

Welcome pack English

Your step-by-step guide to becoming part of AQA's English community and teaching our specifications.



Welcome to AQA

Welcome to AQA, the most chosen general qualifications awarding organisation in England. We're delighted you've decided to join us.

We set and mark around half of all GCSEs and A-levels taken in the UK every year.

We're proud to be an independent education charity with over 120 years of assessment expertise and knowledge. We invest any surplus we make back into education.

We've developed this guide to explain what happens now that you've joined AQA and are ready to deliver one – or all – of our English qualifications, which are:

- **GCSE**
English Literature, English Language
- **AS and A-level**
English Language, English Literature A, English Literature B
- **A-level**
English Language and Literature
- **Entry Level Certificate (ELC)**
Step Up to English
- **Functional Skills**
English (NB this qualification is being withdrawn. The last exams will take place in summer 2025.)

Learn more about our [English qualifications](#) and how to use [Exampro](#) for revision, homework and topic tests when teaching GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature.

We'd love to hear from you. Get in touch with our team of English experts and start a conversation or ask us any questions you have about AQA English:

Tel: 0161 953 7504

8am – 5pm Monday to Friday

Email (GCSE):
english-gcse@aqa.org.uk

Email (AS and A-level):
english-gce@aqa.org.uk

You can also [subscribe](#) for all the latest news, resources and support for your subject.

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What makes us AQA?

We're the UK's leading awarding organisation. Our assessment experts create best-in-class qualifications which are recognised across the globe and accepted by universities worldwide.

But we're more than just an exam board. Our ethos and values are central to what we do and how we do it. We aim never to let a student down and believe that fair and inclusive assessment is at the heart of learning.

Many of our people started out in the classroom and some still teach part-time or volunteer as school governors.

By placing teachers front and centre of everything we do, and by using our world-class research and expertise, we help define the assessment world. Through the expertise of our [Assessment Research and Innovation](#) teams we make sure that we're continuously improving the quality and reliability of our assessments. This work contributes to the development of assessment policy and practice, both in the UK and around the world.



“

It's a privilege to have been asked to be part of such a values-driven organisation, dedicated to providing high-quality qualifications and fair assessments to all students.

Colin Hughes

Chief Executive Officer, AQA

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Our history

1903

The universities of Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool establish the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) and become public exam providers.

1953

The Associated Examining Board (AEB) is established as a provider of the new GCE, with its first exams in 1955.



1985

The Northern Examining Association (NEA) is formed, made up of four regional northern CSE exam boards working together in equal partnership with JMB.

1992

JMB merges with NEA to form the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB).



2000

NEAB merges with AEB to create the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and becomes the largest exam board in England.



2012

AQA acquires Doublestruck, an educational technology company specialising in formative assessment and reporting products to support teaching.



2016

AQA acquires DRS, experts in data capture and electronic marking.



2022

AQA acquires assessment consultancy AlphaPlus, the platforms Blutick and Project Q and awarding organisation and end-point assessment organisation TQUK.



AQA English – the best choice for your students

We believe that a combination of:

- subject experts at the heart of the business
- deep assessment expertise (underpinned by academic research)
- 120 years of designing and delivering assessments

means that we can offer you access to all the expertise and guidance you'll need, as well as a supportive – and growing – English community.

Our English qualifications include:

Ages 15–16*

[GCSEs](#)

Ages 16–19*

[AS and A-levels](#)

Ages 14–19*

[Entry Level Certificate \(ELC\) – Step Up to English Functional Skills](#) (Last exams summer 2025)

[Visit our website](#) for the full range of English support resources, tools and services and to read our latest subject updates.

* The age groupings show the ages at which our qualifications are most commonly taken in a school or college environment (though they are also taken by older, or younger, learners – and at AQA we recognise the importance of lifelong learning).



Introducing our English team and your points of contact



Paul Stover,
Subject Support Manager for English

Paul has worked in education for over 20 years. He qualified as a teacher in 2000, teaching GCSE and A-level English in a range of settings and working as an examiner. In 2010, he moved to AQA where he worked in the creative arts team before joining the English team in 2024. He has supported schools and colleges across the country with the delivery of AQA qualifications and has been involved in a number of projects including overseeing the addition of new diverse texts to the GCSE and A-level Drama specifications in 2022.



Wayne Power,
Subject Support Manager for English

Wayne has been at AQA for six years, bringing extensive experience to the English team. He plays an important role in supporting teachers with the delivery of English specifications, emphasising the importance of integrating English as a core component of the curriculum in schools and colleges. Wayne is a firm believer in the pivotal role English plays in preparing students for a wide range of careers. He is also deeply committed to equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI), striving to ensure that English education is as inclusive and accessible as possible, enabling all students to enjoy and benefit from it.

We'd love to talk to you.
Get in touch with our team of English experts and start a conversation.

Tel: 0161 953 7504

8am – 5pm Monday to Friday

Email (GCSE): english-gcse@aqa.org.uk

Email (AS and A-level): english-gce@aqa.org.uk

Introducing our Area Account Managers

If you'd like general curriculum guidance or need to make informed choices that fit regional or individual conditions, do get in touch with one of our Area Account Managers.



Helen Arman

Region: South West

E: harman@aqa.org.uk

Tel: 07825 606 431



Mark Chester

Region: National (MATs)

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Gregory Thomas

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Gail Nielen

Region: National (MATs)

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Nick Sandeman

Region: North East and Cumbria

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Tel: 07825 606 377



Zoe Thomas

Region: South London and Kent

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Tel: 01420 22973
07825 606 478

Your journey with AQA

From registering to become an approved centre to receiving your exam certificates from us, we're here to help, support and advise at every stage of your journey.

Read on to find out what your journey with us might look like.



Step 1 – Get approved

To offer our qualifications, you'll need to become an approved centre. If you're already approved, skip over this section.

If not, here's how:

1 Get in touch

Let us know that you'd like to teach AQA qualifications by emailing centreapproval@aqa.org.uk.

If you're already with another exam board, please include your National Centre Number (NCN) in your initial email.

Once we've received your email, we'll send you everything you need to apply for approval.

2 Check compliance

Please check that you comply with the Joint Council for Qualifications ([JCQ regulations for approved centres](#) and [JCQ instructions for conducting exams](#)).

Questions about compliance? Email us your questions at centreapproval@aqa.org.uk or, if you're an exams officer, at eos@aqa.org.uk or phone 0800 197 7162 or +44 161 696 5995 (outside the UK) and we'll talk you through it.

3 Apply for approval

Complete your forms and submit them to us using the guidance provided. As the process can take a bit of time to complete, contact us before teaching the course. (NB: you won't be able to enter students for exams until your centre is approved.)

Learn more about [becoming a centre](#) or find out more about the [services and support](#) we provide for exams officers.

Step 2 – Access training and support

Our support package goes well beyond the specification and exam. We're here to support and advise you throughout the exams' lifecycle and we produce a range of tools, training materials and additional guidance – which we're continually adding to.

Training

We know that as your career develops, the skills and knowledge you need will change. Which is why we've developed a range of courses to help you meet the requirements of the latest specifications, with sessions available for both secondary and post-16 schools and colleges.

Whether you're:

- an early career teacher just starting out
- an exams officer trying to make sure your school or college is fully prepared for exams
- keen to get the lowdown on the most recent exam series so you can prepare students for the next

we've got a [training course](#) to suit your needs.

Some of our most popular courses include:

- Getting started – an introduction to GCSE: perfect as you start teaching your Year 10s.
- Feedback events – a look back at the summer exam with a focus on key aspects of student performance.
- Curriculum connect events – a chance to take away key messages from examiner reports as well as finding out about updates to essential resources.

English resources and support

When it comes to the classroom, our English experts are well-placed to understand what you need to keep students engaged, on track and working to their potential.

The [subject pages](#) of our website contain hundreds of resources to help you deliver our specifications. Categorised by 'Planning resources', 'Teaching resources' and 'Assessment resources', we've created specification-friendly content to help you at every stage of your teaching journey.

Our secure website, Centre Services, also contains lots of past exam papers, example answers and examiner commentaries that aren't on our public website. Centre Services is also free to AQA teachers. [Find out more about Centre Services and register here.](#)

Our [GCSE English](#) support offer is hugely popular with AQA customers – and we're continually adding to our collection of resources in response to feedback from teachers like you.

Our resources and support include:

- professional development courses with student answers and examiner commentaries
- marking guidance
- schemes of work
- teaching guides on key areas of the specification
- sample question papers
- examiner reports
- AQA insights into assessment.

[Exampro](#) is our exam preparation tool. Access hundreds of interactive marked and annotated student responses to GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature questions.

Finally, we have a wide range of English textbooks that are 'AQA approved' to support you and your students with AS and A-level, GCSE and ELC specifications.

Step 3 – Apply for access arrangements

Access arrangements allow a candidate with particular requirements, for example special educational needs, health conditions, impairments or temporary injuries, to take our exams and assessments. They are made before an examination series.

Detailed information can be found in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) [Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#) document.

AQA's [access arrangements](#) are described in more detail on our website.



Step 4 – Make entries

An entry is how a school or college lets us know which students, and how many, will sit which exams.

We need this information so that we can make sure that:

- we send you the correct question papers for your students
- we have enough examiners to mark the question papers
- your students get their results on time.

Entries need to be made before a set date, so we've created this [useful table containing key entry dates](#).

Visit our student support area to find out how to make [entries for private candidates](#).



Step 5 – Carry out non-exam assessment (NEA)

Non-exam assessment measures subject-specific skills which can't always be tested by written exam papers. Assessment is internal, in that it takes place in the centre – and comes in the form of coursework, controlled assessment and non-exam assessment. Marks are then submitted to AQA.

An AQA moderator selects a sample that, for most subjects, still needs to be [sent to our moderator](#) by post. Check our list of dates for the deadlines for each [subject's NEA components](#). The AQA website also contains [further information on NEA](#).

If your subject includes non-exam assessment, it's likely you'll have an NEA adviser. If you don't have an assigned adviser, please contact eos@aqa.org.uk

Our English qualifications with NEA components are:

- AS and A-level English Language
- AS and A-level English Literature A
- AS and A-level English Literature B
- A-level English Language and Literature
- ELC Step Up to English
- Functional Skills English (Last exams summer 2025).



Step 6 – Conduct exams

Prepare for exam season with our video on planning and conducting exams, including invigilation and what to do if the unexpected happens.

Watch the video: [Preparation for running exams](#)

Exam arrangements are governed by the [JCO](#). These regulations:

- are reissued each academic year
- set out the key admin requirements
- reference the national agreements on the conduct of exams and special arrangements for individuals with particular requirements.

Supplementary regulations exist for overseas centres and for [private candidates](#).

[Refer to our website](#) for further information on assessment materials, question papers and stationery and what to do if you suspect malpractice.*



* Malpractice is any breach of regulations that apply to an exam or assessment being taken.

Step 7 – Receive results

We'll issue results on the published day. The [results days page](#) of our website lets you know what's available when. We also have a [student page](#) for students, parents and other candidates.

Grade boundaries (which show the minimum number of marks you need for each grade) are also published on AQA's website on results day. These are set by senior examiners and assessment experts and help us to maintain standards and stop grade inflation.



Step 8 – Review results

If you have questions about a student's results or if you're unhappy with it – or one of your students doesn't have a result – then you can use one of our [post-results services](#).

If you're a private candidate we recommend that you speak to the exams officer in your school or college first. For more information go to our [private candidate page](#).



Step 9 – Receive certificates

We send your exam certificates to you three months after results day. These show the final, confirmed results. Check you have all the certificates and give them to students as soon as possible (using secure post if sending by mail).

Our [exam certificates](#) page has more information, including how to deal with lost or damaged items and how to obtain replacement or corrected certificates.



Glossary

We know that education is full of jargon. Below is a list of some key terms and definitions which will, we hope, help clarify things.

Access arrangements – adjustments that can be made to support a student with specific requirements in accessing an exam. These adjustments are called ‘reasonable adjustments’ and can include the use of assistive technology, breaks during an exam or specially adapted exam papers to support visual impairments.

Approved centre – centre approval from an exam board confirms that a provider or ‘centre’ has met a set of standards and has the relevant qualified or experienced employees and resources to deliver qualifications. Approved centres can be schools, colleges, training providers or sole providers.

AQA centre – a school, college or training provider with approval for delivering AQA’s qualifications.

AS and A-levels – following on from GCSEs, AS and A-levels usually take two years to complete during full-time study at school or college. The first year of study is known as the AS (Advanced subsidiary) level with the full qualification being the A-level (Advanced level).

Assessment policy – a set of goals, expectations or objectives linked to an assessment approach, set out in the form of a policy, documentation or guidance.

Awarding organisation – in the UK an awarding organisation or awarding body is an exam board that sets exams and awards qualifications such as GCSEs and A-levels.

Compliance – in an exams context, compliance refers to regulatory compliance or the act of conforming to a set of rules, policies, standards or laws relating to the creation and delivery of assessments.

CPD – continued (or continuing) professional development is the process of ongoing training and development. It allows teachers to carry on with learning relevant to their role and which benefits short-term objectives and longer-term career goals.

ECT – Early Career Teacher, previously known as NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher).

Entries – the numbers of students sitting particular exams.

Entry Level Certificates – also known as ELCs, are qualifications offered in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They sit at the Entry Level of the National Qualifications Framework and are pitched at just below GCSE level.

Exams Officer – also known as Exams Manager or Exams Administrator, the Exams Officer is responsible for the efficient and effective running of the administration of all internal and external exams within a school or college, including liaising with staff, students, invigilators and exam boards, adhering to national regulations and guidelines and an annual budget.

Functional Skills – also known as FCSEs, are applied qualifications which allow students to demonstrate real-life skills across a range of subject areas.

GCSEs – short for General Certificate of Secondary Education. The GCSE is an academic qualification offered for a range of subjects in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Grade boundaries – the minimum mark you need to achieve a certain grade.

Invigilation/invigilator – to supervise students in an exam/the person with responsibility for supervising students during an exam.

Malpractice – any breach of regulations that apply to an exam or assessment being taken.

Moderator – a moderator is the person appointed to do ‘moderation’, which is an internal check on marking to ensure that marking criteria have been applied in a fair and consistent manner.

National centre number – a five-digit number that all schools and colleges (centres) entering candidates into exams need to have.

NEA – non-exam assessments. These measure subject-specific skills or knowledge that can’t be tested by timed written papers in an exam setting.

Post-results – a range of services offered to centres and candidates after the distribution of exam results, eg a clerical recheck or review of results.

Private candidate – also known as an external candidate, a private candidate is a person who enters an exam but is not enrolled as a student at the centre in which they sit the exam.

Qualifications – qualifications can be academic, vocational or skills-related and are grouped into levels. They show universities and employers the depth and breadth of your learning and what you're likely to be able to do as a result.

Reasonable adjustments – agreed in advance, these are changes to an exam (either to the paper itself or the conditions in which it is sat) which allow individuals with specific needs to access the exam.

Regulation – an official rule, or the act of controlling something.

Script – a candidate's answer to an exam paper.

Specifications – exam specifications describe the specific content areas of an exam and stipulate the number and proportion of items for each assessed competency.

Switching – the act of changing examination boards.

Useful links

Below are some links to websites you might find useful – either as general sources of information and support, or for support and guidance specific to English.

DfE – [Department for Education](#).

JCQ – [Joint Council for Qualifications](#).

Ofqual – [The Office for Qualifications and Examinations Regulation](#).

Cambridge University Press – AQA's approved publisher for [English](#).

The British Library – Based in London, the [British Library](#) is the UK's national library and home to millions of resources and materials, including books, newspapers and manuscripts.

Poetry Archive – the [Poetry Archive](#) is a free, online library where you can access thousands of poems and listen to recordings of English language poets reading their own work.

BBC Bitesize – a useful website for teachers and students where you can find homework and revision materials for AQA [GCSE English Literature](#) and [GCSE English Language](#).

English and Media Centre – The [English and Media Centre](#) is an independent educational charity that provides publications and classroom resources to support English and media teachers and students.



Thanks and feedback

Thanks for reading this guide – we hope you found it useful.

Please send any thoughts, suggestions, comments or feedback to:
welcome@aqa.org.uk

We'll use these to inform or improve future versions.

We look forward to working with you.

Contact us

Tel: 0161 953 7504

Email (GCSE): english-gcse@aqa.org.uk

Email (AS and A-level): english-gce@aqa.org.uk

[aqa.org.uk](https://www.aqa.org.uk)

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