



ANNUAL REPORT

2006

January 2007

1. THE EXAMINATIONS APPEALS BOARD

1.1 2006 report

This is the Examinations Appeals Board (EAB) annual report for the year 2006 covering appeals against 13 awards made in 2005 and one award from 2006. The EAB welcomes comments on this report and on any issues arising from it.

1.2 EAB members

Ministers at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) appoint EAB members for three-year terms. The chairman, Jeff Thompson, was first appointed in 2002 and re-appointed in 2005 for a further period of three years.

Deputy chairman Mike Moran was appointed in 2005 for a period of three years.

Deputy chairman Robin Trebilcock was first appointed in 2003 and re-appointed in 2006 for a further period of three years.

1.3 Panellists

Currently there are 16 panellists, two of whom sit with one board member to hear each appeal. In addition to hearing appeals, panellists act as observers in those cases where the EAB requests an awarding body to re-mark or re-moderate work. This happened twice in 2006.

In November 2006, the EAB held its annual panel training day. The members, panellists and office staff met to consider issues arising from this year's operations and other matters that could affect the EAB's work in future.

In 2006, the EAB re-appointed for an additional period of three years all those panellists who were first appointed in 2003. The Board is grateful to the panellists for agreeing to serve a further term.

The expertise and professionalism of the panellists is a major strength of the EAB and the panellists' contribution and support is much appreciated.

1.4 Administrative and financial support

The EAB receives administrative and financial support from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The board depends greatly on the qualities and experience of its officers who handle all enquiries to the EAB and offer information and advice to those involved at any stage of the enquiries and appeals process. The board was, therefore, sorry to lose the services of Kate Watters in 2006; she served the EAB with dedication and skill and we are grateful to her for her time with us. The board welcomed her replacement, Sam Debnam in July and is delighted to be working with her. The board's principal officer, Bryan Whittaker, continues to provide first class support and advice to board members, panellists, awarding bodies and appellants. He also oversees the organisation and management of the office in an exemplary manner.

EAB members and panellists are paid a fee for each day they work and their out of pocket expenses are also met. For the calendar year 2006, the combined cost of this was £48,870.

1.5 EAB website

The EAB website (www.theeab.org.uk) contains copies of all the information and guidance that EAB issues. In addition, the office will send documents to anyone unable to access the website and can also provide most documents in Welsh.

Following feedback from users, the website has undergone a re-structuring. Improvements have been made to navigation and links. The board hopes that the new look will improve the site's usability whilst maintaining the quality of the content.

2. EAB WORK IN 2006

2.1 EAB cases

2.1.1 Number of appeals

In 2006, the EAB heard thirteen appeals on 2005 examinations: four on GCE, five on GCSE, three on GNVQ and one on VCE examinations. It also heard one GCE appeal arising from the January 2006 examinations. This represented an increase in the volume of appeals from six in 2005.

2.1.2 Timescales

The EAB's remit requires it to hold hearings within two months of receipt of an application. In 2006, all cases were heard within two months except, when the examination centre requested a hearing date outside the two-month timescale or when school holidays intervened and left the examination centres unable to send representatives to a hearing during that time.

In all cases, the detailed final decision letter was issued within 15 working days of the hearing. Five days of that period is allowed for the centre and awarding body to consider the factual accuracy of the draft text.

From the receipt of the appeal application, the average time taken to complete an appeal was 68 days.

The regulatory authorities (QCA, ACCAC and CCEA) expect awarding bodies to complete all appeal hearings arising from the previous summer's examinations by 14 February. This timescale is reflected in the Code of Practice adopted by the awarding bodies. The EAB welcomes awarding bodies' efforts to achieve this target. In 2006, EAB was able, because of this, to complete all hearings for 2005 examinations, by the end of July 2006.

2.1.3 Outcomes of appeals

Of the 14 cases heard in 2006, five were allowed and nine were not allowed.

The EAB requested a reassessment of candidates' work in three of the allowed cases.

	GCE	GCSE	VCE	GNVQ
Appeals allowed	2	2	0	1
Appeals not allowed	3	3	1	2

A list of cases is provided in Appendix 2. Summaries of closed cases are available on the EAB website or from the office.

2.2 Meetings of the board with interested parties

Each year the EAB offers to meet with representatives of the teachers' associations to discuss issues of general concern to examination centres and those specifically arising from EAB cases. The EAB values its contact with teachers' representatives and hopes that through it a better understanding of the EAB's work is disseminated to teachers. This year, as there were no particular issues that the teachers' associations wished to raise, the meeting was cancelled.

In April and September 2006, the EAB met the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), through which the awarding bodies coordinate their work. As usual, at both meetings the EAB discussed issues arising from EAB cases.

The EAB's regular contacts with the regulatory authorities and the DfES continue to be helpful and productive and are seen to be increasingly important, given the extensive changes that are taking place in the examination system.

The board has been pleased to be able to work with the Examination Officers' Association in 2006 and was able to send a representative to each of the Association's regional conferences.

3. ISSUES

Below is a list of some of the issues raised in decisions on cases heard in 2006. The list relates mostly to individual appeals but could have wider implications for other subject specifications and for awarding bodies.

The EAB's detailed decision letters are copied to JCQ, so all the awarding bodies can become aware of its decisions and recommendations. In addition, the EAB discusses issues from the appeal hearings at meetings with JCQ and, as necessary, with the regulatory authorities.

Sometimes, the EAB makes recommendations to examinations centres and to awarding bodies. Issues for centres are posted on the EAB website.

3.1 Making judgements about the merits of scripts

A panel heard that during an awarding body's stage two appeal its panel appeared to have come to a qualitative judgement about the merits of the candidates' scripts. The Board considers that appeal panels should concentrate solely on procedural issues and not offer comment about the quality of individual scripts, as they are not qualified to do so.

3.2 Using predicted grades

The board was concerned that examination centres do not always appear to understand how awarding bodies use predicted grades. There seems to be a commonly held perception that predicted grades are compared to results and that remarks will take place automatically where there is a discrepancy. The board asked that awarding bodies consider this and explore with JCQ how such information might best be communicated to centres.

3.3 Ensuring a clear audit trail

A panel was presented with mark sheets that did not demonstrate clearly how the marks had been arrived at. Awarding bodies are asked to remind examiners of the importance of leaving a clear audit trail to demonstrate the basis on which marks were awarded.

3.4 Examiner workload

A panel heard evidence that a new examiner was asked to assess 100 practical performances in three days. The panel believed that the assessment load might have been too excessive for a new examiner (even though the examiner was accompanied by a team leader for part of the time). Awarding bodies are asked to ensure that the workload for all examiners (but especially new examiners) is appropriate and manageable.

3.5 Helping examiners apply the mark scheme with accuracy

A panel was shown a mark scheme that allocated the number of available marks to each of the required criteria. However, there appeared to be no additional guidance to help examiners understand where a candidate's performance should be placed within the available marks.

3.6 Sample sizes

In three cases there appeared to be a distinct possibility that moderation exercises had failed to identify portfolio deficiencies in years before the examination under appeal. Where deficiencies were identified in 2005, centres argued that such problems had not been pointed out in previous years. It was entirely possible that the reason for not identifying deficiencies was the use by the awarding bodies of very small sample sizes.

3.7 Lost scripts

One case concerned the measures employed by an awarding body when a marked script could not be located at EAR stage. Although the panel accepted that the awarding body had acted properly and fairly, it nevertheless considered that it might be useful for awarding bodies to agree a common set of procedures for dealing with such cases.

3.8 Re-moderation

Although the Code of Practice now makes it clear that re-marks are not carried out on clean scripts, it is not so clear about how re-moderations are to be conducted. The Board asked the regulatory authorities to make a clear definition of the meaning of the term re-moderation in the Code's glossary.

4. CONCLUSION

The EAB wishes to thank the awarding bodies for their continued cooperation and willingness to act upon the recommendations that follow appeals.

The EAB has made considerable effort in 2006 to garner feedback from a variety of sources. The board is always grateful for feedback and commits itself to take all such feedback seriously and to where necessary to act upon it to ensure that it operates as fairly and as efficiently as possible.

The EAB is confident its small part in the whole examination process has been conducted in a way that helped centres, their students, and the awarding bodies.

Jeff Thompson
Chairman

Mike Moran
Deputy Chairman

Robin Trebilcock
Deputy Chairman

THE EXAMINATIONS APPEALS BOARD

Board members

Jeff Thompson	Chairman
Robin Trebilcock	Deputy Chairman
Mike Moran	Deputy Chairman

Panellists

Paul Ashdown	Gerry Hayden
Michael Batten	Robert Nutter
Caroline Blatchford	Liz Preston
Paul Clark	Alan Richardson
Andrew Collins	David Snashall
Maggie Evans	Graham Soles
Mike Fletcher	David Turton
Jim Haines	Neil Watts

Office staff

Bryan Whittaker	Principal Officer
Kate Watters	Appeals Officer to July 2006
Sam Debnam	Appeals Officer from July 2006

Contact details

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Appendix 2

APPEALS HEARD ON 2005 EXAMINATIONS

Prior Park	OCR GCE English Literature	Not allowed
Cardinal Newman	AQA GCE Dance	Allowed
Queen Elizabeth	AQA GCSE English Literature	Not allowed
West Park	Edexcel GCSE Religious Studies	Not allowed
Castle View	Edexcel GNVQ ICT	Allowed
St. Peter	Edexcel GNVQ ICT	Not allowed
Rougemont	OCR GCE Chemistry	Not allowed
Greenhead	AQA VCE Health and Social Care	Not allowed
St Mary	OCR GCE History	Not allowed
Hayling	Edexcel GNVQ ICT	Not allowed
Hazelwick	OCR GCSE Drama	Not allowed
Maryhill	OCR GCSE English Literature	Allowed
Northfield	OCR GCSE Engineering	Allowed

APPEAL HEARD ON 2006 EXAMINATIONS

Cirencester	OCR GCE Media Studies	Allowed
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Summaries of closed cases are available on the EAB website, or from the office.