



Dixons City Academy

Policy Documentation

Policy: Exams Policy

Responsibility for Review: Vice Principal & Exams Officer
Date of Last Review: October 2013

Exams Policy

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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 year by the Vice Principal and the Exams Officer.

1. Exam Responsibilities

Principal

Overall responsibility for the Academy as an exam centre.

Exams Officer

Manages the administration of public and internal exams:

- advises on appeals and re-marks;
- responsible for reporting all suspicions or actual incidents of malpractice. Refer to the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) document; *Suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments*. (<http://www.jcq.org.uk>);
- advises the senior leadership team, subject and class tutors 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 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 the Awarding bodies with data on estimated entries;
- receives, checks and stores securely all exam papers and completed scripts;
- administers access arrangements and liaises with Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who 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;
- liaises with finance department concerning income and outgoings relating to all exam costs/charges;
- recruits, trains and line manages the exam invigilators;
- monitors a team of exam invigilators responsible for the conduct of exams;
- prepares the data to allow the Senior Management Team (SMT) to analyse results achieved in relation to expected grades and comparable data for previous years, thus allowing them to indicate where future procedural improvements might be made;
- collects money for resit, remarks, access to scripts;
- distributes the coursework record forms to heads of subject so that they can submit candidates' marks;
- tracks and distributes returned coursework to Heads of Subject;

- arranges for dissemination of exam results and certificates to candidates and forwards any appeals/re-mark requests from candidates or heads of subject;
- 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 / Post-16
- leads the analysis of exam results

Heads of Department/Subject

- 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 and the dispatch to the appropriate Awarding body or marker – copies of all marksheets to be given to exam officers;
- accurate completion of entry and all other mark sheets and adherence to deadlines as set by the Exams Officer;
- to ensure that all procedures are followed in relation to classroom based exams set by boards and coursework.

Teachers

- notification of access arrangements (as soon as possible after the start of the course) to SENCO;
- submission of candidate names to heads of department.

SENCO

- administration of access arrangements, keeping the exam officers informed at all stages;
- identification and testing of candidates' requirements for access arrangements, with specialist teacher;
- provision of additional support — with spelling, reading, mathematics, dyslexia or essential skills, hearing impairment, English for speakers of other languages, IT equipment — to help learners achieve their course aims;
- management of extra time allowances.

Lead Invigilator/Invigilators

- collection of exam papers and other material from the exams office before the start of the exam;
- follow the guidelines as stated in the JCQ documentation;
- collection of all exam papers in the correct order at the end of the exam and their return to the general office;
- seating plans and attendance lists filed in the exam office.

Candidates

- confirmation and signing of entries;
- understanding coursework regulations and signing a declaration that authenticates the coursework as their own;

- aware of the malpractice issues surrounding all examinations and coursework – JCQ documentation.

Administrative Staff

- support for the input of data and support on results days
- ensure security of all incoming exam post to the building
- posting of exam papers
- exam notice board is up-to-date

2. The Qualifications Offered

The qualifications offered at this centre are decided by the SMT.

The qualifications offered are GCSE, A levels, Business & Technology Education Council (BTEC) Diploma, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and Oxford Cambridge and RSA (OCR) Nationals and Technicals.

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 June.

At Key Stage 4

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

At Post-16

It is expected that AS modules will be completed during year 12. BTEC & OCR Nationals / Cambridge Technicals are 2 year courses.

3. Exam Seasons and Timetables

3.1 Exam seasons

- Internal exams are scheduled in December, March, June and January
- External exams are scheduled in November (GCSE English and Maths), January (OCR Nationals), May and June
- All internal exams are held under external exam conditions
- IFS Tests take place at certain times of the year

3.2 Timetables

- The exams officer will circulate the exam timetables for both external and internal exams once these are confirmed and when any clashes have been resolved

4. Entries, entry details, late entries and retakes

4.1 Entries

- Candidates are selected for their exam entries by the subject teachers.
- A candidate or parent/carer can request a subject entry, change of level or withdrawal, but must discuss these matters with the appropriate head of subject.
- The centre accepts external entries from former candidates only.

4.2 Late entries

- Entry deadlines are circulated to heads of department via email.
- Late entries are requested by student, signed by teacher.
- Entries are put on the system once the student has completed the form and paid.
- List of late entries given to staff for checking.

4.3 Retakes

- Retake decisions will be made in consultation with the candidates, subject teachers and the heads of department (see also section 5: Exam fees).

5. Exam fees

GCSE initial entry exam fees are paid by the centre

NVQs are paid by the centre

AS initial entry exam fees are paid by the centre

A2 initial entry exam fees are paid by the centre.

BTEC initial registration and exam fees are paid by the centre.

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. However after the deadline the costs must be met by the candidate or department, depending on who made the request.

Reimbursement will be sought from candidates who fail to sit an exam or meet the necessary coursework requirements.

Retake fees for first and any subsequent retakes are paid by the candidates (see also section 4.3: Retakes)

Candidates must pay the fee for an enquiry about a result, if it is at the candidate's request. Departments may request an enquiry and pay for this, but this must be agreed by the candidate. (See also section 11.2: Enquiries about results [EARs])

6. The Equality Act, Special Needs and Access Arrangements

6.1 The Equality Act

- The Equality Act 2010 extends to general qualifications. All exam centre staff must ensure that the access arrangements and special consideration regulations and guidance are consistent with the law.

6.2 Special Needs

- A candidate's special needs requirements are determined by the SENCO and the educational psychologist / specialist teacher.
- The SENCO will inform subject teachers 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.

6.3 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 with the exams officer.
- Invigilation and support for access arrangement candidates will be organised by the SENCO with the exams officer.

7. Estimated Grades

The Heads of Department and the Heads of Subject will submit estimated grades to the exams officer when requested and in time to meet the exam board deadline date.

8. Managing Invigilators and Exam Days

8.1 Managing Invigilators

- External Invigilators will be used for exam supervision whenever possible. They will be used for all written exams.
- The recruitment of Invigilators is the responsibility of the exams office.
- Securing the necessary Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance for new Invigilators is the responsibility of the centre administration. Fees for securing such clearance are paid by the centre.
- Invigilators are timetabled and briefed by the exams office.

- Invigilators' rates of pay are set by the exams office.

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.
- Site management is responsible for setting up the allocated rooms.
- The lead invigilator will be responsible for all exams and will start and end exams in accordance with JCQ guidelines if the exams officer is not present.
- Subject staff should only be present at the start of the exam to assist with identification of candidates but must not look at the exam paper whilst in the room.
- In practical exams subject teachers may be on hand in case of any technical difficulties.
- Papers will be distributed to Heads of Department at the end of the exam session.

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.
- 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.
- Head of Year and Exams officer are responsible for candidates who are late for their exams, or do not turn up at all.

9.2 Clash Candidates

- The exams officer will be responsible as necessary for identifying escorts, identifying a secure venue and arranging overnight stays.

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.
- Any special consideration claim must be supported by appropriate 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. Controlled Assessment and Appeals against Internal Assessments

10.1 Controlled Assessment

- Candidates who have to prepare portfolios should do so by the end of the course or centre-defined date.
- Heads of Department will ensure all controlled assessment is ready for despatch at the correct time and the centre administration will keep a record of what has been sent when and to whom.
- Marks for all internally assessed work are provided to the exams office by the heads of subject and the heads of department.

10.2 Appeals against Internal Assessments

The centre is obliged to publish a separate procedure on this subject, which is available from the exams office.

The main points are:

- candidates may appeal if they feel their controlled assessment has been assessed unfairly, inconsistently or not in accordance with the specification for the qualification. Appeals will only be accepted if they apply to the process leading to an assessment. There is no subsequent appeal against the revised mark or grade awarded.
- appeals should be made in writing by 30 June to the Exams Officer & Vice Principal, who will decide whether the process used conformed to the necessary requirements. The Principal will be informed.
- the centre's findings will be notified in writing, copied to the Principal and recorded for awarding body inspection.

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 / by post to their home addresses (candidates to provide sae).
- Arrangements for the Academy to be open on results days are made by SMT.
- The provision of staff on results days is the responsibility of the SMT.

11.2 EARs

- EARs may be requested by centre staff or candidates if there are reasonable grounds for believing there has been an error in marking.
- When the centre does not uphold an EAR, a candidate may apply to have an enquiry carried out. If a candidate requires this against the advice of subject staff, they will be charged. (See section 5: Exam fees)

11.3 ATS

- After the release of results, candidates may ask subject staff to request the return of papers within the deadline dates of the results. Candidates are required to pay the fee for this service.
- Centre staff may also request scripts for investigation or for teaching purposes. For the latter, the consent of candidates must be obtained. Any scripts must be stored securely and not issued to students to take out of the classroom. All names should be deleted from the scripts.
- GCSE re-marks cannot be applied for once a script has been returned.

12. Certificates

Certificates are presented in person, posted (first class) or collected and signed for

Certificates may be collected on behalf of a candidate by a third party, provided they have been authorised to do so.

Certificates are not withheld from candidates who owe fees.

The centre retains certificates for one year after this time they are returned to the exam board where they are destroyed.

Appendix 1: Early Entry Policy - September 2013

As part of the curriculum review in 2010, SMT introduced an accelerated curriculum for ICT and Modern Foreign Languages. The intention was to introduce greater challenge for all and a much broader balanced curriculum with all taking a MFL option. Previously, languages had been optional and only two classes took it at GCSE. When languages were compulsory it had been hugely unpopular, particularly in Year 11 where students felt they had too many other exams to focus on. Additionally, this was against a national backdrop of a lack of support for this subject. The decision was also taken to accelerate (compulsory) ICT to spread the work load for students over Key Stage 4. This subject has always been hugely successful and our students are extremely ICT literate.

In the past 3 years, teaching in MFL has improved significantly and results have improved year on year. It has, however, become apparent that acceleration is capping progress and so de-acceleration is planned for the current Year 9. We feel that it would damage results further as well as student motivation to de-accelerate any sooner.

In Maths and English there has never been an accelerated curriculum. All students (except for students with exceptional circumstances) have continued with Maths and English up until June of Year 11. In 2012-3, the Academy took the decision to offer some early entry in Maths and to early enter all of Year 11 for the English January 2013 exam. This was because of the on-going concerns we have had about turbulent grade boundaries, possibly unreliable marking and also a lack of faith in the modular Maths exam. Students continued with both subjects and took their summer exams, progress and attainment was outstanding. During 2012-3 we took the decision to take the same strategy with the class of 2014, particularly as grade boundary turbulence seemed to be continuing and we felt this early entry (for some in Maths and all in English) would be very useful formative assessment.

In Science, given that the syllabus has not yet changed and the course is designed to be modular, not linear, we took the decision that an early entry for some exams in Year 10 (class of 2014 and 2015) would be useful in spreading huge exam pressure. Some of the class of 2014 are re-sitting as the change to grade boundaries has meant that they have not performed as well as we would have expected.

Following the unexpected announcement on the 30th September from Mr Gove, we are no longer entering any of our students for the English November entry. This is because they have not completed their controlled assessment and so this could not possibly be their best result. We are continuing to enter some Year 11 students for their Maths exam. This is where we believe that despite this turn of events, it is in the best interests of the students. This may have some, although very little, impact on the schools 2014 Raise Online. No student will take this as their only exam (unless there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances such as long-term illness or inability to continue in mainstream education).

In the current Year 10 (class of 2015), there will be no early entry for any components of GCSE science although the students have already completed some ISAs and we have concerns about the amount of terminal exams.

We are currently reviewing the early entry of ICT in light of curriculum changes.

In 2012-3, it was agreed by SMT and the Maths department that to improve the chances of our children to achieve to their best potential that we should for the first time consider an early entry policy. It was agreed that with the volatility of the exam situation (i.e. suppression in modular results in 2011 and 2012) that the Academy should consider early entry for some students with lower attainment on entry. It was agreed that this policy should raise aspiration for students, not cap aspiration and that students should understand that there is no 'stopping at C'. This policy was successfully applied and as a result of this (and other strategies) the progress levels in Maths were some of the best achieved by the department both in terms of expected and above expected. Attainment was also strong. Having seen the positive effect the early entry policy had on the motivation of lower ability students, the Academy made the decision in May to continue (for the last year) with an early entry option for the 2 bottom sets in Maths. Once again, students and parents were clearly told that the early entry was on the proviso that no students were to stop at C and that all would continue with Maths to gain their best possible result. On the 30th November, a press announcement was received stating that whilst the students can re-sit the exam, the first exam entry will count on the school's performance table. The Maths department are strongly of the opinion that pulling the students from the course of action which has been carefully thought out, planned and communicated and which has had a positive effect on student motivation (for those students who particularly find self-esteem in the subject difficult) would have a detrimental effect on the students and therefore their results. As a result, the school's position in the performance tables would be adversely effected anyway.

The risk to the Academy is two-fold, firstly in terms of the headline figure 5A*-CEM which is still the currency for parents. We need to establish what the possible impact of this could be (worst case scenario) and then consider whether this is a risk we are willing to take in the interests of the current Year 11 cohort. The second risk is in terms of the ROL. What might progress look like if we enter all our students as planned and where does that place us? Is this a risk worth taking given that we are probably going to be inspected before that ROL, however it could spark a subject inspection, given 2012 results, again on balance, do the interests of the current Year 11 outweigh this risk?

Things to consider to make the decision

- How many students were entered in November last year and out of these, how many gained their best result at that time?
- How many students are planned to be entered in November this year?
- What are the teachers' most recent predictions for this exam – both in terms of levels of progress and also C pass rate?
- How many of these students are predicted to gain a C in June – or how many of these students best case scenario would gain a C (i.e. what is our track record with these students)?
- Would we still think it was worth sticking to our strategy if we knew the students would not get the grades until the summer as well as us getting the 1st result as counting?

Is there a middle way?

- Externally marked 'Bradford mock'
- Entering the students who we feel it is the best strategy for – i.e. telling the students we have to review – i.e. I'll take the risk if I think you are serious about it – you've got the next 4 weeks to prove you are ready – i.e. pull at the last minute?