



## CASE STUDY

# The Mauritius Examination Syndicate [MES] introduces online exam authoring to build resilience for the future.

Facing the advent of lockdown measures because of the Covid 19, the MES wanted to ensure that the process of setting exams could continue to be able to meet its deadlines whilst also keeping high levels of security and confidentiality. With this situation, the only possible solution was the use of trustworthy and reliable online exam authoring technology.

## A history of excellence

The MES has a clear procedure in place for exam authoring, which follows a rigorous workflow – seven individual steps from setting items through checking of the first printer’s proof to final clearance for printing. The process is overviewed by a paper coordinator. In addition, an independent quality assurance panel, made up of senior MES officers vets the papers before giving the green light for printing. It was therefore important for the MES that any solution would enable the same rigorous workflow online and continue to deliver high-quality exams, securely.

## The challenge of Covid 19

The advent of Covid 19 and lockdown measures meant that authors, moderators and other panel members could not meet in person and the normal processes could not be followed. However deadlines still had to be met and exam papers needed to be ready for the main exam dates in August and October. To meet these deadlines, they needed to have the papers ready to go to print as early as April.

As soon as the lockdown started in March, the MES realised it had to adopt a new approach to solve the problem of authoring remotely.

## Choosing the right technology

The MES had been trialling the GradeMaker software in a small-scale way for several years previously, which gave them confidence in its usability for their purposes. Trust is very important to them and the fact that GradeMaker is part of a large organisation with a long history in the area of assessment was also a key factor.

“ The best thing remains the possibility to continue the paper setting process securely and confidentially while remaining in the safety of our homes and not exposing people to unnecessary risks associated with Covid 19. ”

**DR SHALENA FOKEERA-WAHEDALLY,  
CHARTERED EDUCATIONAL  
ASSESSOR, RESEARCH &  
DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

## Implementing remotely during lockdown

The MES found the experience of working with GradeMaker during the lockdown very beneficial. They have appreciated the step by step implementation project, with constant support provided and queries promptly addressed, with ongoing support for users. They found it particularly useful having a training site set up to enable users to trial the software before setting the live papers.

Moreover they found that the templates GradeMaker has set up to facilitate the setting of the papers saved a lot of time and effort as the setters don’t have to choose which type of question to use each time – they just need to focus on creating their content into the templates provided.

## Getting up to speed

It took about a month to set up the whole thing and get started. It took about 2 to 3 weeks to set up about a 100 user accounts and get them to start trialling on the MES Training site.

A few more weeks were needed to approve the syllabuses and upload the additional documents that would be needed by the exam authors such as specimen papers. GradeMaker conducted an online training session with all the users. This was followed by specific and focused online training for setters, reviewers and approvers. Two months after the start of lockdown the setters and reviewers have already started working on the live papers.

“ We expect that GradeMaker will be instrumental in supporting us to meet those deadlines which might have been more challenging if the traditional method of setting was maintained. ”

**DR I AHSUN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
MES**

## What has changed as a result of using technology for exam authoring?

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This has been a successful model. Subject Managers now have the capacity to train their colleagues and item writers on how to author items, develop them and build question papers in GradeMaker.

## How have the setting team adapted?

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The vast majority of resource persons involved in the process of authoring examination papers reacted positively to working on GradeMaker. They find the online paper setting appropriate as they do not have to find time during office hours to physically come to the MES to work on the papers. Having an online solution provides them the possibility to work remotely and in their own time as well.

## The benefits for the future

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The MES hopes that in the long run all or most of their paper setting can move onto GradeMaker. Crucially they plan to use it to create an item bank and keep the records on each item which can be readily available as reference for other purposes in the future. Issues such as the lack of physical space and trained human resource to do the typesetting for instance can also be solved through GradeMaker. Moreover, they can see that post-exam analysis can be input. This information can also be available to future setters driving continual quality improvements.

“ I would encourage the use of the system. I personally think that the possibility to have an audit trail of all the activities and having a close overview of the paper setting process is a very important aspect especially for national exam boards. This software can help in addressing any weakness in the authoring process at an early stage and ensure that high quality assessment and exam papers are produced. ”

MRS D S THANACOODY SOBORUN,  
DIRECTOR, MES

## KEY FACTS

### Subjects:

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72 subject exams at Primary and Secondary

### Levels:

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7 levels including Grade 3, 4, 5(x2), 6, 9, and Pre-Voc in Year 4

### Other:

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Additional variations for other islands



## About MES

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The Mauritius Examinations Syndicate is the national examination board of The Republic of Mauritius. It organises and conducts examinations at all levels consistent with national policies and goals and in line with emerging international trends. The MES ensures that its examinations are valid and reliable and that standards are maintained in view of international recognition.

In the conduct of examinations, the MES provides a high level of confidentiality and security, so vital for strengthening confidence among the users of its services and the public in general.

## About GradeMaker

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GradeMaker Ltd. is part of the Stephen Austin group, which includes Stephen Austin Ltd, the leading supplier of secure examination production and distribution services.

With over sixty years' experience in the specialist field of assessment, Stephen Austin works with Ministries of Education, Examination Boards, Assessment Agencies and Professional Institutes in twenty-five countries across the globe.

To discuss how GradeMaker Pro can help you make your exam authoring better, then contact us for a free, no obligation, demo:

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