

Creating a question paper

When a student turns over the paper at the start of an OCR exam, that question paper has been nearly eighteen months in the making. So what goes into producing a question paper?

Here we take you through six steps to creating a question paper, from the thinking behind it through to the student turning over that paper:

- 1** Our question papers are put together by an exam committee (teachers who have built up experience in assessment), headed by a chair of examiners for the subject and a chief examiner for the specification. Their job is to ensure the question paper allows students to show that they have acquired the knowledge, understanding and skills set out in the syllabus (or specification as it is usually now known) of a particular course, e.g. a GCSE or A Level.
- 2** Before any question is written, the committee reviews how papers from the previous year performed, such as whether students understood exactly what they were supposed to do. This helps us to continue to improve the quality of our exam papers.
- 3** The questions can now be written. Not everything in the specification can be tested in one exam, so we select which areas to focus on for that particular set of exams. Once written, each question is checked to ensure it offers the right level of challenge, tests content covered in the specification and is free of errors. A mark scheme is developed in partnership with the questions. This outlines the knowledge and skills students need to demonstrate to achieve a particular mark and will guide those marking the papers.
- 4** Once ready, the individual questions are brought together to form a question paper. This is then checked and proof read before a subject expert sits the paper exactly as a student would, checking that the questions are clear, offer the right level of challenge and that the paper can be completed in the allocated time.
- 5** The paper then goes through more checks before a second expert sits the paper and then, after a final check, the chair of examiners signs it off and it is sent to the printers.
- 6** Once back from the printers it is given one more check before it finally arrives on the student's desk and the exam begins.