



Ms Daisy Cooper MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

By email only to  
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13 May 2024

Dear Ms Cooper,

**Written PQ23804: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the process used by examination boards to award marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar for children who use a scribe in exams.**

Minister Hinds has asked Ofqual to respond to you directly regarding your recent Parliamentary Question. Ofqual is the independent regulator for qualifications, examinations and assessments in England and sets the rules for exam boards that offer GCSEs and A levels. A copy of this response will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

In some GCSE subjects, spelling, punctuation and grammar are part of what is intended to be assessed.

The Department for Education's (DfE) curriculum intentions are set out in its 2010 [schools white paper](#). In line with this, in GCSE ancient history, history, religious studies and geography, a small number of additional marks (equivalent to 5% of the main subject marks) are available to credit students for the accuracy of their spelling, punctuation, grammar and subject-specific specialist terminology.

Furthermore, in GCSE English qualifications, DfE's [subject content](#) stipulates that students are assessed on their technical accuracy in writing – accounting for 20% of the total marks in GCSE English language and 5% of the total marks in GCSE English literature.

Ofqual has a statutory responsibility to ensure that the result of a regulated qualification is a reliable indicator of what a student knows, understands and can do in relation to what is being assessed in the qualification. Therefore, in order to credit marks to a student, an exam board must be assured that it is the student's own knowledge, skills and understanding that are being demonstrated in the assessment.

Exam boards also have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students under the Equality Act 2010. Ofqual's rules require the exam boards to have in place clear arrangements for making reasonable adjustments, and to publish

their arrangements. The exam boards do this through their representative body the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), in the JCQ document '[Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#)'. This document states that "where a scribe is used in an examination assessing spelling, punctuation and grammar, marks can only be awarded if the candidate can demonstrate that he/she has carried out the skills being assessed". For exam questions which have marks available to credit a student's spelling, punctuation and grammar, a student using a scribe, and who is therefore not directly demonstrating their spelling, punctuation and grammar through writing, is able to access these marks by dictating their spelling and punctuation to their scribe.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ian Bauckham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Sir Ian Bauckham CBE  
Chief Regulator