

**NOVEMBER 2022****Utilising mock examinations to raise the standard of invigilation within your centre**

In our latest blog, Lisa Longstaff (exams officer at Dunottar School) highlights the importance of utilising mock examinations to raise the standard of invigilation within your centre ahead of the summer exams series

As well as being an assessment opportunity for teaching staff, mock exams are a useful learning tool regarding the exams process, for candidates, exams officers and invigilators.

You can run mock exams in line with JCQ regulations, using similar systems, documentation, rooming and invigilation. If your Contingency Policy or Emergency Evacuation Plans are required during the summer series, then it is to the benefit of everyone if these are 'road-tested' during mock examinations.

**Students**

A pre-mocks briefing will provide candidates with clear guidelines to follow and serve as the start of their 'training' for how examinations will be conducted during the summer series. Some of the instructions which should be emphasised at this briefing may include:

- Not reading the examination paper until told to do so
- The regulations surrounding the use of a calculator
- Whether food and drink can be brought into the examination room, and if so, how this can be brought into the room

**Access Arrangements**

Although your SENCO will lead on the awarding and facilitating of access arrangements, it is very likely that those candidates requiring an access arrangement in the summer exam series will be given the same support during their mock exams. This may help to provide evidence of their normal way of working. For some access arrangements and conditions, it is acceptable for the normal way of working to be evidenced via mock exams or internal assessments.

A regulation change which centres should be aware of is the requirement that a teaching assistant should 'not normally' facilitate an access arrangement in a subject for a student where they have assisted in the teaching. If a teaching assistant is required – as, for example, a candidate is on the autism spectrum, then a separate invigilator must also be present.

**Contingency**

Mock exams are also an ideal opportunity to check whether your Contingency Policy adequately covers the on-the-day practicality of exams. This importance of this should not be underestimated, as in my experience, it is very possible for a JCQ Centre Inspector to ask an exams officer of the

actions which will be taken during a range of scenarios, including the measures in place if the exams officer is absent at a critical time of the year (e.g when entries are made, during exam time, when results need to be disseminated to candidates)

Other questions which you will need to know the answers to, are:

- Who is responsible for arranging cover? If, like at my centre, teaching staff for Years 11 and/or 13 are expected to invigilate their subjects and teach during their teaching slots during mock exams, what is the procedure if they are absent?
- Who will step into your role and function if you are unavailable? This may require more than one person to fulfil the requirements during mocks.

As an example, a few years ago I was held up behind a major road accident during November re-sits. Thankfully I could phone ahead and there were keyholders who took over the management and conducting of the examination with the support of an experienced lead invigilator. This reinforced the importance of having a comprehensive contingency plan for a range of potential issues.

### **Documentation**

To ensure that all incidents and issues in the examination room are recorded, mocks exams are the ideal time to familiarise your exams office team and invigilators with the essential documents used during the public exams. These include:

#### Exam room incident Log

The use of the exam room incident log in the mock exams can provide useful evidence of incidents in the examination room(s) which must be addressed and not repeated during the summer exam series. It is also helpful in highlighting to students that incidents in the examination room are recorded, and what constitutes malpractice.

#### Second pairs of eyes check

The checking of mock papers and ensuring that the correct ones are disseminated to students, helps to familiarise staff with a task which is very significant during the summer exams series.

### **Assessing and testing your invigilators**

A pre-mocks training session for your invigilators is very useful in ensuring that they are adhering to the current regulations, and by observing their performance during these assessments, an exams officer can begin to test their competence and understanding of the regulations.

This is also a good opportunity to ensure that your invigilators are familiar with how scripts and question papers are handled after the examinations.

### **New invigilators**

Mock examinations provide an excellent opportunity for new invigilators to acquire practical training ahead of the summer exams series.

Many exams officers ask new invigilators to 'shadow' an existing member of the invigilation team which ensures that the invigilator is fully prepared for examinations which take place in the summer.

## Conclusion

Every exams officer should consider utilising mock exams to prepare, support and train their invigilation team. They can also be used to meet the JCQ requirement of testing the competence of your invigilators, whilst also allowing for individuals to learn from mistakes whilst familiarising themselves with examination room conditions.

The Exams Office provide a range of support materials to help you train your invigilators (<https://www.theexamsoffice.org/invigilator-training/>) which should be utilised ahead of mock exams to ensure that you have a well-trained team whose understanding of the regulations can be put to the test in practice as well as in theory.

*The contents of this article were correct at the time of writing (October 2022)*