

News story: The impact of qualification reform on A level science practical work

This study explores the perspectives of teachers implementing the changes to A level science practical work after one year.

Ofqual has today (28 July 2017) published its report on [‘The impact of qualification reform on A level science practical work – Paper 1: Teacher perspectives after one year’](#)

Reformed A level science qualifications were introduced for first teaching in September 2015. The assessment arrangements for practical work have changed significantly and Ofqual is conducting a programme of research to evaluate the impact of the reform on students’ practical skills. This report describes the first study from this programme, in which a series of interviews were conducted in 2016 with teachers. They were asked for their initial reflections on how the reform had affected the teaching and learning of practical skills.

On balance, most teachers perceived the reform, or at least many aspects of it, to be positive for teaching and learning practical skills. They suggested the new arrangements compared favourably to those that were previously in place, which had, prior to their removal, become beset by significant issues around reliability and fairness. Many suggested the post-reform assessment arrangements allowed greater flexibility to embed practical work into the course and encouraged a more ‘hands on’ approach to practical work.

The findings also suggest schools and colleges have not been affected in a uniform way by the reform. The magnitude and nature of the impact is dependent on the characteristics of the school or college. And there was some evidence of contradictory views about how the reform would affect student motivation for engaging with practical work.