PLANNING FOR A SUCCESSFUL SUMMER EXAM SERIES

Effective planning in the coming weeks and months is the key to ensuring that the summer exam series is a success.

This article outlines twelve key areas that exams managers/officers should focus on before the Easter break to make sure that they - and their centre - are fully prepared for the summer series.

Entries

- Submit any entry changes (amendments, withdrawals) prior to deadlines where additional charges are levied by awarding bodies
- Access entry confirmation and feedback from awarding bodies on entries to identify and resolve any issues that may have been detected in relation to candidate data or entry data
- Check subsequent entry feedback that may be generated after the submission of any changes to entries

Access arrangements

- Meet with your SENCo (or equivalent role) to identify what needs to be done, by whom and by when
- Confirm arrangements which have been delegated to the centre and those approved by awarding bodies
- Confirm the staff (facilitators and invigilators) who will be supporting and/or supervising access arrangement candidates in their exams/assessments are/will be trained in their role

Invigilation

- Identify if additional invigilators will be needed for the summer exam series
- If required, recruit additional invigilators
- Collect availability information from your current team of invigilators
- Ensure thorough training on the current (2025/26) regulations for any new invigilators and those facilitating an access arrangement for a candidate under examination conditions
- Ensure that the existing invigilation team are/have been made aware of any changes

Key dates and deadlines

- Where applicable, note/meet the key dates and deadlines associated with the summer exam series and undertake relevant tasks, for example the deadline for requesting transferred candidate arrangements

Confidential exam materials

- Be prepared to receive or download advance/pre-release/preliminary materials
- Ensure a log is kept at the initial point of delivery of confidential materials to the centre and the required information is correctly recorded
- Have in place a system that demonstrates 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, and a log in your secure room to correctly record the required information

Alternative site arrangements

- Check whether any candidate(s) in your centre will be taking their exams at an alternative site (This include any arrangement(s) for exams to be taken in a candidate's home)
- If so, notify the JCQ Centre Inspection Service by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online using the Centre Admin Portal no later than six weeks before the start of the exam series

Exam timetables

- Produce your centre's master exam timetable
- Produce candidate exam timetables and identify/resolve any timetable clashes

Private candidates

- If an entry (or entries) has been made for a private candidate, ensure that final exam information is confirmed to the candidate well in advance of the exam period

Rooming

- Calculate the number of rooms required for each (morning and afternoon) session
- Books rooms (if applicable) and liaise with relevant centre staff
- Select rooms which are appropriate to the type of assessment taking place
- Confirm whether additional rooms for candidates with access arrangements will be required
- Add room details to the centre exam timetable

- Confirm where candidates' personal belongings and any unauthorised items will be stored – e.g. bags, mobile phones

Seating plans

- Produce a seating plan for each exam room session which:
  - shows the exact position of each candidate in the exam room
  - identifies any candidates with access arrangements
- As applicable, consider any changes to entries that may impact on seating plans that have been created early

Share exam information and guidance with candidates

- Ensure the JCQ *Information for candidates documents* are/have been distributed to candidates
- Ensure candidates are made aware of the content of the JCQ *Unauthorised items* and *Warning to candidates* posters
- Follow up the sharing of this information with a briefing session or assembly led by a senior member of staff to reinforce what candidates must and must not do when sitting written exams and/or on-screen tests, and when producing coursework and/or non-exam assessments

Time saving – hints and tips

- To ensure the smooth running of exam sessions/days, consider using the resources within The Exams Office Hub to create the following for each exam session:
  - Exam room clocks (displaying exam information)
  - Second pair of eyes check forms
  - Roving invigilator forms (where applicable)

The contents of this article were correct at the time of publication (February 2026)