

17 June 2019

King Edward VI School
19303

GCE Maths examination security

We know that some of your students sat our GCE Maths examinations last week and I wanted to update you on the actions that we have taken to ensure that the integrity of the examinations have been maintained.

As you may know, on the morning of 14 June, we confirmed that blacked out images of two exam questions from our A level Maths Paper 3 on Statistics and Mechanics appeared on social media before the exam started. We now know the paper was also shared on closed networks before the exam, and we are currently conducting face to face interviews with the small number of people on closed networks who had access to the full version of the paper from where these images came from.

Whilst it is of course impossible to be completely sure who has seen it, we have no evidence that this was widely shared and we are completing a thorough investigation. We know the vast majority of students want to get results through hard work and fair effort. As a result we are always contacted by students who have been offered materials ahead of the exam and very few students have come to us through this route.

We took decisive action to secure the Paper 3 exam that was due to be sat that afternoon. Because of our enhanced security measures we were able to quickly narrow the source of the leak to a specific geographic area. We visited every school in that area and found one centre in serious breach of correct practice. As a result of further investigations, we retrieved sufficient information to inform the police and they will now investigate this as a criminal matter. We are extremely grateful for the support and cooperation of the schools we visited in these very unfortunate and difficult circumstances. There is no evidence that this linked to previous security breaches that have occurred.

We are marking all questions from all students to look at how they have performed. For questions that were made available prior to the exam (question 4, on both paper 31 and 32), we have the option to remove these from the overall assessment, should we find evidence that this is necessary to ensure a level playing field.

In addition, we will undertake additional statistical analysis once the marking is completed which will be used to both consider individual student performance as well as that of the whole cohort. Together with the detailed interviews and investigations that are taking place with those that we believe are involved, we will be able to identify whether there are patterns in the results that are unusual for a particular centre or student. For those individuals found to have been involved in malpractice, we will follow the JCQ guidance which can include withholding results for individual students.

Separately, some candidates have also raised concerns about the level of difficulty of

Paper 2. Grade boundaries are set on every paper each year in order to allow for any differences in the level of difficulty of an exam paper from one year to the next. As we do for every exam series, we will be analysing the evidence from a review of students' scripts and statistical data to ensure that the grade boundaries are set fairly and reflect the level of demand of this year's papers.

We recognise that exam season is a stressful time for students. We are reviewing any further actions that we need to take to further protect the security of the remaining Further Maths papers and will be in touch with Examinations Officers separately, should any action be required.

I know that the vast majority of students take their examinations in good faith and will be concerned about the potential impact that this might have on their grades, again, I would like to reassure you and them that we will take all of the necessary action to ensure fairness to all students.

We do understand that you may have questions from your students and their parents that you may want us to help you address, so we will be posting regular updates on our website to support you. We will also provide you a letter that you may wish to use for parents and students to help you in explaining the situation.

Should you have any questions or would like to discuss the matter further in person please do not hesitate to email or call me on assessment.feedback@pearson.com or 0344 463 2931.

Kind regards,

Sharon Hague
Senior Vice President
UK Schools