



ANNUAL REPORT

2007

January 2008

1. THE EXAMINATIONS APPEALS BOARD

1.1 2007 report

This is the Examinations Appeals Board (EAB) annual report for the year 2007 covering six appeals against awards made in 2006. The EAB welcomes comments on this report and on any issues arising from it.

1.2 EAB members

Ministers at the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 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. In 2007, the appointment was extended for a further year until 2009.

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 EAB 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 2007

In November 2007, 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 2007, the EAB re-appointed for an additional period of three years all those panellists who were first appointed in 2004. 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 EAB depends greatly on the qualities and experience of its two 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. They also provide professional support to the Board and panellists before, during and after each hearing.

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 2007, the combined cost of this was £30,015.

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.

2. EAB WORK IN 2007

2.1 EAB cases

2.1.1 Number of appeals

In 2007, the EAB heard six appeals on 2006 examinations: five on GCE and one on GCSE examinations. This represented a decrease in the volume of appeals from 14 in 2006. Seven further applications to appeal, (five of which related to 2007 examinations) were received. In three cases, the chairman did not accept the application as it fell outside the scope of the EAB's remit. In three of the cases, the applications could not be accepted, as they had not been submitted by the centres in question. In the remaining case, the centre withdrew its application.

This year, the EAB held an appeal hearing in Northern Ireland. Although the majority of appeals come from English schools, the remit of the EAB extends to Wales and Northern Ireland.

Invitations to observe appeals are sent to the relevant qualifications' regulators and to the relevant education department. In addition, dates of forthcoming appeals are published on the EAB website and members of the public are welcome to observe the hearings.

2.1.2 Timescales

The EAB's remit requires it to hold hearings within two months of receipt of an application. In 2007, all cases were heard within two months. In all cases, the detailed final decision letter was issued within 15 working days of the hearing. From the receipt of the appeal application, the average time taken to complete an appeal was 58 days.

The EAB was able to complete all hearings for 2006 examinations by the beginning of July 2007.

2.1.3 Outcomes of appeals

Of the 6 cases heard in 2007, 2 were allowed and 4 were not allowed.

	GCE	GCSE
Appeals allowed	2	0
Appeals not allowed	3	1

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 with interested parties

Each year the EAB offers to meet with representatives of the teachers' associations to discuss issues 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 not held.

In April and September 2007, 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 DCSF 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 2007 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 2007. They arise mostly from individual appeals but could have wider implications for other subject specifications and awarding bodies.

The EAB's detailed decision letters are copied to JCQ (as well as to the regulators and the relevant government departments), 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 examination centres and to awarding bodies. Issues for centres are posted on the EAB website.

3.1 Importance of an audit trail

In some cases, the panels were concerned at the absence of full audit trails of marking decisions. Awarding bodies were reminded of the importance of keeping a clear and transparent audit trail.

3.2 Keeping exemplar material up to date

Where exemplar coursework has been available over a number of years, awarding bodies are asked to regularly review that work and to ensure that it remains valid in all respects.

3.3 Comments written by examiners on scripts

In one case, the panel found comments written on scripts by an examiner that left the panel unclear about the mark band into which the examiner had placed the work. Awarding bodies were reminded to ensure that examiners follow their marking instructions meticulously and in line with the principles of the regulators' Code of Practice.

3.4 Placing details of assessment opportunities within the specification

In one case, a centre had taught the wrong specification. The centre claimed that the awarding body was at fault because it had not given details within the specification itself of when alterations to the assessment opportunities would take effect. Although this was not the reason for allowing the appeal, awarding bodies were asked to ensure that information about the availability of first assessment opportunities is within the body of the specification itself.

3.5 Warning centres of toleration boundaries

Awarding bodies were asked to consider providing clear and explicit warnings to centres if they are close to the limit of marking tolerance when marking coursework. In a number of cases, centres did not know that they had been previously marking close to the limit of tolerance and were therefore surprised by the scale of marking adjustments made by the external moderators.

3.6 Re-moderation

The Code of Practice requires that awarding bodies should ensure that, where possible, coursework is re-moderated by someone other than the original moderator. In one case, the original moderator was the principal moderator. When the centre then requested re-moderation, the scripts were sent back to the principal moderator. The Board believes that in such circumstances another senior marker should be asked to carry out the re-moderation.

3.7 Specifications and mark schemes

Awarding bodies are reminded that the only sources of marking criteria should be the specification and the mark schemes. In one of the cases heard the marking team appeared to have been strongly influenced by comments made in the most recent Principal Moderator's reports. It is the belief of the Board that the focus of such reports should remain on the improvement of teaching and learning rather than influencing the marking process directly. Any changes to required standards should be via amendments to the specification and/or the marking schemes and not via the reflective reports sent to centres.

4. CONCLUSION

The EAB wishes to thank the awarding bodies for their continued cooperation and their willingness to take action on the recommendations that follow appeals.

The EAB believes that awarding bodies share the desire to ensure that the processes of examinations are as robust as possible and that an appropriate mechanism is in place to help assure learners, centres and the wider public that achievements are accurately recognised.

The EAB is confident its part in the whole examination process has been conducted in a way that helped centres, their candidates, 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
Sarn Debnam	Appeals Officer

Contact details

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APPEALS HEARD ON 2006 EXAMINATIONS

Calday Grange	OCR GCE Geography	Allowed
Dominican	AQA GCE Media Studies	Allowed
Havering	Edexcel GCE Psychology	Not allowed
Loughborough	OCR GCE History	Not allowed
Maiden Erlegh	Edexcel GCE Music	Not allowed
Millfield	Edexcel GCSE Mathematics	Not allowed

Summaries of closed cases are available on the EAB website, or from the office.