

The Future of Examinations

Dr Mike Cresswell, Director General, AQA



Our young people deserve an education which equips them to live happy and fulfilled lives in a rapidly changing world. They need to have the knowledge and skills to reach well-judged opinions across an ever broader range of issues, be able to make their way successfully in the world and, in so doing, contribute to our success as a nation.

As an educational charity and the biggest GCSE and A-level exam board, AQA is playing its part in the essential work of equipping our young people for the future.

GCSE Science

Interest in studying the sciences has fallen in recent years and Universities worry about the lack of quality students who want to study Science at university. AQA's new GCSE Science ('How Science Works') is designed to assess knowledge and understanding of how science works, application of that knowledge and practical, enquiry skills. The new GCSE Science qualifications will help prepare young people to take a well-informed view and argue a position about topics such as global warming or the effectiveness of immunisation programmes - and to be able to think about new scientific issues as they emerge.

GCSE Science is a first stepping stone and will be taken in many cases at age 15. It will then

be followed by Additional Science or separate Biology, Chemistry and Physics GCSEs in Year 11, giving students a demanding and positive experience which is intended to increase the number of students opting to continue studying Science at A Level.

A-level Citizenship

Issues of respect for tradition, culture and other people concern all of us in modern Britain, as do the levels of participation in the democratic process. That is why AQA has developed the first ever A-level in Citizenship.

The syllabus covers what it means to have an identity, rights and responsibilities, community action and active citizenship, understanding the justice system, participation in society and the political process. Students will have to demonstrate real understanding of these issues to do well - the examination is at the full A-level standard - and by so doing will be well equipped to be the responsible citizens of the future.

Diplomas

The new Diplomas will give young people a fully rounded education which combines theoretical and applied learning. A Diploma programme includes key functional skills in English, maths and ICT, work experience,

active learning within a specific vocational 'line of learning' and opportunities to study a particular topic in more depth or undertake complementary learning.

AQA, in partnership with City and Guilds, is developing Diplomas in all the approved lines of learning. Courses for the first five lines will start in 2008 in: Engineering; Construction & The Built Environment; Information Technology; Society, Health and Development; and Creative & Media.

At Levels 1 and 2, the new Diplomas will offer young people from the age of 14 the chance to follow a curriculum which reflects the views of employers about the knowledge and skills required in particular sectors. This will also be the case at Level 3, where the new Diplomas will sit alongside A-levels and Advanced Apprenticeships as a different, but equally rigorous, route to Higher Education.

Assessment Technology

Alongside these important curriculum developments, AQA is spear-heading the use of modern technology in the assessment process. For example, our new GCSE Science examination is the first major GCSE which young people can take on computers and our examiners will be marking over 2 million papers this year on computers.

In both assessment technology and the curriculum, AQA is helping to define the future of examinations.

Dr Mike Cresswell
Director General



The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is the largest of the three English exam boards and the main provider of qualifications for UK schools and colleges, awarding 51% of full course GCSEs and 43% of A Levels nationally. In total, students take over 3.5 million exams with us each year. Please see www.aqa.org.uk