



The Network

Your Exams Officer newsletter

SPRING 2013 EDITION

Note from the Editor David Sands

A belated Happy New Year, and a warm welcome to the spring term edition of The Network, our newsletter for Exams Officers.

In this edition we will be updating you on the results of our recent Customer Service Survey, and on the successful inclusion of our Next Generation BTEC Firsts in the DfE's headline measures for English schools in 2015.

Our Exams Officer Q&A features Robert Smith from Lambeth College, who tells us about his role as Exams Officer at a large FE college, and the many changes he's seen during his career. We also meet Hassan Jugoo, one of our team of account specialists who gives an insight into his role at Edexcel, and his thoughts on what makes good service.

Please get in touch if you have any ideas for articles for the future editions of The Network – just email us at TheNetwork@pearson.com.



David Sands
Head of Account Services Schools & FE



Customer Service Survey

In December 2012 we carried out a survey of our Exams Officer customers. Nearly 1,300 of you responded to the questionnaire, and we would like to thank those that did for taking the time to let us know how we are doing.

Here is a summary of the key findings from the survey.

Your Account Specialist

- 91% of you know that you have a dedicated account specialist for your centre.
- More than half of you rated the service from your account specialist as 9/10 or 10/10.
- On average, you rate the service from your account specialist as 8/10.

How We Compare to Other Awarding Bodies

- 35% of you said that our service is better than the other awarding bodies.
- 10% of you said that our service is worse than the other awarding bodies.

We also received a lot of comments about what you like or dislike about our service, and are currently analysing this feedback to see what actions we can take to further improve.

Everyone completing our survey was entered into a prize draw to win an iPad. We are pleased to announce that the lucky winner was Sonja Freter from Abbey College in Birmingham, centre 20002.

BTEC 2015 Headline Measures

On 20 November 2012 the DfE published the list of vocational qualifications that will be recognised in headline measures in the 2015 performance tables for Key Stage 4.

We are delighted to announce that all the accredited qualifications we submitted for review by the DfE are on this list. This underlines the position of BTECs as high quality vocational qualifications, as defined by Alison Wolf in her review of vocational education. We're also pleased that this gives you the opportunity to continue to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for your Key Stage 4 learners going forward.

For a full list of the qualifications that have been accredited, please see this [link](#).

We have also drawn up a list of qualifications that have not made the list [here](#).

If you have any further queries regarding BTEC Headline Measures, please see the FAQs on our website via this [link](#).

Alternatively, please [contact us](#) and we will be happy to help.





The Exams Officer Q&A

The Network managed to book in some time with Robert Smith, exams manager at Lambeth College in South London.

The Network: Welcome back and Happy New Year – Good Christmas Holiday?

Robert: The Christmas break was wonderful, thank you. It was long enough to really relax although it seems a long time ago now!

The Network: How long have you worked as an exams officer?

Robert: I took charge of examinations across the college back in 1996 although I had involvement with exams since I joined the college in 1986. There have been quite a few changes in that time. I recall when exam entries had to be manually transcribed onto large broadsheets and then double checked for spelling errors.

The Network: Tell us about what kind of centre you work for and the qualifications you are delivering?

Robert: Lambeth College, the Careers College, is a large FE college in South London dealing with a very broad provision. Everything from Entry Level to HE to Hairdressing and Motor Mechanics. There is a course for everyone and we ensure the right learner gets on the right course. Functional Skills, which we run with Edexcel, is also a major provision.

The Network: What does a typical day involve?

Robert: Typically I will be dealing with the EMS (Examination Monitoring System) which is our detailed course-by-course monitoring system for exam registrations, entries and results, along with looking after late or problem returns from our academic colleagues. I also attend meetings with academic colleagues and deliver training workshops.

We have devised a number of innovative procedures including an electronic examination document library which I will be involved with, all designed to ensure students entries and results information is readily available to our teachers. Then, of course, I will assist my team with their work and deal with some entries and results processing myself.

The Network: Have you attended one of our free Exams Officers training events? – If so, can you tell us if you found it helpful?

Robert: Sadly I have not.

I have a very experienced team that have been with the college for a number of years. I have, however, had meetings with our Account Specialist, Janet Obidahunsi, who will be working with us to help develop a system for monitoring our Functional Skills provision.

The Network: What is the most fulfilling aspect of your job?

Robert: The most fulfilling part of the job is devising systems, tools and procedures that address areas that otherwise would be problematic and seeing them help in the smooth running of college exams. Of course you rarely get acknowledged for this other than by a lack of problems and complaints.

The Network: What is the biggest challenge you face in your role?

Robert: Undoubtedly getting accurate Candidate Lists (the method by which teachers give us their examination entries to process) from academic colleagues in a timely fashion. We have to recognise the pressure that they all work under, and provide training and systems to assist them.

The other issue is the almost constant change in education. It would be good if the Government could agree that once they have made a change they will leave the system alone for at least a five year period!

The Network: What would be your top-tip for exams officers?

Robert: Establish good contacts with all the awarding bodies you deal with.

Exam boards have been known to make mistakes, as have exam officers (on rare occasions!), so with goodwill on all sides we can help each other out.

Also ensure that you have some tool to monitor all your entries and results, whether it is a spreadsheet, database or even a large sheet of paper. It is very easy to sink amongst such a large number of essential actions that you need a guide.

The Network: What are your thoughts on the government changes to A-levels, and having fewer re-sits opportunities?

Robert: I've seen my son and daughter go through their AS and A levels and I am convinced that the standard is at least as high as they were in my school days. The Government has the right to make changes but please make them and leave them in place for a sensible amount of time. Don't downplay the achievements of young people.

The Network: How have you found having a dedicated Account Specialist – one named contact dealing with your queries?

Robert: This has been a crucial step forward that has made so much difference to our relationship with Edexcel. It's all about contacts and understanding each others' needs. We have already been making good use of Janet's services, particularly in relation to unpicking the labyrinth that is Functional Skills.

The Network: What would your ideal job be?

Robert: I have always thought that being an artist or perhaps an author where you could work at your own pace would be ideal. The closest I have got to it is my video editing hobby. Creating something that others will want to see or read is very satisfying.

The Network: Any 2013 new year's resolutions?

Robert: Only to try to make time for exercise, relaxation, family and friends.

The Network: Do you have any interesting hobbies you partake in?

Robert: I enjoy barn dancing and have been known to call on occasions. This was thought to be such an unusual activity that just the knowledge that I do this won me a prize at our staff party, although this is without them actually seeing me in action!

I have already said that I enjoy producing film and videos. Online genealogy is another hobby and I have most of my family back to 1792 but there is always more research that can be done.

I enjoy yoga, badminton, walking, gardening and going to the gym as well as finding time to meditate every day. That's my way of unwinding as an exams manager's role is demanding. So when I finally give up the mantle and EDI files are a distant memory, I will have plenty to keep me occupied!

If you would like to be interviewed by The Network, please contact us via TheNetwork@pearson.com. Everyone we feature will receive £30.00 worth of Love2Shop vouchers as a token of our appreciation.



Free Exams Officer Training

During the autumn of 2012 we provided training to over 300 exams officers at our London and Manchester offices. If you missed out on these then do not despair, as we are now taking bookings for our spring 2013 events.

Our events are primarily designed for new exams officers providing all you need to know on administering our GQ or BTEC qualifications. If you are an experienced exams officer feel free to come along if you need a refresher!

These events are free of charge and are presented by members of the Account Services team so you may get an opportunity to meet your Account Specialist.

To book onto one of our spring 2013 training events, please click [here](#).



We are constantly looking for ways to adapt these events to suit you better, so if you have been to any of these events do you have any feedback? Is there anything you would like us to include for other training events?

Also, if you are booked on to any upcoming events – is there anything you would like to ask/request beforehand?

Please feel free to email any comments to eoevents@pearson.com and we will be happy to assist.

Meet your Account Specialist...

The Network interviews Hassan Jugoo, an Account Specialist at our London offices in High Holborn.

The Network: Season's greetings! Enjoy your Christmas Holidays?

Hassan: I'm great thanks, especially after almost two weeks of stuffing myself during Christmas – and I don't even celebrate it! I visited a lot of my friends who do celebrate Christmas, so I had no choice in the matter. But I'm not complaining!



The Network: Firstly tell us a bit about yourself, and your career at Pearson?

Hassan: Well, I started off as a temporary member of the team in the old Service Operations structure as a bit of a floater! Gradually I began dealing with UCI merges and GQ eligibility. As time passed, I grew in confidence and eventually, in February 2012, I became a permanent member of the Service Operations Team. I'm currently an Accounts Specialist for some big centres such as Derby, Leicester and Cambridge.

The Network: How are you building relationships with your centres?

Hassan: I've been able to develop good working relationships with my centres. I only have around 30 centres in my range which gives me time to get to know them all well, and to hopefully meet all their individual needs. I have found that visiting the centres has also helped a lot! It's good to put face to a name, and I'll be looking to visit a lot more of my centres in 2013.

The Network: Do you have any plans for your centres in 2013?

Hassan: I definitely want to carry out more centre visits and perhaps organise a network meeting with all of them. It would be good to see all the centres I look after all in one room where I can perhaps provide some customised training. On second thoughts I may regret ever saying this...ahaha!

The Network: What qualities do you think are needed to make a good Account Specialist?

Hassan: Patience is the key! It can be a challenging role at times, and I think the most important quality is having good communication skills, along with fully understanding the customer's concerns.

The Network: What is the most challenging aspect of the Account Specialist role?

Hassan: The world of education is a volatile place at the moment with all the changes happening to GCSEs and A-Levels. Keeping up to date with all these national developments is definitely a challenge!

The Network: What are the best and worst Christmas presents you have ever received?

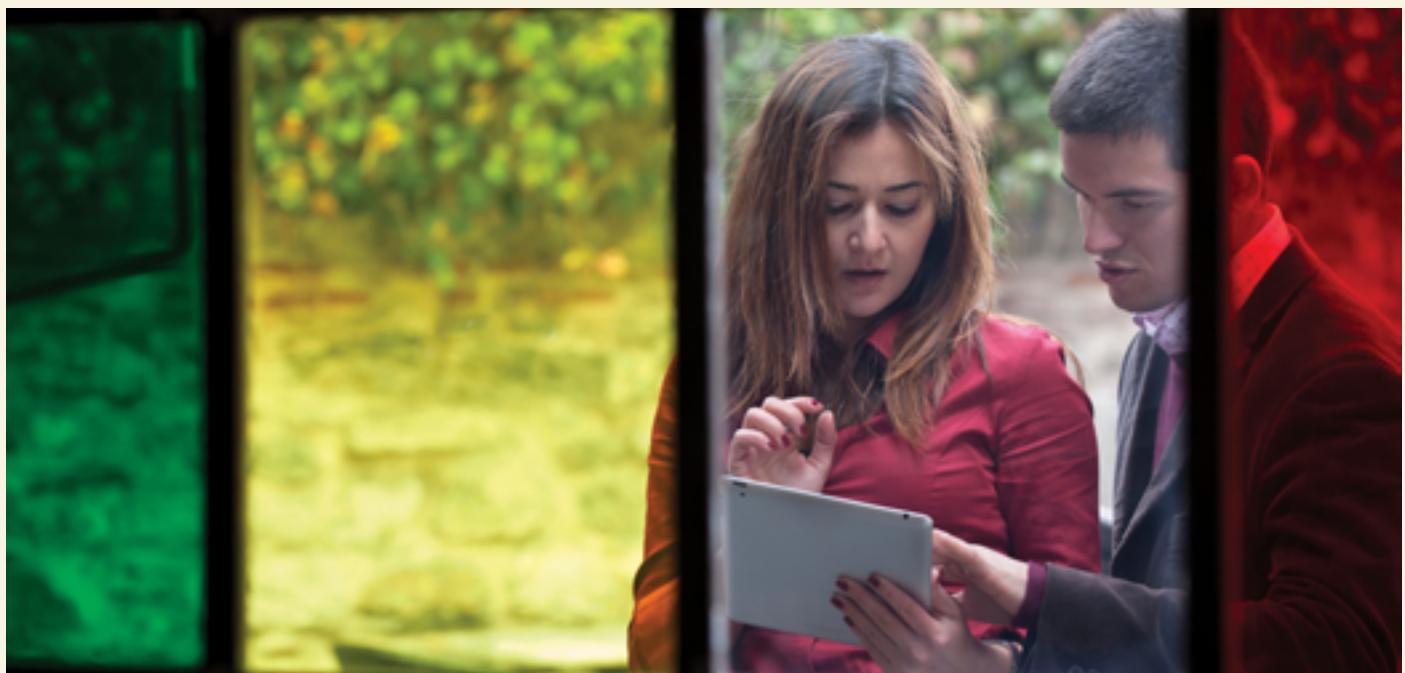
Hassan: Well since I don't celebrate Christmas I really can't answer that. Having said that, Secret Santa is always hilarious in the office. We are located near Soho so you can imagine all the crazy gifts that are given – some people have no shame!

The Network: New Years Eve: is it a quiet night in or big night out?

Hassan: This year it was a bit of both I guess... went to see the fireworks on the river. You can never get bored with that. That definitely wasn't a quiet night in!!

The Network: Any 2013 messages you'd like to leave?

Hassan: Yes, I'd like to wish all my centres (you know who you are!) a happy new year. You know where to find me if you need me.



Tell us what you think...

The Network is always looking for your opinion on the important debates that are happening in the educational world at the moment. Tell us what you think about the topics below, or any other topics you would like to share with us. You just need to click on the questions below and email in your contribution...

- Do you have any top tips for new exams officers?
- What are your thoughts on the government changes to A' levels having fewer re-sit opportunities?
- How do you think reforms to GCSEs and A' levels and the move to terminal assessment will affect the workload of exams officers?
- Do you think the proposed English Baccalaureate is a step in the right direction?
- Have you attended our Free Exams Officers training events? If so, what did you think?

THE E.O. SUPER-DUO

