



Examinations Policy

Adopted by Utopia- for review by the Board of Directors

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For review - Annually - Review targets annually

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1. Introduction and aims

Our school is committed to ensuring that exams are managed and administered effectively.

The aim of this policy is to ensure:

- The planning and management of exams is conducted in the best interest of candidates.
- Our system of exams administration is efficient and clear, and staff and pupils understand what is required and expected of them
- We comply with requirements and guidance set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and awarding bodies

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Everyone

Everyone involved in our exam processes, including staff and pupils, must read, understand and implement this policy.

2.2 Head of centre

The head of centre:

- Has overall responsibility for the school as an exams centre
- Is responsible for ensuring that all suspected or actual incidents of malpractice are reported, in line with the JCQ guidance on [malpractice in examinations and assessments](#)

Our head of centre is **Chris Black**

2.3 Exams officer

The exams officer is responsible for the administration of exams. They:

- Manage the administration of internal and external exams.
- Advise the senior leadership team (SLT), subject and class tutors, and other relevant support staff on annual exams timetables and procedures as set by awarding bodies.
- Oversee the production and distribution of an annual calendar for all exams in which candidates will be involved and communicate regularly with staff about imminent deadlines and events. This calendar must be provided to all staff and candidates.
- Ensure that candidates and their parents/carers are informed of, and understand, aspects of the exams timetable that will affect them.
- Check with teaching staff that the necessary coursework and/or controlled assessments are completed on time and in accordance with JCQ guidelines.
- Provide and confirm detailed data on estimated entries.

- Maintain systems and processes to support the timely entry of candidates for their exams.
- Receive, check and securely store all exam papers and completed scripts, and ensure that scripts are dispatched as per the guidelines.
- Administer access arrangements and make applications for special consideration following the regulations in the JCQ [guidance on the special consideration process](#)
- Identify and manage exam timetable clashes.
- Account for income and expenditures relating to all exam costs/charges.
- Line manage the senior exams invigilator in organising the recruitment, training and monitoring of a team of exams invigilators responsible for the conduct of exams.
- Ensure candidates' coursework/controlled assessment marks are submitted correctly and on schedule, along with any other material required by the awarding bodies.
- Track, dispatch and store returned coursework/controlled assessments.
- Arrange for dissemination of exam results and certificates to candidates, and forward, in consultation with the SLT, any post-results service requests.
- Report all suspected or actual incidents of malpractice, in line with the JCQ guidance on suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments
- Advise on appeals and re-marks.

Our exams officer is **Alice McMullen**.

2.4 Heads of department

Heads of department are responsible for:

- Advising the exams officer of any changes to syllabus or assessment details for their subjects
- Advising the exams officer of entries for their subjects
- Guidance and pastoral care for candidates who are unsure about exams entries or amendments to entries.
- Accurately completing entry and mark sheets, and adhering to deadlines as set by the exams officer.
- Accurately completing coursework/controlled assessment mark sheets and declaration sheets
- Decisions on post-results procedures

2.5 Teachers

Teachers are responsible for:

- Supplying information about entries, coursework and controlled assessments as required by the exams officer.

2.6 Special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO)

The SENCO is responsible for:

- Identifying and testing candidates' requirements for access arrangements and notifying the exams officer in good time so that they can put exam day arrangements in place
- Processing any necessary applications in order to gain approval (if required)
- Working with the exams officer to provide the access arrangements required by candidates in exam rooms

Our SENCO is **Danny Cooke**

2.7 Lead invigilator(s)

The lead invigilator(s) are responsible for:

- Assisting the exams officer to run exams efficiently, according to JCQ regulations.
- Collecting exam papers and other material from the exam's office before the start of the exam.
- Collecting all exam papers in the correct order at the end of the exam and ensuring they're returned to the exams office.

Our lead invigilator is **Kate Martin**.

2.8 Candidates

Candidates are responsible for:

- Confirming and signing entries
- Understanding coursework/controlled assessment regulations and signing a declaration that confirms the coursework to be their own.
- Ensuring they conduct themselves in all exams according to the JCQ regulations.

3. Qualifications offered

Utopia's SLT decide the qualifications we offer.

We offer the following types of qualifications:

- GCSE's
- BTEC (Entry Level - Level 2)
- Functional Skills
- Duke of Edinburgh Award

If there will be a change to a specification for the next year, the exams office must be informed by July 1st.

Informing the exams office of changes to a specification is the responsibility of heads of department.

Decisions on whether a candidate should be entered for a particular subject will be taken by the head of department in consultation with the SLT.

4. Exam series

Internal exams (mock or trial exams) and assessments are scheduled throughout the academic year and are recorded in Utopia's ARR diary.

External exams and assessments are scheduled during the months of May/June and are recorded in Utopia's ARR diary.

Internal exams are held under external exam conditions.

SLT decides which exam series are used in the centre.

The centre does offer assessments on an on-demand basis. If offered, on-demand assessments can be scheduled only in windows agreed between the exams officer and another member of the senior team.

5. Exam timetables

Once confirmed, the exams officer will circulate the exam timetables for internal and/or external exams at a specified date before each series begins.

6. Entries (including entry details and late entries)

Candidates or parents/carers cannot request subject entry, change of level or withdrawal.

We accept entries from private candidates.

We do not act as an exams centre for other organisations.

Entry deadlines are circulated to heads of department via Utopia's ARR Diary, email reminders and staff meetings.

Heads of department will provide estimated entry information to the exams officer to meet JCQ and awarding body deadlines.

Entries and amendments made after an awarding organisation's deadline require authorisation, in writing, by the exams officer.

6.1 Re-sits

We allow re-sits for the following types of qualifications:

- GCSEs
- BTECs
- Functional skills

Re-sit decisions will be made by heads of department in consultation with SLT.

7. Exam fees

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.

The exams officer will publish the deadline for actions well in advance of each exams series.

8. Equalities

All our staff must ensure that they meet the requirements of any equality legislation.

We will comply with the legislation, including making reasonable adjustments to the service that we provide to candidates in accordance with the requirements defined by the legislation, awarding bodies and JCQ. This is the responsibility of the head of centre, exams officer and the SENCO.

9. Access arrangements

The SENCO will inform subject teachers of candidates with special educational needs (SEN) and any special arrangements that individual candidates will need during the course and in any assessments/exams.

A candidate's access arrangements requirement is determined by the SENCO as per 2.6 above.

Ensuring there is appropriate evidence for a candidate's access arrangement is the responsibility of the SENCO and teachers.

Room arrangements for candidates using access arrangements will be organised by the exams officer.

Invigilation and support for candidates using access arrangements, as defined in the [JCQ access arrangements regulations](#), will be organised by the exams officer and lead invigilator.

9.1 Use of word processors

We may allocate the use of a word processor to a candidate as part of access arrangements or as a reasonable adjustment where appropriate, including:

- When it is their normal way of working, i.e. where the curriculum is delivered electronically and word processors are provided to all candidates
- If they need support with handwriting
- If they have a:
 - Physical disability
 - Learning difficulty that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly.
 - Medical condition
 - Sensory impairment

The above is not an exhaustive list and Utopia will assess candidates on an individual basis.

The SENCO will use their judgement, in collaboration with relevant members of staff where necessary, to make decisions about when a word processor is appropriate outside the specific listed examples above.

We will make sure that:

- The proposed arrangement will not disadvantage or advantage a candidate.
- The use of a word processor will not compromise the assessment objectives or the integrity of the assessment and will be used under secure conditions. Where these objectives would be compromised, then a word processor will not be granted for use by a candidate.

We will also make sure that the word processor:

- Has the spelling and grammar check, and predictive text software disabled.
- Does not have internet connectivity during the exam.
- Has been cleared of any previously stored data, along with any portable storage medium used (and where any authorised memory stick is provided to or used by the candidate, the memory stick will be cleared of any previously stored data)
- Does not allow access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited), spreadsheets or emails.
- Does not have graphic packages or computer-aided design software unless permission is given.
- Does not have computer reading (text to speech) software unless the candidate has permission.
- Does not have speech recognition technology unless the candidate has permission.

The word processor will not be used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe.

All equipment will be checked to make sure it's in working order and sufficiently charged for the duration of the examination.

Candidates provided with the use of a word processor will be accommodated in such a way that other candidates are not disturbed and cannot read the screen. Where we accommodate a candidate in another room, a separate invigilator will be present.

Candidates will be:

- Reminded to make sure that the centre number, candidate number and the unit/component code appear on each page as a header or footer, or to handwrite their details on the printed documents where this feature is not available (where the candidate needs to handwrite their details, they will be supervised to make sure that's solely what they're doing and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way)
- Reminded to save their work at regular intervals, unless 'autosave' has been set up on the device to make sure that the candidate's work is not lost because of a technical issue.
- Advised to use a minimum font size of 12pt and double spacing.

Each page of the typed script will be numbered.

The word processor will be connected to a printer so that the script can be printed off and will be done once the examination is over. The candidate must be present to verify that the work is their own and then the script will be attached to any answer booklet that contains some of the answers. We may also be required by the awarding body to include a word processor cover sheet with the candidate's typed script.

We may retain electronic copies of a word-processed script and this may be accepted by an awarding body where the printed copy has been lost and it is demonstrated that the file has been kept securely.

10. Contingency planning

Contingency planning for exams administration is the responsibility of the head of centre, SLT and the exams office.

Contingency plans are available via the school drive and are in line with the [guidance provided by Ofqual](#), [JCQ](#) and awarding organisations.

11. Estimated grades

Heads of department and teachers are responsible for submitting estimated grades to the exams officer when requested.

12. Managing invigilators

Internal and external staff will be used to invigilate examinations.

These invigilators will be used for external exams.

Recruitment of invigilators is the responsibility of the head of centre and the exams officer.

If invigilators require Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, the head of centre is responsible for obtaining these.

DBS fees are paid by the centre.

Invigilators rates of pay are set by the head of centre and SLT.

Invigilators are recruited, timetabled, trained and briefed by the head of centre and the lead invigilator.

13. Malpractice

The head of centre, in consultation with the exams officer, is responsible for ensuring that suspected malpractice is thoroughly investigated.

14. Safe storage and handling of exam papers

As soon as question papers have been delivered and signed for, they will be passed immediately to the exams officer, who will check to ensure all required materials have been received.

Exam papers will then be locked away in the safe in exams store cupboard.

If question paper packets cannot be checked immediately upon delivery, they will be locked away in the safe until an authorised staff member is available to make the necessary checks.

15. Exam days

The exams officer will:

- Book all exam rooms (after liaising with other relevant users)
- Make question papers, exam stationery and materials available for the invigilator.

Site management staff are responsible for setting up the allocated rooms and will be advised of requirements 7 days in advance.

The invigilators and the exams officer will start and finish all exams in accordance with [JCQ guidelines](#).

Subject staff may be present at the start of the exam to assist with identification of candidates. Any staff present must be in accordance with the rules defined by JCQ concerning who is allowed in the exam room and what they can do.

In practical exams, subject teachers' availability will be in accordance with [JCQ guidelines](#).

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 in accordance with JCQ's recommendations and no later than 1 hour after candidates have completed them.

After an exam, the exams officer will arrange for the safe dispatch of completed exam scripts to awarding bodies, working in conjunction with invigilators and school support staff.

16. Candidates

The exams officer will provide written information to candidates in advance of each exam series. A formal briefing session for candidates may be given by the likely invigilators or heads of department.

Our published rules on acceptable dress and behaviour apply at all times. Candidates' personal belongings remain their own responsibility and we accept no liability for their loss or damage.

In an exam room, candidates must not have access to items other than those clearly allowed in the instructions on the question paper, the stationery list, or the specification for that subject.

This is particularly true of mobile phones and other electronic devices with text or digital facilities.

Any precluded items must not be taken into the exam room.

Disruptive candidates are dealt with in accordance with JCQ guidelines. Candidates are expected to stay for the full exam time at the discretion of the SLT.

Candidates who leave an exam room must be always accompanied by an appropriate member of staff.

SLT and the exams officer are responsible for handling late or absent candidates on exam day.

16.2 Private candidates

The head of centre and exams officer are responsible for managing private candidates.

16.3 Clash candidates

The exams officer will be responsible for making arrangements for clash candidates, including:

- Supervising escorts
- Identifying a secure venue
- Arranging overnight stays where necessary

17. Special consideration

If a candidate is unable to attend an exam because of illness, bereavement, or other trauma, or if a candidate becomes ill or otherwise disadvantaged during an exam, they are responsible for alerting the invigilators, the exams officer, or the head of centre to that effect.

The candidate must support any special consideration claim with appropriate evidence within 7 days of the exam.

The exams officer will make a special consideration application to the relevant awarding body within 21 days of the exam.

18. GCE and GCSE non-examination assessments

Teaching staff who deliver non-examination assessments will follow the correct specifications and the specification and instructions provided by the awarding body, or JCQ [instructions for conducting non-examination assessments](#) if appropriate.

It is the duty of heads of department to ensure that all non-examination assessment is ready for dispatch at the correct time. The exams officer will assist by keeping a record of each dispatch, including the recipient details, and the date and time sent.

Marks for internally assessed work are provided to the exam's office by heads of department. The exams officer will inform staff of the deadline date for appeals against internal assessments.

Any appeals will be dealt with in accordance with our internal appeals policy and procedure document.

18.1 Artificial intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard. Utopia recognises that AI has many uses to help pupils learn but may also lend itself to cheating and plagiarism.

Pupils may not use AI tools:

- During assessments, including internal and external assessments, and coursework.
- To write their homework or class assignments, where AI-generated text is presented as their own work.

Pupils may use AI tools:

- As a research tool to help them find out about new topics and ideas
- When specifically studying and discussing AI in schoolwork, for example in IT lessons or art homework about AI-generated images. All AI-generated content must be properly attributed.

Where a pupil uses an AI tool, the pupil should retain a copy of the question(s) asked and the AI-generated responses. Pupils must submit this along with the assessment.

Staff should:

- Be aware that AI tools are still being developed and should use such tools with caution as they may provide inaccurate, inappropriate or biased content.
- Make students aware of the risks of using AI tools and that they need to appropriately reference AI as a source of information to maintain the integrity of assessments.

For more information on AI misuse, see [guidance from JCQ on AI use in assessments](#). Any misuse of AI tools may be treated as malpractice.

19. Results and certificates

Candidates will receive individual results slips on results days in person at school or via recorded delivery (under extenuating circumstances where a candidate is unable to collect results in person).

The results slip will be in the form of a centre-produced document.

Arrangements for the centre to be open on results days are made by the head of centre and SLT.

The provision of the necessary staff on results days is the responsibility of the head of centre.

Dates of results days each year will be publicised for all candidates through the school website and letters home.

19.1 Enquiries about results (EARs)

EARs may be requested by centre staff or the candidate following the release of results.

A request for a re-mark or clerical check requires the written consent of the candidate. A request for a re-moderation of internally assessed work may be submitted without the consent of a group of candidates.

The cost of EARs will be paid by the centre.

All decisions about whether to make an application for an EAR will be made by heads of department.

If a candidate's request for an EAR is not supported, the candidate may appeal and we will respond by following the process in our internal appeals procedure document.

All processing of EARs will be the responsibility of the exams officer or head of centre, following the JCQ guidance.

19.2 Access to scripts (ATS)

After the release of results, candidates may ask subject staff to request the return of written exam papers within 21 days of the receipt of results.

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

Applications for EARs cannot be submitted once an original script has been returned.

The exams officer is responsible for processing requests for ATS.

The cost of ATS will be paid by the centre.

20. Conflict of Interest

The conflict-of-interest process is designed to protect the integrity of the exams system and also helps to ensure that Utopia staff are protected if there is an allegation of malpractice due to a perceived, or real, conflict.

Full details of the regulations can be found in the [JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres Booklet](#) in section 5.3 (i), which should be read in addition to this guidance.

The head of centre is responsible for managing the conflict-of-interest process and must determine how they do so. They will abide by JCQ regulations with regard to what must be reported to the awarding bodies and what information must be kept on record at Utopia.

The Head of Centre will ensure that any records include details of what measures will be taken to mitigate any potential risk to the integrity of the affected qualifications.

20.1 Reporting a conflict of interest

The exams officer must inform awarding bodies about conflict of interest before the published deadline for entries for each examination series. They need to report any members of Utopia staff who are:

- teaching and preparing members of their family (which includes stepfamily, foster family and similar close relationships) or close friends and their immediate family (eg children) for qualifications which include internally assessed components/units.

20.2 Keeping records

The Head of Centre is responsible for ensuring that Utopia maintains clear records of all instances where:

- exams office staff have members of their family (which includes step-family, foster family and similar close relationships) or close friends and their immediate family (eg children) being entered for examinations and assessments either at the school/college itself or other centre

- school/college staff are taking qualifications at their centre which do not include internally assessed components/units
- school/college staff are taking qualifications at other centres.

These records must:

- include details of the measures which have been put in place to mitigate any potential risk to the integrity of the affected qualifications
- be available for inspection by a visiting JCQ Centre Inspector and/or awarding body staff
- be available if requested in the event of concerns being reported to an awarding body
- be kept until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed (whichever is later).

21. Monitoring and review

The head of centre is responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed every year and is in line with any changes to:

- The exams system
- JCQ guidance
- Utopia's curriculum offer.