Coping with your examinations

The aim of this booklet is to help you to ensure that your examination experience will be as stress-free and successful as possible. There is guidance on examination regulations, procedures to follow in the event of any problems arising while you are taking your exams, suggestions on how to revise and cope with stress.
Before the examinations

Statements of entry:

- You will receive a statement of entry from the school that lists the subjects that you have been entered for and the level of entry, where applicable. You should check that you have been entered for the correct subjects and the correct tier, if there is more than one tier of entry for a subject.

- You will also receive statements of entry from the examination boards. You should check that the spelling of your name and date of birth are correct as they will appear on certificates and they cannot be changed once certificates have been awarded.

Timetable:

- You will receive a copy of your own examination timetable. You should make sure that you check this carefully to ensure that you turn up for all examinations on time and at the correct place.

Contact Numbers:

- Please make sure that the school has at least two up-to-date contact numbers for you.

Equipment:

- Make sure that you have all the correct equipment before examinations. You should check the Notice to Candidates and the information on the following pages.

During the Examinations

Attendance at Examinations

- You are responsible for checking your own timetable and arriving at school on the correct day and time. You should arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of the examination. Seating plans will be placed in the entrance to the school, in Amigo Hall and outside of the school hall.

- If you arrive late for an examination your may be admitted, depending on how late you are, but you will not receive any extra time. If there are special considerations then you should speak with Ms. Johnson.

- Full school uniform must be worn to all examinations.
o All items of equipment should be visible at all times and should be carried in either a transparent pencil case or a clear plastic bag.

o Pens should be black ink or black ballpoint. No rubbers or corrector fluids may be used.

o For Mathematics and Science exams, you should ensure that calculators conform to examination regulations. All covers and instructions should be removed.

o You must not make any attempt to speak with or distract other candidates.

o Mobile telephones MUST NOT BE BROUGHT INTO THE EXAMINATION ROOM. If a mobile phone (or any other type of electronic communication or storage device) is found in your possession during an exam (even if it is turned off) it will be taken from you and a report made to the appropriate exam board.

o Only water may be brought into the examination room. The labels must be removed.

o Please do not write on the exam desks. They will be checked at the end of each session and you will be asked to pay for any damage done to the desks.

o Do not graffiti or write abusive comments on examination papers as the examination board may refuse to mark it.

o Listen carefully to all instructions given by invigilators as there may be changes to papers.

o Check that you have the correct paper – check the subject, paper and tier of entry. Inform an invigilator immediately if anything is incorrect for you.

o Read all instructions carefully and number your answers clearly.

o Always check that you have answered all the questions expected and you should see the ‘End of Exam’ written in bold font at the end of the exam booklet. If you have not seen this, keep going through the booklet!

o You will not be able to leave the examination hall before the end of an exam.

o At the end of the examination all work must be handed in. You should cross out all rough work. If you have used more than one answer book or loose sheets of paper, you will be given a tag to fasten them together.
Invigilators will collect your exam papers before you leave the room. Absolute silence must be maintained until you have left the examination hall.

You may not take question papers, answer booklets or additional paper from the examination room.

If the fire alarm sounds during an examination, the invigilators will tell you what to do. You will be asked to leave in silence and the order in which you are sitting. You must leave everything on the desk and you should not attempt to communicate with anyone else during the evacuation. When you return to the room, do not start writing until you are told to do so. You will be allowed the full working time for the examination and a report will be sent to the exam board detailing the incident.

Invigilators

The school employs external invigilators to conduct the examinations. You are expected to behave in a respectful manner towards all invigilators and follow their instructions at all times.

Please note that invigilators cannot discuss the examination paper with you or explain the questions.

Absence for examinations

If you experience difficulties during the examination period (e.g. illness, injury or personal problems) please inform the school at the earliest possible point so that we can help or advise you.

Only in ‘exceptional circumstances’ are candidates allowed special consideration for absence from any part of an examination. It is essential that medical or other appropriate evidence is obtained on the day of the examination by the candidate/parent and given to Ms. Johnson without delay in all cases where an application is to be made for special consideration.

For the award of a grade by special consideration, where a student misses part of an examination through illness or personal misfortune, a minimum of 35% of the examination (including controlled assessments) must be completed.

Please note that misreading the timetable will not be accepted as a satisfactory explanation of absence.

Frequently asked questions

Q What do I do if there is a clash on my timetable?

The school will re-schedule the papers on the same day. You will receive an amended timetable to reflect the new times. You will sit one paper and then have a break. You will be supervised at all times and you will not be allowed to communicate with anyone.
Q What do I do if I forget my Candidate Number?
- Printed exam cards will be on your allocated desk, which will have your name, candidate number and exam entry.

Q What do I do if I have an accident or am ill before the exam?
- You should inform the school as soon as possible so that we can help or advise you. You may need to obtain medical evidence (from your GP or hospital) if you wish the school to make an appeal for Special Consideration.

Q What do I do if I feel ill during the exam?
- Put your hand up and an invigilator will assist you.

Q If I am late can I still sit an exam?
- If you are not more than 1 hour late, it may be possible for you to sit the exam. You should go to reception on arrival and you will be accompanied to the exam room. You may not enter an exam room without permission after an exam has begun. It may not be possible to allow you any extra time if you start the examination late. You should also be aware if you start the exam more than 30 minutes after the published starting time, the school must inform the examination board and it is possible that the board may decide not to accept your work.

Q If I miss the exam can I take it on another day?
- No, timetables are regulated by the exam boards and you must attend on the given date and time.

Q Do I have to wear school uniform?
- Yes, normal school rules apply to uniform, hair, make-up etc.

Q What equipment should I bring to my exams?
- You should bring at least two black pens.
- For Science and Mathematics examinations you will need to bring two pencils.
- For some examinations you will need other equipment such as calculators or coloured pencils. You should check with your subject teacher if you are not sure what you need to bring.
- You are responsible for providing your own equipment for all exams and you must not attempt to borrow equipment from other candidates during the examination or from other students in the school prior to the start of an exam.
Q Why cannot I bring a mobile telephone to the exam room?
  o Being in possession of a mobile ‘phone (or other electronic device such as an iPod) is regarded as cheating and is subject to severe penalties from the examination boards:

The minimum penalties are as follow:
Device found on you and turned **ON** – disqualification from the entire subject award.
Device found on you and turned **OFF** – disqualification from the paper you are sitting at the time.
If your phone rings during the exam, wherever it is in the room, the exam board must be informed and you will be disqualified from all papers for the subject (including any already taken).

Q Can I go to the toilet during the exam?
  o If it is absolutely necessary. You will be escorted by an invigilator, but you will not be allowed any extra time.

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**Equipment Checklist**

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<tr>
<th>Equipment needed</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 black pens</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 pencils</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruler</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calculator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear pencil case</td>
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<td>Colouring pencils</td>
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Organising your revision

Here are some ideas to help you organise your revision

a) Create a revision timetable

- Creating a revision timetable can add structure to your revision and help you to prioritise what you need to revise. Blank outlines are available in the school library.
- It will help you to be organised and having written one will reduce your stress as you will have started your revision.
- Build in time to have breaks and work in small chunks of time. It is better to revise for 25 minutes and learn something effectively, than revise for 3 hours non-stop and learn very little.

b) Make a list of all the topics you need to revise

- If your teacher has not given you a list of topics to revise make your own. You should then divide all topics into small chunks. You can then tick off each topic as you complete it

c) Getting down to revision

- Make a list of what you will do each session.
- When you start revising a topic make a mind map of what you know already.
- Only use books and websites to ‘fill gaps’.
- Make sure that your revision is active (see below)
- Keep asking yourself questions about the topic.
- Don’t just revise what you know!


d) Active revision

- I read my notes; I remember 25% of what I have learnt.
- I make notes and test myself: I remember 70% of what I have learnt.
- I make notes, test myself, practise questions, make notes of notes, talk to other people about the topic and I remember 95% of what I have learnt.

e) Some techniques

- Make notes and diagrams in your own words
- Organise notes around particular questions or themes
- Talk through answers to questions
- Make up lots of short questions for a topic and plan answers.
- Make up films in your head of topics with you starring in the film.
• Make master cards with key points and memory triggers – think of it like making a shopping list.

f) Practise, Practise, Practise
• Practise doing lots of past GCSE papers. This will help you to get familiar with the exam format, question style, time pressures and retrieve information more quickly

g) Variety is the spice of life
• Mix up your study habits and methods by listening to podcasts, watching videos or documentaries, moving to a new area of the house to study or even something as simple as using different colours for your notes.

h) Use mind maps to connect ideas
• If you find it difficult to remember tons of notes, mind maps may be an easier way to improve your memory. The theory is that making associations by connecting ideas helps you to memorise information easier and quicker.

i) The Pomodoro Technique
This is a useful technique if you find it difficult to get down to revision:

• Use a timer and set it for 25 minutes and then start revising.
• Spend the last five minutes reviewing what you have learnt.
• When the timer goes off have a 5 minute break.
• Repeat this 4 times. After the 4th session have a 15 minute break.

j) Adapt for different subjects
• Use different techniques to revise for different subjects, rather than using the same techniques for all subjects. For example, flash cards are an ideal aid to prepare for a language exam, while an online quiz is a great way to test your GSCE Maths skills with sample questions.

k) Adapt with technology
• Look at different apps you can use: https://www.examtime.com/blog/apps-for-students/

l) Stay positive
• Revision is tiring: give yourself lots of short breaks and rewards for getting things done.
• Studies suggest that we remember more at the start and end of sessions – so the more short sessions you have the more you will remember.
• Get plenty of sleep.
• Eat well and drink lots of water.
• Have regular exercise – it will help your concentration and state of mind.
• Read the section about mindfulness and stress reduction techniques and practise them.

m) The day of the exam
• The night before the exam go to bed at a sensible time.
• Make sure that you eat breakfast – you need the energy.
• Don’t try to cram lots of revision immediately before the exam.
• Try some of the mindfulness techniques before you go into an exam and try them if you are panicking during an exam.
• Give yourself plenty of time to get to school and check the time your exam starts!
• Avoid friends who are panicking and after an exam don’t hang around discussing how you answered questions. Move on to your next exam!
Mindfulness Meditation and Stress Reduction Tips

Mindfulness of Breath meditation

a) Find a quiet space and sit on a chair with a back or on a cushion on the floor.
b) Close your eyes.
c) Become aware of the sensation of sitting and how your body is feeling. You just need to notice the feelings.
d) Now move your awareness to your breath. As you breathe in and out notice the breath in your nose, chest or stomach. Be aware of the breath and the subtle changes in your body.
e) You will find that your mind will start to wander, this is perfectly normal. When you notice this just guide your mind thoughts back to your breath.
f) Try to do this for between 10 and 20 minutes a day.
g) Go to Youtube = mindfulness meditation 4

3 minute breathing space

This meditation is very good to do when you feel stressed or anxious. You could also try to build it into your daily life. Try to do this mediation three times a day.

a) Sit or stand quietly, and, if possible, close your eyes. Notice the thoughts going through your head and any body sensations that you may have for about a minute.
b) In the second minute focus on the breath.
c) In the final minute take in the whole body as if it were breathing.
d) Go to Youtube = mindfulness meditation 8
Some other mind/ breathing/body ideas to consider

- Simple breathing: saying ‘breathe in calm’ on the in breath and ‘breathe out anxiety’ on the out breath.

- Breathe in to the count of 7 and breathe out to the count of 11. You may want to start this with 5 and 7. Always make sure that your out breath is longer than the in breath.

- Use a mantra, this is a special word to you. It could be meaningless or something such as ‘calm’ or ‘relax’. Say this repeatedly under your breath.

- Smile if you panic. This will ease anxiety. Put a pen between your teeth, if necessary, to create a smile.

- Put yourself in a positive mind by imagining how you would like things to go. Picture yourself turning up for an exam confident and relaxed. Picture it in as much detail as you can.

- Guided imagery—Close your eyes and look within. Picture yourself in a relaxing situation. For example, imagine you’re gliding in a canoe over the quiet blue waters of a mountain lake. Listen to the slap of the water on the boat, the sound of a bird singing, and feel the warmth of the sun. Studies have shown that blue is a particularly relaxing color for your imagined scene.

- Go for a walk or do some exercise each day.

- Give yourself 20 minutes worry time a day. Decide that you will only worry in that time.

- Finish each day thinking of 10 positive things that have happened that day.

- Make sure that you get plenty of sleep, water and eat regularly.
Keeping your cool in exams

When the big day arrives it is too late to worry any longer over whether you have revised enough, but coping with your stress on the day itself may make all the difference to how you do. Here is some more advice from experts:

- Try to have a good breakfast. Getting hungry during the middle of an exam can be distracting, especially if your concentration is already waning.
- Make sure you know when and where the exam will be.
- Give yourself plenty of time to get there and calm your nerves. Rushing only adds to the feeling of panic.
- The night before check that you have packed your bag with everything you will need – extra pens, water, tissues and so on. On the morning of the exam, nerves can make you forget something important.
- If the nervous chat of other pupils taking the exam increases your butterflies, try and find a quiet corner for yourself.
- Make a list of your worries on a piece of paper for that exam and then throw it away. This will allow you to focus on the exam when you enter the hall, as you have ‘thrown’ your worries away.
- Go to the toilet before the exam starts.
- In the exam, make sure you take time to read the instructions and questions carefully. Many students do badly because they give the wrong number of answers or misread the questions.
- Work out how long you will have to answer each question and try to stick to this.
- Keep an eye on the time and follow instructions about how long to spend on different sections.
- Make sure you allow yourself 10 to 15 minutes at the end to read through your work, check for obvious mistakes and ensure you have answered all the questions you need to.

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson

Ohhh pl-eease, PLEASE, pl-eeezee
Lord, SAVE ME, and GIVE ME SUCCESS!

Ps 100:25 The Psalm of the unprepared student.
How parents can help

- The best way to support your daughter during the stress of revision and exams is to make home life as calm and pleasant as possible. It helps if other members of the household are aware that your daughter may be under pressure and that allowances should be made for this.
- Make sure there are plenty of healthy snacks in the fridge and try to provide good, nutritious food at regular intervals. Encourage your daughter to join family meals, even if it's a busy revision day - it's important to have a change of scene and get away from the books and computer for a while. Also encourage your daughter to take regular exercise. A brisk walk around the block can help clear the mind before the next revision session.
- It's important to get a good night's sleep before an exam, so discourage your daughter from staying up late to cram. And make sure he or she eats a good breakfast on the morning of the exam.
- Help by testing your daughter to make sure her revision is working. Buy her revision books, insist that she takes their breaks or simply pamper her when she has worked really hard.

Some useful websites

AQA: www.aqa.org.uk
OCR: www.ocr.org.uk
WJEC: www.wjec.co.uk
EDEXCEL(Pearson): www.edexcel.com

Revisiontime
www.revisiontime.com
A free education portal for students, parents and tutors. Provides information via links to useful sites. Helpful for project research and keeping up-to-date with the news.

S-cool
www.s-cool.co.uk
Dedicated to school students. Contains GCSE and A-S revision guides on a range of subjects, revision tips, and a good list of links.

Exam Apps https://www.examtime.com/blog/apps-for-students/

www.nhs.uk : has some excellent guidance and links on coping with exam stress. Type 'exam stress' into the search engine on the site