

WJEC/CBAC makes the grade with DRS e-Marker® technology



EDUCATION ELECTIONS CENSUS

Company

- WJEC/CBAC a leading Awarding Body that offers qualifications in academic and work related subjects in England and Wales

Challenges

- Implement e-marking without compromising quality
- Implement simpler logistics
- Reduce turnaround times

Solution

- e-Marker® and its associated services were contracted for a permanent solution

Implementation

- Tight physical control of scripts
- Protect and enhance marking standards
- Track marking performance by examiners

Results

- Eliminated postal distribution of scripts to examiners
- Continuous monitoring of marking
- Efficient quality control
- Reduced marking turnaround times
- Positive marker survey feedback

“ DRS are very good. They come in and talk to the subject officers and go through the exam paper and work out the design changes”

“We had some very good face-to-face training provided by DRS for senior examiners. For other examiners we used the very good computer-based training supplied by DRS”

Hugh Lester
Assistant Director - (Business Development) WJEC

Secure and efficient process

Examination boards have much to gain from online marking. When WJEC wanted to introduce e-marking, it wasn't going to compromise with quality.

WJEC, formerly the Welsh Joint Education Committee, is a leading awarding body providing examinations in England and Wales. It offers qualifications in academic and work-related subjects including the Welsh baccalaureate, GCSE and AS/A2 level.

Before 2004, manual marking saw examination centres sending scripts to examiners by post. During the following 2 years, a trial of a limited number of scripts covering maths, computing and ICT subjects were marked on-screen.

Like other examination boards since, WJEC had discovered the general benefits of electronic marking including simpler logistics, reduced turnaround times and sound monitoring. It decided to seek a permanent e-marking solution for these subjects and others.

Detailed evaluation

A thorough review of electronic marking systems took place in Autumn 2009, and a contract for the use of e-Marker® and its associated services was awarded to DRS. As well as eliminating postal distribution of scripts to examiners, WJEC wanted to implement the monitoring of marking quality and progress which e-Marker® allows.

The new DRS e-Marker® service began in Summer 2010 for maths, computing and ICT. The preparatory work included advice on examination paper design, training in the use of e-Marker® and full testing of sample scripts. This ensured that the system worked smoothly from scanning to marking.

“We realised very quickly that there were a number of advantages to electronic processing”

Hugh Lester
Assistant Director - (Business Development) WJEC

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About DRS

DRS has over 40 years' experience in delivering data capture projects around the world. Specialising in examination and assessment processing and electronic marking, it also provides solutions for elections and censuses.

Systems are implemented using the company's extensive expertise in document design, printing, award winning scanning and image capture technologies, software, logistics, project management and consultancy.

As a pioneer of electronic marking solutions, DRS' e-Marker® offers a variety of modular and scalable electronic marking approaches for awarding and professional bodies, including the UK's largest awarding body, the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and the Welsh awarding body WJEC. Electronic marking is now gaining acceptance in many regions of the world and DRS has completed successful e-Marker® pilots in several countries including Africa and India as a precursor to further expansion overseas.

Segmented marking

Marking scripts on-screen ensures a highly secure and efficient process. The examination centres send batches to DRS for scanning and processing. A DRS project team works closely with WJEC to ensure smooth running of the service.

A major difference between traditional and electronic marking is segmentation. Rather than ask examiners to mark whole scripts, they are given allocations of questions from different scripts to mark instead. DRS segments scripts according to WJEC requirements, ensuring that each script is assessed by a number of different individuals, and allowing marking specialisation when appropriate.

The examiners can now concentrate wholly on marking without having to undertake any of the other time-consuming tasks associated with processing and despatching marked scripts. Many examiners who had initial doubts about switching from paper were quickly convinced of the benefits.

"The DRS e-Marker® system allows examiners to concentrate on what they're paid to do - mark"

"Once the examiners actually use the system, they are usually converted very quickly. In some subjects we are now able to complete the marking within a reduced timescale"

Hugh Lester
Assistant Director - (Business Development) WJEC

Continuous monitoring and improvements

Reviewing marking progress in real-time is now possible and this is backed up by robust quality methodologies. The use of pre-marked test questions helps ensure marking accuracy. Senior examiners can also compare previously marked answers and take corrective action.

"With e-Marker®'s extensive quality methodology, we are able to monitor how examiners are marking at very regular intervals".

Since 2009, the DRS e-marking technology has expanded into other subjects such as geography and A-level english, where its use in the marking of longer answers has been implemented.

The relationship with DRS has proved excellent for WJEC, supported by positive feedback from marker surveys and post-examination season reviews.

"The DRS technology is a very clear easy system to use. I'm hugely impressed by how responsive and contactable the DRS team that work with us are" says Mr Lester.