



ANNUAL REPORT

2005

January 2006

1. THE EXAMINATIONS APPEALS BOARD

1.1 2005 report

This is the Examinations Appeals Board (EAB) annual report for the year 2005 (covering appeals against six awards made in 2004 and one in 2005). 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, Gerry Kelly, reached the end of his second term of office in November 2005. Following advertisement and interview, the Minister for Schools & 14 – 19 Learning, upon the advice of the interviewing panel, appointed Mike Moran as deputy chairman. The EAB places on record here its thanks to Mr Kelly for his hard work, commitment and wise counsel throughout his time as deputy chairman.

Although very sorry to lose the services of Mr Kelly the EAB, nevertheless, welcomes the appointment of Mr Moran. His extensive experience of examinations and appeals will be most helpful to the EAB.

Deputy chairman Robin Trebilcock was first appointed in 2003 and has been asked to serve for a further 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 EAB observers in those cases where the EAB requests an awarding body to re-mark or re-moderate work. This happened once in 2004.

In November 2005, 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 2005, the EAB re-appointed for an additional period of three years all those panellists who were first appointed in 2002.

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 principal officer and the appeals officer handle all enquiries to the EAB and offer information and advice to those involved at any stage of the enquiries and appeals process.

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 2005, the combined cost of this was £34,857.

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 can 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 2004

2.1 EAB cases

2.1.1 Number of appeals

In 2005, the EAB heard six appeals on 2004 examinations: three on GCE, and three on GCSE examinations. This represented a large drop in the volume of appeals from 13 in 2004 and 16 in 2003. There was also one appeal from the 2005 summer examination session.

EAB received five other applications. Two examination centres decided not to pursue their cases. One examination centre had not appealed to the relevant awarding body and the EAB could therefore not consider the application. A fourth application was deemed by the chairman to be lodged beyond the deadline for making an appeal. In the fifth application, the chairman did not consider that the examination centre had provided appropriate grounds for appeal and therefore declined to accept it.

2.1.2 Timescales

The EAB's remit requires it to hold hearings within two months of receipt of an application.

In 2005, all cases were heard within two months except, when the examination centres 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.

The regulatory authorities (QCA, ACCAC and CCEA) expect awarding bodies to complete all appeal hearings 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 2005, EAB was able, because of this, to complete all hearings for 2004 examinations, by the end of July.

In previous years, the EAB has received applications for appeals up to 18 months after the date of the examination but the board is pleased to note that an improvement in meeting deadlines has taken place during the year.

2.1.3 Outcomes of appeals

Of the seven cases heard in 2005, three were allowed and four were not allowed.

The EAB requested a reassessment of candidates' work in one of the allowed cases. In another of the other allowed cases, the examination centre had accepted the marks awarded by the principal examiner following the stage two appeal but had concerns about the way in which aberrant examiners were identified and managed. The board raised this matter with the awarding body and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). In the third allowed case the board requested further work from the awarding body concerned.

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

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 usually meets 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 this regular 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 2005, 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.

3. ISSUES

Below is a list of some of the issues raised in decisions on cases heard in 2005. The list relates mostly to individual appeals but could have wider implications for other 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 Identifying discrepant markers

The board was concerned that in one case it heard, a discrepant examiner had not been identified until very late in the process. Although the board considered that the awarding body had followed its procedures properly, the failure to identify the aberrant examiner at an early stage suggested that the procedures needed reviewing. The board asked awarding bodies to attempt to identify discrepant examiners as early as possible.

3.2 Using predicted grades

The board was concerned that examination centres do not always appear to understand how predicted grades are used. There seems to be a commonly held perception that predicted grades are compared to results and that re-marks 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 Assessing scripts in grade terms

The board was concerned that in one hearing there was evidence that examiners had been asked to assess scripts in terms of grades, as well as in terms of ranges and marks. The panel did not consider it helpful to introduce the concept of grades when assessing individual questions, especially as the grade boundaries would not have been determined at the time when examiners were marking.

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 board hopes that the downturn in the volume of appeals heard in 2005 reflects real improvement in the examinations services offered by awarding bodies to examination centres. Regardless of the number of cases submitted to EAB the board would like to record again that it remains ready to be of assistance when disputes cannot be resolved by the awarding bodies' enquiries and appeals procedures.

Jeff Thompson
Chairman

Mike Moran
Deputy Chairman

Robin Trebilcock
Deputy Chairman

THE EXAMINATIONS APPEALS BOARD

Board members

Jeff Thompson	Chairman
Gerry Kelly	Deputy Chairman (to November 2005)
Robin Trebilcock	Deputy Chairman
Mike Moran	Deputy Chairman (from November 2005)

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

Contact details

The EAB
83 Piccadilly
London
W1J 8QA

www.theeab.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7509 5995

Email: bryan.whittaker@theeab.org.uk

Appendix 2

APPEALS HEARD ON 2004 EXAMINATIONS

1	Bridgnorth School	Edexcel GCE Drama and Theatre Studies	Allowed
2	Northgate School	Edexcel GCE Psychology	Not allowed
3	Newstead Wood School	Edexcel GCE English Literature	Allowed
4	Scarborough College	AQA GCSE English Literature	Not allowed
5	Maricourt School	AQA GCSE Design and Technology	Not allowed
6	Pershore High School	OCR GCSE Applied ICT	Not allowed

APPEAL HEARD ON 2005 EXAMINATION

1	Rugby School	AQA GCSE Special consideration	Allowed
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Summaries of closed cases are available on the EAB website, or from the office.