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Evaluation Institute Completes Essay Phase of Student Testing Annual Assessment Almost Done

Doha, Qatar (May 5, 2004) – The scoring of the essay portion of the first Qatar Comprehensive Educational Assessment was recently completed by the Supreme Education Council's (SEC) Evaluation Institute, marking the forward progress of Qatar's comprehensive reform effort known as "Education for a New Era." Approximately 60,000 essay exams were scored between April 14-30.

The Assessment is a battery of tests that will be administered every year to students in grades 1-12 at all public and private Arabic schools in Qatar. These exams will help Qatar monitor the quality of its schools by gauging student learning on an on-going basis. Four subject areas will be tested each year: Arabic, English, mathematics and science. The testing schedule for 2004 is as follows:

Secondary Schools	April 4-15
Preparatory Schools	April 18-29
Primary Schools	May 2-13

The Assessment uses a multiple choice format for most grades, but also includes an Arabic language essay section for students in grades 7-12 and an English language essay section for students in grades 10-12. In order to score the essays, the Evaluation Institute hired 278 qualified local residents, all of whom have a university degree and some background in education. Of those scoring the Arabic essays, 90 percent were teachers; of those scoring the English essays, 100 percent were teachers.

"The results of the annual Assessment are absolutely essential to our efforts to implement comprehensive education reform in Qatar," said Adel Al-Sayed, Director of the Evaluation Institute. "The student scores will reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the current system and alert us to where improvements are most needed."

The scoring operation was conducted at the Intercontinental Hotel in Doha each evening from 4-8 p.m. in a secure area set up for this purpose and with necessary quality control mechanisms in place. Scorers underwent a comprehensive training seminar before the actual scoring process began and also were required to perform a practice scoring again each evening before they were given exams to grade. The scoring of the Arabic and English essays was overseen by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the world's largest educational testing and measurement organization. In keeping with standard international procedures, each exam was scored twice. If there was more than one point difference in the first two scores, the exam was scored a third time. Scorers were not able to see any previous scores, nor could they determine the names of the students or their schools.

Scoring of the multiple choice portions of the Assessment is being done electronically and will be on-going for several weeks.

The Supreme Education Council was established by Emiri decree in 2002 to serve as the leading authority on education policy in Qatar and to oversee the effort to transform the nation's schools into a modern, world-class education system.