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PEARSON AND EDEXCEL CREATE NEW ORGANISATION TO MODERNISE EXAM MARKING AND PROCESSING

Pearson, the world's leading education company, and Edexcel, one of the UK's leading examining and awarding bodies, today announce an agreement to modernise examination marking and processing in the UK.

Under the terms of the agreement a new organisation, London Qualifications, will take responsibility for all Edexcel's existing courses and qualifications including GCSEs, GCE A and AS levels, GNVQs, NVQs and BTEC Higher National Certificates and Diplomas. Pearson will own 75% of London Qualifications and the Edexcel Foundation will own the remaining 25%. Pearson plans a multi-million investment programme over the next five years through London Qualifications to introduce a technology-based approach to marking and processing examinations.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority has accredited and will regulate London Qualifications, which will make no changes to the current Edexcel processes until the 2003 summer examinations cycle is complete, to ensure full continuity of service.

London Qualifications will be led by Martin Cross, the former Director General of the OCR examinations board, as Chairman and John Kerr, the current Chief Executive of Edexcel, as Chief Executive. Edexcel's 800 employees will transfer to London Qualifications. Garry Hawkes will remain as Chairman of the Edexcel Foundation, which will continue to operate as a charitable organisation providing grants to the education sector with a particular focus on vocational education and training.

Over the past 50 years, Pearson has developed a technology-based approach to marking and processing examinations which is used extensively in the US and around the world. In this process every completed examination paper – whether it contains multiple choice or essay-type questions - can be scanned, made available to markers on screen and stored electronically. This enables examination papers to be marked and results to be reported faster, more reliably and more securely than in a traditional paper-based process.

London Qualifications now plans to implement this approach in the UK over the next five years and the potential benefits to schools and students include:

- **Quality:** Examinations can be marked by two or more examiners simultaneously, enabling the awarding body to monitor marking accuracy in real time.
- **Security:** Examination papers are stored electronically, reducing the risk of lost papers.
- **Transparency:** Individual examination papers are tracked through the reporting process and marked scripts can be returned to candidates and teachers.
- **Speed:** The process can reduce the time required to mark and process examinations and publish the results.

Martin Cross, Chairman of London Qualifications, said: “The creation of London Qualifications provides a real opportunity for a step-change improvement to our examination processes. We are determined to grasp that opportunity for the benefit of students, teachers and parents.”

Edexcel’s Chief Executive, John Kerr, said: “The examinations system has been under intense pressure for some time. We have proved we can cope with this, but coping isn’t good enough. If we are to deliver the quality and standards of service that teachers, students and parents deserve, we need investment, skills and technology that we cannot deliver alone. With its commitment to education, its testing experience and its proven technology, Pearson is the obvious partner and this agreement enables us to modernise our processes and ensure continuity.”

Clive Hay-Smith, President of Pearson assessment and testing, said: “Edexcel has recognised the need for significant investment in technology and new processes and we are delighted to make this long term commitment to UK education. The UK’s world-class qualifications deserve world-class examination processes and through this partnership with Edexcel we are determined to play our part in realising that vision.”

Ends

NOTES FOR INFORMATION

1. Any school, teacher or student with questions about the new organisation can visit <http://www.edexcel.org.uk> or call our dedicated customer information line on 0870 2409800
2. The Board of London Qualifications will have the following members:

Martin Cross	Chair, Police Promotions Examinations Board Former Director General, OCR
John Kerr	Chief Executive, Edexcel
Garry Hawkes	Chairman, Edexcel Foundation and Vice-Chairman London Qualifications
Dennis Stevenson	Chairman, Pearson; Chairman HBOS
David Bell	Director for People, Pearson; Chairman, the FT Group
Clive Hay-Smith	President and CEO, Pearson Assessments & Testing
Stephen Mullarkey	Director of Finance & Company Secretary, Edexcel
Martyn Leese	Managing Director, Pearson Assessments & Testing (UK)
Rosemary Gray	Principal, Walsall College of Arts & Technology
Stephen Grix	Corporate Director – Education, Tower Hamlets
Chris Husbands	Professor of Education, University of Warwick

1. About Edexcel

Edexcel develops a range of academic and vocational qualifications, preparing course specifications, assessing, examining and providing quality control of qualifications and certifying achievement. It was formed in 1996 through the merger of the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the UK's leading provider of vocational qualifications, and the University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (ULEAC), one of the major GCSE and GCE examining bodies.

In 2002, more than 4,000 schools, 450 further education colleges, 80 higher education institutes and 800 employers ran Edexcel courses. These accounted for 3.5 million exam entries and registrations, and 4.6 million papers, that were processed and marked by 15,000 examiners and moderators. Edexcel employs approximately 800 permanent staff and up to 1,000 temporary staff in peak processing periods.

Edexcel is a registered charity. In 2001 it reported an operating loss of £7 million on sales of £92 million.

For more information, visit www.edexcel.org.uk.

2. About Pearson

Pearson is an international media company with market-leading businesses in consumer publishing (The Penguin Group), business information (The Financial Times Group) and education (Pearson Education).

Pearson Education accounts for about two-thirds of Pearson's annual sales (of £4.3 billion in 2002) and is the world leader in educational publishing, testing and technology. Every year:

- One in three schoolchildren in the US study reading and maths with one of our programmes;
- We publish 2,500 new higher education textbooks;
- 40 million people learn English as a second language through our Longman imprint;
- 40,000 schools use our software to manage their timetables, run their accounts and monitor the educational progress of their students;
- We process, mark, report and analyse the results of 40 million school tests covering 300 million multiple-choice answer sheets and 85 million essays every year.

We have more than 50 years' experience in educational testing. In the US, we mark school tests for 20 states, the only nationwide school test (the National Assessment of Educational Progress) and the American College Testing programme. We are also working with four states to pilot online student testing. In the UK, our customers include the Teacher Training Agency and the QCA.

For more information, visit www.pearson.com