

St Katherine's School



Public Examinations Policy

Policy Number SKP A017

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Rationale

Students work hard through their school years to be assessed at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. Students get one opportunity to sit their exam and therefore the preparation, arrangements and conditions surrounding the examinations need to be of high quality, giving students the very best chance of success.

Aims

At St Katherine's School we aim to:

- provide a clear timetable for all examinations;
- communicate clear expectations to all stakeholders;
- work with students on their revision skills in preparation for their exams;
- accommodate student needs in all exam arrangements;
- provide all students with a high quality examination environment.

Broadly there are two areas where clear policies regarding the provision and administration of public examinations need to be in place.

- (a) internal policies for the benefit of teaching, non-teaching staff and invigilators
- (b) policies for candidates and parents

(a) Internal policy for school

1. Choice of specification and awarding body

- It is at the professional discretion of subject departments to choose which exam board offers the most appropriate specification designed to meet overall curriculum requirements.
- Any changes in specifications must be notified to the examinations office by the subject lead as soon as they are known. This applies equally to a change of board where revised intentions to enter/estimated entry numbers are often required eighteen months ahead of exams taking place.
- The examinations specifications are available online via each exam board website.

2. Examination Seasons

i. GCSE/Entry Level

- As a general rule GCSE examinations will be available to all candidates for the June series.
- English and mathematics are available for 'retakes' in the November or June window for Sixth Form students.
- Occasionally students in Year 11 will be entered for the November series. Where this is the case the ASHT will decide with the relevant Head of Faculty.

ii. Vocational entries

- Vocational entries are 'on demand' and heads of subject need to agree windows for assessment with the Vocational lead within school.
- 'Retakes' will need to be agreed with the Vocational lead within school.

iii. AS/A Level

- All available units/modules will be offered in the summer exams.
- 'Retakes' will need to be agreed between teacher, Head of Faculty and student, and will take place the following summer.
- Exceptions to the above need to be agreed between Subject Head, Examinations Officer and Head Teacher.

3. Entries

- It is essential that all entries are made accurately and within deadlines posted by exam boards.
- In all cases, entry forms will be issued to subjects by the exam office. These need to be completed and returned within the required time frame.
- When making entries it is essential that correct entry codes are given and checked by departments. Failure to do so can prove extremely costly and amendment fees will be charged to subjects.
- Entry forms returned to the exams office will be used to enter candidates electronically via EDI. Printouts of entries will be circulated to subjects for final checking. These must be returned before the given cut off dates.
- Late entries made by departments will be invoiced to subject budgets.
- Where students request individual entries (for example as retakes) this must be agreed by subject department using the appropriate form from the exams office. In such cases charges will be the responsibility of the student who will be required to pay before entry can be made.
- Entries for AS/A levels need to be made as units as well as providing the overall subject code where aggregation/certification is required.
- Entry codes for GCSE need to include the overall subject code as well as individual units. Without both of these, entries will be incomplete and incur heavy financial penalties. It is the responsibility of the head of subjects to inform the exams office accurately.
- All re-sit entries will be paid for by students. These need to be agreed by subject departments.

4. Amendments

- As a rule amendments to entries should be avoided.
- Where changes of tier/level are requested any such change will incur fees payable by departments or individual students.
- In all cases amendments notified to the exams office including additional entries, withdrawals or changes of tier must be given written department approval. This may be based upon student or parental request.

5. Withdrawals

- Withdrawal requests must be made in writing and be approved by departments.
- Depending upon the date of withdrawal, charges may be made. These will usually be passed on to the candidate. In some cases the department will be asked to pay.

6. Coursework

i. Internally Assessed

- In all cases, heads of subject are responsible for collating coursework marks. These should be provided accurately and in good time to the exams office.
- All coursework marks will be submitted by appropriate means to exam boards by the exams office.
- External moderation of internally assessed work will be requested and work should be handed to the exams office to be sent by them to the moderator.

ii. Externally Assessed

- Departments should arrange for coursework to be sent to the examiner via the exams office in good time before any advised cut off date.
- All paperwork including Candidate Record Forms and Centre Declaration Sheets need to be completed by departments and included with samples to be sent to boards or moderators.
- Returned coursework will be distributed to departments by the exams office. All coursework must be retained securely by departments until all dates for possible recall or appeal against marks awarded have passed. In practical terms, this means holding on to coursework at least until certificates have been issued to students.

7. Forecast Grades

- These are an essential part of the system especially when candidates are absent for an element of the exam or in circumstances where re-marking is requested or appeals lodged.
- GCSE & AS/A2 forecast grades should be submitted to the Exams Office by completion of the relevant exam board forms within the deadlines provided by the exam board.

8. Access Arrangements

- All applications for access arrangements must be made by the inclusion team adhering to JCQ requirements in conjunction with the exams office.
- Applications need to be submitted to the relevant boards by the JCQ deadline provided (usually the February preceding the exam series).
- Late applications will be considered on an individual basis according to circumstances. These must be indicated as soon as possible to the Exams Officer
- Full details of levels of access are held by SENDCo and the Exams Office.
- Students awarded access arrangements will sit their exams in appropriate locations and will be supervised by support staff.

9. Candidate Briefing

- This is the responsibility of the Exams Officer and Year 11 Coordinator or Head of Sixth Form.
- Students in Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 will be advised of procedures through assembly presentations relating to the conduct of examinations.
- A booklet containing relevant information regarding student conduct and expectations, as well as key dates and contacts will be available to all students at the same time as their exam timetables. This will be distributed via tutor groups in registration.

10. Exam Clashes

- These are infrequent with GCSE students but do occur more often at AS / A Level. The majority of exam clashes are resolved without resorting to overnight supervision thus avoiding moving any exams to the following day. Where this is not possible, students will be accommodated through arrangements made by the Examinations officer in conjunction with the appropriate Head of Year.
- Where a student has clashes within one day's limit of 6 hours of exams he/she will sit exams in an order to be advised by the Exams Office. This will mean that students will need to be kept under supervision between am and pm sessions. In such circumstances, a packed lunch should be provided.
- Students with clashes will be informed by the Exams Office via their statements of entry and printed exam timetables. Students with queries regarding clashes should seek clarification from the Exams Office in good time prior to the day of the exam.

11. Storage of Papers

- On arrival at school, all exam papers and other exam materials will be stored securely in the exam papers office, in accordance with JCQ regulations.
- As soon as possible all papers will be sorted and checked against delivery notes prior to being stored in chronological order within double-locked filing cabinets in the exam cupboard which itself is double locked and windowless.
- Security of all material is the responsibility of the Exams Officer at all times whilst such materials are present on site. Any breach of security will be reported to the Head Teacher and directly to the appropriate exam board(s).
- Exam papers and other required materials will be distributed from the exam cupboard to invigilators immediately prior to the required session. Where students are taking exams in locations away from the main body these papers will be passed to invigilators by the Exams Officer.

12. Exam Venues

- The main venue for GCSE exams is the Sports Hall. It is often necessary to use other rooms such as the Sixth Form Common Room, the Conference Room, Lecture Theatre and other classrooms. Decisions regarding venues are made through planning between the Exams officer and Data Manager.
- Rooms for exams are set out with tables and chairs by the caretaking staff. This is done to set seating plans and measured according to JCQ standards.
- The Exams Officer is responsible for ensuring that all venues have the required signage including notices and warnings to candidates, silence notices, mobile 'phone warnings etc. All this is done in accordance with JCQ regulations.
- All other materials that might affect performance in exams will be removed.
- Sufficient clocks and stationery for exam times will be provided by the Exams Office.
- Seating plans will be drawn up by the Exams Office using data prepared from the entries via 'Examinations Organiser' in SIMS.
- Candidate cards for each session will be set out by the Invigilators.

13. Invigilation

- External Invigilators are organised by the Exams Office, using the staff employed specifically for invigilation and internal support staff are organised by the Data/Cover Manager.
- Rates of pay for external invigilators are set by CST. The pay runs on a two tier system with 'senior' invigilators taking responsibility for a team of others.
- Interviewing and training new invigilation staff will be organised by HR on behalf of and in conjunction with the Exams Office using recognised and approved NAA training materials.
- Where possible exams will be started and finished by an Invigilator or Exams Manager and occasionally, other Senior Teaching Staff.
- There should be at least one relevant subject teacher available at the start of each exam to check question papers.
- The issue of malpractice is dealt with in separate documents covering the detail of invigilation. In all suspected cases of malpractice it is essential that the Exams Office and/or Senior Management are informed immediately. All procedures are followed in accordance with the JCQ rules & regulations.
- Absent candidates are contacted by either by the Student Support Office or the Exams Office.

14. Special Consideration

- All requests for special consideration must be made by the department or parent to the Exams officer at the time of the exam.
- The Exams officer will complete the required paperwork and send to appropriate exam board(s) within the time frame published for each exam season.
- Students and parents are informed that the awarding of extra marks via special consideration is extremely limited and should not be considered as a passport to higher grades.

15. Results

- All results are downloaded to the Examinations Office from the exam boards on the day prior to the date advertised to students.
- This information is kept secure and seen only by Exams Officer and Head Teacher.
- Required statistics are prepared for the Head Teacher, departments, LA and press as appropriate. As far as possible this is done prior to release to the students.
- Paper statements of results are issued in sealed envelopes to students by Year Team and Exam Office Staff. There is frequently press or media presence at this time. Statements for the press are prepared by the Head Teacher based on statistics provided by the Exams Office.
- On arrival in school all certificates are checked and prepared for distribution to students. Once this preparation has been completed certificates are stored securely prior to distribution in one of the following ways:-
 - i. GCSE certificates for Year 11 leavers are available for collection from a date issued to candidates (usually the start of the January term), or are posted to students unavailable upon written request.
 - ii. GCSE and AS certificates for students now in Sixth Form are collected and signed for by students from the Exams Office.
 - iii. A Level certificates are collection from a date issued to candidates (usually the start of the January term), or are posted to students unavailable upon written request.

16. Post Results Service – Enquiries About Results (EAR)

- Students may request re-marks for most scripts.
- Levels of re-marking can vary from clerical checks to a full individual reassessment of papers.
- Requests for these can be made by the subject department or the individual.
- Costs must be borne by the applicant. A tariff of fees is available from the Exams Office.
- Students or departments wishing to apply for an EAR or have their papers returned through the Access to Scripts (ATS) service must apply directly to the Exams Office who will complete the necessary paperwork.
- Under no circumstances should direct communication be made to the exam boards.
- The processes of EAR and ATS must be carried out as soon as possible after the issue of results –cut off dates for these are published by each exam board for each exam season.

(b) External Policy for Students & Parents

1. Entries

- Students will be entered for exams when they have completed the necessary coursework and made satisfactory progress within the subject. Once entered they may only be withdrawn or have their tier altered by written agreement from the teacher.
- When amendments to entry or personal details are needed, these must be made by direct contact with the Exams officer well before the date of the exam.
- In certain circumstances, the costs of making the amendments are required to be met by the student or parents.

2. Fees

- Exam entry fees are expensive. The school will pay for the first attempt at any level.
- In all cases, students will be charged for any exam they elect to retake. Typical costs levied by the exam boards are £32.00 per unit. These fees must be paid to the Exam Office before entries for re-sits can be made.
- Late entry fees for re-sits must be paid for by students or their parents.
- When a student has been entered for an exam but fails to attend for any reason other than certified illness or bereavement, the exam fee must be reimbursed by the student or parent.

3. Access Arrangements

- Students and their parents may consider applying for access arrangements if they have been receiving support from special education needs.
- Levels of access vary from extra time granted for the completion of exams (up to 25%) to the use of a reader, scribe or word-processor.
- Students seeking access arrangements must initially speak to the SENDCo who will arrange for the student to be tested by an appropriately qualified person. Provided that the recommendations are applied in the classroom the SENDCo will then ask the Exams officer to make the application.
- In all cases written evidence in support of applications must be provided and must cover the dates appropriate to the claim.

4. Timetable Issues

- The school's default times for the start of examinations are 09.00am and 14.00pm. This can vary at times but all students will be informed.
- Individual timetables will be produced by the Exams Office. Starting times will be the ones shown on the timetables and must be strictly adhered to.
- It is the responsibility of all candidates to arrive at the correct exam venue no less than ten minutes before the advertised starting time.
- Students with clashes must liaise with the Exams officer about how the clashes will be resolved. This needs to be done well in advance of the date for the exam
- In most cases, clashes will be resolved by all the clashing exams being taken on the same day one after each other with the student being supervised in between. Where this is not a possible option, arrangement for overnight supervision will be made.

5. Information for parents/carers

- Parents/carers will be informed of all exams by email or letter. All information is also available on the website
- Parents/carers are sent copies of the examination booklet and are encouraged to talk through the timetable and expectations with their son/daughter.

- Parents/carers are encouraged to work through some of the techniques with students to support their revision
- Parents/carers can support students by ensuring they are organised and have all the necessary equipment in advance of the examination series.

6. Expectations During Exams

- i. Behaviour
 - Students need to be aware of the need for excellent personal and group behaviour at all times. This is essential to create a positive atmosphere in which exams may be sat.
 - Behavioural problems will be dealt with by a member of the Senior Leadership Team, Head of Year or Exams officer.
 - Any malpractice within the exam room will be dealt with in strict accordance with the guidelines published to students at the start of each exam season.
 - It is the responsibility of the students to make themselves fully aware of these guidelines
- ii. Uniform
 - It is expected that students below the Sixth Form will wear normal school uniform including black shoes. No other clothing will be permitted in exam rooms.
 - Sixth Form students are expected to dress in an appropriate manner.
- iii. Mobile phones
 - Any student found with a mobile phone or any other such communication device will be reported to the exam board. If a mobile phone is heard during an exam this will also be reported and the student can expect to be disqualified from at least that subject or unit.
 - Mobile devices MUST be switched off and either handed to an invigilator or left in a student bag.
 - Students MUST NOT have a mobile phone or device in their possession.
- iv. Exam equipment
 - It is the students' responsibility to equip themselves with all they need for their exam.
 - All bags and coats are to be left at the side or front of the exam venue.
 - All equipment must be kept in a transparent plastic case.
 - When permitted, calculators may be used but must be of a type that is non-programmable and in accordance with exam board/JCQ regulations. They must not have cases attached.
 - Water is permitted into the exam room but must be in a clear bottle with any labels removed.
- v. Arriving late
 - If a student arrives late for an exam, they should enter the room quietly and speak to an invigilator who will show them to their seat. A report will be issued to the exam board and it is the board's discretion and decision as to whether they will accept the exam paper, as a result of arriving late.
 - The amount of time you will be allowed will depend upon your time of arrival.
 - If you arrive later than the official finish time of the exam, you will not be allowed to sit it.

- vi. Leaving exams early
- Students will only be allowed to leave an exam early with the direct permission of the Exams Officer. This will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
 - Students are to remain in the exam room until the official finish time of the exam and they have then been dismissed.
 - If students disrupt or disturb other students, they may be penalised by being disqualified from the exam. Their behaviour will be reported to the exam board.

7. Results

- Dates and times for collection/distribution of results will be notified to all candidates prior to the start of the exam season.
- Students may only collect their own results.
- Students may delegate a parent or responsible adult to collect their results for them. This must be notified in writing to the Exams Office.
- On arrival in school, all the certificates are checked and prepared for distribution to students. Once this preparation has been completed certificates are stored securely prior to distribution in one of the following ways:-
 - i. GCSE certificates for Year 11 leavers are presented to students invited to a brief ceremony held in school. Certificates can be posted to those who are unavailable to attend, upon written request.
 - ii. GCSE and AS certificates for students now in Sixth Form are collected and signed for by students from the Exams Office.
 - iii. A-Level certificates are presented to students invited to a brief ceremony held in school. Certificates are posted to those who are unavailable to attend, upon written request.

8. Post results service – Enquiries About Results (EAR)

- Students may request re-marks for most scripts.
- Levels of re-marking can vary from clerical checks to a full individual reassessment of papers.
- Requests for these can be made by the subject department or the individual.
- Costs must be borne by the applicant. A tariff of fees is available from the Exams Office.
- Students wishing to apply for an EAR or have their papers returned through the Access to Scripts (ATS) service must apply directly to the Exams Office who will complete the necessary paperwork.
- Under no circumstances should direct communication be made to the exam boards.
- The processes of EAR and ATS must be carried out as soon as possible after the issue of results – actual cut off dates are published for each exam season by the exam board.

9. Appeals against internal assessment of coursework

- Internally assessed coursework will have been standardised and moderated by subject staff.
- Parents and students may discuss this with the appropriate teachers but the actual marks awarded are at the professional judgement of the teacher and not usually subject to change by parent or student.
- Should parents or students wish to instigate an appeal of this nature they must initially do so in writing for the attention of the teacher responsible or the Exams Officer.
- If an appeal against the process is lodged it will be addressed initially by the head of the relevant subject or their representative.
Decisions regarding the outcome of such appeals will be notified to parents and students in writing.

- All appeals must be dealt with within the time allowed for EAR – see above.

10. Appeals against external assessment of coursework

- Externally assessed work is sent to a designated examiner by the exam board.
- Appeals may be made by subject heads when, in their professional judgement, they consider results to be below that expected or predicted.
- The process requires careful communication between the department and the relevant exam board and must be done through the exams office.
- Parents or students wishing to instigate an appeal of this nature must initially do so in writing for the attention of the teacher responsible for that subject or the Exams Officer.