

## IEA STATUS

# 'Status, support and a voice'

### Steve Smethurst

makethegrade@redactive.co.uk

The Institute of Educational Assessors (IEA) has now been incorporated as an independent legal entity at Companies House. The incorporation process effectively marks the birth of the Institute.

The role of the Institute will be to improve the quality of assessment, by providing support, status and a voice for the assessment community.

Mick Walker, the interim chairman of the IEA, said: "This is a significant day for the education and assessment community. The incorporation of the Institute marks a stepping up of support to those involved in examining, marking and moderating of general qualifications and national tests."

The Institute will establish itself as a working body from Spring 2006, offering examiners, markers, moderators and teacher assessors professional status. It will offer five grades of membership, dependent on assessors' qualifications and experience:

**Affiliate membership** – available to anyone, graduate and non-graduate, with a



MICK WALKER

professional interest in assessment. This will include newly qualified teachers and non-practitioners working in education.

**Student membership** – available to graduates studying on teacher training

programmes. Benefits include additional learning, support and assessment information.

**Associate membership** – available to graduate teachers, lecturers and others with limited experience of assessment and knowledge of the examination system.

**Full membership** – open to more advanced practitioners in external and internal assessment, such as KS markers, GCSE and A-Level examiners, and teachers marking coursework.

**Fellowship** – this is for the most experienced and expert practitioners in educational assessment, such as chief and principal examiners, or those with a specific responsibility for assessment in schools and colleges.

The Institute has also been granted charitable status by the Charities Commission, the body responsible for overseeing the work of charities in England.

Charitable status will enable the IEA to more fully pursue its remit of improving assessment by providing support, status and a voice for members of the assessment community.

## COMPANY MEMBERS

# Key figures to lead Institute

The Institute of Educational Assessors has named the four people who will form its team of 'company members' – effectively the legal owners of the independent, not-for-profit organisation.

The four are all heavyweights of the education world: Lord Sutherland of Houndwood, Professor Alison Wolf, Professor Eva Baker and Graham Soles.

**Lord Sutherland** was born in Aberdeen and studied at both Cambridge and his home-town university before embarking on a university teaching career that included spells in North Wales, Stirling and King's College, London where he was principal for five years from 1985.

From 1990 to 1994, he was Vice Chancellor of London University and HM Chief Inspector of Schools in England.

GARY DOAK



LORD SUTHERLAND

**Alison Wolf** is Professor of Management and Professional Development at King's College London. She is an expert on the assessment of professional and technical skills and a

founding editor of *Assessment in Education*. Her most recent book is *Does Education Matter? Myths about education and economic growth* (Penguin, 2002).

**Eva Baker** is Professor of Educational Psychology and Social Methods in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

She has published more than 450 articles/book chapters and co-edited several books, including *Technology Assessment in Education and Training* (1994) and *Testing and Cognition* (1990).

**Graham Soles** is head teacher at Brighthouse High School, West Yorkshire and has almost 20 years' experience as assistant examiner and assistant chief examiner for GCE, O-Level

and GCSE French.

Soles is also a member of the independent Examinations Appeals Board, which plays an important role in making decisions when schools and colleges are in dispute over candidates' results.

Soles said that he was delighted to accept the invitation to be involved in the Institute. "It's a new and exciting venture. Assessment is a significant feature of the educational system and if qualifications are to be fit for purpose in the 21st century it is important that examiners and assessors are part of a framework of continuous development," he told *Make the Grade*. It is also essential that the status of these people is recognised and transparent. The Institute will play a significant role in fulfilling this."

## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

### Tax and insurance benefits among those available to Institute members

The Institute of Educational Assessors will offer a host of membership services for assessment practitioners alongside professional recognition.

After conducting a benchmarking project of similar bodies in other industry sectors, the Institute's founders have identified a series of benefits it feels members would seek out in such an organisation.

They have also conducted focus groups of teachers, examiners, markers and moderators to ensure the proposed activities would be responsive to members' needs.

When the Institute is up and running in Summer 2006, core member services will include membership certificates and cards, a termly magazine, a website and online newsletter and a series of regional and national conferences and events.

The Institute also plans to offer a set of optional services for members, including bespoke or discounted tax and insurance services.

These will include a tax helpline service,

#### Membership costs

Annual fees will be £60 for fellows, £50 for full members, and £30 for associate members.

In addition, it costs £20 for affiliate members and £10 for student members. As a special launch deal, the Institute is offering two years' membership for the price of one.

which will offer support and advice to self-employed assessors on aspects of tax liability. The Institute will also offer a fixed-fee tax return service through a third party.

The IEA hopes these services will help to develop community and affiliation with the Institute, as well as build brand loyalty and support membership retention. It's also hoped they will act as an effective sales promotion tool. Most importantly, the Institute will provide invaluable support to members of the assessment community.

## IEA offers online benefits for members



One of the core member benefits of the Institute of Educational Assessors will be access to its website, which is due to be fully up and running in Spring 2006 to coincide with the official launch of the Institute.

The site will include a dedicated members' area, where subscribers will be able to update their details, take part in membership surveys and pay membership fees online.

Another key feature of the site will be its online knowledge centre, where assessors will be able to access abstracts, articles and research related to their work.

The Institute has also teamed up with *The Times Educational Supplement* to provide an online jobs listing and vacancy alert service by email.

The Institute worked with advertising agency J Walter Thompson to design the site.

To access these and more services, visit [www.ioea.org.uk](http://www.ioea.org.uk)



EXAMINERS SEEK SUPPORT

### Research shows support for Institute

A research project by the National Assessment Agency has found examiners, moderators and markers to be fully in support of greater professional recognition for their work.

The NAA commissioned independent research company MORI to interview 600 assessment professionals on their views of how their work is perceived, their enjoyment of assessment, and their views on the formation of an Institute of Educational Assessors.

The report concluded that more than three-quarters of examiners, markers and moderators are proud of what they do, while nine out of 10 current examiners said they would recommend becoming an assessor to a fellow teaching professional.

At the same time, however, many examiners feel that negative perceptions of the assessment system drag down their confidence. Examiners' further concerns included the amount of time they spent on assessment work and lack of information on changes to the examining system.

The majority agreed that the formation of a professional body would give them greater support in this regard. In fact, more than three-fifths (67%) of those questioned agreed that an Institute of Educational Assessors would do this.

According to MORI, examiners, moderators and markers who currently feel uninformed about the examination system are looking for a professional body that will improve communications and provide greater insight into the assessment system.

When asked what activities they would like to see an Institute of Educational Assessors undertake, 78% cited 'providing support to the profession' as important. When asked to select just one activity that would make them more likely to welcome an Institute, the majority of current examiners cited 'professional recognition'.