

Working with AQA: Becoming an associate

Associate
recruitment
pack



A message from Mark Bedlow, Chief Operating Officer

Thank you for taking the time to express an interest in working with us as one of our associates.

AQA is an organisation whose charitable purpose is to advance education and we focus this purpose on enabling teachers and students to realise their potential. Working with us offers an exceptional opportunity to make a big difference in the world of education; it offers you the opportunity to develop a new or existing set of skills in assessment; and, most importantly, it helps us enable students to progress to the next stage of their lives as they seek to fulfil their potential. It is vital work.

Our ethos is very much built on a set of values and behaviours that allow us to be our best, in ourselves and in the work we do. This pack will give you a clear idea of what being an associate with us is all about.

I wish you every success with your application and I hope that you join the team in our important mission. Thank you.

With best wishes

Mark Bedlow,
AQA Chief Operating Officer



About us



AQA is an independent education charity and the largest provider of academic qualifications taught in schools and colleges. We set and mark the papers for around half of all GCSEs and A-levels taken every year.

Our qualifications are highly valued by employers and universities and enable young people to progress to the next stage of their lives.

Our UK qualifications are also internationally recognised and taught in more than 40 countries around the world.

Our purpose

As an independent education charity, our income is reinvested back into creating and delivering high quality qualifications and assessments.

We also deliver and support other charitable activities including cutting edge assessment research and the [AQA Unlocking Potential](#) programme, which helps develop and inspire young people facing significant challenges in life.

Everything we do contributes to achieving our purpose. We enable teachers and students by providing the framework for great teaching and learning through our specifications, resources, support, question papers and quality of marking.



Working together



At AQA we work in an honest, supportive and collaborative way to achieve great things.

Our culture is built on a set of values and behaviours, the foundations of which enable us to bring the best out of ourselves and the great work that we do.

Together we:

- treat everyone well and with empathy
- achieve amazing things by working together
- are open and honest
- do what we say we're going to do
- continuously learn and improve
- act in the best interests of AQA
- are optimistic and determined
- value everyone's expertise.

Commitments to working in partnership

The following set of commitments are embedded within our teams and underpin our partnership approach to ensure we are invested collectively in delivering accurate assessment outcomes, high quality marking and the smooth delivery of results.

We will at all times:

- act in a courteous and professional manner
- communicate and consult in an appropriate and timely manner
- keep each other informed
- listen, respond to requests for information and feedback within appropriate timescales
- resolve issues together where they arise
- lead meetings to provide the required outcomes and a positive experience for attendees
- work together to improve continuously our processes and advocate change.

Great people proud to
be **making a difference**
together



Being an AQA associate

We asked Viv Milne, Chair and Chief Examiner, to share what it's like to be a senior associate with AQA.

A bit about Viv

My specialist PE teacher training led to a varied career that began as a PE teacher in Essex before a move to Staffordshire. With an absence of PE vacancies there, I spent some time temping in a range of businesses. During a career break, I took on a computing qualification and when I returned to the classroom it was to teach a range of business and IT courses.

Recognising the value of being involved with marking and moderating on my own continuous professional development (CPD), and the impact on my students' achievement, I started as an assistant examiner for AQA GCSE Business over 20 years ago and added further experience moderating ICT soon afterwards.



What Viv enjoys about being a senior associate

AQA recognises achievements and encourages people to make the most of the talents they have; hence the opportunities that have arisen. Aware that I left behind one set of teams when I retired from teaching, working with AQA colleagues and associates has been equally fulfilling. Contributing to the development of qualifications has been the source of immense pride and so rewarding. It's been an absolute privilege to learn the craft from exceptional colleagues. I almost don't recognise the shy, insecure person that stepped into that first standardisation meeting all those years ago.

Why Viv feels the role is an important part of the education system

This whole process involves representing the interests of many stakeholders as we strive to create qualifications that engage students and deliver reliable assessments.

Fitting everything in around work and family commitments is hard work, especially against the backdrop of educational change, but playing our part is an honour and a pleasure. Associates bring new and different perspectives to the work of AQA and hence make a major contribution to AQA's core purpose.

"The opportunities and experiences have taken me on a journey towards a genuine sense of achievement and self-belief."

Our Community



By choosing to work with AQA, not only will you be making a difference to the world of education – you'll also be part of a 30,000 strong associate community who help design our assessments and mark our exams – over seven million of them each year!

During your time with us, there's lots of ways to have your say and be involved in our day-to-day activities to help shape our organisation.

These include:

- attending roadshows and demonstrations
- responding to annual engagement surveys
- contributing to monthly newsletters
- participating in action forums
- reviewing training materials
- undertaking user acceptance testing of core system developments







The associate team – creating assessments

This diagram shows the various roles that make up the **associate team for question paper production**.

All question papers and exam related materials are produced using a stepped process – from planning and drafting, right through to their sign-off for approval. This process involves all of the roles outlined below, who write our assessments and perform quality assurance checks in line with regulatory requirements.





The associate team – exam delivery

This diagram shows the various roles that make up the **associate team for exam delivery**.

Our exams and non-exam assessments (coursework) are marked by 30,000 examiners and moderators. Progress and quality is monitored by groups of senior associates, starting with standardisation and regular checking of marking, to awarding – where grade boundaries are set and applied to each student's mark.



The associate team



■ Chair of Examiners

The Chair is responsible for maintaining standards across all contracted specifications by contributing to the development of the subject strategy and ensuring that specifications meet that subject strategy and the needs of students, teachers and other stakeholders.

■ Chief Examiner

The Chief is responsible for implementing the subject strategy at specification level. The Chief can also be a Lead Assessment Writer or Lead Examiner/Moderator for at least one component within the specification.

■ Lead Assessment Writer

The Lead Assessment Writer is responsible at individual component level for producing high quality assessment materials which meet the guidance provided via the blueprint and specification handbook.

NB For some components the roles of Lead Assessment Writer and Lead Examiner are performed by different people and for others the same person fulfils both roles.

■ Reviser

The Reviser is responsible for checking assessment materials to ensure materials are error free, fit for purpose and aligned with the subject strategy.

■ Scrutineer

The Scrutineer is responsible for testing draft assessments. Assessments are tested from the perspective of a student to ensure that the assessment is complete, valid and appropriate for students.

■ Item Writer

Item Writers are responsible for creating questions, items or tasks and appropriate supporting marking instructions for a question paper in accordance with guidelines provided.

■ Item Assessor

Item Assessors are responsible for submitting a report recommending where revisions to a question paper or item should be made and where errors must be corrected.

■ Lead Examiner/Moderator

Lead Examiners and Moderators are responsible, at an individual component level, for delivering high quality, consistent marking/moderation standards and expert guidance to examining/moderating teams.

■ Team Leader

Team Leaders are responsible for leading their team of Examiners/Moderators through standardisation and ensuring that their team mark to the standard set by the Lead Examiner/Moderator. Team Leaders also mark/moderate their own allocation.

■ Assistant Lead Examiner/Moderator

Assistant Lead Examiners/Moderators are appointed where there are large entries for a specification and these roles are required to monitor the team leaders appointed to a component. Assistant Lead Examiners/Moderators will also mark/moderate their own allocation.

■ Examiner/Moderator

Examiners and Moderators are required to complete standardisation and mark/moderate an allocation to the required standard.



The importance of confidentiality

As an awarding organisation, we must comply with Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition, which include provisions regulating the management of conflicts of interest and confidentiality.

These conditions apply to any person who is currently or previously connected with the development, delivery or awarding of our qualifications.

The effective management of conflicts of interest and confidentiality is key to protecting the reputation and integrity of AQA and our qualifications and assessments.

If you are a full time teacher and teach our specifications, you will still be able to work with us, as long as you declare all the relevant information regarding your teaching role to us.

Please have a look at our [conflicts of interest guidance](#)



Training and support



AQA provides training for our core systems and processes to ensure you are fully equipped to carry out your work.

These include courses on:

- assessment writing and reviewing
- online marking and monitoring
- digital assessment creation
- awarding and statistical analysis

We'll also need you to periodically undertake compliance training in line with our regulatory and internal policies.

You'll be supported in your role by AQA colleagues and will also have the support of the associates team you'll be working with on the specification.

When you receive your contract you will be sent a welcome pack to provide you with lots of useful information and links to get you started.

Fees



Depending on the role that you do, the fees we pay will vary according to the subject and paper you'll be working on.

Information about fees payable for work, such as writing a question paper, will be available at the interview stage. An outline of all other fees payable to you as part of your role will be sent to you with your contract.

You will be paid to attend meetings and events at the request of AQA. These can be during term-

time, school holidays and at weekends.

If you are employed by a school or college, you can claim a teacher release voucher for meetings or events attended during term-time - this means that we will financially reimburse your school or college for letting you out.

We will reimburse travel expenses that are essential for AQA work



Our offices

We have offices in Guildford, Manchester, Harrogate, London and Bath.

Our [office locations](#), maps and useful travel information are available on our website.

The majority of the work that you will be undertaking for AQA will involve you working at home, but you will also be required periodically to attend meetings and training events at our office locations.

The number of meetings that you will need to attend varies depending on the role and the specification. Where possible any face-to-face meetings will be arranged around the team's other commitments. Please be advised that some meetings might take place at weekends.

Contact us:

Email: examine@aqa.org.uk

Phone: 01483 556 161

Helpful links:

AQA website – aqa.org.uk

Centre for Education Research and Practice (CERP) – cerp.aqa.org.uk

Ofqual – the regulator for all qualifications, exams and assessment in England – gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) – jcq.org.uk



