

Centre practices to help keep mobile phones out of the exam room

The following are responses to the question of what centres do to keep mobile phones out of the exam hall, put to Exams Officers during a webinar held by Ofqual in November 2018.

These responses were given following a discussion about candidate behaviours and in light of research that students don't necessarily intend to commit malpractice when taking their mobile phones into the exam hall. They may simply wish to be sure their phones will remain safe when not in their possession.

These responses are not endorsed by Ofqual, but are simply provided following requests from webinar attendees to understand more about what other centres do on this point.

Leave outside room

- "We just use coin operated lockers outside the exam rooms so that they know they are secure."
- "Empty pocket policy in all exams."
- "We get students to leave their phones in their bags in the corridor. The corridor is permanently staffed during the exam to prevent anything going missing. The students are happy that they don't have to give their phone in to us."
- "We ask students to leave them in their bags outside, switched off, at their own risk."
- "As a 6th form we have hardly any issue with mobile phones in exams. This may be because they have been through school and already understand that they can't have them in exams, but we run two full mock exam sessions in Feb & April that are run to full exam regulations - including no mobiles. We've had no issues with mobiles in several years because of this. We don't offer any particular place for them to store their phones. They have to leave their bags outside the hall. If they don't have a bag they have to hand their phones in to the invigilators."
- "Phones are switched off and left in bags and lots of verbal reminder requests. No innovative ideas here I'm afraid!"
- "As a small exam centre I ask all candidates to put their phones in their school bags. Their school bags are on a bench outside the exam hall. In addition, I get all candidates to 'turn out ALL their pockets as they walk into the exam hall'. This seems to jog their memory to make sure they have put the phone in their school bag."
- "We are a small centre, all our pupils have to hand in mobile phones upon arrival to school, they are stored in secure storage until the end of the school day. We also have a hand-held security wand to ensure pupils do not come into school with mobile phones."
- "Students are happier leaving phones in their bags rather than in a box with loads of other phones. We have a cupboard where desks are stored and so we get the students to enter through the cupboard and leave their bags in there before they enter the exam room. Then we lock the outside door so they are kept safe. In the gym we use the changing rooms which are locked on the inside so that no one can enter."

- “We put trays inside the hall entrance, outside the exam room and pupils hand them in. They stay in the trays in the hall as we don't want the responsibility of the value of the phones being stolen. They collect on way out. They do this in school internal exams too from Yr 7 onwards.”
- “Our students leave their bags in an allocated room which is locked during examinations. They only bring in what they need.”

Bag and tag systems

- “Phones are collected in envelopes which state each student's name. They are placed in a box outside the door and the students collect them as they depart.”
- “We used to use a 'bag and ticket' system but found it took too much time and invigilator resources at the start and end of exams - especially for 500-600 candidates at a time.”
- “Students put mobiles in a collection box and receive a receipt which they need to reclaim their phone.”
- “Mobile phone collection through a wallet and ticket system. Phones given back on presentation of the numbered ticket. Safely stored during exam. Alternative stored in lockers. Several reminders.”
- “We collect phones in plastic zip lock bag with ID label inside, a matching ID card is given to the candidate. Bags are kept safe in a plastic box. Candidates collect their phone by producing the ID card.”
- “We use crates to collect their mobile phones, smart watches etc.”
- “Each student hands in their phone and receives a number card which corresponds to the slot the phone has been put in.”

Detectors

- “I scan my students using hand-held metal detectors.”
- “Would really like it to be made part of regulations that students should be scanned for phones before going in!”
- “Metal detectors have been very successful in our centre. £15-£20 buys excellent scanners.”