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23 February 2018

238 GCE A-LEVEL H2 CHEMISTRY CANDIDATES AFFECTED BY THEFT OF PAPER 3 SCRIPTS IN THE UK

Affected candidates have been given valid and fair assessment

The Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board (SEAB) has been informed by Cambridge Assessment that a parcel containing 238 scripts for the 2017 GCE A-Level H2 Chemistry's Paper 3 was stolen from a courier in the United Kingdom (UK). The parcel was stolen while in transit from Cambridge Assessment to the Examiner.

2 The parcel contained scripts from four Junior Colleges – Anderson JC (58 scripts), Anglo-Chinese JC (60 scripts), Hwa Chong Institution (60 scripts) and Nanyang JC (60 scripts). This comprised about 3% of the 8,843 school candidates who sat for the 2017 GCE A-Level H2 Chemistry examination.

3 The theft occurred on 16 November 2017, and the courier company lodged a report with the UK Police on the same day. To date, the case remains under UK police investigation and the scripts have not been recovered.

4 Chief Executive of SEAB, Ms Tan Lay Choo, said, "SEAB has been working closely with Cambridge Assessment to ensure a valid and fair assessment of the affected candidates. Cambridge Assessment has asked SEAB to convey its sincere apologies to the affected candidates for this regrettable incident, and has given its assurance that it would review its processes to prevent a recurrence."

Valid and Fair Assessment of Affected Candidates

5 In such circumstances where a candidate does not have a mark for a paper, Cambridge Assessment and SEAB have an established procedure to provide affected candidates with a valid and fair assessment.

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6 For this incident, Cambridge Assessment and SEAB took into consideration the candidates' performance in the other three Chemistry papers¹, which make up 65% of the final grade, and the cohort's performance in the subject. To check for consistency in the affected candidates' overall performance in the Chemistry subject, Cambridge Assessment and SEAB also took into consideration the candidates' school-based examination results.

7 Following this procedure, all 238 candidates obtained at least a pass grade, with 81% scoring As and Bs for H2 Chemistry. All candidates attained better grades or maintained their grades in the national examinations compared to their school-based examinations.

8 Marking of the rest of the Chemistry exam scripts was not completed until end January, after which Cambridge Assessment and SEAB worked to award the grades of the affected candidates. Informing the affected candidates of the theft incident earlier, without the awarded grades ready, would have caused them undue anxiety.

Offer of Re-examination

9 Cambridge Assessment and SEAB will offer affected candidates the option of a re-examination of the H2 Chemistry Paper 3 on 25 April 2018. The results of the re-examination will be released by mid-May 2018.

10 In addition, candidates in full-time national service have the option of taking the re-examination of the H2 Chemistry Paper 3 in November 2018 instead of 25 April 2018. The results of the re-examination will be released by February 2019.

11 Candidates can only register for one re-examination - either April or November 2018 and must register their choice by 9 March 2018. Details of the registration have been provided by SEAB to the candidates.

12 The re-examination of H2 Chemistry Paper 3 will be based on the same curriculum that the candidates had been taught in schools. The re-examination of Paper 3 will be pegged at the same standard as the 2017 GCE A-Level H2 Chemistry Paper 3 examination. The examination format will also remain unchanged.

¹ 2017 GCE A-Level H2 Chemistry examination format:

- Paper 1 (Multiple Choice Questions) : 15% weighting
- Paper 2 (Structured Questions) : 30% weighting
- Paper 3 (Free Response Questions) : 35% weighting
- Paper 4 (Practical) : 20% weighting

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13 For candidates who wish to take up the re-examination, Cambridge Assessment and SEAB will give the better of the two grades, i.e. the better of the awarded grade and the re-examination grade, will be recorded in their GCE A-Level result slip and certificate. For the other candidates who do not wish to take the re-examination, their awarded grade will be recorded as the final grade in the GCE A-Level result slip and certificate.

14 For students who opt for the re-examination, SEAB will work with the local Autonomous Universities to consider their re-examination results, for the purpose of shortlisting for interviews, as well as final course admissions or scholarship applications.

15 SEAB has taken the necessary actions to ensure that the affected candidates are not disadvantaged and are given a valid and fair assessment. Ms Tan Lay Choo added, "We understand the concerns that the affected candidates may have. SEAB and schools are in contact with them and their parents and will continue to provide them with the necessary support."

SINGAPORE EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT BOARD