

## EXAMS BLOG

### **The National Association of Examinations Officers (NAEO) – What are its' aims and objectives and why should I join?**

*This month's blog is written by Jugjit Chima, the Chief Executive Officer of the newly launched National Association of Examinations Officers (NAEO), who outlines the aims and objectives of the NAEO and why exams officers may consider joining the newly formed association.*

It goes without saying that the last 18 months have been a very testing period for exams officers. However, as we seek a return to normality, it is also clear that the 2021/2022 academic year will present significant challenges for the exams officer community, and this is one of the reasons why the [National Association of Examinations Officers](#) (NAEO) was launched on 1 September.

Before we visit the [aims and objectives of the NAEO](#), and the merits of joining, let us consider some of the key activities in which exams officers will engage during 2021/2022.

Firstly, be under no illusion, there will be no immediate return to a 'business as usual' examination year.

Following the implementation of exceptional arrangements for summer 2021, exams officers will begin the academic year engaged in the aftermath of examination results based upon Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) and any subsequent appeals. In addition to this, attention will swiftly turn to preparations for managing and administering an October GCE and November/December GCSE exam series. Deadlines for this series, including those for submitting entries and modified paper/access arrangements applications, will have to be met in September and October, whilst other tasks, such as finding, preparing, and training invigilators to conduct these examinations will also have to be completed in the weeks immediately after the start of term.

As with any exam series, exams officers will need to confirm the arrangements for storing confidential materials, timetabling, rooming, seating; organise access arrangements candidates and logistics; ensure that every exam day runs smoothly; plan contingency measures; deal with special consideration requests; and then pack and dispatch scripts – followed by organising results day(s), administering post-results services and the issuing of certificates.

If that is not a busy enough start to the new academic year, exams officers will also have to undertake the 'business as usual' activity of every academic year. This includes being aware of changes in every JCQ publication relevant to their role (which is the vast majority of publications), producing/updating exam policies, and planning for examinations and assessments taking place during an academic year where some form of adaptations are inevitable to ensure that the current cohort of candidates taking exams are not disadvantaged.

So, at a time when exams officers will be under considerable pressure and require as much support as possible, this is the ideal time to launch the NAEO which, unlike other associations and trade unions, will have the sole aim of supporting the exams officer community, and raising their status and profile within the sector.

Although [membership to the NAEO is free](#), before joining, you should consider the benefits offered and whether these meet your needs, particularly if you are transferring your membership from another organisation/association.

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The NAEO is not the first representative group to be set up to represent the exams officer community. The Examinations Officers' Association (EOA) was incorporated in 2005 with the support of government funding but was forced to disband in 2019 due to inactivity, dwindling membership and a lack of funds. The NAEO has been set up to ensure that the same mistakes are not made. Support, including staff and financial resources, has been provided by **The Exams Office**, and a commitment has been made that only reasonable expenses – and no salaries – will be offered to those running and supporting the activities of the NAEO. This commitment has helped us to provide a free academic year membership to all exams officers and exams office staff for as long as it is possible to do so. The NAEO really is all about exams officers and the exams officer community.

It is this vision and a commitment for greater representation for the exams officer community by The Exams Office which has helped to create and launch the NAEO. The Exams Office will continue to support exams officers and centres in the management, administration, delivery and conducting of examinations, whereas the NAEO will focus upon supporting exams officers as individuals. This may be in providing you with [professional development opportunities](#), enhancing your skills, giving you [access to professional legal and employment advice](#) (including access to legal representatives in the event of issues at centre level) and guidance or considering your [well-being with a focus on mindfulness](#).

A longer-term aim is to develop a set of professional standards which all exams officers must adhere to, and which will help our objective of professionalising the role for the most significant stakeholders within the education sector, including the DfE and Ofqual. From this, we can consider the terms and conditions of each exams officer at centre level.

Although the NAEO is not trade union, the areas listed above do include activity undertaken and support offered by a trade union. Similarly, the NAEO will represent and steer decision making on behalf of the exams officer community across the wider education sector and amongst key stakeholders, including DfE, Ofqual, JCQ and the awarding bodies and the teacher associations. The NAEO will use an annual exams officer survey (to be launched each October) to identify the areas which are concerning the community and address these issues amongst decision makers within the sector. So, although there are similarities, however, unlike trade unions who often represent individuals across multiple sectors and occupations, the NAEO will **only** have the interests of the exams officer community as its sole focus.

The NAEO will also look to enhance and facilitate networking opportunities amongst the exams officer community via an [annual summer conference](#) and an online forum (to be launched in 2022/2023), as well as launching a [rewards and awards programme](#) which recognises the effort and commitment of individuals to the role.

Naturally, we hope that every exams officer will [join the NAEO](#). A strong membership will help us to further raise the profile and status of the role so that each and every exams officer is afforded the recognition and support which they deserve at centre level and ensure that additional support resources are developed and offered to members.

Finally, to allay fears which some exams officers have expressed around the status of The Exams Office as a result of the launch of the NAEO, please rest assured that the two organisations will work together to support you at individual and centre level and, by joining the NAEO, you are not threatening the ongoing viability of The Exams Office. The Exams Office is here to stay!

*Views and opinions expressed in this blog are the authors own*