

Ofqual

Schools
NorthEast
2016
Sally Collier

Ofqual: Who we are, what we do

- Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)
- we regulate a broad range of qualifications in England, including GCSEs, AS and A levels
- our mission is to make sure that qualifications are valid and trusted
- we have five statutory objectives. In brief, they are:
 1. to secure qualification standards;
 2. to promote National Assessment standards;
 3. to promote public confidence in regulated qualifications and National Assessment arrangements;
 4. to promote awareness of the range and benefits of regulated qualifications;
 5. to secure that regulated qualifications are provided efficiently.

Today's Presentation

- Qualifications Reform
- Quality and Consistency of Marking
- Awarding
- National Reference Test
- Our Priorities

Qualifications Reform

- GCSEs and A levels in England are being reformed to match the best systems in the world and keep pace with universities' and employers' demands

Reformed GCSEs

- will have more demanding content
- have been designed for a two-year period of study
- will be linear
- degree of non-exam assessment will reflect balance and nature of new subject content
- will have a new grading scale from 9 to 1

Reformed AS/A levels

- content refreshed with input from universities
- AS results no longer count to an A level
- will be linear
- degree of non-exam assessment will reflect balance and nature of new subject content
- will keep the A* to E grading scale (A to E for AS level)

Qualifications Reform - Quick Test

- How aware are you that there will be a new grading scale for England, with grades of 9 to 1 instead of A* to G?
 - a) I am not aware at all (until I saw the last slide...)
 - b) I have heard that there is a new grading scale, but don't understand it
 - c) I understand the new grading scale

- Which grade will be the top grade?
 - a) 9
 - b) 1
 - c) Don't know

Qualifications Reform - Quick Test

- In the first year of the new grading scale, students who get a grade 4 or better would have got a grade C or better in the old system.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) Don't know

- Why is the new grading scale being introduced? Select 2 answers
 - a) Because numbers are easier to understand than letters
 - b) To better distinguish between students of different ability levels
 - c) To have a new grading scale for a different and reformed set of qualifications
 - d) To combat grade inflation
 - e) Don't know

Qualifications Reform – Communicating the Reforms

- affects schools and pupils, but also further education, higher education and employers
- we are launching a national communications campaign
- we need your help to reach all teachers, parents and students
- resources available – any feedback would be welcomed
 - Postcards
 - Presentation
- signing up to our newsletter 'Exam matters' is a good way of keeping up-to-date with our work

Quality and Consistency of Marking

- teachers want good quality marking...so do we
- exam boards have safeguards in place to make sure papers are marked well; they employ sophisticated checking systems
- we are conducting research that will help us better evaluate reliability and take action if necessary
- degree of marking consistency in England is in line with other countries (eg US & NZ)
- sometimes there is no single correct mark for a response
- the system relies on tens of thousands of teachers; it can never be perfect
- it needs you to be prepared and able to mark; the system needs to find ways to encourage and help you to do that

Marking Reviews and Appeals

- review and appeals systems provide an important additional safeguard beyond exam boards' marking processes
 - 572,000 reviews were requested in 2015
 - 52% saw no mark change and 23% saw a mark change of ± 1 mark
 - grades changed in 90k cases; 600 grades changed by 2 grades or more
 - this is in a system where 8 million qualifications are awarded
- evidence suggested that some reviewers were substituting one legitimate mark for another...that advantaged some students over others
- from this summer, differences in professional opinion will stand; marking errors will be corrected – important they are found and corrected quickly
- data for this summer will be published in December
- some decisions still to take, need to evaluate changes

Awarding – Comparable Outcomes

- the idea that if cohorts ‘look’ the same, then outcomes should ‘look’ the same has existed for decades
- comparable outcomes is the principle we use to turn this notion into a source of evidence to inform awarding
- it has proved effective at maintaining standards in GCSEs, AS and A levels over the period it has been in use
- using predictions is more reliable than examiner judgement and also means we can align standards between exam boards...
- ...but exam boards also have the opportunity to put the case for an award being higher, or lower, than predicted
 - 33 out of tolerance awards in 2016 (21 up, 12 down)
- comparable outcomes it is not a straitjacket on success

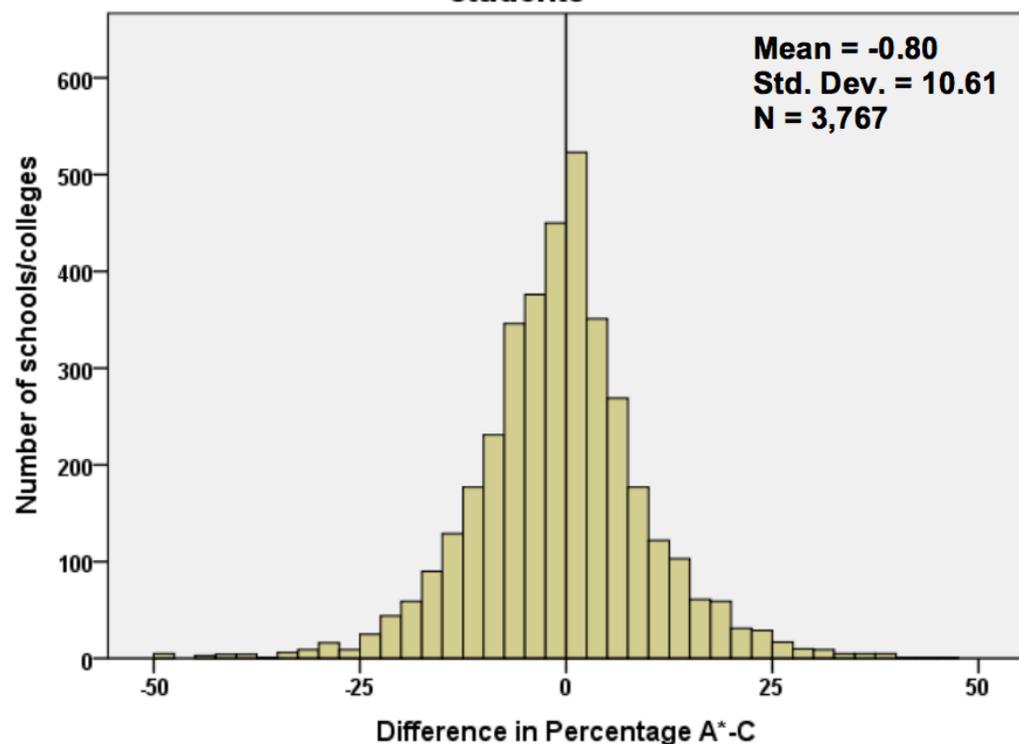
Awarding – Variability in Results

- GCSE, AS and A level outcomes have been remarkably stable since 2010
- year-on-year variability in results can result from individual school factors or system-wide factors
- school level: differences in the ability mix of students, different teaching approaches, changes in teaching staff or teaching time, and choice of qualifications
 - every year a minority of schools see larger increases or decreases in results
- system-wide: government policy
 - our use of comparable outcomes will make sure that the introduction of reformed qualifications does not cause a sharp fall in national results

Awarding – Variability in Results

■ school level

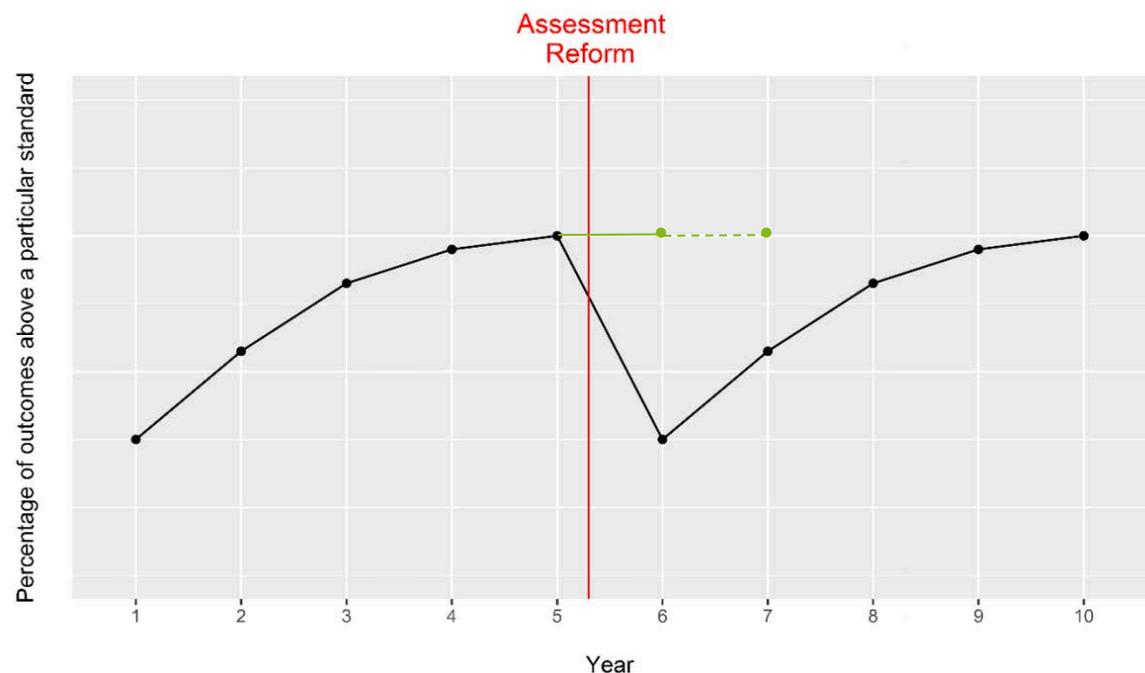
GCSE and Level 1/2 Certificates English summer 2016 vs 2015: all students



- bell curve common to all subjects, in all years
- a small number of schools see a $\pm 25\%$ (or more) change in results year-on-year
- consistent pattern across the country, over time
- **this is 'normal'**

Awarding – Variability in Results

- system-wide – sawtooth effects



- we use comparable outcomes to maintain standards over time
- performance would be expected to fall as new qualifications are introduced, but...
- ...using comparable outcomes means **students will be insulated from sawtooth effects** as qualifications change
- we are continuously looking at sources of evidence that could be used in awarding

National Reference Test

- designed to help inform GCSE awarding
- first Test to be held in spring 2017, following successful trial
- two subjects, 300 schools, 18,000 students; each student only does one test
- tests reflect the content and style of the new English language and maths GCSEs
- there is no need for students or teachers to specifically prepare
- results will be used to measure performance changes nationally and these will be published; no results for individual students or schools
- extra information at awarding, not the only information
- **test results will not be used in awarding until at least 2019**

Our Priorities

- playing a full part in reform and regulation of vocational and other qualifications and learning, including functional skills, apprenticeships and technical qualifications
- completing accreditation of new GCSEs, AS and A levels for first teaching in September 2017
- building awareness and understanding of new GCSE 9 to 1 grading and all other aspects of reform
- ensuring the safe delivery and awarding of all GCSEs, AS and A levels in summer 2017
- delivering a clearer, fairer and more consistent system for marking reviews and appeals
- taking forward work on the quality and consistency of marking

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