

EXAM INFORMATION FOR PARENTS & STUDENTS

SCHOOL NAME: Outwood Academy Foxhills

GCSE and all other qualifications

Introduction

Examinations can be a stressful time for students and parents and it is important that all those involved are as well informed as possible. Well informed students will realise that the rules and regulations are designed to ensure fairness and minimise disturbance and it is in the interest of all that the exams run smoothly.

The school will make every effort to ensure that candidates receive the best possible preparation for their examinations, that the administrative arrangements run smoothly, and that the examinations are conducted in a way that will cause as little stress as possible and help students to achieve their best. Mock exams are run to the same standards and rules in order that students are familiar with the process beforehand.

This booklet is intended to inform about examination procedures, to answer some of the most frequently asked questions to help to guide and support students and parents through the examination process. If you have any other questions please feel free to make enquiries from the Exams Officer. You can contact the Exams office by telephone on 01724 292920 e-mail to enquiries@foxhills.outwood.com . On exam days it is best to contact the main school reception and leave a message, with the nature of your query, since the main priority will be the starting of exam sessions on time. On exam days the Exams Officer may not always be available even during the office hours mentioned above.

Who is responsible for the examinations?

The schools' Examinations Officer is responsible for administering all examination arrangements and for oversight of the exams process, under direct responsibility from the Head of Centre, the Principal. There is a team of adult invigilators who will be present during the exams at all times and who are supervised by the Exams Officer. The Awarding Bodies or Examination Boards set down strict criteria which must be followed for the conduct of exams, and the school is required to follow them precisely.

Who is entered for examinations?

It is school policy to enter every student who is being taught a subject, for the most appropriate level of exam. Only by exception, after consultation with parents, and with the written consent of the Vice Principal, will students not be entered.

Can students take holidays during term time?

Dates for exams are rigidly fixed by the Exam Boards and are subject to change until close to the time that students start study leave. The Examinations Officer will not give actual dates for exams to parents or students in advance, wishing to book holidays. Parents are reminded that they require the Principal's permission to take students out of school and they book holidays during term time at their own risk. It is strongly against good practice, careful preparation and school policy to take holidays in term time.

Coursework / Internal assessment deadlines

Most of the subjects have an element of coursework/internal assessment included in them which has to be completed, marked and assessed and the marks and work sent to the Exam Boards well before the formal exam sessions take place. The departments set deadlines that allow time for this process and to meet the board deadlines. These cannot be changed. Students who don't submit coursework on time will not be allocated a mark for this portion and their overall grade will suffer.

What arrangements are made for study leave?

Study leave begins for Year 11 students in May or June on dates notified by the school. After those dates students are only required to be in school when they actually have examinations.

What information will students receive about their examination entries?

When the entries have been entered on the schools computer system, students will receive an individual Candidate Timetable detailing the subjects and tiers for which they been entered. This should be checked and you are asked to inform the school if you believe there are any errors or problems. This document serves two purposes:

I. to check that all entries have been made and are correct

II. to ensure that the exam timetable has gone home to parents/guardians

Where will the examinations be held?

The main locations for written papers are the Sports Hall. Candidates are asked to be there 15 minutes before the advertised start time to enable seating procedures to be carried out efficiently, and to allow for any unforeseen room changes. They are asked to wait quietly outside until invited to enter. Where a candidate sits will be determined by their candidate number, which appears on all individual candidate timetables and the seating plan placed outside the venue. The candidate will sit at the desk bearing a label with their name and candidate number. This arrangement follows examination board rules and the school cannot change it.

How do I know when the date exams take place?

The main period for exams is from the start of May – until the end of June but some oral examinations and practical examinations will take place earlier. All candidates will receive individual candidate timetables, which will give them the dates and sessions (a.m. or p.m.) of the papers they are taking. They will also receive a school produced timetable of all GCSE examinations. This will include start times and the location of the examinations. The general timetable will be displayed in school and placed on our website and issued to candidates. It is helpful if parents make sure a copy of this timetable is available to them at home with their son's/daughter's exams highlighted.

At what times do the exam sessions begin?

The Exam boards dictate the permissible start times for exams. Candidates are asked to report no later than 8.15 am for morning examinations and 12.30 pm for afternoon examinations. The AM session starts at 8.30am and the PM session starts at 1.00pm. The length of examination papers varies and they will frequently not finish until after school has finished.

Parents/guardians should be aware of this and make appropriate arrangements for getting home. Students will not be allowed out of an exam early for any reason. Some students may also receive an allowance of extra time for the examinations and so their finishing times will be even later. Timings for some papers may deviate from this pattern and the candidates will be made aware of this. It is the candidates' responsibility to be aware of the start time of each exam, but parents should be warned there is a tendency for students to confuse a.m. and p.m. sessions. Please ensure your son/daughter checks his/her exam commitments for each day on the previous evening.

What happens if a student has more than one exam at the same time?

If a candidate is timetabled to sit two or more exams at the same time this is known as a timetable clash. If these are for the same subject this is intentional on the part of the board and the exams are meant to run one after another. If not, then this should be picked up during the checking process and notified immediately to the Examinations Officer who can grant permission for one of the papers to be taken at a different time on the same day. The candidate will have to remain under supervision between the two papers. In rare cases it may be necessary for a paper to be done the next day and it is a requirement that the candidate is supervised overnight.

This is essential to avoid compromising the integrity of the examination and needs to be organised well in advance. If an exam is delayed from a morning to an afternoon session the candidate will be supervised over lunchtime. They should bring some revision or reading material and their lunch and a drink, as they will not be allowed to buy food. Even attempting to communicate with any other candidate will invariably result in the loss of all those exams for all of the candidates involved.

How are students supervised?

Adult external invigilators will supervise students under the direct management of the Exams Officer. Once candidates enter the exam room they must remain supervised and follow the invigilators instructions at all times. The invigilators are experienced in exams procedures and subject to strict regulation, references and police checks. They usually work in teams and can contact the Exams Officer by radio to resolve any issues. Candidates will be called in by the seating plan columns or subject group and should find the desk with their name and candidate number label on it. In some sessions, papers will already be on exam desks, these must not be opened by candidates until they are advised to do so.

What happens if a student cannot find his/her place in the exam room?

Occasionally problems arise because a student's label is not where he/she thinks it should be. There are a number of possible reasons for this and the situation has to be investigated. Your son/daughter will be asked to wait at the front for a few moments whilst the invigilator on duty in that venue checks the entry and sorts the problem out with the Exams Officer. Every effort is made to keep these problems to a minimum and they will not prejudice any

student's chance of taking an examination for which he/she has been entered. Students who have been officially withdrawn from an examination will not be permitted to sit the papers. It is helpful if the candidate has his/her Individual Candidate Timetable with him/her, but these must not be written on.

What happens if a student is late?

If parents are aware that their son/daughter has got the timing of the examination wrong and has missed the starting time, they should telephone the school immediately and get a message to the Exams Officer. Depending on how long the exam has been in progress, it may be possible for the candidate to be admitted. However, we are bound by Examination board regulations on this matter. Normally candidates with a genuine reason and who are brought straight to school may be admitted within the first 30 minutes of the start time, after this time the board will decide whether to accept any paper sat. Candidates who arrive more than 1 hour after the start or after the end of the exam will not be admitted.

What should students bring to the examinations?

Pen(s), pencil(s), rubber and calculator, protractor and compass if needed will be provided for students. Any equipment taken into the examination must be in the form of a clear transparent bag / pencil case (not coloured plastic). No spectacle cases or calculator cases will be allowed on the examination desks.

What should candidates not bring with them?

Some items are strictly banned from exam rooms and should not be brought into the examination room under any circumstances. The Exam Boards treat mere possession of these items as an infringement. Mobile phones/ iPods / MP3 and MP4 players / any products with an electronic communication and/or storage devices or digital facilities/ headphones Personal CD/tape/minidisk players - unless permitted for individual language exams.

These items must be handed to an invigilator before the start of an exam, but the school cannot be responsible for the security of these while the examination is in progress. The use of tippex or correction pens is not permitted. Candidates should cross through work they do not wish to be marked. Notes, papers and text books etc are only allowed in certain exams and candidates will be informed by the subject teachers in advance. Candidates should not bring lucky mascots etc. into the examination room. No food items or chewing gum are allowed.

May students bring a drink?

Candidates may bring a drink of water with them into the exam room. The bottle needs to be see-through and the label must be removed. No fizzy drinks, cans or pouches will be allowed.

Regulations governing the use of calculators

Some subject papers, especially Maths Paper 1, explicitly prohibit the use of calculators. Candidates must not have on them or attempt to use any form of calculator for these.

What are the regulations regarding mobile phones?

The regulations state that Mobile Phones are not to be brought into examination rooms under any circumstances. This applies to all examinations. They cause disturbance to other candidates if they ring and can present opportunities for malpractice. Any student found to have a phone in the exam room will be reported to the appropriate examination board. Should this happen they are likely to be disqualified from that paper and possibly from the whole examination in that subject. It is a very serious offence and our advice is that the phone should not be brought to school. We can take no responsibility for the security of mobile phones brought to school.

What is meant by Malpractice?

Malpractice is the term that the Exam Boards use for any irregularity, or breach of the regulations of any form. The Exams Officer is required to, and will, report all infringements to the appropriate body and they will decide on what action to take based on the nature of the infringement. There is a tariff system of actions from which they can decide within limits and some infringements carry automatic loss of marks as a minimum penalty. The Exam Boards take the integrity of exams very seriously and it is important that candidates heed the Exam Officers instructions carefully.

What happens if a student does not turn up for an examination?

A student who is absent from any examination without presenting a doctor's note or a satisfactory reason for a request for special consideration will receive a grade based only on those elements of the examinations which have been marked.

How are exams started?

The Associate Principal or Head of Department will announce the exam formally, and caution candidates that they are subject to the regulations. Any instructions or board notices, changes to papers etc will be read out and the candidates asked to complete their details on the answer papers.

What standards of behaviour are expected during examinations?

Candidates receive a copy of a 'Notice to Candidates' produced by the Examining Bodies with their individual candidate timetable. If you have misplaced your notice – an up to date copy will be available from the school's website and it is the candidate's responsibility to make sure he/she has read it. The 'Notice to Candidates' is a document updated every year by Joint Council of Qualifications and gives general guidelines for conduct, which must be observed. The school and the examination boards regard breaches of examination regulations very seriously.

Parents should stress the importance of good behaviour in an examination, as any activities that may disturb or upset other candidates will not be tolerated. The Head of Centre and Examinations Officer have the authority to remove disruptive candidates. Candidates are asked to wait quietly outside the exam venue, and to enter and leave in silence. This avoids disturbance to other candidates and does help to maintain a calm atmosphere for those students who are nervous about their exams. Candidates who try to communicate with other candidates inside the venue, or who create a disturbance in the examination room will be asked to leave, and the circumstances will be reported to the examination board. This may result in the candidate not receiving a grade for the whole of that examination.

What should students wear for examinations?

Examinations are a school activity and students must wear normal uniform until they have gone on study leave. We ask for the co-operation of parents in ensuring candidates are correctly dressed as we wish to avoid causing stress to candidates in the examination room by pointing out when they are not in correct uniform. Students not dressed properly or modestly will not be permitted to sit exams. Jackets, jumpers or other clothing are not allowed over the backs of the chairs. Candidates should bring as little as possible in the way of coats and baggage into the examination room. Items of jewellery, such as rings or bracelets should not be worn as they make a noise on the desk and would be deemed a disruption to other candidates, likewise keys around necks.

What do I do if my son/daughter is unwell at the time of one of the examinations?

Even if you would not normally visit your doctor's surgery for minor illnesses it is important that you do so at examination time. Your doctor will advise as to whether your son/daughter is fit to sit the examination. If the candidate takes the paper, your doctor should give you a letter, which the school can forward to the Examination Board asking for special consideration on the grounds of illness.

If the candidate is unable through illness to sit a paper the board may, after examining the doctor's letter and any evidence of performance on other papers, decide to award a grade. It is essential that you see your doctor on the day of the examination or previously.

Retrospective information is not accepted by the Examination Boards and any doctors' letters must be forwarded to the Examination Officer without delay, as there is a tight deadline. There is a 7 calendar day window after the exam in which the Exams Officer/Head of Centre may apply for Special Considerations on the basis of medical evidence. Please telephone the school if your son/daughter will not be attending an examination or if he/she will be present but is unwell.

It is often helpful for the invigilator to be aware that a candidate is not feeling well. Always make sure that the Exams Officer is aware of the situation. Please be aware that any medical certificate must be accompanied by a note detailing the examinations to which it refers and the date on which the papers were sat. We cannot guarantee otherwise that all relevant examinations will be covered

What do students who finish early do?

Students should use all of the available time on their exams and spend any time at the end checking their answers. In any event they are not permitted to leave before the duration of the exam. They must sit quietly at their desk so as not to disturb other candidates.

What do I need to do if a student has problems that may affect his/her examination performance?

Some candidates are eligible for extra time or special examination arrangements. These are normally identified by the school and appropriate applications made supported by an Educational Psychologist's report, The SEN Department, Exams Officer and Head of Centre are empowered to grant extra time, the provision of a prompter or similar arrangements, but only given the correct evidence and at their sole discretion. The Learning Support Department will make arrangements for providing any other special assistance.

How can a Parent/Carer best help their son/daughter during the examination period?

Examinations are inevitably a stressful time for some candidates and support from both school and parents can be helpful. The school will provide advice about revision programmes and examination techniques, and if this is followed it should not be necessary for any student to work abnormally long hours during the revision period. It is probably helpful to discuss with your son/daughter how he/she intends to organise revision and to talk through any anxieties about particular techniques or subject matter.

Testing knowledge of factual material can benefit the student if such help is requested, but often all that is needed is a quiet place to work and lots of encouragement. Students should get plenty of sleep and some opportunities for relaxation.

When and how are the results distributed?

GCSE results arrive in school on the third Thursday in August. Results will normally be available for collection from 10.00 a.m. from the New Theatre. Students wishing for a relative to collect their results must send a signed letter of authorisation with the collector. The person collecting the results will have to produce photographic ID and may be asked to write a statement of collection. Alternatively a stamped addressed envelope may be provided by the candidate and results will be posted out. Results will not be given over the telephone under any circumstances. Result slips for GCSE not collected or posted on results day will be retained in school for collection at the start of term, again with the necessary authority.

What can I do if results are substantially different from what is anticipated?

It must be remembered that examinations can only measure performance on the day, and that candidates can do better or worse than anticipated for a variety of reasons. It is advisable to obtain a copy of the script and mark scheme before proceeding to an EAR (enquiry about result) that is very expensive.

If there are serious grounds for concern about a result then the school can initiate an enquiry with the appropriate board. Details of the procedures and the fees involved are available from the Exams Officer and the process should be started as soon as possible after consultation with the Department Head concerned.

The final date for submission to the board is 20th September for summer exams (apart from priority requests, for which, as mentioned above there is only a 5 day window after the publication of results) and 4 weeks after results for others. The Exams Officer may set up internal deadlines for departments and candidates which will be earlier than the Exam Boards ones.

If this happens the Exams Officer will publish this information to students and departments via email. Those internal deadlines must be adhered to and requests received after the published internal deadline may not be processed. If the results have serious implications for the student's future plans then advice should be sought from the Careers Advisor/Head of Centre.

How do I go about obtaining copies of marked examination scripts?

It is currently possible to have access to marked scripts for some GCSE's. You will need to complete a request form from the school and pay a fee for each subject/paper. Please contact the Exams Officer before the deadlines to organise this.

How do candidates apply to re-sit?

GCSE retakes are organised by departments and Department Heads only. Students/parents may not request GCSE re-sits directly from the Exams Officer. Departments will contact relevant students/parents if they think a re-sit is advisable. If agreed – parents will have to pay the fees.

How should fees be paid?

Where students are requesting a chargeable service, fees should accompany a completed request form and handed into the Exams Office paid by cheque or cash.

When do students receive certificates?

The examining boards issue certificates well after the examinations have taken place and can be collected from our main reception in November until the last Friday before the Christmas break. Any certificates which are uncollected will then be returned to the exam boards, in line with their regulations, to be destroyed. Students are required to collect certificates in person, however, a family member may collect them if they have a letter of request signed by the candidate and some form of photographic ID.

Once certificates have been collected they need to be kept safe, they are legal documents and cannot be re-issued by exam boards. Lost certificates are replaced with a statement of results which has to be requested, by direct application to the boards, by the candidate. Candidates will require proof of identity such as an original birth certificate and a substantial fee (£40 - £50 per statement).

It is recommended that copies are made of the original certificates and these are provided to prospective employers and further education institutions. Candidates should not give away the original copy.