



## Position Statement on Awarding Bodies and Teaching Resources

The IMA is concerned about developments in the market for textbooks and other teaching resources<sup>1</sup> for courses preparatory to public examinations which it believes to be detrimental to the public good. The practices have arisen of the endorsement of textbooks by awarding bodies and the publicising of authors being examiners.

- Many centres feel obliged to purchase textbooks which have been written by examiners and have been endorsed by awarding bodies in case they confer some advantage and to protect themselves from criticism for failing to have done so. Even for those centres wishing to use broader criteria in the choice of resources this restricts their choice as other publishers find they cannot achieve commercial viability and withdraw from the market.
- The versioning of textbooks to particular specifications fragments the market which makes it difficult for a variety of approaches, especially innovative ones, to be published. It also causes a culture to arise in which textbooks are considered obsolete when specifications change, with the consequent cost to centres of replacing stock.
- Examination specifications need to be self-contained and sufficiently detailed so that all are confident what is required and there should be no suspicion that dependence must be placed on *de facto* amplification provided by texts where a financial relationship exists between the awarding body and the publisher.
- Good examiners are not necessarily good writers of textbooks. Although there are exceptions, there is a tendency for the books to be very exam focused which is a further factor encouraging teaching to the test; those teachers who feel the most need for endorsed texts are those least likely to be confident to break free from the textbook.
- Endorsement is effectively acting as a restraint to trade rather than as a kite-marking system. Whilst innovative projects and pilots should quite properly be able to publish linked supporting material, and awarding bodies should be able to support innovative or small-entry examinations with booklists and free materials, anything from which awarding bodies gain commercial advantage should be prohibited as a condition of accreditation by the regulator.

For the maintenance of public confidence in standards there must be a clear separation, between teaching and learning and the public assessment thereof, which does not admit of any suspicion of conflict of interest. It is in the public interest that the resources published for use in our schools and colleges are supportive of good teaching and learning, and it is proper that the regulatory authorities should take steps to prevent practices not conducive to this.

Schools and Further Education Committee

1 September 2009

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<sup>1</sup> In what follows 'textbooks' should be construed as including other teaching resources.