The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority conducts public examinations which are taken by tens of thousands of candidates each year. To improve the quality and efficiency of its assessment services, the Authority launched an onscreen marking system and established assessment centres in 2007 to facilitate the marking and processing of millions of public examination scripts. The onscreen marking system was used for the first time to mark the Chinese Language and English Language scripts in the 2007 Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination. Over 660,000 scripts were marked by about a thousand teacher markers.

To prepare for onscreen marking, candidates need to stick personalised barcode labels on answer books and answer sheets, showing the candidate number, centre number, seat number and subject name. After the examination, the entire script is electronically scanned. The resulting image is stored in a secure database, before being delivered to markers via a secured intranet. Answer scripts can be readily allocated to different markers who can be assigned to mark the answers to a particular question. They can also be sent simultaneously to two markers for double marking, allowing for greater objectivity and avoiding the need to circulate scripts among markers, check-markers and HKEAA staff. Most markers are professional teachers. They can use the online booking system to reserve work stations at the assessment centre they wish to work at. Before they mark live scripts, all markers have to mark some training scripts to familiarize themselves with how the onscreen marking system works, and then take a qualifying test. Markers can only begin marking live scripts after they have passed this test. To ensure that different markers continue to follow the same assessment guidelines, the system will randomly distribute special scripts with pre-assigned scores to check whether makers are adhering to the marking standards. The system automatically records and calculates marks, thus reducing the chance for human error. As they work, markers can refer to the online marking scheme and consult the Chief Examiner when they encounter a problem. They can also check their own marking records.

Control rooms are set up at the assessment centres where the Chief Examiners and the Assistant Examiners monitor the marking progress, using such statistics as the marking speed of the different panels and the number of scripts marked by individual markers. They also check marked scripts to ensure that markers are applying the same standards. If a marker appears to be too lenient or too strict, immediate action and suitable adjustments can be made. The system can also supply various data on individual questions for research and analysis on candidates’ performance.

There is widespread agreement among teacher markers that onscreen marking can help to improve the quality of marking.
Mr Wong:
Once a teacher is familiar with the standard, marking will be quicker and more accurate. Markers can also concentrate better because each one will focus on marking, just one or two questions. This is also fairer for candidates.

VO:
Experienced teachers who have served as examiners think that onscreen marking helps them to standardize marking.

Miss Chui:
We explain the guidelines carefully. Markers who stray off standard can immediately be advised where they are being too lenient, or too strict. We can tell them if they have missed something or if they have made a mistake. The markers themselves can then correct and adjust their work. This is sure to benefit the whole assessment process.

Mr Leung:
The mark distribution curve will show whether a marker’s marking is skewed to the higher or lower end or is using too narrow a range of marks. When we find such problems on checking we will take further script samples to see whether the marking can be improved.

VO:
Onscreen marking has further improved the marking quality, accuracy, security and efficiency in results reporting. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority will gradually adopt onscreen marking for all the public examinations it organises, providing candidates with reliable and effective assessment services.

End super:
香港考試及評核局
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority