



The “ping” factor: What does it mean to maintain standards in composite qualifications?

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Cambridge Assessment, 19 October 2009

“The qualifications standards objective is to secure that regulated qualifications –

(a) give a reliable indication of knowledge, skills and understanding, and

(b) indicate a consistent level of attainment (including over time) between comparable regulated qualifications”

(Clause 125(2))



The problem



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What does it mean to maintain standards in qualifications when the qualification outcomes are pre-determined by unit outcomes?



Defining terms



- “Unitised”
- Composite



What do we mean by “maintaining standards” ?



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■ “Level of attainment” definition

- Ensuring that, other things being equal, those who show the same level of attainment get the same outcome



What do we mean by “maintaining standards” ?



■ “Level of attainment” definition

- Ensuring that, other things being equal, those who show the same level of attainment get the same outcome

■ “Likelihood of achievement” definition

- Ensuring that, other things being equal, the likelihood that a candidate with a given level of knowledge or skill will get a particular mark or grade remains the same



Can structures affect standards?



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- Yes, using the “likelihood of achievement” definition



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- Yes, using the “likelihood of achievement” definition
- Statistical factors



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- Compensatory mark schemes V “hurdles”



Can structures affect standards?



- Yes, using the “likelihood of achievement” definition
- Statistical factors
- Compensatory mark schemes V “hurdles”
- Re-sits



New or changed qualifications?



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- Easier to maintain standards in a stable qualification



New or changed qualifications?



- Easier to maintain standards in a stable qualification
- Difficult if content changes



New or changed qualifications?



- Easier to maintain standards in a stable qualification
- Difficult if content changes
- Difficult for new qualifications



The problem: how to maintain standards in unitised qualifications



Possible answers



1. Reject the question



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2. Reflect the overall standard in the design of the curriculum/syllabus for the qualification



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3. Reflect the standard in the structure of the qualification



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1. Reject the question
2. Reflect the overall standard in the design of the curriculum/syllabus for the qualification
3. Reflect the standard in the structure of the qualification
4. Intervene at the awarding stage



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4a Modify/hyper-correct the last unit(s) as an adjustment mechanism



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4b **Announce that all unit marks/outcomes are provisional**



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4c **Be prepared to change grade boundaries at qualification level if necessary**



4. Intervene at the awarding stage?



- 4a **Modify/hyper-correct the last unit(s) as an adjustment mechanism**
- 4b **Announce that all unit marks/outcomes are provisional**
- 4c **Be prepared to change grade boundaries at qualification level if necessary**
- 4d **Do not disclose any unit outcomes until the qualification is complete**



Possible answers

1. Reject the question
2. Reflect the overall standard in the design of the curriculum/syllabus for the qualification
3. Reflect the standard in the structure of the qualification
4. Intervene at the awarding stage
5. Use the outcome of retrospective monitoring studies



Conclusions



- The problem: how to maintain standards in unitised qualifications
- Definitions of “unitised” and “composite”
- Effect of structure on standards
- Five possible answers to the problem



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1. Reject the question
2. Reflect the overall standard in the design of the curriculum/syllabus for the qualification
3. Reflect the standard in the structure of the qualification
4. Intervene at the awarding stage
5. Use the outcome of retrospective monitoring studies



- Ofqual not recommending any of these at this stage
- **IF YOU DON'T LIKE THEM, AND YOU THINK THAT MAINTAINING STANDARDS AT THE LEVEL OF THE QUALIFICATION MATTERS, WHAT'S YOUR ALTERNATIVE?**



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