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Remote marking of high-stakes examinations: leadership, challenges and strategies

Conference Abstract

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Abstract

A key priority for educational institutions at both secondary school and university level is ensuring that students' work is marked to a high standard, often within fairly tight deadlines. This qualitative study focused upon the marking of high-stakes examinations taken by secondary school students in England. Marking is carried out by a group of markers, led by a team leader, and this research investigated the qualities and behaviours that are perceived to be important for leadership in this context. Notably, the marking task is carried out remotely. Any potential challenges that take place when marking within this context were explored, alongside the strategies used to overcome them.

Seventeen semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with assessment specialists and markers. Data was also obtained from marker rating systems to obtain multiple perspectives from major stakeholders. The participants represented a wide range of different subject areas, and some distinctions in the findings were related to the nature of the assessments in different subjects. A key finding applicable to all subjects was that leadership was focused around the shared goal of achieving fairness to students. Successful leaders were perceived to create a positive team culture and facilitate high quality marking through various strategies despite the lack of face-to-face interaction. The findings facilitate a nuanced understanding of the leadership of marking processes in a remote marking context, which can be compared and contrasted with other contexts.