

Ian Sollom MP
Member of Parliament for
St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire
House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

2 July 2025

Ref: PQ 59498

Sent by email only to:
ian.sollom.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Mr Sollom,

Re: PQ 59498 To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) errors in (i) GCSE and (ii) A-level braille exam papers from examination boards and (b) the lack of past papers available to pupils studying for those exams on affected students

Minister McKinnell has asked Ofqual to respond directly to your recent Parliamentary Question. A copy of this response will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Ofqual is the regulator for qualifications in England. It is responsible for ensuring that regulated qualifications reliably indicate the knowledge, skills and understanding students have demonstrated and that public confidence in regulated qualifications is maintained.

Errors in modified assessment materials

To protect the security of assessments, Ofqual does not directly oversee assessment material creation and modifications. However, Ofqual regulates to ensure that exam boards provide valid and accessible assessment. Our rules require regulated exam boards to design and deliver exams and assessments that are as accessible as possible and free of error. We also require exam boards to have in place quality assurance processes robust enough to identify and correct any errors that may be introduced during the

setting process, act to minimise the impact of any errors on students, review the causes of any errors, and explain how they plan to prevent recurrence.

If an exam board becomes aware of an error in their assessment materials that has the potential to cause an adverse effect, they must notify Ofqual promptly. Exam boards may become aware of a notifiable event through their own quality assurance processes, or from correspondence from a school or college, student or parent. Where this happens, exam boards must use clear decision-making and timely escalation processes for identifying and determining whether an error has been made and the potential impact on students. Ofqual monitors exam boards' actions to ensure they are taking every possible action to minimise the effect on students.

Exam boards consider, for example, whether the error will have stopped students being able to answer the question or complete the task, or whether students' performance in other questions might have been affected. Exam boards then decide the fairest way to proceed. This might include analysing how students answered the question or awarding all students full marks for the question.

Ofqual reports each year on the delivery of summer exams, including the number of assessment material errors which exam boards inform us about. We will publish our delivery report for 2025 towards the end of this year. For [the summer 2024 series](#), exam boards produced approximately 1,430 GCSE, AS and A level question papers and 2,555 discrete modified papers. There were 65 errors reported in the content of question papers for GCSEs, AS and A levels.

Of these errors, 26 occurred only in modified versions of question papers or modified supporting materials adapted to make them more accessible to students with specific requirements (for example large print or braille paper), compared with 14 in 2023. As these errors were introduced during the modification process, they did not appear in the standard version of the assessment. Twelve were identified prior to the exam and replacement materials were issued. The other 14 were identified during or after the exam and the exam boards chose to either discount the question or applied special consideration to mitigate any potential impact.

Although the number of errors is small in scale in relation to the number of assessments taken in any given series we recognise that any error can have a potential impact on students. This is why we expect awarding organisations to take all reasonable steps to prevent errors and, where they do occur, to mitigate their impact.

Availability of past papers

Ofqual's conditions require exam boards which offer GCSEs, AS and A levels to make appropriate and sufficient information available to teachers to prepare students for assessments. This includes past or practice question papers.

The exam boards provide modified (including braille) versions of past papers free of charge where those papers had been modified for a live series. Some of these are provided in hard copy, others are hosted electronically on the exam boards' secure websites.

For papers that were not modified for a live series (as no requests were received for a modified version), a school or college can ask the exam board to create a modified version of that past paper. As these modifications can take up to ten weeks, exam boards may not be able to immediately provide a modified braille version of a past paper upon request if there have been no previous entries for this type of modification.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Ian Bauckham
Chief Regulator, Ofqual