# *Connections Newsletter*

OCR Assessment Specialist news and views

**Ninth edition**
**May 2017**

# In this issue:

If you have any feedback or queries related to the content of this publication, please contact us at: assessor.communications@ocr.org.uk

## Debbie Hancock, Head of Examiners and Assessors, welcomes you to issue 9 of *Connections*

As ever, without your continued commitment to completing you assessment tasks to the highest standard and within challenging timescales we wouldn't be able to make sure our candidates receive the results they deserve.

We look forward to the June 2017 series when we'll be assessing the first of the reformed general qualifications and using the first question papers created using the Right First Time production process.

Although we've recently made a few changes to the names of teams and roles - you may have noticed my own job title has changed - you'll continue to receive the same support. The Examiners and Assessors team is now 'Assessor Management', the Assessment Standards directorate is now 'Assessment', and the new title for the Chair of Examiners is 'Assessment Standards-Senior Manager'. You'll see these terms in use from now on.

In this issue we explain what a conflict of interest is in the world of assessment and tell you about the work we've been doing to help you identify and declare a conflict of interest, if you have one. There's also an update on the progress of our Cambridge Technicals qualification and the latest on the grading of reformed general qualifications. RM Results recognise the contribution the RM Assessor User Group makes to enhancing the functionality of RM Assessor, and we tell you about recent activity in the Assessment Specialist Community.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Connections. Please let us know your thoughts by emailing assessor.communications@ocr.org.uk

Best wishes
Debbie Hancock

# Grading the
## new general qualifications

**Frances Wilson, Principal Researcher in our Research & Technical Standards (RTS) team, explains how we will grade the new qualifications:**

The new GCSEs will use a 9-1 grading system, which replaces the old A*-G scale. The new grading scale is aligned to the old scale at three points: approximately the same percentage of students will receive a grade 7 and above as currently get an A and above, and the same for grade 4 and grade C, and grade 1 and grade G.

Explains Frances: "We'll set the grade boundaries for these grades using statistical predictions to ensure the new grades are aligned to the old scale. Grade 9, the new top grade, will be set differently from other grades, using a formula.

"We've been working with the examinations regulator, Ofqual, and the Joint Council on Qualifications (JCQ) for some time, to finalise the details of the new system. During the summer, RTS will model outcomes at each grade to make sure our outcomes at key grades are as close as possible to prediction. This year we've updated the modelling to take into account the new grading system and the new method for setting grade 9 so the process will be as smooth as possible.

"In 2016 we awarded the first of the new AS qualifications, and this summer will see the first of the new A Levels. They have a different structure from the old ones – the AS is a completely separate qualification, so the marks do not count towards the A Level.

"Unlike at GCSE, at A Level we're going to continue using the same grading scale, so grades will still be awarded at A*-E. Approximately the same percentage of students will achieve a grade A in the new qualifications as those who got a grade A in the old qualifications. The change in structure will simplify how we award the new A*.

"For the old qualifications, candidates had to achieve a grade A across both AS and A2, and 90% of UMS marks at A2. For the new qualifications, AS marks don't count, and there are no UMS marks (because the qualification is linear), so we'll award the A* using statistical predictions, as we currently do for grades A and E."

## GCSE 9-1 grading – standard pass and strong pass

Ofqual has published an explanation of the distinction between a standard pass (grade 4) and a strong pass (grade 5).

- A new GCSE grade 4 will be called a standard pass. A grade 4 standard pass, or above, marks a similar level of achievement to a current grade C, or above.

- Pupils achieving a grade 4, or above, in English and maths will not be required to continue studying these subjects post-16.

- A new GCSE grade 5 or above will be called a strong pass. For schools, the proportion of pupils achieving a grade 5 or above strong pass in English and maths will be one of the headline performance measures.

- The Government will also publish GCSE performance measures at grade 4 and above. The Government will no longer be reporting on the "good pass" in school performance tables.

*"This year we've updated the modelling to take into account the new grading system and the new method for setting grade 9 so the process will be as smooth as possible."*

# Cambridge Technicals
## Update

With a broad range of subjects to choose from, Cambridge Technicals are vocational qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3 for full-time students age 16-19. They're designed with the workplace in mind and provide a strong base for progression onto an apprenticeship, employment, or further education. Our Level 3 Cambridge Technicals provide a high-quality alternative to A Levels making them a perfect component within a student's study programme and with the added bonus of gaining UCAS points, they provide progression to university.

**Cambridge TECHNICALS 2016**

Our 2016 Level 3 suite is already live for teaching and the feedback has been superb. Centres like our choice of units and content, and our student-centric assessment model.

The 2016 Level 2 suite has also been launched for first teaching in September 2017 and we're really pleased to announce that in January the DfE confirmed the Level 2 suite's inclusion in the 2019 Key Stage 5 performance tables.

All the subjects in our 2016 Level 2 and Level 3 Cambridge Technicals suite have been designed to meet the DfE technical guidance and are eligible for Key Stage 5 performance points. The 2016 suite includes a combination of externally and internally assessed content, student-focused internal assessment rules, and visiting moderation, providing centres with feedback and support.

Our product team will be on the road again in the summer term to showcase the 2016 Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications at our FREE vocational conferences to be held in London, Leeds and Coventry. Centres will be able to learn about our specifications, talk to our development team, view our teaching and learning resources, and find out about our assessment model and customer support. Keep an eye out for the booking details which are being released shortly.

To support tutors through the planning and delivery of these qualifications we have a host of face-to-face training events and live online training. We also have subject support videos and live Q&A sessions for tutors to ask any questions they may have.

Download our Cambridge Technicals guide at www.ocr.org.uk/cambridgetechnicals or contact our Customer Contact Centre on 02476 851509 for further information.

**Cambridge TECHNICALS 2012**

We have extended the 2012 Level 2 and Level 3 suite of qualifications. Extending the 2012 suite gives centres a real choice when it comes to selecting post-16 provision. This enables them to provide qualifications that are fit-for-purpose, right for a student's destination, and accessible for students' needs, allowing them to succeed within their post-16 studies.

The 2012 suite is 100% internally assessed, has student-focused internal assessment rules, and visiting moderation providing centres with feedback and support. However, please note that this suite is no longer eligible for Key Stage 5 performance points.

# RM User
# **Group**

**Two years ago, Cambridge Assessment, OCR and RM Results teamed up to create an examiner user group. The aim: to gather and apply valuable insight around the on-screen platform RM Assessor from those who use it the most.**

RM Results' Stefanie Silson brings us up to date on the work of the User Group.

For us at RM Results, the ability to meet and work closely with examiners is invaluable in understanding the needs that impact their on-screen marking ability. Hearing the diversity of wants and differing priorities across a range of subjects enables us to take an empathetic and user-centric approach when considering features being developed for future releases.

*"There is no substitute for getting first-hand feedback from real examiners."*
Kerry Marns, Product Owner, RM Results

There are many examples of feedback we've had from the user groups over the years that we have been able to successfully implement: the ability to select your 'favourite' (frequently used) annotations so you can find them more quickly; the ability to quickly search for messages sent by a particular examiner and the alternative ways to view comments on the side of a script, to name a few.

The real strength of the user group is hearing the shared experiences and having the ability to bring a common voice to the table, beyond looking at features and enhancements. Examiners are able to meet like-minded individuals, share their experiences of on-screen marking with one another and view how those from different disciplines use RM Assessor. This allows us to come up with a solution that benefits all, and bounce these ideas immediately off the end users.

*"It's interesting to hear how different subjects are using our software in different ways, and then trying to come up with solutions that will make everyone's lives easier"*
Christopher Swan, Solution Architect, RM Results

We're on a journey with Cambridge Assessment and OCR, with the aim to continuously improve RM Assessor and the examiner experience. The input we hear from examiners is invaluable in helping us develop software that is truly beneficial, be it helping them mark more efficiently and accurately, to creating a simpler, more user-friendly interface.



**Top 5 tips for the best marking experience**

1. Familiarise yourself with RM Assessor's features by reviewing the user guides. We recommend you do this even if you are a RM Assessor veteran, as we are continually upgrading the system thanks to your feedback.
2. Ensure that your computer meets the recommended specification to run RM Assessor. You can check this via the Web Version System Requirements document.
3. Free up memory space and process power by closing any unused apps or browser windows.
4. Check if your internet bandwidth is sufficient to run RM Assessor, including when others in your household are using the internet on other devices. You can do this by visiting www.speedtest.net.
5. Schedule any software updates to run at a time when you are not using your computer for marking.

**RM Assessor Enhancements for June 2017**

As part of RM Results' commitment to enhancing the performance of RM Assessor a number of improvements to the user experience have been implemented for the June 2017 series.

These developments have been informed by input from the RM Assessor User Group. They include improvements which will help both markers and those involved in standardisation setup (SSU) activities.

For more detail, visit the 'RM Assessor Enhancements 2017' document under the 'On-screen marking' tab of the Assessor Communications website. You will find it in the 'RM Assessor Examiner/Specialist Marker' section.

http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/371548-rm-assessor-enhancements-2017.pdf

*"There is no substitute for getting first-hand feedback from real examiners."*

# Right First Time
## in June 2017

# Assessment Specialist
## Community update

**Candidates to sit the first examination papers produced by the Right First Time production process**

Less than two years after its launch in December 2015 the benefits of the Right First Time (RFT) process will be realised this summer when candidates sit the first Right First Time-produced examination papers.

83% of this summer's question papers have been created under RFT, the other 17% were produced under the former Enhanced Material Production Process (EAMP). The whole production process was completed in 14 months, compared to 18 months under the EAMP system. While not only streamlining the process to eight stages and speeding up the movement of the assessment material through the stages, with RFT we've seen a major reduction of 19% in the need of typesetting amendments. This means that we've produced high quality, fit-for-purpose question papers in a fraction of the time it used to take.

Since our last Connections newsletter in November 2016, not only has our Yammer community changed its name from Examiners and Assessor Community to Assessment Specialist Community, but the Community Manager has also changed. Laura-Jane Boshell has stepped-up into the role whilst Lisa Hodgkinson is on maternity leave. *Laura tells us more….*

With community membership holding steady at just over 6300 members, it's clear it is a well-established network that continues to provide useful support for its members. With over 670 members actively engaged and 125 'likes' in March, it is clear that it's a well-used beneficial space that allows Assessment Specialists to discuss issues, share ideas and experiences and generally support each other.

Live engagements sessions, particularly before a big summer series, remain the highlight of the year. Leo Shapiro, OCR's new Chief Executive was in the community on 26th April and the RM Results team joined us on 5 May, to discuss new features and enhancements and provide advice and top tips guidance. RM Results have also committed to continue their regular fortnightly postings throughout the summer, featuring 'Meet the helpdesk team', FAQs and updates on marking trends.

| Assessment Specialist Community Stats (March): | |
|---|---|
| Members: | 6367 |
| Likes: | 125 |
| Members Engaged: | 670 |
| Groups: | 75 |

In addition to the Assessment Specialist community we also have a dedicated network for prospective Assessment Specialists, where they can get a better understanding of what it's like to mark, moderate or verify. There is also a range of information for them to browse and an array of recruitment information including details of the latest vacancies.

We held a live engagement session with the Recruitment team on 7 April, which was a great success! We had 38 members actively engaged, posting questions, likes, following conversations, clicking on links and creating groups. We hope to convert several members to markers for this summer series.

For further information about our communities or if you would like to become a member, please email assessor.communications@ocr.org.uk

# Conflict of
# **Interest Explained**

Charlotte Simkins, Assessment Specialist Quality Manager, explains the work we've been doing to improve the conflict of interest declaration process and provides answers to some of the questions we're often asked about conflict of interest.

A conflict of interest arises when you (or someone with whom you have a family, personal, or professional relationship) are in a position to make, in the eyes of an informed and reasonable observer, a personal gain, whether financial or non-financial, from undertaking an assessment task for OCR. This is, of course, aside from the legitimate fees and expenses you receive from OCR for undertaking the task.

This doesn't mean that there is a presumption that you would seek such a personal gain from your assessment activity for OCR, but to protect the integrity of our assessments, and the reputation of OCR, we need to be able to identify whether or not a conflict of interest exists.

Our responsibility is to identify, manage, and take reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of a conflict leading to an adverse effect on an OCR assessment or our reputation for providing fair assessments for all candidates.

To enable you to declare conflicts of interest as easily as possible we've been reviewing the declaration process to make it simpler for you to identify if you have a conflict of interest you need to declare and to submit your declaration.

## What will you have to do?

When invited to undertake an assessment task, you'll need to declare if you have, or do not have, a conflict of interest associated with doing that task.

You'll need to submit a declaration form each time you are invited to undertake an assessment task, even if you are declaring that you have no conflict of interest.

When you are invited to undertake an assessment task, the invitation will direct you to complete a Conflict of Interest Declaration form. The form has been redesigned and will be hosted by Survey Monkey. The form asks questions, accompanied by guidance notes, to help you determine whether you have any conflicts of interest to declare. You need to fill in the form and submit it, even if you answer 'No' to each question.

## How do you decide if you have a conflict of Interest?

There are a number of circumstances where a conflict of interest can occur and these are explained in the declaration form:

- If you are preparing candidates for an OCR assessment (or are related to someone who is taking an OCR assessment) and you have been involved in producing the assessment materials (eg question paper and mark scheme) for that assessment.

- If you are preparing candidates for any OCR qualifications which are moderated or marked in hard copy, as there will be identify information about the candidate on the scripts or coursework you receive.

- If you have had a relationship with an examination centre, for example a school or college, within the last five years. For example, you may have been employed by, or provided training to, that centre within this period.

- If you have been, or are currently, involved in the preparation of a learning resource (for example a text book or learning package) designed to support the preparation of learners and persons likely to become learners, for a qualification you have been involved in producing the assessment materials for. You are allowed to create material which is only for use when preparing you own learners for the assessment, for example classwork and homework material for your own students, but you still need to declare this.

- If you are involved in delivering generic subject training, or producing generic subject learning resources, for a third party, such as a publisher, when you have knowledge of confidential assessment material for an OCR specification.

## What happens once you've submitted the Conflict of Interest Declaration form?

In almost every instance you will carry on to complete the assessment task. We would only contact you if we needed further information and we would only stop you undertaking a task when absolutely necessary. Our preferred approach is to risk-assess conflicts and put in place appropriate mitigations to allow the task to be complete.

## What can't you do?

If you are involved in producing confidential assessment materials for an OCR specification, or have access to those materials, we cannot allow you deliver advice, training or guidance on that specification. This includes face-to-face or webinar sessions, website and social media postings and blogs, informal training provided to colleagues, or training delivered on behalf of a publisher or other third party provider.

**Look out for the new-style declaration form when it starts to appear with your assessment task invitation. We're confident that these changes will make submitting your conflict of interest declaration much simpler.**

# New Cambridge National in
**Information Technologies**

It's been a busy month for the product development team. Following the DfE's review of ICT Technical Awards, we took the opportunity to consult widely with schools, employers and other qualification users. The overwhelming outcome of this consultation was that we should bring forward redevelopment plans and launch our brand new qualification, aligning it to the latest Key Stage 4 Curriculum and innovative use of technology to best equip students for their future.

Our new qualification draws directly on this feedback to bring together the most important features of the Cambridge National in ICT with the latest thinking in information technology teaching, learning and assessment. We are very excited about the result:

- A combined Level 1 and 2 qualification – retaining assessment accessible at both levels.

- Core content focussed on using technologies to manage data and work in a project lifecycle – which centres told us would add great value to the KS4 curriculum.

- A holistic delivery approach – enabling teachers to relate the skills and understanding to contexts that are meaningful for young people.

- Emphasis on transferable skills and adaptability – building confident IT users resilient to rapid technology advances.

The qualification consists of two assessment units; one internally assessed and moderated and one that is examined.

Data is now part of our everyday lives and it's particularly relevant to a Key Stage 4 audience. This qualification will, for example, help give learners an understanding about how their data is being used when they download a 'free' app. It will also develop their transferable IT skills and allow them to show their creativity in the way they present their outcomes. This might be a blog, a webpage, an interactive presentation – but it needs to engage and be relevant to their audience

Ros Kaijaks, our Deputy Head of Vocational Qualification Products, said "As soon as the DfE told us it was reviewing these qualifications we realised that the timings were challenging for everyone concerned. That's why we worked quickly to create the new qualification so centres had the maximum amount of time to prepare for delivery this September. The result is a qualification that not only reflects today's IT User requirements, but will also prepare learners for their world of work in the future."

OCR is currently recruiting for a variety of roles for the new qualification and will shortly be recruiting assistant examiners and moderators.

To see the full specification and find out further information including free CPD events visit the page http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/vocational-education-and-skills/cambridge-nationals-information-technologies-level-1-2-j808/

# Redirection of deliveries to an
## InPost Locker via DHL OnDemand

# Register for
## SMS alerts

# Are you keeping your contact details up-to-date?

In the November 2016 and the January 2017 series' we successfully piloted the DHL InPost Locker service. This is now part of OCR's standard DHL service offer, providing you with extra control over your DHL deliveries by enabling you to redirect your parcel to a local parcel locker for collection.

To use this service you'll need to provide your mobile phone number to the Assessment Specialist who is sending you the parcel so that this can be entered when the sender books a collection using the Online Shipping Tool.

When the parcel is ready for delivery you will receive an SMS alert to let you know. If you also provide an email address you can receive an email notification as well as an SMS alert.

The SMS message contains an active link to the DHL OnDemand website where you can opt to collect the parcel from an InPost Locker. You also have the choice to re-schedule the delivery to your home at a more convenient time or you can re-direct the parcel for collection from a DHL Service Point if you prefer.

If you opt for re-direction to an InPost Locker you receive a unique PIN to unlock the locker where your parcel is waiting for you to collect it.

InPost Lockers are placed at over 1000 locations across mainland UK. Locations include service stations, supermarkets, newsagents, and retail parks and can be used twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Once you have opted to collect from a locker you have a 72 hour window within which to collect your parcel.

Visit the InPost Parcel Lockers guide in the Courier services tab of the Assessor Communications website for further information about this service.

**Are you marking on-screen, but haven't registered for a 'start marking' alert?**

If you register for this service, as soon as the mark scheme is uploaded into RM Assessor you will receive a text message notifying you the mark scheme for your unit is available and you can start marking.

This means that you don't need to keep logging in to RM Assessor to check if the mark scheme is available and you can get started without delay at the earliest possible moment.

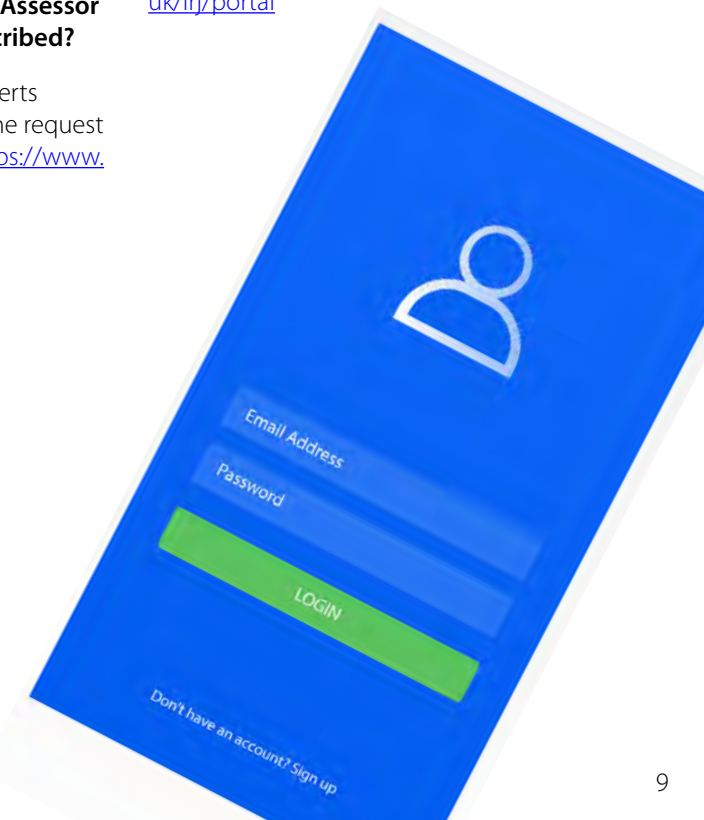**Why not join the other 2000 RM Assessor markers who have already subscribed?**

To sign up for SMS mark scheme alerts please register your details using the request form which can be found here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9R6BLK9

You now self-manage the updating of your contact details via the Assessment Specialist Portal. To ensure that you receive all communications related to your assessment task, it's really important that you capture changes to your email address, phone number or postal address in the Portal as this is where we gather your contact information from.

Why not log into the Assessment Specialist Portal to check?

https://asportal.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/irj/portal