

Ballyclare Secondary School



External Examinations Policy

“Every child deserves a rewarding educational experience.”

<i>Date of last review</i>	<i>March 2023</i>
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Introduction

The purpose of this exam policy is:

- to ensure the planning and management of exams is conducted efficiently and in the best interest of candidates
- to ensure the operation of an efficient exam system with clear guidelines for all relevant staff.

It is the responsibility of everyone involved in the Centre's exam processes to read, understand and implement this policy.

This exam policy will be reviewed every two years.

This exam policy will be reviewed by the Head of Centre, Vice Principal and the Examinations Officer.

1. Exam Responsibilities

Head of Centre / Principal

Overall responsibility for Ballyclare Secondary School as an Exam Centre:

- advises on appeals and re-marks
- the Head of Centre is responsible for reporting all suspicions or actual incidents of malpractice. Refer to the JCQ document *Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments*.

Exams Officer

Manages the administration of public exams.

- advises the Senior Leadership Team, subject and class teachers and other relevant support staff on annual exam timetables and application procedures as set by the various exam boards
- oversees the production and distribution to staff and candidates of an annual calendar for all exams in which candidates will be involved and communicates regularly with staff concerning imminent deadlines and events
- ensures that candidates and their parents are informed of and understand those aspects of the exam timetable that will affect them
- consults with teaching staff to ensure that necessary coursework is completed on time and in accordance with JCQ guidelines
- provides and confirms detailed data on estimated entries
- receives, checks and stores securely all exam papers and completed scripts
- administers access arrangements and makes applications for special consideration using the JCQ *Access Arrangements and Special Considerations Regulations and Guidance relating to candidates who are eligible for adjustments in examinations*
- identifies and manages exam timetable clashes

- accounts for income and expenditures relating to all exam costs/charges
- line manages the Chief Exams Invigilator in organising the recruitment, training and monitoring of a team of exams invigilators responsible for the conduct of exams
- submits candidates' coursework marks (where necessary), tracks despatch and stores returned coursework and any other material required by the appropriate awarding bodies correctly and on schedule
- forwards, in consultation with the SLT, any appeals/re-mark requests
- maintains systems and processes to support the timely entry of candidates for their exams.

Vice Principal

- Organisation of teaching and learning.
- External validation of courses followed at Key Stage 4 and 5

Heads of Department

- Guidance and pastoral oversight of candidates who are unsure about exam entries or amendments to entries
- Involvement in post-results procedures
- Accurate completion of coursework mark sheets and declaration sheets
- Accurate completion of entry and all other mark sheets and adherence to deadlines as set by the Exams Officer

Careers Teachers

- Guidance and careers information.

SENCO

- Notification of Access Arrangements (as soon as possible after the start of the course)
- Submission of candidate names to Heads of Department
- Administration of Access Arrangements
- Identification and testing of candidates' requirements for Access Arrangements
- Provision of additional support — with spelling, reading, mathematics, dyslexia or essential skills, hearing impairment, English for speakers of other languages, IT equipment — to help candidates achieve their course aims
- Organisation of rooming and invigilating of access arrangements
- As recommended by JCQ all Special Consideration Candidates and their details should be recorded and updated on SIMS (SENCO Records).

Chief Invigilator/Invigilators

- Collection of exam papers and other material from the Exams Office before the start of the exam
- Collection of all exam papers in the correct order at the end of the exam and their return to the Exams Office or for collection by CCEA.

Candidates

- Confirmation and signing of entries
- Understanding coursework regulations and signing a declaration that authenticates the coursework as their own.

Administrative Staff

- Support for the input of data
- Signing in exam paper deliveries
- Posting of completed exam papers.

2. The Statutory Tests and Qualifications offered

The statutory tests and qualifications offered in Ballyclare Secondary School are decided by the Head of Centre, Vice Principal and Heads of Department. The statutory tests and qualifications currently offered are GCSE, A Levels, Essential Skills, BTEC Level 2 and BTEC Level 3.

The subjects offered for these qualifications in any academic year may be found in the Centre's published prospectus for that year. If there has been a change of syllabus from the previous year, the Exams Office must be informed by 30th September of the current year.

2.1 At Key Stage 4

All candidates will be entitled, and enabled, to achieve an entry for qualifications from an external awarding body.

2.2 At Post-16

It is expected that AS modules will be completed during Year 13. Some awarding bodies and post-16 qualifications do not have AS modules and so are assessed in their entirety at the end of Year 14.

3. Exam Seasons and Timetables

3.1 Exam Seasons

External exams are scheduled in November, January, March, May and June.

Which Exam Boards are used in the Centre is decided by the Heads of Department.

3.2 Timetables

The Exams Officers will circulate the exam timetables for external exams once these are confirmed. For the summer exams, pupils are required to get their exam timetables signed by their subject teacher and parent/guardian and return to class teacher who will forward to the exam officer. Candidates will then receive a final copy of the timetable.

4. Entries, Entry Details, Late Entries and Resits

4.1 Estimated entries and forecast grades

The Examinations Officer will carry out an annual Audit of Qualifications at the end of June. This will be completed by Heads of Department or relevant Subject Co-ordinators by the given internal deadline. They will provide data (codes and seasons of entry) on qualifications to be offered under their remit for the following two academic years along with, as accurately as possible, provisional candidate numbers for each season in the incoming year. Heads of Department and Subject Co-ordinators can find all information pertaining to courses on the website for the Awarding Body or by contacting the Subject Officer of the course in question. For each examination series, the Examinations Officer will forward provisional entry numbers to the relevant Awarding Bodies by their given deadlines.

The Heads of Department will submit forecast grades, when requested, to the Exams Officer. The Exams Officer will send these off, via EDI, to the relevant Awarding Bodies.

4.2 Entries

Candidates are selected for their exam entries by the Heads of Department and the subject teachers. Regarding GCSE, Subject Teachers will make students aware of their Tier of Entry.

Entries for full classes will be made by the class teacher by way of Entry Marksheets printed by the Exam Officer. Heads of Department must inform the Examinations Officer of changes to courses during the Qualifications Audit to ensure that the information on the Entry Marksheets is correct for each exam season. While teachers are responsible for completing the Entry Marksheets, Heads of Departments should check that the entries are correct before returning these to the Exams Officer.

Heads of Departments or Subject Co-ordinators will receive hard copies of final Entry Marksheets to check and sign before entries are submitted. They will make the Examinations Officer aware of any errors or discrepancies in writing before the given internal deadline. The Examinations Officer will submit the entries to the Awarding Bodies via EDI. Pupils will also be given a copy of their entries to check and sign.

A candidate or parent/carer can request a subject entry, change of level or withdrawal.

4.3 Late Entries

Entry deadlines are circulated to Heads of Department with the Entry Sheets.

Late entries are authorised by Head of Centre and Exams Officer. The fee for late entries may be requested from the pupil if, for example, it is a late pupil request for a re-sit.

4.4 Resits

Candidates are allowed 1 resit per subject in GCSE.

Candidates are allowed 1 resit per subject in AS.

Candidates may be allowed resits in A2

Resit decisions will be made in consultation with the candidates, subject teachers, Exams Officer and the Heads of Department.

(See also section 6: Exam fees)

4.5 External entries

Ballyclare Secondary School is not listed with the Awarding Bodies as a Centre for accepting External Candidates. However, some exceptions will be made to facilitate past pupils wishing to re-sit examinations.

Past pupils will not be eligible for portfolio or coursework entries where marking or moderation by BSS teaching staff would be required, unless in exceptional circumstances, and by prior agreement with the relevant teacher(s).

If an entry from an external candidate is accepted, the candidate is responsible for the entry fee. The Examinations Officer will ensure that the candidate receives written confirmation of the times and dates of the examination concerned.

5. Conduct of Examinations

5.1 Briefing of Candidates

The Examinations Officer will ensure that each candidate receives the JCQ Notice to Candidates with their individual timetable before the candidates embark upon Study Leave. The Examinations Officer and class teachers will thoroughly brief candidates on the regulations regarding the conduct of examinations, including how soon they may be released from the examination hall, and on other practical issues such as lateness, illness or bereavement.

5.2 Conduct of Examinations

All pupil examinations will be conducted in strict accordance with JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations.

Equipment and set texts are the responsibility of the candidate, except where the centre is required to provide a clean copy of a book. The Examinations Officer will make available pens and pencils in the examination room, but no further provision can be guaranteed. Calculators, where permitted, are the responsibility of the candidate. Candidates should ensure that their calculator is in full working order and comply with the JCQ guidelines.

5.3 Conduct of On-line Examinations

All on-line examinations will be conducted in strict accordance with JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations, Appendix 1 Instructions for On-screen External Assessments.

6. Exam fees

- GCSE initial registration and entry exam fees are paid by the Centre.
- AS initial registration and entry exam fees are paid by the Centre.
- A2 initial registration and entry exam fees are paid by the Centre.
- Late entry or amendment fees are paid by the Departments or pupil, depending where the request has come from.

Candidates or departments will not be charged for changes of tier, withdrawals made by the proper procedures or alterations arising from administrative processes, **provided these are made within the time allowed by the awarding bodies.**

Resit fees for first resit are paid by the Centre. Resit fees will be paid by candidate if candidate was absent without good reason for the first exam sitting.
(See also section Resits)

Candidates must pay the fee for an enquiry about a result.
(See also section 11 Enquiries about results [EARs])

Failure to attend any externally timetabled examination, without a valid reason, may result in candidates being billed for the full cost of the entry.

7. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), Special Needs and Access Arrangements

7.1 DDA

The Disability Discrimination Act 2010 extends the application of the DDA to general qualifications. All exam centre staff must ensure that the Access Arrangements and Special Consideration regulations and guidance are consistent with the law.

7.2 Special Needs

A candidate's special needs requirements are determined by the SENCO and the Educational Psychologist / Specialist Teacher. All evidence to be retained by SENCO.

Parents to be informed by SENCO of the Access Arrangements by letter, and to also explain to pupils what these arrangements are. These pupils must also sign the "Data Protection Notice", again the responsibility of SENCO.

The SENCO will inform subject teachers and Exams Officer of candidates with special educational needs who are embarking on a course leading to an exam, and the date of that exam. The SENCO can then inform individual staff of any special arrangements that individual candidates may be granted during the course and in the exam.

7.3 Access Arrangements

Making special arrangements for candidates to take exams is the responsibility of the SENCO.

Submitting completed Access Arrangement applications to the awarding bodies is the responsibility of the SENCO.

Rooming for access arrangement candidates will be arranged by the SENCO. On the day of the exam, SENCO to collect papers as arranged from the Chief Invigilator, deliver to correct room and return at end of exam. A check should also be made that all SEN pupils are in the correct room with the correct staff.

Invigilation and support for access arrangement candidates will be organised by the SENCO. This includes all invigilation staff being informed of specific arrangements and their role in the invigilation process as outlined in the JCQ Access Arrangements document.

8. Managing Invigilators and Exam Days

8.1 Managing Invigilators

External invigilators will be used for CCEA exam supervision. The recruitment of invigilators is the responsibility of the Chief Invigilator and Exams Officer. Securing the necessary Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance for new invigilators is the responsibility of CCEA. Invigilators are timetabled and trained by the Exams Officer. Invigilators' rates of pay are set by CCEA.

The Examinations Officer will ensure that suitable personnel are recruited to assist the Chief Invigilator for the invigilation of public examinations in BSS and will ensure that an annual briefing takes place before the main examination series. Where it is not possible to meet with all Invigilators, suitable information will be sent to the invigilation team. The Chief and Assistant Chief Invigilators will be issued with JCQ Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations, and will make themselves familiar with these regulations. Copies of the JCQ document will be made available to all Invigilators.

8.2 Exam Days

The Exams Officer will book all exam rooms after liaison with other users and make the question papers, other exam stationery and materials available for the invigilator.

The Exams Officer and/or SLT will ensure the correct identity of students sitting examinations.

Building Supervisors/Exams Officers are responsible for setting up the allocated rooms.

The Chief Invigilator will start all exams in accordance with JCQ guidelines.

In practical exams subject teachers may be on hand in case of any technical difficulties.

Procedures for Emergency Evacuation of Exam Site: At start of examination invigilators must inform candidates of evacuation procedures of exam rooms. Evacuated Candidates must go to Assembly Point B, located at the opposite side of the hockey pitches. Candidates must remain there, in isolation, returning to Exam Venue to complete examination. A report will be submitted to relevant Exam Board.

Exam papers must not be read by subject teachers or removed from the exam room before the end of a session. Papers will be distributed to heads of department/faculty either at the end of the exam session (English exam boards) or 24 hours after the published end time of exams (CCEA).

9. Candidates, Clash Candidates and Special Consideration

9.1 Candidates

The Centre's published rules on acceptable dress, behaviour and candidates' use of mobile phones and all electronic devices apply at all times.

Candidates' personal belongings remain their own responsibility and the Centre accepts no liability for their loss or damage (this includes mobile phones and other electronic devices).

Disruptive candidates are dealt with in accordance with JCQ guidelines.

Candidates may leave the exam room for a genuine purpose requiring an immediate return to the exam room, in which case a member of staff must accompany them.

A candidate who arrives after the start of the examination will be allowed access to the exam hall if the examination is still in progress. The candidate should be allowed the full time for the examination provided adequate supervision arrangements are in place.

The Exams Officer will attempt to contact any candidate who is not present at the start of an exam and deal with them in accordance with JCQ guidelines. If a candidate fails to present him/herself for more than two consecutive examinations with no explanation, it will be assumed that he/she does not wish to sit his/her examinations, and no further attempt at contact will be made. Charges may be levied against that candidate at the discretion of the Head of Centre.

9.2 Clash Candidates

The Exam Officer will be responsible as necessary for identifying escorts, identifying a secure venue and arranging overnight stays if required.

9.3 Special Consideration

Should a candidate be too ill to sit an exam, suffer bereavement or other trauma or be taken ill during the exam itself, it is the candidate's responsibility to alert the Centre, or the Exam Invigilator, to that effect.

Pupils may be entitled to apply for Special Consideration based on guidance given in the JCQ document 'Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration'. Most requests for Special Consideration will be reported to the Examinations Officer directly or via a Pastoral leader.

Any Special Consideration claim must be supported by appropriate written evidence within five days of the exam, for example a letter from the candidate's Doctor.

The Exams Officer will then forward a completed Special Consideration form to the relevant awarding body within seven days of the exam.

10. Coursework/CAT and Appeals against Internal Assessments

10.1 Coursework/CAT

Candidates who have to prepare portfolios should do so by the end of the course or centre-defined date.

The Examinations Officer will inform candidates of the regulations surrounding coursework and portfolios by issuing them with the JCQ Notice to Candidates Coursework and Portfolios.

The Examinations Officer will inform Heads of Department and Subject Co-ordinators of the internal deadlines relating to coursework and portfolio completion for each examination series.

It is the responsibility of Heads of Department to ensure the most up to date Candidate Record Sheets are being used by checking the website of the relevant Awarding Body.

Heads of Department will ensure all coursework is ready for despatch at the correct time.

Marks for all internally assessed work are provided to the Exams Office by the Heads of Department. Subject teachers are responsible for uploading marks to the Awarding Body's online systems.

10.2 Appeals against Controlled Assessments Tasks

A separate procedure on this subject is available from the Exams Office.

The main points are:

- appeals will only be entertained if they apply to the process leading to an assessment. There is no appeal against the mark or grade awarded
- candidates may appeal if they feel their coursework has been assessed unfairly, inconsistently or not in accordance with the specification for the qualification
- appeals should be made in writing by 30 May to the Head of Centre/Exams Office who will decide whether the process used conformed to the necessary requirements
- the Head of Centre's findings will be notified in writing, copied to the Exams Officer and recorded for awarding body inspection.

Further details can be found in the 'Controlled Assessment Policy' and the 'Appeals Procedure' policy.

10.3 Appeals committee

There will be an Appeals committee to investigate any requests for appeal by a candidate, or parent/guardian of a candidate.

If any individual teacher has an issue with any exam arrangements or any queries brought to them by students in their teaching groups or form class, please inform your Head of Department who can then inform the Exams Office for investigation.

This Committee will sit to look at appeals against any issues of malpractice, or any other issues reported to awarding bodies, that a candidate or parent/guardian may disagree with.

This committee will comprise:

Chairperson: Principal/Head of Centre
 Vice Principal
 Exams Officer
 Head of 6th Form
 Year Teachers of Year 12

11. Results, Enquiries about Results (EARs) and Access to Scripts (ATS)

11.1 Results

Candidates will receive individual results slips on results days in person at the centre.

Arrangements for the school to be open on results days are made by the Head of Centre.

The provision of staff on results days is the responsibility of the Head of Centre.

Candidates who cannot be present may authorise/nominate (in writing only) someone to collect their results. This person will be asked to show proof of identification.

11.2 Enquiries about results (EARs)

EARs may be requested by centre staff or candidates if there are reasonable grounds for believing there has been an error in marking. Candidates must be made aware that with re-mark scripts there is the possibility that their marks may be lowered, unchanged or increased. The fee for this remark will be paid by the candidate. This fee will be reimbursed if the appeal is upheld.

11.3 Access to Scripts (ATS)

After the release of results, candidates may ask subject staff to request the return of papers within three days' scrutiny of the results. The fee will be paid by the candidate.

Centre staff may also request scripts for investigation or for teaching purposes. For the latter, the consent of candidates must be obtained. The fee for this service will be paid by the relevant Department.

Exam Officer will circulate a document to HoDs summarising the fees and deadlines for these services.

12. Contingency planning

Please refer to separate policy on contingency planning for further details.

12.1 Evacuation

In the case of an emergency such as a fire alarm or a bomb alert, the invigilator will follow the guidelines given in JCQ Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations. In summary, the invigilator will lift the attendance register and instruct the candidates to leave all examination materials on their desks and proceed to the assembly point, staying with the invigilator at all times. Candidates must remain supervised separately from other pupils within the school and should not engage in conversation with each other.

If and when it is safe to return to the building, the examination will re-commence and candidates will be given extra time to account for the disruption. All details should be recorded in the incident book and a report should be sent to the relevant Awarding Body. If the examination cannot continue the Awarding Body should be contacted immediately.

12.2 School Closure

In all cases, the guidance given in the Joint Contingency Plan should be followed. In summary, the decision whether it is safe to open the centre lies with the Principal. He/she is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether they are able to open. If possible, the centre will open for examinations and examination candidates only. If not, the centre will consider alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g. share facilities with other centres or use other public building, if possible).

If none of the above solutions are possible, candidates will be offered an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series or an application for special consideration may be considered for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements.

12.3 Unusable Venue

If the timetabled venue within the school is unusable due to flood damage or faulty heating or lighting, an alternative venue should be used within the school. All candidates should be supervised under secure conditions to ensure the integrity of the examination remains intact. All efforts should be made to ensure the examination begin within one hour of the scheduled start time. In the case of the examination lasting less than one hour, the examination should begin within 30 minutes of the published finishing time.

13. Storage of Examination Materials

13.1 Pre-Exam Storage of Confidential Material

The General Office staff will contact the Examinations Officer when confidential examinations material arrives in the college. All materials will be supervised until the Examinations Officer can be made available. The examination materials will then be moved to the secure room on the day of arrival where he/she will open and check the materials and immediately check them into the examinations safe, recording all materials in the log.

Live examinations material will be arranged in chronological order in the safe before each examination series, so as to help minimise the risk of error. Materials will be hand delivered to the Chief Invigilator within 30 minutes of the start time of the examination.

After an examination, if scripts cannot be forwarded to the relevant examiner or are awaiting collection by CCEA, they will be securely stored in the examinations safe overnight.

13.2 Post-Exam Storage of Confidential Material

After the invigilator has packed the completed exam scripts in the tamper-proof envelopes, the packages will be stored in the exam safe in the secure room until such time as they are collected for delivery. If the scripts cannot be forwarded to the examiner on the day of the examination, they will be locked in the safe overnight.

13.3 Dispatch of Scripts

Scripts will be checked and packed by the Examinations Officer or Chief Invigilator immediately after each examination, either in the examination room or in the main hall.

The intended destination will be logged by the Examinations Officer in the Dispatches Book for the series, and the package(s) will be via recorded delivery to the relevant examiner within 24 hours. A record of all postings is also kept in the General Office, where receipts of postage and recorded delivery details relating to examinations mail will be held.

CCEA scripts may be stored overnight in the safe, while awaiting collection by Parcelforce. A separate Parcelforce collection book will be provided by CCEA for each series and will be kept in the General Office for daily signing.

14. Malpractice

All instances of suspected malpractice will be dealt with according to the JCQ Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments Policies and Procedures.

15. Withdrawal process

1. Parental contact made to HoD or HoY regarding withdrawing from a subject **OR** HoD/HoY concern leads to phoning home to discuss withdrawal as a possible option
2. HoD/HoY gathers up evidence (pastoral or academic) and brings the information to Head of Learning (Mrs Colgan)
3. Mrs Colgan looks at the broader picture of the pupil and checks the Exams excel document (managed by the Exams Officer) to see if the same pupil is already withdrawn from any other subjects
4. Mrs Colgan informs all relevant parties of the potential withdrawal
5. Mrs Colgan makes the decision (in consultation with the Vice Principal, Mr Rea) and informs the Exams Officer so that the Exams excel document can then be updated with all the relevant information, including the outcome
6. The Exams Officer then lets the original HoD/HoY know they need to gather in written parental confirmation before the decision is finalised
7. The original HoD/HoY is responsible for getting the written permission to the Exams Officer
8. When the written confirmation is in, the Exams Officer will email all staff involved to let them know the decision is finalised
9. The pupil must remain in the class they have withdrawn from but should work on their revision/work for other subjects

16. Certificates

Certificates are presented in person. Certificates may be collected on behalf of a candidate by a third party from the School office, provided they have been authorised to do so. Certificates are not withheld from candidates who owe fees. The Centre retains certificates for one year.