

Newsletter

Exams and Revision:
2017/2018



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Following on from an earlier issue back in January 2017, this updated newsletter can help put the exam and revision process in perspective for you.

My format tweaking is now complete and I feel this is a good layout for editor and reader.
Your time starts now! Eyes down, get reading section by section or all in one massive read...



What are GCSE's?



They're formal qualifications taken at Teaseldown School, our exam centre.

A General Certificate of Secondary Education demonstrates learning ability across a variety of subjects.

English Language, Maths, Science are core subjects and everyone who takes GCSEs for the first-time studies for those three subjects.

All the other subjects are optional, and you have some choice in picking which one's best suit your learning style and give you a balanced education across the school timetables.

Grading Changes

0 1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9

GCSE's were formally graded only by the letter system. (A*-U) They're now gradually changing from a letter to a number system for Maths, English Language, Science and twenty other subjects. Below shows how it compares to the letter grading:

9	A*
8	A
7	
6	B
5 (strong pass)	C
4 (standard pass)	
3	D
2	E
1	F
	G
U	U

I appreciate the wording may be difficult to read!
Strong Pass= a high C and a standard pass= a low C.

Nerdy Nora's Newsletter Nuggets

Nora is back, did you miss her in the previous issue?
Don't like facts, just ignora. She'll get the message one day...



GCSE grading has been kept very similar since O-levels, the previous qualification phased out in the late nineteen eighties.
I heard the editor regretted excessive promotion of Facebook in his previous newsletter as well.
Cambridge Analytica are stealing this data in 3,2,1...

What would GCSE's allow me to do?

By sitting five GCSE's and passing all five at Grade 4 or above will you gain a RQF (Regulated Qualifications Framework) at level 2. The highest RQF is level 8, which means a subject has been studied and mastered to an extremely high(geeky) level at University.

These are the options open to you once passing GCSE's

- A BTEC level 1/2/3 for less exams and more coursework-based learning
- Choose an Intermediate or Advanced Apprenticeship that gives you training and skills whilst being employed and learning more about your industry at work and College
- Take up to four Level 3 A-Levels, a traditional but challenging academic route with a larger focus on exams
- Try a distance learning course to study largely independently ,and at your own pace.

Struggling with GCSE's?

- Then ELC's, Functional Skills and personalised life-skill based qualifications at College mean you'd be more prepared for future studies

It may take longer to get to some of the Level 3 qualifications, but you'll still be achieving in the mean-time!

I'd strongly recommend that Maths and English GCSE's are gained at the required grade of 4 or above before progressing to Level 3 qualifications.

It's a government requirement to pass and it will make juggling College work, gaining employment or progressing to University more difficult further down the line.

Qualifications and experience are more likely to improve job opportunities and level of pay.

To find out more about future qualifications and life at College, please speak to the Transition coordinators or refer to the College newsletter on the website.



KISS

(Keep It Simple Silly!)

- Pick a quote or piece of text from a source
- Find descriptive vocabulary in this sentence (e.g. desperately)
- Describe the use of this vocabulary in your answer. the writer may have used the word desperately to show the character was clinging on for dear life as he knew...
- Use these tips to answer GCSE English Language- comprehension exam questions. Find your own tips for each subject and jot them down in a safe place so you can revise for them now.

How to prepare your head for exams now...



Currently, it may feel that exams are too stressful to think about "There's no point trying, the whole exam system is against me."

Many students have felt like this.

With lots of time, patience and effort thinking can change.

"This is a stepping stone to the next level of education and it's an achievement to have got to the point of sitting in the exam room.

However much you may disagree with exams, that's how most qualifications test knowledge. Accepting this the best you can and cracking on with preparing for it is difficult. Surely it's worth a try though?

Revision Recommendations

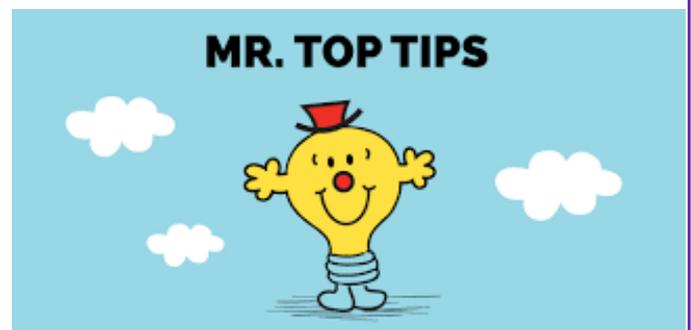


Students who will be taking exams this year will have received a letter relating to when study leave begins. Support is provided from mentors in the school. This may be through Skype, telephone or face to face sessions and will be confirmed with students closer to the time. A revision pack will outline areas to focus on and try to improve in. Students and parents can email/contact staff for more information, support or both. They will reply when they can.

One of my own areas that needed improvement was having effective revision techniques and better time management on study leave. With the help of my brain and some of the Transition coordinators it's time to pass on some advice...

- ✓ Many people have sat exams and know how it feels. They can't do the revision for you, but feel free to ask questions and explain how you're feeling as they can suggest a few ideas that helped them cope with revision.
- ✓ Maintain some type of routine until you have completed your exams, it will help if you find a set time to study every day. If you think it will help, create a revision schedule.
- ✓ Fail to prepare, prepare to fail! Make sure that you get drinks and snacks before you start so that you won't use this as an excuse to stop studying.
- ✓ Everyone learns differently and knowing your personal learning style can be a great help with study. Transition Coordinators can work with students to find this out or try yourself using the link provided **HERE!**
- ✓ Make sure you include breaks in your revision timetable... This will increase your focus while you study and won't leave you bamboozled when revising.

- ✓ Keep revision interesting. Use brightly coloured flash cards, include videos and online quizzes about the topic you are revising and learn facts using acronyms and song lyrics.
- ✓ Pick your environment! Find out where you find it easiest to study and do your revision there.
- ✓ Study Leave is most useful if time is used to the max and this is a key part of the exam preparation process. Reading, exam question practise or using online resources can help you understand a topic but be sure to keep the learning in short, sharp bursts!



- 1.) Help yourself by getting to bed on time. Sleep aids like milk and bananas, aromatherapy, blackout blinds, deep breathing all help.
- 2.) Try not to use screens for 30-60 minutes before bedtime, read a book, chat or listen to music instead. (This is hard we know!)

These sleep aids will help you to relax and improve your sleep quality, which will help on a busy day that may feel stressful.
- 3.) Eat well, munch on plenty of proteins, carbohydrates, fruit and vegetables.

They're filling and give you the most nutrients and energy for a hard-working brain answering exam questions!
- 4.) Try to find your way of relaxing and revising before or after an exam. It can get very intense and a chill-out will be much-needed.

5.) Attempt as many questions as you can and read them carefully.

It's better to put something than nothing always, as an extra mark could make a big difference. Answer the questions you're most comfortable with first then come back to any others.

6.) Marks show how many points to make in an answer to a question. Use evidence from a source to explain your answers. This will gain you more marks.

When a question says, "Discuss the pros and cons" for example, ensure you have a balanced argument that includes your own views to get plenty of marks.

7.) Speak to your school's Transition co-ordinator to help find out what revision techniques work for you and how gaps in learning can be covered.

8.) Try your best.



How long are exams?

Most students take around six or seven GCSE's in Year 11, so several hours across seven weeks (not including half-terms) will be spent in exams.

You can take GCSE's early in Year 10 but only if you feel ready and can handle it. This would also need to be agreed by your parents and exams officer. In this scenario, less hours will be spent in exams, with fewer subjects to revise for next year if you get a good grade. HOORAH!



What equipment do I need to bring?

Nothing, it's all provided for you, but a non-labelled water bottle may be a good idea. Be aware that in exams at College or University much less is provided for you and its important steps are taken to the remember all the equipment for exams.

How do I get to my exam?

Via school transport or through parents dropping you off and picking you up again.

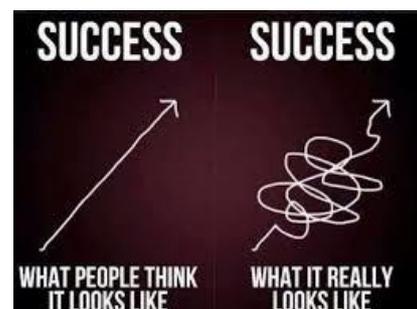
What can my mentor do to help me in an exam?

Not much really, as they invigilate (monitor) your exam they can give you a time countdown if you request it beforehand. Mentors remain in the exam room throughout but can't tell you how to answer a question or work through an exam paper for you as it tests your knowledge not theirs!

What's the room laid out like?

An empty desk would contain:

- Two black pens
- Your paper when given to you
- Forms for your invigilator (mentor) to fill in and any other equipment needed for the exam
- A clock will be in the room and you can ask for a digital one if you prefer this
- whiteboard pens for invigilators to write exam information
- Course codes, and subject information about the exam paper along with start and finish times will be shown
- There will be posters on the wall with exam rules on and all displays will be covered up in the room



What happens before an exam?

Do stuff like a toilet break, water bottle re-fill, snack, chillax before entering the exam room. Electrical devices must be stored away safely or handed in at the school office. Clothing, water bottle labels must be covered up or removed if it has writing on. Watch out for watches as they're not allowed in the exam room too.

The room you sit your exam in, (which is often the same) can be entered at least ten minutes before the exam starts. An invigilator will read through a checklist and ask you if the temperature is right. They will then read out the rules of the exam and pause in-between if you have questions. When the paper is in the room and your start time matches the front of the exam paper you can begin!

I'm finding it too hard/ stressful can I leave the room?

Absolutely, for a toilet break but be aware that the toilet may be searched before you enter in case a cheater lurks in your exam centre! The invigilator also must follow you to the toilet, wait outside and follow you back. You're unable to leave the room until another invigilator or exams officer arrives to stand with the paper and you still can't talk to anyone, including the invigilator during this time. The exam time will often not stop during a toilet break.

Ending an exam before designated leaving the room times that the invigilator would tell you about, mean the exams a write-off and it must be re-sat later/ or you won't be graded for the examination part of a subject which significantly lowers your final grade.

I need extra support in an exam who can help?

The exams officers Jenny and Mel can apply for additional support ("Special Consideration") for exams. This could range from bigger text, extra time, a scribe, (adult writer) a computer to do your exam on and other alternatives. If you feel that it would be a benefit to have special consideration, discuss this with your schools

transition co-ordinator and your parents. This will then be fed back to Jenny and Mel in the exams office who can go through the relevant procedures and paperwork to apply for this support.

There is no absolute guarantee that this will be approved or applied for if the criteria aren't met. Unfortunately, all these decisions are made by JCQ and their rules are strict.

Who are JCQ and why do they tell us what to do?

JCQ are called the Joint Council for qualifications and they're the voice for the main exam boards across the UK.

They help exam boards, exam centres, teachers and support staff work more closely together. Rules set by them need to be strict so everyone has equal opportunities and conditions to show what they know.

JCQ's main roles include:

- Checking exam centres follow the rules
- Giving guidance to exam officers
- Publishing advice, guidance and regulations on delivering examinations
- Managing the massive levels of administration needed for country-wide GCSE exams
- Dealing with any media interest.

Without JCQ we'd have different posters in the classrooms; but a much less organised exam system at the same time!

That completes our guide to GCSE exams. Thanks to everyone who supported with layout and content and to you for reading all this!

Any Ideas?

For our schools, the website or for this student newsletter? Contact us using our website feedback page, or get in touch through social media, active on:



Students must not contact staff on social media for Child Protection, E-Safety reasons. It's important to maintain professional boundaries too).



GOOD LUCK
IN YOUR EXAMS

knock 'em out with your GENIUS!