

# O & A Levels: Achievement Unlocked

## A Talk with Simon Young, Regional Director of Pearson Edexcel Asia

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Simon Young was recently in Dhaka to attend The Daily Star O and A Level Awards Programme 2015. During his stay, he also visited a number of schools, BTEC centres and attended meetings with the British Council. In an exclusive interview with SHOUT, he talked about how Bangladeshi students are excelling in the academic field.

Pearson Edexcel is one of the world's largest qualification awarding bodies. For the past 43 years, this examination board has offered its prestigious qualifications to students in Bangladesh who aspire to study at any of the top universities at home or abroad. Such is the popularity of Pearson Edexcel that over 10,000 students have registered for International GCSE and A Level exams due to take place in May/June 2015 session. With the great responsibility as an awarding body, Pearson Edexcel makes sure that the curriculum is properly aligned with universities and that the universities recognise the students' achievements.

Simon Young has worked with Pearson for over six years and has been Regional Director, based in Singapore, for about four and a half years. He considers it a great honour to represent the Edexcel exam board, saying, "To see the impact of our exams on students and how qualifications improve an individual's prospects in life is a wonderful privilege for me. We take our work very seriously, and we put the learner first in everything that we do. This means we ensure that our qualifications do what we say they will do, and fulfil our promise to the learners."

"Your education never leaves you. Your grades stay on your CV for the rest of your life. My A Levels are still on mine and it acts as a constant reminder. Yet when you are a young person taking your exams it can be quite difficult to see 15 years ahead and the lifelong impact your qualifications will have on your life," he adds.

Pearson Edexcel is unique in allowing its students to compete on a world stage. This examination board produces global papers, meaning all countries outside of UK have the same exam paper. Therefore, it is possible for the awarding body to measure students of Bangladesh against the global standard. According to Young, "Our Bangladeshi students are amongst the best in the world, and they want to be measured against a global standard, and they achieve outstanding success."

Due to the high standards, the Edexcel Higher Achiever Awards are becoming more important, and each year more Bangladesh students are winning the highest achievement awards across all subjects. Young says that both the Edexcel Awards and The Daily Star Awards are complementary as the latter celebrates every

learner regardless of curriculum and the Edexcel Awards have a stricter award criterion.

Furthermore, he is highly impressed by the performance of Bangladeshi students who win the highest proportion of awards worldwide, outside of the United Kingdom. Bangladeshi students are thriving particularly in mathematics, science and economics. Young says, "Year after year, Bangladesh leads the world in achieving the best Edexcel academic results and tops the rankings for students who win places at the world's leading universities. This outstanding national achievement is a testament to the students' phenomenal hard work, and the dedication of all those involved in the education sector, in particular the schools and teachers."

Young strongly commends schools in Bangladesh which provide an environment that allows the students to excel not only in academic qualifications but also create social impact through extra-curricular activities. He believes that learners who have well-rounded personal characteristics and capabilities increase their chances of getting into good universities.

In the recent years, the UK Government has been reforming the education system to upgrade and update the quality of education. Pearson Edexcel has paralleled their standards likewise. The new GCE A Levels is linear, which means students have to take all their A Level exams at the end of two years. The Edexcel IALs (International Advanced Level) on the other hand, which has become the leading system internationally, follows a modular system. This allows students more flexibility of splitting their A Levels into two sessions – January and May/June. Also, the Advanced Subsidiary Level, which is half of an A Level, will contribute

towards their final A Level grade.

Due to the current political circumstance of the country, these crucial exams stand at the risk of being disrupted. Pearson Edexcel is working very closely with the British Council to ensure that the examinations are continued smoothly. The examination board empathises strongly with the students as they understand it is a very challenging situation and are doing everything they can to ensure the continuation of examinations.

Pearson Edexcel does not differentiate what the reason for a disruption is. Thus, they treat the situation in order to put the safety of students, teachers and parents first. There will be a conclusive announcement this month regarding how exactly the exams will be operated if the unrest persists.



*"It is great to see The Daily Star recognising Bangladeshi students on a national scale, regardless of which examination board they have chosen. It provides excellent recognition of students' achievements and motivates the next generation of learners tremendously."*