Examinations Policy (Public Examinations)

Berkhamsted Schools Group

Berkhamsted Boys
Berkhamsted Girls
Berkhamsted Sixth

Revision and Terminology

Please refer to the School Policies’ Policy.

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Scope of this policy

1.1 to ensure the planning and management of examinations is conducted efficiently and in the best interests of candidates;

1.2 to ensure the operation of an efficient examinations systems with clear guidelines for all relevant staff

1.3 For the purpose of this document examinations refer to GCSEs, iGCSEs, GCE, HPQ, EPQ and University Admissions Testing (such as BMAT and the Oxford University entrance examinations).

1.4 It is the responsibility of everyone involved in the Centre’s examination processes to read, understand and implement this policy, which will be reviewed annually by the Head of Centre, Head teachers and the Examinations Officer.

1.5 The School operates two recognised Exam Centres for logistical reasons. The policy refers to both Centres.

2 Examination Responsibilities

2.1 Head of Centre/Principal

2.1.1 Overall responsibility for the School as an Exam Centre:

2.1.2 Advises on appeals and re-marks.

2.1.3 Reports all suspicions or actual incidents of malpractice (cf the JCQ document Suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments / follow the procedure as set out in the Cambridge International Handbook for dealing with suspected malpractice).

2.2 Examinations Officer

2.2.1 The Examinations Officer manages of the administration of public and internal exams More specifically, s/he:

2.2.1.1 Advises the Senior Management Team (SMT), Heads of House, Heads of Department and other relevant support staff on annual examination timetables and application procedures as set by the various examination boards.

2.2.1.2 Oversees the production and distribution to staff and candidates of an annual calendar for all examinations in which candidates will be involved and communicates regularly with staff concerning imminent deadlines and events.

2.2.1.3 Ensures that candidates and their parents are informed of those aspects of the examination timetable that will affect them.
2.2.1.4 Consults with teaching staff (usually Heads of Department) to ensure that necessary coursework is completed on time and in accordance with JCQ/Cambridge International Examinations guidelines.

2.2.1.5 Provides and confirms detailed data on estimated entries.

2.2.1.6 Receives, checks and stores securely all examination papers and completed scripts.

2.2.1.7 Administers access arrangements and makes applications for special consideration using the JCQ/Cambridge International Examinations Access Arrangements and special considerations regulations and Guidance relating to candidates who are eligible for adjustments in examinations.

2.2.1.8 Identifies and manages exam timetable clashes.

2.2.1.9 Arranges for dissemination of exam results and certificates to candidates and forwards, in consultation with the SMT, any appeals/re-mark requests.

2.2.1.10 Maintains systems and processes to support the timely entry of candidates for their exams.

2.2.1.11 Collects exam papers and other material from the Exams Office before the start of the exam.

2.2.1.12 Collects all exam papers in the correct order at the end of the exam and their returns to the Exams Office.

2.2.1.13 Produces spread sheets of examinations results at the reasonable request of the Vice Principal Education and/or Director of Studies.

2.2.1.14 Liaises with HoH regarding day-to-day issues which arise that may affect pupils' ability to sit an external examination.

2.3 Heads of Department

2.3.1 Provide guidance to candidates who are unsure about exam entries or amendments to entries.

2.3.2 Are involved in post-results procedures.

2.3.3 Complete accurately coursework mark sheets and declaration sheets.

2.3.4 Complete accurately completion of entry and all other mark sheets and adherence to deadlines as set by the Exams Officer.

2.3.5 Stores returned coursework and any other material required by the appropriate Awarding Bodies correctly and on schedule.

2.4 Heads of House

2.4.1 Provide guidance and pastoral oversight of candidates who are unsure about exam entries or amendments to entries.

2.4.2 Communicate with pupils and parents about information relating to examinations.

2.5 Head of Careers
2.5.1 Offers guidance and careers information.

2.6 Teachers
2.6.1 Submit candidate names to Heads of Department.

2.7 SENCO (see Access to Examinations Policy)
2.7.1 Identifies and tests candidates’ requirements for access arrangements.
2.7.2 Provides additional support — with spelling, reading, mathematics, dyslexia or essential skills, hearing impairment, English for speakers of other languages, IT equipment — to help candidates achieve their course aims.

2.8 Candidates
2.8.1 Confirm examination entries.
2.8.2 Understand coursework regulations and signing a declaration that authenticates the coursework as their own.

2.9 Administrative staff
2.9.1 Support the input of data.
2.9.2 Post examination papers.

3 The statutory tests and qualifications offered
3.1 The statutory tests and qualifications offered are decided by the Head of Centre. The statutory tests and qualifications currently offered are GCSE/IGCSE and A levels.
3.2 At Key Stage 4, all candidates will be entitled, and enabled, to achieve an entry for qualifications from an external awarding body.
3.3 At post-16, it is expected that AS modules will mostly be completed during Year 12, although this will change in 2015-16 with the planned A-level reforms Berkhamsted Schools Group’s response to them.

4 Exam seasons and timetables
4.1 Exam sessions
4.1.1 External exams are scheduled in May/June.
4.1.2 Candidates are roomed as appropriate with the Centre’s resources.
4.2 Timetables
4.2.1 The Examinations Officer circulates the examination timetables once these are confirmed.
4.2.2 Where examinations clash they are scheduled to run without breaks within the 3 hour session. This is to minimise security issues for the candidate and Centre.

5 Entries, entry details, late entries and retakes

5.1 Entries

5.1.1 Candidates are selected for their examination entries by the Heads of Department. A candidate or parent/carer can request a subject entry, change of level or withdrawal. The Centre does not normally accept entries from external candidates.

5.1.2 The school reserves the right, in exceptional cases, not to enter a candidate for public examinations if preparations have been significantly disrupted by prolonged absence (either unauthorised absence and/or due to prolonged illness). This decision will be at the discretion of the Principal.

5.2 Late entries

5.2.1 Entry deadlines are circulated to Heads of Department via email and post. Late entries are authorised by Head of Centre. Candidates presenting themselves for any examination for which the entry has not been sanctioned by the relevant department will, in addition to the Examination Board’s penalty fees be liable for a charge of £100.

5.2.2 Exam fees are charged once the entries are made. No refunds are made if a candidate is withdrawn. Late fees for changes/additions are charged.

5.3 Retakes

5.3.1 Retake decisions should be made in consultation with the candidates, parents, subject teachers and the Heads of Department. (See also section 6: Exam fees)

5.3.2 At the discretion of the Principal, pupils who have left the school are not normally allowed to sit their exams at school, unless at the discretion of the Principal.
6 Examination Fees

6.1 The following fees are paid by the candidates:

6.1.1 GCSE examination entry
6.1.2 AS examination entry (if used, from 2015-16)
6.1.3 A2 examination entry
6.1.4 Any other public examination entry e.g. EPQ, University entrance exams
6.1.5 Late entry or amendment fees
6.1.6 Retake fees for first and any subsequent retakes (see also section 4.3: Retakes)
6.1.7 The fee for an enquiry about a result (see also section 11.2: Enquiries about results [EARS])

7 The Equality Act 2010, Special Needs and Access Arrangements

7.1 The Joint Council for Qualifications uses the definition of disability set out by the Equalities Act 2010 using it cumulatively:

7.1.1 Identifying a physical or mental impairment
7.1.2 Looking into adverse effects and assessing which are substantial
7.1.3 Considering if substantial effects are long term
7.1.4 Judging the impact of substantial long term effects on day to day activities

7.2 Factors that might reasonably be expected to have a substantial adverse effect include;

7.2.1 Persistent and significant difficulty reading and understanding written material where this is in the person’s native language, for example because of a mental impairment, or learning difficulty or a sensory or multi-sensory impairment.
7.2.2 Persistent distractibility or difficulty concentrating
7.2.3 Difficulty understanding or following simple verbal instructions.

7.3 Special Needs

7.3.1 A candidate’s special needs requirements are determined by the educational psychologist/specialist teacher. The SENCO will inform subject teachers of candidates with special educational needs who are embarking on a course leading to an examination. The SENCO can then inform individual staff of any special arrangements that individual candidates may be granted during the course and in the examination.
7.4 Access arrangements

7.4.1 Making special arrangements for candidates to take examinations and submitting completed access arrangement applications is the responsibility of the Examinations Officer. Please refer to the separate policy Access Arrangements for Examinations.

7.4.2 Arrangements in place will be confirmed in writing by the SENCO to the parents of the candidate prior to the exam session.

7.4.3 Restbreaks range from 5% to 25%. They are awarded at the discretion of the exams officer.

8 Estimated Grades

8.1 The Heads of Department will submit estimated grades to the Examinations Officer when requested by the Examinations Officer.

9 Managing invigilators and Examination Days

9.1 Examination Days

9.1.1 The Examinations Officer will book all examination rooms after liaison with other users and make the question papers, other examination stationery and materials available for the invigilator. The Examinations Officer is responsible for setting up the allocated rooms. The Examinations Officer will start all examinations in accordance with JCQ / Cambridge International Examinations guidelines.

9.1.2 Subject staff may be present at the start of the exam but must not advise on which questions are to be attempted. In practical examinations, subject teachers may be on hand in case of any technical difficulties. Examination papers must not be read by subject teachers or removed from the examination room before the end of a session. Papers will be distributed to Heads of Department after 24 hours as per JCQ / Cambridge International Examinations guidelines.

10 Candidates, Clash Candidates and Special Consideration

10.1 Candidates

10.1.1 The Centre’s published rules on acceptable dress, behaviour and candidates’ use of mobile phones and all electronic devices apply at all times. Candidates may only bring analogue watches into the exam hall. They must be placed on their desk for the duration of the exam. Candidates’ personal belongings remain their own responsibility and the Centre accepts no liability for their loss or damage. Disruptive candidates are dealt with in accordance with JCQ / Cambridge International Examinations guidelines.

10.1.2 Candidates may leave the examination room for a genuine purpose requiring an immediate return to the examination room, in which case a member of staff must accompany them.

10.1.3 All candidates must stay until the end of normal time.

10.1.4 Extra time candidates may either leave at the end of normal time or remain until the end of extra time. (If a candidate with extra time has a difficult day due to clashes then the exams officer will discuss timing with the individual candidate and appropriate arrangements put in place).
10.1.5 Candidates are responsible for bringing all allowable examination equipment – no equipment is provided to candidates during exams. The candidates must bring in everything they need and replacements if their equipment fails.

10.2 Clash Candidates

10.2.1 The Examinations Officer will be responsible as necessary for identifying ‘escorts’, identifying a secure venue and arranging overnight stays. Where a candidate’s examinations exceed three hours in any one session according to the Board’s published timetable, a paper may be moved to a later or earlier session on the same day with the candidate remaining under supervision between examinations.

10.2.2 Where a candidate’s examinations exceed six hours (GCE) and five and a half hours (GCSE) in any one day, according to the Board’s published timetable, a paper may be moved to the following day with the candidate remaining under supervision overnight by a member of the school staff.

10.3 Special Consideration

10.3.1 Should a candidate be too ill to sit an exam, suffer bereavement or other trauma or be taken ill during the exam itself, it is the candidate’s responsibility to alert the Centre, or the examination invigilator, to that effect. Any special consideration claim must be supported by appropriate evidence within five days of the examination, and would usually (where relevant) include a letter from the candidate’s doctor. The Examinations Officer will then forward a completed special consideration form to the relevant awarding body within seven days of the examination. It is important to note that the school reserves the right to decide, on the basis of the evidence presented and in light of the guidance issued by JCQ / Cambridge International Examinations, whether to process an application for special consideration on behalf of the pupil concerned.

11 Coursework & appeals against internal assessments for public exams

11.1 Coursework

11.1.1 Candidates who have to prepare portfolios should do so by the end of the course or centre-defined date. Heads of Department will ensure all coursework is ready for dispatch at the correct time. Marks for all internally assessed work are provided to the exams office by the heads of subject.

11.2 Appeals against internal assessments

11.2.1 In accordance with the Code of Practice for the conduct of external qualifications produced by QCA, the School is committed to ensuring that:

11.2.1.1 Internal assessments are conducted by appropriately qualified staff.

11.2.1.2 Assessment evidence provided by candidates conforms to the requirements of the specification.

11.2.1.3 The consistency of the internal assessment is assured through internal standardisation as necessary.

11.3 Written appeals procedure
11.3.1 Candidates have the right to appeal to the School against the procedures used in internal assessments for public examinations:

11.3.2 The appeal must come in the form of a written request from the parent to the Head of Centre, setting out the grounds for the appeal.

11.3.3 The appeal can apply only to the procedures used in arriving at internal assessment decisions and does not apply to the judgements themselves.

11.3.4 The enquiry will normally be led by the Director of Studies or the Examinations Officer, provided that neither has been involved in the original assessment process.

11.3.5 The above will consider whether the procedures used for the internal assessment conformed with the published requirements of the Awarding Body and the ‘Code of Practice’.

11.3.6 The findings of the enquiry will be reported back to the Head of Centre who will formally report back to the parent.

11.3.7 Deadline for appeal is 2 weeks prior to the last exam in that subject for that exam session.

11.4 Records of the request for the appeal and of subsequent actions taken and decisions reached will be kept by the School for future reference should any Awarding Body wish to pursue the matter further.

11.5 The Centre is obliged to publish a separate procedure on this subject, which is available from the Policy handbook. The main points are:

11.5.1 Appeals will only be entertained if they apply to the process leading to an assessment. There is no appeal against the mark or grade awarded.

11.5.2 Candidates may appeal if they feel their coursework has been assessed unfairly, inconsistently or not in accordance with the specification for the qualification.

11.5.3 Appeals should be made in writing to the Head of Centre (or other nominee) who will decide whether the process used conformed to the necessary requirements.

11.5.4 The Head of Centre’s findings will be notified in writing, copied to the exam officer and recorded for awarding body inspection.

12 Results, enquiries about results (EARs) and access to scripts (ATS)

12.1 Results

12.1.1 Candidates can receive individual results slips on results days in person at the Centre or by post to their home addresses. Arrangements for the school to be open on results days and the provision of staff on results days are the responsibility of the SMT. The Centre aggregates at the end of Year 13 for AS grades, not at the end of Year 12.

12.2 EARs

12.2.1 EARs may be requested by Centre staff or candidates if there are reasonable grounds for believing there has been an error in marking. The deadline for EARs, as set by the Exams Officer, is final and non-negotiable.
12.2.2 Ultimately the decision about an EAR lies with the candidate. Candidates are advised that marks can go down as well as up and this may affect university entrance decisions.

12.2.3 Should under exceptional circumstances the Centre feels unable to support the candidate’s request for an enquiry about results, the candidate or their carer/parent may lodge an appeal in writing to the Head of Centre with whom the final decision rests.

13 Certificates

13.1 Certificates are presented in person. Certificates may be collected on behalf of a candidate by a third party, provided they have been formally authorised to do so. Uncollected certificates are posted by registered post to the address held by the school.