

Maximum Exam Security backed by Outstanding Support: The key drivers for the Pensions Management Institute to switch to the TestReach online assessment system



**Pensions
Management
Institute**

“TestReach has a wealth of experience and assessment options over and above what other providers offer.”

“We are now running the most successful exams we’ve ever delivered at the PMI. It has been the best roll out and the most efficient assessment process we’ve ever seen”.

“The unique TestReach offering maintains exam integrity and security in line with Ofqual regulations, and the amount of support we receive completely exceeds our expectations.”

Background

Founded in 1976, the Pensions Management Institute (PMI) is the UK’s largest and most recognisable membership body for pension professionals, supporting over 7,000 members and offering the most prestigious qualifications for those wishing to progress their careers in pensions. The PMI has most notably recently launched their new Pathways, which have been introduced with one aim in mind: to make their qualifications more streamlined to a specific career path, so that their learners can undertake a group of units or qualifications that fit their career goals.

Although a certain type of exam may take place more regularly at the PMI, their main two exam sessions are run every year in the Spring and Autumn, with around 20 different examination papers. The longest exams are 3 hours 30 minutes, with the shortest exams taking 1 hour 30 minutes to complete. The PMI offer a range of different types of examinations, ranging from multiple choice, written questions and calculations, and are taken by around 1,500 candidates annually.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the PMI delivered exams on paper in test centres. In March 2020, these test centre-based exams had to be cancelled due to lockdown, and so, at this point, the PMI switched to online exams with remote proctoring. During the pandemic, Ofqual, (who regulate qualifications, examinations and assessments in England), were somewhat flexible with exam arrangements given the difficult circumstances, however the PMI recognised that the online assessment solution chosen at that time did not maintain the levels of exam integrity and security that would be necessary in line with stricter, post-pandemic Ofqual regulation.

In addition, the support received from the initial provider by PMI’s administration team and exam candidates was inadequate. Candidates struggled to use the technology and regularly contacted the PMI exam team looking for support. In the run up to and during exams, the PMI

team was on the phone with candidates all day, and often was not in a position to assist with technical issues.

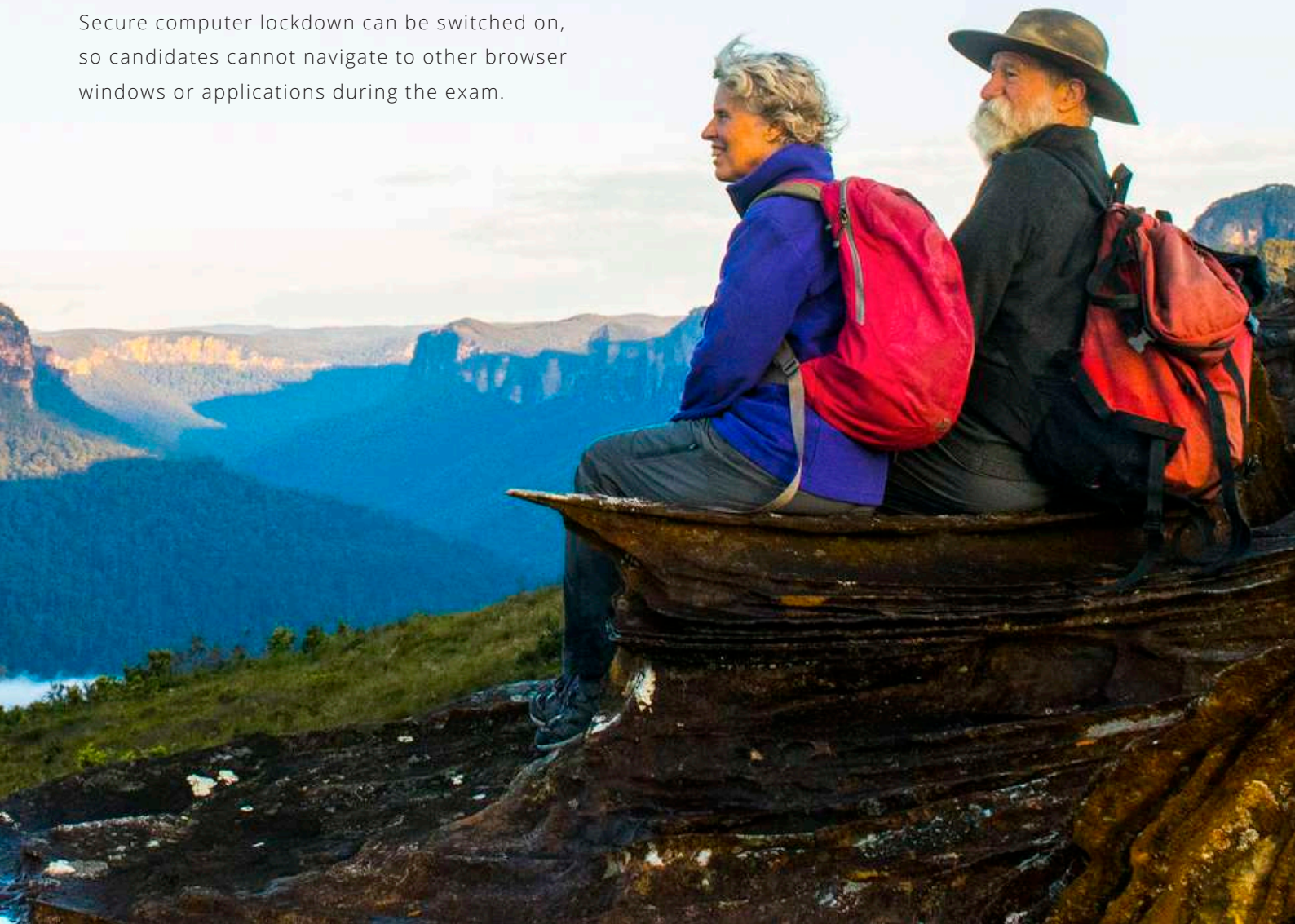
Vanessa Jackson, Manager of Lifelong Learning, Qualifications Department at the PMI, described it: *“We became conditioned to be in panic mode during the exams, on the edge of our seats, waiting for doomsday. It was so stressful and unworkable – it just wasn’t a sustainable situation.”*

Solution

Exam integrity and security were the main drivers that led to the PMI selecting TestReach as its new online assessment partner. Unlike other proctoring systems, the secure TestReach desktop application provides a very robust and reliable solution for delivering remotely invigilated exams, as everything takes place in the controlled environment of a purpose-built application and not in a browser window. All invigilation is live, carried out by well-trained TestReach supervisors, who understand the application and offer a professional service. Secure computer lockdown can be switched on, so candidates cannot navigate to other browser windows or applications during the exam.

TestReach has a very experienced support team, who can easily be contacted by phone, email and chat messenger, so any technical queries on exam day come through to the TestReach HelpDesk and not to the PMI exams team.

In addition, TestReach has been running high-stakes exams for almost 10 years, and in the words of Keith Hoodless, Director of Lifelong Learning at the PMI, *“TestReach has a wealth of experience and assessment options over and above what other providers offer. When we looked at TestReach we could see that it offered us a lot of very significant improvements across multiple areas of the business.”*



Results

The combination of greater exam security alongside responsive support has had a huge positive impact on exam delivery at the PMI. Keith Hoodless says: *"At this point I can answer any of the regulator's questions, as so much information is available in real time. The layers of security that TestReach provides puts us ahead of the field."*

It has improved our processes much more than anticipated, making things precise and very structured. The secure application prevents use of AI solutions like ChatGPT and maintains the integrity of our qualification. Pre-Covid, when exam papers left our building, it was extremely difficult to keep track of things, until completed scripts came back through the doors! Compare that to the approach we have now, where everything is transparent and controlled, the security is tight and the delivery is robust - it is the best iteration of exams the PMI has ever seen. We offer a professional qualification, professionally delivered and assessed. That has been made possible with TestReach."

Speaking about the support provided, Vanessa Jackson said of exam days with TestReach: *"It has honestly been a dream. Everything is so structured, so easy-to-understand and well managed. Now, instead of spending exam days on the phone, we are able to focus on exam quality and content, instead of worrying about IT issues. Literally everything that TestReach provides at every step, like the live chat to the invigilator and the support service, is an outstanding operation."*

The PMI is also using TestReach's extensive online marking and moderation features. The marking team welcomes using the intuitive screens, allowing them to easily read and assess written answers. In addition, the exam team finds the graphical moderation tools extremely relevant and helpful.

"It has honestly been a dream. Everything is so structured, so easy-to-understand and well managed. Now, instead of spending exam days on the phone, we are able to focus on exam quality and content, instead of worrying about IT issues."

Literally everything that TestReach provides at every step, like the live chat to the invigilator and the support service, is an outstanding operation."

Keith Hoodless adds:

“One piece of key advice I would give to others looking at assessment solutions is to ask, ‘How much support are you going to provide?’. The support from TestReach has been excellent. The relationship and the level of understanding is refreshingly different, it is really open and honest.”

“We are now running the most successful exams we’ve ever delivered at the PMI. It has been the best roll out and the most efficient assessment process we’ve ever seen. We used to be on calls from 7am to 7pm on exam days, but now it doesn’t even feel like there are exams running – it has completely removed the stress and pressure from the assessment team. The unique TestReach offering maintains exam integrity and security in line with Ofqual regulations, and the amount of support we receive completely exceeds our expectations.”

“We’ve had a great experience with TestReach and the more people hear about it, the better.”

