

APRIL 2024

FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE SUMMER EXAM SERIES

With less than a month to go before the start of the summer 2024 exam series, exams officers in centres across the country will be completing their final preparations ahead of the start of the common timetable on Thursday 9 May.

For new exams officers who have not previously experienced an exam series, this can be a daunting, and often worrying, period as they may be unaware of the tasks which they need to undertake. However, if the tasks within the exam cycle have been followed then an exams officer is as prepared as they can be - regardless of the number of qualifications or students they are engaged with.

In this article, we consider some of the final checks/tasks which an exams officer should undertake at this stage of the exam cycle ahead of the summer series (note that the information is given as an example only, and exams officers may have to undertake additional tasks/checks depending on the qualifications taken at their centre).

Exams officers are strongly encouraged to maintain a 'paper trail/audit' when communicating with centre staff and ensuring that all requests are made via email. This may provide critical evidence in the event of any issues which may arise in the future.

Entries

- Check with teaching teams if their final entries are still correct
 - Ask if any changes need to be made in relation to the examination papers to be taken by a candidate from the one they were originally entered for (e.g a tier change from a foundation to a higher paper). All changes should be documented, for example via the [Changes to entry information form template](#) provided by The Exams Office. This provides a way of ensuring that a formal process (providing an audit trail) is in place to collect requests for changes to be made to final entries that have already been collected (and ultimately submitted to awarding bodies)
- Submit any required changes (amendments and withdrawals) to the relevant awarding body.
 - This will require an awareness of the deadlines (for entries, fees and charges) where windows of opportunity to make changes without charge (or where refunds may be given for withdrawals) may still be available in April for some awarding bodies. The Exams Office [Deadline for entries, fees and charges template](#) provides a record of awarding body entry, amendment and withdrawal key dates and deadlines with links to fee information

- Continue to check entry feedback from awarding bodies after any changes have been made

Exam preparation

- Manage preparation for the exam period
 - e.g. timetabling, rooming, seating plans, being prepared for exam time/days, tasks to be undertaken at the beginning of, during, and the end of the examination etc.
- Ensure that all access arrangements tasks have been completed
 - e.g. rooming, seating, briefing/training invigilators/facilitators, briefing candidates, being prepared for emergency access arrangements etc.
- Brief candidates and staff
 - See the [Senior Leader and Line Manager Exam Support website](#) for a candidate briefing PowerPoint presentation and guidance notes

Internal assessment

- Complete all relevant tasks related to the administration of internal assessment
 - Ensure subject staff complete all tasks relating to non-examination assessments/coursework and vocational qualifications, and that all relevant centre assessed marks/grades and required samples of candidates' work are submitted to the awarding body to deadline to allow certification to take place

Confidential examination materials

- Confirm the system in place to demonstrate the receipt, checking, secure movement and secure storage of confidential exam materials (i.e. question papers and any other confidential supporting materials in any format) throughout the time the material is confidential
 - Refer to the following documents provided by The Exams Office – [Confidential materials: initial point of delivery log template](#) and [Confidential materials: receipt, secure movement, checks and secure storage log template](#)
- Prepare to receive, check and securely/safely store awarding body examination stationery and attendance registers, examiner address labels, moderator address labels

Invigilation

- Confirm that all invigilation arrangements are in place and in line with JCQ regulations/requirements

- Ensure that JCQ regulations (in accordance with section 12 of the *Instructions for conducting examinations* publication) are met, including:
 - Invigilators have been made aware of the [Checklist for invigilators \(for written examinations\)](#)
 - New invigilators have been provided with thorough training on the current *Instructions for conducting examinations* publication
 - The existing invigilation team has been made aware of any changes
 - The testing of invigilators competence and understanding of the JCQ regulations is rigorous
 - A record of the content of the training given to invigilators and those facilitating an access arrangement for a candidate under examination conditions is available for inspection and retained on file until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later
 - Invigilators have been asked to declare whether they have invigilated previously and whether they have any current maladministration/malpractice sanctions applied to them
 - Invigilators are familiar with the JCQ [Warning to candidates](#), JCQ *Information for candidates* and the JCQ [Unauthorised items poster](#)

Exam time

- Continue with exam preparation and ensure understanding of all the requirements in relation to exam time
- Be prepared for the tasks you will need to undertake on a daily basis to prepare for each exam session, after each exam session, and for the next exam session/day
- Refer to The Exams Office [Exam day checklist](#) which provides a reminder of key tasks to be undertaken each exam day and pointers on how to deal with unplanned events (what to do in the event of) that may arise on during the exam series. These include:
 - 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 absent from an exam
 - A candidate who arrives late for an exam
 - A candidate who arrives 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)
- Exams officers – and senior leaders/line managers – should also ensure that they are fully prepared for the JCQ centre inspection. Amongst a range of areas on which the inspector will focus upon, centres should pay particular attention to their contingency

planning which should detail the plans relating to an [alternative venue in the event of your centre being unavailable on an exam day\(s\)](#), and [covering the absence of the exams officer at critical stages of the exam cycle](#) (including during an exam series, during the results and post-results process etc.).

- Be aware of the process relating to the dispatching of scripts:
 - (England only) Arrangements for the DfE (STA) [Dispatch of exam scripts: yellow label service](#).

The contents of this article were correct at the time of publication (End of March 2024)

Further resources

Other useful resources provided by The Exams Office include [training videos](#) and guides to managing [exam preparation](#) and [exam time](#).