

## Resolving exam clashes

### Introduction

The recent re-introduction of linear assessment in GCSE specifications has meant that an increasing number of students are experiencing examination clashes. This can cause additional anxiety for the student(s) concerned and logistical issues for the school's exams office staff. However, there are some straightforward and relatively simple steps which each school should take to manage examination clashes.

Firstly, exams office staff and SLT should be aware of the rules and regulations regarding examination clashes. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) provide clear guidance in their [Instructions for Conducting Examinations](#) booklet (pages 10-12, sections 2.9-2.16), which state that an exam clash occurs when a student has:

- two or more examinations timetabled in the same session
- multiple examinations timetabled for the same day and the duration of these papers is **more than:**
  - 6 hours for GCE AS and A2 examinations including extra time and/or supervised rest breaks or;
  - 5½ half hours for GCSE examinations, including extra time and/or supervised rest breaks.

In the instance of two or more examinations in one session the school may:

- decide the order in which to hold the examinations
- give candidates a short supervised break between papers within a session

If the total time of two or more examinations in one session is more than 3 hours including extra time and/or supervised rest breaks you may conduct an examination in a later or earlier session within the same day (no paperwork required or prior permission needed from the awarding body) but 'clash' candidates must be adequately supervised.

If multiple examinations are timetabled for the same day (and the duration of exams is more than that specified above) candidates may:

- be allowed to take an examination the following morning, including Saturdays.

If 'overnight supervision' is to be implemented, the school must ensure that:

- candidates who take an examination on a later day than that published in the timetable must either be sitting examinations or under centre supervision from 30 minutes after the published starting time for the delayed examination until they begin their examination. This is to make sure there is no contact with other candidates.
- a member of centre staff or an invigilator is appointed to supervise the candidate at all times while he/she is on the premises.
- the supervision of a candidate on journeys to and from the school and overnight is undertaken by the candidate's parent/carer or centre staff. The school must determine a method of supervision which ensures the candidate's well being.
- the JCQ form Timetable variation and confidentiality declaration for overnight supervision is completed before the overnight supervision is to commence. (The form may be downloaded from the JCQ website)
- the parties involved (parents, candidates etc.) are informed that any infringement of the conditions governing overnight supervision arrangements may lead to the application of penalties and sanctions to the candidate's examinations taken in the relevant series, as detailed in the JCQ publication Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments: Policies and Procedures ;
- be satisfied that your arrangements maintain the integrity and security of the examination;
- all completed forms are kept and made available in your school/college for inspection until the closing date for enquiries about results has passed. (Forms must not be sent to an awarding body.)
- the relevant awarding body is informed immediately of any known or suspected contravention of the arrangements for overnight supervision of a candidate.
- The Headteacher/Principal is satisfied of any arrangement for overnight supervision of a candidate where necessary and accepts full responsibility for the security of the examinations throughout. This includes ensuring that all copies of the question paper used on the earlier day must be sealed in an envelope and returned to secure storage until all candidates at your centre have taken that examination.

You should also remember that an examination must never be taken on an earlier day than that scheduled on the timetable, and if candidates are taking an examination on a later day than other

candidates, all copies of the question paper used on the earlier day must be sealed in an envelope and returned to secure storage until all candidates at your centre have taken that examination.

To summarise, here are 10 practical tips for dealing with exam clashes in your school:

1. **Identify exam clashes as early as possible.** By using the *Exams Timetable Tool* (available on [The Exams Office](#) website) or your management information system, ask your exams officer to identify when examclashes will occur and the students that will be affected.
2. **Be clear over the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) guidelines for dealing with exam clashes** (see summary below). You must be aware of what you can/cannot do when an exam clash occurs. JCQ provide clear guidance over GCSE and GCE exam clashes – see sections 2.9-2.16 of JCQ's [Instructions for Conducting Examinations](#) booklet.
3. **Keep parents and candidates fully informed at all times.** Contact parents as early as possible once an exam clash is identified. Clearly explain the regulations in such instances and the measures you have put in place to support their son/daughter. Notify the candidate of the arrangements in writing, e.g. a letter with their individual timetable.
4. **Examinations can never be taken on an earlier day than that scheduled on the timetable.** This is the 'golden rule' when dealing with exam clashes.
5. **Discuss all options with the candidate(s).** Although school logistics such as rooming and invigilation are important, the needs of the candidate(s) should always come first. Would they prefer to sit all of the exams on the scheduled day? Identify which order would they prefer to sit the exams? How often will they require supervised rest breaks? How long should these last?
6. **Avoid overnight supervision if possible.** This adds anxiety over a longer period for the candidate(s) and in the age of social media is much harder to administer.
7. **Make use of a twilight session if possible.** This will provide the candidate(s) with time to relax and gather thoughts in between exams.
8. **Submit a request for special consideration** to the relevant awarding body for the final paper which is taken.
9. **Clearly identify the 'exam clash' candidate(s) in the examination room** and ensure that invigilators know what the supervision arrangements are for clash candidates.
10. **Have you considered Access Arrangements?** If a candidate is eligible for an access arrangement, then ensure that this is incorporated into your planning and is made available.

