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12 March 2014

**Ref: OCR – Undertaking (March 2014)**

**Undertaking given by Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations ('OCR') to the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), in accordance with Condition B8 of the General Conditions of Recognition, September 2013 ('the Conditions').**

## **Background**

OCR is currently in the process of implementing revised systems and processes relating to the marking of our regulated qualifications including GCE and GCSE. Following the summer 2013 examination series OCR identified and reported to Ofqual two separate marking errors relating to their transition to an online marking system: Firstly, an IT system issue in relation to the inputting of marks where the examination paper offered a choice of questions and the examiner was required to select a "No Response" answer if appropriate but this was selected in error; and secondly, arising from the training, standardisation, and monitoring of examiners in relation to some examination papers.

In view of the forthcoming summer 2014 examination series; the serious potential implications of marking errors on the standard of qualifications and public confidence in regulated qualifications; the requirement under the Conditions to investigate and mitigate any marking errors or other Adverse Effects promptly and the fact that OCR's implementation and review of its new processes and procedures is on-going, Ofqual has requested specific assurances regarding OCR's arrangements and contingency plans for ensuring compliance with the Conditions for the 2014 Examination series.

OCR has agreed to provide an Undertaking to Ofqual as set out below to assure Ofqual of its arrangements for ensuring compliance with the Conditions.

## **The Undertaking:**

OCR undertakes that it will:

1. By 17:00 on Friday 28 March 2014, provide Ofqual with a detailed Action Plan setting out the arrangements it will put in place in respect (at least) of the matters detailed in Schedule 1, below;
2. Notify Ofqual within 24 hours of OCR becoming aware that it is likely to fail to meet any of the timescales or target dates set out in its Action Plan, and seek Ofqual's approval of any relevant amendment. In any event OCR will report progress against the Action Plan on a periodic basis to be agreed;

3. By 1700 on Friday 28 March 2014, provide Ofqual with its written proposals for the appointment of an independent third party ('the Third Party Auditor') to report and provide the assurance to both Ofqual and OCR's Governing body that Ofqual requires on or before a date to be agreed;
4. The written proposals will include information setting out any pre-existing relationship between the proposed Third Party Auditor and OCR or Cambridge University, the remit and terms of reference for the audit and the arrangements for reporting the outcome of the audit to the Governing body;
5. Notify Ofqual of, and seek its express approval before appointing the proposed Third Party Auditor;
6. Provide Ofqual with a copy of the Third Party Auditor's report, once received by the Governing body, and permit Ofqual access to the third party on demand;
7. Where not otherwise set out in the Action Plan referred to in paragraph 1 above, by 17:00 on Friday 28 March 2014, OCR will provide details of the arrangements in place in the event that errors are identified in examination marks from summer 2014, after results have been issued and outside of the normal EAR, EAR extension and Appeals processes. This will include arrangements and timescales for the review and investigation of potential errors, their definition and potential scope, and the arrangements and timescales for their resolution, so that amended outcomes can be issued to affected candidates within reasonable timescales, to be agreed in every instance with Ofqual; and
8. During marking of GCE and GCSE examinations in summer 2014, provide to Ofqual evidence that OCR is undertaking real time monitoring of marking by providing copies of its monitoring reports, to reflect 10% of the monitoring in place, to include examples of any issues identified through monitoring and the actions it has taken as a result.

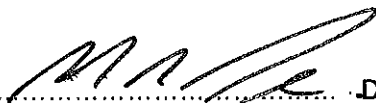
**In giving this Undertaking, OCR acknowledges that:**

- (1) Ofqual will publish an undertaking given to it in full or in part on its website.
- (2) Ofqual may take regulatory action in respect of any failure to comply with an Undertaking given to it, which may include the issue of a Direction, the imposition of a fine, costs or other such action as it deems appropriate.
- (3) The undertaking will remain in force until Ofqual confirms it is satisfied that the actions have been completed and it may be discharged.

**Ofqual has acknowledged it will review this undertaking by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014 with a view to determine whether it may be discharged.**

- (1) If an awarding organisation considers that an Undertaking should be discharged it may at any time request this in writing including a written assurance signed by the Chair of the Governing Body that he/she is satisfied that the Undertaking has been completed, together with supporting evidence that each part of the Undertaking has been fully completed.
- (2) In the event that Ofqual reviews the Undertaking, either at the request of the awarding organisation or because a review date has been reached, and determines that it has not been completed or that insufficient progress has been made against the Undertaking Action Plan, it may consider taking formal regulatory action against the awarding organisation.

Signed



Dated

12 MAR 14

Responsible Officer

## **Schedule 1**

OCR will provide a detailed Action Plan setting out the actions it will take in respect of the issues identified in section 1, including agreed dates when it will report back to Ofqual on progress being made against the Action Plan, together with the further details set out in section 2.

### **1 Issues Identified**

- a) Ensuring it has a formal process for scenario planning to identify risks and mitigation required;
- b) Ensuring it has sufficient trained examiners available in respect of the full range of GCE and GCSE examinations anticipated in Summer 2014;
- c) Ensuring that Principal Examiners, Team Leaders and Assistant Examiners are trained in respect of the use of electronic marking systems (Scoris), its marking arrangements and standardisation procedures for its examinations;
- d) Ensuring it has identifiable contingency plans in the event that it is unable to recruit sufficient examiners, examiners do not complete their training requirements, or issues are identified which require additional training;
- e) Ensuring it has sufficient arrangements for real time monitoring and review of examiners during the period allocated for marking Summer 2014 examination papers;
- f) Ensuring it has sufficient arrangements for analysis / checking of results including by subject or by examiner, to maximise the likelihood that any potential issues are identified at an early stage of the marking / results process;
- g) Ensuring it has appropriate procedures in place should more than one type of marking error be identified which is outside of the marking errors normally identified as part of the standard monitoring processes, either i) before results are issued or ii) after results are issued and where the marking error is outside of the normal EAR, EAR extension and Appeals processes, and to ensure appropriate prioritisation;
- h) Ensuring OCR has appropriate contingency plans in the event that examiner error is identified which is outside of the marking errors normally identified as part of the standard monitoring processes, either i) before results are issued or ii) after results are issued and where the marking error is outside of the normal EAR, EAR extension and Appeals processes, to ensure that papers are identified and re-marked promptly; and
- i) Ensuring it has sufficient arrangements in place to ensure that, should it be necessary to issue any revised results, such results are available within a reasonable time, such that any prejudice or detriment to Learners whose marks or grades would be varied (up or down) is limited.

### **2. Details to be provided in respect of each issue identified (above)**

- I. The date it is intended that the action will commence
- II. The planned completion date
- III. Key milestones for that action
- IV. Arrangements for a named person to take responsibility for the action
- V. Dates for review of the implementation of the action
- VI. Key measures for success
- VII. Dates for regular risk review, other triggers for risk review and risk escalation arrangements; and
- VIII. Contingency plans in event of delay or failure, to include the identification of additional resources, staff or training of staff.

### **3. Approval of and amendments / review of Action Plan**

The Action Plan once agreed may only be amended or varied with the consent of Ofqual's Head of Entry, Exit and Enforcement.