

May 2019

This month's blog is written by Jane Hickey - Operations Manager, responsible for Exams at Saint Martin's Catholic Academy who considers the importance of Exams Officers and some of the key tasks they are engaged in during the build up to, and during, the summer exams series...

The importance of your Exams Officer...and not just during exam time...

Since my last blog, I have taken up a new position in school and a new exams officer has been appointed. It was interesting to read last month's blog written by Gemma Sadler, which made me realise the amount of knowledge the exams officer holds in respect of the examination processes and the importance of contingency and succession planning.

Whilst I have been training and mentoring our new exams officer it has confirmed to me how diverse the role is. It is essential to have a knowledge of the education system, individual qualifications including their value and assessment criteria, knowledge of MIS systems, key dates and compliant with awarding bodies rules and regulations. Ensuring the correct information is communicated to staff, students and parents in a clear and timely manner.

In January this year both Katherine McDiarmid from Kendrick School and I were approached by Ofqual to be interviewed about the role of the exams officer. Together with members of our SLT and my new exams officer we were asked questions about our role and our responses were recorded. This was a great opportunity for us to try and raise the profile of the exams officer, describing the diversity and importance of the exams officer's role. From these interviews Ofqual put together a short 3 minute video titled [The role of an Exams Officer](#). We hope that this will raise awareness within schools and with parents highlighting the important work we do.

The summer term is well underway, entries, amendments, seating plans, exam clashes and individual candidate timetables all completed. Invigilators trained and invigilation schedules completed. With still so much to do, we have made a list of tasks we need to complete to ensure the summer season is successful. [Summer term checklist](#).

JCQ Inspection – An inspection that happens with no prior notice and exams officers should always be prepared for a visit/visits by the JCQ Inspection Service. This year there is greater emphasis on centres' secure storage for all confidential material related to exams. All Exams Officers should read [Changes to the JCQ Centre Inspection Service](#). Question paper inspections have been added to ensure question papers for a particular subject are stored appropriately in accordance with the published regulations. You should ensure the inspector is accompanied throughout the visit which will include the exam room and the

secure room to inspect your secure storage facility. The Exams Office's [secure storage checklist \(free access\)](#) is an excellent resource.

More information is available from *The Exams Office* [A guide to understanding the JCO inspection](#)

I mentioned earlier the importance of contingency planning; it is also a JCO requirement to have in place a written examination contingency plan to cover all aspects of examination administration. In a previous role I supported new exams officers and centres in 'crisis', a contingency plan is a critical document designed to support a centre in crisis or in an unexpected situation e.g. a school closure on an exam day. It is also extremely valuable to a new exams officer as it details centre specific information. *The Exams Office* [Exam Contingency Plan template](#) provides you with a starting point/framework for you to build an exam contingency plan for your centre.

As the exam papers start to arrive, we are checking and double checking the number of papers received including tier requirements against despatch notes and entry lists. A useful tip is to create a check list detailing the date papers are received, number of papers received, attendance register received, address labels, stationery requirements and specific notes. We export the exam timetable from our MIS system into excel and add columns to populate the required information. We also find it useful to download the stationery requirements for specific exams from the awarding body websites. Keeping a log of everything received/required on the day of the exam helps us to see in advance that we have everything we need for the day. It also highlights at a glance any missing exams papers.

Exam Clashes – most, if not all, Centre's will have to resolve exam clashes and our Centre is no exception. I would recommend *The Exams Office* [Resolving exam clashes form template](#) this template provides a way of confirming agreed arrangements with candidates regarding a clash of two or more examination papers that meet the criteria for a timetable variation. We print two copies - one for the student to have with their timetable, the second for the invigilator who will be managing the clash.

We have downloaded the following templates from *The Exams Office*. [Exam room checklist template this](#) is completed at the start of each exam and ensures that the room is set up to JCO standards. The invigilation team note and record all of their observations on the [Exam room incident log template. We check the incident logs daily and further comparison checks are made across consecutive days. We look for patterns of student behavior, toilet visits, minor disturbances and lack of exam equipment. Post exam we will speak to students regarding any reported incidents to avoid any reoccurrences.](#) We attach both the incident log and the exam room checklist to the seating plan and attendance register. They are then kept until all enquiries about results deadlines have passed and any outstanding reviews or appeals have been resolved.

[Exam day checklist template \(free access\)](#) useful visual aid to ensure all the daily tasks have been completed, this is also one of the documents we have included in our contingency plan.

I wish you all the very best for a successful summer series and I hope to see some of you at [The Exams Office's Summer conferences](#).