

## January 2019

This month's blog is written by Marcia Woods, Examinations Officer at Brookfield Community School, Chesterfield, who highlights some of the key tasks in the coming weeks and months...

### **It's a new year and a time to focus upon my invigilators...**

I hope that when you read this blog you have had a good Christmas break and are feeling refreshed and are ready for the next chapter in the world of exams.

I know a lot of us will have conducted, or will be conducting, mock (PPE) exams around this time. I always think that if we can run mock exams, which are usually much more crammed together than the real thing and have the added jeopardy of having to wait for teaching colleagues to provide the question papers, then we can certainly survive external exams!

When I was first thinking about what to write in this blog I thought I could discuss the entries that will need to be collected from teaching colleagues and submitted to the exam boards by 21 February 2019, then I looked back at what I had written for the December blog last year and realised that I had covered it fairly comprehensively then, so back to the drawing board.

Besides entries, the other major task that I will be starting in January is recruiting some new invigilators. In my school we use external invigilators for our internal mock exams and GCSE and A level exams. In order to be able to cover our exam requirements I need to maintain a team of about 25 invigilators and, even then, there still seems to be the odd day or two when everyone has other plans, for example election days when I have a couple of invigilators who can make much better money, by sitting in a draughty village hall all day ticking voters off. This recruitment process needs to be started in good time to ensure that we have time to recruit, obtain DBS certificates as required, and train our team before we need them to manage the summer exams.

Most of my invigilators are more mature folk who have already had a successful career but are not yet ready to give up working entirely. However, each year few of my team decide to finally retire and hang up their treasury tags (AQA only!), so it seems each January I am looking to recruit quality staff, which can be a challenge.

Having in the past, run a full recruitment process including advertising, shortlisting and interviews only to have a new employee tell me that she was only available on Thursday afternoons (I kid you not), I have made my advertisement and job description much more specific. In my last advert I specified that applicants must be available for the whole of May and June and for at least 3 days each week. I also mentioned the type of people required: calm and organised with attention to detail and a real interest in safeguarding young people.

The next question is where to place your advert. I found the local paper was expensive, and the job centre is not the right place to advertise a seasonal/zero hours contract type post. Last year, when I recruited some really good staff, I put adverts on community notice boards in our local shops and the local supermarket as well as emailing every single member of school staff including current invigilators asking them to draw the vacancies to the attention of anyone they thought might be suitable, I think at least one copy of the advert ended up on a church notice board. The advert was also placed on the school website and Twitter feed. This seemed to get the message out and we had more applicants than required and had to shortlist before interviewing candidates. I have also heard that the University of the Third Age (U3A,) an organisation for retired people, might be a good place to advertise.

There are loads of useful resources on the [The Exams Office website](#) regarding the employment of invigilators, including a guide to planning invigilator recruitment, a job description template, other useful documents to use for gathering information on staff availability, and a confidentiality and security agreement for your invigilators to sign to indicate they understand that information they discover when working must stay in school, and that they must not gossip about students outside of school.

Once I have received applications, our Business Manager and I will shortlist and interview prospective candidates. In our school as part of our safeguarding policy, we make sure that at least one of the interviewers has had safer recruitment training. I found several years ago that the process of recruiting invigilators needed to be formalised so that they understood that this was a serious and important role within the school, and that the exams officer was their boss.

Once you have recruited members to your team and they have undergone any necessary security checks, you will need to ensure that they are trained as required by JCQ regulations. Section 12 of the Instructions for Conducting Exams (ICE) book states that a training session must be held for any new invigilators, and/or an update meeting must be held for the existing invigilation team so that they are aware of any changes. New for this year, a record of the content of the training given to invigilators must be retained on file until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later. You must make sure that invigilators know what is expected of them.

This training must be undertaken by anyone who is involved in the conducting of exams, so if you have school staff or teaching assistants who will be working as invigilators, scribes, readers, practical assistants or prompters they also need to be trained and a record kept.

*The Exams Office* also offer [excellent resources](#) to help us carry out this training task. On the website is a Powerpoint training presentation template, presenter notes and video clips to help you to run your own training event. There is also information about [invigilator training events](#) run in various

locations up until next April, by the *The Exams Office* Exams Training team. Members of *The Exams Office* can send a minimum of 2 delegates **free of charge**. Members may be able to book additional places free of charge if capacity allows. You could choose to attend this event as an exams officer to find out how you could run your own event or, if you only have a couple of new invigilators, you could send them for the full training and just run an up-dating event for your other invigilators.

If you don't fancy training your team yourself you could arrange for one of the *The Exams Office* team to come out to your school and run an in-house invigilator training event; there is a cost for this and full details can be found on the *The Exams Office* website under the [Invigilator Training map \(in-house training\)](#). I must confess that I am one of those trainers; it has been a real pleasure over the past year visiting other schools to meet and train their exams teams. I have had some repeat bookings, so I presume I am not too bad at the job.

In December, a really exciting new resource was released, by *The Exams Office* - an [online invigilator training and assessment tool](#). It is one thing for our invigilators to attend a training event and possibly receive a certificate to say they were there, but I think this tool will allow us to ensure that our invigilators really know what their role is and can demonstrate that they are familiar with the JCQ regulations. This assessment tool is freely available to members of *The Exams Office*. There is information for invigilators to read or watch before they move on to answer a selection of multiple choice questions. If they do not answer a question correctly the first time they can re-visit a section to improve their score. I have to confess when I logged myself on as an invigilator last week and had a very quick go at some of the questions, I skipped reading the information and only got 3 out of 4 on my first attempt – I redeemed myself on a second go though. I am planning to offer my invigilators the choice to log on at home and complete the assessments or come in to school for some moral support. I just need to work out what would be a fair payment to the invigilators for this training work.

When I come back to school in January I will be ready to start making entries and recruit more staff, but I will also be looking forward to the [The Exams Office Winter Conference](#). I am going to Leeds on 18 January, and I am looking forward to meeting up with colleagues and hearing updates from the exam boards, it will be particularly good to welcome AQA to the conference. This will also be an opportunity to join a workshop on the new online assessment tool, so we can see it in action before getting our invigilation team involved.

Wishing you a very happy New Year and happy recruiting too!