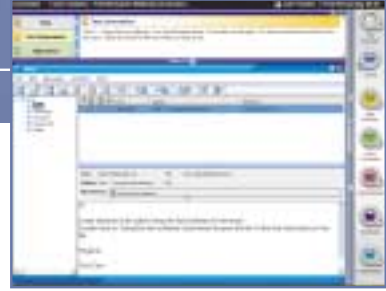


Assessment Services



Assessment, the measurement of achievement by individuals and institutions, is critical to education. It shapes opportunities for learners and is a key component in the raising of educational standards. RM is working with the QCA and a number of examination boards to develop some innovative approaches to student assessment.

Background

Assessment is undergoing a transformation. Processes are being streamlined, and new forms of assessment are becoming available. Technology is key to these changes, which are designed to foster innovation, improve quality and increase efficiency.

The transformation programme is driven by:

- The rapid development of technology.
- The competitive dynamics of awarding bodies looking to innovate and create new products.
- The explicit support of the Working Group on 14–19 Reform, the QCA and the DfES.

RM is working with assessment partners to build core platforms for the exam industry:

1. The delivery of onscreen tests.
2. e-Marking and workflow services.

QCA – Onscreen testing

The need

The QCA was looking for a partner to work on a £23M project to create and deliver an innovative, onscreen ICT test for Key Stage 3, providing both formative and summative information. The test delivery system had to be capable of being installed in all secondary schools in England, enabling secure high-stakes ICT tests to be delivered to over 600,000 pupils in 4,000 schools each year.

The solution

The RM-led consortium is building an innovative, process-based onscreen test for the QCA to deliver KS3 tests in ICT. This will be the most significant use of onscreen and computer-based testing techniques in English secondary schools.

The KS3 ICT test is designed to test pupils' ICT capability against the national curriculum programme of study. Pupils can demonstrate their ICT capability by applying technology to solve problems, analyse information, develop ideas, create models and exchange information.

The technical pilot took place in 94 secondary schools across England during 2004. A further pilot, involving 500–600 schools across the country, will take place in summer 2005.

In 2005 the test will assess ICT capability across levels 3–6 of the national curriculum, and provide a national curriculum level. The practice test also provides detailed feedback for each pupil and their teacher.

The test delivery system has the capability to support the delivery of additional onscreen tests in other subjects. RM is working with leading examination boards to pilot onscreen testing in schools in other subjects, beginning with Key and Basic Skills and then extending to GCSE and GCEs.

"If we are looking at learning that is adaptive, this has great potential in other subjects, not just ICT."

*Dr Roger Highton, QCA teachers' group
QCA – Onscreen testing*

Assessment Services

UCLES – Processing examination scripts

The need

UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate), one of the UK's leading awarding bodies, was seeking a partner for a major 'e-Marking' project to modernise the marking process with new workflow and technology for examiners.

The solution

Following a successful pilot project, in August 2004 RM became the strategic partner of UCLES in the development and delivery of e-Marking services.

Working in partnership with UCLES, RM has built an e-Marking system which transforms the marking phase by combining assessment expertise with the latest in technology and services. It delivers benefits of quality control, security and transparency, and flexibility in the way scripts can be marked. The system is built around a powerful workflow tool and operates at the heart of the examination process.

The flexible architecture of RM's e-Marking system enables continuing change in the marking process, including;

- Scanning marks manually entered on paper score sheets.
- Inputting marks onscreen from paper test sheets.
- Marking responses to computer based tests.

RM's e-Marking system will ultimately enable any awarding body to mark any response – whether from computer based tests, traditional paper scripts or scanned script images – with appropriate technology support.

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"It is clear that ICT services will be essential in modernising the processes that underpin the delivery of examinations."

Simon Lebus, CEO, UCLES

RM's strengths

RM's assessment strategy is focused on partnership. RM is not an awarding body, and works in partnership with assessment experts to bring together all available skills and expertise on the projects.

RM has a long track-record of delivering services in schools, where large volume assessment takes place. Schools can be complex environments with varied patterns of hardware, networks, applications and users, and RM's nationwide technical and operational support ensures that applications run reliably and effectively in schools.

RM can develop a range of electronic assessments from simple multiple choice to complex simulations that engage and assess performance across subjects and age groups.

With the largest support capability in education, RM has the scale to deliver support and training across the UK, so large numbers of teachers, examiners and centres can be supported throughout pilots to national rollout and beyond.

RM has the specialist technical knowledge, including system integration and knowledge of data standards, to ensure that applications work successfully across the different back office structures and complex legacy systems of the examination organisations.

RM's project management skills enable successful management of high-stakes, complex projects. From a trial in 94 schools, through a pilot, to a national rollout in 4,000 schools, RM has the resources to manage each part of the project to the same exacting standards.

