

# Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZimSEC)

DRS technology helps ZimSEC to save costs and ensure that results are published to the candidates in a timely manner.



EDUCATION ELECTIONS CENSUS

### Company

- ZimSEC is a state owned organisation under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. It is an internationally accredited examination board.

### Challenges

- Support ZimSEC's strategic aim of technological advancement
- Continue the advances in marking quality and speed, initiated by belt-marking
- Improve the overall control of the marking series, to ensure that results are published in a timely manner.

### Solution

- To support ZimSEC to set-up their own infrastructure
- To support marking in the regional marking centres
- To scan and manage the workflow associated with script processing.

### Implementation

- Successful pilot test
- Training for examiners and ongoing support

“ Before, the old conveyour belt system (of manual marking) took 12 to 14 days per subject. With DRS e-Marker® it takes just three to four days per subject. ”

**John Maramba**  
Deputy Director

ZimSEC is a state owned organisation under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. It is an internationally accredited examination board. Its syllabuses were evaluated by the National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (NARIC) in the UK, and found to be equivalent to the General Certificate of Education Standard offered in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, United States of America and the other English speaking countries, hence the internationally recognised qualifications offered by the Council.

### The Challenge

ZimSEC approached DRS in 2011 to explore the opportunity afforded by electronic on-screen marking. ZimSEC has innovation as a core value and part of their vision is to advance through technology.

ZimSEC had already successfully introduced belt-marking as a quality initiative. This was delivering benefits in terms of both marking speed and quality, but was exacting a logistical burden in terms of paper movement.

The challenge for DRS e-Marker®, therefore, was to:

- Be in charge, improve the marking time and take control of the overall marking process;
- Support ZimSEC's strategic aim of technological advancement;
- Continue the advances in marking quality and speed, initiated by belt-marking; and
- Improve the overall management of the marking series, to ensure that results were published in a timely manner.

### The Project

Following a successful pilot in October 2011, ZimSEC progressed to the live marking of two subjects (Integrated Science and Mathematics) in the June 2012 examination series for over 50,000 candidate scripts. Building on this success, growth has continued and it is estimated that over a million scripts will be scanned and marked in 2015 across fourteen subjects.

With DRS support and guidance, ZimSEC have set-up their own technology infrastructure in Harare, to support marking in the regional marking centres as well as a script processing bureau, to scan and manage the script workflow.

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## Results

- Over 2.2 million scripts have been scanned
- Developed their skills sets
- Improved quality assurance of marking and its progress in real-time
- Increase cost saving

## About DRS

DRS has over 45 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.

Since 2013 ZimSEC have delivered all Marker and Senior Marker training themselves, ensuring that e-Marker® is a sustainable solution. In November 2014, just under 2,400 Markers used e-Marker® in the regional marking centres.

To date, ZimSEC have scanned over 2.2 million scripts – that's over 20 million sheets. The ZimSEC technology and script processing teams have significantly developed their skill sets, ensuring that ZimSEC now delivers these functions independently of DRS.

## Benefits

The requirements and structure of belt-marking was explored in detail by both ZimSEC and DRS, and DRS developed e-Marker® to ensure that the benefits provided by belt-marking could be transferred across to the electronic on-screen marking environment.

"ZimSEC has progressively realised an improvement in the quality of marking, an increase in marker throughput and we have gained increased control and ownership of the process."

(V. T. Mguni, Examinations Administration Manager)

Since the June 2013 series, the electronically-marked components have been the first ZimSEC components to complete the marking process, ensuring that results were published to the candidates in a timely manner.

"Before, the old conveyor belt system (of manual marking) took 12 to 14 days per subject. With DRS e-Marker®, it takes just three to four days per subject".

(John Maramba, Deputy Director)

The reduced marking window means that ZimSEC have made cost savings through the reduction of accommodation and subsistence assistance normally provided to markers while they are in the marking centres.

Following a successful transition, with support and guidance from DRS, ZimSEC are now completely self-sufficient in their usage of e-Marker®, allowing them to determine the pace and timing of transferring subjects from the paper-based marking to electronic on-screen marking.