



Welcome pack for **exams officers**

Your step-by-step guide
to becoming part of AQA's
exams officer community and
conducting our exams.

Welcome to AQA

Welcome to AQA, the most chosen general qualifications awarding organisation in England. We're delighted you've decided to join us.

We set and mark around half of all GCSEs and A-levels taken in the UK every year.

We're proud to be an independent education charity with over 120 years of assessment expertise and knowledge. We invest any surplus we make back into education.

We've developed this guide to explain what happens now that you've become an AQA exams officer and are ready to start conducting our exams.

We'd love to hear from you. Get in touch with our team of exam experts and start a conversation or ask us any questions you have about exams administration.

Tel: 0800 197 7162

8am – 5pm Monday to Friday

Email: eos@aqa.org.uk

You can also [visit our website](#) for all the latest news, resources and support for exam officers.

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What makes us AQA?

We're the UK's leading awarding organisation. Our assessment experts create best-in-class qualifications which are recognised across the globe and accepted by universities worldwide.

But we're more than just an exam board. Our ethos and values are central to what we do and how we do it. We aim never to let a student down and believe that fair and inclusive assessment is at the heart of learning.

Many of our people started out in the classroom and some still teach part-time or volunteer as school governors.

By using our world-class research and expertise, we help define the assessment world. Through the expertise of our [Assessment Research and Innovation](#) teams we make sure that we're continuously improving the quality and reliability of our assessments. This work contributes to the development of assessment policy and practice, both in the UK and around the world.



“

It's a privilege to have been asked to be part of such a values-driven organisation, dedicated to providing high-quality qualifications and fair assessments to all students.

Colin Hughes
Chief Executive Officer, AQA

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Our history

1903

The universities of Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool establish the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) and become public exam providers.

1953

The Associated Examining Board (AEB) is established as a provider of the new GCE, with its first exams in 1955.



1985

The Northern Examining Association (NEA) is formed, made up of four regional northern CSE exam boards working together in equal partnership with JMB.

1992

JMB merges with NEA to form the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB).



2000

NEAB merges with AEB to create the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and becomes the largest exam board in England.



2012

AQA acquires Doublestruck, an educational technology company specialising in formative assessment and reporting products to support teaching.



2016

AQA acquires DRS, experts in data capture and electronic marking.



2022

AQA acquires assessment consultancy AlphaPlus, the platforms Blutick and Project Q and awarding organisation and end-point assessment organisation TQUK.



Introducing our Exams Officer Engagement team

Gemma Miller, Exams Officer Engagement Manager

I joined AQA in April 2024, and I'm responsible for leading our Exams Officer Engagement team. I've worked in the world of assessment and awarding since 2007, and I have a real passion for the exams officer role.

My team are unique in that they have all been exams officers before, which means they all have a strong understanding of what the role entails and its responsibilities. We're looking forward to working with you, and we hope you find the information in this guide useful and thorough.





**Vic Taylor,
Exams Support Advisor (North)**

Before joining AQA I spent 12 years in education – 7 of these as an exams officer. In my previous centre, I held a dual role, which means I understand the challenges faced by those responsible for more than one role. I am dedicated to raising the profile of exams officers and providing stakeholders with an opportunity to shape future developments. I am also keen to develop strong, professional working relationships with centres in the north.

vtaylor@aqa.org.uk



**Jon Edwards,
Exams Support Advisor
(Midlands and The Wirral)**

Before joining AQA, I worked as an invigilator at an independent centre (mainly private candidates), and eventually worked my way up to exams manager. Being disabled and struggling with my own mental health, I can empathise with how hard this process can be for everyone involved, no matter your situation. I am keen to work with you to give your students the best chance to succeed. You are appreciated and I am here to support you.

jedwards@aqa.org.uk



**Jo Lemon,
Exams Support Advisor
(East and North London)**

I have been involved in exams for 14 years and worked as an exams officer for an independent school from 2016 to 2024, conducting A-levels, GCSEs and international qualifications. I have the utmost respect for anyone who becomes an exams officer, and I am committed to supporting them and helping AQA develop new processes and procedures with the students, centre and the exams officer in mind.

jlemon@aqa.org.uk

**We'd love to talk to you.
Contact us at
examsofficerengagement@aqa.org.uk**



**Gemma Moody,
Exams Support Advisor (South
London and South East)**

Having worked as an exams officer in a large 11–16 state secondary school for five years, I know first-hand how challenging, yet rewarding, the exams officer role can be. Whether you are new in post, or an experienced exams officer, I am here to support you and your students, and I am excited to work in collaboration with you.

Gmoody@aqa.org.uk



**Sam Vowles,
Exams Support Advisor
(South West)**

Before joining AQA I worked as an exams officer for 25 years in FE/HE colleges and an 11–16 state-funded boarding school. I have lived the struggles and challenges that exams officers face and want to help make your AQA journey the best it can be, by listening to your feedback and ideas and by being your voice in AQA. I look forward to working with you and helping support you in your role.

Svowles@aqa.org.uk

**We'd love to talk to you.
Contact us at
examsofficerengagement@aqa.org.uk**

Your journey with AQA

As a member of the exams team for your centre, there will be key stages of the academic year where different tasks take place. We've broken these stages down for each qualification:



These stages will be supported by:

- systems
- training and support.

NB: If you join us as a new exams officer in the middle of the academic year, you will receive, in bulk, the onboarding materials so far. You will then begin to receive onboarding updates in line with our series process.

Step 1 – Planning and preparation

Planning and preparing for exams will help you deliver an exams session that runs as smoothly as possible.

Entries

Students need an entry for each subject they wish to gain a qualification for, which triggers us sending you the right number of question papers. Entries can be made via our secure extranet, Centre Services, or via your centre's Management Information System (MIS) by EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) file. To make entries, you'll need:

- basedata, if using EDI – this contains key exam information such as entry codes, exam dates and times, and exam durations. You can download basedata from our ['Make entries with EDI and basedata'](#) web page
- student information such as legal name, date of birth, gender, candidate number, UCI number and ULN, which can be found in your centre's MIS. If a learner moves from another centre to yours, they will need to use their original UCI number which can be obtained from the learner's original centre.

Access arrangements

Access arrangements such as extra time, a reader, a scribe, supervised rest breaks etc enable students with special educational needs, physical disabilities or temporary injuries to access the exams. Some of these need to be applied for. Please see the [access arrangements and reasonable adjustments regulations and guidance](#) and [instructions for conducting examinations \(ICE\)](#) for more detail.

Your special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) is the person that leads the access arrangements process in your centre, but you have an important role to play in administering them before exams and putting them in place during exams.

Exam preparation

Other tasks that will help your exam session be a success include:

- arranging exam rooms according to the regulations in the [JCQ ICE document](#)
- recruiting and training your [invigilators](#)
- ensuring students are aware of the regulations. JCQ have produced various notices and information for candidates that should be shared with them. These can be found in the [appendices in the ICE booklet](#) and on the [JCQ Information for Candidates](#) documents
- organising timetable clashes – if a student has two exams scheduled at the same time, you'll need to make alternative arrangements, which may involve moving one of the student's exams to an earlier or later session and organising supervision of the student to ensure they don't have any contact with those that have not yet sat the exam. See the [JCQ ICE document](#) for more information on clashes.

Management information systems

The majority of our centres use their Management Information System (MIS) provider to process learner information and complete their entries.

You can use these systems to produce your seating plans in readiness for the exam period, and many allow you to do this for your mock exams as well. Please contact your MIS provider for guidance on how to complete these tasks.

Step 2 – Non-exam assessment

Non-exam assessment (NEA) measures subject-specific skills that can't always be tested by timed, written exams.

This refers to parts of the specification that are marked by teachers and moderated by trained examiners.

- Marks for most subjects are now submitted using Centre Services. Marks can also be submitted by EDI.
- Samples for many of our subjects can be submitted online via Centre Services, using either the Digital Media Portal or Centre Marks Submission area (found on the 'Exams' tab). Information on how to use these systems can be found on our [website](#).
- Samples should be kept secure until the end of the post-results period.
- Every centre must have an NEA policy which a JCQ inspector will want to check.
- Students should be informed of their mark for their NEA work.
- Teaching staff normally need to complete a few forms to go with the sample. Any forms that need to be submitted with the sample will be detailed on the website.



Step 3 – Exams

Exam days are the highlight of the season – the days you have been working towards.

In addition to the JCQ general regulations and ICE books, you might find the JCQ Exam Day Checklist useful to support your readiness to deliver exams.

Sometimes exam days can be unpredictable; therefore, it is important to identify support within your centre.

Exam checklist

1. Conduct a second pair of eyes check when opening the paper packets and keep a log of this.
2. Ensure you read out the invigilator announcement (see JCQ ICE).
3. Place question papers face-up on desks before students enter the room.
4. Check identity of students.
5. Retain a seating plan to record where the students sit in the room.
6. Keep a record of key information, e.g. what time the exam started/ended, and any issues or incidents that occurred.



Step 4 – Results and post-results

Results are issued on the JCQ published dates. Our [results days page](#) on our website provides lots of useful information. We also have a [student page](#) for students, parents and other candidates.

Restricted release to centres happens on the day before the student results day, to allow you to prepare. Most centres access their results on their EDI systems via A2C. We provide results reports on Centre Services as well.

You can direct your teaching staff to ERA (Enhanced Results Analysis) on Centre Services for in depth information on results.

Post-results services can be requested from the student results day onwards. You must ensure that you have student consent for any post-results services.

You will receive your centre's certificates three months after results day. These show the final, confirmed results. These can be given to students as soon as received.

The JCQ have more detailed [information on post-results](#) services available on their website.



Systems

Follow the links below to learn more about the systems you will need to use as an exams officer.

[Centre Services](#) – our secure extranet

[Digital Media Portal \(DMP\)](#) – for uploading NEA files

[Centre Marks Submission \(CMS\)](#) – for uploading NEA marks

[JCQ Centre Admin Portal \(CAP\)](#) – for processing alternative sites, overnight supervision and access arrangements among others

[Enhanced Results Analysis \(ERA\)](#)



Training and support

We offer a broad range of training courses to help you develop your knowledge. You can find more about our offerings and what courses are available on our [professional development page](#).

You can also find a great deal of information on each aspect of being an exams officer on our [exams administration page](#). This page will help guide you to the information you might need, from exam preparation all the way to post-results.

We also run webinars in the lead up to exams. You can view webinars from past exam series on our [YouTube channel](#).

Below are links to our most viewed video guides, and you can find many more videos across a huge variety of subjects and processes.

- [Entries](#)
- [Centre mark submissions](#)
- [Results and ERA screens](#)
- [Post-results](#)

Keep an eye on our website for some exciting updates coming soon.



Network events

We know there is a lot to learn when you become an exams officer, but you have joined an amazing community of people who want to support you.

If you would be interested in becoming part of an exams officer network in your area, please contact us at examsofficerengagement@aqa.org.uk

Most network meetings take place two or three times per year. During these events, you'll receive updates from the boards and there will be an opportunity to share best practice and network with your fellow officers.



Glossary

We know that education is full of jargon. Below is a list of some key terms and definitions which will, we hope, help clarify things.

Access arrangements (AA) – adjustments that can be made to support a student with specific requirements in accessing an exam. These adjustments are called ‘reasonable adjustments’ and can include the use of assistive technology, breaks during an exam or specially adapted exam papers to support visual impairments.

Approved centre – centre approval from an exam board confirms that a provider or ‘centre’ has met a set of standards and has the relevant qualified or experienced employees and resources to deliver qualifications. Approved centres can be schools, colleges, training providers or sole providers.

AQA centre – a school, college or training provider with approval for delivering AQA’s qualifications.

AS and A-levels – following on from GCSEs, AS and A-levels usually take two years to complete during full-time study at school or college. The first year of study is known as the AS (Advanced subsidiary) level with the full qualification being the A-level (Advanced level).

Assessment policy – a set of goals, expectations or objectives linked to an assessment approach, set out in the form of a policy, documentation or guidance.

Awarding organisation – in the UK an awarding organisation or awarding body is an exam board that sets exams and awards qualifications such as GCSEs and A-levels.

Compliance – in an exams context, compliance refers to regulatory compliance or the act of conforming to a set of rules, policies, standards or laws relating to the creation and delivery of assessments.

CPD – continued (or continuing) professional development is the process of ongoing training and development. It allows teachers to carry on with learning relevant to their role and which benefits short-term objectives and longer-term career goals.

ECT – Early Career Teacher, previously known as NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher).

Entries – the numbers of students sitting particular exams.

Entry Level Certificates – also known as ELCs, are qualifications offered in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They sit at the Entry Level of the National Qualifications Framework and are pitched at just below GCSE level.

Exams officer – also known as exams manager or exams administrator, the exams officer is responsible for the efficient and effective running of the administration of all internal and external exams within a school or college, including liaising with staff, students, invigilators and exam boards, adhering to national regulations and guidelines and an annual budget.

Functional Skills – also known as FCSEs, are applied qualifications which allow students to demonstrate real-life skills across a range of subject areas.

GCSEs – short for General Certificate of Secondary Education. The GCSE is an academic qualification offered for a range of subjects in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Grade boundaries – the minimum mark you need to achieve a certain grade.

Invigilation/invigilator – to supervise students in an exam/the person with responsibility for supervising students during an exam.

Malpractice – any breach of regulations that apply to an exam or assessment being taken.

Moderator – a moderator is the person appointed to do ‘moderation’, which is an internal check on marking to ensure that marking criteria have been applied in a fair and consistent manner.

MIS – Management Information System. A school or college’s computer system that is used to manage student information, entries and timetables, for example: SIMS; Bromcom, Phoenix Gold.

Moderator – a moderator is the person appointed to do ‘moderation’, which is an internal check on marking to ensure that marking criteria have been applied in a fair and consistent manner.

National centre number – a five-digit number that all schools and colleges (centres) entering candidates into exams need to have.

NEA – non-exam assessments. These measure subject-specific skills or knowledge that can’t be

tested by timed written papers in an exam setting.

Post-results – a range of services offered to centres and candidates after the distribution of exam results, e.g. a clerical recheck or review of results.

Private candidate – also known as an external candidate, a private candidate is a person who enters an exam but is not enrolled as a student at the centre in which they sit the exam.

Qualifications – qualifications can be academic, vocational or skills-related and are grouped into levels. They show universities and employers the depth and breadth of your learning and what you're likely to be able to do as a result.

Reasonable adjustments – agreed in advance, these are changes to an exam (either to the paper itself or the conditions in which it is sat) which allow individuals with specific needs to access the exam.

Regulation – an official rule, or the act of controlling something.

Script – a candidate's answer to an exam paper.

Specifications – exam specifications describe the specific content areas of an exam and stipulate the number and proportion of items for each assessed competency.

Switching – the act of changing exam boards.

Useful links

Below are some links to websites you may find useful as general sources of information and support, and we would recommend signing up for their updates.

DfE – [Department for Education](#).

JCQ – [Joint Council for Qualifications](#).

Ofqual – [The Office for Qualifications and Examinations Regulation](#).

The Exams Office – [The Exams Office](#) provides training, conferences and support for a yearly fee.

AQA – the pages below on our website are visited regularly by our exams officers:

- [Entry codes 2024/25](#)
- [GCSE History entry codes](#)
- [GCSE Religious Studies A entry codes](#)
- [Post-results services – summary guide](#)
- [Key dates calendar 2024/25](#)
- [Dates and timetables](#)
- [Special consideration](#)
- [Access arrangements](#)

Contact us

Tel: 0800 197 7162

Email: eos@aqa.org.uk

Our opening hours are:

8am–5pm Monday to Friday

aqa.org.uk

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