

Aberdare Community School Ysgol Gymunedol Aberdâr



Examinations Policy

Date Adopted	12 th July 2023
Signature of Headteacher	<i>Evelyn Morgan</i>
Signature of Chair of Governors	Mrs E Bryant
Date to be reviewed	July 2024

Rationale

The purpose of this examination policy is:

- To ensure the planning and management of examination is conducted efficiently and in the best interest of candidates.
- To ensure the operation of an efficient examination system with clear guidelines for all relevant staff.

It is the responsibility of everyone involved in the centre's examination processes to read, understand and implement this policy. This examination policy will be reviewed annually. This examination policy will be reviewed by the Deputy Head-teacher, Senior Leadership Team, Examinations' Officer and the Governing Body.

1. Examination responsibilities

The Headteacher has the overall responsibility for the school as an examination centre and:

- advises on appeals and re-marks.
- is responsible for reporting all suspicions or actual incidents of malpractice. Refer to the JCQ document 'Suspected Malpractice in Examinations and Assessments.'

Examinations' Officer manages the administration of public and internal examinations and analysis of examination results and:

- Advises the Senior Leadership Team, Leaders of Learning, subject teachers and form tutors and other relevant support staff on annual examination timetables and application procedures as set by the various examination boards.
- Oversees the production and distribution to staff, governors and candidates of an annual calendar for all examinations in which candidates will be involved and communicates regularly with staff concerning imminent deadlines and events.
- Ensures that candidates and their parents are informed of and understand those aspects of the examination timetable that will affect them.
- Consults with teaching staff to ensure that necessary coursework is completed on time and in accordance with JCQ guidelines.
- Provides and confirms detailed data on estimated entries.
- Receives, checks and stores securely all examination papers and completed scripts.
- Administers access arrangements and makes applications for special consideration using the JCQ 'Access Arrangements and Special Considerations Regulations' and 'Guidance Relating to Candidates who are Eligible for Adjustments in Examinations'.
- Identifies and manages examination timetable clashes.
- Accounts for income and expenditures relating to all examination costs/charges.
- Line manages the senior examinations invigilator in organising the recruitment, training and monitoring of a team of examinations invigilators responsible for the conduct of examinations.
- Prepares and presents reports to the SLT showing results achieved in relation to expected grades and comparable data for previous years, indicating where future procedural improvements might be made.
- Submits candidates' coursework marks, tracks despatch and stores returned coursework and any other material required by the appropriate awarding bodies correctly and on schedule.

- Arranges for dissemination of examination results and certificates to candidates and forwards, in consultation with the SLT, any appeals/re-mark requests.
- Maintains systems and processes to support the timely entry of candidates for their examinations.
- Reports to the Headteacher on the estimated examination costs for the school. Ensures that there is a strategy to ensure cost effective protocols are in place to reduce the costs of entry and organisational financial risk.

Leaders of Learning

- Organisation of teaching and learning.
- External validation of courses followed at key stage 4 / post-16.
- Guide candidates regarding examination entries or amendments to entries.
- Involvement in post-results procedures.
- Accurate completion of coursework mark entries, controlled assessments, forecast grades and declaration sheets.
- Accurate completion of entry and all other mark sheets and adherence to deadlines as set by the Examinations Officer.

Head of Careers

- Guidance and careers information.

All Teachers

- Refer any pupils to SENCO who may require access arrangements (as soon as possible after the start of the course).
- Submission of candidate names to Leaders of Learning

SENCO

- A candidate's access arrangement requirement is determined by the SENCO.
- Identification and testing of candidates' requirements for access arrangements.
- Provision of additional support , e.g. with spelling, reading, mathematics, dyslexia or essential skills, hearing impairment, English for speakers of other languages, IT equipment, to help candidates achieve their course aims.

Examinations Officer /invigilators

- Collection of examination papers and other material from the examinations office before the start of the examination.
- Collection of all examination papers in the correct order at the end of the examination and their return to the examinations office.

Candidates

- Confirmation and signing of entries.
- Understanding coursework regulations and signing a declaration that authenticates the coursework as their own.

Administrative staff

- Support for the input of data.
- Posting of examination papers.

2. The statutory tests and qualifications offered

The statutory tests and qualifications offered at this centre are decided by the Headteacher, Leaders of Learning and the Senior Leadership Team. The statutory tests and qualifications offered are GCSE, A levels, AS, Welsh Baccalaureate, BTEC, Entry Level and Skills Based Qualifications. The subjects offered for these qualifications in any academic year may be found in the centre's published prospectus for that year. If there has been a change of syllabus from the previous year, the examinations office must be informed.

At Key Stage 3

All candidates will be awarded levels based on teacher assessment. Pupil targets are issued by curriculum areas, (both core and non-core) throughout the key stage, with candidates being made fully aware as to their target grade expectations. Decisions on whether candidates should not take an individual subject or all NCTs will be taken in consultation with the candidates, parents/carers, Progress Leader, Leader of Learning and the Deputy Headteacher.

At Key Stage 4

All candidates will be entitled, and enabled, to achieve an entry for qualifications from an external awarding body.

At post-16

It is expected that pupils will follow courses over 2 years. However, in line with national guidelines post-16 courses could possibly be run over 3 years. 3 year provision will be at the discretion of the SLT.

3. Examination seasons and timetables

3.1 Examination seasons

Internal examinations are scheduled in December (for Year 11) and May/June (Years 7 – 10). External examinations are scheduled throughout key stages 4 and 5 as required.

3.2 Timetables

The examinations officer will circulate the examination timetables for both external and internal examinations once these are confirmed.

4. Entries, late entries and resits

4.1 Entries

Candidates are selected for their examination entries by the Leaders of Learning and the Subject Teachers.

4.2 Late entries

Entry deadlines are circulated to Leaders of Learning via yearly calendar.

Late entries are authorised by Leaders of Learning, Examinations Officer and Deputy Headteacher.

4.3 Resits

Candidates are only allowed resits in GCSE and resits at AS at the discretion of the school. This will be dependent on the attitude and aptitude of the individual candidate. (See also section 5: Examination fees)

5. Examination fees

All initial registration and entry examination fees are paid by the centre. Late entry or amendment fees are paid by the departments or parents/carers depending on who initiates the action. Candidates or departments will not be charged for changes of tier, withdrawals made by the proper procedures or alterations arising from administrative processes, provided these are made within the time allowed by the awarding bodies. Reimbursement will be sought from candidates who fail to sit an examination or fail to meet the necessary coursework requirements.

Candidates must pay the fee for an enquiry about a result, should the centre not uphold the enquiry and the candidate insist on pursuing the enquiry. (See also section 11.2: Enquiries about results [EARs])

6. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), special needs and access arrangements

6.1 DDA

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 extends the application of the DDA to general qualifications. All examination centre staff must ensure that the access arrangements and special consideration regulations and guidance are consistent with the law.

6.2 Special needs

A candidate's special needs requirements are determined by the SENCO and the educational psychologist / specialist teacher. The SENCO will inform subject teachers of candidates with special educational needs who are embarking on a course leading to an examination, and the date of that examination. The SENCO can then inform individual staff of any special arrangements that individual candidates may be granted during the course and in the examination.

6.3 Access arrangements

Making special arrangements for candidates to take examinations is the responsibility of the SENCO and the examinations officer. Submitting completed access arrangement applications to the awarding bodies is the responsibility of the examinations officer. Rooming for access arrangement candidates will be arranged by the examinations officer. Invigilation and support for access arrangement candidates will be organised by the SENCO with the examinations officer.

7. Estimated grades

The Leaders of Learning will submit estimated grades to the examinations office when requested by the Examinations Officer.

8. Managing invigilators and examination days

8.1 Managing invigilators

External invigilators will be used for examination supervision. They will be used for all examinations. The recruitment of invigilators is the responsibility of the examinations office. Securing the necessary Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance for new invigilators is the responsibility of the examinations office. Invigilators are timetabled and trained by the Examinations Officer. Invigilators' rates of pay are set by the centre administration.

8.2 Examination days

The examinations officer will book all examination rooms after liaison with other users and make the question papers, other examination stationery and materials available for the invigilator. Site management is responsible for setting up the allocated rooms. The Examinations Officer will start all examinations in accordance with JCQ guidelines. Subject staff may be present at the start of the examination to assist with identification of candidates but must not advise on which questions are to be attempted. In practical examinations subject teachers may be on hand in case of any technical difficulties. Examination papers must not be read by subject teachers or removed from the examination room before the end of a session. Surplus papers will be distributed to Leaders of Learning at the end of the examination session.

9. Candidates, clash candidates and special consideration

9.1 Candidates

The centre's published rules on acceptable dress, behaviour and candidates' use of mobile phones and all electronic devices apply at all times. Candidates' personal belongings remain their own responsibility and the centre accepts no liability for their loss or damage. Disruptive candidates are dealt with in accordance with JCQ guidelines. Candidates are expected to stay for the full examination time. The Examinations Officer will attempt to contact any candidate who is not present at the start of an examination and deal with them in accordance with JCQ guidelines.

9.2 Clash candidates

The Examinations Officer will be responsible as necessary for identifying escorts and identifying an alternative secure venue.

9.3 Special Consideration

Should a candidate be too ill to sit an examination, suffer bereavement or other trauma or be taken ill during the examination itself, it is the candidate's responsibility to alert the Centre, the Examinations Officer, or the Examination Invigilator to that effect. The candidate must support any special consideration claim with appropriate evidence within three days of the examination, (for example by providing a letter from the candidate's doctor).

The Examinations Officer will then forward a completed special consideration form to the relevant awarding body within seven days of the examination.

10. Controlled Assessment

By managing and coordinating controlled assessments, we shall ensure that:

- Teachers and examination officers understand what is involved for each assessment task and have obtained the necessary information from awarding organisations well in advance.
- Students have been suitably prepared for controlled assessment tasks through schemes of work and take account of the nature and timing of the assessment from the outset of the course.
- The necessary accommodation, resources, equipment and facilities will be available, for example sufficient laptops and suitable arrangements for candidates with particular requirements.
- Timings are coordinated so that, for example, assessments do not clash with each other or with events and activities such as school trips or concert rehearsals.

Staff Responsibilities

Senior Leadership Team

- Accountable for the safe and secure conduct of controlled assessments. Ensure assessments comply with JCQ guidelines and awarding bodies' subject-specific instructions.
- At the start of the academic year, begin coordinating with Leaders of Learning to schedule controlled assessments. (It is advisable that controlled assessments be spread throughout the academic years of Key Stage 4.)
- Map overall resource management requirements for the year. As part of this resolve:
 - Clashes/ problems over the timing or operation of controlled assessments
 - Issues arising from the need for particular facilities (rooms, IT networks, time out of school, etc.).
 - Ensure that all staff involved have a calendar of events.
 - Create, publish and update an internal appeals policy for controlled assessments.

Leaders of Learning

- Decide on the awarding body and specification for a particular GCSE.
- Ensure that at least 40 per cent of overall assessment (controlled and/or external assessment) is taken in the examination series in which the qualification is certificated, to satisfy the terminal assessment requirement in accordance with the awarding body specification.

- Standardise internally the marking of all teachers involved in assessing an internally assessed component.
- Ensure that individual teachers understand their responsibilities with regard to controlled assessment.
- Ensure that individual teachers understand the requirements of the awarding body's specification and are familiar with the relevant teachers' notes, and any other subject-specific instructions.
- Where appropriate, develop new assessment tasks or contextualise sample awarding body assessment tasks to meet local circumstances, in line with awarding body specifications and control requirements.
- Ensure that pupils who have been absent for any Controlled Assessment have the opportunities to take these within a reasonable timescale under conditions as laid down for the initial assessment.
- Teaching staff
- Understand and comply with the general guidelines contained in the JCQ publication Instructions for conducting controlled assessments (2009).
- Understand and comply with the awarding body specification for conducting controlled assessments, including any subject-specific instructions, teachers' notes or additional information on the awarding body's website.
- Supply to the examinations office details of all unit codes for controlled assessments.
- Obtain confidential materials/tasks set by awarding bodies in sufficient time to prepare for the assessment(s) and ensure that such materials are stored securely at all times.
- Supervise assessments (at the specified level of control). Undertake the tasks required under the regulations, only permitting assistance to students as the specification allows.
- Ensure that students and supervising teachers sign authentication forms on completion of an assessment.
- Mark internally assessed components using the mark schemes provided by the awarding body. Submit marks through the examinations office to the awarding body when required, keeping a record of the marks awarded.
- Retain candidates' work securely between assessment sessions (if more than one).
- Post-completion, retain candidates' work securely until the closing date for enquiries about results. In the event that an enquiry is submitted, retain candidates' work securely until the outcome of the enquiry and any subsequent appeal has been conveyed to the centre.

- Ask the appropriate special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) for any assistance required for the administration and management of access arrangements.

Examination officer

- Enter students for individual units, whether assessed by controlled assessment, external examination or on-screen test, before the deadline for final entries.
- Enter students' 'cash-in' codes for the terminal examination series.
- Where confidential materials are directly received by the examinations office, to be responsible for receipt, safe storage and safe transmission, whether in electronic or hard copy format.
- Download and distribute mark sheets for teaching staff to use, and collect and send mark sheets to awarding bodies before deadlines.
- On the few occasions where controlled assessment cannot be conducted in the classroom, arrange suitable accommodation where controlled assessment can be carried out, at the direction of the Senior Leadership Team.

Special educational needs coordinator/additional learning support

- Ensure access arrangements have been applied for
- Work with teaching staff to ensure requirements for support staff are met.

BTEC Qualifications

The BTEC qualification is a vocational qualification that involves a learning and assessment style that is different to traditional GCSE and A Level courses. Courses are assessed within the QCF Framework through teacher-marked assignments rather than end-of-module examinations. This will lead on to the new framework which requires 25% examination as well as 75% teacher marked assignments. Students should be aware of the volume of work that needs to be generated on an on-going basis to complete these assignments and the importance of getting that work handed in for assessment by the given deadline.

Assessment entitlement

Students of Aberdare Community School are entitled to:

- Fair and open assessment practices in line with the Schools Equal Opportunities policy for learners.
- An Assignment Brief indicating the criteria against which they will be assessed.
- Regular advice and guidance through teachers.

- Access to an open and fair appeals procedure.
- Assessments being carried out regularly and outcomes reported within 2 weeks with written and/or verbal feedback.

BTEC assessment

- The purpose of assessment within BTEC programmes is:
- To identify the positive achievements of each student and the areas of their work that needs to be improved. This involves both formative and summative assessment.
- To further identify learning and additional support needs so that appropriate help and guidance can be provided.
- To enable the tutor and student to know how the quality of a student's work relates to the standards of external awarding bodies.
- To inform the process by which students set targets for attainment.
- To allow teachers to evaluate students' understanding and progress and decide whether the way in which the course is taught and managed needs refinement or modification.

Submitting Assignments

Students are given a hand-in date for each assignment. Staff are required to mark assignments and provide students with feedback within 2 weeks. The feedback must be sufficient to give clear information on achievement and how to improve.

Failure to meet deadlines

- Students who fail to hand in work by the agreed deadline will be required to provide evidence of the cause e.g. a letter from parents.
- Failure to do so may result in student's failure to meet all criteria required to pass the course.

Recording Progress

Staff are required to record student grades on a grade tracking sheet when the assignment has been completed.

Assessment Processes

a) Assessment processes will aim to promote learning and achievement of all learners.

b) The Assessor is responsible for ensuring that assessment processes are consistent and transparent, that evidence is valid, sufficient, authentic and that judgement of evidence is valid and reliable.

c) The role of the Teacher / Assessor is to: -

- Ensure that learners are fully briefed on assessment methods and procedures, including Student Appeals Procedures and guidance on what constitutes plagiarism.
- Involve learners in the assessment planning process and agreement of assessment deadlines.
- Provide constructive feedback to learners on assessments (conveying levels of achievement using awarding body criteria / grading); discuss targets and areas for development on an individual basis.
- Adhere to the Awarding Body's assessment specification in the judgement of evidence towards an award.
- Record outcomes of assessment using appropriate documentation.

d) Each unit is assessed using the grading grid and grading criteria at Pass, Merit and Distinction. There is also an overall qualification grade calculated from the unit grades. To achieve the BTEC all units have to be achieved at least to Pass level.

Internal verification

The Internal Verifier is at the heart of quality assurance in all programmes. The role, in terms of managing assessment is that it consistently meets national standards.

Implementation of internal verification (IV)

Verification of Assessment Decisions:

- Students work will be marked by unit / assignment tutor.
- IV will 'sample' work assessed (top, middle and bottom).
- IV will feedback to assessor on awarding of criteria, accuracy, feedback to learner and grading decision. If remedial action is needed, this will be discussed and allocated a timeframe of review.
- IV will follow up action recommended ensuring high quality standards are being met and maintained. IV will 'sign off' assessment decisions form once satisfied.
- IV will initial and date 'IV Schedule-Assessment Decisions' form to document sampling. Form will ensure Internal Verification coverage of all pupils and all criteria within units within each academic year.
- Verification of Assignment Briefs:
- Assessor / unit leader will write assignment brief.

- IV will check assignment is 'fit for purpose' incorporating deadline for assessment, assessment criteria, task mapping against criteria, relevance of tasks, evidence, vocational context / scenario, timescale and language / presentation.
- IV will suggest remedial action, if any, needed before brief is issued. Assessor and IV will confirm actions have been met.
- Brief will be signed and dated by IV.
- Brief will be distributed to students.

Internal Verifiers will meet with assessors on a regular basis.

These meetings will concern themselves with resolving issues of interpretation, validity, sufficiency and reliability of evidence.

External verification (EV)

All units are internally assessed and subject to external verification through National Standards Sampling (NSS). External verifiers will be responsible for carrying out the sampling process. Verifiers, through consultation with their centres, will agree dates when the sampling process will take place.

The verifier's role is to monitor assessment practice to ensure that all:

- assessment decisions are valid and reliable
- evidence is attributable to the learner
- evidence is current.

In addition, the verifier will offer advice and guidance on the above where the centre is not meeting the criteria.

Verification of assessment practice will normally be carried out either through postal sampling or a centre visit.

Candidates who have to prepare portfolios should do so by the end of the course or centre-defined date. Leaders of Learning will ensure all coursework/controlled tasks is ready for despatch at the correct time and the Examinations Officer will keep a record of what has been sent, when and to whom. Marks for all internally assessed work are provided to the examinations office by the subject teachers and Leaders of Learning.

Academic misconduct and plagiarism

a) It is the responsibility of assessors to explain what constitutes plagiarism in their courses and the seriousness of the issue.

Teachers should be vigilant for plagiarism. Students will need to develop the habit of acknowledging sources through bibliographies, lists of sources and acknowledgement of assistance.

b) Awarding bodies regulations on academic misconduct and plagiarism will be followed. All coursework must be authenticated as original by the student and the teacher. The School cannot authenticate work it does not believe to be original.

c) If a teacher suspects plagiarism or academic misconduct has taken place it must be acted upon following the examination board guidelines.

d) If plagiarism or academic misconduct is discovered prior to the date for final entry, the assessor should resolve the matter internally and, in consultation with the Leader of Learning, decide whether or not to submit work for that unit:

- Where work leans too heavily on a source but stops short of plagiarism this should be reflected in the mark awarded and the comments made on the work.
- If plagiarism is detected early enough it may be possible to submit a replacement assignment, but none of the work which contributed to the misconduct must be submitted.
- If plagiarism is discovered at a late stage and the work of a student cannot be authenticated then no mark should be given for that work and no work will be submitted for that unit or part of a unit. Where possible a meeting with the student should take place and the student will be informed of the appeals procedure. A letter will go to the student and to their parents/carer with a copy placed on file.

Appeals procedure

In the event of a student wishing to make an appeal against an assessment decision, the following steps outlined below must be followed:-

- Within 3 days the student must contact the assessor to arrange an informal meeting to discuss the assessment decision.
- If the student is still dissatisfied, then appeal to Leader of Learning.
- This will allow the student to put forward reasons why his / her assignment should be re-assessed. This should be done within 3 days of meeting with the assessor.
- The assignment will be reassessed by an Internal Verifier who will provide the student with feedback within one working week.
- If the student is still dissatisfied, then he / she may appeal to the External Verifier via the Leader of Learning.

Grounds for Appeal

Appeals may be made under the following circumstances:

- If the student is dissatisfied with individual assessment outcomes for a unit element or individual performance criteria.
- If the student is dissatisfied with their assessment outcome at the end of the course.
- If the student has any personal circumstances which may have affected his / her ability to complete assignments and meet deadlines.

11. Results, enquiries about results (EARs) and access to scripts (ATS)

11.1 Results

Candidates will receive individual results slips on results days in person at the centre. Arrangements for the school to be open on results days are made by the Headteacher. The provision of staff on results days is the responsibility of the Headteacher.

11.2 Enquiries about Results (EARs)

EARs may be requested by centre staff or candidates if there are reasonable grounds for believing there has been an error in marking. A candidate may apply to have an enquiry carried out. If a candidate requires this then they will be charged the appropriate fee. (See section 5: Examination fees)

11.3 Access to Scripts (ATS)

After the release of results, candidates may ask subject staff to request the return of papers within three days' scrutiny of the results. If a result is queried, the Examinations Officer, teaching staff and Headteacher will investigate the feasibility of asking for a re-mark at the centre's expense.

When the centre does not support a candidate's or parent's request for an EAR, a candidate may apply to have an enquiry carried out. If a candidate requires this against the advice of subject staff, they will be charged.

Centre staff may also request scripts for investigation or for teaching purposes. For the latter, the consent of candidates must be obtained. GCSE re-marks cannot be applied for once a script has been returned.

12. Certificates

Certificates are collected and signed for. Certificates may be collected on behalf of a candidate by a third party, provided they have been authorised to do so. Certificates are not withheld from candidates who owe fees. The centre retains certificates under secure conditions for a minimum period of 12 months. After that they will be destroyed by a secure method. A record of all certificates destroyed will be kept for a further 4 years.