

## Preparing for the summer 2017 exams series – Last minute preparations...

**With less than a fortnight to go to the start of the exams series, I am calm, controlled and confident...even if something unexpected happens, because I have planned for every eventuality...unless something new crops up which I have never experienced before!**

So, it is nearly upon us – the 2017 exams series. This is the time when I get asked the ‘old chestnut’: ‘This must be your busy time of year? So what do you do when exams aren’t taking place?’....as if the entries, invigilator training, timetabling, policy writing, seating plans, rooming, access arrangement applications etc. were completed by someone else! Anyway, at least my SLT have stopped asking that question after they attended a training event from '[Exams Training](#)' (which is '*The Exams Office's*' training partner). My Deputy Head returned from the course admitting that she never realised how much work and responsibility I carried, and – wait for it – ‘How can I help you?’....it was like music to my ears!

As you can imagine, I highly recommend that you encourage your SLT/Line Manager to attend the [training course](#) during the 2017/18 academic year...the delegate rate is discounted to just £145 for members of '*The Exams Office*'.

I must admit that the summer exams series is my favourite time of the school year. No, I’m not going crazy! This is when my planning comes to fruition. It is the time when my contingency plans are tested...and pass the test! This is the time when I am seen as ‘doing my bit’ for the school – the candidates, the staff and the parents. During the rest of the year, my work may not be as visible, but during an exams series, everyone can see how I prepare meticulously, and how everything I do plays a part in helping our candidates and school to succeed. I care deeply about our candidates and now I can prove it.

So, with less than two weeks to go until the first timetabled exam, prior to the first exam, I will be implementing my final checklist, this includes a range of tasks.

Firstly, I sort question papers and exam materials into date and session order which enables me to quickly and accurately check against our master exam timetable and to ensure all materials have arrived prior to exam dates.

If any erratum notices arrive, I affix them to the relevant sealed question paper packet(s) to ensure they will not be overlooked at the time of the exam.

I will also be checking my secure storage against '*The Exams Office's*' '[Secure storage checklist](#)' to help me confirm that our secure room and secure storage is in line with JCQ requirements.

I will also be undertaking a final check of attendance registers, storing them safely, in date and session order for ease of access and daily preparation for exam sessions. If I make any amendments to final entries I will update the relevant attendance register and confidentially destroy the original and replace with the update.

In line with my contingency plan, I will be drawing up a checklist of key tasks to be undertaken each exam day and reminders for invigilators and my line manager of how to deal with unplanned events that may arise on a daily basis.

'The Exams Office' have produced an excellent free-to-download '[Exam day checklist](#)' which I will be using to help me set up each exam in accordance with JCQ guidelines and to deal with a range of emergencies and irregularities which may occur during an examination.

I have printed off my 'exam room incident logs' (from '[The Exams Office website](#)') and have made sure that my line manager has arranged a process for identifying candidates in exam rooms – we have a member of SLT present before each exam to fulfil this JCQ requirement. I've included this in my exam policy.

My line manager is also aware that the JCQ centre inspection will take place (unannounced) and that the inspector will report on a range of areas. If I am not at school, then at least someone is aware of what needs to be done, and this is another 'item on my agenda' when I meet with my SENCo.

I will also liaise with my SENCo over access arrangements to confirm that all paperwork and logistics are in place for access arrangement candidates and that candidates are aware of the arrangements that are in place for their exams and any exceptions where these will not be applied. We will compile a list of all access arrangement candidates and their support needs, something which I will also highlight to my invigilators.

An important part of my exams day planning will also include being prepared to deal with any last minute temporary or emergency arrangements.

My invigilators are fully trained – thanks to 'The Exams Office'. One of the founders of 'The Exams Office', Jugjit Chima, came to our school and delivered an [excellent invigilator training session](#) for my team of 20 invigilators at a cost of just £195. All Invigilators – including support staff working with access arrangements candidates – are clear on their role and the importance of following instructions – and they have a certificate to prove it!. The training emphasised the importance to all invigilators of what is expected of them before, during and after each examination.

I have checked that invigilation ratios will be maintained in all of our exam rooms, but I am also ensuring that I have a 'spare' invigilator – as well as the 'roving invigilator' – in case of emergencies such as invigilator absence or illness. I have also confirmed that sole invigilators are aware of how to summon assistance without leaving the examination room and without disturbing the candidates.

Next week, I am meeting with my line manager to confirm that everyone involved in the conducting of examinations is aware of how to deal with incidents of malpractice/suspected malpractice – my invigilators are already aware of the procedure. I reiterated the importance of recording what has happened, and wherever possible, the requirement to remove and keep any unauthorised material that a candidate may have in the examination to all invigilators, and will be highlighting what JCQ expects of SLT/Head of Centre in the event of malpractice/suspected malpractice.

One JCQ change which I have stressed to my invigilators is to reiterate and check – and ask candidates to check - that any additional loose sheets or additional answer books are inserted into their scripts and that fully completed cover sheets are also inserted into the scripts of access arrangement candidates, where a cover sheet is required by the arrangement, unless I inform them that an individual awarding body has issued different instructions.

Finally, I will also be planning for results day and post-results enquiries by ensuring that all candidates are made aware of the post-results services that will be available to them and our

centre's 'Internal Appeals Procedure'. I have prepared a standard form to collect enquiries/requests, acquire candidate consent/permission and relevant fees.

That's what I will be doing in the fortnight prior to the exams starting – not a lot is it?!

However, it is also important to plan beyond the summer exams series, and I am also looking ahead to the 2017/18 academic year and my professional development.

Last year, I attended [a training course hosted by 'The Exams Office'/'Exams Training' on JCQ changes](#) – it was very worthwhile. Thankfully, they are staging a similar course this September in five venues across the country.

At a discounted delegate rate of just £145 (our school budget has been 'tightened' so we can't afford to pay £255 for a course), this is a must-attend course as not only are the presenters of the highest quality, I am reassured that the information given is accurate and up-to-date. It's a great opportunity to meet and network with colleagues...and the venues and lunches are also great!

Whilst looking at the 'Exams Training' website I have also noted that there are [training events being held for new exams officers](#) in conjunction with OCR...once again, if you want training – and you are new to role – these are an excellent face-to-face induction to help you plan the academic year and get ready for any exams series.

So, until next month...good luck, and remember, that there is always help at hand if you experience any issues – whether it be from 'The Exams Office', the awarding bodies, local colleagues or those on social media via the Facebook group.