

A-level reform: The view from the inside

The Centre for Education Research and Policy (CERP), has been working within the examination system under various guises since 1975 to ensure that public examinations are reliable and valid. This insider knowledge offers CERP a unique understanding of what is working well and what is working less well in the context of A-levels.

The following series of short papers draws on the experience of the past 35 years to present some answers to pressing questions on A-levels. These papers represent a small part of the work of the Centre for Education Research and Policy, and do not represent AQA's view on the future of A-levels or an exhaustive list of the features they should possess. Rather, they are an attempt to inject some high quality evidence into the discussions of A-level reform.

Grades

The A* grade allows the most selective universities to continue to distinguish between the most capable students fairly on the basis of A-level grades. The paper [The A* at A level](#) considers how the A* was successfully introduced and adopted, the paper [How many grades should a qualification have?](#) considers whether there are enough A-level grades while the paper [Is ranking A-level students useful?](#) discusses the use of additional ranking information at A-level.

Progression

The AS-level supports progression from GCSE to A-level and has broadened the curriculum for some students. The paper [Has the AS-level achieved its intentions?](#) explains the original purpose of the AS and evaluates how well it has fared, while the paper [Are modular structures responsible for learning to forget?](#) discusses the impact of the modular structure of A-levels on student's approach to learning.

Validity

While resitting is not prolific, and has little or no impact on the grades of the most able candidates, there are examples of its abuse and there is potential imbalance in the current rules. The paper [What is the impact of resitting at A-level?](#) analyses who benefits most from resitting, while the paper [Should the best mark count?](#) explains how inequities can arise from resitting, and how the resitting rules could be improved.

Standard Setting

While there are lessons to be learned abroad in standard setting, there are also lessons from the past that must not be forgotten. These lessons are set out in [Why have A-level outcomes risen?](#)

Bibliographies are included to allow readers to explore further the evidence presented and to make up their own minds. We look forward to an engaging, and well-informed, debate.

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