

November 2018

This month's blog is written by Gemma Sadler, Assistant Principal (Data and Examinations) and Examinations Officer at Shirelands Collegiate Academy, Smethwick who gives an insight into her role at this time of year...

Time flies when you are an Exams Officer...

I can't believe we are nearly at the end of the first half-term and I am into another exam season already. It started in early October with iGCSE Hindi as a Second Language for two of our students, continues this week with a BTEC on-screen exam for some of our KS4 Sport students and culminates in the GCSE Maths and English examinations just after half-term. There is no such thing as easing ourselves back in in September!

September brought the influx of post results requests from staff and students, an expensive time for the Academy! All the reviews of marking were completed about two weeks ago, but I am still waiting for scripts to be returned. I have also started receiving the first batches of certificates which will be sorted by my Exams Assistant into the pre-addressed envelopes she produced in the Summer term.

I have been busy with my information gathering, not only for examinations, but I pass this information on to our Data Manager and Admissions Manager to help with the Autumn census. I use *The Exams Office's* [Information Gathering Form](#) template and [Annual Examinations Plan](#) template to help me with this process and have done so for the last few years, so my Heads of Department are familiar with the format of the request. It has been interesting this year as some very last minute [approvals by the DfE for qualifications](#) to appear in the 2020 performance tables have meant decisions about which qualifications are being delivered to Year 10 students have only just been finalised, yet they chose their option subjects mid-way through Year 9 as they do in many centres now.

This half-term has also afforded me the opportunity to get out of the Academy for a few days to take part in different activities. I started early in September by attending a course on administering Access Arrangements with our new-to-post SENCo. Although it is not the Exam Officer's role to lead on Access Arrangements I feel that it is important to work alongside the SENCo when putting Access Arrangements in place, particularly as our SENCo has had no previous experience of the process. I spent two and a half hours with her last Monday afternoon discussing the current arrangements in place for students and identifying other students who may need to be assessed and what access arrangements would be the most suitable. I know many of you will have dealt with students requiring coloured paper or overlays previously, but this is a first for me this year, as well as a student who has colour deficiency (previously known as colour blindness).

I also attended the [Experienced Exams Officers training](#) which I find invaluable every year to network with other exams officers and ensure I am up to speed with all the changes in JCQ regulations. There are several changes that have caused

discussions back at the Academy! I am already looking forward to the [Winter Exams Officer Conference](#) – the booking window is open from 5 November.

I also went out to deliver my first [in-house invigilator training session](#). I returned to a school where I delivered training last academic year and it was good to find out how their Summer season went and get some feedback on how helpful the training was. There has been a lot of interest in this in-house training and I have already been booked at three other centres in the Spring term. *The Exams Office* is still offering two free places per centre on the New Invigilator training courses they are running. However, if you are planning on booking the in-house invigilation I would suggest you get your booking in early, as I know there were booking requests just before the Summer 2018 season that we were unable to fulfil due to our commitments in our own centres.

I am looking forward to half-term but the 'to do' list is long. I need to start collecting the information from Heads of Department about their requirements for the Year 11 internal examinations which are calendared for December, so that I can start creating