

DECEMBER 2023**FIVE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT YOUR EXAM ENTRIES ARE MADE TO DEADLINE**

The impact of not submitting examination entries to deadline can be significant upon a centre. As well as the financial implication of submitting entries after the deadline, there is now an increased focus placed upon the importance of meeting deadlines and how a failure to submit information to awarding organisations in a timely manner may be construed as malpractice.

In this article, we consider five actions which exams officers should take to ensure that examination entries are made to deadline – and that late fees are avoided at all cost - in their centre.

Set internal processes and deadlines

Although it is the responsibility of the exams officer to submit examination entries, the task can only be completed with the cooperation of subject staff, and therefore it the exams officer's responsibility to ensure that clarity is provided over what is required from each department and when this information is required. Exams officers should set internal processes and deadlines which should be conveyed to subject staff.

The importance of setting and informing staff of your internal deadlines should not be underestimated. It is not difficult for your senior leadership team and teachers to learn that the deadline for submitting entries for the summer exam series is 21 February, but they may not be aware of the scale of the task which you must undertake once information has been provided by individual departments.

The greater the number of qualifications which are taken at your centre, and the number of candidates whom are being entered for examinations, will determine your internal deadlines. It may be that you set a deadline several weeks prior to the awarding organisation final entry deadline – the date which is set should also incorporate a contingency period in the event that you are unexpectedly absent in the days/weeks prior to when you planned to submit entries to the relevant awarding organisation(s).

It is also important to Inform your line manager (who should be a senior leader) of the process and deadlines which you have set at the start of the process in the event of requiring their support if a subject department/staff fails to follow the process and/or meet an internal deadline.

Gather information from subject staff/departments in a timely and structured manner

Exam entries can only be submitted once examination information has been confirmed by/received from subject staff/departments, and therefore exams officers should:

- set an internal timeline for the collecting of this information and make relevant staff (and senior leaders) aware of this. Prior to the approach of this deadline, set reminders for those who have failed to provide the necessary information, and act

immediately once the deadline has been reached and the information has not been submitted.

- strictly enforce deadlines as it is imperative that sufficient time is allowed from the receiving of entry information from subject staff/departments to submission to the relevant awarding organisation(s).
- plan well ahead and request that internal deadlines are included in the centre's calendar, therefore recognised as significant events in the school/college year
- ensure that entry processes are easy to follow, and any internal deadlines set can be reasonably met
- set internal deadline(s) well in advance of external deadline(s) to allow sufficient time for entries for all subjects to be collated and processed internally

If possible, prior to the end of the autumn term, exams officers should ensure that the following has been confirmed:

- Named subject staff who are responsible for providing the exams officer with final entry information
- The centre's entry process and deadline(s) (to senior leaders, heads of departments and/or subject staff)
- That senior leaders, heads of departments and/or subject staff are aware of the consequences of not submitting the correct final entry information to the internal deadline

Where there is a new head of department, or staff who are new to teaching and responsible for submitting examination information, exams officers should assume that they are unaware of your deadlines and processes.

Exams officers should provide these members of staff with the relevant entry collection information, processes and internal deadline(s).

Relevant staff should be made aware of processes to deal with any non-standard entries, which could include:

- entries for candidates on the centre's roll who may be educated elsewhere or in alternative provision
- candidates who may transfer into the centre from another centre during the course of the academic year
- re-sit entries

Before entry information is submitted, exams officers must, as far as practically possible, build in time for relevant staff to re-check entries after internal processes are complete to confirm entries are correct prior to the deadline for final submission to the awarding organisation.

Amendments and withdrawals

Exams officers should identify the awarding organisation deadlines for making changes to entries in terms of amendments without charge or withdrawals with a refund of entry fee.

Where subject staff want to make changes to entries, they should make these changes via a formal and recognised process. This will provide an audit trail of what changes were requested, by whom, and when. It should also be ensured that ad hoc or informal requests not made via the formal process are not accepted.

Clear communication

It is imperative that clear lines of communication are established between the exams officer and teaching teams (or those members of staff responsible for providing entry information).

Exams officers should request a regular 'exams' agenda slot at appropriate meetings (for example departmental staff meetings or head of department meetings) as an effective way of presenting information and providing clarity over what information is required, why it is required and when it is required.

Once the request for exam information has been sent to staff, a regular update/review of deadlines and progress towards meeting these should be provided.

Senior leaders should be engaged to provide support in minimising the risk of late or missed entries, and they should also be made aware of the potential scale of late or other penalty fees and the support that may be needed to make sure the centre avoids them.

All correspondence between the exams officer and subject staff should be documented (for example, via email) to establish the facts in the event of a dispute or the imposition of late entry fees.

Highlight late entry fees

At the beginning of the information gathering process, all relevant teaching staff (and senior leaders) should be made aware of the financial impact of missing the summer exams series entry deadline. This may help to 'focus minds' on ensuring that deadlines are adhered to and ensure that there are no surprises if late entry fees are applied.

Submit entries as early as possible

Regardless of the 21 February deadline, The Exams Office encourages all exams officer to submit entries as soon as possible...try and submit entries once you have acquired candidate and qualification information from staff/departments. do not wait until the awarding organisation deadlines.

By submitting entries as soon as possible, not only will this ensure that the entry deadline is met and late entry fees are avoided/minimised, but exams officers can take advantage of the 'non-fee' period to make amendments and withdrawals following the submission of entries.

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