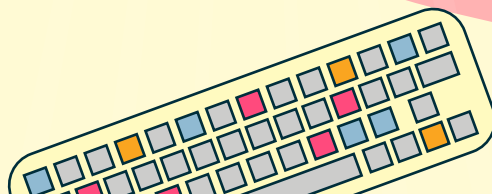
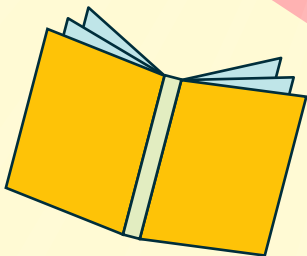


SEAB-link

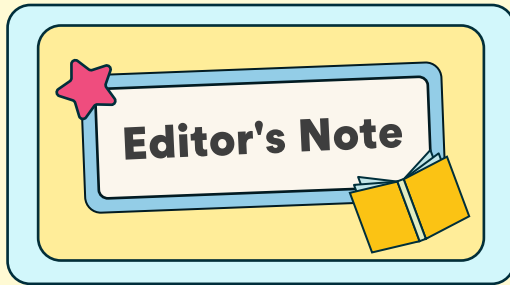


Special Feature
on 2021 PSLE



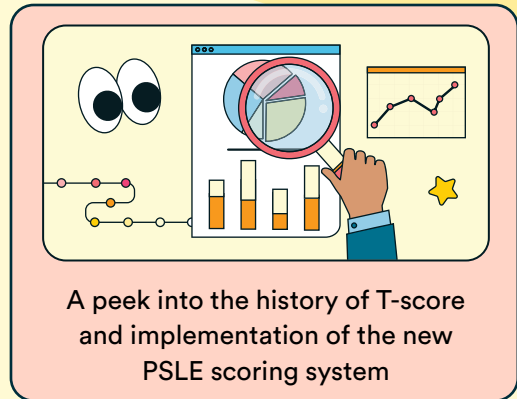
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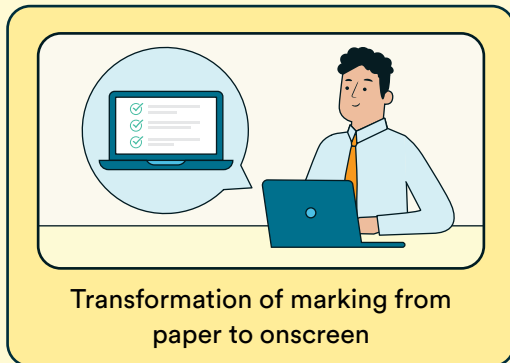
Editor's Note

04



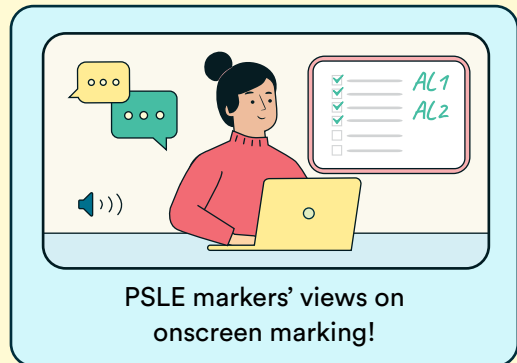
A peek into the history of T-score and implementation of the new PSLE scoring system

07



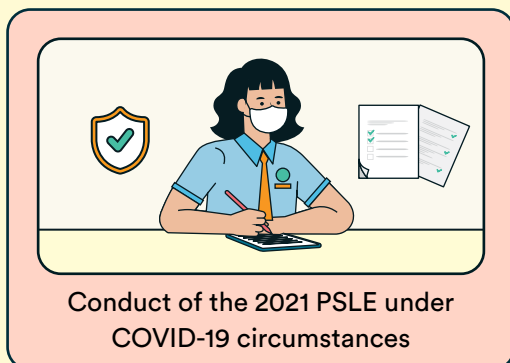
Transformation of marking from paper to onscreen

17



PSLE markers' views on onscreen marking!

20



Conduct of the 2021 PSLE under COVID-19 circumstances

Dear Readers



The Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) in 2021 was a memorable one which marked several key milestones.

We saw the implementation of a new PSLE scoring system. This new system is part of several planned changes by MOE and SEAB, to move away from an over-emphasis on academic results and help students discover and develop their strengths and interests. In this issue, we share details of SEAB's involvement in the implementation journey, including highlights of our discussions with MOE and the engagements with the schools. You can read about this on page 4.

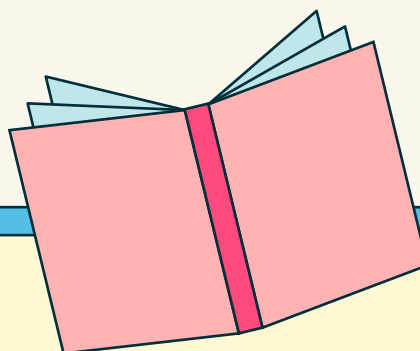
We also saw more PSLE subjects moving from pen-based marking to onscreen marking (OSM). The rest of the PSLE subjects will move to OSM in 2022, marking the full transition to OSM for PSLE. Through a photo story, we document the pen-based marking processes and detail those that have been replaced or made defunct by OSM. You can also read about the sharing from key OSM personnel. These can be found on page 17.

In the midst of these exciting changes, we continued to tackle the COVID-19 situation. In this issue, we highlight the key updated measures put in place to facilitate the safe conduct of the PSLE. These measures accounted for a rapidly evolving COVID-19 local situation, including the emergence of a more infectious variant of the virus, and Singapore's plans to transit to a COVID-19 resilient nation. Building on our 2020 experience with implementing Safe Management Measures (SMMs) for the national examinations, the SMMs were updated throughout the 2021 examination year. Following each update, communications to all stakeholders on the changes were made swiftly and clearly. Read about these measures on page 20.

The success of the 2021 PSLE was possible because of the perseverance and cooperation of our stakeholders, including MOE colleagues, schools, examination personnel and candidates. We hope that you enjoy reading this special edition of SEAB-link on the 2021 PSLE. Stay tuned for our next issue in Q3 2022, as we continue to share updates on SEAB's latest happenings.

Take care and continue to stay safe.

SEAB-link Editorial Team





A peek into the history of T-score and implementation of the new PSLE scoring system

In 2021, the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) T-score, or transformed score, which had been in place since the 1970s, was replaced by the new PSLE scoring system which adopts wider scoring bands known as Achievement Levels (ALs). The new PSLE scoring system aims to reduce fine differentiation of students' examination results at a young age and recognise students' level of achievement regardless of how their peers have done. It is part of MOE's continual fine-tuning of the education system to help students discover and develop their strengths and interests, while moving away from an over-emphasis on academic results. This special article focuses on the history of the T-score system and encapsulates SEAB's journey in preparing for the change to the new AL system.

History of T-score

Up until 1972, composite raw marks from the PSLE were used to determine the "Pass - Fail" outcome of students. However, there were challenges when these composite raw marks with double weighting for the then First Language (English Language) and Second Language (Mother Tongue Languages) were used for posting students to secondary schools. Hence, T-scores were introduced in 1973 and each raw subject mark was converted into a Transformed Score (T-score). The formula for computing the T-score of a subject was:

$$T = 50 + 10 \left(\frac{X - Y}{Z} \right)$$

where X is the candidate's mark for the subject
Y is the average mark (mean) scored by all the candidates
Z is the spread of marks around the average mark (standard deviation)

With this computation, the distribution of raw marks for each subject was standardised to produce equal means and standard deviations. Hence, the T-score of a subject would show how well a candidate had done compared to his/her peers in the subject. The sum of all the subject T-scores, referred as the PSLE Aggregate, was used for posting students to secondary schools. The double weighting for both First and Second Languages was removed in the 1985 PSLE.

The T-scores and PSLE Aggregate served as a fair and transparent mechanism to determine secondary school posting from 1973 to 2020. As the PSLE Aggregate could finely differentiate student performance, each student could tell how well he/she had performed in the PSLE compared to his/her peers. Whilst the T-score system served Singapore well, the fine differentiation of students at a young age had inadvertently increased competition among students which did not support the longer-term goal of promoting holistic education. Hence the PSLE Aggregate was replaced in 2021 by the new PSLE AL Score, which ranges from 4 to 32. Students will no longer be finely differentiated and will be awarded Achievement Levels that reflect their own performance relative to the learning objectives of the curriculum.

Key milestones leading to the implementation of new PSLE scoring system

Since MOE's 2016 announcement regarding the changes to PSLE scoring, SEAB has been working closely with various divisions in MOE such as the Planning Division, Student Placement and Services Division, as well as the Communications and Engagement Division to ensure the smooth implementation of the new PSLE scoring system. The key milestones leading to the actual implementation of the new PSLE scoring system are summarised below:

2016

- Announcement by MOE on the changes to PSLE scoring from 2021.



2017 - 2020

- Announcement by MOE on the scoring for Foundation Subjects and its pegging to Standard Subjects in July 2019.
- Series of briefings for Key Personnel and Professional Development workshops for primary school teachers.
- Customised comparison report of Preliminary Results versus PSLE results based on AL system for all primary schools to help them align the school preliminary examination to the PSLE.
- Announcement by MOE in November 2020 on the indicative achievement level (AL) cut-off point ranges for different school types and subject-based banding (secondary) eligibility criteria in terms of AL.



2021

- Announcement of indicative PSLE score range for all secondary schools by MOE in April 2021.
- Release of PSLE results based on new PSLE scoring system in November 2021.
- Press Release of 2021 PSLE results reflected the change to new PSLE scoring and included statistics on Subject-Based Banding (SBB-Sec) eligibility.



SEAB's efforts in helping teachers manage assessment demand

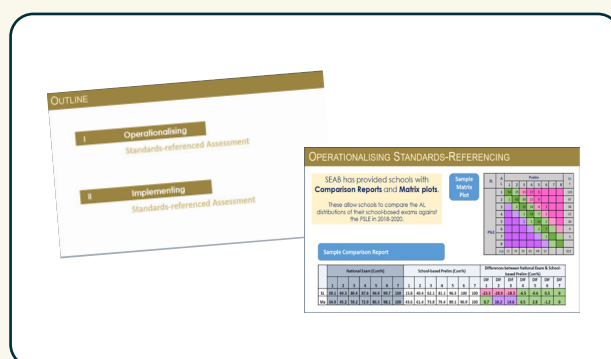
From 2018 to 2021, SEAB conducted a series of briefings and Professional Development workshops to level up teachers' assessment literacy and provide them support in setting appropriately pitched assessments. SEAB also provided each school with a customised report of how the AL distributions of the school's preliminary examinations of all subjects compare with those of the actual PSLE. The report consists of the Matrix Plot, Comparison Report and Preliminary Examination Mark Distribution, and aims to guide schools to align their preliminary examinations to the PSLE standards. The conceptualisation of the reports started in 2018. Several rounds of focused group discussions with teacher representatives and CPDD colleagues were conducted to finetune the reports to ensure that they are clear and easy to understand by teachers. All subject HODs were briefed on the use of the reports at the HOD meetings.

For schools which showed more significant deviations, SEAB held annual assessment literacy workshops to guide teachers on the use of the reports and in the design of their preliminary examinations. SEAB also shared useful materials such as "A guide for primary schools to align overall demand of school-based assessment to the PSLE" and "Designing Quality P6 Prelim Papers" to explain the concept of Standards Referencing to teachers and guide them to align the assessment demands of their school preliminary examinations with the PSLE's.

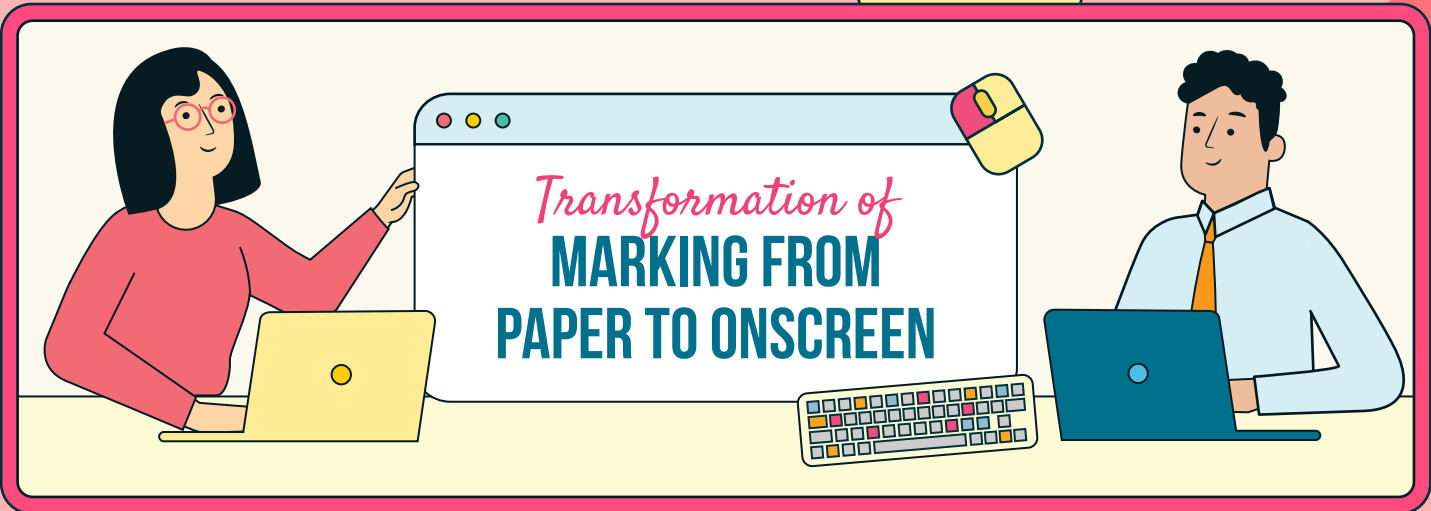
Over the past 3 years, close to 8,000 primary school teachers attended the assessment literacy workshops. They have been the spheres of influence in their schools to share the knowledge acquired with other teachers and apply the principles of characterising item demand for the setting of their school examinations. Through these sustained efforts, schools are now able to adopt a more data-driven approach to calibrate their preliminary examination papers and we are heartened by their efforts. With the rollout of the new PSLE scoring system, SEAB endeavours to encourage teachers to continue using this data driven approach to ensure appropriate pitching of assessment demand in school-based assessments. We thank school leaders and teachers for walking this PSLE transformation journey with us!



Resources that were shared with schools on managing assessment demands.



A sample of the matrix plot and comparison report used to guide teachers in interpreting their own school reports during the briefings and workshops. Teachers learnt to identify whether their school preliminary examinations were of comparable demand, more demanding, or less demanding than the PSLE based on the colours of the matrix plot and the comparison report.



Pen-based marking had been the default mode of marking for the Primary School Leaving Examinations until onscreen marking (OSM) was introduced in 2020. The robust processes and rigour of pen-based marking have served the national examinations well. They have also laid strong foundations for the transformation to OSM. Over the years, we have seen more subjects move towards OSM. In 2022, all locally marked subjects at the PSLE and GCE-level examinations would be marked onscreen.

In this article, we capture some of the key moments in pen-based marking and OSM to mark the milestones of this transformative change. We have also invited Mr Sam Wong, Principal of Canberra Primary School, to share his thoughts and reflections regarding the pen-based marking processes. Mr Wong is an experienced Group Head who has been involved in the PSLE marking exercise for close to two decades.

Please note that some of the following photos were taken before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Pen-based marking



Online-based marking

Pre-marking

1

After candidates sit for their national examinations, candidates' scripts are sent to SEAB. Thereafter, these scripts would be sent to the various PSLE marking centres.



At the end of each examination day, bags of scripts are sent to SEAB.



30 scripts are packed in each packet.

1

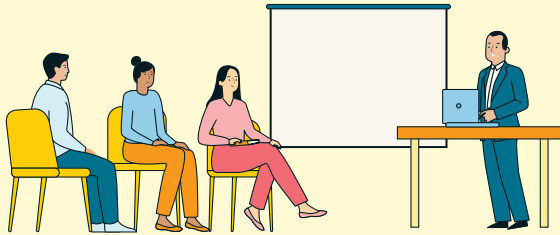
After candidates sit for their national examinations, candidates' scripts are sent to SEAB for scanning.



Scripts are cut at the spine before scanning.

2

Standardisation Meetings - Professional discourse takes place during the benchmarking and standardisation processes.



2

Standardisation Meetings - Professional discourse is enhanced via the OSM system.



Standardisation meetings carried out at a marking centre using the OSM system.

Live marking

3

Marking begins after the Standardisation Meeting.



Important tools in pen-based marking – red and green pens for 1st & 2nd markers respectively, purple pens for quality checks and pencils for shading bubbles.



Name tags for the various marking personnel involved during each exercise.

3

Markers need to go through a practice marking exercise, followed by a standardisation test before they are approved to perform live marking.

My team				
Examiner	Status	Times suspended	Target progress	Responses to review
A.E.Scornibus03	Not Approved	0	0/1 Practice	
A.E.Scornibus04	Not Approved	0	0/1 Practice	
D.C.Beauchesne	Awaiting Approval	0	1/1 STM Standardisation	1
D.C.Beauchesne	Not Approved	0	0/1 Standardisation	
L.S.Fleishman	Approved	1	1/190 Live	1
W.O.Donatelli	Approved Pending Review	0	0/1 STM Standardisation	

Screenshot of a page in the OSM system showing markers who are cleared for live marking, are suspended, or are awaiting clearance from their Team Leaders.

Please wait for advice

Your standardisation marking has been sent to your supervisor for review.

You will not be able to continue marking this question group until your supervisor has provided you with feedback. The status will update automatically when the review is complete. This will not prevent you from marking other question groups where you have a quota.

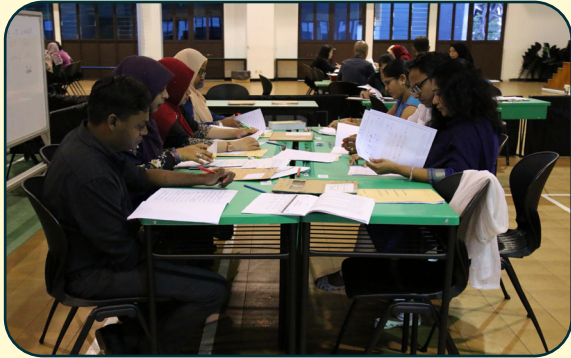
The system message sent to markers who are awaiting clearance from their Team Leaders.

4

Each marker will take charge of a certain set of questions. Hence, they may need to wait for scripts to be marked first by their partners before they can continue with their marking.

4

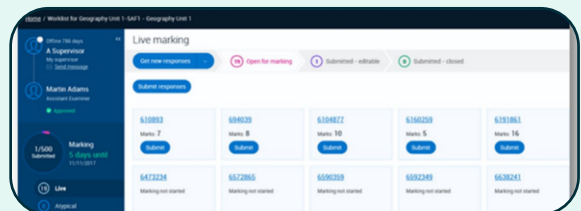
Individual markers can download the scripts at any time, without having to wait for their partners to finish marking them. They can also review their marking within a specified period.



Pen-based marking in the school hall.



Onscreen marking with the use of laptops.

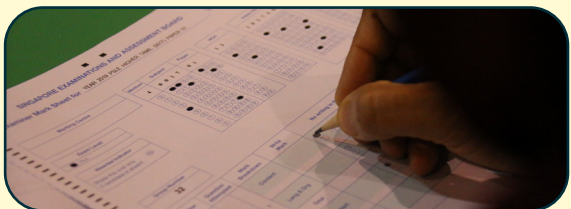


A screenshot of the OSM system showing the scripts that are being marked.

Scripts under the 'Open for marking' tab are available for marking. Scripts under the 'Submitted - editable' tab are available for markers to edit. Scripts under the 'Submitted - Closed' tab have been routed to the relevant Team Leaders for quality checks.

5

Shading bubbles, adding marks, transferring of marks to the Examiner Mark Sheet (EMS) and the accounting for every script in each envelope are key, albeit manual processes in pen-based marking.



Shading bubbles in the EMS for every marked script.

5

These manual tasks are now handled by the OSM system.



6

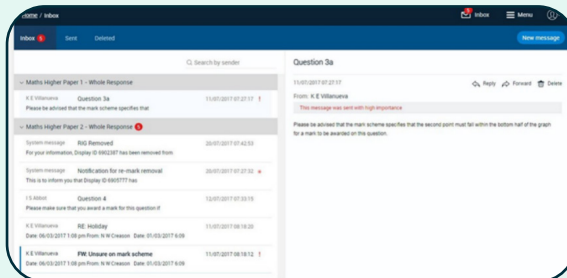
Consultations with the key marking personnel during pen-based marking are performed physically and are dependent on their availability.



A marker consulting and deliberating with a Key Marking Personnel.

6

Markers have the additional option of sending messages to their Team Leader for advice or consultation via the OSM system.



Apart from face-to-face consultations, the markers can consult their Team Leaders via the inbuilt messaging system.

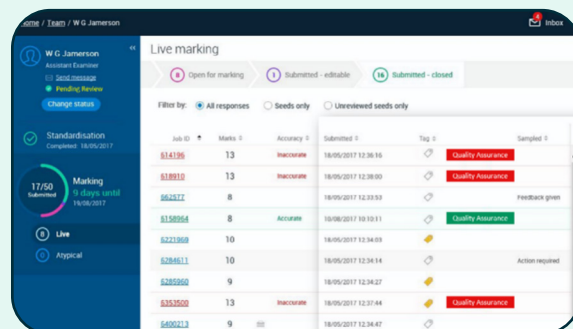
7

Team Leaders perform manual checking by opening and closing each envelope / packet.

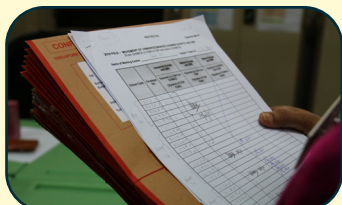
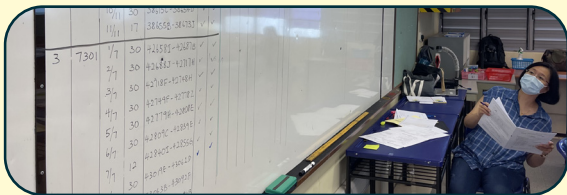


7

Team Leaders can monitor marking more closely and in real-time.



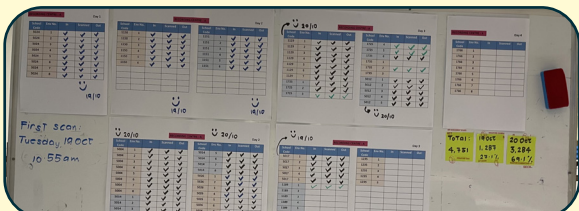
The progress of marking is checked via updates indicated on a white board and hardcopy forms.



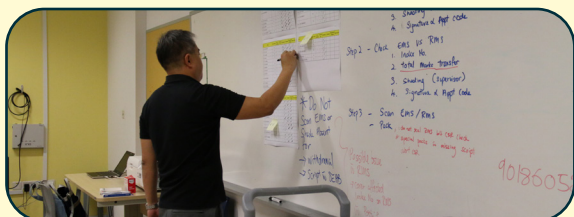
Marking personnel track the progress of marking for each packet of envelope from every school centre.



The scripts are moved from the markers to the Chief Markers (CM) for checks. Thereafter, they are moved to the Chief Supervisor, Recording (CSR) for the scanning of the scripts. Once all marking and scanning processes are completed, the scripts are returned to the Group Heads (GH) of the marking centres for safekeeping. This movement of the scripts is meticulously tracked with the hardcopy forms.



Marking personnel keep track of the envelopes containing the marked scripts collected.



The progress of scanning is tracked by recording the envelopes received from the Chief Marker for scanning and those returned to the GH after the scanning is completed.

The progress of marking can be tracked online and in real-time.

Marking Project	OS Name	Caroline Number/No	Caroline Number/No	Caroline Number/No	Caroline Number/No	Caroline Number/No	Total Unchecked	Total in Progress	Total Closed	Total Closed/Total
0005-01-0005-01	0005-01-0005-01	2000	2070	2070	86.4%	100.0%	0	0	2070	100.0%
0005-01-0005-01	0005-01-0005-01	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
0005-01-0005-01	0005-01-0005-01	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
0005-01-0005-01	0005-01-0005-01	0	0	2070	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	2070	100.0%
0005-01-0005-01	0005-01-0005-01	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
0005-01-0005-01	0005-01-0005-01	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
0005-01-0005-01	0005-01-0005-01	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
0005-01-0005-01	0005-01-0005-01	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%

Marker Name	Role	Marking to be checked				Checking activities	
		Number of items picked for checking (total)	Number of items picked for checking in current day	Number of items checked with no change (total)	Number of items checked with changes (total)	Number of items waiting to be checked	Number of items checked
CLK Chua Lay Heng	Assessment Officer	0	0	0	0	0	71
LEE LEO JOAOZING	Chief Marker	0	0	0	0	0	0
LPI LIM PBI YING	Marker	0	0	0	0	0	0
CLM Chen Lye Heng	Chief Marker	1	0	0	1	0	0
WYI Wong Yanyan	Chief Marker	0	0	0	0	0	0
LEE Lee Yee Hui	Chief Marker	0	0	0	0	0	0
PSLR POON SIOW LING RAYMOND	Chief Marker	0	0	0	0	0	63
WIS WONG JIANFU STEVEN	Chief Marker	0	0	0	0	0	61
LWE LAM WHEE ENG	Chief Marker	0	0	0	0	0	63
LST LIM SHEWE TYUG	Chief Marker	0	0	0	0	0	63
OSM GAN SER MIN	Chief Marker	0	0	0	0	0	40
TUYI TAN LAY WISH	Chief Marker	0	0	0	0	0	143
KYIB KWIG WEE BENG	Chief Marker	0	0	0	0	0	162
TEENA POON SIM NAU	Chief Marker	0	0	0	0	0	149

Online reports in the OSM system display the marking progress.



Recording

9

Recorders check the marked packets of envelopes in preparation for scanning of the EMS.



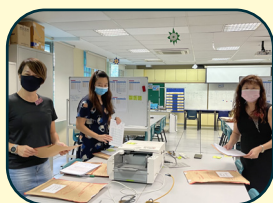
Recorders checking that every envelope from each centre is accounted for.



Recorders checking the accuracy of mark entries.

10

Scanning in the recorders' room.



Packets of Recorder Mark Sheet (RMS) forms are prepared for scanning.

Scanning takes place in the Recording Rooms.

11

Returning the scanned EMS and RMS to the Group Head.



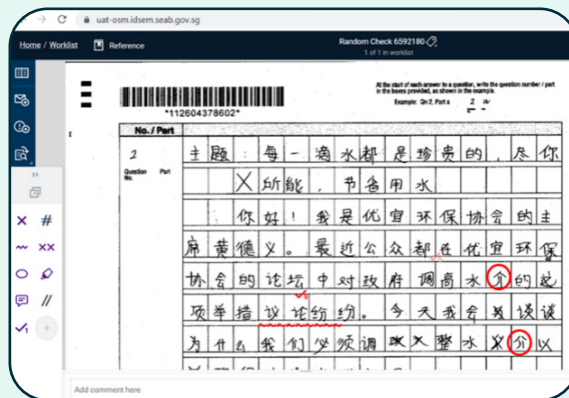
Completed and scanned RMS ready to be returned to the GH of the marking centre for safekeeping.



The completed and scanned RMS are returned to the GH of the marking centre.

9

The marks are automatically captured at the point of marking by the OSM system.



Marking of a Mother Tongue Language paper.



12

Envelopes are colour coded for ease of identification and retrieval and stored in cabinets.



Transporting of large numbers of envelopes using trolleys.



Completed and scanned RMS are placed in cabinets. They are colour coded for ease of retrieval and identification.



Clearly labelled cabinets and properly bundled packets are used to distinguish the unmarked/ marked/ scanned RMS scripts from each centre. Boxes on top of the cupboards will be used to pack all the envelopes for return to SEAB at the end of the marking exercise.



13

The Group Head (GH) and Assistant GH (AGH) checks the receipt of envelopes and RMS returned from the CM and CSR.



GHs ensure that every RMS form in every packet is accounted for.



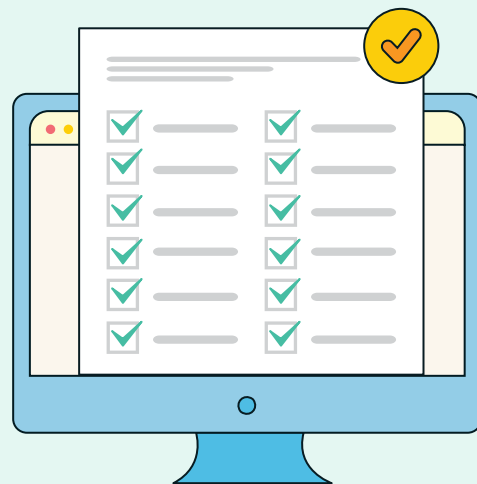
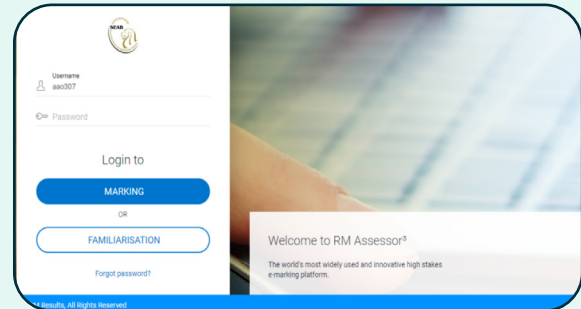
The GH and AGH of the marking centre check on the return of the scanned and marked scripts.



Boxes are used to pack the marked answer booklets.

10

There are no physical scripts to handle, and the attendance of markers are captured as soon as they log on to the OSM system.



Tracking the progress of marking and the daily attendance of markers.



The daily attendance rate of markers is tracked via a whiteboard.

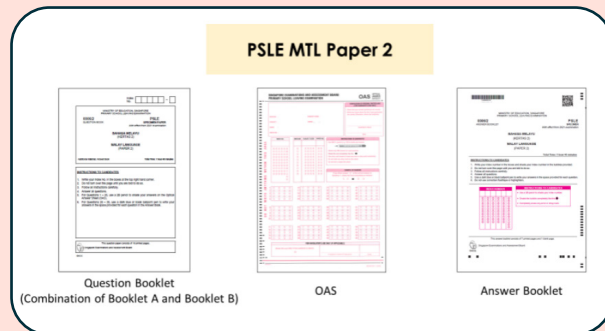
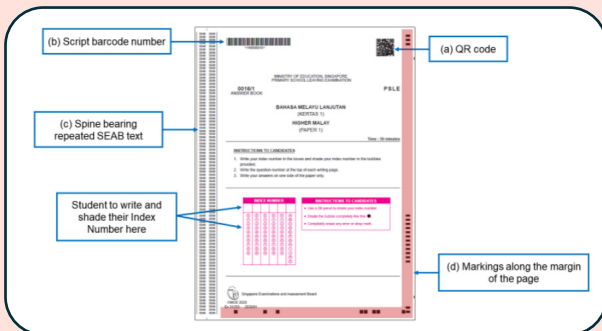
Engagement efforts

Familiarisation Exercise for PSLE Higher Mother Tongue Language (MTL) and Foundation MTL in 2019.



During the familiarisation exercise for Foundation Mother Tongue Language (MTL) and Higher MTL in 2019, Chief Executive, SEAB, Mr Yue Lip Sin addressed the key marking personnel.

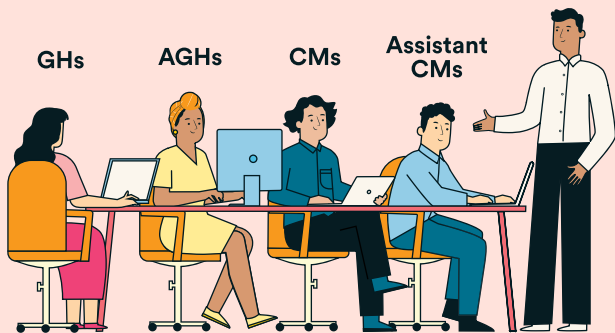
Involving teachers in research studies and re-design of the question and answer booklets.



Re-designed answer booklets that allow for better scanning.

SEAB used various platforms to update personnel ahead of the OSM implementation.

This included emails to the personnel, as well as briefings during HOD meetings and marking exercises during each year preceding the implementation of OSM for a subject.



Targeted engagement for Key Marking and Centre Personnel onboarding to OSM for the first time were carried out. These personnel included the GHs, AGHs, CMs and Assistant CMs.

Welcome and Thank You notes were sent to marking personnel.



Notes of appreciation by SEAB management to the marking personnel.

An interview with Mr Sam Wong, Principal, Canberra Primary School



Mr Sam Wong

1

How long have you been involved in the PSLE marking exercises and how do you feel about this involvement?

Mr Wong: I have been appointed as a Group Head in the PSLE marking exercises for 18 years. It has been a rewarding experience with the opportunity to grow School Leaders and Key Personnel.

3

Could you share some of the common challenges faced during pen-based marking?

Mr Wong: The marking exercise is a strenuous and intensive activity. This requires care of the personnel involved. Thus, a challenge of pen-based marking is the consistent and accurate application of the agreed mark scheme for every script over the 4 days of marking.

Nonetheless, we have superb teams leading the exercise every year and they have the experience to monitor the quality of marking and moderate the pace of the marking exercise.

2

With your rich experience, could you share with us your thoughts about pen-based marking over the years? You can also share details of your earliest involvements in pen-based marking and chronicle any changes to pen-based marking over the years.

Mr Wong: Pen-based marking evolved over the last ten years. Support and administration processes were streamlined to provide more focus on the professional aspects of marking. With the use of technology, the accuracy of marking as well as the considerations for marking decisions have also improved.

However, the most important aspect of the marking exercise is the professional discourse and exchanges amongst the markers and key personnel. They appreciate the professional fellowship and rich learning. From the feedback during the last exercise, the markers' main concern is the reduction in face-to-face human interaction with the introduction of onscreen marking.

4

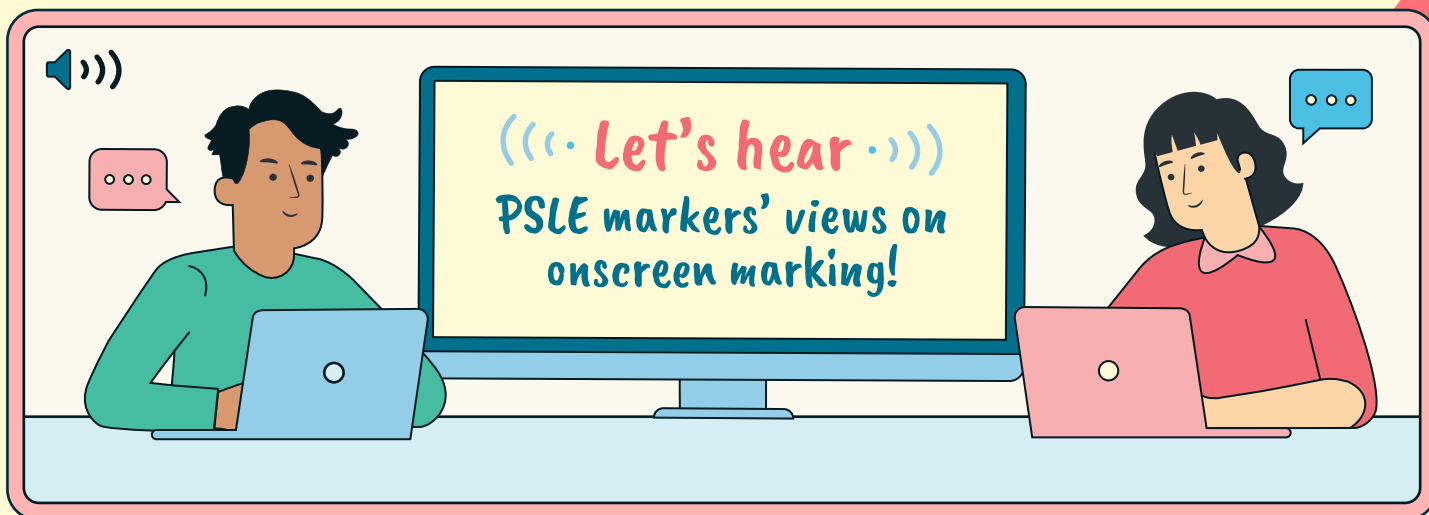
What are some takeaways from your past experiences with pen-based marking?

Mr Wong: The annual marking exercises created unique opportunities for the fraternity of educators to come together to learn and affirm the values and the professional standards of the national assessment.

The opportunities to have face to face deliberations and discussions with markers and key personnel have been very useful for the professional growth of the teachers, in understanding assessment and the pedagogical principles in the different subject disciplines.



Mr Sam Wong (centre), with other markers during the conduct of a PSLE marking exercise.



2021 was an important milestone in the history of PSLE marking as it was the final year of pen-based marking before the full transition to onscreen marking (OSM) for all PSLE subjects in 2022. Onscreen marking aims to bring more value to the marking processes and personnel. But just how transformative is OSM to the personnel involved? To answer this question, we invited several marking personnel who have experienced OSM for their subjects, to share their thoughts regarding the revised marking processes.

“Although many of us have become quite familiar with pen-based marking over the years, I was initially quite apprehensive when PSLE moved to onscreen marking (OSM), wondering if the learning curve of marking on a laptop would be a steep one.

Once the system was set up on our laptops, I was pleasantly surprised that the onboarding process was smooth and simple. I learned the layout and design of the system quickly as it was intuitive. By removing the need to shade the mark bubbles or deal with physical scripts, the marking process was sped up and this allowed me to support my fellow key personnel and markers better.”

**Assistant Chief Marker,
Foundation Science**

“Since 2009, I have been performing the role of a Chief Marker for Foundation Mathematics. Over several years of refinements to the pen-based marking system, my team and I had established a very efficient process in team management, the monitoring of marking and the accounting for examination scripts.

Hence, when I was informed of the switch to onscreen marking (OSM) about three years ago, I had some immediate concerns about how we would: (a) oversee script movements; (b) monitor the marking process and; (c) conduct sample checking. I was also concerned that it would be time consuming to navigate the OSM system.

After some initial teething issues in familiarising ourselves with the OSM system, my team soon became comfortable using and navigating the system with adequate hands-on opportunities. We have not looked back since. With the implementation of OSM, we no longer worry about script movements, script counting and the possible misplacement of scripts. Without such responsibilities and concerns, we can focus on and do more sample marking. We are also more efficient and focused on our marking.

With OSM, we are now able to complete the marking of examination scripts within a shorter period without compromising the quality of marking.”

**Chief Marker,
Foundation Mathematics**

“My role as a Chief Marker during the onscreen marking (OSM) exercise allowed me to have a first-hand experience of how the PSLE marking processes could be enhanced with technology.

OSM greatly increases the productivity and efficiency of the marking process. Markers are no longer required to spend time on operational and administrative tasks such as the counting of paper scripts and recording of marks. Inputting marks directly into the system removes the risk of human miscalculation and transcription errors, as well as the need for additional manpower to conduct checks on the accuracy of marks computation. Markers can concentrate on the marking, and the marking supervisors are able to focus on the sampling of scripts to check on marking accuracy. OSM also allows for real-time monitoring of the marking process, which enables early intervention and guidance of markers to ensure marking quality. The marking supervisors are able to obtain timely feedback on the markers’ compliance with the standardised mark scheme, which further ensures consistency and accuracy of marking.

The OSM system has added value to the conduct of the marking processes and markers’ experiences, whilst maintaining the rigour and integrity of the marking exercise.”

**Chief Marker,
Chinese Language**



“Having been accustomed to the rigour of pen-based marking (PBM) for many years, I was initially unsettled by the announcement that we would be embarking on on-screen marking (OSM). There was scepticism as to whether the process of onscreen marking would be as thorough and fair to the candidates, as well as a nagging thought that there might be room for errors in marking as compared to PBM. However, all these fears were allayed after the first hands-on training session by SEAB’s officers. The processes put in place were definitely well thought out, and it was evident that there would be no compromise in assessing each candidate’s scripts. The timely distribution of the Quality Assurance Scripts (QAS), which are scripts that have been pre-marked by the Key Personnel Team, provided example-based guidance for interpreting and applying the mark scheme. This immediately reduced the risk of possible misinterpretations of the marking scripts or the mark scheme. It was heart-warming to see all the markers taking this measure in their stride and even welcoming it as they had the assurance that they were on the right track. The specialised marking was also facilitated by an enabler in the OSM system which could split the answer scripts into Question Item Groups (QIGs). Markers were hence able to focus on specialised marking, thus increasing their productivity.

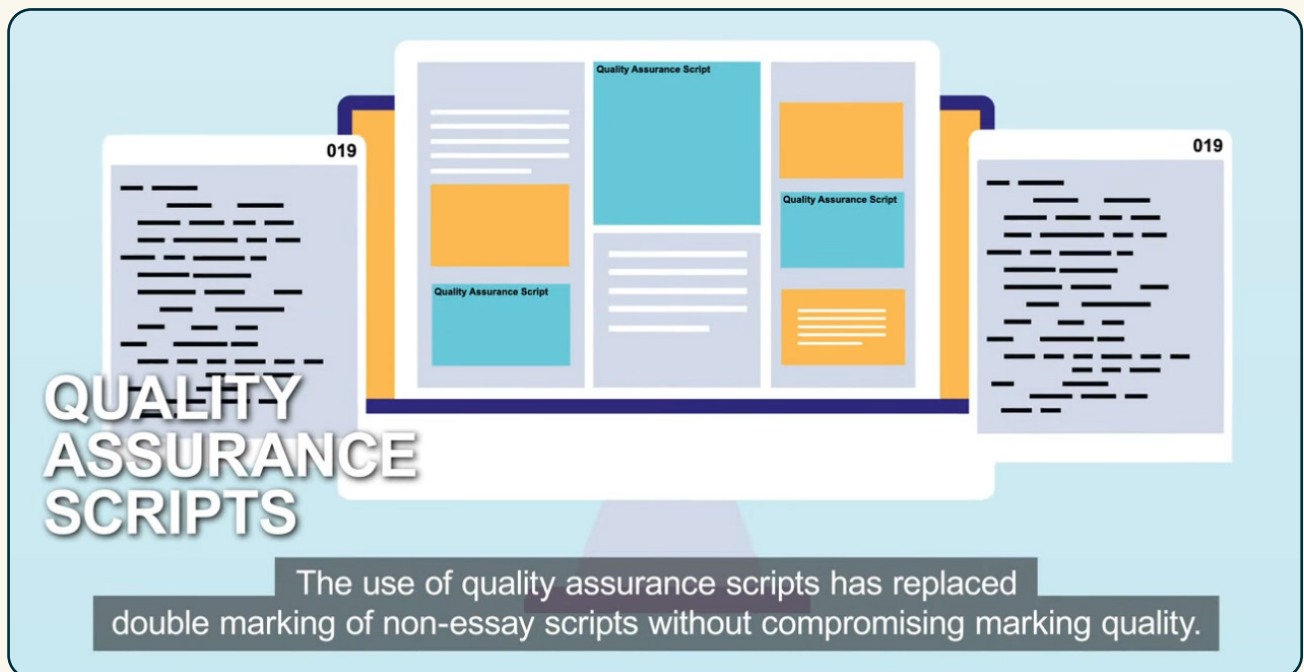
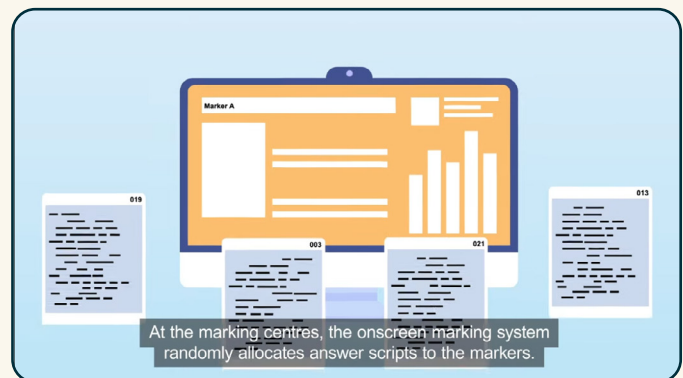
My Team Leaders, Assistant Chief Markers and I were able to fully focus on sampling the marked scripts without having to cut open envelopes, count scripts, check for transfer errors and re-count scripts before submitting the envelopes to the Recorders. Furthermore, my supervisors and I were also able to use the functions in the OSM system to monitor the progress of individual markers and hence keep the marking exercise on track. Instead of going room by room to check on the progress of the marking exercise or wait for SOS signals from my supervisors, I could directly check everyone’s status on my laptop, which saved me a lot of time to concentrate on the many professional duties of a Chief Marker. Needless to say, at the end of the OSM exercise, which ended earlier than the paper-based marking exercises in previous years, it was ALL SMILES and THUMBS UP for OSM!”

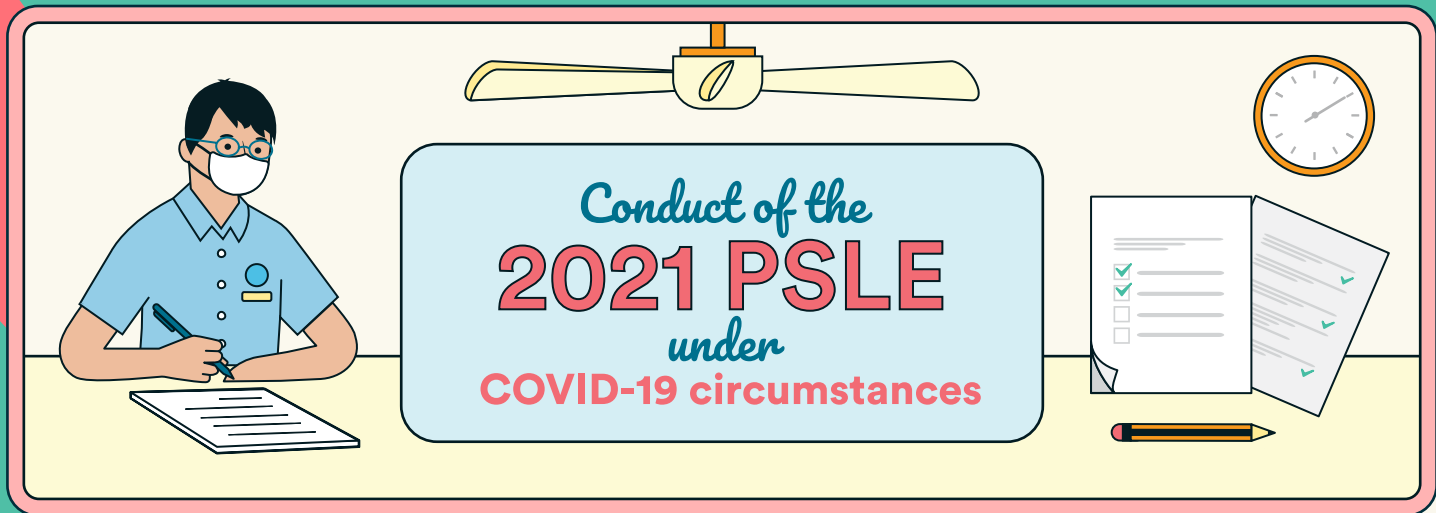
**Chief Marker,
Tamil Language**



Video on onscreen marking processes

Based on the feedback from our marking personnel, we are heartened that onscreen marking has indeed helped to enhance marking quality and efficiency. To wrap up our article, we present a behind-the-scenes look at the processes involved in onscreen marking in the national examinations, along with visual explanations of the positive changes. Click on the screenshots to watch the video. Enjoy!





The 2021 Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) was conducted during challenging COVID-19 circumstances, when there were increasing infections in Singapore. As the PSLE was an important milestone in the Primary Six students' educational journey, careful considerations were made to facilitate as many PSLE candidates as possible to sit for the examination in a safe environment for all.

Removal of PSLE common last topics

The Common Last Topics were removed to support the well-being of the Primary 6 students.

PSLE oral examinations

In past years, the PSLE oral examinations were conducted over two half-day morning sessions, with English and Mother Tongue Language subjects running concurrently. Candidates would sit for one language subject on Day 1 followed by the other language subject on Day 2.

The 2021 PSLE oral examinations were similarly conducted over two days, but with two sessions per day (morning and afternoon) to spread out and halve the number of candidates attending each session. Candidates continued to sit for one oral examination per day.

In view of the more infectious Delta variant, candidates and oral examiners were required to wear surgical masks at all times during the examination. Placards were also affixed onto the desks to remind candidates that they could request for the oral examiners to repeat the questions or speak louder if necessary.

PSLE written examinations

MOE and SEAB also **announced** that the following special examination arrangements.

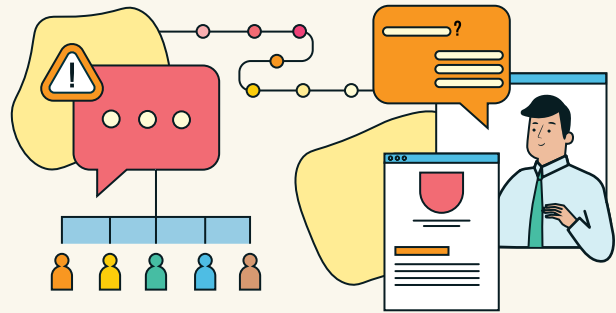
The key changes were:

- Allowing candidates on Quarantine Order (QO) to sit for their papers under enhanced safe management measures if they had a negative PCR entry swab and also tested negative on the Antigen Rapid Test (ART) kit within 24 hours before each of their examination papers.
- Allowing candidates on Health Risk Warning to sit for examinations if they had a negative ART (Ag-) results.



Behind the scenes: Facilitating candidates on QO to sit the 2021 PSLE

As the revised arrangements for the written examinations were announced close to the PSLE, there was a whole-of-SEAB effort to provide responsive support and guidance to schools, examination personnel and candidates. In addition to SEAB's PSLE and GCE-Level operations units, and the Corporate Communications Department, a dedicated SEAB QO operations team comprising SEAB personnel from various Divisions, was mobilised to:



- Work with MOE's Safety Security and Emergency Branch and Schools Division, liaise with MOH counterparts to ensure measures were feasible and practical, and assist affected candidates to sit for their examination where possible, so as to relieve unnecessary stress for students and parents.
- Disseminate updated measures via various approaches to schools, examination personnel, candidates, and their parents, particularly by setting up communication channels for schools to make clarifications, issuing Parents Gateway messages to parents, as well as updating information on both the SEAB and MOE websites for the public.

The SEAB QO team supported the PSLE operation in handling an influx of emails and calls from the schools and candidates. This additional support was especially crucial given the rising daily COVID-19 cases, and there were many candidates under QO seeking approval to take the examinations.

The QO operations team followed up to ensure candidates on QO could obtain their PCR results within a short time period and be issued leave from QO by MOH in time for their examination papers. We also worked with Schools Division to inform schools and examination personnel to make the necessary arrangements for the candidates. The team worked tirelessly to facilitate the arrangements and ensure that as many candidates as possible could take the examinations. It was a race against time, especially for some candidates who only managed to obtain their PCR test results on the night before their papers.

With strong guidance and support from all SEAB colleagues and fellow MOE counterparts, the 2021 PSLE written examinations were conducted successfully.

Here are some reflections and insights from members of the SEAB QO operations team:

“ Good morning Mrs Goh, how many candidates in your school are under QO and will not be able to sit for their examination today?”

This was a question that the QO Operations team asked every morning at 7am when we called the school leaders to check on their candidates' status. Thankfully, all school leaders were very supportive and gave clear and prompt updates every morning. This made the tracking job by the QO operations team much easier.

This journey was not without challenges. For example, schools would share with us that parents complained that they were unable to get through the Ministry of Health (MOH) hotlines. They also felt lost and confused over the SMM, such as being unsure if their children were able to sit for the PSLE while waiting for their PCR test results. I remember talking to a parent whose child was a close contact of a COVID-19 case. The parent had placed the child in a room to self-isolate, instead of sending him to school. She sounded very worried as her child would not be able to sit for his PSLE if he tested positive. I assured her that we were working closely with MOE

to manage the situation and the school could apply for special consideration for her child if he was not able to sit for the examination. I called the parent the day after to check on her child's status. Unfortunately, he tested positive and would not be able to sit for the examination. Nevertheless, the parent appreciated the follow-up call and we ended the conversation well.

As there were periodic updates to the SMM, the QO Ops Team had to make sure that every team member understood and was clear about the instructions so that we could better support the schools and private candidates. The QO team was glad when MOH streamlined the COVID-19 testing protocols and SMM, which made it easier to understand and follow. With this change, the QO team stood down. While there were multiple challenges to juggle, the team is thankful for the support and guidance from management, and I will never forget this meaningful exercise.”

Cherral Teo



“ As the COVID-19 situation evolved in 2021, I was informed that I would be in the team supporting the examination administration for candidates who were under QO. It was the start of a short, eventful and ultimately rewarding project. I will always remember and be grateful for the leadership from management and the positive attitude and strong teamwork from team members and colleagues from other departments and MOE.

There was one case that I still remember vividly. It was about a candidate whose family member had tested positive for COVID-19. We were in constant communication with him for almost one full week to confirm his QO status so that our colleagues could prepare the examination venue and arrange for examination personnel to invigilate the

examination. When everything was put in place for the candidate to sit the examination, he tested positive for COVID-19 and had to miss his examination. Nonetheless, he was very grateful for our support and help.

The team tried our best to help the candidates who were under QO to sit for the examinations safely. While some candidates were able to do so, there were also, others who were not able to sit for their examinations in the end. Ultimately, I believe that we have played a role to give hope, assurance and support to our candidates and our fellow Singaporeans.”

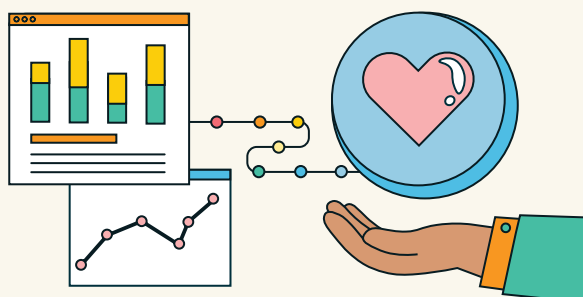
Joshua Neo



Special consideration (SC) provision for candidates who missed examinations

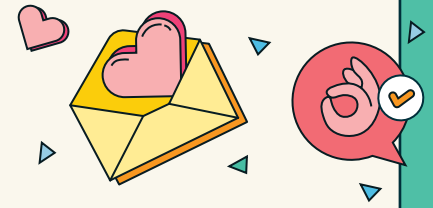
For the 2021 PSLE, about 497 (1.3%) students missed at least one paper due to COVID-19 reasons such as testing positive for COVID-19, Quarantine Order, Medical Leave due to Acute Respiratory illness etc.).

Candidates who missed their examinations due to valid reasons (including COVID-19, medical leave or compassionate reasons), could apply for SC. SC is a well-established procedure which awards affected candidates with projected grades through an evidence-based and data-driven approach. To provide candidates and their parents with clarity on the SC processes, MOE and SEAB shared details on how SC would be computed for candidates missing one or all papers of a subject via media releases. Such measures provided assurance that the affected candidates were not disadvantaged by the circumstances.



Notes of appreciation from Primary schools

In recognition of SEAB's efforts in facilitating the safe conduct of the national examinations, schools have sent us several heartwarming notes. We would like to thank all examination personnel and educators for partnering with us.



It has been our pleasure to work with colleagues in SEAB. The last 2 years were particularly challenging for all of us.

Wishing you and all our colleagues in SEAB a Merry X'mas and a Happy New Year.

Hope 2022 will be a better year for all of us.

**Mr Perry Tan, Vice-Principal
(Administration)
Catholic High School**

Thank you. It is our honour and pleasure to have worked with SEAB and we would also like to thank you for all the support SEAB has given us during the PSLE where on the ground decisions have to be made with regard to candidates' ability to take their PSLE in view of Covid 19.

**Mr. Koh See Choon, Vice-Principal
(Administration)
Dazhong Primary School**

Thank you so much for your team's appreciation for our staff!

I believe it has been a very challenging year for all of you in SEAB too, with the many changes in policies and procedures to ensure the national examinations are conducted in a consistent and fair manner!

Great job to the SEAB team for the efforts to ensure this!

Wishing all of you, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year ahead!

**Mr David Wang, Vice-Principal
(Administration)
Meridian Primary School**

On behalf of the school leaders and our teachers, I would like to express our gratitude to the SEAB team for the guidance and support too.

Wishing you and your team a good year ahead.



**Ms Chua Leng Leng, Vice-Principal
(Administration)
Unity Primary School**



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board

Our Vision:

A trusted authority in examinations and assessment,
recognised locally and internationally.

Our Mission:

We assess educational performance so as to certify individuals, uphold
national standards and advance quality in assessment worldwide.

Our Values:

Integrity | Value people | Commitment | Professionalism | Teamwork