

Ofqual fines Cambridge OCR £270k for physics exam paper errors

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AS and A Level physics exam materials containing errors were delivered to over 14,000 students which affected some grades.

Ofqual has fined Cambridge OCR £270,000 for serious errors relating to A and AS Level physics exam papers in summer 2025 – which also meant some students were issued with the wrong grades.

Between April and October 2025, 12 errors were identified in Cambridge OCR's AS and A Level physics exam papers and mark schemes. The exam board failed to ensure the papers' content was fit for purpose, in breach of its conditions.

Errors were contained in assessment materials delivered to over 14,000 students. They included errors in exam paper questions and in the marking scheme which guides examiners.

Some of the errors were identified before exams, and Cambridge OCR issued correction notices to schools to correct these mistakes. Others were identified after exams had taken place and Cambridge OCR took action prior to issuing results when necessary, including by awarding full marks to all candidates for the affected question.

However, 2 errors were identified after results day. Correction of these errors led to 37 students receiving a grade increase by 1 grade. In total, 33 of the incorrect grades were issued to AS Level students due to an exam paper error, and 4 resulted from a mark scheme error for A Level.

Cambridge OCR also failed to have in place clear arrangements for Special Consideration – by which schools could request adjustments to marks because of the errors. This led to 3 other incorrect higher results being issued. Cambridge OCR chose not to reduce those by one grade, to prevent an adverse effect on the students affected.

Amanda Swann, Ofqual's Executive Director for Delivery, said:

Students deserve quality exam assessment materials. After years of hard study, these unacceptable failures caused anxiety for students during their exams. Some were issued incorrect grades.

We will always act to protect students' interests and maintain public confidence in our qualifications system.

The root causes of the incidents related to inadequate systems of control, workplace competence and insufficient workplace capacity.

Ofqual's enforcement panel took into account mitigating factors. They included that Cambridge OCR accepted the breaches, entered into settlement agreements, and had taken action to minimise the impact on students, standards and public confidence.

Cambridge OCR has also provided an action plan (an undertaking) to prevent the errors recurring. It

includes strengthening technical checking across AS and A Level physics exams papers. Ofqual will take action should Cambridge OCR not follow through on its action plan.

For more details, see our Notice of Financial Penalty published today.

Background information

Ofqual's Supporting compliance and taking regulatory action guidance sets out how it will use its powers to take regulatory action.

Previous cases and fines can be viewed in Regulatory actions and interventions by Ofqual - GOV.UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofqual-fines-cambridge-ocr-270k-for-physics-exam-paper-errors>