

# Centre for Education Research and Practice (CERP)

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Find out more at:  
**[cerp.org.uk](http://cerp.org.uk)**

# About AQA's Centre for Education Research and Practice (CERP)

The Centre for Education Research and Practice (CERP) plays a crucial role in AQA. We provide robust evidence that informs AQA's operational activities and improves the quality of examinations. Our research expertise also contributes to the wider debate on assessment and education.

AQA and its predecessor organisations have a long history of assessment research that stretches back more than 50 years. Our work is reviewed by a prestigious committee of internationally recognised researchers, chaired by Professor Jo-Anne Baird.

CERP's research interests are wide ranging. Areas such as setting and maintaining standards and quality of marking are critical to the continual improvement of AQA's core work. We also investigate issues in assessment validity, accessibility of assessments, and the impact of assessment on learners and schools. In addition, we carry out work that aims to advance theoretical and philosophical thinking about assessment.

Our main areas of research and current partnerships are summarised overleaf.

**Dr Lena Gray**  
**Director of Research**



AQA's charitable purpose is to advance education. CERP's work supports this by:

- contributing to the continuous improvement of assessment
- ensuring that standards are maintained
- sharing research within the assessment community, and beyond.

## Assessment design

AQA's qualifications provide high-quality assessment of learners' skills, knowledge and understanding. CERP's research programme aims to provide an evidence base for continuous improvement of the quality of these assessments. Research in this area spans the whole assessment process, including question paper and mark scheme development.

## Marking

In the examination system in the UK, we assess students' abilities in a variety of ways, such as via written essays and visual portfolios. This ensures the assessment is appropriate, but means that marking is more complex. CERP's work explores a number of issues – such as factors affecting the reliability of marking – to support AQA's marker recruitment and training, mark schemes, and quality assurance of marking processes.

## Standards

Setting and maintaining standards is of vital importance to AQA. CERP's expert team ensures that the technical and statistical support provided to the grade-awarding process is of the highest quality. CERP is a leader in its field both in researching and improving current practices, and in investigating and testing innovative methods and approaches. In both areas, our overarching aim is to ensure that AQA's standards are fair, defensible and command public confidence.

## Impact

CERP's research investigates the impact of policy changes – such as qualification reform – on assessment. Research projects also consider how qualifications are used by different groups of people, for example, employers and universities.

**For more information about our current research, visit [cerp.org.uk](http://cerp.org.uk)**

## Partnerships

We regularly collaborate with academic colleagues in other organisations, and currently have joint projects with the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Surrey, and the UCL Institute of Education in London.

We work in partnership with our fellow awarding organisations and are active members of the Association for Educational Assessment – Europe (AEA–Europe) and the International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA).

We also work closely with Ofqual and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

## In numbers

- 2330\*      The number of grade boundary decisions that CERP is involved in annually
- 36         The number of staff within CERP
- 1965/75    The years that the Joint Matriculation Board and Associated Examining Board (AQA’s predecessor bodies) established their first research committees, respectively
- 173        The number of research papers available to download from our website, [cerp.org.uk](http://cerp.org.uk)

\*figure taken from 2016 data

