

Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Integrity of public examinations](#), HC 345

Tuesday 28 November 2017

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Members present: Robert Halfon (Chair); Michelle Donelan; James Frith; Ian Mearns; Thelma Walker; Mr William Wragg.

Questions 1-96

Witnesses

I: Barnaby Lenon, Chair, Independent Schools Council, Simon Henderson, Headmaster, Eton College, and Michael O'Sullivan, Chief Executive, Cambridge Assessment International Education.

II: Michael Turner, Director General, Joint Council for Qualifications, Professor Jo-Anne Baird, Director of the Department of Education, Oxford University and Dr Michelle Meadows, Executive Director for Strategy, Risk and Research, Ofqual.

Examination of witnesses

Barnaby Lenon, Simon Henderson and Michael O'Sullivan.

Q1 **Chair:** Thank you for attending the Committee today. For the benefit of the recording, could you please go from our left to right, explain who you are and where you are from?

Barnaby Lenon: I am Barnaby Lenon, Chairman of the Independent Schools Council.

Michael O'Sullivan: I am Michael O'Sullivan, Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment International Education.

Simon Henderson: I am Simon Henderson, the Headmaster at Eton College.

Q2 **Chair:** Thank you. I am going to start the questions focusing on the allegations over the summer. Can I ask Cambridge, particularly, how many cases of exam malpractice have been reported to you by whistleblowers in the last five to 10 years? How many of those have been investigated, and how many of those have led to exam marks being voided?

Michael O'Sullivan: I can't give you all those statistics, Mr Chairman. I can tell you that this year—which was a fairly typical year—we had 719 cases of exam maladministration and malpractice in all our examinations worldwide.

Q3 **Chair:** Surely you would know at least over the last five years how many incidences of exam malpractice have been reported every year?

Michael O'Sullivan: Mr Chairman, we do know that, but I will have to ask you to allow me to write to you after the session with the exact data going back over five years. We do have those on record.

Chair: It would have been helpful.

Q4 **Ian Mearns:** Just for clarification, you did say 719 but I think you finished the sentence with the words "worldwide".

Michael O'Sullivan: That's correct.

Q5 **Chair:** What about the UK?

Michael O'Sullivan: I can give you a breakdown of that data in writing afterwards. I wish to be precise about that data.

Q6 **Chair:** Do you roughly know how many instances of exam malpractice there have been on average every year, in the UK and internationally?

Michael O'Sullivan: Yes, it would always be in the hundreds in recent years internationally and, therefore, in the dozens in the UK, but I will give you precise data on it.



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Q7 **Chair:** How many exams have been voided because of those allegations?

Michael O'Sullivan: Mr Chairman, I cannot give you an exact number for the exams. By "voided", I think perhaps you mean we did not award a grade at all or we changed a grade?

Q8 **Chair:** The exams would have been voided because of the allegation of malpractice being found to be right.

Michael O'Sullivan: In some cases we do apply that sanction where students themselves are at fault, and I can get you recent data on that.

Q9 **Chair:** What are you doing to ensure that future cases of cheating do not occur? Surely it is impossible to rule out the teachers doing the same thing again, given the current system? If you have the same teachers setting and teaching the exams or involved in the exam, surely this could happen again?

Michael O'Sullivan: Mr Chairman, on your wider question, I just comment that malpractice cases usually don't involve the kinds of behaviour by teachers who are examiners that occurred this summer in the case of Pre-U. Malpractice involves many kinds of impermissible behaviour by candidates and by those administering exams, but in regard to this type of problem, which is rare, we are already taking steps to further strengthen the supervision and training of any examiner who has this kind of potential conflict of interest. We are also making suggestions—as we are allowed to do—to Ofqual, which, as I believe the Committee will know, is currently carrying out a general review of this area of management of the system.

Q10 **Chair:** Why do you think—perhaps all of you could answer this—teachers should set the exams for the subjects that they teach and be in the same schools? Why could this not be done by teachers—Edexcel, for example?

Barnaby Lenon: Do you want me to comment on that? First, because a third of qualifications are only offered by one exam board, so it is quite difficult to ask teachers to set for another board in those subjects. The syllabuses of A levels and GCSEs in different boards are different. For that reason, it is more complicated.

There are a number of good reasons why teachers are encouraged to be exam setters. It is partly because they know the syllabus better than anyone else. It is partly because they know what an able and less able pupil is capable of. It is partly because they know what sort of vocabulary and terminology pupils should be familiar with. It is partly because they know from their experience how long it takes to teach different elements of the syllabus. That has a bearing on the balance on the questions that are asked, so there are a number of good reasons why both teachers within the system who are not setters and the system, more broadly, prefer teacher setters if they can be allowed to do this.



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In the past we have had times when university lecturers have set questions—

Chair: Can we have shorter answers please?

Barnaby Lenon: Yes, and it wasn't successful.

Q11 **Chair:** Can I go back to Cambridge? As I understand it, I think you are the only exam organisation not a member of the JCQ. Why is that?

Michael O'Sullivan: We are not the only examiner organisation not a member of the JCQ. The reason we are not a member is—

Chair: You are one of the very few, let's put it that way. Why is that?

Michael O'Sullivan: That is correct, Mr Chairman. Our principal work is international and is outside the United Kingdom. In fact, we follow many of the same rules and procedures as the JCQ and our regulated qualifications in England, including Pre-U, are subject to the same Ofqual general conditions and other regulatory requirements. The JCQ membership consists of exam boards whose principal activity is in this country, Mr Chairman.

Q12 **Chair:** Could I also ask: why is there is such a lack of transparency? You have opaque processes, schools are not identified, and parents of children are not able to find out. What happened over the summer was only because of whistleblowers going to *The Daily Telegraph*, for example, but surely that is wrong. Surely there should be absolute transparency, in terms of the teachers who are involved in exams and teaching at the same schools but also, if there is malpractice, alleged or otherwise, that should be completely transparent, and the parents should be notified.

Michael O'Sullivan: Mr Chairman, in these cases we provided extensive explanations to the schools concerned, in writing, to assist them in explaining to the parents of the affected students what had happened and how those students had, therefore, been graded under special procedures that we apply in such cases. The transparency that would enable large numbers of people to identify examiners—if I caught your meaning correctly—might give rise to other risks in the system.

Q13 **Chair:** What about the transparency, in terms of if alleged malpractice has been thought of or malpractice has occurred, that the schools are identified and named so that the parents can be informed of what is going on?

Michael O'Sullivan: We saw in these two cases—rare and unfortunate as they are—that they had extremely severe consequences for the two examiners who were also teachers concerned. That perhaps makes it clear why we need to be careful and responsible about revealing identities of people who are subject to investigation, because the consequences are so severe and allegations are sometimes unsubstantiated.



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Q14 **Chair:** Could you set out briefly, please, your protocols for investigating exam malpractice? Do you have any idea when leaks occur and how the information ends up with you?

Michael O'Sullivan: Yes.

Chair: It would be good if you could set that out for the Committee please.

Michael O'Sullivan: I am glad to do so, Mr Chairman. Like all exam boards, detection of malpractice is of fundamental importance, and therefore we go about it in a number of ways. One way we deter and detect malpractice is that all schools that hold our examinations are subject to random, unannounced inspection by our independent inspectors, for example, before the examination to ensure that confidential material hasn't been opened prematurely during the exam and that the exam is being properly supervised. That is one thing we do.

We actively encourage whistleblowing by anybody with valuable information. In these cases, it was whistleblowing that enabled us to catch it, not in fact via the media, but whistleblowing directly to our organisation. We also carry out statistical and other examination of the exam scripts after we receive them, in order to spot improbable performance or copied scripts. That is another way of catching malpractice.

I give you those examples. We are looking for cheating at every stage to ensure we can catch it and deter it.

Q15 **Chair:** Why are the vast majority of all your exam convenors employed at leading public schools? What have you done to try to employ convenors who don't set the exams at the same school?

Michael O'Sullivan: Mr Chairman, we do not target any particular type of school for recruitment of examiners. We only look at the professional qualifications and capability of the individuals concerned. Most of our examiners are resident in this country. In the case of Pre-U, a lot of independent schools use the exam and a good number of examiners are engaged as teachers at independent schools, but we have no policy or preference for independent school teachers, Mr Chairman.

Q16 **Chair:** I have to say that I find it remarkable that you have come to the Committee not knowing the incidences of malpractice, given that this is an inquiry into exam integrity, and you have only the figure for the current year of 719, which seems quite high. I hope that you will let us know as soon as possible.

My final question is to Eton. In terms of Eton, without going into the specifics of what occurred, is your view that it was a one-off or is it possible that this was going on for some time? The whistleblowers, who went to *The Daily Telegraph* and elsewhere, have suggested in the cases in the other schools that it was going on for some time.



Simon Henderson: Do you mean with reference to this specific teacher?

Chair: In reference to the case specifically in Eton.

Simon Henderson: We have no evidence that it occurred previously. I would like to make the point that the initial whistleblowers were other members of our own economics department who were concerned about what had gone on and reported it to me, and I personally referred it to the exam board, so it had all been dealt with before it hit the public domain in the media. We have no evidence that this was going on previously involving this particular teacher.

Michael O'Sullivan: Mr Chairman, if I may, I have now located in my brief the accurate figures for the last five years.

Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Michael O'Sullivan: I did not wish to cite figures that were imperfectly remembered. The total number of proven cases of maladministration and malpractice: five years ago in 2013 it was 269; it increased in 2014 to 485; it increased again in 2015 to 703; last year, 2016, it fell to 490, and in 2017 it was back up at 719. The general trend is an increase, although not consistently so.

Q17 **Chair:** It is pretty worrying, so your safeguards clearly are not working if the instances of malpractice are going up.

Michael O'Sullivan: In part I think we can attribute that to the increased number of schools and candidates taking the examinations, Mr Chairman, but any malpractice is a great concern for us.

Q18 **Mr William Wragg:** A supplementary to Mr O'Sullivan. In terms of the likelihood of having examiners from the independent sector, is that because your examinations are predominantly the IGCSE, which is more likely to be taught in the independent sector and, therefore, the teachers are obviously from that sector as well?

Michael O'Sullivan: No, sir, that is not the case. This year we had about 120,000 candidates in this country for Cambridge IGCSE, so many more than for Pre-U. Of those 120,000, it is roughly 50/50 independent sector and state sector, so we do indeed have many examiners from the state sector.

Q19 **Ian Mearns:** Just a general observation, since there seems to be a prevalence of setters and markers who are employed as teachers in the independent sector. Inevitably as a setter and marker, you cannot know what the syllabus is—you cannot know what the tips are and you can't know what the tricks are—therefore, because of that prevalence of teachers in the independent sector, does that not mean that the independent sector has particular advantage against the state sector when it comes to particular exams?



Michael O'Sullivan: I don't think that is the case. Pre-U is popular with independent schools. About 62% of the 127 schools that used the exam this year are independent schools, but the other 38% are state schools, so, not surprisingly, you will see a slight preponderance of teachers in the independent sector who are involved in setting the exam. But I don't believe that that confers any kind of general unfairness or advantage. I believe the vast majority of teachers are quite capable of drawing the line between effective teaching and improper disclosure of examination content and that these cases, as rare as they are, are unfortunate.

Q20 **Ian Mearns:** You are saying you don't feel as though there is any particular advantage there, but have you done, for instance, any research into that? Have you drilled down to see if there is an advantage that you are not aware of?

Michael O'Sullivan: I would say not. One thing to bear in mind is that although the questions of course must not be known in advance, the material covered in the course that leads to the examination has to be absolutely transparent, so the learning objectives are there for all to see and students work towards those defined objectives in the course and teachers work towards them, so all competent teachers are well aware of what will be examined.

Q21 **Chair:** Can I just ask, in terms of the numbers of allegations of malpractice, how many of those were because of whistleblowers and how many were because of your own safeguarding procedures?

Michael O'Sullivan: I would have to investigate that to give a precise breakdown, Mr Chairman, but we discover malpractice in all the ways I mention and some others.

Q22 **Thelma Walker:** The title of our inquiry is "Integrity of Public Examinations", and I would like to unpick that word "integrity", which is obviously about high moral principles. For me, integrity is about doing the right thing, even when somebody isn't watching you or knows what you are doing. I would say this inquiry is possibly linked to the fact that the national press exposed malpractice; that whistleblowers actually reported it. Would you say that some members of staff have perhaps been scapegoated as the sole people responsible for this malpractice, or would you say that this is systemic throughout the independent examination system? When looking at integrity, what do you think the threat is to the integrity of public—and we are accountable to the public—examinations? What are the threats at the moment, and would you say it is possible that this is historical and systemic throughout the independent and I would say parts of the state sector?

Michael O'Sullivan: You would like me to take that question?

Thelma Walker: Any.

Barnaby Lenon: Shall I start? I certainly don't think it is systemic. This was a very bad, disgraceful case, which was quickly and effectively dealt



with, but generally speaking, over time, the threat to the integrity of the exams has got less, I would say, partly because of exam reforms. One of the big reforms in the last five years has been the reduction in teacher assessed course work—that was the biggest single problem clearly identified by Ofqual—and the abolition of modules and multiple re-sittings, the new Ofqual remarking processes, the toughening up of the way that invigilators have to behave, all of these things have been very important, so I don't think myself that this is a problem that is growing. After all, finding more cases of maladministration and malpractice could be because the systems are working better than they used to.

Chair: Surely that is not the case because the things that happened over summer were purely because whistleblowers went to *The Daily Telegraph* and, also, I think exam cheating was spread on social media that then spread from one school to another. It is nothing to do with the safeguarding. It is to do with the whistleblowing in the media.

Q23 **Thelma Walker:** Which, Chair, goes back to my point about integrity being about doing the right thing when you are not being watched. Now we are being watched by the national press and by the public to whom we are accountable. I go back to the question: is it systemic, is it historical, or is it just happening now when the press are on to it?

Simon Henderson: If I can answer that. First, I agree with your definition of integrity. I say to my pupils that one of the key things they need to do is do the right thing even when no one is looking.

In this particular case, it was our own teachers in the economics department who had concerns about the behaviour of their head of department. They reported it to me. I reported it to the examination board. The teacher had been dealt with and dismissed three weeks before the matter hit the public domain in the press.

In my experience, both in the case involving economics, and there was another case involving history of art, it is very, very clear to all teachers that this is clearly unacceptable and gross misconduct. They are quick to report things that they don't agree with that other teachers are doing, and the heads of the schools take their responsibilities as head of examination centres incredibly seriously and refer allegations when they are raised to the examination boards and co-operate fully with their inquiries.

Q24 **Chair:** If I can interject there. In terms of Charterhouse School, there was a very honest pupil—because it had spread via social media from your school, allegedly, and the student reported this to the teachers. If the student hadn't been honest and done this, what had happened could have spread even further, so, again, it seems to be not what you are doing, the teachers and so on, but whistleblowers, the media or honest students, who are responsible for these issues coming to light.

Michael O'Sullivan: Perhaps, Mr Chairman, it falls to me to make it clear, as we were investigating the cases, that information voluntarily



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provided by the school was indeed crucial to enabling us to deal with these cases. So I must confirm what Mr Henderson has told you in that regard.

Q25 Thelma Walker: Simon, could I ask you: the high stakes accountability for the examination system doesn't condone malpractice, but do you think—and in the state sector too—that that could lead to teachers feeling under pressure to get those results by any means? Do you think that is—

Simon Henderson: That is certainly a question I have asked myself over the last few months. In the case of my school I don't believe that to be the case. We pride ourselves that the education we offer is about much more than just examination results. We don't enter, for example, league tables in August. We don't release our results at that point because it is not a particular metric that we prioritise. Certainly, in our schools when I meet heads of departments annually—we have an annual review of their departmental performance—there is no discussion about a drive to improve examination results. Of course, we want our pupils to be well educated and get good results.

I don't know why this particular teacher behaved in this way, but I would come back to the fact that his own colleagues were the ones who reported it, so—

Q26 Chair: When you said it was a one-off, how do you know that it was a one-off? That individual could have allegedly—I stress allegedly—been doing this for a long time.

Simon Henderson: He was only employed by us for two years, so he was reaching the end of his second year. The summer of 2017 was the first year that we had sat the Pre-U examinations, which he was involved in helping to set. In the summer of 2016, which was the only other set of public exams while he had been in our school, the pupils were doing A level economics, which he was not involved in setting, so in terms of my own school, this was the first time that the examinations in Pre-U economics had been sat by our pupils.

Q27 Ian Mearns: It is very hard to talk about individuals, but has the individual teacher gone on to teaching elsewhere or is he out of the profession now?

Simon Henderson: He was dismissed by us for gross misconduct and we referred the case to the NCTL—the National College of Teaching and Leadership—because we regarded it as unacceptable professional conduct, and conduct that could bring the profession into disrepute. NCTL are currently investigating him and I believe he is not currently working in another school.

Q28 Chair: Ian has touched on a very important point about the lack of transparency. This only came to light because of the media. Surely that means that a teacher who has done exam malpractice could then move to another school without anybody knowing that that teacher was



responsible for exam malpractice, because there is no transparency.

Simon Henderson: Not in the case of this particular teacher. He was dismissed on 2 August. I wrote to all our parents who were affected by this on 3 August, and I made it clear at that point that we were going to refer him to NCTL. We did refer him to NCTL and, as I say, the matter had been dealt with by us three weeks before it hit the media.

Q29 **Mr William Wragg:** Good morning, gentlemen. I should briefly say that I worked for a time in the independent sector, in educational special needs, so I have some experience of invigilation of GCSE exams in that sector. But my question is from a wider perspective now for Mr Lenon and Mr Henderson. It regards remarking and challenging exam results. I wondered if there was a greater expectation in the independent sector among parents of challenging examination results that were perhaps lower than expected.

Barnaby Lenon: I would not have said there was a greater expectation within independent schools. It has nothing much to do with independent schools. It is simply that middle-class, educated parents, who have children who need to get a particular grade perhaps to go to university, may well be more aware of the system.

Incidentally, it is also focused on certain subjects: English and history. More subjective subjects tend to attract more review requests. Slightly more parents at independent schools have A level remarks than in state schools but not hugely more.

Q30 **Mr William Wragg:** No, indeed. Perhaps, Simon, if you could comment on your experience of parents at Eton.

Simon Henderson: A number of our candidates do request remarks. It is the candidates themselves who have to authorise the remark request. We find that a number of those results do indeed change, so in the last cycle of 2017 that we have just gone through, of the remarks that were requested, just over 9% of the grades changed at A 2 or Pre-U. Nearly 16% of the grades changed for GCSE.

In that context, where parents feel—and indeed teachers sometimes feel—that the quality of marking can be imprecise, the parents or candidates exercise their right to ask for a remark.

Q31 **Mr William Wragg:** Indeed. If I may move on to the aspect of extra time for examinations and so forth. It may be a fairly obvious question, but what resources do independent schools have to identify students who are entitled to reasonable adjustments for exams and how does that differ from the state sector perhaps?

Barnaby Lenon: All schools have SENCOs these days, and they are responsible for following the JCQ rules and identifying students who might need access arrangements.

Q32 **Mr William Wragg:** Not a high percentage of pupils at independent



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schools who will get that extra time?

Barnaby Lenon: Very little difference. In the Ofqual March 2017 report, independent schools had 8% of candidates taking exams in 2016, 9% of access arrangements, and that 1% difference could just be because we have quite a lot of special schools within the independent sector, so it is not a significant difference.

Q33 **Michelle Donelan:** If I could ask a question about the remarking that my colleague just discussed. Obviously parents have to pay for those remarks, so don't you think that skews the system slightly because, as you said, there is a significant percentage of those remarks that do come back upgraded? Whereas, in the state school education system, more parents will be less likely to be able to afford a catalogue of remarks, so is that something that you think—

Barnaby Lenon: Personally, I agree with that. Again, I don't think you would say this is to do with the income of parents rather than the type of school they go to, but I do agree it costs £30 to £60 to have a remark, so you must be right.

Q34 **Michelle Donelan:** What could you do to fix that as an issue? Obviously, you can't offer free remarks on everything because everybody would take it up. How would you address that issue of social mobility in terms of the concerns there?

Barnaby Lenon: I think I would put the question to Ofqual. It is a difficult one because we don't want to have vast numbers of remark requests because that would bring the system to a halt, yet the fact is that they are expensive and that is a weakness in the system.

Michael O'Sullivan: If I may make a suggestion on that, it is a difficult issue because, if there were no charge for remarks it would encourage very large volumes of remark requests, which would simply have the consequence of increasing the cost and ultimately the price of exams, so people would pay by different means. A constructive approach might be to look at the ability of schools to fund these remark requests themselves, rather than the parents paying. All remark requests are made through schools and that is the case for all examination boards. They are not made independently by the parents or the student, but if the cost falls on the parents, inevitably there is the consequence that parents of higher income would be in a better place to pay for that. The charge of course is waived if the review results in a higher grade.

Q35 **Ian Mearns:** Would the school offer advice to parents about whether they thought that the marks were fair or not?

Simon Henderson: We do occasionally offer advice. There is the ability to recall scripts and sometimes we might recall scripts, and if we thought that there was a particular reason to request a remark on occasions we would advise the remark but not normally.



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Q36 **Ian Mearns:** Is there a charge from the exam board for recalling scripts?

Simon Henderson: Yes.

Q37 **Ian Mearns:** But that is less than the application for a remark?

Simon Henderson: Yes.

Q38 **Mr William Wragg:** Moving on to exam markers, Mr O'Sullivan touched on this earlier on but how beneficial is being an examiner for a teacher? You can unpack "beneficial" perhaps in two ways.

Michael O'Sullivan: Yes, indeed. In terms of non-financial benefit I assume you mean—

Mr William Wragg: Indeed, absolutely. Yes.

Michael O'Sullivan: In terms of non-financial benefit, we find that there is a lot of interest on the part of many teachers in becoming examiners because it enables them to better understand the way our programmes are constructed, what we are looking for when we assess students. That is quite a proper professional concern of teachers, in my opinion, to gain a deep understanding of what knowledge skills and conceptual understanding is being assessed in the exam. There is a desire to examine for reasons of gaining professional insight and expertise, partly countered by, I would say, the pressure on teachers' time from work and other aspects of their lives.

Q39 **Mr William Wragg:** As you touch on that, do you see a noticeable difference, therefore, between the state sector and the independent sector?

Michael O'Sullivan: No.

Mr William Wragg: You don't?

Michael O'Sullivan: No, I think the kinds of pressures are similar; the professional benefit is similar and the difficulty of fitting in more work is comparable, I would say. As for financial benefits, obviously those who mark exam scripts are paid. How much they get paid depends on which things they mark and how experienced they are, how long it takes them to work through a script, but as a rough calculation, an experienced examiner would earn about £20 an hour marking at a normal rate.

Q40 **Mr William Wragg:** Do you think there are any further incentives—I am going to come to the independent sector in a moment—for teachers in the state sector that you would suggest would encourage them to take up this role?

Michael O'Sullivan: I would say so. It would come down to the professional recognition, again, within their profession for undertaking this kind of work.

Barnaby Lenon: They could be paid more because the pay is quite bad.



- Q41 **Mr William Wragg:** Indeed. The question, therefore, to Barnaby and Simon is: what incentives does the independent sector have to encourage teachers in your sector to become examiners, if any?

Simon Henderson: I would agree with Michael's comments. We regard it as a good part of your professional development, in terms of understanding how examinations work, but I think the main reason that most of the teachers in my school who contribute to examining in various ways do it is because they recognise the importance of having a strong public exam system in the country and they want to contribute to it.

I would agree with Barnaby, the financial incentives tend not to be the priority. It tends to be because they are contributing to the public good.

- Q42 **Chair:** Could I ask how much you pay your examiners?

Michael O'Sullivan: Mr Chairman, as I said, they are paid per script they mark I think in common with other exam boards. It works out at about £20 an hour marking at a normal rate.

- Q43 **Ian Mearns:** Are you aware of any incentives that exist in the independent sector? Because there is a benefit to the institution as well from doing this in terms of the professional development of the teaching staff, so do any schools give time off to mark or more salary or anything of that nature?

Simon Henderson: We don't give people extra salary but we do release them if they need to go to exam board meetings. It is perhaps easier for certain types of schools than others to release their staff, but we certainly support them in terms of releasing them to go to exam board meetings.

- Q44 **Chair:** Do you not think—going back to the issue of teachers involved in the exams and teaching at the school—that it would be better for your teachers not to have this dual role, the same teachers?

Simon Henderson: I have eight teachers who are involved in setting exams—so know in advance what is coming up in exams—for 10 separate exams because two of them set for more than one board. Seven of those 10 exams are papers that Etonians sit, three of them are not. We have brought in additional safeguards following this case.

- Q45 **Chair:** To make it transparent, are the parents made aware of which teachers are setting which exams and teaching what exams and so on?

Simon Henderson: No. In fact, we go the other way and we have now said that teachers are not to disclose to pupils if they are involved in examining, because we think that that perhaps creates an additional risk if the pupils know that a teacher is involved in setting. We now take the view that we have a register that sits with me, so I must have authorised it, but it is not something to be publicly discussed with colleagues or with pupils.

- Q46 **Chair:** If I can ask the panel, surely one way out of this—one idea that



has been suggested—is for examiners to write multiple tests and then you would select one at random and give that to the teachers, so it would be much harder for malpractice to occur. Can I take your view, please?

Simon Henderson: I certainly think that is a solution that is worth giving serious consideration to. I have discussed it with one of my colleagues who has been involved in examining for many years and he certainly thinks that is a viable way forward.

Ian Mearns: I must admit I am now scratching my head wondering if the investigatory powers of the pupils at Eton will now be trying to work out which eight teachers are setting which 10 exams, but there we go. It is just a thought.

Q47 **Chair:** Why could you not do that? Set multiple exams and then randomly choose one?

Michael O'Sullivan: We could do that and it is one of the things we are thinking about, and I think we discussed it in the context of Ofqual's review. I certainly would not say that it is not a good idea. It does need careful consideration. For example, it would result in more exams existing for longer before they are used and we then need to be careful that they were very secure during that extended period. Also, I think realistically one cannot reduce to zero the number of professionals who have to know the content before the exam is taken because the time to mark and grade the exam, between exam day and results day, is too short to get it all done if there isn't some preparatory activity involving the chief examiner, for example, but it could reduce risk.

Q48 **Chair:** It would go some way to restore confidence and to minimise malpractice in many ways. Would you agree with that?

Barnaby Lenon: Yes, I would. I was an examiner 20 years ago and that is exactly what we did then. It was a question bank. I contributed to it. I didn't know if any of my questions would ever be chosen.

Q49 **Ian Mearns:** Is anyone aware of any occasions when teachers who are examiners and markers have had a modified timetable to facilitate them doing the other part of their job?

Simon Henderson: I can't recall a case in my school.

Q50 **Chair:** I think we have finished our questions on this. I do have a completely separate issue I would like to raise particularly with Mr Lenon and perhaps Mr Henderson as well. In terms of the charitable status of the independent sector, one of the reasons given is the bursaries, scholarships and assisted places that are given out to pupils, which of course are very welcome. Could I ask you, of those assisted places/scholarships/bursaries, how many of them are pupils who are free school meal pupils?

Barnaby Lenon: Bursaries and scholarships or just—

Chair: Anything that in essence helps those from lower incomes to have



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the chance to go to the independent schools.

Barnaby Lenon: It would be about a third of all the pupils but, in terms of the amount of money spent, it would be a much higher proportion than that. I will give you an example. Manchester Grammar School has about 220 boys on bursaries. The average bursary there is 93% of the fee, so most of those pupils have free places.

Q51 **Chair:** Are they free school meal pupils? That is what I am asking. Are you saying that a third of all the pupils who have—whether it is assisted places, scholarships, bursaries—are free school meal pupils? In other words, very, very low income backgrounds?

Barnaby Lenon: We don't know whether they are free school meal pupils or not because they are in an independent school where they are not being classified as free school meals, but they would come into that category, yes.

Chair: But they would have come from primary school.

Barnaby Lenon: They would have qualified for free school meals, yes.

Q52 **Chair:** Do you know how many of the children that you have have come from free school meals—

Barnaby Lenon: No, but we can find that out.

Simon Henderson: I can tell you in my school. In the last academic year we had 261 pupils who were on some form of financial support, which is approximately 20% of the pupil body. Of those, 82 pupils paid no fees at all, so they are at 100%. Some of those plus extras and the majority of those I believe would have qualified for free school meals.

Q53 **Chair:** Of the 82?

Simon Henderson: Of the 82. Of those 261, the average fee remission was 64%.

Q54 **Chair:** How much do you spend a year on this?

Simon Henderson: We spend about £6.5 million a year.

Q55 **Chair:** On what?

Simon Henderson: On means-tested bursaries.

Q56 **Chair:** Out of the 261, 82 of them—

Simon Henderson: Had 100% fee remission.

Q57 **Chair:** They were the free school meal ones, just to be clear?

Simon Henderson: I cannot 100% guarantee all of them would have qualified for free school meals, but they are certainly from—

Q58 **Chair:** But on the lowest incomes?



Simon Henderson: Yes.

Q59 **Chair:** Are you able to write to the Committee with—

Barnaby Lenon: Sir, I will tell you that last year, our 1,300 schools spent £385 million on bursaries for pupils from low income homes, and about 6,000 pupils were paying no fees.

Q60 **Chair:** But how many of them were of the very lowest income, the most socially disadvantaged—that is what I am trying to find out—of those 6,000?

Barnaby Lenon: They would all have been. If they are paying no fee at all, they would all be within that category.

Q61 **Chair:** What percentage is that?

Barnaby Lenon: That is 6,000 pupils paying no fees at all out of the 500,000 pupils in Independent Schools Council schools. A third of our pupils are on some sort of fee reduction, but where the line would be drawn for free school meals is something we would have to look at.

Chair: I would be very interested to know that.

Barnaby Lenon: A third of pupils are on some sort of reduction.

Chair: Okay. Thank you very much indeed for answering the questions and we look forward to working with you over the coming months.

Examination of witnesses

Michael Turner, Professor Jo-Anne Baird and Dr Michelle Meadows.

Q62 **Chair:** Thank you for coming. For the benefit of the recording and those watching outside, could you kindly state, from our left to right, who you are and your organisation?

Dr Meadows: I am Dr Michelle Meadows. I am Executive Director for Strategy, Risk and Research at Ofqual.

Michael Turner: I am Michael Turner. I am the Director General of the Joint Council for Qualifications.

Professor Baird: I am Professor Jo-Anne Baird from Oxford University.

Chair: Can I gently ask you to speak loudly, thank you, into the microphone, for the benefit of the people watching?

Q63 **Ian Mearns:** What do you think are the main threats to the integrity of the exam system at the moment, Michelle?

Dr Meadows: That is a very interesting question. If you were to have asked me that four or five years ago, I would have said grade inflation, so at that time teachers were known to be continually assessing which was the easiest exam board to take their qualification with. That has



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entirely changed. Since we started the very close regulation and monitoring of exam grading, that is far less of an issue than it once was.

We have done research into threats to integrity of exams, where we have surveyed teachers to hear from them to tell us about their direct experience of malpractice, so out and out cheating, but also in the grey area of bending the rules. Through that research, what they tell us is that it is really course work, non-exam assessment that is the greatest threat. Of course, through the reform of GCSEs and A levels, we only now have course work where it is absolutely essential to assess the subject content.

We must not forget, of course, that there are swathes of vocational qualifications that very much rely on exactly that kind of assessment, so we are very mindful of making sure that the controls around that kind of assessment are up to scratch.

Michael Turner: I agree with what Michelle said there. I think also public confidence. We see cases that very quickly get into the media, are talked about in Select Committees, and I think that can damage the integrity and how people perceive the examination system. Putting that into context is quite important. When we talk about—as you did in the previous session—changes to marking, we need to put that into the context of the wider picture. Yes, perhaps one is too many, but in the scale of the system that we have in the UK, of GCSEs and A levels, it is a very big operation; 50,000 examiners each year are involved in the marking of these scripts.

I think there is something about improving public confidence by talking about the safeguards in place, talking about what is being done when things go wrong and, also, reassuring that everything is done as far as possible to make sure that students get the grades that they deserve.

Professor Baird: It is a really interesting question. It is quite important to realise that we have quite a high integrity system. If you look internationally, other countries have much more problems with corruption, cheating and malpractice than we have. The thing about these events is that they are shocking when they do occur, but that is also because they are quite rare in our system. They are against our cultures. We have lots of structures and processes in place to prevent them, to tackle them when they arise, and obviously because they are so shocking and rare, they then get political and media attention, which is in a way quite right but it also undermines public confidence, I think, as Michael has just been saying. These issues are rightly investigated, but we need to bear in mind that here I don't think we are looking at endemic systemic issues. We are actually looking at a few rogue incidents that need to be tackled when they occur.

If you ask me what I think is the biggest challenge to the integrity of the exam system, I would say pressure on teachers. Now, in this instance it wasn't accountability pressures in state schools—we have just been looking at an incident in Eton—but, again, the competitive pressures on



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teachers to produce good results in private institutions, as well as in state schools; it is essentially a quasi-market system that we are setting up through accountability pressures. Those issues and having an intelligent accountability system, which doesn't provoke teachers to behave in that way, are quite serious for the system currently.

We do see in other countries, where there are similar sorts of pressures, these kinds of incidences arising. For example, in the US in 2014, nine teachers found to be guilty of racketeering. Some of them had won awards for their data-driven approaches to education but it was discovered that they had been cheating the system, so I think we have to be very careful about the pressures that are put on teachers and the sorts of unintended consequences that these pressures can result in.

Q64 Ian Mearns: We have looked at a series of incidents over this year and we have asked questions about whether they were systemic or whether they were just a one-off, and they all believe that we are dealing with mainly one-off situations and that we do not have a situation out there in the public examination system where cheats prosper.

Professor Baird: If you don't mind if I answer that first. This Committee has regularly said that teachers are to be trusted, and I think there is good evidence for that. But in a circumstance where the job is very difficult, there are lots of pressures these days, emphasising that trust in teachers and the professionalism that they bring to this—the fact that so few cases arise—is an important message.

We know that there are shortages of teachers in the system. It is very hard to attract people to come to train as teachers because of all the current issues that they face, so personally, yes, I think the evidence points to this being a very minor number of cases.

Dr Meadows: I think that is right. The evidence does suggest that we don't have an endemic problem here. But of course where malpractice is proven, it is so deeply unfair and deeply corrosive to public confidence that we need to take it very, very seriously. It is unfortunate that whenever there are debates around malpractice, views can get very polarised. I have heard people express the opinion that we must trust all teachers. Equally, I have heard people say to me, "Oh, teachers are cheating". Neither of those is right. We have to be vigilant about how malpractice and bending the rules might evolve and change over time, and keep ahead of that game.

Q65 Ian Mearns: As Ofqual, Michelle, how many investigations has Ofqual conducted into exam boards over the last five years? Of those investigations, what did you find?

Dr Meadows: Exam boards are responsible for investigating forms of malpractice. There was earlier a question about how malpractice comes to light. That is mostly through whistleblowing, and exam boards and ourselves have campaigns to encourage whistleblowing. Where we have



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an interest in particular investigations, perhaps because we are concerned about the level of public interest or the complexity of a particular exam board investigation, we will monitor the activity of the boards and, if we are not satisfied with the approach that they are taking, we will step in. Generally speaking, though, it is quite rare that we would do that, but there has been a handful of instances where we have not been satisfied with the approach taken and we have suggested changes that the exam boards need to make. It is quite unusual.

- Q66 **Ian Mearns:** Is that, though, not an inherent cause for concern, the fact that you rely so much on whistleblowers in the first instance, rather than the transparency and accountability systems that should exist to make sure that this is being overseen properly and effectively?

Dr Meadows: There are mechanisms that exam boards use to spot malpractice, and one of the helpful things through our review of the rules around teachers writing exam papers is that we have spotted where some of the exam boards use statistical monitoring of those teachers' outcomes year on year. But not all do, so certainly we have observed where safeguards could be improved. These are some changes as well that we might be able to make very quickly for forthcoming years of exams.

- Q67 **Thelma Walker:** I am pleased to hear you say that teachers can be trusted as professionals. You talked about the pressures on teachers, though, and I mentioned in the previous session about the high stakes accountability. We are now moving away from formative and modular assessment to a pure summative examination. How do you think this is going to impact on the pressures on teachers and the integrity of our public examinations?

Dr Meadows: Would you like me to respond first?

Thelma Walker: Yes, please, Michelle.

Dr Meadows: In our call for evidence in relation to the events of the summer, around one fifth of respondents spontaneously talked about pressures on teachers, so we do recognise those. But of course the vast majority of teachers nonetheless continue to act with integrity, despite those pressures. It is important to remember that.

- Q68 **Thelma Walker:** Are the pressures for the results or are the pressures from senior management?

Dr Meadows: Our respondents talked about pressures from the accountability system, pressures from parents, pressures from senior management; a whole range of pressures that they experience but, as I say, the majority do nonetheless act with integrity. Sorry, I have forgotten your original question.

- Q69 **Thelma Walker:** It is about the shift from the modular, formative to the summative.



Dr Meadows: Yes. We are conducting an extensive evaluation of the impact on teaching and learning of that shift, focusing particularly on the GCSEs, GCSEs in English and Maths. As part of that, we interviewed teachers before those changes when they were teaching the old specifications, and now when they are teaching the new, as you say, linear qualifications. It is fair to say that the teachers we spoke to before the changes did raise concerns. They were concerned about the impact of the change. They were worried about the new materials they would need to get familiar with. They were concerned about particular groups of learners for whom this might be a challenge.

As I said, we went then back to them after they had begun to teach these qualifications and it was surprising how positive they were about their experiences once they had actually started teaching them. That is not to say that different forms of assessment and structures of qualifications are not better for certain groups of students—some students do better under a linear system—but teachers were quite vocal about their enjoyment of teaching these new qualifications, with less repeated assessment, always getting ready for the next exam.

Q70 James Frith: Do you think that qualification through that linear examination alone acknowledges a student's ability or range of abilities that demonstrates that they understand and have taken in the knowledge in the subject? Some students clearly won't respond to exam conditions, but may very well be able to argue based on knowledge and not simply through sitting an exam paper. I welcome your thoughts on that.

Just on the trusting teachers point: it is absolutely imperative that we trust teachers. To your first point, Michelle, about grade inflation, teachers now feel that the system, in attempting to compensate for that, entirely overlooks them when it comes to making judgments on the basis of their knowledge of their students. I wonder if you have any comment on that as well.

Dr Meadows: First, on exam structures and linearity versus modularity, or course work versus exams, it is true to say that some students perform better with course work. Other students perform better under examination. Whenever qualification structures change, there will be a change in the rank ordering of students, that is absolutely right. However, I think there is a tendency to overstate these effects. To give you an example, often people will say that female students will do much better under course work and continual assessment than male students. When you look back over time and when there have been really significant changes in the balance of exam to course work, the proportions of male and female students getting particular grades is remarkably steady. There is a tendency to overstate these effects.

Chair: Because of time can we have very comprehensive but slightly shorter answers, please?



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Dr Meadows: The second question I think was about the potential of capping schools' results given the way in which the setting of grade boundaries is now controlled.

Chair: Yes, briefly if you can.

Dr Meadows: There is nothing within that to stop individual schools' results going up or, indeed, down, and they do from year to year. Exam boards can come to Ofqual with examiner judgment evidence to allow them to adjust grade boundaries.

Q71 **Mr William Wragg:** Just a quick point of information: is it still the case that the higher mark is carried forward in the event of a remark and it comes back lower?

Dr Meadows: No, marks can go up and down.

Q72 **Mr William Wragg:** In terms of exams being marked accurately, a very straightforward question: are they being marked accurately?

Chair: Could we get everybody to answer briefly? Why don't we start with you, Professor Baird?

Professor Baird: There is a lot of research on this. In fact, a few years ago, Ofqual had a massive research programme called the reliability programme to look at this. Of course, you can set exams that can be marked virtually perfectly.

Chair: Could you kindly speak a tiny bit louder?

Professor Baird: Sure. If you have multiple choice tests and you have machine marking, that can be done. As soon as you move away from that, you get less reliability as soon as humans are involved in the process. Whether you want all your exams as multiple choice tests where you rote learn the answers has been the issue for our education system since time immemorial. There are well-known kinds of exams that are more difficult to mark than others. From my reading of what I can see in the literature, they are at least as well marked as other exams internationally. This has been a perennial issue for our examining system.

Mr William Wragg: I totally acknowledge the subjectivity of arts subjects and so forth.

Michael Turner: I agree. I think the quality of assessment that we want within our education system is where the focus should be. I think marking is on the whole extremely accurate. Some statistics: less than 1% of grades were changed across GCSEs and A levels last year. Yes, perhaps you could argue that should be zero, but in such a large system, there will perhaps be some mistakes or subjectivity creeping through.

Q73 **Mr William Wragg:** Maybe this is for Michelle then: what could be done to reduce the number of successful grade challenges? Is it something inherent in the examination or is it the demand that a better mark be forthcoming?



Dr Meadows: The focus needs to be on getting the first marking right. It needs to be right first time. We are now gathering annually data from exam boards about the consistency of their marking in the live period so that we can begin to benchmark what is good enough. As my colleagues have already said, where you have essay responses, inevitably there will be some differences of opinion as to the mark worthiness of a particular piece of work. What is a good enough level of consistency? By benchmarking, we will be able to see where we need to aim to get it better.

Of course, with reviews of marking, it is absolutely essential that we have a review appeal system. What we have been keen to do is make sure that where marks are changed it is because they are errors. In the past, the system has been that a benefit of the doubt has crept in at the review of marking stage such that the reviewing examiners were more likely to find a mark to give benefit of doubt to a student and get them a higher grade. That is not a level playing field. That means that those students that happened to be put in for a review are more likely to get a higher grade. Our rules are now that only errors must be changed—and errors must be changed—but what you must not do is replace one legitimate mark for another.

Q74 **Ian Mearns:** Is it not an inherent, therefore, cause of concern, which I think we did have expressed in the previous panel, that it will be the children of those who can afford to pay for a remark who will benefit from getting a remark?

Dr Meadows: That is why it is absolutely essential that people do not have to pay upfront having a remark and, absolutely, then once the remark or review of marking is done, that it is level at that point, that there is not a benefit of the doubt that creeps in there that then benefits those schools that put in for more reviews.

Q75 **Michelle Donelan:** I do not think it is necessarily the not paying upfront, because if a family cannot afford to pay for it, they are not going to. It is a risk, isn't it? It is a gamble as to whether it is going to be marked up and they will not be charged. It is not necessarily the not paying upfront. If you cannot afford it, you cannot afford it, can you? There is an inbuilt disadvantage between those families that can afford to take that gamble for the remark and those that cannot.

Michael Turner: I am not sure whether it is necessarily the parents who always pay the money. It is the schools themselves and it is the school that needs to put in and ask for that review. One of the reasons the awarding body stipulates that is because it is the school that knows best about how their student has performed. It may be that a parent feels that they should have got a higher grade, but looking at the evidence, looking at the script, it is the school who will be able to say, "No, there is something amiss here. We want to put that in for a review".

Q76 **Michelle Donelan:** It was my understanding that they were all



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channelled through the school, but a proportion were paid for by the school and a proportion were paid for by individual families. Do you know the split? It was my understanding that if a school deems that an entire class, for instance, is out of kilter, they might put in their entire class. Whereas, on an individual case-by-case basis, it is much different.

Michael Turner: We have no information or evidence as to who would pay for that review of marking because it is channelled through the school or college, whether or not they then pass on that cost.

Q77 **Ian Mearns:** Do any of you believe that this is worthy of greater examination to see if there is any impact across the board because of remarking fees?

Dr Meadows: I think you are absolutely right, it is indeed a mixed practice. Absolutely, this is such a thorny issue, isn't it? As you were alluding to earlier, you want a system that is open to everybody, but clearly having a system that did not have any cost associated with it would merely mean that every fee would go up and then everybody would put in for a review of marking, leading to a vast swathe of remarking in a very compressed time period, which then might produce quality issues in and of itself. It is something that we continually debate and keep under review, this balance between wanting to make sure that those people who really have a concern about quality of marking can access the system.

Q78 **Thelma Walker:** Can I ask about the recruitment and appointment of markers and how rigorous that is? What is the process? I am not sure.

Michael Turner: On recruiting, I think I mentioned earlier that 50,000 examiners are used across GCSEs and A levels each year. There will be a recruitment process. On many occasions they would be teachers—current teachers teaching at specification. They may be retired teachers.

Q79 **Thelma Walker:** Can I come in on that? The retired teachers, what are the safeguards that that person who is retired, who I am sure has a wealth of experience, is upskilled and is up to date?

Michael Turner: Once they have met the criteria on paper, they would then have to attend a certain number of training sessions. They would have to prove that they understand the specification. They would also go through standardisation meetings to make sure that as they mark papers they are doing so in line with the marking scheme. Importantly, that monitoring is ongoing. With the increase of online marking, where the examiner can look at it on a screen, they have somebody who can monitor their performance in live time. If they are starting to drift away from the mark scheme in any way, they can be stopped, taken off, either retrained or, if necessary, removed from marking. What would then happen is you would look back over their scripts and, if necessary, those scripts would be remarked by somebody else. There is ongoing, upfront recruitment monitoring.



Thelma Walker: There is a kind of hierarchy, yes.

- Q80 **Ian Mearns:** You have referred to it before, Jo-Anne, but in general I think we need to put the record straight. How reliable is our exam system in contrast to other systems around the world?

Chair: Briefly, if you can.

Professor Baird: There are some systems where they use multiple choice tests for almost every kind of exam, so they can produce really high levels of reliability with that kind of test. I do not know of any system, let us put it that way, that uses the range of assessment techniques that we use that has been demonstrated to be more reliable. In fact, we have been much more rigorous in investigating these things than I have seen in other countries. I think that is worth saying.

Can I come back to your earlier point, which was about parents paying the fees? There is a question there about whether that is good practice within schools for schools to pass on those fees for remarks to parents.

- Q81 **Ian Mearns:** One little thing lurking in the back of my mind is, if our system is more robust, better assessment and better across the board, does that not call into question our ranking in things like PISA tables?

Professor Baird: In terms of our ranking in PISA, we invest an average amount in education compared with other OECD countries and we get an average score. I don't think it is about the quality of our assessment system, which really also evaluates the students, but other countries do things differently. I think, Ian, you had a trip to Finland and you saw that most of the teachers there have Masters levels of education. There are not the same school accountability pressures. They have had quite a consistent system for a long time. They haven't had the same level of changes as we have. That is just one system. If you looked at other countries that have different characteristics, a lot of the countries in the east—Hong Kong, Singapore and so on—do very well in the tests but for different reasons.

- Q82 **Chair:** In the letter that Ofqual sent to the Committee you say, "Each year we publish official statistics on malpractice in GCSEs, AS and A levels". Do you do that for Pre-U as well?

Dr Meadows: The Pre-U is not included in that statistical release.

- Q83 **Chair:** Why is that? Surely they should be included in the same way.

Dr Meadows: To be quite honest, I think it is probably a quirk of history that we have routinely gathered that evidence for GCSEs and A levels, which are national qualifications, whereas other qualifications such as the Pre-U come along, stay a little while and then go—

- Q84 **Chair:** Given what has happened and given the figures set out by the Cambridge examination board earlier, should they not be included in the same way? I am still not clear why they would not be included.



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Dr Meadows: GCSEs and A levels are national qualifications that have, from our perspective, particular rules built around them. I think you raise a really good point that we can take away and reflect on how we report on malpractice, not just for GCSEs and A levels but for the whole raft of other qualifications, Pre-U being just one of them.

Q85 **Chair:** Particularly where there has been seen to have been an issue, surely that should—

Dr Meadows: Exactly.

Q86 **Chair:** Could you let the Committee know? I just find it strange, given that there is a preponderance of this qualification used by the independent sector and given the numbers of alleged malpractices that there have been, that this is not considered in the same way.

Can I turn to transparency again? The headmaster of Eton raised a very important question. He said he had gone the opposite way because he wanted to create a clear barrier between the students and the teachers who set exams. I accept that there is an interesting argument on that side, but there is also an argument on the other side that sunlight is the best disinfectant and that teachers who are setting exams who teach in the same school should be identified and that people should know what is going on because it makes it harder for malpractice to occur. We had a paper sent to us by the ACA who, in essence, said that hacking would occur if there were teachers who were identified and who were transparent. I find that bizarre, to be honest. I am not saying that there are not hackers around and people are ever more sophisticated, but if people wanted to hack existing teachers they could do it now. I do not see why it would make it worse. I found that a very strange reason. I can much more accept the headteacher of Eton's argument than I can that it will lead to more hacking because you could say that about anything: no transparency on anything in case things are hacked. I am sure that secure systems could be identified or introduced to ensure that hacking did not occur. Can I have your comments, please?

Professor Baird: It is a very high status role to be one of the senior examiners and set the exams, so it is not exactly a secret who these people are. It would be well known within the examining community, and you have just heard that there are thousands of teachers involved. I am not exactly sure what additional transparency would achieve. I am not sure that it helps the parents to know, other than they might be more interested in having their children taught by those very senior professionals whose expertise has been recognised in that way.

Q87 **Chair:** It may be known within the academic equivalent of the Westminster village, but if it was known much more widely do you not think that the teachers would be much more careful? I accept it is a minority and it is very important, as you say, not to tar teachers in terms of malpractice because I am sure that 99% of them are completely open, honest and transparent. Surely it would discourage malpractice if there



was utter transparency all the way through the system. To argue that you should not do it because of hacking seems to me a bit ridiculous.

Michael Turner: I think hacking itself is perhaps one of the risks and one that, as you quite rightly say, could be mitigated. Doing so would also increase the pressure on the individual, whether it be from students or parents, if it was made that public. The real focus is about it being transparent within the school and college, for the head of centre to be aware not just that this individual has this privileged information but what it means to have that privileged information. What support, what guidance, what frameworks can the head of centre or the headteacher put in place for that individual to alleviate some of that pressure? One of the things that the Joint Council for Qualifications is going to be doing is writing to headteachers to give them best case studies of what they can do to support those teachers with that privileged information.

Q88 **Chair:** Do you find it strange that the Cambridge board is one of the few, if not the only one—we will check that—that is a member of the JCQ? Why would that be?

Michael Turner: On the general qualification side you are right, I think it is one of the few that is not. Obviously, there are a large number of vocational qualifications that are not. CIE does have a very large international focus. Although my members have an international focus as well, the work that the Joint Council for Qualifications does is very much focused on the UK. The rules and regulations and guidance that we produce are generally for GCSEs and A levels. That is not to say, of course, that others cannot look to join JCQ or, indeed, follow the regulations that we produce.

Q89 **Chair:** Although we have touched on this already, what further safeguards do you think should be introduced—if I could ask all the panel briefly—to stop the events of the summer happening again or to expose these events? It may be that we were just lucky in terms of whistleblowers and honest students.

Dr Meadows: We are just coming to the end of the evidence-gathering phase on our review of our rules around teacher involvement in exam writing. Virtually everybody who has provided evidence has been very clear about the massive advantages of involving teachers, so we would like that to continue.

One possibility, of course, is that teachers continue but they are not allowed to teach the specification for which they are writing. We have not ruled that out, but there are some thorny issues associated with that that would need working through. Much more likely, we think we might consult on the proposition that teachers can continue to be involved and teach the specification they are writing papers for, but they will not know with certainty when the questions or papers they have been working on will come up. There is then going to be the question: what is unpredictable enough? If you have a 50/50 chance of knowing when an



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item or a paper is going to come up, is that unpredictable enough? That will drive cost into the system. There will be a cost associated with that, so we will want to know what the impact on the whole system is.

Q90 **Chair:** The idea of teachers setting multiple exams and then having that randomness we spoke about in the previous session, what is your view about that?

Dr Meadows: I think it is all about knowing what the impact would be in terms of cost on the end fee for schools. It would be good practice for exam boards to be in that position anyway because if there is a security breach, which does happen inadvertently from time to time, they have an exam paper there ready to go. It is certainly a possibility, but we think there are also some more straightforward quick wins that we could have such as what Michael has described, but also improved transparency about the potential sanctions and more campaigns around whistleblowing.

Michael Turner: I agree absolutely with that.

Q91 **Chair:** Should there be a whistleblower's hotline in the sense of Crimestoppers but for exam qualifications?

Dr Meadows: There is exactly that and we do—

Q92 **Chair:** How many calls do you get a year?

Dr Meadows: I would have to go and check. I am sorry, that is the one figure that I do not have. I do not think it is an enormous number and often—

Ian Mearns: It is not often engaged.

Q93 **Chair:** How well known is it among students, the public, teachers?

Dr Meadows: We have been working really hard to get it well known. We had a campaign last year, "Seen it? Suspect it? Report it", which was exactly to do that, to get pupils engaged.

Q94 **Chair:** It works in the same way as Crimestoppers, anonymous and so on?

Dr Meadows: Yes.

Michael Turner: As well as whistleblowing, the JCQ carries out inspections of schools and colleges. This year, for 2017 summer, there were 6,500 inspections of schools and colleges taking place just in England, specifically looking for things like malpractice while the exams are happening, malpractice in access arrangements. So there are other things that are in place to look at that.

Q95 **Thelma Walker:** Is that at no notice?

Michael Turner: Yes, it is. That is right. I think Michelle is absolutely right about sanctions and making people aware, also making schools and



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colleges and heads of centre aware that they have a duty to consider reporting serious cases of malpractice to the National College for Teaching and Leadership. We do trust the teachers. They do have this privileged information. We can put in the safeguards, we can help them, we can support them, but ultimately it is their career that is on the line. It is not just about not working in exams, it is their career and their future. I think that is another reason why teachers are in a good position to be question setters rather than perhaps using other people who do not fear such a sanction in a similar way.

Q96 **Chair:** This final question is to the JCQ. Do you think it should be a requirement that all exam boards be a member of your organisation, given the work you do in regulation, looking at exams, safeguarding and so on?

Michael Turner: I think there could be a benefit in that happening. I would not like to get to the stage where organisations are forced to be members. Of course, we work with Oxford and Cambridge OCR, which is part of the Cambridge assessment umbrella. They are one of our members. Yes, we are always open to conversations about sharing our work and people becoming members.

Chair: Thank you. It has been an incredibly informative and valuable session. I really appreciate your time and the work that you are doing to ensure exam integrity.