

Tasks for exams officers to undertake during April and May

Despite the cancellation of the May and June exams series this year, there are still several tasks for exams officers to undertake in the coming weeks. It should also be noted that there will be a vital role for exams officers once the process for awarding grades this summer is confirmed, including:

- Sharing information between teachers and awarding bodies
- Organising the arrangements for the issue/distribution of results to candidates
- Handling appeals from candidates who do not believe the correct process has been followed in their case
- Being prepared for candidates who feel that their grades from the summer do not reflect their ability will have the opportunity to take their exams in the autumn series

However, ahead of further announcements and activity related to this summer's grade awarding process, below are some tasks which exams officers may be involved in over the coming weeks/months.

1. Exam policies

Some exam-related policies cannot be updated until the regulations for the new academic year are published. However, here are some exam-related policies which could be devised/updated ahead of the new academic year:

- Emergency Evacuation Policy – consider whether exam rooms will evacuate immediately (recommended) or wait for instruction, the route to, and the location of, the emergency evacuation point
- Exam Contingency Plan – use the current situation to detail procedure such as centre shutdown, transfer/suitability of IT to home working, absence of key staff etc.
- Exams Archiving Policy – detail the archiving procedure for all exams-related documents
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Policy - ensure that information is being retained in line with GDPR regulations
- Complaints and Appeals Procedure – outline the procedure for complaints and appeals related to the management, administration and conducting of examinations
- Internal appeals procedure - Once the process for summer 2020 awarding is confirmed, be prepared to update your internal appeals procedure in line with grade awarding based upon teacher assessment/awarding body modelling

Visit *The Exams Office* website for information on [exams related policies](#).

2. Annual exams plan 2020/2021

Create an [annual exams plan](#) for the 2020/2021 academic year to outline key tasks and activity in relation to exams, and your role, in your centre. This will need to be updated once JCQ key dates for the 2020/2021 academic year are published – we expect these to be available in the

coming weeks.

By creating an annual exams plan you will:

- aid your planning for the new academic year
- minimise the risk of deadlines being missed, and essential tasks not being undertaken
- enable easier identification of the busiest periods
- allow you to highlight key aspects of your role with your line manager whilst also outlining exam activity within your centre and why you need to be kept informed of centre-wide decisions or events
- serve as a contingency measure in the event of your absence by highlighting key tasks and when these need to be completed

Within your annual exams plan, you may want to include:

- Key tasks, dates and deadlines
- Start/end dates of:
 - Exam series
 - Non-examination assessments
 - On-demand assessments
 - Windows of assessment
 - Mock exams (PPE)
 - Other tests – e.g. Years 7-10, CATs, Yellis, University Admissions Tests
- Training events – e.g. continuing professional development, invigilator training, awarding body events, conferences
- Other events – e.g. parents' evenings, educational visits, careers days, sports day

3. Exams handbook (centre specific)

In September, as part of *The Exams Office's* initiative to support contingency and succession planning in centres, an 'online toolkit' will be launched. This will enable exams officers to create bespoke online (or hard copy) folders of documents relating to key information and tasks. These may be stored on a month-by-month or termly basis. The toolkit will support new/temporary staff in undertaking the exams officer role by providing them with information guides, checklists and templates.

Exams officers can prepare for the launch of the toolkit by considering or listing the information relevant to your centre, so you create a toolkit which is appropriate to your centre's needs. For example:

- Qualifications taken
- Awarding bodies engaged with
- When exams series take place
- Listing documents on *The Exams Office* website which you currently use or may be relevant to a new/temporary exams officer (these can be added to your toolkit when this service is available in September)
- Devising centre specific instructions and procedures for inclusion in your centre toolkit

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4. Briefing candidates

Review the information which needs to be disseminated to candidates and confirm when and how this will take place during the new academic year.

JCQ regulations state that *Information for Candidates* (including coursework, non-examination assessments, on-screen tests, social media and written examinations and Privacy Notice) must be distributed to all candidates.

Centres should also consider the following information which is relevant to candidates:

- Mobile Phone poster
- Warning to Candidates poster
- Written procedures for dealing with candidates' requests for post-results services
- Accessibility of senior members of staff immediately after the publication of results
- Contingency plans for any disruption to examinations

Candidates should also be informed of:

- Exam start times
- Late arrival policy
- What to do if there is a timetable clash
- How seating information will be provided
- Relevant rules and regulations

You may also wish to consider how candidates will be made aware of:

- Candidate numbers
- Exam timetable and exam room information
- Identification requirements
- Instructions for personal belongings
- Mobile phone policy
- Exam equipment requirements
- Role of the invigilator
- Malpractice warnings
- Absence from exams
- Illness
- Access arrangements
- Contingency day, summer 2021 exam series – Tuesday 29 June 2021, this is the date until candidates must be available for examinations

A [candidate exam handbook template](#) can be found on *The Exams Office* website.

5. Senior Leader/Line Manager checklist

To assist your Senior Leader/Line Manager in not only supporting you in your role, but also effectively managing/safeguarding exams in your centre, utilise the *Senior Leader/Line Manager*

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module on *The Exams Office's* [Online Portal](#).

This will help those with overall responsibility for exams to ask the appropriate questions and be aware of the key tasks undertaken by their exams officer.

Create an account for your Senior Leader/Line Manager via *The Exams Office's* [Online Portal](#) so they can complete the *Senior Leader/Line Manager Training and Assessment module* throughout the 2020/2021 academic year.

Exams officers with administrator accounts on the Online Portal have access to print the self-assessment confirmation statement questions from each unit within the module. They can support their line manager by using these for each stage of the *exams cycle* as a guide to the questions which should be asked/areas which should be addressed and/or confirmed at meetings which take place throughout the academic year.

See *The Exams Office* website for an [exams officer/line manager meeting report form template](#).

6. Teacher briefing guide

In preparation to support new staff, particularly NQTs (newly qualified teachers), it is good practice to devise a guide for teachers to support them in complying with exams-related processes in your centre.

The Exams Office has devised an example [teacher briefing guide](#) to the exams management and administrative process (containing a brief overview of the stages of the exam cycle that may impact on the role of a teacher) which should be personalised to reflect activity and processes in your centre.

7. Invigilator management

Although invigilators are not required during May and June, there are two tasks which can be undertaken in relation to managing and training invigilators:

- Create a process to evaluate invigilators – it is good practice to evaluate invigilators to ensure that you recognise the performance of good invigilators and address areas in need of improvement in those who are not performing as required. *The Exams Office's* December 2019 blog – [Creating an effective invigilation team](#) – provides some excellent hints and tips on how to evaluate and manage your invigilation team.
- Devise an invigilator training programme – utilise the resources on [The Exams Office website](#) – which include a PowerPoint presentation template – to create a training programme for your new and existing invigilators. Although this will need to be updated in line with any regulation changes for the 2020/2021 academic year, create a template for a training presentation which meets JCQ requirements and addresses specific centre activity, such as identifying candidates, emergency evacuation procedure, watches in the exam room etc.

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8. Information gathering - 2020/2021 academic year

In preparation for the 2020/2021 academic year, exams officers can begin to organise resources which will be used with subject and centre-wide staff at the start of the new academic year. This may include information gathering forms, declaration of interest forms, a conflict of interest log, or documents such as a confidential materials log at the point of delivery or forms to capture information on private candidates.

A range of guides, checklists and templates to help exams officer prepare for the 2020/2021 academic year will be found on [The Exams Office website](#) over the coming weeks/months.

9. 2019/2020 key tasks – other exams series

See *The Exams Office's* [new exams officer monthly support guides](#) for tasks which need to be undertaken in relation to non-summer exams.

Exams officers will also need to be prepared to stage exams for candidates who do not feel their calculated grade reflects their performance. Once the process for these exams is announced there will be preparatory work which will need to be undertaken in preparation for this impromptu exams series.

10. Centre website - update

It is good practice to include exams related information on your centre's website, and this is an ideal opportunity to update current information or, if there is no exams information on your centre website, to create such an area. With regard to this summer's grading process, your centre website could be utilised to keep students and parents updated with the latest information.

Utilising the centre website keeps candidates and parents informed of the latest information. Also, by sharing information via a public platform centres may also be 'protecting' themselves from possible challenge from candidates and parents if a claim of lack of information or misinformation is made.

The following information may be included on your centre's website:

- Key dates – mock exams, internal assessments (including NEAs), written timetabled exams (including the contingency day), results day(s), certificate presentation day etc.
- Information for candidates - for example, check timetables, behaviour in the exam room, malpractice and the consequences etc, what to do in the event of illness, absence, late arrival to an exam, certificate collection/lost certificates etc. You may also include the latest information relating to this summer's grade awarding.
- Selected exam policies which are relevant to candidates and parents, or policies which require reinforcement of your centre's process (for example, internal appeals procedures, complaints and appeals procedure, special consideration policy, separate invigilation policy, etc.)

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- Exams officer contact details – particularly if you only want to be contacted on certain days, at certain times, or via email only

Notes

This article was published on 3 April 2020. Contents were accurate based upon information available to this date.

The tasks above are only a guide and not a comprehensive list. Depending on centre requirements, exams officers may be engaged in several other tasks beyond those listed in this article, including those related to summer 2020 grading.