CARRY ON EXAMINING: WHAT PREDICTS EXAMINERS' INTENTIONS TO CONTINUE EXAMINING?

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SUMMARY

AQA is highly reliant on a large body of examiners who are crucial in ensuring that candidates receive timely and reliable results for their high-stakes examinations. As such, the potential ramifications of low examiner satisfaction are significant. This study aimed to investigate the factors which predicted whether an examiner intended to continue examining for AQA. Examiners (n = 1,368) took part in a postal questionnaire survey concerned with their experiences of examining, and their intentions to continue examining. Most examiners (over 85%) indicated that they were likely to continue examining for AQA. There does not appear to have been a significant increase or decrease in overall intentions to continue examining compared to similar previous work performed by Meadows (2004). Factor analysis of 32 questionnaire items suggested three factors underpinned examiners' intentions to continue examining: 1) the relationship between examining work and work outside examining, 2) the pressures of examining and the support received from AQA, and 3) the incentives to examine. All three factors were significantly correlated with intention to continue examining, and are consistent with the findings of previous research by Meadows (2004). Examiners' responses to questions about recruitment and retention were also analysed. Although there seems to be no immediate threat to examiner retention, the study highlights areas which may impact on examiner retention in the future. For example, there appear to be continuing difficulties for examiners in accepting and adjusting to the move towards online standardisation. Similarly, the results indicate that conflicts between examining work and other employment may discourage examiners to continue examining as they may feel unsupported or undervalued by AQA.

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction is the extent to which an individual likes their job, and includes their overall feeling about the job and their attitudes towards different aspects of the job (Spector, 1997). Job satisfaction has consistently been found to predict intention to stay in employment; moreover, there is evidence of a causal relationship, with low job satisfaction leading to resignation (Spector, 1997).

Job satisfaction is posited to derive from a number of factors, which can be broadly divided into two categories: situational factors are those related to the job itself (e.g. wages; Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000), whereas dispositional factors are those related to the employee (e.g. personality; Spector, 1997). Once an employee has been recruited, however, an employer has limited control over these dispositional factors; therefore, from a practical perspective it seems more useful to focus on the situational factors of job satisfaction rather than dispositional factors.

Indeed, there is a vast body of research associating a wide range of situational factors with job satisfaction. Many researchers have focused on the nature of the tasks assigned to an employee; for example, there is evidence that employees whose tasks are complex and challenging are more likely to be satisfied than those with routine tasks (Oldham, Hackman &

Pearce, 1976). Similarly, Hean and Garrett (2001) found that aspects such as workload, training, time pressure and resources influenced job satisfaction.

Other researchers have investigated the impact of social aspects of work on job satisfaction. Social interaction appears to play an important role in job satisfaction; for example, Hean and Garrett (2001) found that, for Chilean secondary school teachers, the most frequently cited source of satisfaction was related to working with students, followed by the relationships teachers formed with the profession generally. Conversely, feeling isolated at work has been found to correlate negatively with job satisfaction (Fonner & Roloff, 2010). Social support at work has also been linked to satisfaction (Houkes, Janssen, de Jonge & Nijhuis, 2001; Pomaki, DeLongis, Frey, Short & Woehrle, 2010). Social support is thought to have a positive effect on overall wellbeing and contentment, through providing "regular positive experiences… a sense of predictability and stability in one's life situation, and a recognition of self-worth" (Cohen & Wills, 1985, p.311). Moreover, social support has been found to help mitigate the effects of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Pomaki et al., 2010) – another factor which has been negatively linked to satisfaction (Cohrs, Abele & Dette, 2006; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). The relationships between one's work life and one's home life have also been studied, and researchers have found that conflict between work and home has been recognised as a key determinant of job satisfaction (Magnini, 2009; Pasupuleti, Allen, Lambert & Cluse-Tolar, 2009). Two main types of conflict have been identified: work-life conflict is when one's work interferes with one's personal life: life-work conflict is when one's personal life interferes with work (Fonner & Roloff, 2010).

Interestingly, the influence of pay appears to be lower than might be expected (Griffeth et al., 2000). This may be a methodological artefact, caused by limited pay variation in research studies and by failure to consider other forms of compensation (Griffeth et al., 2000). Hean and Garrett (2001) found that salary was the most frequently mentioned cause of dissatisfaction among teachers. However, Griffeth et al. (2000) note that it is important to consider the fairness of reward allocation when looking at pay, arguing that "fair treatment by employers connotes that they value employees and care about their well-being" (p.480). It seems that, while payment is a necessary condition for being satsified at work, it is not intrinsically motivating. However, payment may be seen to reflect the extent to which the organisation values the employee and thus motivate indirectly through feelings of being valued (Robbins, 1993).

These factors have been investigated in a wide range of employee populations, including teachers (Klassen, Usher & Bong, 2010), nurses (Tourigny, Baba & Wang, 2010), hotel workers (Kim & Jogaratnam, 2010), temporary employees (Slattery, Selvarajan, Anderson & Sardessai, 2010), social service workers (Pasupuleti et al, 2009), staff at correctional institutions (Lambert, 2010) and teleworkers (Fonner & Roloff, 2010). Despite this, little research to date seems to have investigated satisfaction in examiners. Of the few studies carried out to date, Meadows (2004) conducted a questionnaire survey of examiners' attitudes to examining. She found that most examiners were satisfied with their experience of examining, but wanted greater financial remuneration. Factor analysis of the responses produced four factors: the pressure and stress of examining, insight gained from examining, support from AQA and senior examining staff, and pay. However, only the pressure and stress of examining and support from AQA and senior examining staff significantly predicted whether an examiner would continue to examine. Pay and insight gained from examining did not significantly independently predict intention to continue examining. Meadows concluded that increasing pay would not encourage examiners to continue examining, but it might improve satisfaction; to improve retention, efforts should focus on reducing the pressure on examiners.

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Since Meadows' (2004) study into examiner satisfaction, the role of the examiner has undergone a number of changes. Online standardisation[1] is now almost universal. Marking has undergone similar changes, with examiners either marking entirely online, or submitting marks online. Short answer items are now marked by general markers (i.e. markers without teaching or subject expertise). For those who examine online, marking has become more routine and repetitive, as examiners mark individual items instead of entire papers. Their work is also now monitored through the use of "seeds" – items which are periodically given to the examiner but which have already been marked. The examiner must give the item a mark within a certain tolerance of the "true" mark in order to continue examining. If they fail a certain number of seeds, they are stopped from marking until their supervisor "unlocks" them. In addition to these changes to marking, awarding (the process through which grade boundaries are determined) is also set to move online.

Of all these changes, indications are that online standardisation in particular has negatively affected examiner satisfaction, and online standardisation has been the focus of a number of studies. For example, Chamberlain (2007) asked examiners to complete a questionnaire evaluating their experience of online standardisation. The examiners were satisfied with some aspects of online standardisation, such as the quality and speed of feedback, the ability to revisit material, and being able to fit standardisation around other commitments. Conversely, many examiners were concerned about the loss of face-to-face meetings and opportunities to engage with the examining community. Many felt that they had a poorer understanding of the mark scheme and felt less prepared to mark (Chamberlain, 2007). A follow-up study by Billington and Davenport (2008) drew similar conclusions, adding that technical difficulties with the system may have negatively impacted on examiners' overall satisfaction with online standardisation.

However, there is no evidence to suggest that online standardisation negatively impacts on marking reliability; on the contrary, online standardisation appears to improve marking reliability as all examiners receive the same training (Chamberlain, 2007; Chamberlain & Taylor, 2011). Focus groups conducted to further investigate perspectives on online standardisation found that it was the change in working practices and routines which was problematic, rather than online standardisation itself (Chamberlain, 2008). Concerns regarding the lack of face-to-face contact remained though, and examiners expressed concern about losing the professional insight they obtained through such contact. Professional insight was cited as one of the main reasons for becoming an examiner, and examiners suggested they would be less likely to continue examining if the level of professional insight they gain through examining decreased. Chamberlain (2008) concluded that it was this belief in the importance of face-to-face contact for developing professional insight which was the main barrier for examiners in accepting online standardisation.

While online standardisation does appear to be the most problematic of the changes, other studies have been conducted to look at satisfaction with other changes to the role. For example, a number of studies have been conducted into examiners' satisfaction with various aspects of online marking (Evans, 2005a; Evans, 2005b; Lowther & Fowles, 2005). As online awarding is currently being piloted, it is apt that other research has also looked at examiners' satisfaction with this process (Meyer, 2011). However, both these studies and the online standardisation studies outlined above have mostly had very small sample sizes, and have focused on satisfaction with the changes themselves (for example, satisfaction with ability to read extended

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[1] Standardisation is the process through which examiners are trained in applying the mark scheme. Previously, this took place in face-to-face meetings, but has now been moved online.

response answers on-screen), rather than looking at the impact of these changes on overall satisfaction. As such, it seems appropriate and timely to take another look at the overall factors influencing job satisfaction in examiners – this is the principal aim of this study.

METHOD

A questionnaire was posted to a sample of 3,002 examiners who had marked for AQA in the summer 2010 examining series, of which 1,368 responded (45.57%). Examiners were asked to respond within two weeks of receiving the questionnaire (see Appendix A). This study was conducted as part of a wider programme of research which included investigation of other features of examiners (such as personality) and, therefore, questions on the factors influencing intention to continue examining comprised only one section of the full questionnaire (see Appendix B). The other section of the questionnaire consisted of a series of 25 questions assessing respondents' personality traits (based on the NEO Five-Factor Inventory; Costa & McCrae, 2003). As the current paper is focused on examiners' responses to the satisfaction questions, this section will not be discussed here.

The questionnaire was based on Meadows (2004) and participants rated a series of statements on a Likert scale, indicating the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement. As some of the statements may not have been relevant for all respondents (e.g. questions about work outside examining), participants were also able to rate a statement as not applicable. The statements related to seven aspects of examining: pressure, insight, support, pay, social support, standardisation, and feeling valued for their work. Four aspects - pressure, support, pay and insight - were the factors found by Meadows (2004). Responses to the open-ended questions in Meadows' study also indicated a prevailing theme of examiners wanting to feel that their work is valued, and the theme was accordingly included in this study. Previous research (e.g. Chamberlain, 2007; Billington & Davenport, 2008) found that, in addition to a number of other issues, examiners were concerned by the lack of face-to-face meetings after the introduction of online standardisation, in addition to a number of other concerns. As such, two further aspects were included in the present study: social support and standardisation.

In total, there were 35 questions, compared to 58 in Meadows' (2004) study. As the questionnaire in this study contained an additional section on personality, it was decided to reduce the length of the satisfaction section in order to keep the questionnaire to an appropriate length. For the four aspects based on the 2004 study, a proportionate sample was taken of the questions loading on each of the factors, with priority given to the questions with the highest factor loadings. For the three new aspects, a mix of questions from the 2004 study (updated to reflect new examining conditions) and some new questions were constructed. Three questions measuring intention to continue examining were also included. These were identical to those used in the 2004 study:

- I expect to examine for the AQA for the foreseeable future.
- I intend to examine for the AQA for the foreseeable future.
- I want to continue examining for the AQA for the foreseeable future.

Examiners were also asked three open-ended questions:

- Why did you decide to become an examiner?
- How do you think AQA could make the role of examiner more attractive to new examiners?
- How do you think AQA could encourage experienced examiners to continue in their role?

As the questionnaire was very similar to Meadows' (2004) questionnaire, it was considered that pre-testing would be unnecessary. Responses to the closed questions were coded using the following scale: strongly disagree=1, disagree = 2, agree = 3, strongly agree = 4, not applicable = 0.

Participants

Average mark adjustments and the average grade awarded to the examiner for their marking performance were calculated for all examiners performing marking for AQA in the summer 2010 series. For the average mark adjustment, examiners were categorised as averaging 0 marks adjusted, >0 to 2.5 marks adjusted, >2.5 to 5 marks adjusted, >5 to 7.5 marks adjusted and >7.5 marks adjusted. For the average grade, examiners were categorised as having an average grade of A to B, just below B to C, just below C to D, or just below D to an E grade. Mark adjustments and average grade categories were cross-tabulated to create 16 groups of participants with different levels of performance as an examiner. From this list, a sample of 3,002 examiners was drawn while maintaining the proportion of examiners in each performance group. The intention was to send the questionnaire to 3,000 examiners, however, in order to maintain the proportions across the performance group, it was necessary to select a further two examiners. Marking performance was prioritised as the sampling criterion as future analyses of these data will investigate the relationship between satisfaction, personality and performance. Examiners with addresses in countries outside the UK were excluded from the sample: the final sample of 3,002 thus consisted only of examiners with UK addresses.

In total, 1,368 examiners responded to the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 45.57 *per cent*. The demographic data suggest that these represented a reasonably wide range of responses. It should be noted, however, that not all the participants responded to all the questions. As such, the demographic data may not equate to the total number of participants. The sample was drawn from examiners marking in 2010. Some examiners did not go on to mark in summer 2011 and therefore their answers relate to either summer 2010 or January 2011. Overall, 209 participants reported that they marked electronically in the last series in which they marked, 712 reported that they marked on paper, and 279 reported that they used both methods of marking. Similarly, 242 participants indicated that they had face-to-face standardisation in their previous marking series, 307 indicated that some of their components had been standardised online, and 643 indicated that all of their components had been standardised online.

Examiners from every level of seniority were represented. Many examiners had more than one level of seniority depending on their component; only their highest level has been counted. Some levels of seniority were better represented than others. This may be due to the method of sampling, which focused on keeping examiner performance, rather than level of seniority, proportionate to the whole population. Table 1 outlines the number of examiners at each level of seniority in the study sample, and for all the examiners in June 2010[2], as well as the numbers in the study sample as a percentage of the numbers in the full population of examiners.

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[2] As with the study data, many examiners had more than one level of seniority; only their highest level has been counted.

Table 1: Number of examiners at each level of seniority for all examiners and the study sample.

	All examiners (June 2010)	Study sample	Study sample as % of all examiners
Chair of Examiners	54	6	11.11
Chief Examiner	59	5	8.47
Principal Examiner	155	28	18.06
Assistant Principal Examiner	161	32	19.88
Team Leader	1103	261	23.66
Assistant Examiner	7288	795	10.91
Total	**8820**	**1127**	**12.78**

A wide range of experience in examining was represented. On average, participants had been examining for 11.76 years ($SD = 9.70$). The mean number of series examined in was 12.67 ($SD = 11.54$).

The majority of examiners marked at least one GCE or GCSE, with 921 marking at least one GCE and 782 marking at least one GCSE. However, other qualification types were also represented, with five participants marking diplomas, seven marking ELCs, 26 marking Functional Skills, and five marking Key Skills. In addition, 37 examiners indicated that they marked another, unspecified type of qualification. Over half (613) of the examiners indicated that they worked as full-time teachers. A further 241 worked as part-time teachers, while 313 examiners indicated that they were retired. Of those who worked as teachers, 546 worked in a comprehensive school, 159 worked in an independent or selective school, 84 worked in a Sixth Form College, 79 worked in an FE college, and 95 worked in another type of school. It should be noted, however, that several participants indicated that they worked in more than one type of school: it is not clear whether they were listing all the school types they had worked at, or whether they felt more than one category applied to their school.

RESULTS

Section 1: Intentions to continue examining

The vast majority of examiners were positive about their futures at AQA:

- 87.94 *per cent* of examiners agreed or strongly agreed that they expected to continue examining for AQA.
- 87.50 *per cent* agreed or strongly agreed that they intended to continue examining for AQA.
- 90.13 *per cent* agreed or strongly agreed that they wanted to continue examining for AQA.

These values are slightly lower than in Meadows (2004), where 92.04 *per cent* expected to continue examining (a decrease of 4.1%), 91.13 *per cent* wanted to continue examining (a decrease of 1%) and 87.90 *per cent* intended to continue examining (a decrease of 0.4%).

An "intention to continue examining" scale was calculated by taking the mean of participants' responses to the three "intention" questions. The scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .91,

suggesting that the scale has good internal consistency. The mean intention score was 3.35 (SD = 0.78), suggesting that overall, examiners intend to continue examining for AQA. Although scores were skewed towards the "strongly agree" end of the scale, there was sufficient variation to use the ratings as a measure of respondents' intention to continue examining (see Table 2).

Table 2: Number and percentage of respondents agreeing/disagreeing with questions measuring intention to continue examining.

Rating	Mean score	n	% in 2011	% in 2004	Difference
N/A to strongly disagree	0 to <1.00	20	1.5	-	-
Strongly disagree	1.00	22	1.6	1.6	0.0
Strongly disagree to disagree	1.33-1.67	15	1.1	0.6	0.5
Disagree	2.00	55	4.1	2.4	1.7
Disagree to agree	2.33-2.67	48	3.5	4.2	-0.7
Agree	3.00	392	28.9	37.0	-8.1
Agree to strongly agree	3.33-3.67	230	17.0	24.5	-7.5
Strongly agree	4.00	573	42.3	29.7	12.6

Table 2 also outlines the percentage in each category in Meadows' 2004 study and the difference between the 2004 and 2011 percentages. There have been decreases in the number of examiners agreeing to strongly agreeing with the intention to continue questions, but a large increase in the number strongly agreeing. The number of examiners disagreeing to strongly disagreeing with the intention to continue questions has also slightly increased. The mean intention score in 2004 was 3.32 (SD = 0.60), which is 0.03 lower than in 2011. These findings are interesting given that the percentages agreeing with each of the intention to continue questions had decreased slightly since 2004. Overall, it seems that opinions regarding intentions to continue have very slightly diversified in 2011 compared to 2004. Such an interpretation is supported by the increased standard deviation of responses in 2011 compared to in 2004.

Section 2: Correlation of each question with intention to continue examining

To investigate the factors which could affect examiners' intentions to continue examining, one-tailed Spearman's rho correlations were used to examine the relationship between each question and the total intention score. A selection of the results is displayed in Table 3 (see Appendix C for full table); questions are sorted in descending order from highest absolute r_s value to lowest absolute r_s value.

Table 3: Spearman correlation coefficients for each question and the intention to continue examining score

Question	r_s	Sig.	n
Examining is an important part of my professional development	.43	$p < .001$	1323
I feel that my work as an examiner is appreciated by the AQA	.40	$p < .001$	1335
Gaining an insight into the exam system is of great benefit to me	.34	$p < .001$	1334
Personal commitments will prevent my examining for AQA in the future	-.33	$p < .001$	1326
Marking standardisation prepares me sufficiently	.32	$p < .001$	1330
Examining has increased my understanding of the assessment of the specification	.30	$p < .001$	1344
I feel that I am making an important contribution to society through examining	.30	$p < .001$	1341
Increased administration at work makes fulfilling my role as examiner difficult	*-.02*	*.207*	*1317*
It is important to me that there is a social aspect to examining	*.02*	*.209*	*1339*
The lack of incentive payments to take on larger loads of marking is unfair	*-.02*	*.232*	*1318*
The variation in examining fees across subjects is unfair	*-.01*	*.329*	*1270*
The employment of general markers undermines the status of experienced examiners	*-.01*	*.386*	*1300*

For all the questions in common between this study and Meadows (2004), the r_s values were compared (see Appendix C). While most of the differences were less than .1, nine questions had changes of between .1 and .23. In eight cases, the magnitude of the r_s values had decreased between 2011 and 2004. Many of these questions related to the pressure from other commitments, suggesting that other commitments were less influential in determining intentions to continue compared to in 2004. The only question where the magnitude of the r_s value had increased between 2011 and 2004 was "Examining is an important part of my professional development", suggesting that this was potentially more influential in determining intentions to continue than in 2004.

Most questions in 2011 were either positively or negatively significantly correlated with intention to continue examining, with the exception of five questions, which have been italicised. A positive correlation indicates that the more they agreed with that question, the more likely it was that they would intend to continue examining. A negative correlation indicates that the more they disagreed with that question, the more likely it was that they would intend to continue examining. However, most of the correlations were fairly modest, suggesting that the relationship between any given question and intention to continue examining is not very strong. Cohen posited that effect sizes of $d = .8$ could be considered to represent large effects; this value roughly corresponds to an r value of .371 (Becker, 2000). On this basis, seven questions can be considered to have a large, or almost large, effect. These items feature as the top seven entries in Table 3, with r_s values ranging from .30 to .43. This finding of significant but mostly medium correlations between questions and intention to continue examining is in line with the findings of Meadows (2004). To conclude, it seems that focusing on improving satisfaction on any individual aspect is unlikely to have a significant impact on examiners' intention to continue examining. Rather, it is likely that the individual aspects all add up to contribute to an overall intention to continue examining.

Section 3: Principal components analysis of the questions

To examine whether these questions could be clustered into more useful groups, a principal components analysis using direct oblimin rotation was conducted. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .867, which is well above Kaiser's recommended minimum of .5 (1974, as cited in Field, 2005) and indicates that principal components analysis should be able to find distinct, reliable factors. Similarly, Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant (p <. 001), indicating that there is a degree of correlation between questions, and thus that clusters of questions could be found.

Initially, the analysis suggested eight factors. However, examination of the scree plot suggested four major factors followed by four smaller ones. Further, on looking at the questions loading onto each factor, it seemed that the four smaller factors and one of the major factors were based on only two to three questions, which in most cases had already loaded onto the biggest three factors. As such, it was decided that only three factors were conceptually distinct. Indeed, using this model, 37 *per cent* of residuals had values greater than .05, compared to 29 *per cent* for the eight-factor model. This suggested that reducing the model from eight factors to three did not substantially decrease the fit of the model to the data.

Tables 4 to 6 outline each of the factors, and each question which contributed towards that factor. Questions with absolute loadings lower than .40 were not included[3]. Questions loading on the first factor related to the connections and conflicts between examining and work – over half of the respondents (61.55%) indicated that they worked as teachers outside examining. This factor was labelled "relationships with work outside examining". Questions loading on the second factor related to support from AQA and stress associated with marking; as such, this factor was labelled "pressure and support". Questions loading on the third factor related to rewards associated with marking, such as status, remuneration, opportunities to meet others and so on. This factor was labelled "incentives to examine".

Table 4: Factor 1 - Relationships with work outside examining

Number of questions: 10 Accounts for 17.71% of the variance	Factor loading
Involvement in examining helps to improve my teaching practice	.871
Examining prevents my teaching approach from becoming insular	.808
Examining allows me to see other ways I could approach teaching the subject	.783
Increased work pressure makes fulfilling my examining role difficult	.779
Examining is an important part of my professional development	.773
Increased administration at work makes fulfilling my role as examiner difficult	.724
I feel that my employers value the work I do as an examiner	.607
Gaining an insight into the exam system is of great benefit to me	.592
Work commitments will prevent my examining for the AQA in the future	.558
Examining has increased my understanding of the assessment of the specification	.437

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[3] These figures are based on the un-rotated eigenvalues.

Table 5: Factor 2 - Pressure and support

Number of questions: 10 Accounts for 12.35% of the variance	Factor loading
The AQA does not provide adequate support for my examining duties	.571
Marking standardisation prepares me sufficiently	-.570
I find examining stressful	.568
I feel that my work as an examiner is appreciated by the AQA	-.545
Marking puts me under extreme time pressure	.479
Marking standardisation is inconvenient	.460
Personal commitments will prevent my examining for AQA in the future	.457
Marking standardisation improves my marking	-.441
Marking is an isolated job	.423
I have too much marking to do	.412

Table 6: Factor 3 - Incentives to examine

Number of questions: 6 Accounts for 6.77% of the variance	Factor loading
I would like more opportunities to meet and talk with other examiners	.570
I am not paid enough for the complex marking I do	.543
It is important to me that there is a social aspect to examining	.525
The lack of incentive payments to take on larger loads of marking is unfair	.493
The employment of general markers undermines the status of experienced examiners	.418
The variation in examining fees across subjects is unfair	.415

For each factor, the mean of individuals' scores on the questions loading onto that factor was calculated to create a scale measuring the construct that was relevant to that factor. Questions with negative factor loadings were reversed prior to averaging. In addition, questions which were negatively correlated with intention to continue examine were reversed prior to averaging, for consistency and clarity of interpretation.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the first two scales indicated a good degree of internal consistency, with an alpha of .88 for relationships with work outside examining and .73 for pressure and support. The coefficient for the incentives to examine scale was .32, suggesting a poor degree of internal consistency. This is perhaps unsurprising, however, as there are several incentives to examine, and different incentives may be more or less important to different examiners. Spearman's rho correlations were then used to investigate the relationship between each scale and intention to continue examining. Table 7 summarises the results.

Table 7: Correlation between each factor and intention to continue examining

	Intention to continue examining			
	r_s	Sig.	n	R^2
Relationships with work outside examining	.409	$p < .001$	1354	.167
Pressure and support	-.386	$p < .001$	1355	.149
Incentives to examine	.109	$p < .001$	1355	.012

It seems that the relationships with work outside examining, and the pressure, support and incentives to examine experienced by examiners are all significantly related to whether or not examiners intend to continue examining.

Section 4: Examiners' responses to open-ended questions

Examiners were asked three open-ended questions. For these questions, examiners' responses were coded with a word or phrase that characterised that response. These codes were reviewed and similar codes were clustered together into categories. The number and percentage of responses in each category were then calculated. It should be noted that the percentages of responses in each category do not add up to 100 *per cent* as many examiners offered more than one response to each question. The results of the analysis of examiners' responses to the open-ended questions are outlined in Tables 8, 9 and 10.

Table 8: Results of analysis of responses to "Why did you decide to become an examiner?"

Response	No.	%	Illustrative quotations
Financial remuneration	587	42.91	*"Originally, to gain insight into exam system. Also for extra money. Now it is mainly about the money."*
Insight into the exam/specification/process	538	39.33	*"To gain an insight into what skills exam boards were looking for. When I started there were no feedback meetings or published mark schemes."*
Improve teaching/better prepare candidates for exams	496	36.26	*"To gain an insight into how exams are marked so that I could better prepare my classes and to earn extra money."*
Experience and professional development	283	20.69	*"Initially to inform own teaching and professional development."*
Source of (flexible) work (e.g. retired, maternity leave, illness etc.)	100	7.31	*"When I became part time after having my second child, I felt it would provide some extra income whilst working from home."*
Enjoyment/interest in examining	63	4.61	*"Find examining work interesting and fulfilling."*
Keep in touch with the subject/specification/education	58	4.24	*"I wanted to stay in touch with the 'system'"*
Improve subject knowledge	48	3.51	*"Primarily to improve my knowledge of the subject."*
Use skills/be challenged	38	2.78	*"Keep my mind active in retirement."*
Improve career prospects	31	2.27	*"Professional development and career development - a future alternative to classroom teaching."*
Contribute to society/subject	28	2.05	*"A real concern for justice in marking students' work."*
Colleague suggestion	25	1.83	*"A moderator suggested it - otherwise I would not have known how to get involved."*
Meet other teachers and practitioners	22	1.61	*"To meet other people with expertise in my subject."*
See work from range of candidates	9	0.66	*"School I was in had poor take up of modern languages and I wanted to gain insight into other schools."*
Travel	3	0.22	*"Understand subject examination requirements and to travel to cities."*

The most common reason given for becoming an examiner was remuneration. Gaining insight into the examination system or their specification was also a common reason to beginning examining; many examiners listing this reason also stated that they wished to improve their teaching. A number of examiners also commented that they used examining as a way to gain experience, and as part of their professional development. Several examiners noted that their reasons for examining had changed over time.

Table 9: Results of analysis of responses to "How do you think AQA could make the role of examiner more attractive to new examiners?"

Response	No.	%	Illustrative quotations
Increased remuneration	477	34.87	*"The hourly pay is much less than many professionals would regard as acceptable for their expertise."*
Face-to-face standardising/support	462	33.77	*"I would hate to be a new examiner and have to do the online standardising. Without an opportunity for a real professional dialogue, what's the point?"*
Improved support from AQA and schools	165	12.06	*"Pay a day of teacher release for first timers, regionalised presentations/standardisation."*
Inform teachers/schools about examining (benefits, how to apply etc.)	164	11.99	*"More information about what it involves would attract more. If I had known more I would have done it years earlier."*
Smaller/more flexible allocations, more time, less administration	125	9.14	*"When also teaching full-time the time required for the minimum allocation is not enough so becomes very stressful."*
Improve or increase examiner training	109	7.97	*"I didn't like the 'teach yourself' how to use this piece of software' approach."*
Remove or improve online marking	50	3.65	*"Certainly not bringing in online marking for English literature."*
Increase the perceived value of examining (e.g. through accreditation)	29	2.12	*"Stress need for expertise/qualifications. Not take any old graduate."*
Reward long-serving or good quality examiners	21	1.54	*"Offer bonus to finishing the work early and having an A rating on quality of marking."*
Improve/clarify progression opportunities	8	0.58	*"Encourage and provide opportunities and training to become team leader."*
Allow examiners to have input into the system	7	0.51	*"I work with a small team there is an element of 'we'll do it as we have always done it'. Sometimes it feels like an old boys' network!"*

An increase in the amount of remuneration was the most commonly suggested way of attracting new examiners. Many examiners also suggested that face-to-face standardisation and support would help to attract new examiners. Several of the examiners suggested ways in which AQA and schools could support examiners and make examining easier for teachers. These suggestions were varied and sometimes quite specific to an individual's needs, such as making examiners' earnings tax free, more training, releasing meeting dates earlier, and withdrawing staff from school to allow them to examine.

Table 10: Results of analysis of responses to "How do you think AQA could encourage experienced examiners to continue in their role?"

Response	No.	%	Illustrative quotations
Increased remuneration	345	25.22	*"Treat us like professionals - pay us for the printing of handbooks etc. instead of penny pinching at our expense, or send us hard copies of everything we need."*
Improve support, communications; make examiners feel valued	256	18.71	*"The 'thank you' letter, the speedy processing of payments and swift feedback on their work."*
Remove (or improve) online standardisation	218	15.94	*"Re-introduce group standardisation meetings- I know teachers that have dropped out due to online standardisation."*
Reward long-serving or good quality examiners	168	12.28	*"Reward experience even if it's just a personal thank you letter - not a circular or email message. If I finished today after more than 30 years. I don't believe AQA would even acknowledge the fact!!"*
Remove, do not implement, or improve online marking	130	9.50	*"Resolve the difficulties of online activity - I've found it far more stressful than the actual marking! I have to have help every year."*
Improve/clarify progression opportunities	105	7.68	*"How can I progress though? Is there a structure of progression to become an APE or is it dead man's boots?"*
Smaller/more flexible allocations, more time	80	5.85	*"Allow examiners to ask for different amounts to fit in with other commitments."*
Provide opportunities for face-to-face interaction	64	4.68	*"Personalised support and encouragement, face to face."*
Allow examiners to have input into the system; listen to examiner views	58	4.24	*"Give experienced examiners an input into developing specifications and the curriculum in general."*
Reduce/streamline administration	30	2.19	*"Less admin or more streamlined ICT admin on QMS."*
Improve or increase training	29	2.12	*"For retired teachers (who have the time to mark) more training and opportunity to meet with other examiners would be useful."*
Increase the perceived value of examining (e.g. through accreditation)	11	0.80	*"Membership of an examiners professional body."*
Improve system for allowing examiners to mark more scripts	10	0.73	*"Allow examiners to mark extra papers earlier than the deadline. You can waste 4 to 5 days waiting to get extra allocations."*
Guarantee work for examiners	9	0.66	*"I appreciate being asked to do it every year."*
Hold local standardisation meetings	9	0.66	*"More localised training/standardisation venues. Ditch online standardising. Please no online marking!"*
Keep online marking	1	0.07	*"Simplification of online marking form was a better experience than using paper."*

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What predicts examiners' intentions to continue examining?   Kate Tremain

Increased remuneration was again the most popular suggestion for encouraging experienced examiners to continue examining. Many examiners also commented that they would like better support from AQA, with a wide and varied range of suggestions. Online standardisation was also decidedly unpopular, as was the decision not to pay examiners for the time spent standardising. This may not reflect the views of all examiners, however, as it is possible that those examiners who chose to respond to the questionnaire were those who particularly wanted to express their views about online standardisation. A common theme throughout the responses was that of wanting to feel valued; examiners wanted to feel as though AQA appreciated them and their work. Suggestions as to how that could be achieved included more and better quality communication from AQA, taking into account examiners' views on changes, and swift, good quality feedback on their marking. Similarly, many examiners commented that they would like to be rewarded for good performance – for long service, high quality marking or for taking on extra allocations.

DISCUSSION

Overall, examiners seemed positive about their future with AQA, with the vast majority indicating that they expected, wanted and intended to continue examining. There does not appear to have been a significant increase or decrease in overall intentions to continue examining compared to in 2004, although there is some suggestion that intentions may have become slightly more polarised. Factor analysis of the questionnaire produced three factors, all of which were significantly correlated with whether an examiner intended to continue examining for AQA.

The first factor, relationships with work outside examining, related to the connections and conflicts between outside work and examining and was positively correlated with intention to continue examining. The findings suggest that examiners who experience good relationships between their role as an examiner and their work outside examining, which for many is teaching, are more likely to continue examining. This finding is supported by responses to the open-ended questions, in which improved support from AQA and from schools was a highly popular suggestion for improving the recruitment and retention of examiners.

The second factor, pressure and support, was negatively correlated with intention to continue examining. This suggests that examiners who feel pressured and stressed by their marking, or who do not experience sufficient support from AQA, are less likely to continue examining. Again, this finding is supported by the qualitative findings suggesting that improved support from AQA and from schools would be an effective way of improving recruitment and retention. Further, three of the questions loading on this factor related to marking standardisation, suggesting that examiners with negative experiences of standardising may be less likely to continue as an examiner than examiners who have positive experiences. Removing or significantly improving online standardising was also one of the most common responses to the open-ended questions. However, there is a possible response bias, in that those examiners who responded to the questionnaire may have been those who particularly dislike online standardising, or who examine in subjects where online standardisation is not well-established. Similarly, criticisms regarding support for examiners may reflect a response bias to the questionnaire, in that those who felt unsupported were more likely to respond, viewing it as an opportunity to voice their dissatisfaction, rather than indicating a widespread lack of support from AQA.

The third factor, incentives to examine, related to the rewards associated with marking, and was positively correlated with intention to continue examining, suggesting that examiners who feel that there are positive incentives to examine are more likely to continue examining. This factor had a lower internal consistency than the other two factors. This is perhaps unsurprising, as there are a variety of possible incentives to examine, and it is likely that examiners are differentially motivated by different incentives. Interestingly, however, four out of six of the questions loading on this factor did not significantly correlate with intention to examine when considered individually. The R^2 for the relationship between incentives to examine and intention to continue examining was also low, at .01, suggesting that examiners are not especially motivated by rewards. This was at odds with the qualitative data, however, in which increased pay was the most popular suggestion for improving recruitment and retention of examiners, as well as the most common reason for beginning to examine. This ambiguous relationship between incentives to examine and job satisfaction fits with Meadows' (2004) findings, as well as previous research indicating that pay has a lower than expected influence on intentions to continue in a role (Griffeth et al., 2000).

Similarly, the factors explaining examiners' intentions found in the present study resemble those found by Meadows (2004), who found four factors of pressure, insight, support and pay. The pay factor contained four of the six questions which loaded on the incentives to examine factor. However, in this study, an additional two questions relating to social aspects of examining (not included in the 2004 study) also loaded on this factor. This suggests that incentives to examine are not restricted to financial remuneration. Similarly, the factors of insight and support have more or less been retained, corresponding to the relationships with work outside examining factor and the pressure and support factor respectively. The questions which originally loaded on the pressure factor in the 2004 study have been divided between these two factors. Questions relating to pressure caused by conflicts between teaching and examining loaded on the relationships with work outside examining factor: pressure questions relating specifically to the examining role loaded on the pressure and support factor. Interestingly, many of the questions loading on the factor of relationships with work outside examining had decreased correlations with intention to continue in 2011 compared to Meadows (2004), although the factor as a whole correlated better with intention to continue than the 2004 insight factor. This suggests that a focus on improving satisfaction with several aspects of the factor is more likely to have a significant impact on intention to continue examining than focusing on any individual aspect.

The similarity of these factors to those found by Meadows (2004) suggests that, although the experience of examining has been changed by online standardising and e-marking, the fundamental issues remain the same; however, as the two questionnaires had a number of questions in common, similar findings are perhaps to be expected. The findings also fit well with previous research, suggesting that the role of the examiner is perhaps not as unique as might be expected. For example, the finding that an important determinant of satisfaction is the degree of conflict experienced between one's home and work responsibilities (Magnini, 2009; Pasupuleti et al., 2009) fits neatly with the first factor of relationships with work outside examining. This factor suggests that examiners who experience a high degree of conflict between the demands of their full-time job and their examining work may be more likely to express an intention to leave examining, than those who feel that their examining work compliments their full-time work. Additionally, the findings of this study suggest that a lack of face-to-face support and the introduction of online standardisation is a source of dissatisfaction to a number of examiners. This fits well with the findings that employees experiencing low levels of social support or feelings of isolation are less likely to experience job satisfaction (Houkes et

al., 2001). However, Chamberlain (2008) found in her focus groups that problems with the change to online standardisation were often due to problems in changing work patterns rather than online standardisation itself. As such, it may be this process of change, rather than the lack of face-to-face contact which is impacting on job satisfaction.

It is important to note that this study represents only a sample of the entire examiner population, which may not represent the full population. For example, while approximately 23.66 *per cent* of Team Leaders (as compared to the whole population) responded to the questionnaire, only 10.91 *per cent* of the Assistant Examiners responded. As such, the extent to which these findings are generalisable to all examiners is unclear. It is also possible that the examiners who chose to respond to the questionnaire were those who particularly wanted to make their views heard (for example, regarding online standardisation). Caution in interpretation of the results is advisable; Griffeth et al. (2000) found in their meta-analysis that almost all the factors found to predict intentions to continue in a role were moderated by variables such as gender, age and other demographic factors. As such, these results should not be assumed to be relevant for all examiners, and further analysis should look at breaking down the findings by demographic variables.

Indeed, this study represents part of a broader programme of research. Future analyses of these data will investigate the relationships between examiner satisfaction, marking performance and personality. Future research could also look in more depth at the support that examiners require. The theme of support as found in the open-ended questions in this study was quite broad, and a more detailed picture of the kind of support that examiners desire is likely to be useful. Further investigation into the role of pay and other incentives to examine could also be beneficial. Finally, it is notable that many examiners suggested that their reasons for examining had changed over time. As such, it seems likely that what initially attracts examiners to the profession is different to what encourages them to continue. It may, therefore, be fruitful to consider investigating perceptions of the examining profession among teachers, to increase understanding of the factors involved in examiner recruitment.

To conclude, as the majority of examiners indicated that they were likely to continue examining for AQA, there does not seem to be an immediate issue with examiner retention. However, this study has highlighted some of the areas in which potential problems with examiner retention could arise. For example, increases in the conflict between examining and full-time work, resulting from changes in either role, could discourage examiners from continuing. As such, it is important to consider the potential effects of any changes to the examining role on this conflict. It also appears that a number of examiners were experiencing difficulties in adjusting to the move towards online standardisation. While it is expected that these issues will decrease over time, it may be worth considering ways in which this adjustment process can be made easier. Similarly, ensuring that examiners feel adequately supported in their role is an essential and a continuous process.

Kate Tremain
16th November 2011

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APPENDIX A – COVERING LETTER TO EXAMINERS

Centre for Education Research and Policy

Dear Examiner,

The AQA is keen to ensure the retention and the recruitment of appropriately qualified examiners. To inform this undertaking, the AQA would be grateful if you could spare a few minutes to respond to this questionnaire about examiner satisfaction. You will be asked about your experience of examining. Please try to give an honest and fair impression of both the positive and the negative aspects of examining.

As part of this study, we would also like to investigate the role that personality plays in affecting satisfaction, and what factors lead to satisfaction and dissatisfaction in different examiners. This work forms part of our endeavours to understand the examiner experience, and to understand the type of people that may be attracted to becoming an examiner. As such, you will also be asked to complete a personality questionnaire.

In all cases, **your answers are anonymous and will be used by the Centre for Education Research and Policy to consider overall patterns rather than individual responses**. You may also withdraw your data at any point.

Please return the questionnaire to the AQA in the pre-paid envelope provided within the next two weeks. If you have any questions about this research project please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you very much in anticipation of your assistance and co-operation in this matter.

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APPENDIX B – QUESTIONNAIRE SECTION SENT TO EXAMINERS

Section 2. Your Thoughts and Feelings about Examining

Please tick the box that comes closest to reflecting your opinion about each item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N.A
Examining has broadened my understanding of the specification					
Work commitments will prevent my examining for the AQA in the future					
I find examining stressful					
Marking is an isolated job					
I would like more opportunities to meet and talk with other examiners					
I want to continue examining for the AQA for the foreseeable future					
The lack of incentive payments to take on larger loads of marking is unfair					
The AQA does not provide adequate support for my examining duties					
I have received an incorrect allocation of marking from the AQA					
It is important to me that there is a social aspect to examining					
Examining allows me to see other ways I could approach teaching the subject					
I feel that my employers value the work I do as an examiner					
I feel that I am making an important contribution to society through examining					
Personal commitments will prevent my examining for the AQA in the future					
The employment of general markers undermines the status of experienced examiners					
I am not paid enough for the complex marking I do					
Increased administration at work makes fulfilling my role as examiner difficult					
The variation in examining fees across subjects is unfair					
Examining has increased my understanding of the assessment of the specification					
I expect to examine for the AQA for the foreseeable future					
Marking standardisation prepares me sufficiently					
I intend to examine for the AQA for the foreseeable future					
Examining is an important part of my professional development					
I feel that my work as an examiner is appreciated by the AQA					
Examining prevents my teaching approach from becoming insular					
I have experienced difficulties receiving work to mark from the AQA					
AQA staff are competent in doing their jobs					
Marking puts me under extreme time pressure					

AQA

What predicts examiners' intentions to continue examining?   Kate Tremain

Please tick the box that comes closest to reflecting your opinion about each item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N.A
Marking standardisation is inconvenient					
Gaining an insight into the exam system is of great benefit to me					
I have too much marking to do					
Marking standardisation improves my marking					
Involvement in examining helps to improve my teaching practice					
Increased work pressure makes fulfilling my examining role difficult					
When unsure of how to apply the mark scheme I have received support from my Senior Examiner					

Why did you decide to become an Examiner?

_____

_____

_____

How do you think AQA could make the role of examiner more attractive to new examiners?

_____

_____

_____

How do you think AQA could encourage experienced examiners to continue in their role?

_____

_____

_____

Additional Comments

Are there any other comments you would like to make about any aspect of your experience of examining? (Please insert an extra sheet if necessary)

_____

_____

_____

_____

AQA

What predicts examiners' intentions to continue examining?   Kate Tremain

APPENDIX C - SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR EACH QUESTION AND THE INTENTION TO CONTINUE EXAMINING SCORE

Question	r_s	Sig.	n
Examining is an important part of my professional development	.43	$p < .001$	1323
I feel that my work as an examiner is appreciated by the AQA	.40	$p < .001$	1335
Gaining an insight into the exam system is of great benefit to me	.34	$p < .001$	1334
Personal commitments will prevent my examining for AQA in the future	-.33	$p < .001$	1326
Marking standardisation prepares me sufficiently	.32	$p < .001$	1330
Examining has increased my understanding of the assessment of the specification	.30	$p < .001$	1344
I feel that I am making an important contribution to society through examining	.30	$p < .001$	1341
Examining has broadened my understanding of the specification	.29	$p < .001$	1351
Involvement in examining helps to improve my teaching practice	.28	$p < .001$	1307
Examining prevents my teaching approach from becoming insular	.27	$p < .001$	1301
The AQA does not provide adequate support for my examining duties	-.27	$p < .001$	1329
Marking standardisation improves my marking	.27	$p < .001$	1325
I find examining stressful	-.26	$p < .001$	1336
AQA staff are competent in doing their jobs	.24	$p < .001$	1343
Examining allows me to see other ways I could approach teaching the subject	.21	$p < .001$	1328
Work commitments will prevent my examining for the AQA in the future	-.20	$p < .001$	1327
I have experienced difficulties receiving work to mark from the AQA	-.20	$p < .001$	1344
When unsure of how to apply the mark scheme I have received support from my Senior Examiner	.19	$p < .001$	1323
I have too much marking to do	-.18	$p < .001$	1332
I feel that my employers value the work I do as an examiner	.18	$p < .001$	1312
Marking standardisation is inconvenient	-.16	$p < .001$	1329
I have received an incorrect allocation of marking from the AQA	-.15	$p < .001$	1342
Marking puts me under extreme time pressure	-.14	$p < .001$	1343
Marking is an isolated job	-.13	$p < .001$	1344
Increased work pressure makes fulfilling my examining role difficult	-.12	$p < .001$	1306
I would like more opportunities to meet and talk with other examiners	.06	.017	1345
I am not paid enough for the complex marking I do	-.05	.025	1336
Increased administration at work makes fulfilling my role as examiner difficult	*-.02*	*.207*	*1317*
It is important to me that there is a social aspect to examining	*.02*	*.209*	*1339*
The lack of incentive payments to take on larger loads of marking is unfair	*-.02*	*.232*	*1318*
The variation in examining fees across subjects is unfair	*-.01*	*.329*	*1270*
The employment of general markers undermines the status of experienced examiners	*-.01*	*.386*	*1300*

Table: Comparison of the r_s values for common items in 2011 compared to in 2004

Question	2011 r_s	2004 r_s	Difference
Examining is an important part of my professional development	**0.43**	**0.20**	**0.23**
Personal commitments will prevent my examining for AQA in the future	**-0.33**	**-0.54**	**0.21**
Examining has increased my understanding of the assessment of the specification	0.30	0.23	0.07
Examining has broadened my understanding of the specification	0.29	0.25	0.04
Examining prevents my teaching approach from becoming insular	0.27	0.25	0.02
The AQA does not provide adequate support for my examining duties	-0.27	-0.30	0.03
I find examining stressful	-0.26	-0.28	0.02
AQA staff are competent in doing their jobs	0.24	0.24	0.00
Work commitments will prevent my examining for the AQA in the future	**-0.20**	**-0.47**	**0.27**
I have experienced difficulties receiving work to mark from the AQA	-0.20	-0.18	-0.02
When unsure of how to apply the mark scheme I have received support from my Senior Examiner	0.19	0.25	-0.06
I have too much marking to do	**-0.18**	**-0.29**	**0.11**
I have received an incorrect allocation of marking from the AQA	-0.15	-0.21	0.06
Marking puts me under extreme time pressure	**-0.14**	**-0.27**	**0.13**
Increased work pressure makes fulfilling my examining role difficult	**-0.12**	**-0.32**	**0.20**
I am not paid enough for the complex marking I do	-0.05	-0.12	0.07
Increased administration at work makes fulfilling my role as examiner difficult	**-0.02**	**-0.23**	**0.21**
The variation in examining fees across subjects is unfair	**-0.01**	**-0.12**	**0.11**
The employment of general markers undermines the status of experienced examiners	**-0.01**	**0.10**	**-0.11**

Note: Differences greater than or equal to .1 are highlighted in bold.