

Key tasks for exams officers to carry out on an exam day

For those exams officers who have not previously experienced a summer exams series, one area of particular concern is not knowing what to expect on an exam day...this may also apply to experienced exams officers who require a 'refresher' in view of this being the first summer's exams series since 2019.

In this article, **Jugjit Chima** considers some of the key actions which an exams officer must take on each exam day for each exam session. There are a series of tasks and processes which must be undertaken and followed each day, and once you are familiar with, and have experienced, these you will become increasingly confident in what lies ahead in the forthcoming exams series.

It is also important to note that on each exam day many experienced exams officers also ensure preparation for the following exam day to ensure that they are always 'one step ahead'.

Before the examination

At the start of each exam day, you will need to arrive at your centre in good time to undertake a series of tasks. To ensure that no errors are made, you should ensure that, as far as possible, you are uninterrupted, and that you allow ample time to deal with any unexpected issues.

Your first task upon arrival at your centre - check your e-mail/mail for any last-minute erratum (error) notices from the awarding bodies for exams taking place that day.

In your secure room, identify the question paper packets for each exam taking place in the morning and afternoon session (and if applicable, any ordered modified papers and any received erratum notices) in your secure storage facility. No earlier than the permitted time, remove these from secure storage facility and collate with any other required materials such as additional answer sheets/supplementary answer booklets, if appropriate. For certain subjects such as Maths, Physics etc, you will need to check clean copies of any equation/formula/data booklets that may be required are available and added to the materials required by the subject.

Other items which you will need to organise include the attendance register and any required cover sheet(s) for each exam paper, and the seating plan and incident log for each exam room. Although optional, it is recommended that your invigilators are also asked to complete an exam room checklist to confirm that the exam room is set up in accordance with JCQ regulations. If used in your centre, you should also add the relevant desk ID cards to the materials for each exam room.

As required by the regulations, a member of centre staff, additional to the person removing the papers from the secure storage facility, must check the day, date, time, subject, unit/component and tier of entry, if appropriate, immediately before any question paper packet is opened. This check must be recorded – there are templates available from the JCQ ([Second pair of eyes check form](#)) and The Exams Office ([Exam room checklist](#)) which could be used to record this check.

If you need to open any question paper packets in your secure room where permitted by the regulations (for example, to split them in order to make them up into more appropriately sized sets for different exam rooms

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on one or more sites or to facilitate access arrangements), ensure the other member of staff is available at the time you need to undertake and record the required additional check before any packet is opened.

With regard to access arrangements, you will need to prepare any paper(s) required to facilitate an arrangement, for example, printing on coloured paper and/or enlarging from A4 to A3, for the use of a computer reader, for an alternative site arrangement, or photocopying into black and white (where permitted and where beneficial to a candidate who is colour blind). Exams officers should consult JCQ's [Instructions for conducting examinations](#) publication (section 5, *Removing question papers from secure storage*) for the regulations concerning the permitted time for taking materials out of secure storage for access arrangements purposes.

Ensure that your invigilators are clear over what time they are expected to attend for each exam session allowing time to brief them on the relevant arrangements for the session. This may include:

- the exam(s) in their room and the duration(s)
- the required question papers, other exam materials, exam stationery, any erratum notice(s) (if applicable)
- the attendance register(s)
- the seating plan; the arrangements for any private/external, transferred candidate(s) etc. (if applicable)
- being informed of any candidate(s) with an access arrangement(s) and made aware of the access arrangement(s) awarded (where applicable)
- the supervision arrangements for any timetable clash candidates between exam papers taking place within the same session (if applicable)
- the supervision arrangements for any timetable clash candidates between exam papers taking place within a different session (where applicable)
- instructions for completing the exam room checklist and the exam room incident log
- the contents of their exam room box (where provided)

If you are not acting as the roving invigilator, brief the individual(s) who will be undertaking this role, ensuring that they are aware of the room(s) which they need to enter and the arrangement(s) to be observed. It may be helpful to utilise The Exams Office [Roving invigilator checklist template](#) to highlight the areas which need to be observed and to maintain an accurate record of each visit made by the roving invigilator.

After the examination

Once the examination(s) for a particular session have been completed, your invigilators should bring all scripts to you for collation in the secure room. Please note that scripts for candidates under separate invigilation/in separate rooms etc. will need to be merged with those of the main cohort.

Undertake a final check of the completed awarding body attendance register and organise the scripts in the order they appear on the attendance register. Include any cover sheet (e.g. scribe cover sheet) inside the relevant candidate's script. Pack and seal the scripts in relevant awarding body plastic script dispatch envelope(s). Do not use other envelopes or boxes. Check that envelopes are securely sealed.

Ensure that you have checked for any e-mail notifications of last-minute changes to examiner details before affixing the examiner address label to the plastic script dispatch envelope.

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Do not put scripts from different exam papers into one package even if they are going to the same address, and do not overfill script packages. Pad out any envelopes containing a single script with card or bubble wrap to prevent them from getting lost in transit.

Complete the dispatch log (relevant to the [yellow label service](#)) and store your script package(s) in the secure storage facility until dispatch.

If you have any follow up reporting, for example, any very late arrival report, actual or suspected malpractice report, special consideration application etc., ensure that this is completed and submitted to the relevant awarding body(ies) within the specified timescale.

Preparing for the next day

Many experienced, and the most efficient, exams officers will ensure that an exam day is not complete without completing some tasks in relation to exams taking place the following day. They will check that the correct and sufficient sealed question papers are available for each exam in the secure storage facility and any other required resources and answer booklets, if needed. Naturally, these checks will take place through sealed question paper packet windows or by consulting the awarding body stationery list not by opening the question paper packet.

A final check for any e-mails from the awarding bodies relating to erratum or other urgent notices should be made before leaving the centre.

If you have any access arrangements candidates, check that arrangements are, or will be, in place. This should also include, where applicable, checking that any ordered modified papers are available in the secure storage facility and any required cover sheets have been prepared.

Finally, if your centre provides a set of standard materials to candidates during exams, check that your exam room boxes have ample supply, restocking where necessary.

Contingency planning

You should also be prepared to deal with situations that may arise such as:

- A candidate requiring an emergency access arrangement(s) at the time of an exam
- A candidate arriving for an exam who is clearly unwell or extremely distressed
- A candidate is absent from an exam
- A candidate arriving late for an exam
- A candidate arriving very late for an exam
- A candidate suspected of or committing actual malpractice in the exam room
- A serious disruption in the exam room (including emergency evacuation)

Please see our [Exam Day checklist](#) for more information on what to do in the event of the situations detailed above.

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✉ contact@TheExamsOffice.com ☎ 0333 7000 755



@TheExamsOffice



The Exams Office