

Examinations Policy (including guidance re use of word processors)



Legislation and Guidance that inform this document

- Exams administration: information exam centres (DfE 2014)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Disability Discrimination Act (2005)

Statement of intent

Red Balloon aims to ensure that all students have access to an appropriate range of external accreditation and that all examinations are carried out in a professional manner.

Responsibility for Implementation

Each coordinator is responsible for ensuring that an appropriate range of external accreditation is available to students, and that examination procedures are followed rigorously. Each centre will nominate an examinations manager and an examinations officer (administrator).

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that:

- the planning, and management of examinations and external assessment processes are conducted in the best interests of students;
- all examinations and external assessment processes are conducted in line with national and examining body regulations;
- all those involved in all aspects of examinations and external assessment processes are familiar with their roles and responsibilities.

Each centre will have an examinations manager (this could be the centre coordinator) who is responsible for examinations practice.

Names and contact details of staff with specific responsibilities for examinations work (manager and administrator) are available from the centre administrator.

The examinations manager is responsible for ensuring that:

- all examinations and external assessment processes are conducted in accordance with national and awarding body regulations;
- an appropriate range of examinations and accreditation is available to students;
- students are provided with the opportunity to undertake all external assessments in an organised, well-controlled and supportive environment, enabling them to achieve their potential;
- students, parents, teachers and all relevant parties are aware of key dates and details regarding all course entries and external examinations;
- all results are conveyed to students, and other appropriate agencies, such as referring schools and commissioning agents;
- any access arrangements are applied for at the appropriate time - this should be done jointly with the member of staff who has SENCo responsibilities;
- a summary of student performance in external accreditation is sent annually to parents / carers.

The tasks involved in meeting these responsibilities may be delegated to other staff.

Each centre will identify a person to manage the administration of examinations (examinations officer) to include controlled assessments and the submission of coursework.

That officer will:

- maintain systems and processes to support the timely entry of students for their examinations;
- submit students' coursework and controlled assessment marks;
- dispatch and store returned coursework and any other material required by the appropriate awarding bodies correctly and on schedule;
- arrange for dissemination of examination results, any appeals/re-mark requests and certification;
- produce a timetable of examinations and ensure it is appropriately circulated;
- ensure any necessary information is added to the centre website;

- receive, check and securely store all examination papers;
- ensure all examination fees are paid on time.

All teaching staff will strive to ensure that students for whom they are responsible are given the best possible opportunity to succeed and to achieve appropriate external accreditation. Each member of staff will:

- liaise with the examinations officer and manager and inform them of any new qualifications being considered or offered;
- provide all necessary information to the examinations officer concerning entries, forecast grades and coursework;
- ensure that they are familiar with the relevant assessment frameworks and objectives for all relevant examinations;
- maintain accurate records of student progress to facilitate accurate prediction of results;
- ensure that students are well prepared for external assessments through long and medium term planning, regular monitoring and formative assessment and practice and intervention strategies;
- ensure that all examination entries and coursework or controlled assessment procedures are administered in a timely and efficient manner through accurate completion of coursework mark sheets and declaration sheets, accurate completion of entry forms and all other mark sheets and adherence to required deadlines (see later in this document re plagiarism);
- analyse examination performance data in their subject area(s) and review practice in the light of that analysis.

Invigilation

The examinations manager will ensure that a responsible invigilator is identified for each examination. The invigilator will:

- collect examination papers and other material from the examinations officer before the start of the examination;
- oversee the examination, in line with national and examination body regulations;
- take an accurate register of all students sitting examinations;

- collect all examination papers in the correct order at the end of the examination and ensure their return to the examinations officer;
- ensure that students do not have access to any information or support that is not specifically identified as being required or allowed for that examination.

In accordance with the requirements of The Equality Act (2010) and Disability Discrimination Act (2005), all staff must ensure that the access arrangements and special consideration regulations and guidance are consistent with the law.

Making special arrangements and arranging support for candidates to take examinations is the responsibility of the examinations manager.

Entries

Subject teachers select students for examination entries.

Students or parents may request a subject entry, change of tier or withdrawal.

Examination fees

Centres will pay all normal examination fees for students.

‘Special consideration’

Should a student be ill before an examination, suffer bereavement or other trauma, be taken ill during the examination itself or otherwise be disadvantaged or disturbed during an examination, then it is the student’s parent’s / parents’ responsibility to alert the examinations manager or the centre coordinator to that effect.

The student must support any special consideration claim with appropriate evidence within three days of the examination, eg a doctor’s letter. The examinations officer must then forward a completed special consideration form to the relevant awarding body within seven days of the examination.

If an unforeseen event affects the running of an exam (eg a fire alarm), this instance will be reported to the appropriate examining board and agreed action taken.

Controlled assessments

Controlled assessments are the responsibility of the teachers, who must ensure that:

- all controlled assessments are run in line with the relevant awarding body's regulations;
- any special arrangements are met;
- they complete the relevant mark sheets and ensure they are sent together with any other required items to the moderator;
- a comprehensive record is kept of what was sent, who it was sent to and when it was sent.

Teachers must provide the examinations officer with marks for all internally assessed work and estimated grades.

Coursework

The submission of coursework is the responsibility of teachers.

All coursework should be completed in line with the relevant awarding body's regulations.

Students should submit coursework before the deadlines given to them by teachers.

Teachers will complete and pass relevant mark sheets and samples to the examinations officer.

The examinations officer will dispatch mark sheets and coursework samples and keep appropriate records of all communications.

Appeals against internal assessments

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

Appeals should be made in writing to the examinations manager who will decide whether the process used conformed to the necessary requirements. The manager's findings will be notified in writing to the appropriate awarding body: subsequent action will be dependent upon advice from that body.

Plagiarism

Red Balloon staff will attempt to ensure that no student achieves an 'unwarranted' grade through plagiarism. There are many definitions of plagiarism, but they all have in common the idea of taking someone else's intellectual effort and presenting it as one's own. JCQ defines plagiarism as, "the failure to acknowledge sources properly and/or the submission of another person's work as if it were the candidate's own". Most usually plagiarism refers to copying from published texts whether these are in print or on the internet, but it can also refer to copying from manufactured artefacts, or essays or pieces of work previously submitted for examinations.

A strict interpretation of the term "work" in the above definition would include the original ideas, as well as the actual words or artefacts produced by another. However all work relies at least to some degree upon previous sources: only if the candidate has submitted an extensive and unacknowledged paraphrase (amounting to more than 50% of the total) of another person's writings will this be deemed as plagiarism / malpractice.

By virtue of its definition, plagiarism is restricted to those examination components where students undertake examination work in unsupervised conditions, such as coursework, pre-release work, or the compilation of research notes which can be used in the examination. It can also occur when candidates are permitted to annotate texts and take them into the examination room.

Copying from another student during an examination is not strictly defined as plagiarism, but necessary action (informing the appropriate awarding body) will always be taken.

Working jointly with other students is to be commended, *but* any eventual submission must be solely the work of the candidate or indicate clearly where collaborative working has taken place. Staff must ensure that this is the case.

All Red Balloon staff entering candidates for a qualification with a coursework component must accept the obligation to authenticate the work submitted for assessment. Staff must confirm that the work produced is solely that of the candidate concerned. Staff will not accept work which is not the candidate's own. If plagiarism is discovered prior to the signing of a declaration of authentication, the incident need not be reported to the awarding body; it may be dealt with internally. If discovered after this point, the awarding body must be notified.

Given the close working relationship between Red Balloon staff and students, it is expected that staff would quickly know (different style, unusual vocabulary etc) if work submitted is not that of the candidate ie has been plagiarised and must take appropriate action.

In order to reduce the likelihood of students resorting to such practice staff:

- should consider incorporating an awareness raising session on academic honesty when students begin examination courses;
- must ensure that where an awarding body has issued guidance on submissions, all students have been issued with (and internalised) that guidance;
- must ensure that each candidate understands the contents of any such guidance particularly the meaning of plagiarism and what penalties may be applied;
- should reinforce to a candidate the significance of their signature on any form stating they have understood and followed the coursework and portfolio requirements for the subject;
- should make clear what is and what is not acceptable in respect of plagiarism and the use of sources, including the use of websites... it is unacceptable to simply state 'Internet' as a reference, just as it would be unacceptable to state 'library' rather than the title of the book, name of the author, the chapter and page reference. It is similarly unacceptable to list search engines such as Google, Ask Jeeves etc - candidates must provide details of any web pages from which they are quoting or paraphrasing;

- should teach the use of quotation marks when sources are quoted directly (a suggested guideline for the need to put items in quotation marks would be the use of more than six words in unchanged form);
- should set reasonable deadlines for submission of work and provide reminders;
- should give time for sufficient work to be done in class under direct supervision to allow themselves to authenticate each candidate's whole work with confidence;
- should examine intermediate stages in the production of work in order to ensure that the work is underway in a planned and timely manner;
- should introduce classroom activities that use the level of knowledge/understanding achieved during the coursework thereby making the teacher confident that the student understands the material;
- could ask students to make a short verbal presentation to the rest of the group on their work;
- should stress to students and their parents/carers the penalties of malpractice;
- must take care to ensure that work undertaken in previous years' examinations by other students is not submitted as their own by candidates for the current examination - the safekeeping of such earlier work is of great importance, and its issue to candidates for reference purposes should be carefully monitored;
- must not accept, without further investigation, any work which they suspect has been plagiarised.

Use of a word processor during examinations

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body (external examinations) to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment.

A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements.

How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

The 'normal way of working' for exam candidates is that candidates handwrite their exams. For any student who normally / consistently requires the use of a word processor to support their studies in the centre, then the use of a word processor in examinations will be considered. A word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate because s/he now wants to type rather than write or can work faster on a keyboard, or because s/he uses a laptop at home. The use of a word processor in an examination will only be sanctioned where:

- this reflects the candidate's normal way of working within the centre;
- there is a firmly established need for such use;
- an approved access arrangement exists;
- the student would be at a substantial disadvantage in relation to other students were the use of a word processor not to be permitted.

The only exceptions to the above would be a temporary injury or impairment, or a diagnosis of a disability or manifestation of an impairment relating to an existing disability arising after the start of the course.

Whilst it is not possible to identify a definitive list of conditions that might lead to the need to use a word processor, the following are examples where usage will be agreed:

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly;
- a physical disability that makes writing in a legible form very difficult;
- a sensory impairment that impacts upon the ability to write by hand.

Essentially the need for use of a word processor will be indicated by a student's:

- inability to write by hand;
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand;
- exceptionally poor handwriting.

Those staff responsible for examination arrangements must ensure that permission to use a word processor does not compromise the assessment objectives of the examination. Thus the use of a word processor will be

considered on a subject by subject basis and may, on occasion, only be permitted for certain parts of an examination.

The use of a word processor is normally considered and agreed where appropriate at the start of a course. Students are made aware when they will have the use of a word processor for timetabled examinations and non-examination assessments.

Where the use of a word processor has been agreed, staff responsible for supplying the equipment must ensure that it is used only as a typewriter and not as a database. Although standard formatting is acceptable, any processor used must have been cleared of all previously stored data. Also any grammar checking or predictive text facility must have been disabled. Should a memory stick be required, then it must not hold any pre-stored information.

Staff invigilating the examination must ensure that the use of a word processor by one student does not have a negative impact upon the performance of others eg through sight of the screen or noise emitted by the processor.

Management of controlled assessments - specific staff responsibilities

Coordinator and examinations manager

The coordinator and examinations manager are responsible for the safe and secure conduct of controlled assessments. In meeting this responsibility they will:

- ensure assessments comply with JCQ guidelines and awarding bodies' subject-specific instructions;
- work with subject teachers to schedule controlled assessments...

and ensure that:

- clashes/problems over the timing or operation of controlled assessments are foreseen and resolved;
- all staff involved have a calendar of events;
- an internal appeals policy for controlled assessments is available.

Given the lack of a hierarchy at Red Balloon Centres ie heads of department etc, the coordinator and examinations manager will work with subject teachers to ensure that they are able to meet the responsibilities detailed below.

Subject teachers

Teachers may liaise within an individual centre or with colleagues in other RB centres, or, in the case of maths, science and English with the organisation's subject leaders. They must:

- decide on the awarding body and specification for a particular GCSE;
- ensure that marking is standardised internally;
- ensure that they fully understand their responsibilities with regard to controlled assessments;
- ensure they fully understand the requirements of the awarding body's specification, are familiar with the relevant teachers' notes **and** any other subject specific instructions;
- where appropriate, develop new assessment tasks or adapt sample awarding body assessment tasks to meet local circumstances, in line with the awarding body's specification and control requirements;
- understand and comply with the general guidelines detailed within the JCQ publication *Instructions for conducting controlled assessments*;
- understand and comply with the awarding body's specification for conducting controlled assessments, including any subject-specific instructions, teachers' notes or additional information on the awarding body's website;
- supply to the exams officer/administrator details of all unit codes for controlled assessments;
- obtain confidential materials/tasks set by awarding bodies in sufficient time to prepare for the assessment(s) and ensure that such materials are stored securely at all times;
- supervise assessments (at the specified level of control);
- undertake the tasks required under the regulations, only permitting assistance to candidates as the specification allows;
- ensure that candidates and supervising teachers sign authentication forms on completion of an assessment;
- mark internally assessed components using the mark scheme provided by the awarding body;

- submit marks to the awarding body by the published deadline, keeping a record of the marks awarded;
- retain candidates' work securely between assessment sessions (if more than one);
- post-completion, retain candidates' work securely until the closing date for enquiries about results;
- (in the event that an enquiry is submitted) retain candidates' work securely until the outcome of the enquiry and any subsequent appeal has been conveyed to the centre;
- ensure they are aware of any access arrangements for students and that those arrangements are carried out.

Exams administrator

Where confidential materials are directly received by the exams office, s/he is responsible for receipt, safe storage and safe transmission, whether in CD or hard copy format.

S/he will download and distribute marksheets for teaching staff to use.

Each centre will identify a member of staff who is responsible for ensuring that access arrangements are applied for in good time and that they are carried out appropriately. This person will ensure that all staff are aware of any arrangements made and that any equipment required is available in good time.

Risk assessment for controlled assessments

Each centre will carry out, and have available for inspection, a risk assessment utilising the template provided on the JCQ website (www.jcq.org.uk) by clicking on the exams office section and selecting controlled assessments from the drop down menu.

Results

Students will be notified (by email, post or in person - local arrangements will be made before students leave for the summer break) immediately results are published.

A summary of results will be posted on the Red Balloon Website.

Enquiries about results (EARs)

In any case where the subject teacher has reasonable grounds for believing there has been an error in marking, and the student concurs (the student's written consent must be obtained), the result will be queried. The examinations officer or manager will seek a 're-mark' at the centre's expense.

If a student wishes to challenge a result, but that wish is not supported by centre staff, that decision should be discussed with the student. Should the student still wish to submit an enquiry, s/he will be asked to pay the requisite amount to the centre before the EAR is lodged.

NB In those cases wherein the grade is raised, all costs will be reimbursed by the awarding body.

Certificates

The examinations manager will ensure that all certificates are presented or sent to students.

Policy updated April 2019 by Bob Sproson, Director of Education - for review Sept 2019.