in hard copy and on the website.
- **Financial reporting** – Ofqual's financial reports will be part of QCA's until Ofqual achieves statutory independence, and will be published as such.
- **Committee meetings** – minutes will be posted on the Ofqual website, following the next QCA Board meeting, to which they may be submitted.
- **Management structure** – a staffing structure and biographies of Committee members and the Ofqual Management Group will be available on the website.
- **Job vacancies** – all job vacancies for external recruits are posted on the Ofqual website.

### Outcomes of our work

Most of the Ofqual website contains information for learners and parents, awarding organisations and schools, colleges and workplaces. The website has three main areas of information: types of qualification; national curriculum assessments; and accredited qualifications. It also has a section where we will publish reports on a

range of regulatory activities including monitoring standards over time, comparability studies, reviewing awarding body performance, investigating assessment issues and monitoring the qualifications market.

- **Correspondence between the Ofqual Chair and ministers (or significant figures)** – any exchanges of letters will be posted on the Ofqual website a maximum of six weeks after they have been sent.
- **Select committee submissions** – any written submissions that Ofqual makes to a select committee inquiry will be published eight weeks after the deadline for written submissions, unless directed not to by the select committee responsible. Ofqual's own reports to Parliament will be posted on the website on the day of submission.
- **Responses to consultations** – all published responses by Ofqual to external consultations, and all non-confidential responses that our stakeholders provide to Ofqual on our consultations, will be made available on our website.

### **Speeches and statements**

Speeches – all speeches given by the Chair and other senior managers that are relevant to a wider audience are posted on the Ofqual website.

Statements - Ofqual will have a policy to produce open letters on major topics that sets out Ofqual's views and expectations. These will be posted on the website, and flagged up on the homepage and in our e-newsletters.

### **Press releases**

Press releases – all press notices that Ofqual issues are posted on the website.

### **Complaints and queries**

Complaints and queries – the procedure Ofqual follows in handling complaints against awarding organisations and ourselves is on our website.

## 5. Contacts

### Who do I contact if I have a query about Ofqual's publication scheme?

The Head of Communications, has overall responsibility for our publication scheme.

Your enquiries help us to identify what is missing from the scheme. We would also like to hear your comments and suggestions for improvement of the scheme. Please email or post your comments to:

Ofqual  
Spring Place  
Coventry Business Park  
Herald Avenue  
Coventry  
CV5 6UB

[info@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:info@ofqual.gov.uk)

A number of other organisations are mentioned in this publication scheme and their contact details are included below.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA): [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)

Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS):  
[www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessments (CCEA):  
[www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk)

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA): [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)

Information Commissioner's Office: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)

Ofqual wishes to make its publications widely accessible. Please contact us if you have any specific accessibility requirements.

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