

**March 2018**

## **Planning for the summer exam series is underway**

### **The 'pre-exams period'...when you begin to plan for a successful summer exam series**

If you follow the 'exam cycle', March is the month when we enter the 'pre-exams' period for the summer exams series.

So, what do you need to focus upon during the 'pre-exams' period?

Firstly, be aware that there may be some outstanding tasks from your **exam entries** such as amendments, withdrawals, ensuring confirmation of your entries is correct (and acting immediately if any discrepancies are identified), and acting upon warning reports from the awarding bodies...not to mention late entry information which you may receive. *The Exams Office* suggest that you inform SLT of all late entry fee costs to ensure that these are avoided in future.

It is a good idea to download our '[Deadline for entries, fees and charges](#)' document and forward this to your SLT and Heads of Department so they are clear over when late, and higher late, entry fees apply.

The preparation you undertake in the coming weeks will go a long way to ensuring a successful summer series...many experienced exams officers find the exams period one of the least stressful periods of the year – this is due to the hard work, planning and organising which is undertaken during the 'pre-exams' period.

So, what is there to do in March...? Firstly, if applicable, complete tasks for **other exam series**.

If you have been involved in **November examinations**, check that copies of scripts to support teaching and learning where applied for through the Access to Scripts Service have been received and distributed as required.

For the **January exam series**, you will be managing results day – and all of the associated tasks. See our '[Guide to Managing Results and Post-Results](#)' for excellent hints and tips.

Onto the **summer exams series**, and finalising exam preparation.

Now that exam timetables can be produced from your MIS system, ensure that all candidates are aware of the dates/times of their exams/assessments and organise an '**exam briefing/assembly**' where you (or your SLT) highlight the JCQ rules and regulations, as well as general expectations of all students when sitting their examinations. You should also highlight the role of invigilators and the

importance of following their instructions. It is a good idea to disseminate a '[Candidate Exam Handbook](#)' which should be read by candidates and parents – *The Exams Office* have produced a template which serves as an excellent starting point in devising such a document.

With entries made, you will begin to receive **confidential materials** from the awarding bodies – check that you have a process in place to [record the delivery of these confidential exam materials](#). Once received, you should check immediately that you have received the correct exam papers and materials from the awarding bodies. If there is an error, contact the relevant awarding body immediately. You will also need to create a [tracking log](#) (or download a template from *The Exams Office*) to record the movement of exam materials such as pre-release information.

If not already completed, you must **prepare your invigilators** for the summer exam series. You must train your new invigilators and hold an update meeting for existing invigilators. The JCQ have provided additional guidance relating to invigilators for the current academic year – including retaining a [record of the training given to invigilators](#) (*The Exams Office* have produced a template). For full details see page 17 of the JCQ's [Instructions for Conducting Examinations](#) document.

You should continue to **liaise with your SENCo** in relation to the management of access arrangements. Clearly define roles and responsibilities. Some of the questions you should be asking your SENCo include:

- How many candidates have access arrangements?
- What type of access arrangements will need to be delivered?
- Which rooms will be utilised?
- How many invigilators/roving invigilators will be needed?
- Has training been organised/delivered for facilitators (readers, scribes etc.)?
- What is the process for candidates with emergency access arrangements (broken leg/arm etc.)?

If you have made entries for a **private candidate(s)**, ensure that you confirm final exam information to the candidate well in advance of the exam period – see the information on [Private Candidates](#) on *The Exams Office* website.

Clarify your role and the awarding body processes/instructions that must be followed for **non-examination assessments** as windows of assessment may now/soon be open for non-timetabled components of certain qualifications such as GCE MFL speaking tests. Moderator visits may also be taking place, and therefore, it is important that you are aware of your role in the process – it may be that you are not involved.

Regarding wider **internal assessments**, identify awarding body processes for administering internal assessment. You need to determine how and when teachers' marks and samples of candidates' work should be submitted for moderation – deadlines for some subjects may fall in March).

If you want to get ahead of the 'pre-exams checklist', you should also consider the following areas which will need to be addressed or completed prior to the summer exam series:

- **Timetabling** – ensure your centre's master timetable is finalised, and issue individual candidate timetables if not already done so.
- **Rooming** – organise all rooms, conduct a floor-walk on the days exams are taken in a room/area of your centre
- Seating plans – devise and check these with the SENCo and Head of Year to identify and resolve any potential issues
- **Access arrangements** – inform candidates of the access arrangements that are in place for them and how these will be managed. Pre-prepare candidate cover sheets where required in readiness for exam time
- **Irregularities** – research and understand how to deal with late and very late arrivals
- **Absent candidates** – identify your centre's policy for dealing with candidates who are absent from an exam
- **Emergency evacuation** – ensure that both you and your invigilators are aware of dealing with a potential emergency evacuation of the exam room
- **Identifying candidates** – confirm your centre's written procedure for identifying candidates in the exam room
- **JCQ inspection** – research and understand centre inspection(s) – see *The Exams Office* website for information
- **Dispatch of scripts** – ensure that all arrangements for the dispatch of exam scripts are confirmed in advance of the exam period
- **Exam contingency plan** – Check your centre's plans/procedures to identify for what will need to happen in the event of any major disruption/threat/risk during the exam period

***There is information on all the above areas on [The Exams Office](#) website***

So, whether you view it as the calm before the storm, or an opportunity to plan ahead to ensure a smooth summer exam series, March and April are the moths of the main 'pre-exams period'. This is when Exams Officers need to invest the time and hard work to ensure a successful summer exam series.