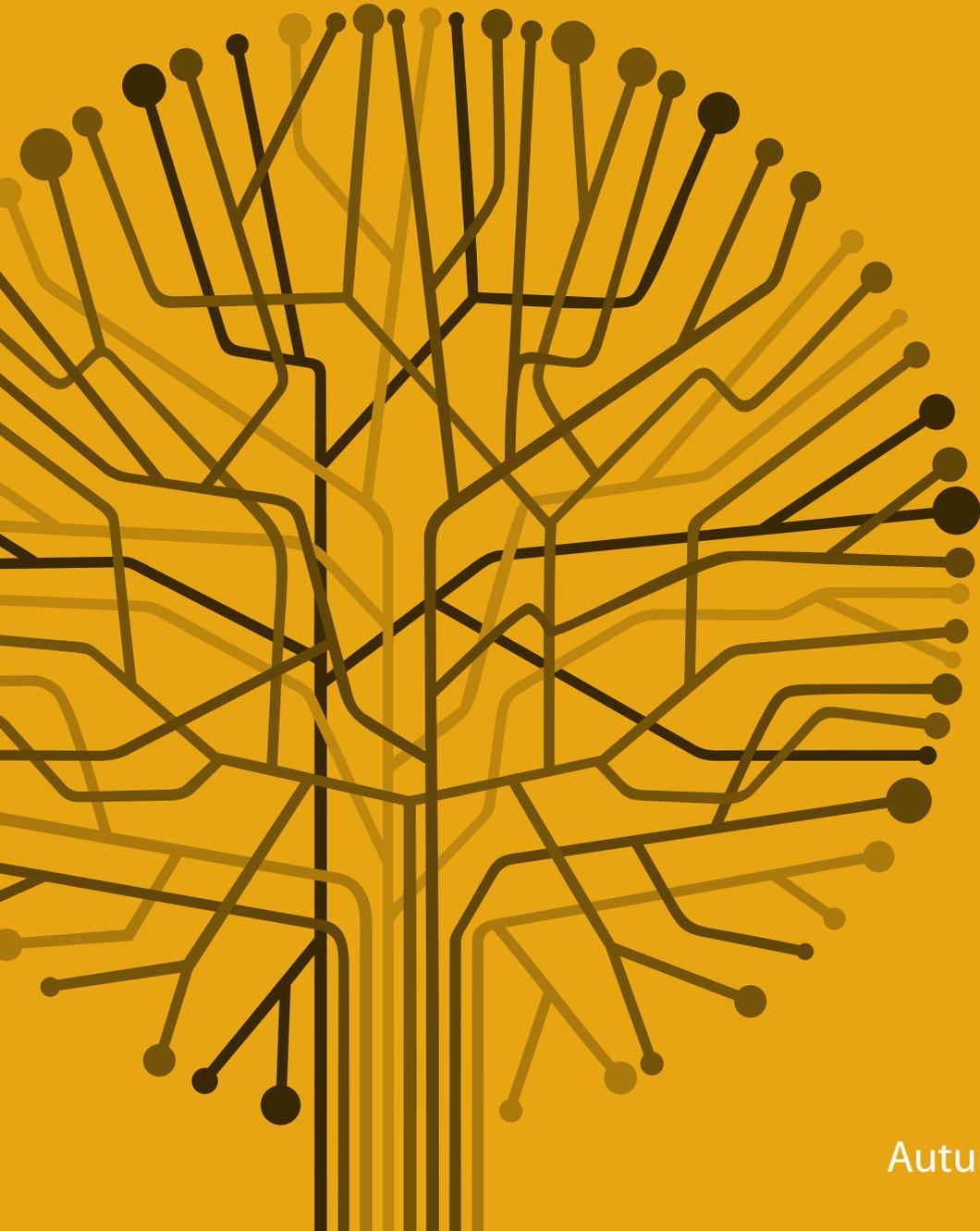


# The future for examining



Autumn 2015



OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations) is a leading UK awarding body, committed to offering qualifications that engage learners of all ages, at school, college, in work or through part-time learning programmes to achieve their full potential.

- OCR is a not for profit organisation so success, for us, is measured through the impact and reach of our activities and the scale of our contribution to helping learners realise their aspirations.
- Our purpose is to work in partnership with others to provide qualifications that support education in ways which enable all learners to reach their full potential and to recognise and celebrate their achievements.

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Loic Menzies is the Director of LKMco. Loic began working with young people as a teenager when he was a youth worker for Cambridge City Council and a Young Advocate for the charity Changemakers. He then moved into schools, eventually joining the senior leadership team of St. George's R.C School in North West London and becoming Head of History and Social Sciences. During his time there, St. George's overcame its turbulent history and became the country's 5th most improved school. On leaving teaching Loic set up LKMco to draw together the different areas of the education and youth sector by linking practical work on the ground to high quality research and policy advocacy. He has also been a tutor in initial teacher education for Canterbury Christ Church University's faculty of education for five years. He is a trustee of the charities UnLtd and SexYOUality.



This report was written by the education and youth development 'think and action tank' LKMco. We believe society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We work towards this vision by helping education and youth organisations develop, evaluate and improve their work with young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience.

[www.lkmco.org.uk](http://www.lkmco.org.uk) / [@LKMco](https://twitter.com/LKMco) / [info@lkmco.org](mailto:info@lkmco.org)

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## Foreword

The exam system in the UK does a remarkable job. More than 15 million scripts are marked each year, for the most part consistently and accurately. This is no mean feat. However, the system is under more pressure and scrutiny than ever before.

Exam reforms mean virtually all scripts must now be marked in the summer, creating an intense workload in a single period. A surge in pupil numbers over the next few years will intensify the pressure further on a system which is already stretched.

At the same time, there is an enormous focus on the accuracy of marking. It has always been vital, but it is particularly so in a high-stakes culture where results for both students and schools and colleges are of such critical importance.

The vast majority of scripts are accurately marked, but where there are problems they can cause huge damage. The system must not only expand to deal with increased demand but ensure marking standards are as good as they possibly can be.

The answer to these issues is to recruit and retain more examiners and widen the pool of experience and expertise. However, there are barriers which discourage people and this report clearly identifies them.

The current system of recruiting examiners has been likened to a cottage industry. It relies upon teachers giving up precious free time to mark scripts for poor pay on top of a heavy workload in their day job. This is not ideal for dealing with demand on an industrial scale.

This report puts forward innovative and practical ways in which these issues can be overcome. One challenge will be to ensure that where we innovate we also improve quality. Examiners, teachers and candidates should demand the highest standards.

Pay progression for examiners is clearly important, but we are also pleased to see the focus put on examining as a key part of professional development.

The report finds that teachers primarily examine because they believe that their teaching practice will improve and that their students will benefit. This chimes with our experience and shows the importance of giving professional recognition to examining as a subject under the auspices of the new College of Teaching.

The profession must go further than this, however, taking more responsibility in general for improving the pipeline of examiners. This is an important part of creating a self-improving system which raises education standards further.

At the same time the exam-making process must be reprofessionalised. There is too much emphasis on marking individual questions rather than whole scripts, and this needs to be addressed.

We are very pleased to endorse this report. It points the way ahead to ensuring that everybody can have confidence in the capacity of the system to produce the timely and accurate assessments which are essential to the futures of millions of young people.

**Brian Lightman**

*General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders*

## Introduction

Examiners are the unsung heroes of the education system; their role as professionals who ensure that students secure fair and reliable examination results is without question. The impact of reforms to examinations and the ever-increasing demands on teacher workload means that the sustainable supply of examiners in future years cannot be taken for granted. We are far from reaching a crisis point in the supply of examiners, but now is the time for a strategic review of how to secure a sustainable approach to recruiting and retaining a body of professional examiners for the future.

As an Exam Board OCR sees itself as an integral part of the whole education system. In researching what motivates examiners we believe the response to the issues must also be addressed by the whole system.

OCR commissioned this report to look at why examining for an exam board appears to have become disenfranchised from the teaching profession and what the solutions might be. We have appointed an independent body to carry out the work and we have asked teachers across a wide spectrum of settings to ensure we have as wide a range of responses as possible.

OCR is a member of a cross-organisational working group to consider how to build examiner capacity and culture in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In a letter, earlier this year, addressed to the Rt. Hon Nicky Morgan MP, Secretary of State for Education, the group committed to reviewing the incentives, disincentives and barriers to recruitment and retention of examiners and to produce a compelling proposition for schools and colleges to support and encourage teachers to join and remain in the examining profession. We believe this report is a first step in this important work.

This report is designed to:

- understand why the relationship between undertaking an assessment role within an exam board has become disenfranchised from teaching
- understand what knowledge and perceptions exist about who is currently an examiner
- explore barriers/reservations to undertaking the examiner role
- explore what it would take to raise the status of being an examiner amongst the wider education community
- identify potential new audiences for examiners.

A debate was held at the RSA House designed to explore some of the interim findings of the research and to stimulate further debate. The panel of speakers\* each responded to the question: 'What would it take for the examiner role to be a recognised professional development route within teaching?' The speakers did not agree on everything but there was consensus on the following:

- for some teachers, especially new teachers, the role of examining contributes to their professional development; in particular it helps them prepare their students for exams
- within the education community, there is a lack of understanding of how the examination system works as a whole and that includes individuals who examine
- the whole area of assessment has not been appropriately emphasised within the teaching profession; it needs to start at the initial teacher training stage and continue throughout a teacher's career
- there is a need for an established professional route that is clear, certified, uniform across all exam boards and one that schools value.

We acknowledge that more effort is required, not just in training individuals how to mark exams but also to provide a broader understanding of assessment. However we cannot do this alone. All of us in the education system have a responsibility: exam boards, school and college leaders, teachers, the College of Teaching, Ofqual and the government have a responsibility for getting this right so that the whole education system benefits and so that employers, higher education, parents and young people can continue to have confidence in the robustness of a system that depends on the professionalism and commitment of those dedicated to delivering a first class education.

\*Panel of speakers: Mark Dawe, *CEO, OCR*, Sion Humphreys, *Policy Advisor, National Association of Head Teachers*, Sarah Jones, *Associate, LKMco*, Sue Kirkham, *Chair, Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors*, Michael O'Connor, *Member, OCR Advisory Group of Examiners and Assessors*, Barry Sindall, *CE, Grammar Schools Heads Association*.

## Executive Summary

This report comes at a time, when recent changes to exams mean more papers need to be marked at the end of summer exams, requiring more examiners than in the past. It identifies what appeals to teachers about examining and what stands in the way of them taking on the role. It then explores the benefits examiners gain from the role and suggests how these could be enhanced and spread to more teachers. It draws on a large scale survey of teachers from all around the UK as well as two large surveys of examiners and a series of individual interviews. The findings reveal that whilst teachers' workload in particular, presents huge challenges for recruitment, large numbers of teachers have not examined before and would consider doing so in the future, were the conditions right.

We hope that the findings help exam boards, educationalists and policymakers recruit and retain more skilled examiners in order to build a sustainable and reliable examinations system with the capacity to cope with future demand. Only by doing this can we ensure we do justice to the hard work of young people and their teachers.

### Part 1: Why teachers examine

Teachers primarily examine because they believe that their teaching practice will improve and that their students will benefit. Money is an important motivator but pay is not currently considered commensurate with the commitment required. Nonetheless, examiners decide to examine because they want to do it, rather than because they think it is a duty. The biggest barrier to examining is the fact that teachers face a workload which they consider unmanageable and they do not want to spend their very limited spare time on additional marking.

### Part 2: Growing the pool

Based on this research, there appear to be three main ways exam boards could grow the pool of examiners:

- Retain more examiners
- Make the role more appealing to attract more examiners
- Widen the pool of potential examiners.

A combination of these three approaches is likely to secure the largest pool of examiners.

### 2.1 Boost retention

Every year, examiners leave the role. To some extent this is to be expected, but exam boards would have more examiners at their disposal if they could reduce year-on-year wastage. More data needs to be gathered on retention but examiners state that improved pay structures and enhanced opportunities for learning and career progression would help retain them.

### 2.2 Make the role more rewarding

By learning from research on best practice, examining and training for the role could be developed so that it makes a greater contribution to professional development. Both the new College of Teaching and exam boards could provide and promote career progression routes that build on teachers' experiences of examining.

### 2.3 Widen the pool

Almost half of teaching assistants do not currently examine but would consider doing so in the future and just over a fifth of supply teachers would also consider the examiner role. These two groups are less likely than other teachers to say that:

- Their workload is too high for them to mark
- They do not want to spend their spare time marking
- Examining is a poorly paid role.

Given that these are some of the key barriers to examining for teachers; it may be worth considering whether exam boards could specifically target these two groups in order to build the pool of examiners.

### 2.4 Maintain the profession's confidence in the examination system

In pursuing the three approaches outlined above, exam boards will need to ensure they maintain confidence in the examination system. Teachers consider the following four factors to be the most important for the examiner role:

1. subject knowledge
2. training
3. teaching experience
4. examining experience.

Of these four attributes, subject knowledge and training are thought to matter most. Any attempt to grow the pool of examiners should take this into account.

#### Recommendations for raising the status of examining:

##### 1. Make the role more attractive by:

- a) Designing the role and training for it in the light of research into effective professional development and assessment
- b) Ensuring that the role and training is differentiated to experience level so that:
  - i) relatively new teachers can have a taster of examining, perhaps with small batches of scripts and introductory training.
  - ii) more experienced teachers and examiners can participate in training that explores assessment and examining in more detail and at a more sophisticated level.
- c) Working with the new College of Teaching to include examining in a subject as part of emerging 'subject expert' pathways.
- d) Strengthening, systematising and promoting progression routes within examining so that experienced examiners can aspire to, and move into, more senior roles over time.

##### 2. Focus on retaining a greater proportion of examiners each year by:

- a) Planning for pay progression so that examiners' pay remains attractive and competitive as teachers' careers progress in school
- b) Ensuring examining is 'examiner friendly' by engaging in dialogue regarding concerns about software and equipment and maintaining opportunities for face to face contact.

##### 3. Widen the pool of potential examiners by:

- a) Targeting supply teachers through agencies and emphasising the training offer
- b) Assessing the feasibility of drawing graduate level teaching assistants into the role of examiner.

## Part 1

### Why teachers examine?

Teachers primarily examine because they believe that their teaching practice will improve and that their pupils will benefit. Money is an important motivator but the pay is not currently considered commensurate with the commitment required. Nonetheless, teachers decide to examine because they want to do it, rather than because they think it is a duty. The biggest barrier to examining is the fact that teachers face a workload which they consider unmanageable and they do not want to spend their very limited spare time on additional marking.

#### 1.1 Teachers examine because they believe it improves their practice

As figure 1 shows, teachers believe that examining will improve their assessment practice and that their students will benefit. However during interviews, head teachers argued that benefits did not apply to staff at all points in their careers equally, suggesting that teachers at an early stage of their career stood to benefit most from examining.

#### Reason to work as an assessor - comparing polls

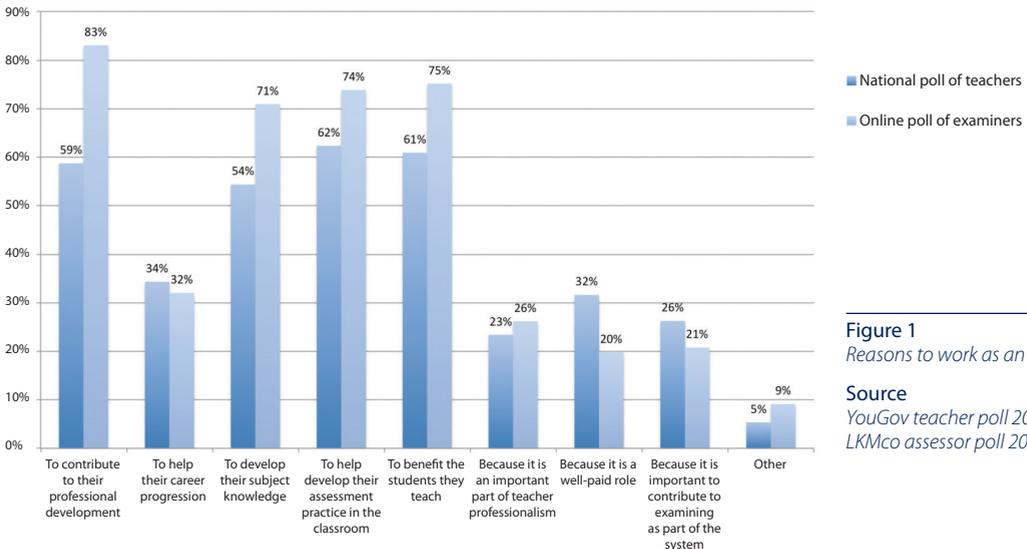


Figure 1  
Reasons to work as an assessor

Source  
YouGov teacher poll 2015 and  
LKMco assessor poll 2015

#### 1.2 Money motivates but pay is considered to be low

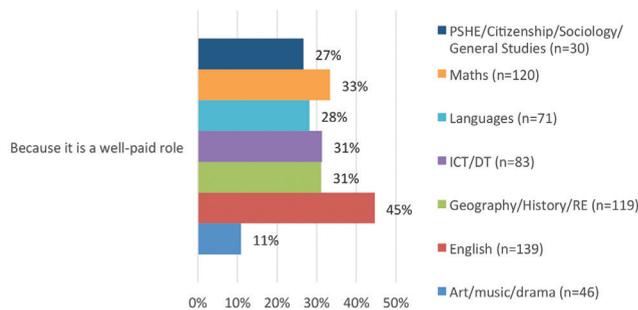
As figure 1 shows, only a third of teachers see the role being well paid as a reason to examine. Being 'poorly paid' is considered a reason not to examine by a quarter of teachers (see figure 4 p10) and almost 90% of examiners felt that higher pay would encourage them to examine again (see section 2.1 p11). It appears that, although financial remuneration acts as a motivator, teachers and examiners do not tend to think the role is well paid – an opinion highlighted in recent press coverage<sup>1,2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/aug/13/a-levels-gcses-examiner-exam-results-wrong>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/11161788/Examiners-paid-little-more-than-bar-staff-to-mark-GCSEs.html>

Views on money vary between teachers of different subjects; English teachers are most likely to examine because of the pay and arts teachers least likely to do so (figure 2). Meanwhile, as figure 3 shows, younger teachers are most likely to see pay as an important reason for examining with 39% of 25-34 year old teachers citing money as a reason for examining compared to 25% of teachers aged 55 or more. As one focus group participant explained:

*“As I progress up the pay-scale marking will become less comparable [to my teacher salary] and therefore less worthwhile.”*

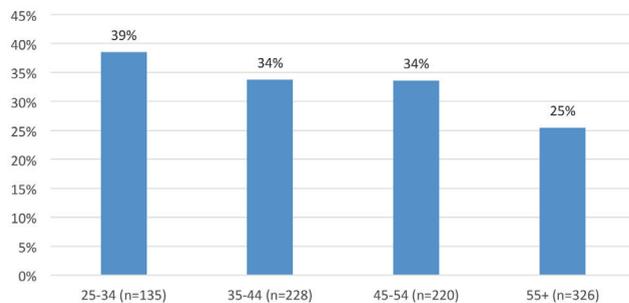


**Figure 2**  
*Percentage of teachers who think the role being well paid is a reason for examining (by subject taught)*

Source  
YouGov poll 2015

We return to this in section 2.1 and highlight the potential for improved pay progression

### Reason why a teacher might examine: “because it is a well paid role”



**Figure 3**  
*Percentage of teachers who think the role being well paid is a reason why teachers would examine (by age)*

### 1.3 Examining is considered beneficial but it is not to be expected

As figure 1 (p8) shows “because it is an important part of teacher professionalism” was one of the least frequently cited reasons for examining in both polls (23% of teachers in the national poll, and 26% of examiners in the assessor poll). Indeed, during survey pre-testing, teachers commented that the term “duty” (used in the question’s original phrasing) caused them annoyance or upset. Similarly, head teachers argued that since they paid for exams they did not see examining as a collective good to be provided by the community. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the concept of teacher ‘professionalism’ itself is highly contested (Freidson, 1994<sup>3</sup>; Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996<sup>4</sup>; Fox, 1992<sup>5</sup>). Indeed, Runte, 1998<sup>6</sup> even argues that external examinations are themselves a threat to teacher professionalism.

Nonetheless, Hoyle and John (1995<sup>7</sup>) identify three central themes to professionalism and these should be taken into account when developing the role of examiners:

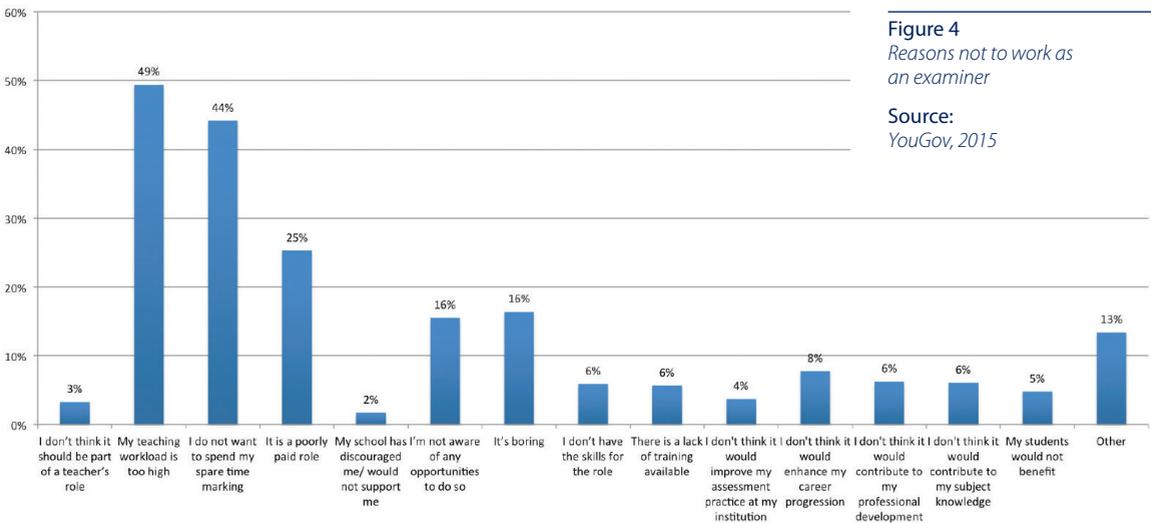
- knowledge
- autonomy
- responsibility.

### 1.4 Time is tight

The Department for Education's recent workload survey<sup>8</sup> highlighted serious concerns about workload amongst teachers and these concerns play a fundamental role in preventing more teachers from examining. As figure 4 reveals, 49% of teachers saw their heavy workload as a reason not to examine. **Cherry Ridgeway** (*Curriculum and Assessment Specialist, Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)*) also highlights time as being the key barrier to examining in a recent survey of ASCL members.

It is also clear that spare time is a precious and limited commodity for teachers with 44% saying that they did not want to spend their spare time marking.

#### Reasons not to work as an examiner



**Figure 4**  
*Reasons not to work as an examiner*

Source:  
*YouGov, 2015*

<sup>3</sup> Freidson (1994) *Professionalism Reborn: Theory, Prophecy and Policy* (Cambridge, Polity Press, in association with Blackwell Publishers)  
<sup>4</sup> Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) *Teachers' professional lives: aspirations and actualities*. In I. GOODSON and A. HARGREAVES (Eds) *Teachers' Professional Lives* (London, Falmer)  
<sup>5</sup> Fox. (1992) What do we mean when we say professionalism? A language usage analysis for public administration, *The American Review of Public Administration*, 22 (1), 1–17

## Part 2

# Growing the pool of examiners

Our findings suggest that three main approaches would help to grow the pool of examiners:

- Retain more examiners
- Make the role more appealing to attract more examiners
- Pursue new groups of potential examiners.

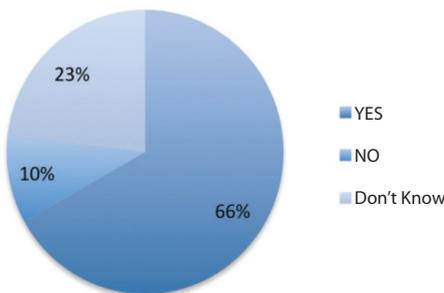
A combination of these three approaches is likely to secure the largest pool of examiners. In doing this, exam boards will need to maintain quality and confidence in the examination system.

### 2.1 Boost retention

Every year, examiners leave the role. To some extent this is to be expected, but exam boards would have more examiners at their disposal if they could reduce year-on-year wastage. More data needs to be gathered on retention but more developed pay structures and enhanced opportunities for learning and career progression may help to retain examiners.

As figure 6 (p12) shows, a quarter of examiners who marked for OCR in 2014 did not do so again in 2015. This implies wastage of approximately two and a half thousand examiners<sup>9</sup>. This appears to be indicative across the system as figure 5 shows a third of 2014-15 examiners are uncertain about whether or not they will examine again. Whilst some turnover is not un-desirable, for example, where examiners were performing badly, or where they are in subjects where they are no longer needed, figure 8 (p13) shows that many more examiners could potentially be persuaded to examine again. Doing so would reduce the need to recruit as many new examiners and potentially have a positive impact on training costs and quality.

#### Will you examine again next year?



**Figure 5**  
*Examiners' future intentions*

**Source:**  
*LKMco retention survey*

<sup>6</sup> Runte (1998) Canadian Journal of Education, 1998, volume 23, issue 2, pages 166-181

<sup>7</sup> Hoyle, E., & John, P.D. (1995). Professional knowledge and professional practice. London: Cassell

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workload-challenge-analysis-of-teacher-responses>

<sup>9</sup> OCR data 2015

	% new in 15	% non-returners
Arts, Media & Publishing	21%	19%
Business, Economics and Law	26%	28%
Design and Technology	16%	20%
English	31%	36%
Health, Public Services & Care	22%	26%
Humanities	26%	28%
ICT	47%	29%
Languages	20%	22%
Leisure, Travel & Tourism	21%	17%
Mathematics	17%	16%
Physical Education	19%	23%
Science	22%	18%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>24%</b>

**Figure 6**  
2014-15 examiners' retention  
by subject

**Source**  
LKMco Retention poll 2015

The main reasons why examiners do not wish to return are shown in figure 7.

Key reasons are:

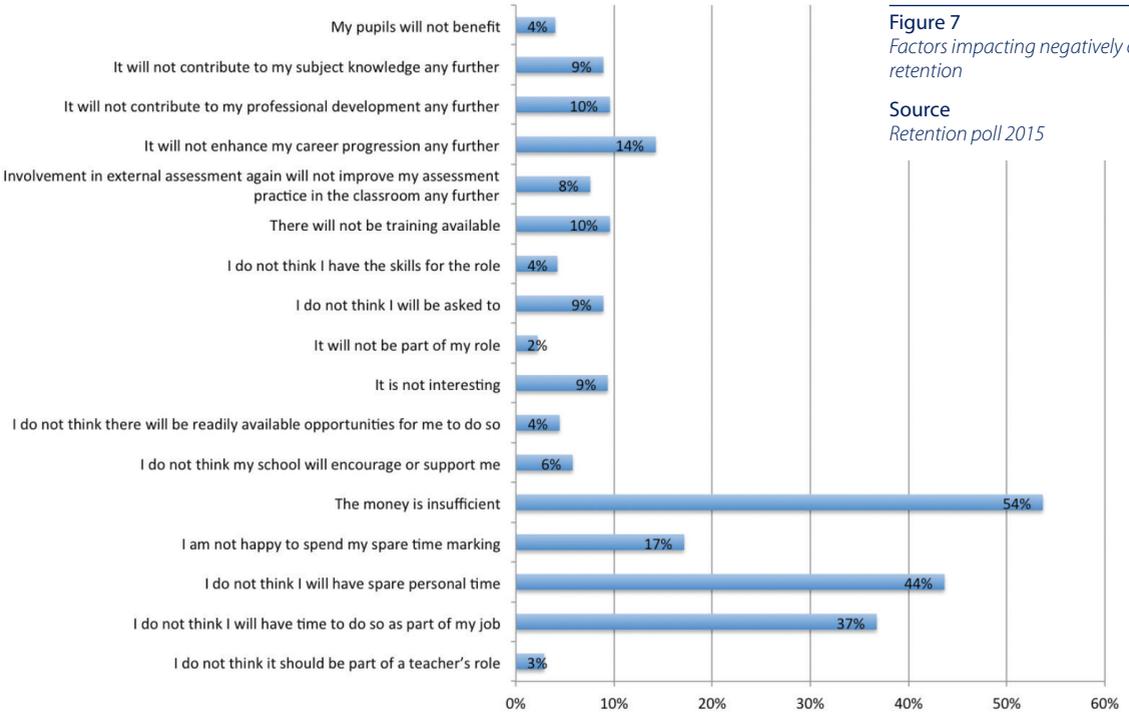
- Insufficient pay
- Insufficient time

These factors are hard for exam boards to influence. However, the following three factors also played an important role and would be easier for exam boards to respond to:

- Planning for pay progression
- Making examining 'examiner friendly'
- Making examining more rewarding through training and professional development

As figure 8 (p13) shows, these were also factors that would encourage examiners currently hesitating about remaining in the role to stay. We therefore explore these recruitment and retention 'levers' in turn.

### Why do you not intend to mark again next year?

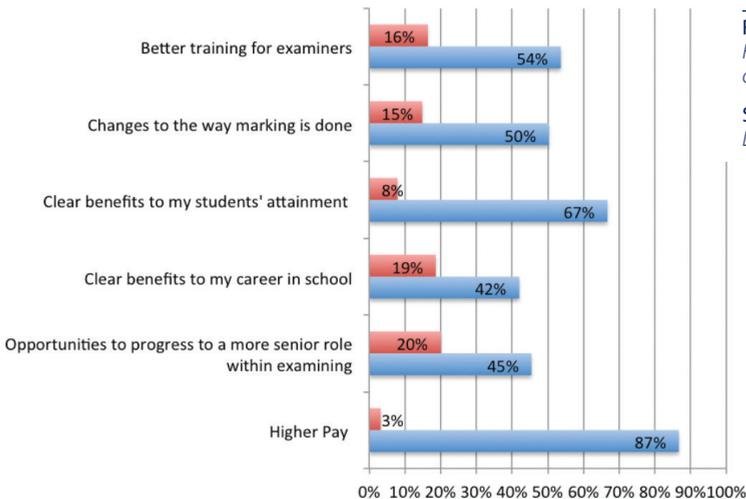


**Figure 7**  
Factors impacting negatively on retention

Source  
Retention poll 2015

### Would these factors encourage you to mark again?

*all respondents who said "no" or "not sure" when asked if they would examine again. Graph excludes "neither" and "I don't think is possible".*



**Figure 8**  
Factors impacting positively on retention

Source  
LKMco retention poll 2015

## Plan for pay progression

As figures 7 (p13) and 8 (p13) show, more than half of examiners who decide not to examine in the future say that this is because of the pay and almost 90% of examiners would be encouraged to mark again by higher pay. In section 1.1 (p8) we noted that as teachers progress through the profession their pay increases and the marginal benefit of examining falls. As **Cherry Ridgeway** (*Curriculum and Assessment Specialist, Association of School and College Leaders*) notes, this is exacerbated by the fact that more experienced teachers face a higher rate of tax.

In terms of recruitment, on the one hand, targeting new teachers may be particularly worthwhile since they stand to benefit most, on the other, it suggests that if high turnover is to be avoided, pay progression needs to be built into the role as **Barry Sindall** (*CEO, The Grammar School Heads' Association*) explains:

"... building into the pay some system of recognition of experience ... may not add to cost, because currently, if you are constantly in a situation where you've got a high percentage of new people coming forward, it's slower, it needs more time, it needs more investment to cover them, if you pass some of that into retention, and it's the recognition then of experience that's important, I think you can get a pay-off."

Whilst at present, examiners can access higher pay by taking on different assessment roles (for example Senior Examiner, Team Leader), this does not address the issues faced by teachers who have developed their skill in marking and just want to continue marking.

### **Make examining 'examiner friendly'**

54% of survey respondents' open comments stated that they would like to have face-to-face training rather than online training and 42% mentioned frustration with online marking. Whilst the shift to online marking has clearly brought many benefits<sup>10</sup>, for many examiners, the transition has been difficult and they raised three main concerns:

#### **Lack of human contact:**

"Why do many examiners drop out these days? I think it is because the job has become more and more isolated with the only interaction, as this is, being with a computer."

Many examiners find purely online training and marking isolating. They explained that it made it difficult to feel a sense of loyalty to a team and argued that part of what made examining rewarding was the human contact and the social side of face-to-face meetings. Without these, the role had lost its allure.

"I look back fondly on face to face meetings, they were brilliant social gatherings, often hugely entertaining, and did help cement the mark scheme in examiners' minds" - "Isolated, atomized examiners have little sense of belonging to an organization or motivation to keep on working for it"

<sup>10</sup> Speilman, A. 2015, ResearchED Conference, Exam marking and re-marking

“I am afraid I am one of those who dropped out after 28 years of marking with (exam board) and then (exam board). Two years of online marking finished me off as I found it slow and tedious with all the annotations we had to do. I would carry on if the scripts came to my house! ... I still have friends from the years I worked with (exam board) and I feel that no face-to-face contact at all is a big mistake.”

“As long as we continue to have standardisation meetings I feel a lot of loyalty towards my team members and feel we are all pulling in the same direction, but with no contact I would feel far removed from the whole process and not obliged to stay on course.”

Exam boards should therefore maximize opportunities for face-to-face contact to ensure that the transition to online marking does not come at the cost of the role being socially fulfilling.

**Physical difficulties associated with working long hours on a computer:**

examiners frequently mentioned problems with eyesight, headaches, backaches and Repetitive Strain Injury. Exam boards should therefore ensure that examiners have the necessary training and equipment to minimise these issues.

**Problems with the software used to mark:** Examiners felt that the role had become more time consuming as a result of software and technology issues. The prevalence of these concerns appears to vary between subjects with short answer questions considered easy to mark online and longer answers and essays harder. Issues included:

- **Uploading of scripts being time consuming**
- **Software crashing and sometimes resulting in the loss of completed marking**
- **Difficulties with the software's usability.**

Examiners experiences of marking software has already been the subject of close scrutiny. However given the prevalence of comments relating to this subject during the research, exam boards and their software providers need to engage with the examining community in a highly visible and responsive manner to address the concerns voiced about the user experience.

## **2.2 Make the role more appealing**

In part 1 we saw that examining is felt by many to contribute to professional development and develop teachers' subject knowledge and assessment skills. By learning from research on best practice, examining and training for the role could be developed so that it makes a greater contribution to professional development. Career progression routes should therefore be created that build on experience as an examiner, something that both the new College of Teaching and exam boards may be able to develop.

Examining can help teachers develop professionally. Teachers and examiners believe that the role:

- Helps develop assessment practice in the classroom
- Contributes to professional development
- Helps develop subject knowledge for teaching.

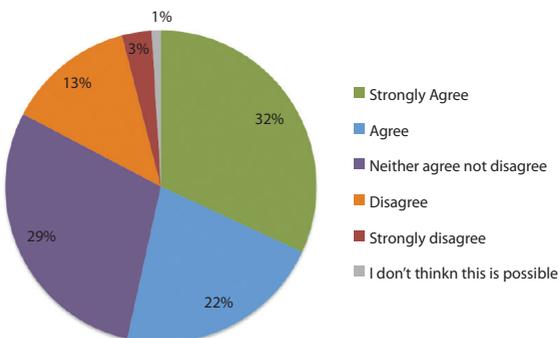
As well as being an important reason for examining, three quarters of examiners at the end of the marking season felt that examining had been worthwhile because of the contribution it had made to their CPD. Just under half of those who intended to mark again next year said this was because they thought it would contribute to their professional development. Focus group participants agreed, stating that examining improved their assessment skills in the classroom. However, when probed as to how it did so, responses tended to focus on exam-related learning such as knowing how to grade accurately and knowing what exam boards are looking for. Their comments therefore focused on summative assessment which judges the outcomes of learning rather than on more formative assessment that feeds into and develops learning outcomes. At present, examiners therefore associate examining with a limited notion of assessment and this limits its value in terms of professional development, something **Sue Kirkham** (*Chair, Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors*) noted:

“Our members at the CIEA (Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors) are telling us that they feel that the (exam boards) are quite separate from the formative assessment that goes on in schools, that we’re not looking at assessment in the round as maybe we should be”

**Barry Sindall** (*CEO, The Grammar School Heads’ Association*) agrees:

“The whole process (of examining) has sometimes in some subjects become too atomised so that you get little or no concept of the whole process of assessment. ... assessment in schools is more sophisticated now than it’s ever been, and terminal assessment is only a small part of it...so this is just a small part of a much bigger picture.”

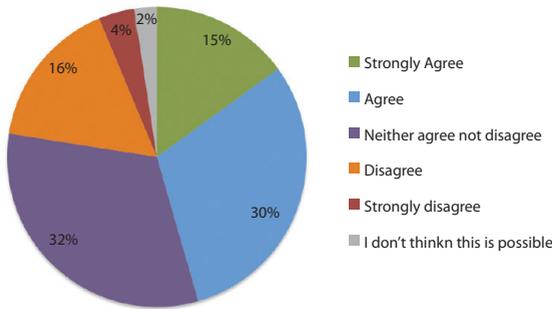
### Better training would encourage me to mark again



**Figure 9**  
*Impact of changes to training on retention*

Source  
*LKMco retention poll 2015*

## Opportunities to progress within examining would encourage me to mark again



**Figure 10**  
*Impact of progression opportunities on retention*

**Source**  
*LKMco retention poll 2015*

This raises important questions because, on the one hand, emphasising professional development related benefits could contribute to examiner recruitment, however on the other hand, this would depend on reshaping the role and training so that it responds to what is known about professional development and assessment practice<sup>11,12</sup>. As **David Weston** (CE, Teacher Development Trust and Chair, DfE Teachers' Professional Development Expert Group) explains:

*"The most important parts of assessment aren't present for examiners: they would need to learn about crafting good questions that tell you important things about students' understanding, using those questions as diagnostic tools and planning in response to them, linking their own learning from those diagnostics to their own practice, and crafting more questions as the cycle repeats itself."*

Any effort to link examining more closely to professional development therefore needs to learn from research evidence about formative assessment as well as what constitutes effective CPD<sup>13</sup> (see list in box on page 18). Exam boards current training offer could therefore be evaluated and re-shaped in light of these principles.

Given that many elements of CPD are currently missing from the examiner role, Weston cautions against any move to include examining in the teaching standards. Instead he argues that future training should be designed with the principles of quality CPD in mind.

<sup>11</sup> Assessment for Learning: Putting it into practice: Paul Black, Christine Harrison, Clare Lee, Bethan Marshall and Dylan Wiliam, OUP, 2003

<sup>12</sup> Visible learning and the science of how we learn: John Hattie and Gregory Yates, Routledge, 2013

<sup>13</sup> Cordingley, P, Higgins, S., Greany, T., Buckler, N., Coles-Jordan, D., Crisp, B., Saunders, L., Coe, R. (2015) Developing Great Teaching: Lessons from the international reviews into effective professional development. Teacher Development Trust. Available at <http://tdtrust.org/cpdtest/>

### A ten point checklist for effective CPD (Cordingley et al, 2015)

CPD should be:

1. relevant and supported by research evidence
2. focused on (and evaluated against) students' learning outcomes
3. surfaces, challenges and develops a teacher's thinking about learning and teaching
4. allows experimentation to adapt/apply approaches to a teacher's classroom
5. includes observation and feedback
6. takes place at least monthly over at least two terms
7. draws on explicit support from external expertise
8. draws on explicit support from peer networks
9. draws on explicit support from coaches/mentors
10. draws on explicit support from school/college leaders

Quality training is not only important to examiners' wider development, it is also crucial in ensuring that they feel confident about their ability to do the job and a number of respondents said they currently felt unprepared for the role. Open responses made it clear that reading online materials and taking part in online tasks were not considered to be 'training'. Instead, it appears there is an appetite for differentiated training that allows examiners with different levels of experience to access training matched to their expertise. A fifth of comments also mentioned a desire for feedback on completed marking, suggesting that it would be good to get "more (feedback) about how you are doing than just whether you're right or wrong" so that you can "learn from your errors".

It is also worth considering which teachers' professional development is most likely to benefit from training and experience as an examiner. Weston suggests that exposure to many examples of "right" and "wrong" answers can be particularly useful to younger, less experienced teachers but notes that this benefit quickly diminishes and may be achieved by marking a relatively small number of papers. This may mean that exam boards should target early career teachers with smaller marking allocations and tailored training.

This would have the additional benefit of responding to the workload challenge noted in section 1.4 (p10). On the other hand, training large numbers of examiners to accurately mark smaller numbers of papers would have cost implications and it would be important to ensure accuracy did not suffer, as **Stuart Gallagher**, (Assessment Standards Team at OCR) emphasises:

"As someone who is accountable for the quality of marking, ultimately, I need to know that I'm going to get good quality senior examiners [...], so that 'a professional route' is really marking every year, gaining experience, becoming a team leader, being involved in setting"

**Sue Kirkham** (*Chair, Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors*) agrees suggesting that the professional benefits of examining require engagement at a high level:

“I know that simply by marking one section of a paper a teacher is not going to suddenly understand how to set an exam. On the other hand, when they are exposed to a marking scheme and what it means and how it’s implemented, that is the first step on that route”

### **Learning from examining should be recognised and rewarded through career progression**

Teachers’ learning as part of reformed training for examiners could be accredited or rewarded in a two main ways.

1. Through the College of Teaching
2. Through exam boards

Weston is, to some extent, positive about the potential for links between examiners’ professional learning and the new College of Teaching: the College’s blueprint sets out a remit which includes creating non-leadership related development pathways - for example through the role of ‘subject expert’. It may be that examining in a subject could form part of this pathway.

Progression routes within exam boards could be developed and clarified.

As **Mark Dawe** (*CEO, OCR*) explained:

“I think the exams industry has worked in an apprenticeship way in the sense that you come along as a marker and you learn by osmosis what goes on, and then someone says, ‘Do you want to be a team leader?’ and you say, ‘Yes, fine,’ and then you learn what happens next. We have a responsibility to put much more training around that”

45% of examiners who are unsure about marking again would be motivated to continue working if there were clear opportunities to progress within examining and many are currently unclear about what opportunities are available.

As **Cherry Ridgeway** (*Curriculum and Assessment Specialist, Association of School and College Leaders*) explains:

“For teachers and school leaders to know what that route is and that maybe you have X years’ experience as an examiner before you could be a team leader before you could be a senior examiner, would be really helpful”

Developing, systematising and promoting progression routes could therefore boost both retention and quality, and, as **Jo Bailey** (*Teacher and Assessor*) points out, such an approach might draw in a group of teachers unmotivated by traditional career progression routes:

“I started to get more involved in the assessment side because I am not a particularly good people manager and I wanted to consider another aspect of my career that I could go through, and I started to get involved with some of the CPD opportunities that are available through OCR and I found them very valuable, but I find it very difficult to plot my route through because I don’t really know what’s available. I’ve been to the CIEA (Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors) website and looked at the opportunities for chartered status and things like that, but I’m still uncertain of what there is for me to get to that point, and I feel that having a professional route that is established, that the schools value and that we know about from the teacher training start would be immensely valuable, to me and to anybody else who is not brilliant with people.”

### 2.3 Widen the pool

Almost half of teaching assistants do not currently examine but would consider doing so in the future and just over a fifth of supply teachers would do so. As figure 11 (p21) shows, these two groups are less likely than other teachers to say that:

- Their workload is too high for them to mark
- They do not want to spend their spare time marking
- They think examining is a poorly paid role.

Given that these are key barriers to examining for teachers, it may be worth considering whether exam boards could specifically target these two groups in order to widen the pool of examiners.

#### Supply teachers

A fifth of supply teachers who do not examine say this is because they are not aware of opportunities to do so. These teachers could be targeted using supply agencies. They are particularly likely to see professional development benefits to examining (68% of supply teachers compared to 57% of teachers) and this could therefore play a particular role in attracting them to the examiner role.

#### Teaching assistants

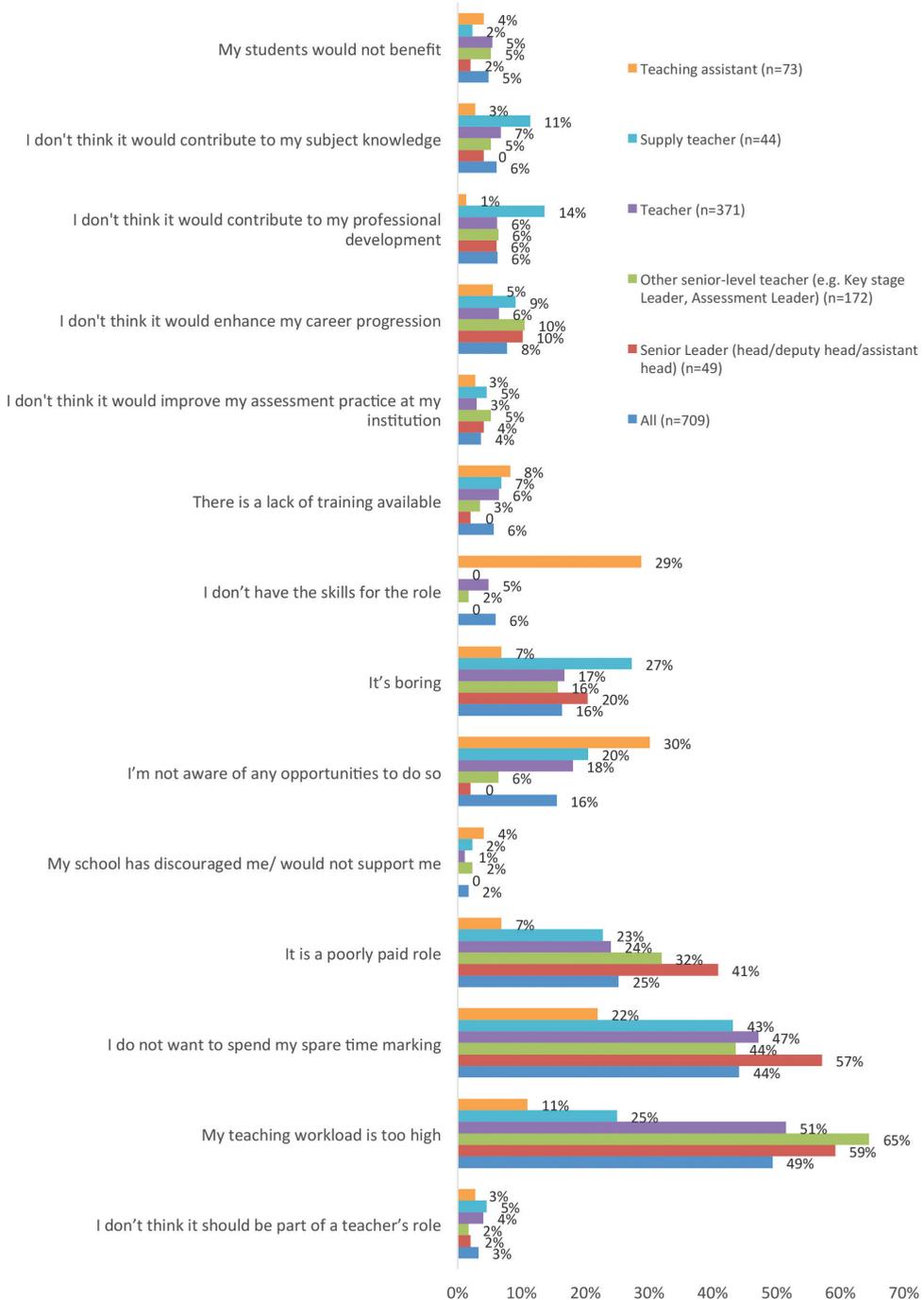
Secondly, it may be possible to identify graduate level teaching assistants (TAs) who, with some training, could acquire the skills to examine. There are 67,800 teaching assistants in English state funded secondary schools<sup>14</sup> and recruiting and training TAs as examiners would have the benefit of making them a more valuable resource in the classroom. However, given the importance of subject knowledge noted in 2.4 (p22), selection would need to be robust in order to maintain the teaching profession’s confidence. Furthermore, given that at present, TAs see fewer benefits to examining, they would need to be made aware of the possible benefits.

<sup>14</sup> DfE 2014, School Workforce census, (Note this figure only includes state funded secondary schools)

**Figure 11**  
*Reasons for not examining by role*

**Source**  
*YouGov and OCR 2015*

**Reasons for not examining by role**



## 2.4 Maintain the profession's confidence

At present, teachers have inaccurate views about who examines; they underestimate the proportion that are current teachers and the proportion that have never been teachers. They consider a combination of subject knowledge and training, as well as teaching and examining experience important to the role but believe that subject knowledge and training are of greatest importance.

Whilst, who teachers think should examine, may not be the same as who would, in fact, make the most reliable examiner, any attempt to grow the pool of examiners needs to take into account how it might affect teachers' confidence in the examination system.

As figures 13a-c (p23) show, most teachers think that:

- Up to 20% are non-teachers (the actual figure is higher)
- Up to 50% are currently serving teachers (the actual figure is higher)
- Up to 40% of examiners are ex or retired teachers (the actual figure is much lower).

This ties in with the belief (figure 12) amongst over 90% of teachers, that it is important for examiners to be experienced teachers. On the other hand, experience of examining, being a qualified teacher and experience of teaching are the factors least likely to be considered 'very important'. The most important qualities examiners need to have in order to secure teachers' confidence are:

- Strong subject knowledge
- Appropriate training
- Experience of assessing students' work in an education environment.

### How important are the following in the role of examiner (n=914)

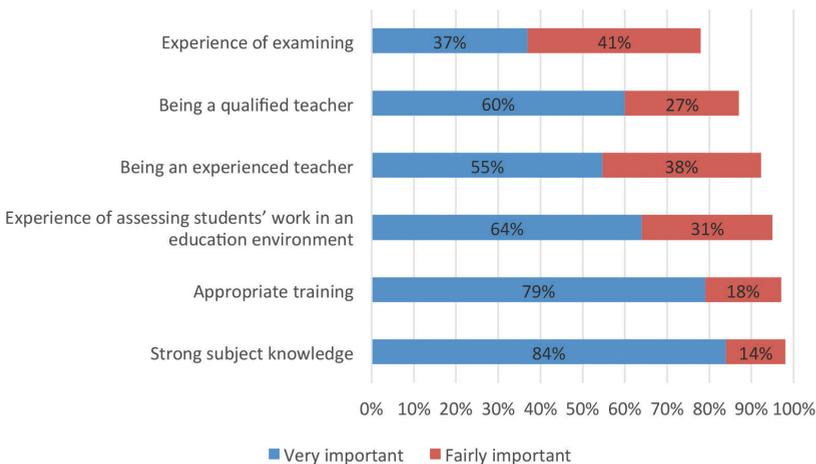


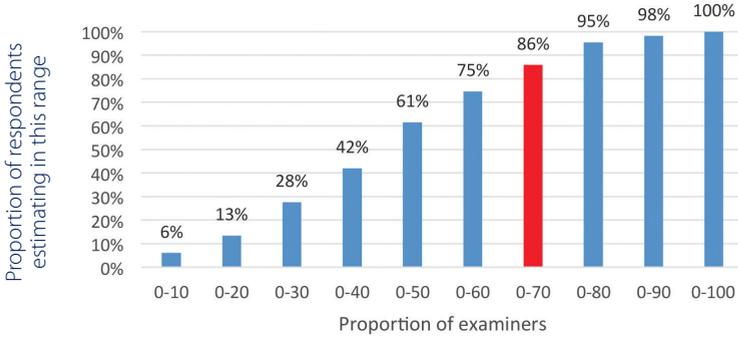
Figure 12  
Qualities of an examiner

Source  
YouGov 2015 and OCR

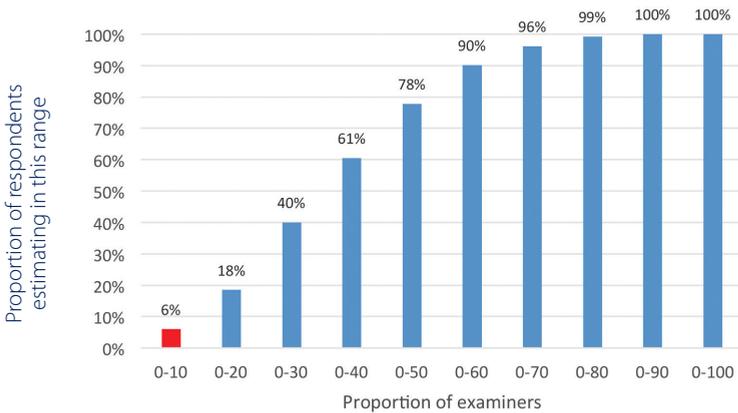
**Figure 13a,b,c**  
*Perceptions and reality of who examines.*

Source  
YouGov 2015 and OCR

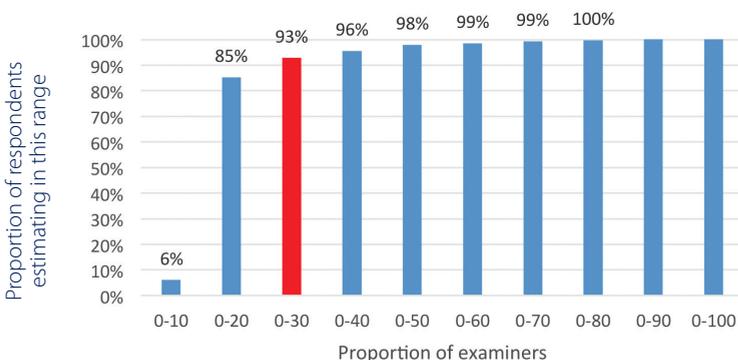
**Proportion of examiners thought to be currently serving teachers (n=914)**  
**Actual proportion of OCR examiners in red**



**Proportion of examiners estimated by teachers to be retired or ex-teachers (n=914)**  
**Actual proportion shown of OCR examiners in red (retired only - does not include 'ex-teachers')**



**Proportion of examiners estimated by teachers to be non-teachers (n=914)**  
**Actual proportion of OCR examiners in red**



## Conclusion and recommendations

Almost three-quarters of teachers surveyed are either currently examining or are potentially interested in the role. However, teachers' formidable workloads have a profound impact on recruitment, with almost half of teachers who are not currently examiners saying that this is because of workload and a similar proportion saying they do not want to spend their spare time marking. Yet there is reason to be hopeful – most teachers see professional benefits to examining, whether in terms of assessment practice or subject knowledge for teaching.

Systematic pay and career progression and improvements to the process of examining would improve retention of examiners, reducing the need for recruitment and potentially improving quality. Examining could also contribute more to professional development if improvements were made to training and if the role were reshaped in the light of best practice in CPD and formative assessment. Finally, open-mindedness about looking beyond the 'usual suspects' when recruiting could also help boost recruitment.

### Recommendations for raising the status of examining:

#### 1. Make the role more attractive by:

- a) Designing the role and training for it in the light of research into effective professional development and assessment
- b) Ensuring that the role and training is differentiated to experience level so that:
  - i) relatively new teachers can have a taster of examining, perhaps with small batches of scripts and introductory training.
  - ii) more experienced teachers and examiners can participate in training that explores assessment and examining in more detail and at a more sophisticated level.
- c) Working with the new College of Teaching to include examining in a subject as part of emerging 'subject expert' pathways.
- d) Strengthening, systematising and promoting progression routes within examining so that experienced examiners can aspire to, and move into, more senior roles over time.

#### 2. Focus on retaining a greater proportion of examiners each year by:

- a) Planning for pay progression so that examiners' pay remains attractive and competitive as teachers' careers progress in school
- b) Ensuring examining is 'examiner friendly' by engaging in dialogue regarding concerns about software and equipment and maintaining opportunities for face to face contact.

#### 3. Widen the pool of potential examiners by:

- a) Targeting supply teachers through agencies and emphasising the training offer
- b) Assessing the feasibility of drawing graduate level teaching assistants into the role of examiner.

## Appendix: Methodology

### 1. **National poll of teachers, conducted by YouGov**

LKMco commissioned a national survey of teachers from YouGov. Survey questions were piloted with ten teachers, and changes made in response to their responses. The survey was conducted using an online survey administered to a randomly selected sample of secondary and FE teachers who are members of the YouGov PLC GB panel. There were 914 responses.

### 2. **Online polls of OCR examiners**

Two surveys of OCR examiners were carried out. In the first, emails were sent to 6,927 examiners, inviting them to take part in a survey. Two reminders were sent in the two weeks that followed the initial email. 1,657 examiners completed the survey, representing a 24% response rate. The survey was undertaken between 1st June and 11th June 2015.

A second poll focusing on retention was then administered in the same way between the 5th July and 16th July 2015. The survey was completed by 1,363 examiners, a response rate of 20%.

### 3. **Interviews**

OCR provided a list of 200 schools that use their qualifications. Data (about the size and type of school, and the percentage of pupils achieving five A\* to C GCSEs including English and Maths, and the proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium) was collected, and the schools ranked accordingly. Twenty schools were then shortlisted so as to secure a broad range of schools. All twenty schools were contacted by email and phone. Unfortunately there was a low response, OCR therefore contacted additional schools to secure further interviewees. Three headteachers agreed to be interviewed. Interviews were carried out over the phone and recorded and transcribed. Informed consent was obtained. **David Weston** (*CE, Teacher Development Trust and Chair, DfE Teachers' Professional Development Expert Group*) was also interviewed. This interview was carried out in person. Notes were taken and quotations checked for accuracy.

### 4. **Focus group with OCR examiners**

A focus group was held online via "yammer" – OCR's online forum. Information about the research project and questions for discussion were posted in July, and examiners were invited to respond. Common themes were identified in the responses.

### 5. **A debate hosted by OCR**

The debate brought together examiners, educators and policy makers to discuss what it would take to make examining a professional development route within teaching. The debate was filmed, and the audio recording transcribed.

Contributors included: Sarah Jones (*Associate, LKMco*), Barry Sindall (*CEO, Grammar School Heads' Association*), Cherry Ridgeway (*Curriculum and Assessment Specialist, Association of School and College Lecturers (ASCL)*), Michael O'Connor (*Member, OCR Advisory Group of Examiners and Assessors*), Sue Kirkham (*Chair, Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors*), Sion Humphreys (*Policy advisor, National Association for Head Teachers*), Mark Dawe (*CEO, OCR*). A full recording of the debate can be found here: <http://lkm.li/OCRdebate>.

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**For further information please contact:**

**Loic Menzies**

LKMco  
The Ship of Adventures  
138 Kingsland High Street  
London  
E8 2NS  
info@lkmco.org  
07793 370459

**Sally Brown**

OCR  
9 Hills Road  
Cambridge  
CB2 1PB  
sally.brown@ocr.org.uk  
www.ocr.org.uk

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