

May 2018

A message from Ofqual to all exams officers

Recognising the importance of the Exams Officer role

The first exams of the 2018 GCSE, AS and A level summer series start on 14 May. But, of course, for exams officers the preparations started long ago.

At Ofqual we recognise the pivotal role exams officers play in making the summer exams series a success. Thanks for all you have done so far in preparation and for all you will do in the weeks and months ahead. It was a pleasure for me and several colleagues to meet so many of you at the Exams Office's conferences earlier in the year, when we heard more about your preparations for the summer exams and some of the issues you typically face.

In 2017, some 14.1 million GCSE, AS and A level exam scripts were written by about 1.4m students who between them took almost 2,200 exams. In the autumn some 6.6 million certificates were issued.

The 2018 series will be an equally huge operation. In most schools and colleges arrangements will all go to plan. Students will take the right exams at the right times, following the exam boards' rules, supported by their exams officers and their teams of invigilators.

The Ofqual 'summer team' meets daily in the lead up to, and during, the exams and until results are released. We look at the issues reported to us by exam boards or by others who are concerned about the way an exam has been conducted. We also monitor social media. Naturally, our focus is on a relatively small number of cases where things don't go so well. Our wish is that all students have a good exam experience and that they are treated fairly. Sometimes, however, things happen with the administration of the exam that will inevitably upset students and might affect their results.

The following checks can avoid some types of problems we see:

- Please check and check again before opening any exam package, that it's for the right day and the right time. The JCQ requires that two people check an exam package before it is opened – this is for good reason.
- Check that students who are not taking the exam when scheduled, usually because of a timetable clash, are properly supervised at all times and have no access to a mobile phone or other form of communication.
- Check students do not have mobile phones with them when they are taking an exam. Help them understand they can't keep their phone with them just because they've switched it off and that they could lose marks or be disqualified from the exam altogether if they keep their phone with them. We

know from talking with students that some worry their phones will not be safe if they hand it in. Please reassure them.

We have [recently written to the heads and principals of all schools and colleges](#) to encourage them to support their exam officers to deliver a successful exam series. We have reminded them, too, of the simple checks that will help the 2018 summer series be success for their students.

I hope all goes to plan for you and I thank you again for the important part you will play in the success of the 2018 summer series