



Dear Head,

Let's have a successful exam series

Before the 2020 series of exams gets underway, I would like to draw your attention to some issues we see every year. Most schools and colleges will have an incident-free exam series, but we understand that sometimes things go wrong. We have identified areas where your exams officer might benefit from some extra support to ensure your exams run without a hitch.

Exam package security: Exams officers will be dealing with a number of deliveries in the run up to exams. Please ensure that other members of staff are briefed on how to handle exam packages securely and are available to assist the exams officer with deliveries. Packages from exam boards must be delivered directly to the exams office secure storage, should not be opened, and should not spend any longer than absolutely necessary in reception areas.

On the day of an exam, two members of staff must be present to check the right packets are opened and must sign documentation to confirm this has happened. This should only occur up to 90 minutes before the exam starts, and no papers must leave secure storage until 60 minutes beforehand ([page 7 of Instructions for Conducting Examinations](#)). This can be difficult to manage depending on staffing and other responsibilities exams officers have during that hour. It is, however, vitally important that this rule is followed so it is crucial that you support your exams officer to resource this practice.

It is rare that the wrong packet is opened and the wrong paper given to students, but if this happens you should ensure that your staff know what to do. There are two key actions:

1. Make sure that all affected students, including those in additional rooms, remain supervised under exam conditions, even if other students have finished the original exam. This is to make sure that any work they have done on the wrong paper can be accepted by the board, and if necessary they can be given the correct paper.
2. Contact the exam board for specific instructions. Your centre is unlikely to have experienced this before, but the exam board has, so they will be able to advise you on what to do next.

The exam boards will be changing some of their established practices and introducing some new measures to enhance the security of their exam papers, and to detect the source of breaches of security should these occur. Some of these will be apparent to schools and colleges and will be explained by the exam board. Others will, intentionally, not be visible and so should not have any impact on how you receive, store and administer exam papers.

Timetable clashes: It can be challenging if there are several timetable clashes, but students must be properly supervised if they are sitting exams at a different time to the rest of the cohort. There is a risk that students' work might not be accepted by exam boards if there are opportunities for exam security to be breached.

Mobile phones and smart watches: As you know, mobile phones and smart watches must be switched off and stored away from students during exams. Students need to know, in advance, that they must not take these items into the exam hall. We know that exams officers put a lot of

work into getting this message across, but still some students do not understand the possible consequences of breaching this rule.

Last year, over 3000 penalties were issued to students for malpractice, of which almost half related to mobile phones and other communication devices, making it by far the most common type of exam malpractice. We have created [specific resources to help students and their parents](#) understand the importance of complying with the rules on phones and smart watches, and any extra support you are able to give to communicate this to students will help add weight to the message.

Exam paper leaks: We know that students often take to social media after their exams to voice their views about exam papers, but there have been instances, before exams take place, of individuals claiming to have copies of live questions or papers, and in some cases offering them for sale. I urge you to remind your students not to be distracted by such claims, or to share them. Sharing exam papers or questions, real or fake, could result in disqualification. If you or a student has any reason to believe the security of an exam paper has been compromised please inform the relevant exam board immediately.

Be Exam Smart: This year we are encouraging schools and colleges to spread the Be Exam Smart message, to ensure that students know how to avoid exam malpractice.

[Visit the Be Exam Smart web page to access information and resources](#) for running a smooth exam series. It includes: digital downloads for your social media channels, classroom preparation and parent communications; a printable poster and checklist; tips on how to keep mobile phones out of exams; useful blogs and student guides.

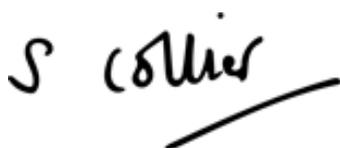
Disruption to the exam series: We all hope the exam series will run smoothly and not be disrupted by local, regional or national events. However, we do need to be prepared to deal with disruption, should it occur.

You can [find information for schools and colleges on how to deal with serious disruption](#) on our website. This includes a link to information from the DfE on how schools and colleges should plan for emergencies.

We recognise schools and colleges might have concerns about the possible impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on the 2020 summer exam series. We routinely consider whether there are particular risks to the smooth running of exams, and we are considering with the exam boards and with the Department for Education whether any additional measures might be needed this year. If so, we will update [our existing guidance](#). In the meantime, your students should continue to prepare for the summer exams as usual.

Thank you for all you and your staff will do over the coming months and I wish you an incident-free and successful exam series.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S Collier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underneath the name.

Sally Collier
Chief Regulator