

## EXAMS BLOG

### Training your invigilators...with contingency in mind

*This month's blog is written by Lisa Longstaff, exams officer at Dunottar School, who considers the importance of training your invigilators ahead of the summer exams series.*

At a time when we must work with what we know is currently happening whilst also being aware of potential changes beyond our control, it is important not to lose sight of the value of training our invigilators.

As well as a JCQ requirement, to update existing invigilators and train new ones, (ICE 12.3) it is imperative that you have training plans in place.

Last term, I held training for external invigilators to ensure that this was completed in time for the January mock exams and any assessments that could be used to determine grades this summer. With no idea of what Covid may have in store for us for the rest of this academic year, and as our school takes every precaution to limit exposure, I ran what I referred to as 'Part 1, online on Teams' in early December.

I used [TEO's PowerPoint presentation](#), adapting it to suit my centre, and including JCQ updates and guidelines that will apply for summer 2022 and the mock exams which may be used to award teacher assessed grades. I included TEO videos, the [malpractice video](#), in particular, stimulated some interesting conversation around the topic. You can find an excellent selection of [invigilator training options](#) on The Exams Office website.

After no written timetabled examinations for the last two summers, our Year 13 candidates and some of our newer invigilating staff have little or no experience of a summer exams series and therefore, they are naturally daunted by the prospect of an exams period lasting approximately six weeks. However, they are not alone, and I must admit, that even I, and my existing, experienced invigilators are also feeling a bit 'rusty' and therefore, we also benefitted from going 'back to basics' during the invigilator training session.

As an independent school, our teaching staff for Years 11 and 13, plus some support staff, form part of our mock invigilation team, working with our Lead Invigilator and other external invigilators in the main room, and in the laptop-users' rooms. I have adapted the PowerPoint to suit them for a separate invigilation training session, delivered online via Teams, on a choice of two different dates and times. I arrange this via a Microsoft Forms invite, which provides me with a mailing list for the Teams invites.

For teaching staff, I have had to consider the new staff who have joined our school over the past two years. For them, I have placed extra emphasis on the importance of reading the full announcement at the start to set the tone, highlighting the new guidelines around watches, use of the incident log, and reminding staff that these mocks are more relevant than ever, so enhanced integrity and security of the papers and materials is paramount. All three of our deputy heads willingly attended the training which also helped to emphasise its importance to other staff members.

Whilst our teachers and support staff only invigilate internal exams, we also need to consider contingency planning and it may be that in the summer series there could be a situation whereby a member of staff may need to step in temporarily to support exams. Therefore, it is reassuring to know that they are now trained and could step in to invigilate if an external invigilator was absent/unavailable and be available at short notice.

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I also utilised some of our support staff during the recent mock exams – this included staff from our marketing department and teaching support...and I am glad to report that they enjoyed doing something different to their original role.

As both the external invigilators and staff were sent a Teams invite to the training, and I could see who attended, this formed my record of attendance, and a hard copy of the slides has formed the evidence of content. This ensures that we have complied with JCQ regulations (ICE 12.3)

The online training was followed up copies of the presentation for all participants, the issuing of the invigilation timetable and the [JCQ checklist](#) – a document which must be issued to invigilators as part of their preparation and training

For my external invigilators I provided face-to-face training, known as 'Part 2', in early January, just two days before the actual mocks began! Some of the new invigilators who attended this training, had previously undertaken this training in March 2020, however, four days later we were placed in lockdown, so they never utilised the training and have to start from 'scratch'. Thankfully we maintained contact with these individuals, and I was relieved when they stated that they were still keen to join my invigilation team. I have also recruited other invigilators for this year, and it was fantastic to finally meet them in person, albeit with distanced seating in a large airy room, wearing face masks!

This session had a more hands-on, practical approach, starting with the exam trays, seating plan, incident log (printed on the reverse of the seating plan) the announcement, which has emergency evacuation details and emergency contact details, plus a useful extra time calculation chart on the reverse, and stationery items.

We also included discussion on face masks and importance of availability of hand sanitiser, something we could not have imagined including a few years ago.

For the recent mock exams, we chose to have all papers placed on exam desks ahead of the arrival of candidates to minimise close contact, with invigilators wearing a face mask when in close contact with the candidates, for example when collecting papers at the end of the exam. Both the candidates and invigilators seemed to be comfortable with this.

To ensure familiarity with the school site, I walked the invigilators around the school site, including a look at our main examination room, the new theatre which we used for the main cohort during the mocks for the first time. Our site has 'changed' over the past two years, so I printed off a site plan acquired from the maintenance team for all invigilators to consider as several rooms have been repurposed/re-numbered.

I plan to run another training session, possibly in late March/early April, to deliver a training update for the summer series, which will cover some familiar ground but also differences. For example, erratum notices, how and when the papers will be sent off, and the significance of maintaining accurate attendance records. This will also fulfil the DBS requirements as the session will take place within three months of the mock exam.

With the prospect of a summer series looking increasingly likely, I have decided to provide my new invigilators with access to [The Exams Office online training](#) whilst also encouraging my existing invigilators to also re-visit and complete this.

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

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