

Secure storage of exam materials – the regulations

Now that schools/colleges have made their entries for this summer's exam series, they will begin to receive confidential materials from the awarding bodies. These materials – which will include question papers - must be stored in line with strict requirements as set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

JCQ insist that examination materials must be stored securely at all times, and that centres demonstrate that the appropriate security systems are in place in order to prevent unauthorised access to confidential examination materials.

The secure storage process begins once examination materials arrive in your school/college. JCQ require centres to '...ensure that any envelopes/boxes containing confidential materials are signed for, with a log (ideally kept at reception) recording the delivery of confidential materials.' This log must include all awarding body deliveries and the number of boxes received.

Upon receipt and logging of examinations materials, they must be checked immediately and placed in your secure storage facility. If question paper packets cannot be checked immediately upon receipt, they must be locked away in secure storage until an authorised member of staff is available to make the necessary checks.

When storing examination materials in your secure storage ensure that question paper packets are arranged in timetable order as this will reduce the possibility of opening a question packet at the wrong time.

If confidential materials such as live assignments or pre-release information are required to be opened or distributed in advance of the examination, centres must make sure that a system is used for recording when material is taken from or returned to your secure storage facilities. *The Exams Office* have devised a [Tracking log](#) to help schools/colleges monitor the movement of this confidential material.

The storage of examination materials requires centres to consider two areas – the secure storage room and the secure storage unit – or the 'locked box in a locked box' as it is commonly known. Both of these areas will be scrutinised by the JCQ inspector during their visit.

The secure storage room must be for the sole use of examinations. It must contain examination related material and nothing else. This means that your secure storage room cannot house items or equipment such as an IT server, boiler, electrical units or any archive materials.

The walls to your secure storage room must be of strong, solid construction, and unless a wall is solid brick it must be reinforced with metal. A solid or reinforced door must also be

evident with strong secure/heavy duty hinges and a security lock/coded keypad lock/electronic security lock.

If the secure storage room has windows which are easily accessible, bars must be fitted or the room alarmed.

Access to this room must be restricted to members of staff directly involved in the administration of examinations, with 2 to 4 key holders - or 2 to 3 key holders if you are engaged in Cambridge International Examinations. There must be at least 2 keys rather than 1 key with 2 or more members of staff with access to it. Spare sets kept in a safe place – not where they can be accessed by members of staff who are not involved in exams administration.

If keys to the secure storage room are not kept on the key holder's person, they must be kept in a coded key safe which is only accessible to the designated key holders.

The secure storage unit within the secure room must also adhere to strict requirements.

Centres must ensure that they have a strong non-portable safe, non-portable security cabinet with multi-point locking system (a cabinet with thick heavy duty bolts in the door, not a slim internal bar) or a metal cabinet with full length external locking bar, bolted to the wall or floor. If centres use a filing cabinet this must be supported with a full length locking bar that runs the entire length of the centre of the cabinet. Centres wishing to use a small safe must ensure that this is fixed securely in place.

The importance of secure storage of written question papers and any other confidential material must not be underestimated. Such a focus on maintaining the integrity of each examination is one of the reasons why our examination system is respected across the world, which in turn ensures that the qualifications gained by our students are valued at home and abroad. *The Exams Office* has produced a free-to-download '[secure storage checklist](#)' on their website to help schools/colleges conduct a self-assessment of their secure storage.

The above guidance is taken directly from the JCQ's [Instructions for Conducting Examinations](#) booklet (page 5, section 1.3), and their supplementary '[Conditions for storing confidential exam material 2016-17](#)' document.

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