

A year currently dominated by national examinations, in the form of GCSEs run by different examination boards, IGCSEs and BTECs, by league tables, by increasing mental health issues and more and more questions about the validity attached to the examinations compared to a broader model of assessment. But why GCSEs will almost certainly stay, the content of curricula needs to change and the amount of summative assessment also.

Preamble:

What is:

- GCSE is one of the seminal points in education and the first fully national examination and likely to remain so. (i)
- Issues abound however, including:
 - Discrepancies amongst examination boards
 - The effect of EBacc in limiting choice
 - The out-dated or inadequate syllabus in certain subjects, ie history
- The amount of time given over to teaching to the test
- The number of mock exams
- The difficulty level and number (20 - 30) exams spread over a month or more
- Mental health epidemic

What could / should be:

Academic:

Social:

Appendices:

(i) England, Wales and Northern Ireland have several exam boards, with schools and colleges able to freely choose between them on a subject-by-subject basis. Currently, there are seven exam boards available to state schools:

AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance) AQA is run as an educational charity

CIE (University of Cambridge International Examinations) Cambridge Assessment also controls CIE, a predominately international exam board that started offering some qualifications to English, Welsh and Northern Irish state schools in 2008.

CCEA (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment) The Northern Ireland Schools Examination Council became the Northern Ireland School Examinations and Assessment Council before being replaced by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in 1994. It is a non-departmental public body.

Edexcel an educational charity like AQA, the Foundation was taken over by **Pearson** in 2003 (and renamed simply Edexcel), making it the only British exam board to be run by a profit-making company.^[21]

ICAAE (International Curriculum and Assessment Agency Examinations) *ICAAE was founded in 1989.^[22] It specialises in a small number of business and ICT courses. It began offering GCSEs in 1997, in partnership with CCEA. Since 2009, it has offered exams independently of CCEA*

OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations) *OCR is now the only major exam board owned by a university and is still run by the University of Cambridge, through its Cambridge Assessment division.*

WJEC (Welsh Joint Education Committee) Unlike the other boards, WJEC did not experience any major organisational changes and is still owned by the Welsh local authorities, though it operates independently. In 2014, WJEC launched a new brand, Eduqas, for new Ofqual-accredited qualifications (mostly offered in England)