



CAMBRIDGE
OCR

Managing an exam day in the absence of your exams officer

Welcome and thank you for joining our session

Cambridge OCR Customer Support Team | Winter Conference 2026



Regulations and instructions

Centres must conduct exams and assessments in accordance with awarding body and relevant JCQ regulations and instructions

JCQ documents include:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres
- Instructions for conducting examinations
- Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments
- Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures
- A guide to the special consideration process



Support resources

Support and guidance documents to help you manage an exam day are available to download from **The Exams Office Hub**

Resources include:

- A guide to managing exam time
- Exam day checklist
- Exam room checklist
- Managing an exam day videos

EXAM DAY CHECKLIST

PREPARING FOR EACH EXAM SESSION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Check e-mail (and mail, for any last-minute erratum notices from awarding bodies for that day's exams)	
(In the secure room) Identify the question paper packet(s) for each exam in the session (and any erratum notices) Reminder: question papers must always be kept in their sealed packets until 'second pair of eyes check' has been undertaken	
Add any required stationery (e.g. answer booklets/additional or supplementary answer sheets/booklets if appropriate)	
Check clean copies of any formula/data booklets added (where/if required by the question paper)	
Add the (an) attendance register for each question paper	
Add the seating plan (and incident log) for each exam room (if used, add <i>exam room checklist</i> and relevant desk ID cards)	
Removing question papers from secure storage (within the permitted time): Confirm a member of staff (additional to the person removing the packets from secure storage) checks the day, date, time (session), subject, unit/component (and tier of entry if applicable) immediately before a question paper packet is opened, and that this check is recorded	
Access arrangements (within the permitted time/times): Prepare any paper(s) required to facilitate an access arrangement Check any ordered modified paper(s) question paper packet(s) is included and add any required cover sheet(s)	
Brief invigilators on all the arrangements for the exam session they need to be aware of, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the exam(s) in their room and the paper(s) duration the required question papers, exam stationery, other materials and any erratum notice(s) and the attendance register(s) the seating plan and the arrangements for any private/external or transferred candidate(s) (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 candidate(s) between exam papers taking place within the same session (if applicable) the supervision arrangements for any timetable clash candidate(s) between exam papers taking place within a different session (if applicable) instructions for completing the exam room checklist (where applicable) and the exam room incident log the contents of their exam room box (where provided) Brief any roving invigilator(s) on the room(s) to be entered and the arrangement(s) to be observed	
AFTER EACH EXAM SESSION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(Where applicable) Merge scripts for candidates under alternative rooming arrangements/at an alternative site with those of the main cohort (ensure any completed cover sheets accompany relevant scripts where appropriate)	
Undertake a final check of completed attendance register and scripts for each exam paper are in register order (Keep signed records of seating plan, invigilation arrangements and centre's copies of the attendance registers for each exam)	
Pack and seal scripts with the associated attendance register in the relevant awarding body script dispatch envelope(s) (Do not insert anything else in package)	
Check e-mail (or mail, for any notification of last-minute changes to examiner/script dispatch details)	
Affix examiner address label(s) (as applicable, the yellow label) to package(s) (only one label per package) - complete dispatch log (Yellow label service)	
Store package(s) in the secure room until as close to the collection window/dispatch time as practically possible	
Complete and submit to timescale any required follow-up reporting to the awarding body (including any very late arrival report, suspected malpractice report, special consideration application)	
PREPARING FOR THE NEXT EXAM SESSION/DAY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Do a final check in the secure storage facility that correct and sufficient question papers are available for each exam	
Check (through sealed question paper packet window or refer to awarding body's stationery/materials list) and collate in preparation any other required resources and answer booklets, if needed	
Check e-mail (and mail, for any erratum or other urgent notice(s) from awarding bodies)	
Access arrangements: Check arrangements in place/will be in place at the time of the exam Prepare any required cover sheets (where applicable)	
Check/restock exam room box(es) (where applicable)	

Contingency planning

Senior leaders must have robust contingency arrangements in place that will minimise the risk to exam/assessment administration and delivery and any adverse impact on candidates – JCQ *General Regulations for Approved Centres*, 3.17

The centre's **written contingency plan** must cover:



All aspects of exam and assessment administration and delivery

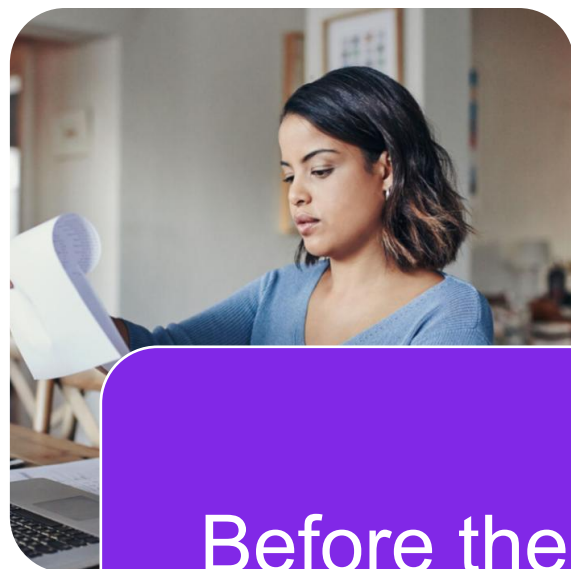


The scenario of essential key staff (including the exams officer) being absent at a critical stage of the exam cycle



Succession arrangements for members of staff involved in exam and assessment administration

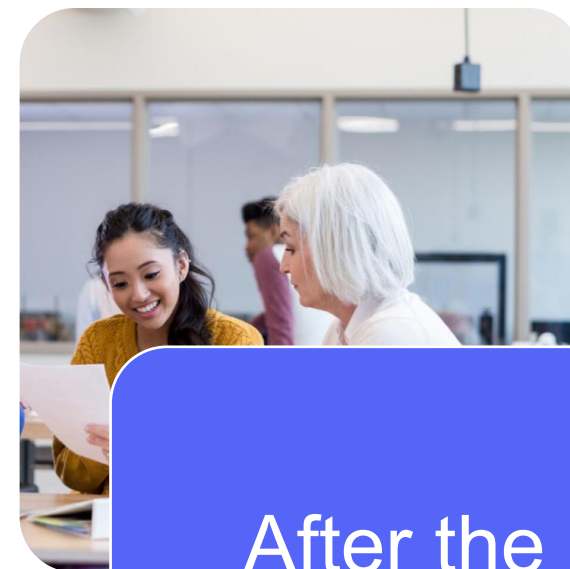
Managing an exam day



Before the
exam
session



The exam
session



After the
exam
session



Before the exam session: key activities	JCQ ICE
Check exams officer emails	
Check centre exam timetable	
Identify designated exam room(s); make sure all rooms are set up to meet JCQ requirements	Section 11
Organise stationery and equipment required for each exam – eg awarding body blank answer booklets	Section 9
Collate the seating plan, attendance register and incident log for each exam room	Paragraphs 11.14, 11.15 Section 22 Paragraph 20.2
Identify candidates with a timetable clash and check arrangements	Sections 7 and 8
Identify and prepare for candidates requiring access arrangements and modified papers	Sections 13 and 14
If required, download electronic PDF question papers from awarding body secure systems	Section 4
Remove question paper packet(s) from secure storage and open in line with JCQ ICE	Section 5
Check for question paper erratum notices	
Complete and record the ‘second pair of eyes’ check immediately before a question paper packet is opened	Paragraphs 2.8, 3.6, 18.1
Brief invigilators on the arrangements for the session	

Timing is everything!

The awarding bodies' published starting time is **9.00am** for morning exams and **1.30pm** for afternoon exams (except for CCEA)

Example – morning session



90 minutes before the published starting time

Earliest question paper packets can be opened in the secure room to:

- split question paper packets
- facilitate an access arrangement
- facilitate an alternative site arrangement

60 minutes before the published starting time

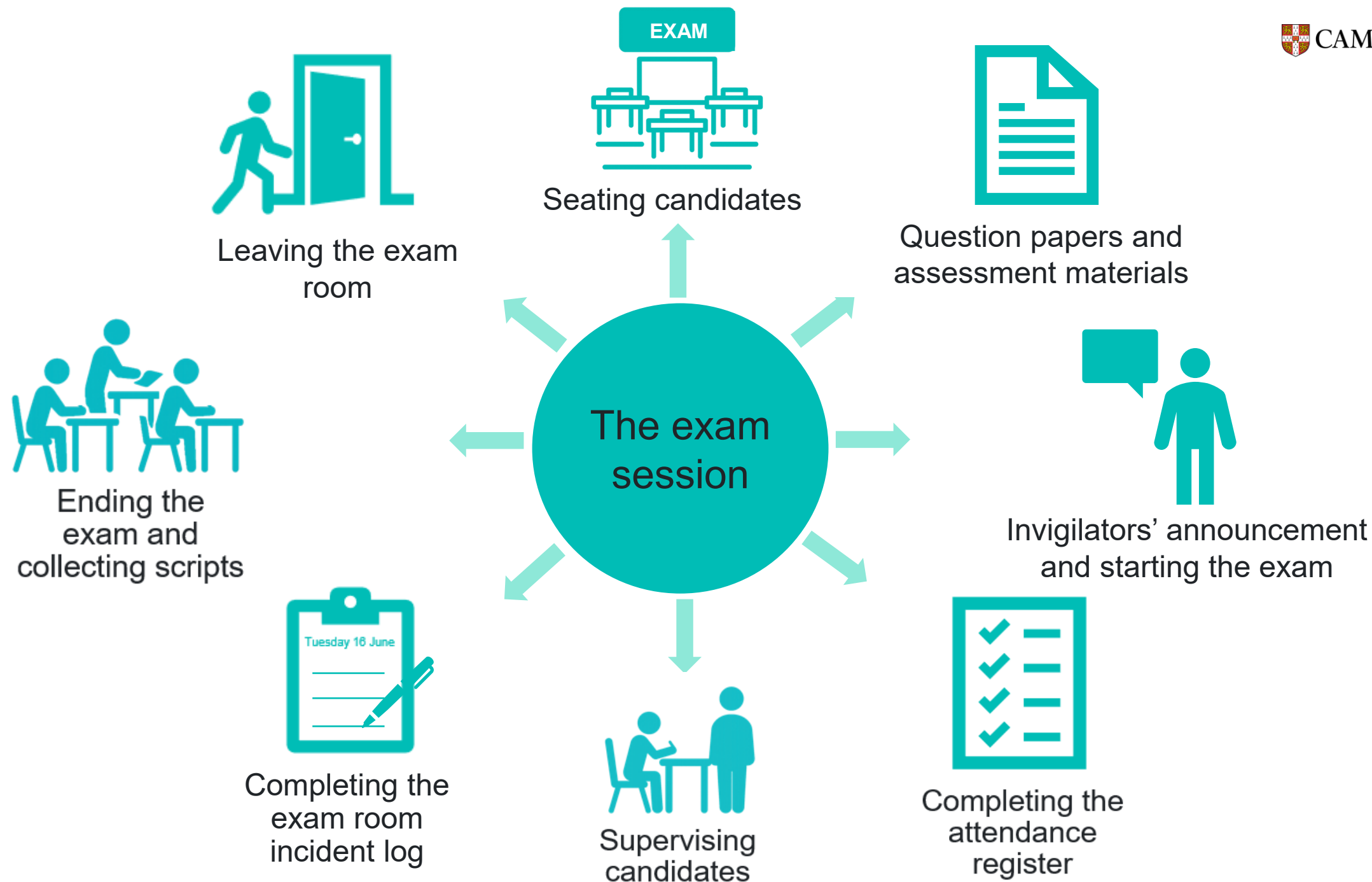
Earliest question papers can be removed from secure storage and taken to the designated exam rooms (except for an alternative site arrangement)

Earliest electronic question paper materials are available from awarding body secure systems

Earliest centre starting time

Awarding bodies' published starting time

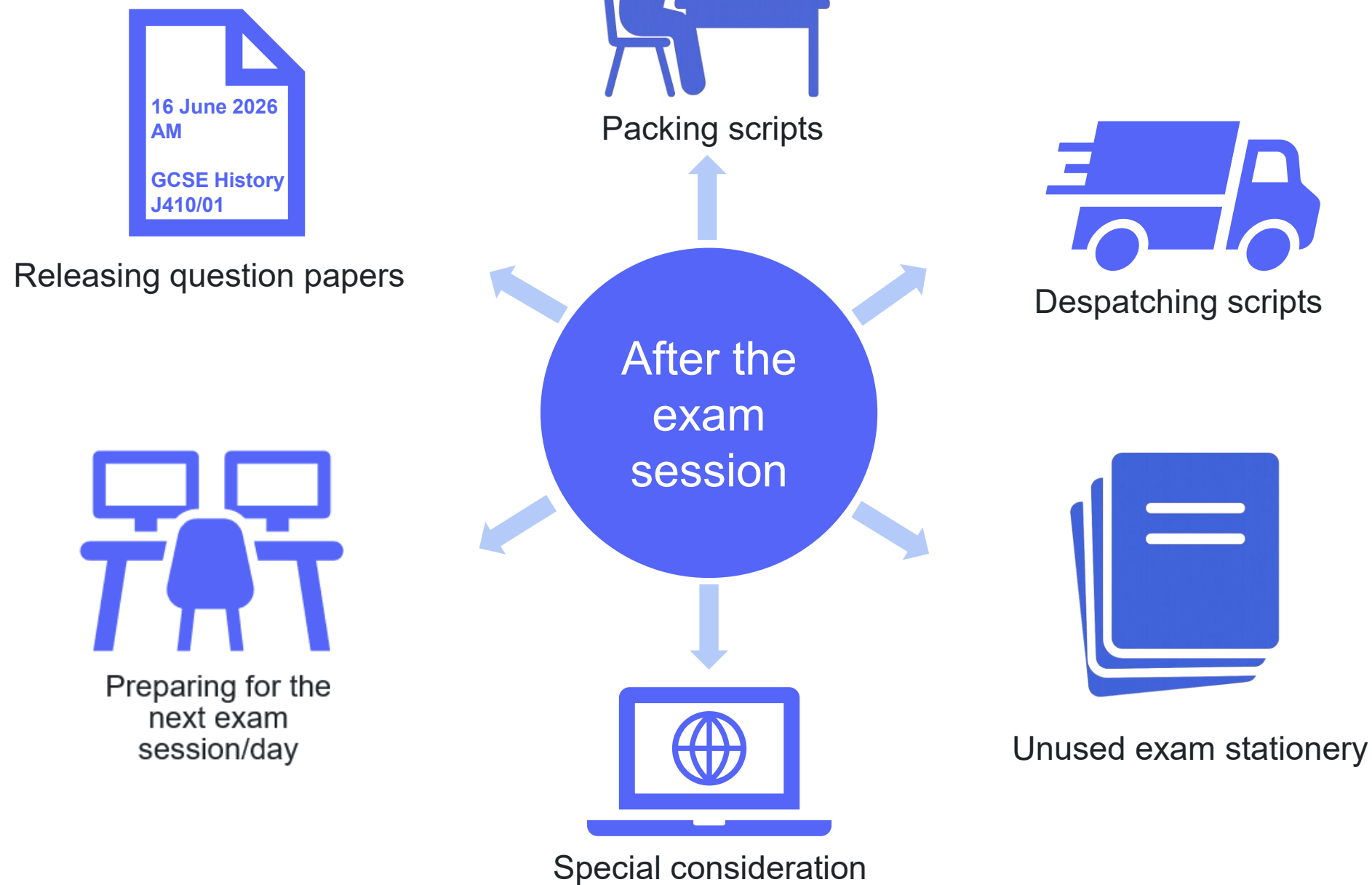
Latest centre starting time



The exam session: key activities	JCQ ICE
Manage the entry of candidates into the exam room	Paragraph 19.1
Seat candidates according to the exam room seating plan	Paragraph 19.2
Distribute question papers and other assessment materials (unless completed before candidate entry); complete and record the 'second pair of eyes' check immediately before a question paper packet is opened	Paragraph 18.1 Paragraphs 2.8, 3.6, 18.1
Confirm the identity of all candidates in line with the centre written procedure	Section 16
Inform candidates of all required information; read the invigilators' announcement; start the exam session	Paragraphs 19.2, 19.3, Appendix 3
Check all information required is displayed on a whiteboard (or similar) and is visible to all candidates	Paragraph 11.9
Check supervision arrangements and invigilator ratios comply with regulatory requirements	Paragraph 12.8b, section 20
Ensure only approved members of staff and candidates taking the exam are present in the exam room	Section 17, Appendix 8
Complete the attendance register before the end of the exam	Section 20
Complete the exam room incident log (templates available from JCQ and The Exams Office)	Paragraph 20.2
Finish the exam, taking account of any candidates with different finish times	Section 26
Collect scripts, question papers and other assessment materials before candidates leave the exam room	Section 27
Manage the exit of candidates from the exam room	

Managing irregularities on an exam day

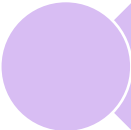




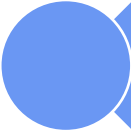
After the exam session: key activities	JCQ ICE
Collect all unused exam stationery and return it to the secure storage facility or secure room	Section 30
Collate scripts in the order of the attendance register	Section 28
Pack scripts/copy of the attendance register using awarding body script return envelopes and attach correct address label provided by the awarding body	Section 28
Despatch scripts on the same day of the exam (where possible)	Paragraph 27.4 Section 29
Complete post-exam administration – eg special consideration, malpractice report	Section 24
Prepare for the next exam session/exam day	
Release unused question papers to centre staff in line with regulations	Section 31

Forward planning

Consider strategies to mitigate risk. For example:



Stress test your contingency plan



Utilise/train other members of centre staff – eg lead invigilator



Manage an exam day with your exams officer present



Attend awarding body/The Exams Office training and support events

Cambridge OCR guidance and support

- Customer Support Centre
- Customer Support Managers
- Training and networks
- Administration



Questions





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Thank you for attending, we hope you
found it helpful