



# Pearson

## Update on A Level Maths

Monday 13 August 2018

Dear Colleague,

As the Responsible Officer at Pearson, I wanted to contact you ahead of A level results day to provide you with a further update on the investigation into allegations of a breach of content of an A level Maths exam paper this summer.

We have evidence that a very small number of students had access to the A level Maths C4 paper (6666/01) ahead of the exam sat on Friday 22 June. Following the examination, we were alerted to the apparent sale of images of questions from the paper in the early hours of the day via two closed social media applications. There is no evidence to show that they were publicly available before the examination, but after the paper had been sat individuals posted images of the sharing of the secure content on publicly accessible platforms.

This is not only grossly unfair to all students, but a criminal matter and we immediately took decisive, swift and comprehensive action. We launched our own investigation, notified the exams regulator for England, Ofqual, and took the evidence we had gathered to the police who began their own investigation.

### **Outcomes of our investigation**

Our investigation, in compliance with Joint Council for Qualification requirements, has progressed well. We have followed all leads and conducted centre visits to interview staff and students. We also have robust measures in place to be able to identify statistical anomalies in student performance during the marking process.

As a result of this work, we have identified one individual as the source of the breach, who has been debarred from any involvement with Pearson examinations for life. We have disqualified five students and are currently investigating a further 30 with regards to their involvement. Their results

will be withheld until these investigations are completed. We are continuing to support the police with their ongoing investigation.

### **Ensuring fair results for all students**

I would like to explain how we can be confident of the fairness of the final results for your students where such a breach occurs and reassure you that our absolute priority is to ensure that all students receive fair outcomes for their hard work and performance in their exams.

I know that there have been concerns raised about the potential impact that a security breach might have on grade boundaries, and the fairness of the qualification. Our evidence shows the breach is highly localised to a small group of students. It is important to note that the review of statistical and qualitative evidence that contributed to the setting of grade boundaries excluded those students under investigation. Every student can therefore be confident that the grade boundaries were set fairly and their result has not been affected by this incident.

I want to express my sincere regret if this situation has caused anxiety for any of your students, teachers or parents and I am very grateful for your patience and understanding over this exam season.

The exams system in this country has robust controls in place including security requirements for exam boards, logistics companies, schools and colleges. However it is also built on a foundation of trust, that those given responsibility for the security of papers, honour that trust. It is regrettable that the actions of a tiny number of individuals have added to the stress of this year's exams for a much larger number of students, their parents, carers and teachers.

I hope you understand that disclosure of further detail about an ongoing investigation before now could have risked undermining the outcome. However we are committed to transparency and have written to you at the soonest possible opportunity once we have been in a position to publicly share an update.

Should you have any questions or would like to discuss this in person, please do not hesitate to contact me at [assessmentfeedback@pearson.com](mailto:assessmentfeedback@pearson.com).

Kind regards,

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Pearson