

## EXAMS BLOG

### Getting ready for the summer exam series – key tasks in January

*This month's blog is written by Alexis Wragg, exams officer at Rugby School, who considers the key tasks which exams officers should be focusing upon in January.*

The New Year is upon us and working on the current government stance that exams are expected to go ahead this summer our focus is now on entries and summer planning. January is a key month in the exam cycle; it is a time where information is gathered to effectively and efficiently run the summer season. So what do we need to focus on?

#### Entries

Now is the time to request summer 2022 entries from Heads of Departments (HoDs). Sending a pre-populated spreadsheet containing names and candidate numbers for the subject speeds up the process. At this stage I ask HoDs to check for errors, as a student may have 'dropped' a subject or perhaps there is a student taking a GCSE or A level off timetable who needs to be added to the list.

It is also vital to get the correct entry codes, especially if a department has changed exam board or option units within their syllabus. Whilst asking for estimated entries in October I keep track of any exam board or syllabus changes. However, I still ask each HoD to check their entry codes and will question them if they have entered a different code than I was expecting.

Once I have confirmation, I make the entries on my MIS and send a copy of the printout to ensure we haven't missed anyone. Once the Head of Department has signed it off I know I am ready to press the 'send' button.

While many of you will have your own systems for collecting the required information **The Exams Office** has also produced an [External Exams Collection Form](#) which exams officers may find useful, and in particular for those new to the role and experiencing this process for the first time.

At this stage do not forget any private candidates you may be catering for. Quite often I have returning students who have expressed an interest to re-sit a subject and it is this time of year that I contact them to find out if they still intend to enter.

Exams officers should be aware that the [JCQ A2C Migration App has been updated](#). Ensure that your system has been updated well ahead of the submission of entries. In advance to ensure your entries go through smoothly. There is a helpful [FAQs page](#) to support you, but you may also need IT support from within your centre.

#### Key Dates

Providing HoDs with a list of key dates ensures that everyone is aware of, and on track to meet internal deadlines. Sending this information as an attachment along with the entry data request will at least save you one email. Sharing such information also maintains clear lines of communication between you and the staff you are working with and hopefully will avoid issues such as late entries.

## EXAMS BLOG

**The Exams Office** has produced a summary of the [deadlines for entries, fees and charges for the summer 2022 series](#) for all awarding bodies. Using this resource enables me to add in my own internal deadlines to allow enough time to process any last-minute changes. The entry deadline very often falls awkwardly around half term, so planning to have all your entry information by the end of January will allow sufficient time to process it, allow for changes and time to check your entries on the exam board web sites before the final deadline.

Thinking ahead for the next few months, it is important to consider when you may want other information from the Head of Department. I provide deadlines for things such as:

- controlled assessment – when I want the marks and the actual piece so I can get it posted in time (assuming departments have reverted to hard copies)
- mock exam requirements - to give enough time to put the various timetables together
- forecast grades for CAIE
- declaration of interest form to be completed

While these things may seem a long time in the future, getting the date set now allows you to manage your long-term planning.

### Access Arrangements

I strongly recommend that you work closely with your SENCo during January to finalise access arrangements. Although the final date to process applications has moved to 31 March 2022 for the processing and approval of access arrangements via the *Access Arrangements Online* (AAO) system. Modified papers for JCQ awarding bodies must be applied for by 31st January 2022.

Please note that if you are engaging with Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE), the Preparation Form 1 must still be completed by 21 February 2022 to complete the Preparation Form 1 for CAIE.

In order to be as efficient and effective as possible, knowing which candidates will require different resources/access/adjustments to the main cohort of students will help you to plan your rooming and the allocation of staff/invigilators. You will need to know which candidates will require the following:

- separate invigilation, maybe in a small room with just a few other candidates
- one to one invigilation
- a word processor
- a computer reader
- a scribe

Knowing this as early as possible will enable you to acquire an understanding of what is going to be required and the sooner you can plan for this, the better prepared you will be if/when last minute emergencies come your way as you approach the exam series...or even on an exam day.

### Invigilators

You should be considering your invigilators and whether you need to add to the current team. I contact my invigilation team in January – I know that many exams officers do this earlier in the academic year - to confirm that I have their latest contact details and to ask them for their availability during the summer exam

## EXAMS BLOG

series.

I also enquire over the days of the week which they prefer to invigilate, and if there are any specific days they know at this stage that they cannot invigilate on as they have a prior engagement. Getting an overview as early as possible allows me to start to assign people to 'slots' as soon as our centre timetable and access arrangements requirements are confirmed. It also enables me to identify any significant gaps in coverage and therefore allows me plenty of time to fill any voids.

### **Conclusion**

January is the month where everything starts to come together and getting this planning stage right means many other tasks start to fall into place. Once the entries are submitted, the exam timetable is confirmed, following which you are able to consider the needs of access arrangements candidates including rooming and invigilation/facilitation. Once rooming is sorted, you can assign invigilators and begin to devise their individual timetables. Before you know it you have planned a summer exam season and ready to deliver each exam day...!

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