

Read the text, published in 2009, about a new way of marking tests. First decide whether the statements (1-7) are true (T) or false (F) and put a cross (☒) in the correct box on the answer sheet. Then identify the sentence in the text which supports your decision. Write the first four words of this sentence in the space provided. There may be more than one correct answer; write down only one. The first one (0) has been done for you.

Can computers replace humans in assessment?

The owner of one of England's three major exam boards is to introduce artificial intelligence-based automated marking of English exam essays in the UK from next month.

Pearson, the American-based parent company of Edexcel, is to use computers to "read" and assess essays for international English tests in a move that has fuelled speculation that GCSEs and A-levels will be next.

All three exam boards are now investing heavily in e-assessment but none has yet perfected a form of marking essays using computers – or "robots" – that it is willing to use in mainstream exams. Academics and leaders in the teaching profession said that using machines to mark papers would create a "disaster waiting to happen".

The Times Educational Supplement (TES) reports today that the Pearson Test of English Academic, an English-language exam, will launch on 26 October. It includes essay questions and will be used in 20 countries, including the UK, to rate applicants' English skills before they are admitted to university.

Computers have been programmed to scan the papers, recognise the possible right responses and tot up the marks. Pearson claims this will be more accurate than human marking.

John Bangs, head of education at the National Union of Teachers, said that computers could be useful in many areas of assessment but cautioned against their use in English exams: "I'm very concerned that it would constrain the nature of the questions being asked. You won't pick up nuances by machine and it will trigger a trend to answering narrower questions. It could be a disaster waiting to happen."

A Pearson spokesman told the TES that its system produced the accuracy of human markers while eliminating human elements such as tiredness and subjectivity.

Other exam boards said the adoption of computers to mark beyond their current use in multiple choice tests was inevitable. Tim Oates, director of research for Cambridge Assessment, which owns the exam board OCR, said: "It's extremely unlikely that automated systems will not be deployed extensively in educational assessment. The uncertainty is 'when' not 'if'. But all systems need to meet exacting quality criteria and should definitely not be adopted just to make life easier for testing organisations."

"Some approaches look like technology in search of a test, rather than assessment designed to accurately report attainment."

An Edexcel spokesperson said that the board was not planning to use automated marking in mainstream exams such as A-levels and GCSEs. She said that previous trials of the technology in GCSE essay questions had not been expanded.

0	A US enterprise is planning to make use of electronic software to mark written performance.
1	A lot of money is being put into the development of automated assessment tools.
2	University professors are convinced that electronic assessment will prove to be successful.
3	The Pearson English language test will be limited to colleges in Britain.
4	A teaching union spokesperson believes computers are able to recognize minor differences in responses.
5	The programme is described as precise and without human weaknesses.
6	According to some testing organizations, electronic rating will only ever be for tests where you select the correct answer.
7	The new technology will not be applied in standard school exams in the near future.

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	T	F	First four words
0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Pearson, the American-based parent</i>
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Von der
Lehrperson
auszufüllen

richtig falsch

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