

November 2017

Dealing with exams series past, present and future...

As the Exams Officer at a rapidly growing school, plus during a time of change in the exam specifications, I really need to prepare now for an increasingly busy exam season next summer, so I have already begun to make endless lists and diary notes for 2017-18 academic year. This is in addition to dealing with the issues/administration from the summer series and preparing for November examinations. Who says that this isn't a full time role?!

Firstly, I need to complete the administration for last summer's exams series. For example, coursework will be distributed to teaching staff for safekeeping/destroying – this means a massive amount of shredding to be done!

Certificates usually arrive early November from the awarding bodies and need distributing to students. At my school, we ask that they are signed for, emphasising that they must keep them safe, which saves our valuable time spent chasing results for those who have lost them! Leavers are expected to collect them by a deadline, usually end of December, to allow those at university to collect their certificates.

Now that the June 2017 exams are well and truly over and done with, I can fully focus on 'November task'. *The Exam Office* have [termly](#) and [monthly checklists](#) which – even for an experienced exams officer like me - are very helpful in reminding exams officers of what needs to be done each month. The '*Exams Officer Handbook*', which I received at one of *The Exams Office's* recent [training events](#), also contains monthly checklists. All members will receive a hard copy of the 2018/19 version via post next October.

Looming large on the horizon are November GCSE re-sits, which will be the first week after half-term. I have a note to remind me that any special considerations have a deadline of 17 November for this exams series and even though we only have a few students taking these, the same regulations apply, so I will be familiarising myself with the [JCQ's Instructions for conducting examinations](#) booklet, and updates/changes for this academic year. The notable of these for me are the updated JCQ "no mobile phones etc" notice to display, which includes a warning relating to smart watches, and that watches must be on desk top not on wrists. I will produce candidate cards showing name and candidate numbers for identification purposes, and inspect all exam rooms using *The Exams Office's* '[Exam room checklist](#)' to ensure that everything is in place, such as a clock which is visible to all candidates, adequate lighting, heating etc. and that posters are displayed outside of all rooms. I am not using the rooms utilised for the summer exams series, so this check is carefully undertaken. I have already organised my invigilators and updated them on the changes in JCQ regulations.

I have liaised with my SENCO regarding access arrangements and we have checked that these are in place for those candidates sitting the November GCSE re-sits, and renewed applications where necessary if they are due to expire.

At this time of year we also have candidates undertaking Oxford/Cambridge Aptitude Tests/assessments eg HAT, PAT etc. I am preparing for these whilst awaiting detailed requirements and materials as appropriate from the relevant university.

I have completed and returned the [NCNR annual update](#) for my centre. The information provided is 'is used by the unitary awarding bodies to maintain centre data held in their internal systems' and all forms must be returned by 31 October. So, if you haven't completed and returned the NCNR form, I advise that you prioritise this task – as failure to do so may result in confidential exam materials being withheld from your centre.

As well as the November exams series, you may also be involved in the administration and conducting of mock exams. If so, these may be taken before, after or either side of the Christmas break. If are running these exams, it is good practice to conduct these in the same format as the external exams as it is great preparation for the summer series – for both you and your candidates.

Looking beyond the November exams series, I will also need to update our centre exam policies. I have 2 identical policy folders, one for my office and one for our Head of Centre. *The Exams Office's* [policy templates](#) are invaluable. They are updated on annual basis to incorporate all JCQ changes, and last year I was complimented on my folder by the JCQ Inspector who went over it in great detail. I amend the templates to reflect the practice which is employed in my centre, but they save me so much time and ensure that I capture all of the necessary information to ensure that we are complying with the JCQ's regulations.

So, what else is on my 'Things to consider now' list? Here's a glimpse...

- Will there be any changes to our secure storage? (If not you must inform JCQ who will need to inspect and approve any changes made prior to exam materials being delivered)
- Where will exams be held during 2017/18? This is very relevant for me as our school is embarking upon a programme of refurbishment over the next few years which may impact our exam rooms and we will need to be very flexible. Good communication with SLT and our maintenance team is particularly vital during this time, and a hint/tip for those new to the role - it always pays to show appreciation for the unsung heroes in your school, I always remember our maintenance office at Christmas and year end, they do appreciate tins of biscuits to go with their tea break!
- I will also be planning ahead for invigilation, keeping in contact with my 'regular' team, making sure I know if anyone is unavailable for the coming season, and that I have met with our SENCo to establish approximately how many scribes/readers we will need. I have set dates in the diary for

invigilator training – which is usually undertaken during April - and run this for the external invigilators that form my core team, plus, in partnership with my SENCO, training for facilitators of access arrangements candidates. As part of our contingency planning, we sometimes have trainee teachers and support staff such as laboratory technicians and administration staff who invigilate at short notice or during busy days. They also have to be trained. The [invigilator support materials/documents](#) provided by *The Exams Office* are invaluable. These include PowerPoint presentations (with trainer notes) and videos to focus attention upon specific areas of examinations.

The Exams Office have also recently trained an 'Exams Officer Support Team' who can come to your centre and run a [half day session for your invigilation team](#). Invigilator training is now compulsory in this year's JCQ regulations and they will ask to see evidence to support it when they inspect. This certificated invigilator training is very cost effective at just £195 for 25 or less invigilators.

Then if there is any spare time there is always the new June 2018 basedata ready to download.....!