



Title:	Storing and Handling GCSE Exam Papers Policy
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Storing and Handling GCSE Exam Papers Policy

The purpose of this policy is to explain JCQ and AQA regulations around storing and handling of GCSE exam papers that centres are required to follow.

AQA will send exam materials throughout the year through the yellow label service which is prepaid recorded delivery by Parcelforce. There are three types of exam materials sent to examiners:

1. Exam stationery and forms, which are sent based on entries.
2. Early question papers that are sent or made available before exam day (sometimes called preliminary or pre-release).
3. Exam day question papers and answer booklets.

AQA also releases a timetable that shows exams materials that will be sent and when they will send it. The timetable is available on <https://www.aqa.org.uk/exams-administration/exams/question-papers-and-stationery>

Receiving Exam packets:

The Exams Officer must be present to receive, check and store the exams packets. In case of the Exams Officer absence, it is the Principal's responsibility to check the paper packets, report any abnormalities to the awarding body, and to store the exams materials in the secure storage facility at the Skills Hub.

Exam materials are sent according to AQA's released timetable. When exam packets are expected:

1. They must be delivered to Learning4life-GY's Main site, which has been approved by an AQA representative following an inspection visit.
2. The Exams Officer must be present at the time of delivery to sign for the exams packets.

Handling Exam Packets:

1. A log that states the date, details of exams packets content / number of boxes delivered, and signature of the Exam Officer and Principal must be completed upon exams packets delivery.

2. On receipt, the question paper packets, still in their despatch packaging, must be moved immediately for checking and transfer to the secure storage facility which is the exams office located in the Skills Hub building by the Exam Officer/Principal. Only persons authorised by the Principal and the exams officer must be allowed access to the secure storage facility.
3. The Exams Officer/Principal must first check the time, date, unit/ component, and tier of entry before opening any of them.
4. The awarding body must be informed immediately if there are any problems by sending an email to irregularities-n@aqa.org.uk. E.g.:
 - a) It appears that the parcel or one of the packets has been opened during transit and therefore there may have been a breach of security.
 - b) There are any differences between the material received and the despatch/ delivery note.
 - c) The material has been significantly damaged in transit or upon opening.
 - d) The material appears not to meet the centre's requirements.
 - e) The material has been received in error.

Arrangements for handling secure electronic materials

- Electronic question paper materials must only be handled by authorised staff which includes only the Exams Officer and the Principal.
- The Principal and the Exams Officer must be familiar with the most recent instructions issued by the relevant awarding bodies.
- The Principal and the Exams Officer are authorised to handle secure electronic materials.
- For AQA examinations, one member of centre staff can be authorised to handle secure electronic material and it must be the Exam Officer.

- In the case of the Exams Officer absence, it is the responsibility of the Principal to handle secure electronic materials.

Secure account management

- The email account used for secure material access is Exams@learning4life-gy.co.uk and is accessed solely by the Exams Officer and the Principal to handle secure materials.
- Files must only be accessed by the named individual(s) to whom they have been sent as it is their personal responsibility for maintaining the security of the material. Emails or links to secure materials must never be forwarded or shared.
- Accounts used to access secure material must be audited and regularly checked. The Principal must review all accounts ahead of each examination series to ensure that users have appropriate levels of access and all inactive accounts have been removed.
- Any unused or unneeded accounts must be closed promptly, for example when a member of staff has left the centre or changed roles.
- Passwords used to access secure material must be strong and changed regularly. Passwords must never be written down or shared.

Accessing and printing secure files

- The integrity and security of the electronic question paper must be maintained during the downloading, printing and collating process. It is the Exams Officer's responsibility to download, print and store the question papers. In the case of the Exams Officer absence, it is the Principal's responsibility to download, print and store the question papers.
- The file must be accessed and downloaded only for use by candidates who have been entered for the examination.

- The file must be stored locally only for the purposes of printing and must then be deleted immediately. The file must then be deleted from the deleted items folder.
- Any emails or links associated with the secure file must also be immediately deleted and then deleted from the deleted items folder.
- Authorised staff must not create any unnecessary hard copies of the file, and securely destroy any unneeded hard copies once printing has been completed.
- Secure files must be accessed and printed within the Exams room. Only authorised members of staff must be present in the room, e.g. exams office staff and a Reprographics Assistant. A subject teacher must not be present in the room.
- Once printed, question papers must be sealed within a non-transparent envelope marked clearly with the exam details on the outside of the envelope. The envelope must be stored securely ready for transfer to the examination room at the appropriate time, in line with the requirements in this policy.

Reporting to an awarding body

- Any deviation from the instructions must be reported to the awarding body using JCQ Form M2. Which can be found on <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice>
- Any concerns of a potential breach of security must be reported to the awarding body immediately.

Storing Exam Packets:

1. Before removing the papers from the despatching packages, the Exam officer/Principal must ensure the office is securely locked.
2. When question paper packets are removed from the despatch packaging they must be checked carefully, and a log of the check kept. The question paper packets must be

checked against the awarding body's despatch note and Learning4life-GY's timetable or entries.

3. Checking must take place as soon as possible on the day the question papers are received. If this is not possible, e.g. due to a late delivery or the unavailability of authorised members of staff (i.e. Exams Officer or the Principal), the material still in its despatch packaging must be transferred by Learning4life-GY's Director immediately into the secure storage facility until it can be checked. The checking must take place no later than the next working day and must be undertaken in the exam office.
4. Following the checking, question paper packets should be arranged in timetable order to reduce the possibility of opening a packet at the wrong time and must then be immediately locked in the secure exams safe.

Before the exam begins

In order to avoid potential breaches of security, care must be taken through the following steps to ensure the correct question paper packets are moved out of the Exams office:

1. Examination papers must only be opened within 60 minutes of the examination scheduled start time by a member of centre staff, additional to the Exams officer/Principal who will be removing the question paper packets from secure storage, e.g. an invigilator.
2. They must check the day, date, time, subject, unit/ component, and tier of entry, if appropriate, immediately before a question paper packet is opened.
3. This second pair of eyes check must be recorded. One way of conducting the second pair of eyes check is to adopt an 'eyes and ears' approach. One person reads the information from the question paper packet to the second person. This addresses the risk that people read what they expect to see. The second person is more likely to hear if there is an issue with the day, date, time or paper.
4. Exam papers are then placed in a sealed envelope and a sign out sheet is signed by the invigilator.

Unless there is a need to split question paper packets for different examination rooms or facilitate access arrangements, they must be opened in the designated examination room(s).

Question paper packets should be taken by the invigilator to the designated examination room(s) as close to the start of the examination as possible. They must not be removed from the exams office and taken to the designated examination room(s) any earlier than 60 minutes prior to the awarding body's published starting time for the examination and they must not be left unattended.

The Exam officer may open the packet(s) of question papers to make them up into more appropriately sized sets for different rooms on one or more sites provided the following conditions are met:

- a) as few packets as possible should be opened and this must be within 60 minutes of the awarding body's published starting time for the examination.
- b) the question paper packet must be opened in the exam office and not in the examination room. The question paper packet must be re-sealed and placed back into the centre's exam office. Unless the question paper packets being removed from the exam office are required for an alternative site, they must not be taken to the different examination rooms any earlier than 60 minutes prior to the awarding body's published starting time for the examination

Where a question paper needs to be scanned or photocopied, the exams officer, or a member of staff authorised by the Principal or exams officer, must take the question paper in a sealed non-transparent envelope to the printer/scanner. The question paper and the copy must be returned to the exams room where they will be placed into the question paper packet, which must be re-sealed and placed back into the exam's safe.

- c) the question papers extracted from the packet must be taken to the examination room(s)/site(s) in a sealed non-transparent envelope. An invigilator must always be present in the examination room(s). Question papers must not be left unattended.

Coloured/enlarged paper

Where a candidate requires a question paper on coloured paper and/or enlarged from A4 to A3, a PDF copy of the standard question paper is downloaded from AQA Centre Services, Pearson Edexcel Online (SDS) or OCR (DFD) within 90 minutes of the awarding body's published starting time for the examination.

Computer reader

Where a candidate requires a computer reader (and approval for the arrangement has been granted by Access arrangements online), a non-interactive electronic (PDF) question paper is ordered via Access arrangements online or accessed via the awarding body's secure extranet site. Printing directly from a PDF of the question paper will ensure better print quality and reduce the possibility of human error when collating and stapling.

Alternatively, the Exam officer may open the question paper packet in the secure room within 90 minutes of the awarding body's published starting time for the examination. Prior permission is not required.

Where an awarding body has granted approval for a Language Modifier, he/she may have access to the question paper 60 minutes prior to the awarding body's published starting time for the examination to prepare

Where the SENCo has granted the candidate a Communication Professional and/or a Live Speaker:

- a) the Communication Professional may have access to the question paper 60 minutes prior to the awarding body's published starting time for the examination to prepare
- b) the Live Speaker may have access to the transcript of the Listening examination 60 minutes prior to the awarding body's published starting time for the examination to prepare.

A reader and/or a scribe is not allowed access to the question paper prior to the starting time for the examination to prepare.

Where confidential materials such as live assignments need to be opened in advance of the examination and held for use over an extended period, strict precautions must be taken to safeguard them after they have been opened or downloaded from an awarding body's secure extranet site:

- a) they must only be issued at the time of the assessment and must be collected at the end of the assessment session.
- b) they must not be removed from the centre and when not in use must be kept secure in the exam room.
- c) each copy must be checked prior to the examination to ensure that it is clean and free from pen or pencil annotations or amendments
- d) live assessment material must not be used as practice material for any qualifications.

During the Exam

Invigilators must take all reasonable steps to make sure that the following conditions are met:

1. The correct examination question papers have been placed face-up on candidates' desks as well as any other required materials. This includes modified papers and those on coloured paper.
2. The official examination stationery for the unit/component, e.g. answer booklets and additional answer sheets, must be issued to candidates. No other stationery, including paper for rough work, can be provided.
3. In a subject where there is an objective test or a personalised question paper, and individual pre-printed answer sheets are provided for each candidate, each individual answer sheet or personalised question paper must be given to the candidate whose name appears on it. The Exam officer must check that the sheets relate to the subject and the unit/component concerned.
4. In the examination room candidates must not have access to items other than those stated in the instructions on the

question paper, the stationery list or the specification for that subject.

5. The invigilator must announce clearly to the candidates when they may begin to write their answers and specify the time allowed for the paper(s). The examination will formally start at this point.

Leaving the examination room

The Exams officer must ensure that question papers should never be made available to any member of school staff until the awarding body's published finishing time, or the last candidate has sat the paper including those candidates with timetable variation. This includes:

1. Examinations that last one hour or more, candidates must stay under centre supervision until 10.00am for a morning examination or 2.30pm for an afternoon examination, i.e. one hour after the awarding body's published starting time for that examination.
2. Examinations that last less than one hour, candidates must be supervised and question papers must be kept in the exams office until the published finishing time of the examination.
3. Candidates who are allowed to leave the examination room temporarily must be accompanied by a member of centre staff. This must not be the candidate's subject teacher or a subject expert for the examination in question. Candidates may be allowed extra time at the discretion of the centre to compensate for their temporary absence.
4. Candidates who have finished the examination and have been allowed to leave the examination room early must hand in their script, question paper and any other material before they leave the examination room. Those candidates must not be allowed back into the room.

At the end of the examination, candidates must hand in their script, question paper and any other material before they leave the examination room.

Where examinations have been re-scheduled in a morning or afternoon session, or deferred to the following morning, for one or more candidates, the question papers must not be released to members of centre staff:

- a) until the awarding body's published finishing time for the paper concerned; or
- b) until all candidates within the centre have completed the paper concerned.

Scripts, question papers and any other material must not be removed from the examination room until all candidates have completed the examination.

In cases where an examination has been moved from an afternoon session to a morning session due to a timetable variation, the invigilator must collect all question papers and pass all copies to the exams officer for return to the exams office.

Emergencies

When dealing with emergencies, staff must refer to Learning4life-GY's policy and, where appropriate, any instructions from relevant local or national agencies.

In an emergency such as a fire alarm or a bomb alert, the invigilator must take the following action:

- a) stop the candidates from writing
- b) collect the attendance register (in order to ensure all candidates are present) and evacuate the examination room in line with the instructions given by the appropriate authority;
- c) advise candidates to leave all question papers and scripts in the examination room. Candidates must be advised to close their answer booklet
- d) ensure the candidates leave the room in silence
- e) ensure candidates are supervised as closely as possible while they are out of the examination room so that there is no discussion about the examination;
- f) make a note of the time of the interruption and how long it lasted

- g) allow the candidates the remainder of the working time set for the examination once it resumes;
- h) if there are only a few candidates, consider the possibility of taking the candidates (with question papers and scripts) to another place to finish the examination;
- i) make a full report of the incident and of the action taken and send to the relevant awarding body
- j) any breach of question paper security or malpractice must be reported to the awarding body immediately.
- k) as each incident will be different, advice must be sought from the relevant awarding body as soon as it is safe to do so. For example, where the centre is concerned about the security of the examination(s) or where candidates are unable to return to the building to complete the examination
- l) an online application for special consideration must be submitted to the relevant awarding body where candidates have been disadvantaged

Overnight supervision arrangements

Overnight supervision arrangements should only be applied as a last resort and once all other options have been exhausted. The Principal must be satisfied with any arrangement for overnight supervision of a candidate where necessary and must accept full responsibility for the security of the examination throughout.

The overnight supervision arrangements must ensure that the candidate does not have advance warning of the content of the examination deferred until the following morning. This means the candidate must not meet or communicate with anyone who may have knowledge of the content. This includes any form of electronic communication/storage device, e.g. telephone, email, internet and social media. It also extends to television and radio, which could report key details of the day's examinations.

The JCQ Overnight Supervision and Overnight supervision declaration forms must be completed before the overnight supervision is to commence. The JCQ Overnight Supervision form is completed online using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP) which can be accessed using any of the awarding bodies' secure

extranet sites. The JCQ Overnight supervision declaration form is downloaded from the Centre Admin Portal (CAP) for signing by the candidate, the supervisor and the Principal.

The Principal must:

- a) inform the parties involved that any infringement of the conditions governing overnight supervision arrangements may lead to the awarding body being unable to accept the script and/or the application of sanctions, as detailed in the JCQ document Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures: <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice>
- b) be satisfied that the arrangements maintain the integrity and security of the examination.

The Exams officer must:

- a) keep all completed forms available for inspection until the deadline for reviews of marking has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later. Forms may be stored electronically or in hard copy paper format and must not be sent to an awarding body, unless specifically requested.
- b) inform the relevant awarding body immediately of any known or suspected contravention of the arrangements for overnight supervision of a candidate.

The centre must re-arrange any examination that cannot be taken in the scheduled afternoon session for the following morning. If an examination is deferred from Friday afternoon, it must be taken the following morning, i.e. Saturday morning.

If some candidates are allowed to take an examination on a later day than other candidates at the centre, all copies of the question paper used on the earlier day must be sealed in an envelope and returned to the exams office until all candidates at the centre have taken that examination.

At the end of examination

A five-minute warning to candidates before the end of the examination is permitted. However, this is at the centre's

discretion. Where candidates have different finishing times, the centre must consider the impact of giving a warning.

At the end of the examination invigilators must:

- a) tell candidates to stop working and remind them that they are still under examination conditions;
- b) allow candidates who arrived late and were allowed the full working time to do their examination, to continue after the normal finishing time. Tell them to stop working after the full working time allowed has passed
- c) instruct candidates taking written examinations to:
 - make sure they have put all the necessary information on their answer booklet and any additional answer sheets, e.g. candidate name, candidate number, centre number
 - make sure their answers are correctly numbered
 - make sure they have put any loose additional answer sheets inside the answer booklet. Paper clips or staples must not be used. Treasury tags should only be used if permitted by the awarding body marking the papers

Candidates granted extra time and/or supervised rest breaks should be allowed to carry on uninterrupted for the necessary additional time. Invigilators must be made aware in advance by the Exam officer which candidates have been granted extra time and/or supervised rest breaks.

Collecting Scripts

Invigilators must:

1. collect all the scripts/objective test sheets, question papers and any other materials before candidates are allowed to leave the examination room.
2. check that there is a script/objective test sheet for every candidate marked as present on the attendance register.
3. check that the names on the scripts match the details on the attendance register (all awarding bodies except CCEA).

4. put the scripts/objective test sheets in the order shown on the attendance register;
5. check that candidates have used their correct centre and candidate number.
6. give the scripts/objective test sheets to the Exams officer for despatching them to the awarding body/examiner.

Exam office staff, including invigilators, must ensure scripts are handled securely at all times.

When checking that the candidate and centre information matches the details on the attendance register, if a discrepancy is identified the Exam officer may correct the discrepancy or add to the information recorded by the candidate on the front of their answer booklet and/or on any supplementary sheets used. This should be restricted to the centre number, candidate number, candidate name or component/unit code. The correction should be counter-signed on the script. The Exam officer must not alter any other details on the candidate's script.

Scripts are confidential between candidates and the awarding body. They may not be read or photocopied before they are sent to the awarding body/examiner, unless the awarding body has stated otherwise

The Exam officer must ensure that scripts are always kept in the secure exam office until as close to the collection time as possible. Script packages must not be left unattended at the collection area.

After the Examination

Packing Scripts

The Exam officer must:

- a) check that they have enough large plastic envelopes to despatch all the scripts. Contact the relevant awarding body if more will be needed
- b) use the plastic envelopes provided by the appropriate awarding body regardless of the number of scripts that need to be despatched
- c) ensure that every script or objective test sheet from the examination has been included. Scripts for each

unit/component must be packed in a separate plastic envelope

- d) ensure that all scripts/objective test sheets for a unit/component are collected together, including those for any candidates who have been accommodated separately
- e) enclose the relevant attendance register(s) with the scripts or objective test sheets. Scripts and objective test sheets must be in the same order as candidates appear on the attendance register. The attendance register must still be completed and sent even when there are no scripts due to all candidates being absent or withdrawn
- f) ensure cover sheets accompany scripts where appropriate, for example where a candidate has used a scribe. The cover sheet must be placed inside the script
- g) use the pre-addressed labels provided by the awarding body. Ensure the correct label is used for each unit/component and that the most up-to-date label is always used – photocopied labels must not be used
- h) always use only one label per package
- i) always use the whole address label, stick it securely to the largest face of the package and ensure it is flat and crease free. The address label must be visible and legible
- j) fasten envelopes securely, but do not use staples, string or tape

The Exam officer must NOT:

- a) include anything other than the examination scripts and the attendance register(s)
- b) identify the centre in any way to the examiner (for example, through compliment slips or franking machines), in order to ensure the marking process is anonymous
- c) combine packages, even where scripts for more than one examination are going to the same address. If there are too many scripts from one examination to fit into one envelope, the awarding body will send extra address labels so that the scripts can be split into separate packages

- d) overfill packages as they may split open during transit
- e) write on labels or alter them in any way

Sending Scripts

The Exam officer must send scripts through Parcelforce to the awarding body examiners and they must:

- a) despatch scripts and accompanying attendance registers to the address provided on the same day of the examination wherever possible
- b) ensure that any scripts that cannot be despatched on the scheduled day of the examination are despatched no later than the next working day
- c) retain scripts in the centre's exams office if kept within the centre overnight

The Exam officer should try to despatch scripts from the morning and afternoon sessions of Friday 24 May 2024 that afternoon. If this is not possible, scripts must be retained in the secure room and be despatched as early as possible on Tuesday 28 May 2024.

Where there is a window for delivering an examination, the Exam officer must make sure that all scripts are despatched by the end of that period.

Unused Stationery

The invigilator must:

- a) collect all unused stationery in the examination room
- b) check it for any loose sheets which candidates may have missed
- c) return it to the exams officer

The exams officer must:

- a) return unused stationery to the exams office or secure room until needed for a future examination. Surplus stationery must not be used for internal school tests, mock examinations and non-examination assessments.
- b) destroy confidentially any out-of-date stationery

Releasing question papers

Question papers must not be released to centre personnel until after the awarding body's published finishing time for the examination or, in the case of a timetable variation, until all candidates within the centre have completed the examination.

Quality assurance for GCSE

Internal Quality Assurance Process

This section gives details of our approach to internal standardisation, within and across subject departments.

- We will ensure that all teachers involved in deriving teacher assessed grades read and understand this Centre Policy document.
- In subjects where there is more than one teacher and/or class in the department, we will ensure that our centre carries out an internal standardisation process.
- We will ensure that all teachers are provided with training and support to ensure they take a consistent approach to:
 - Arriving at teacher assessed grades
 - Marking of evidence
 - Reaching a holistic grading decision
 - Applying the use of grading support and documentation
- We will conduct internal standardisation across all grades.
- We will ensure that the Assessment Record will form the basis of internal standardisation and discussions across teachers to agree the awarding of teacher assessed grades.
- Where necessary, we will review and reflect on individual grading decisions to ensure alignment with the standards as outlined by our awarding organisation(s).
- Where appropriate, we will amend individual grade decisions to ensure alignment with the standards as outlined by our awarding organisation(s).
- Where there is only one teacher involved in marking assessments and determining grades, then the output of this

activity will be reviewed by an appropriate member of staff within the centre.

- This will be [The Principal].
- In respect of equality legislation, we will consider the range of evidence for students of different protected characteristics that are included in our internal standardisation.

External Quality Assurance Process

STAGE 1 – Centre Policy review

1. Following submission awarding organisations will carry out a review of all Centre Policy Summary Forms. This is to ensure the arrangements each centre has in place are appropriate. Awarding organisations may contact centres where they have questions or concerns. At this point, centres will only be contacted by one awarding organisation. It is possible a centre may be contacted by an awarding organisation with which they do not have any entries.
2. All centres will receive email confirmation that their Centre Policy has been received. Centres do not need to wait for approval before beginning their grading processes.
3. Centres will then receive an email confirming that their policy has been 'Accepted' or that there is a need for follow-up contact. Centres may be contacted by an awarding organisation where there are gaps in the policy or if any clarification is required. An update to the Centre Policy may be requested at this time. Some centres may not receive any further follow up from awarding organisations. However, quality checks of the full Centre Policy may still be performed at random.

STAGE 2 – Virtual centre visits

Where the Centre Policy suggests that further support and guidance may be required, centres will be contacted to arrange a virtual centre visit by the awarding organisation. These visits will take place in May and June.

Virtual centre visits are to be supportive with the aim of assisting centres to provide valid teacher assessed grades and to ensure

the best possible systems are in place. The visits will be conducted virtually. They are likely to be held via Microsoft Teams or Zoom, and details will be confirmed at a later date. Awarding organisations will work with centres to find an alternative if the use of these platforms is not suitable.

Visits will be attended by trained representatives from awarding organisations and senior leaders at centres. Awarding organisations will work with centres to find a suitable time and date. Visits will take the form of a professional conversation and will focus on the process of providing teacher assessed grades.

Normally, centres will participate in one visit with a single awarding organisation. The purpose of this is to have a single point of contact and to ease the burden on centres.

If an awarding organisation has significant concerns about a specific element of evidence the centre may be asked to remove the evidence and reconsider the grade.

In rare cases, where it is not possible to resolve issues arising from a virtual centre visit, results may be withheld pending further investigation.

STAGE 3 – Post-submission sampling

The final stage of the quality assurance process is to confirm that centres have implemented what was in their submitted policies and that their submitted grades reflect this. The sampling process will provide confidence that the grades awarded by awarding organisations across the system command assurance.

The sampling process will take place following the submission of grades by centres. Targeted sampling will be informed by:

- the outcomes of Stage 1
- Stage 2 policy review checks, where a centre's overall results profile for this year's cohort appears to diverge significantly compared to the profiles for cohorts from previous years when exams have taken place; and
- centres where awarding organisations had concerns about their policy.

In addition, random sampling will ensure appropriate subject/qualification, geographical and centre-type coverage by the awarding organisations.

Sampling after the submission of grades will involve a review of evidence at qualification and subject level by subject specialists.

The sampling process will help ensure that Centre Policies for determination of grades were followed without placing an unreasonable administrative burden on the centre being sampled.

Awarding organisations will decide whether to accept the grades submitted by centres or undertake further review. This may lead to the withholding of results.

Centres are expected to work with the awarding organisations at all stages of the quality assurance process. Failure to engage may jeopardise the timely issue of results to students, and may lead to awarding organisations undertaking further investigation (see Malpractice section under JCQ ICE).