

Allan Perry: I was given the role of developing two new A-Levels, and on my arrival what I wanted to do was to actually make those A-Levels paperless, and that was back in 2006/2007. I had a particular idea of what I wanted to achieve and a particular idea of what I wanted the assessment screens to look like; it would be incorporating avatars and laid out in a particular way, primarily to actually emphasise the applied nature of the qualifications in question, and really to help engagement of the candidates.

Ian Morgan: I think it's fundamental to us as awarding organisations, and for centres and schools, to understand the climate in which these candidates are currently operating in. Everything they do is technological-based. They're using their phones all the time and then we sit them at the desk and ask them to write their answers down. I think, so there needs to be that step change that kind of says 'okay, we need to be moving in line with what the youngsters of today would expect from us.'

Allan Perry: Almost a decade ago now we met with BTL, and developed the first examinations for January 2009, and we've actually delivered various examinations every series since that date.

Ian Morgan: I think in terms of the offering in the round it gives us everything we want as an organisation. It's evolved over a period of time, and we've put a lot of time and effort into upscaling people within the IT team, but also upscaling the organisation in terms of the development of those assessments, and therefore it's fairly fundamentally important for us that we work with a product that we've got confidence in, that we can deliver effectively as an organisation.

Allan Perry: Our key successes are, initially I think was actually just to have the first two A-levels available in England and Wales that were actually completely paperless, and as I said a fundamental of that was the examinations which were created using the BTL software.

Ian Morgan: One of the things we're trying to do is get additional value out of the BTL software. So we can use it for on-screen assessment, that's fine, but what we're trying to do is use then the processes and the workflows which are inbuilt into the BTL system, so that we can support our paper-based assessment mechanisms as well. Well we've got a whole host of things that are going on with papers, with a range of people having access to those papers, which is kind of less controlled than it will be the terms of using the BTL Surpass software. So the security that you get from within the BTL system means that we can have one version of a question paper which multiple people can access through various processes.

Allan Perry: If we have a remark with a paper, then the actual hard copy of the paper needs to be sent to someone to remark, and then that paper will be sent to the candidate or the centre. Using the technology that we actually had, we were able to actually just use URLs so the whole system was a lot more efficient and quicker. We have seen some good practice for example where an e-assessment has actually been taken by a particular group of candidates on a mock basis. All of those responses were actually sent off to our server, and then the teacher can actually go into the server

and then on a one-to-one basis – or perhaps group-by-group – can actually discuss the responses vis-à-vis the mark scheme, and perhaps try to explain as to how they could elicit more marks. Once the simplicity of the system was actually shown to the teachers, we again had very positive responses from everyone involved, and I think that initial, perhaps ‘fear’, of e-assessment dissipated quite quickly. I think we can hand-on-heart say that the actual customers and candidates that we have are also very happy, and we frequently – at the end of examination series – will receive praise from centres, schools, and colleges indicating that their candidates are far happier with the on-screen provision than they ever were with the paper-based equivalents.