

# Rules confirmed to improve awarding organisation centre controls

Ofqual has today (12 February 2020) published an [analysis of responses and decisions](#) in relation to its technical consultation into the Conditions, requirements and guidance associated with the introduction of Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS). These decisions follow Ofqual's analysis of the risks associated with the practice of delegating assessment judgements to training providers, schools and colleges (collectively known as 'centres'). Ofqual [announced in September 2019](#) that all awarding organisations will be required to introduce CASS by no later than September 2021 for all qualifications assessed in this way. This approach forms part of Ofqual's overall strategy to improve the controls awarding organisations have over centres offering their qualifications.

Today's decisions improve the controls that awarding organisations have over centres and include:

- requiring all centre-marked assessments to be subject to a form of CASS, and confirming the minimum requirements these must meet
- requiring awarding organisations to put in place, comply with, and keep under review a CASS strategy for all assessments marked by centres
- amending the definition of moderation and making clear that it is a distinct form of CASS, which must take place for all cohorts of learners before results are issued, for some type of qualifications
- allowing all other forms of CASS to take place before or after results are issued
- allowing awarding organisations to revoke certificates incorrectly issued by centres

Ofqual has decided that some qualifications must be subject to moderation – these are GCSEs, AS and A levels, Technical Qualifications that form part of T levels, and Project qualifications. This list will be kept under review. It will be for awarding organisations to determine the most appropriate arrangements for other qualifications and assessments as part of their approach to CASS, subject to [minimum requirements and guidance](#) that seek to balance the need to retain flexible delivery with managing associated risks.

Phil Beach CBE, Executive Director for Vocational and Technical Qualifications, Ofqual:

These changes help to address some significant areas of weakness that we have identified in recent years that, if left unchecked, could undermine standards and public confidence. They will make sure that awarding organisations put in place appropriate controls where they allow centres to mark assessments on their behalf. As a result, accountability will sit in the right place – so that everyone can trust that learners' awards provide an accurate

reflection of their skills and knowledge in the subject and performance in assessments.

ENDS

## **Notes to Editors:**

### **What is CASS?**

Ofqual is currently working to strengthen the controls that awarding organisations have in place over their centres, with an initial focus on how assessments are delivered and monitored. As part of this work, we looked at how qualifications are currently delivered, and at our rules. We found that we needed to introduce some new conditions and guidance to address areas of weakness. We also recognised that, given the range of different qualifications and assessments, a more tailored approach to our rules is important. This allows alternative ways for awarding organisations to check centres' assessment judgements, to help ensure the right balance between flexibility of delivery and control over qualification awarding. We amended our rules to allow for awarding organisations to strike this balance.

This approach has been developed taking account of the views of a range of stakeholders, through two consultations, the first of which we launched in February 2019. This process has allowed us to refine our proposals, to reach a workable approach, addressing some of the early concerns that were raised with us.

This approach requires awarding organisations to:

1. decide the scrutiny approach that is most appropriate to the assessment, qualification, or qualification type
2. create a strategy to ensure that centre assessments are conducted in a way so that standards are maintained across different centres and over time

See [blog and diagram](#) for more information.

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## **[Integrated Yellow Card reporting now available in 93% of GP practices in the UK](#)**

Healthcare professionals can now use EMIS Web to report suspected adverse drug reactions to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Integrated reporting of suspected adverse drug reactions (ADRs) to the Yellow Card Scheme has been rolled out across England in January 2020, covering approximately 4000 GP practices that use EMIS Web. Reporting guidance for EMIS Web users can be found on [EMIS Now](#).

Yellow Card reports act as an early warning of previously unrecognised ADRs as well as providing valuable information on already recognised ADRs, helping to ensure that medicines are acceptably safe. Recent examples of Yellow Card reports that contributed to identifying important safety issues are available from the [Yellow Card website](#).

Integrated reporting is already in place with other primary care clinical system suppliers, SystemOne and Vision. This latest development with EMIS Web means that integrated Yellow Card reporting is now available to 93% of GP practices in the UK.

Integrated Yellow Card reporting ensures patient details are anonymised and provides an easier, faster and more secure method for healthcare professionals to report suspected ADRs through a few simple steps. Much of the information needed is automatically populated from the patient and reporter record. This means that reporters only need to complete a few additional pieces of information. A copy of the report is also held on the patient's record.

**MHRA's Vigilance and Risk Management of Medicines' Head of Pharmacovigilance Strategy, Mick Foy, said:**

"This is an important milestone for the Yellow Card Scheme.

"All Yellow Card reports can be a source of potential new safety information. Expanding the availability of easy-to-use routes of reporting is invaluable towards increased reporting and protecting patient safety."

The MHRA has been receiving reports from EMIS Web users since roll-out began.

**Dr Jez McCole, GP at Sheffield Gleadless Medical Centre, stated his experience:**

"I haven't reported a Yellow Card in years, and it was completely coincidental that a significant issue presented itself in consultation the day before the EMIS Yellow card integration switch-on went live. It was a very straightforward process and I think will massively improve the reporting of ADRs with enough advertising."

**Dr Shaun O' Hanlon, EMIS Group Chief Medical Officer, said:**

"Clinical safety is EMIS Group's number one priority. Integrating Yellow Card reporting into EMIS Web is another way that clinicians that use our systems can contribute to preventative healthcare, enabling the MHRA to gather information to continue their work to improve medication safety."

The MHRA continues to work with suppliers and NHS Digital to expand

integrated reporting in a range of healthcare settings.

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## **Troika Statement: Compromise essential to timely formation of South Sudan's Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity**

On February 8, Intergovernmental Authority on Development leaders met during the African Union summit to discuss the peace process in South Sudan. The Troika recognizes the serious efforts that the region has taken to unblock the current impasse and shares its frustration at the lack of progress.

With few days remaining until a power sharing government is due to form, time has almost run out. We encourage all parties to exercise the spirit of political compromise at the heart of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in these final days.

We urge the government of South Sudan and all opposition parties to work together to resolve issues blocking the formation of an inclusive national unity government by the February 22 deadline. A credible unity government needs to be inclusive as specified in the R-ARCSS and cannot be formed on the basis of unilateral action. Specifically, we encourage all sides, including the government, to reach consensus on a way forward on the number of states. Refusing to compromise and move forward undermines the agreement, risks the ceasefire, and erodes the trust of the public and the confidence of partners.

During this critical time, we urge all parties to continue to uphold and publicly commit to the permanent ceasefire, to instruct their forces to exercise restraint, and to avoid inflammatory statements. It is of fundamental importance to avoid a return to armed conflict with devastating consequences for the people of South Sudan and for the region as a whole.

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## **Light dues 2020 to 2021**



A strong and growing maritime industry is vital to the economy of the United Kingdom and it is critical that we treasure and protect this vital artery if we are to remain a world-leading maritime centre.

The work of the [General Lighthouse Authorities](#), which provide and maintain marine aids to navigation and respond to new wrecks and navigation dangers in some of the busiest waters in the world, is crucial to underpinning that vision whilst maintaining our vigorous safety record and continuously improving standards of safety.

Reductions in the 3 General Lighthouse Authorities' running costs have enabled the UK to reduce light dues on 4 occasions since 2014. For 2020 to 2021 I intend to freeze light dues rates at 37½ pence per net registered tonne. This will mean that light dues will have fallen by 30% in real terms since 2010.

Light dues rates will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the General Lighthouse Authorities are challenged to provide an effective and efficient service which offers value for money to light dues payers.

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# Government minded to appoint Ofcom as online harms regulator

- Initial response to Online Harms White Paper consultation published
- More details on businesses in scope of regulation and freedom of speech protections

Digital Secretary Nicky Morgan and Home Secretary Priti Patel have announced the government is minded to appoint communications watchdog Ofcom as the regulator to enforce rules to make the internet a safer place.

The announcement comes as the government publishes its [initial response to the public consultation](#) on the Online Harms White Paper.

The move is part of plans to protect children and vulnerable people online and give consumers greater confidence to use technology. It will provide the certainty technology businesses need to flourish and innovate while creating a fair and proportionate regulatory environment.

The regulator will play a key role in enforcing a statutory duty of care to protect users from harmful and illegal terrorist and child abuse content. It is another step towards achieving the government's pledge to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online.

Ofcom will get new powers to carry out its extended responsibilities. This will include making sure online companies have the systems and processes in place to fulfil the duty of care to keep people using their platforms safe.

DCMS Secretary of State Nicky Morgan said:

With Ofcom at the helm of a proportionate and strong regulatory regime, we have an incredible opportunity to lead the world in building a thriving digital economy, driven by groundbreaking technology, that is trusted by and protects everyone in the UK.

We will give the regulator the powers it needs to lead the fight for an internet that remains vibrant and open but with the protections, accountability and transparency people deserve.

Home Secretary Priti Patel, said:

While the internet can be used to connect people and drive innovation, we know it can also be a hiding place for criminals, including paedophiles, to cause immense harm.

It is incumbent on tech firms to balance issues of privacy and technological advances with child protection.

That's why it is right that we have a strong regulator to ensure social media firms fulfil their vital responsibility to vulnerable users.

Barnardo's Chief Executive Javed Khan said:

The backbone of an internet that is safe for children is regulation, which is why this announcement is so important.

Children face growing risks online, including cyber-bullying, sexual grooming, and exposure to self-harm forums. Two thirds of the vulnerable children supported through our sexual exploitation services were groomed online before meeting their abuser in person.

We cannot expect children to protect themselves. Instead we need a regulator to act without delay. To do so, it will need the necessary powers to carry out work effectively and to hold tech companies to account.

Barnardo's looks forward to working with the Government to ensure children are safe online.

The government today sets out how different approaches to legal and illegal content will be taken and freedom of speech will be protected, as well as the businesses that are likely to be in scope.

The government is minded to legislate to appoint Ofcom and believes that with its experience of overseeing the broadcasting and telecoms sectors, it has the expertise and independence needed to take on the challenge of regulating online harms.

The regulator will hold companies to account if they do not tackle internet harms such as child sexual exploitation and abuse and terrorism.

The initial response also sets out decisions the government has taken on a number of the other proposals put forward in the Online Harms White Paper:

Platforms will need to ensure that illegal content is removed quickly and minimise the risk of it appearing, with particularly robust action on terrorist content and online child sexual abuse.

The government will ensure Ofcom has a clear responsibility to protect users' rights online. This will include paying due regard to safeguarding free speech, defending the role of the press, promoting tech innovation and ensuring businesses do not face disproportionate burdens.

To protect freedom of expression, the regulations will not stop adults from accessing or posting legal content that some may find offensive. Instead companies will be required to explicitly state what content and behaviour is acceptable on their sites in clear and accessible terms and conditions and

enforce these effectively, consistently and transparently.

The regulation will only apply to companies that allow the sharing of user-generated content – for example, through comments, forums or video sharing. Fewer than 5 per cent of UK businesses will be in scope.

Ofcom will provide guidance to help businesses understand whether the services they provide would fall into the scope of the regulation. Business-to-business services which pose a low risk to the general public will not be in scope. A business simply having a social media presence does not necessarily mean it will be in scope.

The government will set the direction through legislation, but decisions on processes and procedures will be taken by Ofcom. This will mean regulation is flexible and can adapt to the rapid emergence of new harms and technologies. It will be up to Ofcom to monitor new and emerging online dangers and take appropriate enforcement action.

The government will publish a full consultation response in Spring 2020. This will set out further details of the potential enforcement powers Ofcom may have. The government will carefully consider the full impacts of this potential change both for Ofcom and to inform broader work on the regulatory landscape.

As set out in the Queen's Speech, the government is in parallel developing legislation at pace and will bring it forward once Parliamentary time allows.

As well as today's announcement that the Government is minded to appoint Ofcom as the regulator for online harms, the Ofcom Board has appointed Dame Melanie Dawes as its new Chief Executive.

Given the Government will be considering the detail of this new regulatory agenda and the role Ofcom will have, and now that the new Chief Executive is in place, the Secretary of State has indicated that the Government would like a Chair to be in place who is able to oversee the successful implementation of any changes in full.

Lord Burns has therefore agreed to step down to enable a new Chair to be in place by the end of this year. He has agreed to stay on until the new Chair is in place to ensure a smooth transition.

## **Notes to Editors:**

There is widespread public concern that online platforms aren't doing enough to ensure their services are safe for all users, particularly children. A recent Ofcom report showed that 61% of adults and 79% of 12-15 year old internet users reported having had at least one potentially harmful experience online in the previous 12 months.

The Online Harms White Paper set out world-leading proposals to tackle these issues by introducing a statutory duty of care enforced by an independent regulator, with tough powers to hold platforms to account. The public consultation on the Online Harms White Paper ran from 8 April 2019 to 1 July



2019. It received over 2,400 responses ranging from companies in the technology industry including large tech giants and small and medium sized enterprises, academics, think tanks, children's charities, rights groups, publishers, governmental organisations and individuals. In parallel to the consultation process, we have undertaken extensive engagement over the last 12 months with representatives from industry, civil society and others.

The initial Government response provides an overview of the consultation responses and wider engagement on the proposals in the White Paper. It includes an in-depth breakdown of the responses to each of the 18 consultation questions asked in relation to the White Paper proposals, and an overview of the feedback in response to our engagement with stakeholders.