

BIRMINGHAM INDEPENDENT COLLEGE

Exam Policy

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The examination policy

The policy purpose

The purpose of this examination policy is:

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

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

The examination policy will be reviewed every year.

The examination policy will be reviewed by the Exams Officer and Senior Leadership Team.

Examination responsibilities

Exams Officer

Manages the administration of public and internal examinations:

- Advises the Senior Leadership Team, class teachers and other relevant support staff on annual examination timetables and application procedures as set by the various awarding bodies.
- Oversees the production and distribution to staff, governors and candidates of an annual calendar for all examinations 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 examination timetable that will affect them.
- Consults with teaching staff to ensure that necessary coursework/controlled assessment is completed on time and in accordance with JCQ guidelines.
- Provides and confirms detailed data on estimated entries.
- Receives, checks and stores securely all examination papers and completed scripts.
- Administers access arrangements and makes applications for special consideration using the JCQ publications Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration 13/14.
- Identifies and manages examination timetable clashes.
- Accounts for income and expenditures relating to all examination costs/charges.
- Line manages Examination Invigilators and organises the recruitment, training and monitoring of a team of Lead Examinations Invigilators responsible for the conduct of examinations, and ensures additional agency invigilators are booked and supervised as required.
- Submits candidates' coursework/controlled assessment marks, tracks despatch and stores returned coursework/controlled assessment and any other material required by the appropriate awarding bodies correctly and on schedule.
- Arranges for dissemination of examination results and certificates to candidates and forwards, in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, any appeals/re-mark requests.
- Maintains systems and processes to support the timely entry of candidates for their examinations through subject teachers.

Subject teachers are responsible for:

- Notification of access arrangements requirements (as soon as possible after the start of the course).
- Submission of candidates' names to the Exams Officer for examination entries.
- Completing and checking all examination related paperwork (Entries / Estimated Grades / Coursework submission) in a timely fashion.

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Identification and testing of candidates, requirements for access arrangements.
- Making applications for Access Arrangements in line with the JCQ publications Access Arrangements manual.
- 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.

Lead invigilator/invigilators are responsible for:

- Collection of examination papers and other material from the Exams Officer or nominated deputy from the main office before the start of the examination.
- Assisting with the setting up of examination rooms.
- Taking the attendance register during examinations.
- Collection of all examination papers in the correct order at the end of the examination and their return to the examinations office.
- Administering examinations in accordance with JCQ rules and regulations.

Candidates are responsible for:

- Understanding coursework/controlled assessment regulations and signing a declaration that authenticates the coursework/controlled assessment as their own.
- Adhering to JCQ rules and regulations regarding examination room procedures.
- Being fully aware of dates, times and venues for their examination.
- Checking (and if necessary querying) their examination entries upon receipt of their examination timetable.

Qualifications offered

The qualifications offered at this centre are decided by the Head of Centre and Senior Leadership Team in consultation with subject teachers.

The main qualifications offered are ESOL, Functional Skills, GCSE, and Level 1/2/3 BTEC.

Entries for examinations may only be made by subject teachers. Decisions on whether a candidate should not be entered for a particular subject will be taken in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team. Subject leaders may recommend the withdrawal of a student from an examination but the final decision lies with the Head of College.

Examination series and timetables

External examinations and assessments are notified in the School Calendar and are scheduled in December and June (with retakes in July). Currently OCR Functional maths and English and Edexcel ESOL assessments are on-demand. GCSE are usually in June and BTEC in May. All dates are confirmed by the Exams Officer.

Internal examinations are held under external examination conditions, except staff relieved from teaching act as invigilators, and in the event of a fire alarm, students line up in forms as usual.

The Head of College in liaison with the Senior Leadership Team decides which examination series are used in the centre, and the standard start times as stipulated within the JCQ regulations.

Once confirmed, the Exams Officer will circulate the examination timetable for Internal and External examinations in a timely fashion.

Entries, entry details and late entries

Candidates are selected for their examination entries by the Head of College in liaison with the class teacher. The Head of College must consult with the student's teacher when determining entries, tiers of entry (where appropriate) and estimated grades. Where more than one teacher is involved in teaching an examination group for a single exam qualification, all teachers involved should meet and agree decisions such as estimated grades.

The centre accepts external entries from former candidates only at the discretion of the Head of College where an examination is already being conducted in the College, and where there is capacity to accept an external candidate. There will be a £10 administration fee in addition to the examination fees, for an external candidate, payable in advance.

The centre does not currently act as an examination centre for other organisations.

Entry deadlines are circulated to subject teachers via the whole school calendar, email, briefings, staff pigeon holes and the yearly Calendar issued by the Exams Officer.

Late entries are authorised by subject teachers and the Examinations Officer in consultation with the Head of College.

Subject teachers may recommend students for retaking an examination once at the school's expense to the Head of College. Where this is not authorised, the student may in liaison with the Exams Officer / Subject Teacher / Head of College, be able to retake a module at their own expense. This is subject to a fee payable to the examinations office and re-sit entries are made upon receipt of the payment and not before.

Retake recommendations will be made in consultation with candidates and subject teachers, with the final decision taken by the Head of College.

Examination fees

Candidates or subjects 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.

Functional Skills fees are paid by the Centre

GCSE entry examination fees are paid by the Centre.

BTEC fees are paid by the Centre.

Late entry or amendment fees are paid by the Centre.

Fee reimbursements are sought by the school from parents/carers of pupils that do not attend an examination that they have been entered for unless there is a valid reason for non-attendance has been provided. Parents will be responsible for all exam fees where a student misses external exams, or is unable to complete controlled assessments required for the course, because of taking their child on holiday.

Disability Discrimination Act

All examination centre staff must ensure that the centre meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), extended in 2005, and the Disability Equality Duty (DED), introduced in 2006.

The DDA introduced measures aimed at eliminating the discrimination often faced by disabled people. The main provisions of the Act give protection to disabled people in the areas of employment and education.

'A person has a disability for the purposes of the DDA if he/she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

The centre will meet the requirements of the DDA by ensuring that the examinations centre is accessible and improving candidate experience. This is the responsibility of the Head of Centre, Exams Officer and SENCO.

Access arrangements

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

A candidate's access arrangements requirement is determined by the SENCO and Educational Psychologist/Specialist Teacher.

Making access arrangements for candidates to take examinations is the responsibility of the Exams Officer.

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 Exams Officer.

Invigilation and support for access arrangement candidates will be organised by the Exams Officer.

Estimated grades

Subject teachers are responsible for submitting estimated grades to the Exams Officer by the deadline when requested by the Exams Officer.

Managing invigilators

External staff are used to invigilate external examinations, with internal staff used to invigilate Internal Examinations.

Recruitment of invigilators is the responsibility of the Exams Officer in liaison with the Head of College.

Securing the necessary Disbarring and Barring Service (DBS) clearance for new invigilators is the responsibility of the Centre administration.

CRB fees for securing such clearance are paid by the centre.

Invigilators are timetabled and briefed by the Exams Officer.

Invigilators rates of pay are set by the centre administration.

Malpractice

The Head of Centre is responsible for investigating suspected malpractice.

The Exams Officer is responsible for informing the Head of Centre of incidents of suspected malpractice and helping with the investigation.

Staff committing malpractice will be dealt with in accordance with the JCQ Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments Policies and Procedures.

Receipt and Storage of Exam Papers

The examination secure storage follows the box within a box principle. The secure room is of brick construction with no external windows on the 2nd floor. The secure room has a strong solid door with a five lever mortice lock. Within the secure room is a non-portable security cabinet fixed to the wall with multipoint locking. The two keyholders for the secure examination storage room are the Head of Centre and Exams Officer.

On arrival at the centre all materials will be signed for by the Centre Manager or Exams Officer. These examination materials will be taken to the secure storage area by the Centre Manager or Exams Officer where they will be locked in the secure metal filing cabinet. All materials will be noted on the booking in / returning of examinations template document in terms of date, time and who has stored them. In the case of controlled assessment materials the same details will be recorded as well as who has used and returned them. This ongoing record will be kept by the Head of College. When materials need to be signed out of the secure storage area, the record will be updated accordingly. On completion of examinations, exam materials will be returned to the secure storage area in preparation for the safe secure exams pick-up service offered by the Post Office (and/or delivered to the main sorting office and send by next day guarantee delivery). These will then be signed out again when the secure pick up service arrives on site.

Examination days

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

Site management is responsible for setting up the allocated rooms.

The Exams Officer and/or Lead Invigilator will start all examinations in accordance with JCQ guidelines.

Subject teachers may be present at the start of the examination to assist with identification of candidates but must not comment on the contents of the question paper or advise on which questions or sections are to be attempted.

Subject staff must not enter the examination room unless it has been pre-arranged with the Exams Officer.

Only the Exams Officer, members of Senior Leadership Team and Invigilators timetabled to an examination may enter the examination room whilst the examination is in progress.

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

Examination papers must not be read by subject teachers or removed from the examination room before the end of a session. Papers will be distributed to subject teachers at the end of the examination session.

A relevant subject teacher may be available to read out any subject-specific instructions and start the examination, if required, but this must be pre-arranged with the Exams Officer.

Candidates

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

Candidates' personal belongings remain their own responsibility and the centre accepts no liability for their loss or damage.

Disruptive candidates are dealt with in accordance with JCQ guidelines. Candidates are expected to stay for the full examination time.

Candidates may only leave the examination room for a genuine purpose and are required to return immediately to the examination room. They must be accompanied by a member of staff at all times.

The Exams Officer is responsible for handling late or absent candidates on examination day.

Clash candidates

The Exams Officer will be responsible for arranging escorts and supervision, as necessary for clash candidates.

Special consideration

Should a candidate be ill before an examination, suffer bereavement or other trauma, be taken ill during the examination itself or otherwise disadvantaged or disturbed during an examination, then it is the candidate's responsibility to alert the centre, the Exams Officer, or the examination invigilator, to that effect.

The candidate must support any special consideration claim with appropriate evidence within three days of the examination, for example by providing a letter from the candidate's doctor.

The Exams Officer will then forward a completed special consideration request to the relevant awarding body within seven days of the examination.

Internal assessments and appeals

It is the duty of subject teachers to ensure that all internal assessment are ready for despatch at the correct time. The Exams Officer will assist by keeping a record of each despatch, including the recipient details and the date and time sent. It is the duty of the Exams Officer to ensure that despatches are sent to the correct destination within 24 hours of being received, and preferably on the same day.

Marks for all internally assessed work and estimated grades are provided to the examinations office by the subject teachers.

The process for managing appeals against internal assessments is detailed in a separate appeals policy (*Birmingham Independent College Internal Appeals Procedures Policy*), available from the exams officer.

Results, enquiries about results (EARs) and access to scripts (ATS)

Candidates will receive individual result slips on results days, which they are expected to collect in person from the centre. In exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Exams Officer / Head of College, and by pre-arrangement only, results can be collected on behalf of a candidate by third parties.

Arrangements for the centre to be open on results days are made by the Exams Officer, in liaison with the Senior Leadership Team and the Site Team.

The provision of staff on results days is the responsibility of the Exams Officer in liaison with the Senior Leadership Team.

EARs may be requested by Subject Heads, Senior Leadership Team or candidates if there are reasonable grounds for believing there has been an error in marking. The candidates consent is required before any EAR is requested. Where there is a cost to the College, permission for an EAR must be approved by the Head of College.

When the centre does not support a candidate's or parent's request for an EAR, a candidate may ask the Exams Officer to apply for an enquiry. If a candidate requests this against the advice of subject staff, there will be a fee.

Centre staff may request scripts for investigation or for teaching purposes. For the latter, the consent of candidates must be obtained.

After the release of results, candidates may ask the Exams Officer to request the return of papers within three days' scrutiny of the results. The candidate will have to pay the fee to the Exams Officer before any requests can be made.

GCSE re-marks cannot be applied for once a script has been returned.

The process for making an enquiry about results or gaining access to a script is detailed in a separate policy (*Birmingham Independent College Access to Scripts, Enquiries about Results and Appeals Policy*), available from the examinations office.

Certificates

Certificates are collected and signed for.

Certificates can be collected on behalf of a candidate by third parties, provided they have proof that they have been authorised to do so.

The centre retains certificates for one year.