

Higher Education MCQ assessment marking



The College of Law is the largest provider of legal postgraduate training courses in England and Wales. Founded in 1962, after a private legal tutorial firm merged with the Law Society's own School of Law, the College is an educational charity and provides courses for over 5,000 students each year. The College operates nationally with its headquarters in Guildford and additional centres in Birmingham, Chester, York and London. Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) assessments feature heavily in the four postgraduate courses that the College offers. Fast, accurate results are crucial for the College to maintain its excellent standards of legal training.

The problem

The specific course design used in legal training has always suited the use of MCQ assessments, but with the introduction of the Bar Vocational course many more MCQ assessments needed to be processed. Initially, this was done manually as they had always been, but it soon became apparent how time-consuming the process had become.

Manual marking could be both unreliable and costly. More and more staff hours were being spent marking and temporary staff had to be hired to help ease the burden. A better all round solution was needed.

The solution

Many staff at the College already had previous experience in using DRS products and services, and they had no hesitation recommending the DRS Optical Mark Reader (OMR) solution to help alleviate the burden of manual marking. As DRS were already well established within the education sector no market testing was needed.

The College's London centre, based at Store Street, took delivery of a high speed, automatic OMR and the MultiQuest software package to aid in assessment processing. In addition, a bespoke mark sheet was designed and printed by DRS to use in conjunction with MultiQuest. With this complete package the College was able to start automatically marking the MCQ assessments very quickly.

Manually, approximately 30 mark sheets could be completed in an hour. But with the DRS solution, the OMR would take just one hour to complete over 7,000 mark sheets. In addition, MultiQuest could automatically download the marks directly into the College's own results database.

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The result

This sort of fast turnaround meant that students taking exams in the morning could have their results by the same afternoon. Lecturers could benefit as well. The results were linked directly to a student's overall course performance meaning written feedback on the assessments could be given to the student immediately.

The comprehensive reporting facility that MultiQuest provides allows the College to evaluate the performance of individual questions. Any rogue questions can be identified quickly and the results analysis adjusted accordingly. In the event that an answer was incorrectly set up when originating the test MultiQuest eliminates the need for re-marking, the answer is simply changed in the setup field and all results are updated automatically.



Fast and accurate data capture for HE

The key benefits the College has seen since implementing the OMR system is the considerable amount of time saved and the higher level of accuracy achieved. Staff no longer have to put aside hours of their time for assessment marking. The OMR relieves staff of this basic, yet vitally important administrative role.



The way forward

The success of the OMR with MCQ assessments has led staff to explore many other areas that will benefit from using DRS technology. Some of these areas include streamlining attendance registers and staff and student questionnaires.

One of the areas where the College has already implemented the DRS OMR is for Teaching Quality forms which were only completed by a small sample of students. This needed to be expanded to cover all students, greatly increasing the number of forms to be processed. Using additional software, the DRS OMR is now helping to save time in collecting and processing this data. The College is currently looking at increasing the number of applications and OMRs it has to enable each centre to utilise the benefits of the DRS solution even further.

As the College is heavily regulated by the Law Society it is assessed on the quality of the courses they provide and on how the courses are examined. Having quick, reliable access to assessment, attendance and survey data greatly helps with this procedure.

“The DRS OMR has made a great difference to the way we approach our data entry requirements.

Having access to fast, accurate data without the burden of manual keying benefits not only our students but our staff as well.”

*Lesley Hill
Deputy Director of Administration
The College of Law - London*

The College of Law 
of England and Wales

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