

JANUARY 2023

January Jumpstart - The countdown to the summer exam series has begun

**In our latest blog, Katherine McDiarmid (exams officer at Kendrick School) highlights the key tasks which exams officers will be undertaking as we embark upon a new year and term, and as preparations begin for the summer exam series.**

Now that the festive period is over and the spring term has begun, the countdown to the summer exams series begins for exams officers across the country.

Students in many centres will be sitting their mock examinations in the coming weeks and these are an ideal opportunity to build on ahead of examinations this summer. Not only can students become familiar with regulations, but centre staff can also be made aware of JCQ requirements whilst invigilators' knowledge of the regulations can be tested and their competence judged within the examination room. The November blog – [Utilising mock examinations to raise the standard of invigilation within your centre](#) – contains excellent advice and guidance on maximising mock examinations ahead of the summer exams series.

I have the additional challenge of starting as exams officer at a new centre in January. The combination of creating handover notes, trying to ensure I have got everything in the best possible condition for handover and thinking about what I need to know in my new centre has been a very useful reflective process in helping me to consider what is needed in preparation for this summer – particularly in the coming weeks prior to February half term.

Most importantly, is to ensure that I am on track to submit **entries** to deadline and to avoid late fees. I will be aiming to submit GCSE and GCE entries well ahead of the 21 February deadline which will require basedata to be downloaded, entry information to be checked with subject leaders/staff, and to circulate statements of entries amongst students in order for them to check the accuracy of their examination entries. I will be having more detailed discussions with subject leaders/staff whose subjects have examination tiers to agree a deadline by which they will confirm any changes, and to ensure that this information is shared with me before the amendment window/deadline closes.

I will be using the following TEO documents to help in managing examination entries:

- [A guide to managing entries](#)
- [A guide to avoiding late entries](#)
- [Managing entries: Candidate names and gender identity](#)
- [Deadlines for entries, fees and charges template](#)
- [External entries collection form template](#)
- [Internal entries collection form template](#)
- [Changes to entry information form template](#)
- [Exam entry/re-sit form template](#)

- [Late entry form template](#)

Another area of consideration will be **non-examination assessments and coursework**. Exams officers need to confirm the process within their centre for informing students of their teacher (centre assessed) marks and giving them the opportunity to appeal prior to the submission of marks to the exam boards. All staff – and students - involved in this process will need to be made aware of the relevant internal deadlines to allow the exams officer to submit the marks and any required documentation to the relevant awarding body to deadline. As for qualifications which include teacher assessed practical components, the dates for these will need to be arranged and deadlines confirmed. If you are a new exams officer, I strongly recommend that you download The Exams Office [Guide to administering internal assessment](#).

Centres must ensure that all **exams-related policies** are in place and updated to reflect practice within your centre for the current academic year (see [Exam Policy Template](#) section of The Exams Office for more information and support). Discussions will need to take place to confirm roles and responsibilities including the member of staff – ideally a member of the senior leadership team – who is in charge of signing off policies, and where these will be kept so that they are readily available to show the JCQ inspector where requested during an inspection.

A meeting will need to take place with your special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and relevant pastoral teams to discuss the arrangements for those students who have special requirements. A review should take place to confirm how any arrangements were facilitated during the mock examinations, whether any modified papers have been ordered (if required), and when and how **access arrangements** approval applications will be made via *Access Arrangements Online* (AAO) - if these have not been made already. If applications are still to be made, discussions will need to take place over the use of documentation such as Form 8, *Personal data consent from examination candidate (aged 13 or over): Access arrangements online and Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENCo forms*. If candidates are to be given access to a word processor during their examinations, you will need to consult the IT department to confirm arrangements such as the number of students who will require the use of a word processor, the dates and sessions when students will require these and to ensure that any word processor used is compliant with JCQ regulations.

The Exams Office has produced [an extensive range of resources to support exams officers](#) in managing and supporting candidates who have approved access arrangements during an examination.

Other tasks which exams officers will need to consider during the spring term – once exam entries have been submitted – include:

- Briefing candidates, parents/carers and staff – there is a range of JCQ information which must be provided ahead of an exam series (see The Exams Office [Briefing candidates and staff templates](#))
- Timetabling
- Rooming
- Seating plans
- Final instructions for invigilators – including providing a copy of the current JCQ [Checklist for invigilators \(written examinations\)](#) which must be issued to invigilators as part of their preparation and training

- Preparing for the exam series – key tasks to be undertaken each exam day/session, how to deal with unplanned events that may arise on a daily basis (e.g. what to do if a candidate arrives for an exam feeling unwell or distressed/anxious, a candidate who is absent from an exam, a candidate is late/very late for an exam, a candidate is suspected of committing malpractice, there is a serious disruption in the exam room or dealing with an emergency evacuation) and developing contingency plans for a range of scenarios including your centre being unavailable on an exam day. See The Exams Office [Guide to managing exam time](#)

As the term progresses, exams officers will also need to consider [arrangements for disseminating results and the information which will need to be shared with candidates and staff](#).

This is the time of year when exams officers need to adhere to a range of deadlines. To ensure that these are met effective communication needs to take place with centre staff, and if this takes place in a timely and effective manner, it will result in a smooth as possible journey towards the summer exam series. Naturally, there will be some diversions, a student may acquire an injury ahead of an examination or the examination series, the special educational needs department undertakes a review of a student and requests changes to their arrangements for an examination(s), or you may have a lack of invigilators. Although unwelcome, such changes are more easily managed if the initial framework and planning is already in place.

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