

myAQA

Issue: Spring 2026

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mytraining

13 pages of
free training
and events

AQA
Questions matter

Let's shape the future of assessment, **together.**

Every AQA product is created in collaboration with teachers, and we're already working with many of you to inform our new qualifications.

To make it easier for you to feed into these updates and share your thoughts with us, we're running a series of subject-specific Teacher Panels.

By signing up, you'll be invited to join a trusted group that:

- informs and guides our development work
- shares your expertise
- answers subject-specific questions
- contributes to the insights that shape our long-term direction.



“ Teacher Panels bring the lived classroom experience directly into our qualification development. By placing teacher voices at the heart of what we do, we can respond to reform guidance, shaping a future that's grounded in what really works for teachers and students. ”

Stephanie Keenan, Head of Product, English.

Sign up to our
Teacher Panels here:
aqa.org.uk/shape-the-future-together



Welcome to your spring issue of myQA

We're excited to bring you a packed edition, full of insights, updates and opportunities to support you and your students.

In November, the publication of the Curriculum and Assessment Review marked a welcome end to speculation and the start of a drive to develop a more inclusive education system; one that takes advantage of technological innovation and focuses on mastering core concepts.

We've summarised the key points on page 4.

See our Director of Assessment Reform Reza Schwitzer's thoughts on the curriculum and assessment proposals on page 22.

What else is in this issue?

- Expert tips for maths teachers
- The pros and cons of using AI in the classroom
- Full listings of our free spring training and events
- Getting more girls into computing – how can we encourage more girls to get into tech jobs?

Thank you for all you do to make learning happen. We hope this issue gives you fresh ideas, useful tools and a little inspiration along the way.



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The Pulse: Curriculum and Assessment Review

The Curriculum and Assessment Review, led by Professor Becky Francis, was published on 5 November. It proposes an 'evolution not revolution' approach. Here are some of the key recommendations.



10%

average reduction of examination time in GCSEs, achieved by streamlining the amount of content.



digital skills

should be embedded in the curriculum. GCSE Computer Science to be replaced with a broader Computing GCSE. Level 3 qualifications in data science and AI to be explored by DfE.



creativity

and academic breadth to be encouraged. EBacc scrapped as headline measure. Enrichment activities encouraged.



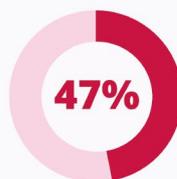
oracy

to be incorporated into the curriculum through all key stages. Oracy framework to complement reading and writing frameworks.



coursework

and NEAs to only be used in subjects (like Drama or D&T) where it is the only valid assessment method. Exams preferred to ensure fairness, reduce teacher workload and combat AI use.



is the financial literacy rate in the UK, compared to an OECD average of 62%. The CAR argues that financial literacy should be embedded into the curriculum.



of students in the UK are from a minority ethnic background. 1 in 10 identify as LGBTQ+. Subject content should reflect modern Britain. Students should see themselves in the curriculum.



is the GCSE Maths pass rate for students aged 17 and over – it is 72% for 16-year-olds. CAR proposes a rethink of resits. New Level 1 'stepped' qualifications would let students 'bank' progress over time.



of state schools don't offer Triple Science (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) to any students. The report recommends that all students who wish to study Triple Science should be able to do so.



of pupils have either SEN support (14.2%) or an EHC plan (5.3%). The report calls for a coherent, well-sequenced and inclusive curriculum, accessible to all students.

Like this magazine? Got feedback? Want some printed copies?

Email: myaqaspring@aqa.org.uk

V is for Vocational: five key questions about V-levels

- 1 What are V-levels?**
They are a new vocational qualification that will sit alongside A-levels and T-levels, beginning in September 2027.
- 2 Why are they needed?**
The current vocational landscape has been described as 'fragmented' and 'broken' by the Prime Minister Keir Starmer. The 900+ vocational qualifications currently available for 16-to-19 year-olds will be replaced by a single qualification.
- 3 What will they cover?**
The DfE has given craft and design, and media, broadcast and production as examples. But other likely areas are education, legal services and tourism.
- 4 How are they different from T-levels?**
A T-level focuses on training for a specific profession and one T-level is equivalent to three A-levels. One V-level will be the same as one A-level and students will be able to study V-levels and A-levels at the same time, mixing academic and vocational options.
- 5 How has the sector reacted?**
Association of Colleges says the proposals are a 'big step forward' and should create 'a more joined-up system.' The Sixth Form Colleges Association has warned that some BTECs will be scrapped before V-levels are fully available, creating a 'qualifications gap.'

Curriculum and Assessment Review: Reactions and Responses

The response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review has been largely positive, with minor pushback coming from some newspapers and educationalists who wanted more extensive reform.

✓ For



Exam boards

AQA was delighted to see so many of our priorities reflected in the final report, particularly around less exam time, greater diversity in the curriculum, and the promotion of Triple Science.



Most schools leaders

For Sir Hamid Patel of Star Academies, the review offers "a compelling road map to elevate our education system from good to great." Dan Morrow of CELT welcomed "a blueprint for improvement that the profession might actually recognise."



The creative community

Musician Ed Sheeran, composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and playwright James Graham were among dozens of working artists who welcomed the report's scrapping of the EBacc and the focus on creative subjects.



Financial and business community

The Financial Times praised the report's emphasis on financial literacy, quoting Becky Francis's remark that financial education was the "one topic that was consistently raised by every single focus group" with young people. The CBI welcomed the focus on workplace skills.



Equality & social justice charities

Sutton Trust welcomed 'the great emphasis placed on disadvantage gaps.' Runnymede Trust praised the fact that "inclusion, social justice and diversity" are "key principles throughout the report."

⚖ Mixed



Education unions

The NEU praised the focus on "oracy, critical thinking and digital literacy," but wanted more focus on reducing teacher workload and exam volume. NAHT said it was "a step in the right direction" but also wanted fewer exams.



Some commentators

The Observer praised the focus on financial education, media literacy and the climate, but criticised the report as reforming the curriculum but not assessment, bemoaning a "huge missed opportunity", lacking "radical zeal."



Science organisations & teachers

There was praise for the focus on Triple Science and climate change, but some scepticism about how to deliver this, with the British Science Association referencing the "national shortage of physics teachers."

✗ Against



The Daily Mail

For The Daily Mail, the report "dumbs down" education and Becky Francis is a "left-wing academic who is fixated with [sic] race, class and gender."



Conservative politicians

Former Schools Minister Nick Gibb argued the abolishing of the EBacc is a "betrayal of aspiration." Conservative peer Amanda Spielman claimed the government was "favouring unions over voters."

Turning struggles into strength

How maths teacher Julia Smith supports lower attainers in Key Stage 4

Julia Smith is a highly experienced maths teacher, trainer, AQA expert panel member and author. With a strong background in Key Stage 4 and post-16 education, she's spent nearly 30 years supporting lower attainers in maths.

Grade 4 in GCSE Maths is the level deemed to be good enough to avoid a re-sit and lead to better advantages in later life. For some students in KS4 (and beyond) it's a real challenge to reach this grade and it becomes a hurdle that is very difficult to get over.

Let's look at how we can give these students the very best chances of success and motivate them (and us as teachers), in what's traditionally a particularly tricky cohort to work with.

Tips for supporting lower attainers in maths

1. Secure fundamental knowledge

Many students enter KS4 and beyond without a secure grasp of the basics, for example:

- Degrees in a triangle
- Millimetres in a metre
- Seconds in a minute
- Days in the month
- 20p in £1
- Properties of shapes

While these may not be directly assessed at GCSE, they're essential for accessing more

complex topics and reducing cognitive load.

2. Build mathematical fluency

Fluency is the bedrock of mathematical ability. This includes times tables and the nine basic maths skills:

- Addition
- Subtraction
- Multiplication
- Division
- Fractions
- Decimals
- Percentages
- Scale
- Ratio

3. Use the right tools for the job

Lower attainers often struggle with mathematical tools like rulers, protractors, compasses and calculators. Regular, purposeful use of these tools in lessons helps develop their motor skills and confidence.

4. Develop effective revision techniques

Revision should start from day one. Teach students how, what, where, who with, and when to revise. Use a spaced and interleaved approach so that

learning is consistently revisited and starts to stick over time.

5. Tackle exam technique

Students often lose marks for reasons unrelated to their maths knowledge, such as poor handwriting, not showing working, or copying numbers incorrectly. Include a dedicated exam technique section in every lesson, using real examples of common mistakes.

These five tips are a snapshot of more in-depth work. I've written blogs for AQA Maths which tackle each one in more detail. There's also a great exam technique document on Teachit called Small things make a Big Difference.

Finally, I can't finish without sharing something exciting I've been working on, which I really hope will help my fellow maths teachers. While I've co-authored other works before, I've just written my first book, "[Maths Revolution: How to turn resistance into GCSE success](#)".

It's available from March 2026 and it explores all of these themes, alongside a raft of classroom ideas and advice.

It may be just the maths toolkit you didn't know that you needed.



*My mantra is
"Practice, practice,
practice – not until
you get it right, but
until you can't get
it wrong!"*



Live online training for the spring term

Welcome to our suite of training courses for the new year. This spring, the focus is on helping teachers to raise student grades across the ability spectrum.

Working towards outstanding grades

This AQA training course will focus on how your students can maximise marks across a range of question types. We will explore example responses at the highest level and highlight key skills for success when working with more able students.

Outcomes

- Examine a range of student responses at the bottom and top of the highest level
- Describe key skills that students can use to improve their performance
- Demonstrate how students can achieve the top level

GCSE English Language	Working towards outstanding grades
GCSE English Literature	Working towards outstanding grades
A-level English Language	Working towards outstanding grades
A-level English Literature A	Working towards outstanding grades
A-level English Literature B	Working towards outstanding grades
GCSE Geography	Working towards outstanding grades
GCSE History	Working towards outstanding grades
GCSE Mathematics	Working towards outstanding grades
A-level Psychology	Working towards outstanding grades
GCSE Biology	Working towards outstanding grades
GCSE Chemistry	Working towards outstanding grades
GCSE Physics	Working towards outstanding grades
A-level Sociology	Working towards outstanding grades

Book these live online courses now: aqa.org.uk/professional-development

If you have any questions, email: events@aqa.org.uk



Raising potential

This course will focus on improving your student's confidence for those that may find the subject more challenging. We will examine example responses to demonstrate how students can successfully improve their assessment outcomes.

Outcomes

- Describe the challenges faced by low-attaining students and discuss strategies to mitigate these barriers.
- Outline how students can improve their responses in assessments.
- Analyse and evaluate a range of student responses to determine key characteristics that lead to improved outcomes.
- Discuss classroom strategies, skills, and resources that will enable students to enhance their outcomes.

A-level English Language: Raising potential

GCSE English Literature: Raising potential

A-level English Literature A: Raising potential

A-level English Literature B: Raising potential

GCSE Geography: Raising potential

GCSE History: Raising potential

A-level Psychology: Raising potential

A-level Sociology: Raising potential

Sign up to [myAQA](#) to access events, resources and support now >

All live training events are free, twilight sessions.



NEA Marking

These courses provide guidance on how to apply the assessment criteria. You will have the opportunity to take part in marking activities and discussion led by the Principal Moderator.

Outcomes:

- Develop a greater understanding of how to apply the assessment criteria
- Apply accuracy when awarding a level/band and mark
- Identify typical features and characteristics of examples at different bands/marks
- Analyse and discuss the application of marks with the Principal Moderator to strengthen your understanding

Dance	GCSE Dance Component 1: NEA Marking
Design and Technology	GCSE Design and Technology: NEA Marking
Drama	GCSE Drama Component 2: NEA Marking
English	ELC Step Up to English: NEA Marking
Music	GCSE Music Component 3: NEA Marking
History	A-level History: NEA Marking

Feedback on the November 2025 series (Post-16) – training and snapshot reports

Training this spring

The live online training will reflect on common challenges from the GCSE English Language and GCSE Maths November 2025 exams. By examining student responses, we will identify potential classroom strategies to support your students and their effective progression.

Outcomes for ‘Feedback’ sessions:

- Demonstrate increased knowledge of how students performed in the November 2025 exams in GCSE English Language/ Maths specifications
- Highlight common challenges and discuss potential strategies
- Identify key aspects of the assessments which are relevant to your planning for the effective learning and progression of your students

English GCSE English Language: Feedback on the Language November series

Mathematics GCSE Maths: Feedback on the November series

Snapshot reports

Look out for the new snapshot reports on the November GCSE maths and English language exams. They'll be available on our website from early February.

Our maths and English language specialists, Anna Berry and Joanne Stanway, pick out headlines from the exam reports. They will show the questions where students did well and less well, and link you to resources to help with areas of weakness.

The key data is also included - grade boundaries and entry profile insights and a break down of the results for key questions on each paper.

You can find snapshots on the June 2025 results here [aqa.org.uk/resit-ready](https://www.aqa.org.uk/resit-ready).



ONLINE

From 13 January 2026

Curriculum Connect: New A-level Business essentials

Join us for a bite-sized session introducing the key benefits and features of our new A-Level Business qualification.



ONLINE

13 January 2026

Curriculum Connect - GCSE Maths: Making the Difference: What are the key differences between learners working at a grade 1, 2 or 3?

During the session, we'll highlight the key questions that differentiate between learners working at grades 1, 2, and 3, share insights from our examiners, and introduce the resources that can help your learners' progress.

For free training and support, including Curriculum Connects, visit > [aqa.org.uk/professional-development](https://www.aqa.org.uk/professional-development)



A-level Business

The new AS and A-level Business specification (7137, 7138) is ready for first teaching in September 2026, with first AS exams in 2027 and A-level exams in 2028. We are developing a suite of videos to introduce you to the spec and guide your teaching.

Sign up now for AS and A-level Business news and updates
aqa.org.uk/subjects/let-us-know-if-youd-like-to-hear-from-us



A-level Business: Preparing to teach (F2F and Online)

A-level Business: Understanding the 6-mark 'analyse' question

A-level Business: Understanding the 9-mark 'assess' question

A-level Business: Understanding the 15-mark 'evaluate' question

A-level Business: Using context from the case study in a response

A-level Business: Quantitative skills

THIS ISN'T BUSINESS AS USUAL

**A-level Business.
Redefined, refreshed
and ready for the future.**

Newly accredited AS and A-level Business specification!

Designed for today's learners and tomorrow's careers, our modern specification offers relevant content, student-friendly assessment, and you'll have everything you need from AQA for first teaching in September 2026.

Explore the new specification.

**Everything you need to get ready
for next year is here.**



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eLearning courses

'Getting started' courses are ideal if you're new to our specifications or simply need a refresher. Register for the course and take the modules when your schedule allows.

Each of our GCSE and A-level 'Getting started' courses has the following outcomes:

- Identify fundamental details of the specification, content and structure
- Examine student responses in order to gain a greater understanding of the assessment requirements
- Investigate suggested teaching approaches and practical strategies



A better way to book events

Our new and improved booking system

Have you visited our website or signed into myAQA recently? You'll find all your tailored content in one place – including a new, easier route to booking our professional development training and events.

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Sign up to [myAQA](#) to access events, resources and support now >

Our live training events are free, twilight sessions.



More new courses

English	GCSE English Language: Stretching 3-4
Geography	Geography: Building confidence in SEN provision
Languages	GCSE Languages: Getting to grips with the new speaking test
Mathematics	GCSE Maths: Stretching 3-4
Mathematics	Maths: Teaching responses to explaining and reasoning questions
Religious Studies	GCSE Religious Studies: 12-markers
Science	SEND in GCSE Practical Science
Statistics	GCSE Statistics: Preparing for 2026

Explore our 'Getting started' courses

GCSE Getting started courses

GCSE **Art and Design**: Getting started

GCSE **Business**: Getting started

GCSE **Citizenship**: Getting started

GCSE **Dance**: Getting started

GCSE **Design and Technology**: Getting started – Requirements for the exam

GCSE **Design and Technology**: Getting started – Requirements for the NEA

GCSE **Drama**: Getting started

GCSE **Economics**: Getting started

GCSE **Engineering**: Getting started – Requirements for the exam

GCSE **Engineering**: Getting started – Requirements for the NEA

GCSE **English Language**: Getting started

GCSE **English Literature**: Getting started

GCSE **Food Preparation and Nutrition**: Getting started – Requirements for the exam

GCSE **Food Preparation and Nutrition**: Getting started – Requirements for the NEA

GCSE **French/German/Spanish (New specification)**: Getting started – Paper 1 (Listening)

GCSE **French/German/Spanish (New specification)**: Getting started – Paper 3 (Reading)

GCSE **French/German/Spanish (New specification)**: Getting started – Paper 4 (Writing)

GCSE **Geography**: Getting started

GCSE **History**: Getting started

GCSE **Maths**: Getting started

GCSE **Media Studies**: Getting started

GCSE **Music**: Getting started

GCSE **Psychology**: Getting started

GCSE **Physical Education Exam**: Getting started

GCSE **Religious Studies**: Getting started

GCSE **Science**: Getting started

GCSE **Sociology**: Getting started

A-level and Level 2 and 3 Getting started courses

A-level **Accounting:** Getting started

A-level **Art and Design:** Getting started

A-level **Biology:** Getting started

A-level **Business:** Getting started

A-level **Chemistry:** Getting started

A-level **Dance:** Getting started

A-level **Design and Technology Fashion and Textiles:** Getting started – Requirements for the exam OR NEA

A-level **Design and Technology Product Design:** Getting started

A-level **Drama:** Getting started

A-level **Economics:** Getting started

A-level **English Language:** Getting started

A-level **English Language and Literature:** Getting started

A-level **English Literature A OR B:** Getting started

A-level **Environmental Science:** Getting started

A-level **Geography:** Getting started

A-level **History:** Getting started

A-level **Law:** Getting started

A-level **Mathematics:** Getting started

A-level **Media Studies:** Getting started

A-level **Music:** Getting started

A-level **Philosophy:** Getting started

A-level **Physical Education:** Getting started

A-level **Physics:** Getting started

A-level **Politics:** Getting started

A-level **Psychology:** Getting started

A-level **Religious Studies:** Getting started

A-level **Sociology:** Getting started

Level 2 Certificate in **Further Maths:** Getting started

Level 3 **Mathematical Studies:** Getting started

Mark scheme guidance and application

These courses give expert instruction from a senior AQA examiner on how to apply mark schemes to key question types. You'll also do some marking activities.

Outcomes

- Apply accuracy when awarding marks
- Develop a better understanding of how to apply the mark scheme
- Recognise typical features and characteristics of responses

GCSE Mark scheme guidance courses

GCSE **Art and Design**: Assessment objectives and guidance for applying the assessment criteria grid

GCSE **Business Studies**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Citizenship Studies**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Computer Science**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Dance**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Design and Technology**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Drama**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Economics**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Engineering**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **English Literature**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Food Preparation and Nutrition**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Geography**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **History**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Mathematics**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Media studies**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Physical Education**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Psychology**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Religious Studies**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Science**: Mark scheme guidance and application

GCSE **Sociology**: Mark scheme guidance and application

Book now at [aqa.org.uk/professional-development](https://www.aqa.org.uk/professional-development)

If you have any questions, email: events@aca.org.uk



A-level Mark scheme guidance courses

A-level **Accounting**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Art and Design**: Assessment objectives and mark grid guidance

A-level **Biology**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Business**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Chemistry**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Dance**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Design and Technology Fashion and Textiles**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Design and Technology Product Design**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Drama and Theatre**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Economics**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **English Language**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **English Language and Literature**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **English Literature A OR B**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Environmental Science**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **French**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Geography**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **German**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **History**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Law**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Maths**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Media Studies**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Music**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Philosophy**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Physical Education**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Physics**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Psychology**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Religious Studies**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Sociology**: Mark scheme guidance and application

A-level **Spanish**: Mark scheme guidance and application

Your **AQA Maths** support is smarter than ever

We've brought together more of the tools and resources you've told us matter most, so you can spend less time searching and more time teaching.

All at your fingertips

exampro

Fully funded
Exampro Maths for
AQA maths centres.

Team Maths

Sharing practical
resource ideas, support
and guidance.

Dr Frost MATHS

Now includes all AQA
GCSE and A-level
exam papers.

STRIDE Maths

Provides personalised
insights into students'
strengths and gaps.

All about MATHS

Your one-stop online
hub for maths resources
and support.

Proven expertise. *Smarter support.*

Everything you need to teach
AQA Maths with confidence.

Discover smarter maths support:
aqa.org.uk/maths-you-can-count-on



Practical GCSE Dance workshops this term



Keep an eye on the Professional development pages of our website as we add events throughout the year.

GCSE Dance: Learning the set phrases		
Location	Date	Time
Manchester	3 Feb 2026	10:15 –15:45
London	9 Feb and 13 Mar 2026	10:15 –15:45

Explore our GCSE Dance events

If you have any questions, email: events@aqa.org.uk



Personalised in-school CPD sessions

We can come to you!

In-school sessions can be delivered in any educational setting, for up to 30 teachers. We have a team of experienced, inspiring trainers with teaching and AQA backgrounds.

We offer a range of courses/training to suit your needs:

- In-school versions of our courses
- Sessions tailored to meet your particular needs, utilising existing resources
- Introduction to the specification
- Discussion of your training needs if they are more complex

Want something else? Tell us what you'd like or need and we'll see what we can do.

Book your in-school training at inschoolcpd@aqa.org.uk



Online EPQ and Project training

Our EPQ and Project qualifications let A-level students plan, research and study just about anything they want. It's a great way for them to dig deeper into something they were inspired by in class, or investigate a personal interest that's completely unrelated to their studies.

Projects: Level 1 and 2 Supervisor training (Online)

Date	Time
13 Jan 2026	16:00

Projects: Level 1 and 2 Coordinator training (Online)

Date	Time
20 Jan 2026	16:00

EPQ Coordinator training (Online)

Date	Time
Dates to be announced	Dates to be announced

EPQ Supervisor training (Online)

Date	Time
Dates to be announced	Dates to be announced

Online EPQ and Project training – access anytime

EPQ: How to use the production log

EPQ: Safeguarding in project qualifications

EPQ: Understanding and applying the assessment objectives and criteria

EPQ: Understanding artefact projects

EPQ: What is required to deliver the Extended Project Qualification?

EPQ: What makes a good Supervisor?

EPQ: What's expected of a Centre Coordinator?

Book our online EPQ and Project training courses now at [aqa.org.uk/professional-development](https://www.aqa.org.uk/professional-development)



AI for lesson planning: Friend or foe?

Kirsty Kelsey, Principal Development Lead at Ark Curriculum Plus, looks at the potential for AI to promote excellence in teaching while reducing workload. Is it too good to be true?

I work closely with schools to ensure their Key Stage 3 English curriculum is effective and accessible. One of the key areas I've been exploring with our partner schools is how artificial intelligence (AI) can support teachers in delivering excellent lessons and improving student outcomes across the network.

While planning becomes quicker as teachers grow familiar with the curriculum, trainees and early career teachers often feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of decisions required, and the time it takes to turn those decisions into practical lesson activities. Even experienced teachers want their time to be spent on making high-quality decisions rather than repetitive tasks that slow the process.

How can AI support teachers in the classroom?

By generating ideas and potential adaptations, AI can help teachers move past decision-making bottlenecks and focus on the most impactful aspects of planning, reducing the cognitive load involved in creating resources from scratch. While it doesn't replace professional judgement, AI can act as a supportive tool that accelerates routine tasks, allowing teachers to dedicate more time to refining content and tailoring lessons to their students' needs.

Teachers have been using AI tools in the classroom to generate model responses for extended essay tasks. By inputting assessment rubrics and specifying the desired level of

response, they can quickly create exemplars that are closely aligned with their students' needs. These models provide a strong support for creating live responses in class, which can be adapted to suit specific contexts and abilities. Teachers particularly value the time-saving benefits and clarity these models offer, especially when planning for mixed-ability groups and adapting instruction.

"While it doesn't replace professional judgement, AI can act as a supportive tool that accelerates routine tasks"



Can AI safely reduce the long evening hours of planning that many teachers experience?

What are the risks or drawbacks?

AI-generated responses may lack the nuance required by certain rubrics or curriculum frameworks, and that over-reliance could limit opportunities for authentic student writing. Some raise concerns about the potential for teachers to view AI outputs as definitive, rather than as starting points for development. Whilst this approach is promising, it works best when combined with professional judgement and contextual adaptation.

AI-generated content can sometimes be inaccurate or lack nuance, especially in subjects like English where interpretation matters. For example, I once asked an AI tool to write a set of comprehension questions based on the first chapter of a book I knew well. The questions it produced only made sense if students had read further into the text, as they referred to events later in the story. Without my own knowledge of the text, this kind of “hallucination” would have been easy to miss and could have serious implications for student understanding. Human and artificial intelligence are different. Humans

learn through experience, social interaction and reasoning, often using intuition and creativity. AI learns from data patterns and statistical models and can lack intuition. The teacher makes the real difference: their knowledge of students and their judicious decision-making ensure that learning is meaningful and that students can be successful.

In summary

AI has the potential to be a powerful ally in lesson planning, particularly when used to streamline routine tasks and support decision-making. It can help teachers, (especially those early in their careers), to navigate the complexities of planning by generating resources that save time; however, its effectiveness depends on thoughtful integration.

AI lacks the contextual understanding, intuition, experience and creativity that educators bring to the classroom. When used judiciously and in combination with professional judgment, AI can be a powerful tool, but it must always be guided by deep knowledge of teacher’s students and their curriculum.

Some notes on AI use from AQA

- **Transparency and explainability** - AI models need to be explainable, so teachers understand why certain lesson plans or suggestions are generated.
- **Human oversight** - teachers MUST approve AI outputs before using them.
- **Bias and fairness and hallucinations** - ensure AI models have diverse training data to ensure equitable outcomes.
- **Data privacy and minimisation** - student data must comply with data protection principles and avoid unnecessary profiling.
- **Accountability and governance framework** - there’s potential for an AI governance framework that defines roles, responsibilities, and escalation paths for issues such as model drift or harmful outputs.
- **Risk assessment and continuous monitoring** - conduct AI impact assessments (similar to DPIAs) before use and ongoing monitoring for performance, fairness, and compliance.

A day in the life...

Director of Assessment Reform, Reza Schwitzer

Please introduce yourself

I'm Director of Assessment Reform and I've been here three years. Previously I worked for a policy consultancy, Public First, and before that I was a civil servant which included six and a half years in the Department for Education.

How did you end up working in education?

I'm a policy and government nerd. I love everything to do with government policy – and I've particularly fallen in love with education policy. At school and university I spent hours doing debating and 'performing' with Model United Nations simulations. I quickly developed a passion for thinking about how governments can improve the lives of their citizens.

Reading books like 'Power Trip' and 'The Blunders of Our Governments' brought home the reality of life in government and the need for high quality policymaking. After university (I studied Politics, Philosophy and Economics at York) I was lucky enough to get a place on the Civil Service Fast Stream and the rest is history really.

My first ever posting, at 21, was working on curriculum and assessment reform in the DfE. Well over a decade later, you could say that my career has come full circle! In that time I've worked on all manner of interesting and tricky issues – including children's social care and school funding (sorry re the latter). I even got to work in the Department's Delivery Unit, advising Damian Hinds (and briefly Gavin Williamson) every month on how key priorities like apprenticeships and teacher recruitment and retention were progressing – that involved having to deliver bad news quite often...

Tell us about your role at AQA

I've recently been appointed AQA's Director of Assessment Reform, on secondment from my day-to-day role as Director of External Affairs. That's because we know how important the outcomes of the Curriculum and Assessment Review are, and we want to get ahead of the game when it comes to engaging with government and the education sector – including all teachers. We're committed to developing innovative, high quality and engaging new products for the reformed GCSEs and A-levels.

I'm always posting about it on LinkedIn, so if you want to connect and send me any thoughts, I'd love to hear them.

Internally, I work across the breadth of AQA, from operations, to product development to regulation to comms. That's why it's such a great job! I'm really passionate about the fact AQA is not only an exam board but also an education charity, and that means we're laser focused on ensuring everything we do directly benefits students and helps teachers do their jobs as effectively as possible.

"Reading books like Power Trip and The Blunders of Our Governments brought home the reality of life in government and the need for high quality policymaking."



What's your focus for the year ahead?

I'm currently talking to the department and key sector stakeholders about assessment reform. A major highlight was attending three party conferences in the autumn, where I sat on four different panels with the likes of Pepe Diasio (ASCL), Leora Cruddas (CST) and our Chair of Trustees David Laws (who was previously a Minister in the DfE). I hugely enjoyed getting the opportunity to debate and discuss ideas with sector representatives and school leaders.

Looking forward, I'm working with the Department for Education and Ofqual to ensure AQA is ready to deliver high quality, refreshed GCSEs and A-levels. I will also be working with colleagues across AQA to help support schools and colleges in understanding what that means for you.



To find out more about Reza and see what he gets up to in his role, follow him on [LinkedIn](#).

Out and about: Meet us at events throughout the spring term



Meet our Computer Science team at BETT 21 – 23 January

Visit us as stand SJ70 in the Teaching and Learning Zone. We'll be showcasing our new Python lessons on Visual Studio Code for Education and how other schools have used them so far and why they think it's a game changer. It's a great chance to meet fellow teachers and share ideas and feedback.



Regional Exam Officer Conferences

Members of the team will be available throughout the day in the exhibition area. We warmly invite you to visit us to share your feedback, ask questions, and engage in conversation. We'll also be gathering insights from customers to support new Exams Officers, and delivering a session focused on managing complex queries.



AoC English and Maths Conference 2026 11 Feb

Come and chat with us at the AQA stand and meet our Key Account Manager who is keen to hear what's working well and how we can support your English and maths delivery.



Language World 2026 13-14 March

We're thrilled to be a main sponsor at Language World this March! Come and visit us at the AQA stand – we'd love to chat with you about our latest resources and support, especially around the new GCSE French, German and Spanish specifications.

Event title	Location	Date
ASE 2026	University of Nottingham	08 Jan 26
IncludEd	Institute of Education UCL	10 Jan 26
ALL London: The January Event 2026	British Film Institute London	17 Jan 26
Bett UK 2026	Excel, London	21 Jan 26
National Exams Officers Conference - Bristol	Ashton Gate Stadium, Ashton Rd, Bristol BS3 2EJ	21 Jan 26
MathsConf40	South of England	22 Jan 26
National Exams Officers Conference - Coventry	Coventry Building Society Arena, Judds Lane, Coventry CV6 6AQ	23 Jan 26
LEAD Teaching Schools Hub Conference	L.E.A.D Teaching School Hub LN6 3QR	26 Jan 26
National Exams Officers SLT Conference - London	Wembley Stadium (Bobby Moore & Wembley Suites), Wembley Park, Wembley HA9 0WS	28 Jan 26
National Exams Officers Conference - London	Wembley Stadium (Bobby Moore & Wembley Suites), Wembley Park, Wembley HA9 0WS	29 Jan 26
NATRE Strictly RE	Voco Street, John's Hotel Solihull	31 Jan 26
National Exams Officers Conference - Manchester	Emirates Old Trafford, Lancashire Cricket Club (The Point & 1864 suites), Talbot Rd, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 0PX	03 Feb 26
AoC Sport Curriculum Conference 2026	Holywell Park Conference Centre, Loughborough	05 Feb 26
National Exams Officers Conference - Leeds	Headingley Stadium, St. Michael's Lane, Headingley, Leeds, LS6 3BR	05 Feb 26
ISMLA Annual Conference 2026	Manchester Grammar School	07 Feb 26
Alternative Provision Conference 2026	Newcastle	11 Feb 26
AoC English and Maths Conference 2026	De Vere Grand Connaught Rooms, 61-65 Great Queen Street, London, WC2B 5DA	11 Feb 26
Music and Drama Expo 2026	The Business Design Centre, London	12 Feb 26
Youth Sport Trust Conference 2026	Telford International Convention Centre	03 Mar 26
AC+ Conference 2026	EdCity, 1 Edcity Walk, London W12 7TF	07 Mar 26
ASCL Annual Conference 2026	ACC Liverpool	13 Mar 26
Language World	Leonardo Hotel Hinckley Island, Leicestershire	13 Mar 26
TES SEND Show North 2026	Emirates Old Trafford, Manchester	13 Mar 26
Big Computing Leadership Conference	Oxford Brookes University	27 Mar 26



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Whether it's through our subject experts, account managers or our dedicated customer services team, if you have a question, we've got the answer. You can also use our live chat function for quick, convenient support during your day.

mynetwork

There's a reason we're the most chosen assessment organisation in England, with the largest network of teachers at the core of what we do.

Meet with our subject experts and like-minded teachers across the country.

Whether you're looking to share best practice, hear and learn from other teachers or wanting guidance from our subject experts, lean on an unparalleled network of teachers.

myresources

Whether you're planning lessons, delivering them or assessing progress, our expert-crafted resources support you at every stage.

The best part? You've told us about yourself, so we can suggest the best and most popular resources for you.

For everything else, we've improved our website's search function. More intuitive and predictive, you'll get exactly what you're looking for at the first time of asking.

mytraining

Every term, free training is available to support your professional development.

So far this year, over 17,000 teachers have accessed our e-learning modules, and we've delivered CPD across 68 GCSE and A-level specifications.

mydata

Data Insights is a powerful results analysis tool, built by us, with the help from experts – teachers.

Use it to get the results data that you need – from whole-school, or class-level trends down to student, paper or question level analysis.

You can even take it to the next level with Trust level performance analysis for all your AQA entries.

A pathway to GCSE for every learner: Inclusivity in action with the Unit Award Scheme at Bishop Fox's School

Chloe Bryant from Bishop Fox's School in Taunton talks about the school's approach to the UAS.

At Bishop Fox's School, inclusivity isn't just a value, it's a daily commitment. Chloe shares how her school gives learners a route to academic achievement, regardless of their ability.

"The UAS is invaluable to learners who struggle to access the GCSE curriculum at Level 1. It provides pathways for them to get a recognised accreditation and certificate for their achievements, where there wasn't one before."

These tailor-made units provide a stepping stone towards GCSEs and further education. Every learner is supported with high expectations, matched to their individual needs and interests.

And this is the power of the AQA Unit Award Scheme.

Chloe describes how her learners work in a classroom where learning is differentiated and aligned to the areas they like.

In core subjects like Science, educators have written bespoke units, mapped to GCSE content, to make Science accessible and engaging for everyone.

"We write our own Science units and purposefully tailor them to the need and interest of each learner, or we use examples from AQA's huge bank of existing UAS units."

At Bishop Fox's School, every learner matters and every achievement counts. Chloe's message is clear: with the right tools and a mapped pathway, every learner can succeed.

Some of the Science units created at Bishop Fox's School.

Unit code: 116295	Unit title: Using a microscope
Unit code: 116644	Unit title: Introduction to science
Unit code: 116697	Unit title: Thermal insulators
Unit code: 116824	Unit title: Properties of metals and non-metals
Unit code: 117373	Unit title: Science: reactions



Visit the [UAS pages](https://www.aqa.org.uk) at [aqa.org.uk](https://www.aqa.org.uk) to see how the UAS scheme could help your learners.

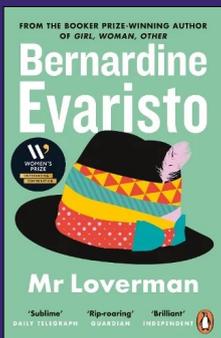


A new chapter in **A-level** **English** **Literature**

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shaped by the world
students live in.

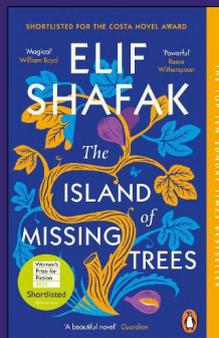
Spec A



Mr Loverman
– Bernardine Evaristo

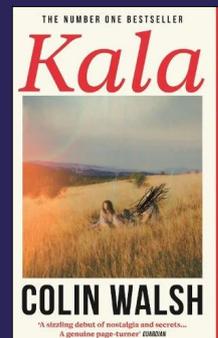


Wake
– Anna Hope

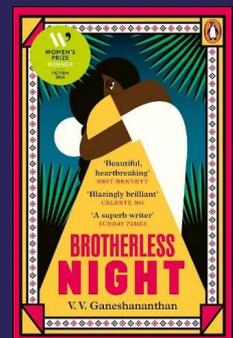


The Island of Missing Trees
– Elif Shafak

Spec B



Kala –
Colin Walsh



Brotherless Night – V.V. Ganeshanathan

What has changed?

We've added five new additional texts to A-level English Literature Specifications A and B – informed by student insights to reflect more voices and experiences.

- ✓ No texts removed
- ✓ More inclusive representation
- ✓ Relevant to modern learners

"A novel that builds bridges of empathy between cultures." – Elif Shafak

"It's a wild honour... I'd be thrilled if Kala can give students even a fraction of what my teen reading gave me." – Colin Walsh



Scan to explore the new texts and support available.

Or visit: [aqa.org.uk/a-level-literature-new-texts](https://www.aqa.org.uk/a-level-literature-new-texts)

Girls in computing: Powering the UK's tech future

What if more girls and young women were supported to take a leading role in shaping the tech landscape? In England, girls consistently outperform boys across most subjects, yet they remain underrepresented in GCSE Computer Science. Dr Chinwe Njoku, AQA's Education Insights Lead, explores the barriers and opportunities, and looks at how we can help more girls engage with computing.

The [OECD](#) has said women are an “untapped source of digital innovation”. A [Women in Tech](#) report has similarly highlighted that 90% of people believe the technology sector would benefit from a “more gender equal workforce.” Are there signs this will get better in the future?

The short answer is ‘no’.

Figure 1 shows the number of students who sat the GCSE Computing (formerly ICT) exam since 2014, excluding 2020 and 2021 when public exams didn't take place. Table 1 then shows the cumulative percentages of students that got a grade 7/A (or 4/C in brackets). Both data are broken down by gender.

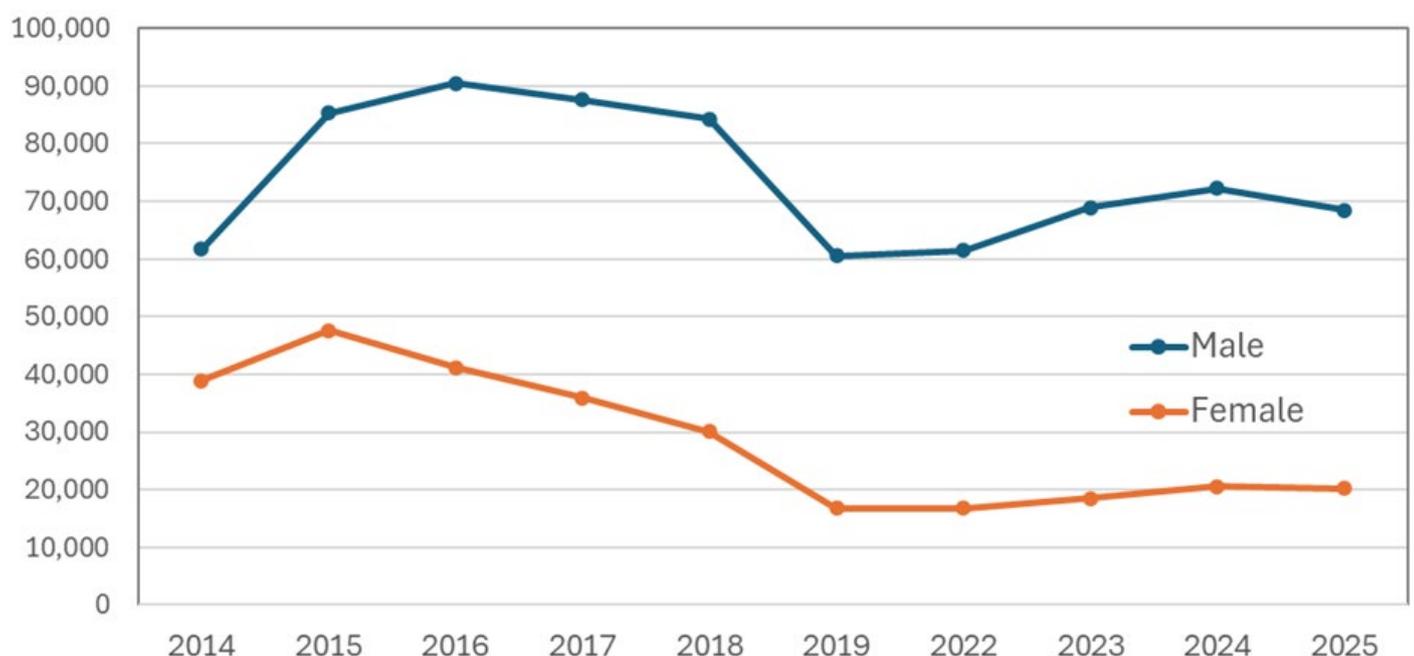


Figure 1: GCSE Computing (and ICT till 2018) entries for male and female students.

Gender	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	2023	2024	2025
Male	22.6% (64.4%)	20.5% (64.1%)	19.5% (29.6%)	19.5% (59.4%)	20.0% (60.4%)	20.6% (61.7%)	32.2% (74.1%)	22.9% (62.8%)	26.4% (66.3%)	27.8% (67.4%)
Female	29.1% (71.9%)	27.5% (72.3%)	24.4% (62.7%)	25.4% (65.6%)	24.2% (65.0%)	24.9% (66.2%)	40.6% (79.4%)	29.9% (71.5%)	35.0% (75.6%)	35.7% (75.3%)

Table 1: Percentage of students who got grade 7/A (4/C) in GCSE Computing and/or ICT in England from 2014 to 2025.

The findings are stark. Less than one in four GCSE Computing (ICT) students are female and the gap seems to be widening. Girls constituted only 23% of the 2025 GCSE Computer Science cohort compared to 43% in 2014 GCSE ICT. However, female students have consistently performed better than male ones. This year, there was an 8-percentage-point difference at Grade 4+ compared to the 4.5-percentage-point difference in 2019. This contrast in entries and results continues at A-level where less than one in five Computing students were female, but where they also outperformed their male peers.

So, if female students do better, why are they not selecting Computing? Some of the reasons we hear from teachers and students include curriculum changes, career aspirations, learning environments, and inadequate professional development for teachers.

Given the widening gap, many have pointed the finger at the 2014 Computing curriculum change. Research shows that roughly three-quarters of girls report not enjoying computing compared with just over half of boys, and fewer girls than boys feel the subject aligns with their career plans.

Interestingly, girls in single-sex schools were over three times more likely than those in mixed schools to take GCSE Computing, suggesting a potential difference in learning environments. It is also worth noting that the proportion of female computing teachers is well below those in other STEM subjects.

So how could we reverse this, and what might the impact be if we did? Let's crunch some numbers. Say the number of female students rose to match the number of male GCSE Computing students, then nearly 50,000 more students could be added to the Computing education and skills pipeline.

On average, about 21% of GCSE Computing students go on to study it at A-level. Therefore, this increase could add about 10,000 students to those taking the subject in KS5. When you then consider that the number of vacancies in the top occupation most relevant to Digital and Computing stands at 11,297 – 10,000 is a very significant number indeed.

And change is achievable. Other nations have implemented strategies to boost female participation in tech, such as the Singapore Women in Tech initiative, where 41% of the tech workforce is female. Japan, another top STEM innovative leader, has made Informatics I, which includes programming, a required course in public high schools.

In England, increasing female participation in Computing could be done through the ongoing Curriculum and Assessment Review, by broadening the curriculum to make it more appealing to a wider range of students and by reviewing its relative difficulty to other subjects. Girls might find Computing more interesting if aspects of the curriculum included topics like 'digital media, project work and presentation work', as research shows they value 'collaboration and teamwork' more highly than their male peers. Ultimately, it will be important to ensure the subject content is relevant to girls as well as boys – not based on preconceptions of what that might mean but based on real-life evidence of young people's attitudes and preferences.

Other ideas include recruiting, training, and supporting teachers through subject specialism training courses like those in maths and physics; fostering inclusive learning environments for all; and breaking down long-held stereotypes about the world of computing education and work. Whichever solution is chosen, the potential prize is clear – propelling the UK to being a tech superpower.

A celebration of talent

The autumn A-level Art and Design Teacher Standardisation meetings saw some inspiring portfolios – here's a selection of student work.





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You have the option to attend these in person (a two-day event) or online (four sessions), looking more closely at the General regulations and the ICE, and taking you step by step through the exam cycle. You will also learn more about access arrangements, special consideration, safeguarding in an exams context and tips for looking after your own wellbeing.

Your Exams Officer Engagement Team



We also host free live webinars throughout the year where you can ask the experts your questions about key events during the exam cycle – for example, entries, non-exam assessments and results. Choose between sessions for new Exams Officers with lots of details and instruction, or sessions for experienced Exams Officers where the focus is more on reminders and updates.

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Exams Officer
Engagement
Manager

Gemma Moody
South East and
South London

Vic Taylor
Scotland, North East
and Yorkshire

Sarah Robinson
North West

Jo Lemon
East of England and
North London

Samantha Vowles
South West

Jonathan Edwards
Midlands

Bridgit Liebenberg
Training and
Development Manager

The team can be contacted on:
examsofficerengagement@aqa.org.uk

Book onto a local network event

We know that many Exams Officers work independently within their centre, so the chance to meet fellow Exams Officers and share best practice is invaluable. It's also a great way to tell us what you need help with, and how we can make your job easier.

Sign up

If there's an event that you would like us to attend, or if you want to join a local network, please complete our [survey](#) or scan the QR code below and a member of our team will be in touch.



Bespoke support

We have recently set up specialised network meetings for FE establishments and Alternative Provisions. We recognise that these centres require bespoke support and our team are on hand to help. If you are interested in receiving further information please email examsofficerengagement@aqa.org.uk.

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- We'll go through our curriculum offer.
- Learn the opportunities for enrichment we provide.

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Deputy Director of Learning for Mathematics

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