

Reviewing your examination year

Although good practice in the reviewing of various aspects of teaching and learning is commonplace in schools, rarely is such scrutiny placed upon examinations. As a member of SLT, are you aware of how examinations are conducted in your centre, or how much is spent in your centre on examinations? Or how much was spent on late entry fees?

The case for conducting a review of examinations does not solely rest upon the need to ensure financial efficiency. Senior leaders should also be aware of what has worked well, what hasn't, and whether the exams officer within their school/college is supported in implementing the raft of assessment changes which have taken place in recent years, and will continue to do so until summer 2019 at the very least. A review will also help you to ensure that best practice is followed which in turn will create the best possible 'exams environment' for your students.

The cost of administering and delivering examinations varies across centres, however, for a cohort of 200 students, the cost of a GCSE exam series will be approximately £60,000. That figure doesn't include invigilation costs, the exams officers' salary, and the cost of appeals and enquiries. Nor does this take into account AS/A-level examinations and vocational qualifications. Factors all these costs into your exams budget, and the figure for conducting examinations is easily into six figures.

The importance of reviewing, and improving, the processes associated with the administration and management of examinations should be seriously considered by all schools/colleges. Even though there is no stipulation to conduct such a summary, *The Exams Office* recommends that all schools/colleges conduct an '*End of year examination review*'.

So, what should be included in your '*End of year examination review*'?

Firstly, the purpose of your review should be clear – that is to provide senior management with an overview of the exam year, highlighting what went well and what could be developed/improved in terms of exams management and administrative processes. With the input of your exams officer, any risks within the system should be identified.

This review could also inform your exams policy and contingency planning – policies which are required by the Joint Council for qualifications – whilst also detailing exactly how the exams budget was spent.

Assessing your exams processes may also help you to report on the performance management and professional development plans of your exams officer/exams office team

With regard to particular areas which should be included within your examination review, you should comment upon the following:

Planning for examinations

- Qualifications data collection – which staff did/did not provide timely and accurate information as request?
- Access arrangements – were the roles/responsibilities confirmed between your SENCo and Exams Officer? Was the appropriate evidence of need and normal way of working to support

access arrangement requirements for individual candidates submitted in an accurate and timely manner by your SENCO?

- Controlled assessment/Coursework – was this administered and undertaken in line with JCQ and awarding body regulations?

Making examination entries

- Entry processes and internal entry deadlines – how were these communicated to staff? Which members of staff/departments failed to meet these deadlines, and what was the subsequent cost?
- Checking candidates' entries – what was the process for checking that the correct entries had been made?
- Making changes to examination entries – were all changes made to exam entries within the deadlines stipulated by awarding bodies? If not, what was the cost of making these changes?

Pre-examination

- Access arrangements – were applications made to the 'Joint Council of Qualifications' (JCQ's) deadlines?
- Were candidates aware of the arrangements which were in place for them?
- Invigilation – how were invigilators recruited and trained? What was the cost of deploying invigilators?
- Were there any issues with exam rooming and timetabling? Were additional rooms required to support access arrangements candidates?
- Were there any 'clash candidates'? – If so, how were they supported?
- What was the process for briefing candidates and staff (and parents?) on exams timetables and the rules and regulations as set out by the JCQ?
- Were exam papers and materials stored securely at all times, with receipt and tracking logs used to maintain the integrity of the examination?
- Were teaching staff made aware of the process and deadline dates for Controlled assessment/coursework marks and sample submission?

Examination days

- Were all exams run in accordance with [JCQ's instructions for conducting examinations](#)?
- Was an incident log provided for every exam room for any irregularities to be recorded by invigilators? Was the information recorded followed-up with the appropriate action? For example, candidates arriving very late, instances of malpractice, or the application of special consideration?

- What was the outcome of the JCQ inspection? Were any areas identified as in need of improvement?

Results and post-results

- Were results issued in accordance with [JCQ release of results](#) information/guidance?
- Provide a summary of Post-results services application, including the number of grades which were altered and the total cost for using the various awarding bodies' Post-results services
- When are certificates due to be disseminated to candidates?
- What is the policy for uncollected certificates?

Evaluation

- Feedback – send feedback forms to the following to acquire their thoughts on the administration and management of examinations:
 - Teaching staff
 - Invigilators
 - Candidates

Please note that these forms are available from [The Exams Office website](#)

Conducting a review of your examination year is not a straightforward task, neither is it one which should be solely undertaken by your exams officer. Yes, they should feed into this review, but ownership lies with the SLT. It may also be presented to your headteacher and Board of Governors for approval.

Such a review not only eliminates financial waste, but it can also reduce risk within your examination process and ensure that your school/college approaches the new academic year with robust examination processes in place which will help your students achieve their academic potential.