

Consultation Summary Paper

Ofqual Consultation on Regulating Endorsement and Examiner-Author Conflicts

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Opened 04/03/2014, closed 06/05/2014, Pearson lead: Jim Dobson

A brief introduction to Pearson

Pearson is the world's leading learning company. Our education business combines 150 years of experience in publishing with the latest learning technology and online support. We are also part of the wider Pearson family which includes Penguin, Dorling Kindersley and the Financial Times. We provide education and assessment services in more than 70 countries. Our qualifications, courses and resources are available in print, online and through multi-lingual packages, helping people learn whatever, wherever and however they choose.

This consultation was of particular relevance to Pearson as it addressed issues both for publishers and for awarding organisations.

A summary of the consultation

This consultation followed up earlier work by Ofqual looking at the benefits and risks of awarding organisations endorsing learning materials, and of senior examiners writing these materials. Their overall conclusion is that the benefits of endorsement outweigh the risks, but that additional controls are needed to ensure that the risks are appropriately managed. They propose strengthening three of their existing Conditions on awarding organisations:

- A4 – Identifying and managing conflicts of interest – with respect to examiners working as authors.
- G4 – Maintaining confidentiality of assessment materials – where individuals writing resources have access to confidential materials.
- F2 – Packaging qualifications with other products or services – requiring an explicit policy to clarify when this would be appropriate.

And adding one new condition:

- C3 Arrangements with publishers – to ensure processes for endorsement are transparent.

A summary of the Pearson response

- We repeat our position on endorsement, that we will endorse resources from any publisher if they meet our published endorsement requirements, which focus on the quality of the materials. In relation to proposals for G4 we therefore support the move not to allow exclusive arrangements between an awarding organisation and a single publisher, but make clear the benefits of integrated learning packages. We recommend that there should be nothing to prevent such integrated packages, but that in all cases the individual components should also be separately available.
- Processes and policies already put in place mean that Pearson complies with most of the proposals in the consultation, and in some cases goes beyond the proposed requirements. Our response supports all the proposals, and in several places recommends a further tightening.
- We strongly agree that endorsement should be allowed, arguing that awarding organisations can have a role in ensuring learning materials go beyond narrow preparation for assessment.
- We recommend that restrictions on senior examiners writing resources for a publisher be strengthened in line with our practice. Ofqual proposes that this should be managed by senior examiners notifying their awarding organisation of any involvement; we have prohibited all senior examiners from any involvement in developing resources for publishers in the subject, and at the level, they examine.