

There is an increasing focus upon the role of senior leaders who have been delegated the responsibility for examinations in a centre. Following the recommendations of the [JCO's Independent Malpractice Commission](#), a greater onus is being placed upon the member of staff who has overall responsibility for the management of exams in a centre, and the support they are offering to their exams officer.

To assist senior leaders/exams officer line managers, *The Exams Office* has devised an online [Senior Leader/Line Manager Training and Assessment Module](#). The module is designed to:

- inform senior leaders/line managers of the key aspects of each stage of the exam cycle (see below)
- support senior leaders/line managers in ensuring that key exams-related tasks are completed in their centre
- recognise the understanding/knowledge of senior leaders/line managers
- support senior leaders/line managers in supporting the exams officer in their centre

One element of this module is a self-assessment which should be completed during meetings with the exams officer to ensure that all key tasks are in hand.

As good practice, the senior leader/line manager should meet with their exams officer on a regular basis. These meetings should confirm that all tasks have been, or will be, completed to deadline, and provide reassurance to the exams officer that they are supported in their role. The self-assessment within the online module provides the framework and content for any meetings between the senior leader/line manager and the exams officer.

The Exams Office recommends that exams-related meetings focus upon the exam cycle and ensure that all tasks are completed/in hand in the following areas:

- Planning
- Entries
- Pre-exams (exam preparation)
- Exam time
- Results and post-results

Exam entries

At this time of the academic year, a meeting between a senior leader/exams officer line manager and the exams officer will need to focus upon entries for the summer exam series, with another meeting required around February half term to confirm exam preparation is underway.

With the GCSE and GCE exam entry deadline of 21 February only a matter of weeks away, senior leaders should be confident that, wherever possible, entries will be made accurately and to deadline. Late entry fees should be avoided unless there are mitigating circumstances which make such costs unavoidable.

It is imperative that senior leaders/line managers acquire reassurance that exam entries will be submitted to the relevant awarding body by the 21 February deadline.

Supporting a new exams officer

If your exams officer is new to the role, then it is very likely that they will require support/training which increases their knowledge and understanding of key areas such as the different entry types - including linear and unitised. Your exams officer will also need to be aware of entry deadlines, where and how to acquire entry codes, how to manage late entries, withdrawals and amendments, and how to check entries, entry reports and awarding body feedback. You may consider *The Exams Office's* [Spring into Summer training event](#) which covers exam entries, exam preparation and exam time.

Collecting entry information

Confirm with your exams officer that there is a process in place for ensuring that entry information is collected to deadline from subject departments/staff, and that all staff are aware of this internal deadline. You may need to confirm the action which will be taken if this information is not submitted to the exams officer by the internal deadline.

Exam entries

As the member of staff with overall responsibility for exams in your centre, not only will you need to be reassured that final entries will be submitted by the 21 February deadline, but you will also need to be aware of the total cost of entry fees in your centre. You should also be aware of the cost incurred in late entry fees, and the measures in place to minimise these in the future.

You may also want to be informed of individual department/staff members who are failing to submit entry information to deadline to the exams officer, and therefore, incurring late fees for your centre.

Post-entry submission tasks

Once final entries are submitted to the relevant awarding bodies, you must confirm/ensure that your exams officer is prepared to make any amendments and withdrawals to deadline, and that there is a process in place to check any awarding body warning reports which may be received following the submission of your centre's exam entries.

Where applicable, your exams officer must be aware of how to use your centre's Management Information System (MIS). If required, access to appropriate training may need to be provided.

Private candidates

If your centre accepts private candidates, then ensure that your exams officer is aware of who these candidates are, and that they must be managed in line with the JCQ's regulations which state that throughout the examination process, private candidates must be treated equally to those candidates who are on your centre roll. This would also extend to post-results services and appeals

Mock exams

Many centres use mock exams to replicate final written timetabled exams to enable candidates

to become familiar with exams-related regulations. If you are intending to take this step, then confirm whether your exams officer will be involved in internal/mock examinations, and if so, whether these will be conducted in line with JCQ regulations?

Although an exams officer is appointed to manage and administer examinations, senior leaders who are responsible for exams in a centre, or have line management responsibilities for the exams officer, must be aware of key aspects of the exam cycle and the exams officer role in order to ensure effective line management. A thorough knowledge of key aspects of the exams process and exams officer role means that not only can a senior leader/line manager effectively support and manage an exams officer, but they can also hold meetings which focus upon the completion of key tasks, and more importantly provide effective contingency cover in the event of the absence of their exams officer at key times during the exam cycle/academic year.

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