

July 2018

This month's blog is written by Marcia Woods, Exams Officer at Brookfield Community School, Chesterfield with advice on how to manage special consideration applications and preparing for results day(s)

The end of the academic year is fast approaching...but there is still plenty to do for Exams Officers

Happy end of the GCSE and A-level exams! Please note that I have not said happy end of the exams season as I know that many of you have now moved on to running internal, end of year, mock exams. At my school, we hold our mock exams in the fortnight before the public exams begin; this makes it a very long hard few months. But we must all nearly be there ... and looking forward to a well-earned summer break.

I have really enjoyed being able to pass all the spare exam scripts on to subject departments and put away the exam boxes and clocks. I can almost see my desk!

However, now I have moved on to the very important job of processing special consideration applications that I have gathered together over the exam weeks. The regulations and guidance concerning requests for special consideration can be found [here](#), and this document explains the types of difficulties for which we can request special consideration, signposting to the exam board websites as most applications can be made via an online system. Although there is a deadline for applying for special consideration, I usually wait until after a student has finished all their exams before I make an application. I do this because not only will I have had time to gather evidence of need – for example a note from a health professional, a completed self-certification form (Form 14 available from the JCQ website), a signed note from a Head of Year or parent in the case of a recent bereavement or other domestic issue – but if the special consideration is for an on-going circumstance, such as a recent bereavement, one application can be made for all the exams taken by a student for an exam board, which makes life a much easier. I still remember the days of hand written paper applications posted off to the boards – now that was time consuming!

When I am alerted to a possible case for special consideration I usually print out a copy of the student's exam timetable and make a note at the time beside the exams that have been impacted, for example 'absent due to ill health', or 'invigilator observed severe hay fever'. When I have made an application for special consideration I keep a print out of the confirmed application along with file notes and any other evidence I have collected until after the deadline for reviews of markings has passed in case it is requested by an awarding body.

Now is a useful time to review the summer exams season – to steal some of my teaching colleagues' terminology – 'What Went Well...' and 'Even Better If...'. The Exams Office's [summer exams weekly report template](#) is a really useful framework to use if you are completing a review.

I will also be emailing my team of invigilators to thank them for all their hard work this summer and to flag up our next update meeting which usually takes place on the first INSET day in September and covers safeguarding training and other whole school issues.

The final major set of tasks for July are associated with preparing for the results days in August. I aim to get as much in place as possible before I break up for the end of the summer term. These are the issues on my list and hopefully they might act as a prompt to help you to make your results days run smoothly:

- Prepare stationery – envelopes and labels for each student. I will also need to get special headed notepaper printed for results slips as the footer to our normal notepaper is not compatible with the print outs from Exams Organiser on SIMS.
- Write a covering letter to go in the envelope with results. For A-level students we have a letter which explains the various options for ordering photocopies of scripts or making enquiries about results. In the past we have put up lots of posters advising GCSE students to speak to the exams officer or a member of SLT for advice if they do not think a result is what was expected, this year I might include a letter with their results too, although it is a fine line between informing students and parents and encouraging spurious EARs.
- Post-results services – I am planning to create a document using the The Exams Office's [deadlines, fees and charges template](#) so that I have all the information in one place. Having drawn post results services and support to the attention of our students before they took their exams, I am planning to put a copy of this document on our school website, so students/parents will have the information to view.
- Check arrangements for results download and results days – when will I be able to get in to school, who will let me in?
- IT support: check with that our IT technician will be in school to support me on the download Wednesdays, have MIS updates been installed and are they running correctly?
- Check the embargos on MIS regarding results – only the Head of Centre and staff judged by them as needing to see the results should see them before results day Thursdays.
- How will our students collect their results? We ask students to collect in person, or provide an SAE or note signed by them giving a third party permission to collect results. We do not give results out by phone or email, but your centre might be different.
- Ask for staff volunteers to distribute results to students on the day.
- Establish what results information I will need to provide to teaching staff/the data manager and how that will be disseminated.
- Ensure that all my log-ins for online results services are working.
- Plan what information might need to be sent to our Local Authority or other parties but note this information CANNOT be sent to third parties before 9.00 am on results Thursdays.

This list is a snapshot of what my plans are, but there is plenty of other information available on the [The Exams Office website](#) regarding results and post-results along with document templates so it would be well worth having a bit of a browse over a cup of tea – now that you may just have enough time to drink one in peace!

I am really looking forward to The Exams Office Conference in London on 2 July 2018 and meeting up with some fellow exams officers; I haven't attended a summer conference before as I am based quite a distance away. This year my sister (who lives near Gatwick) has invited me to her 40th wedding anniversary celebrations on the weekend before the conference, so travelling via London on my way home has worked out very well. My sister - a retired Maths teacher - is an invigilator at her old school now and I just know that we will while away the hours discussing exam procedures!!

I wish you all a restful summer break and successful results days.