



# GCSE Student Guide for External Examinations

# GCSE Student Guide for External Examinations

## **Introduction**

It is the aim of Strathearn School to make the examination experience as stress-free and successful as possible for all candidates.

Hopefully, this booklet will prove informative and helpful for you and your parents. Please read it carefully and show it your parents so that they are also aware of the examination regulations and the procedures to follow in the event of any problems occurring.

Mrs Connery, as Principal of the School, is head of the Strathearn Examination Centre. The administration of GCE and GCSE examinations is the responsibility of the Examinations Officer, Mrs Norris.

The Awarding Bodies (or Examination Boards) set down strict criteria which must be followed for the conduct of examinations and Strathearn School is required to follow them precisely. You should therefore pay particular attention to the **Information to Candidates** that is printed on Appendix 1.

Answers to some common questions can be viewed in Appendix 3. An exam check list has also been provided in Appendix 4 with guidance on calculator use in Appendix 5.

**If there is anything you do not understand or any question that has not been addressed, PLEASE ASK.**

If you, or your parents, have any queries or need help or advice at any time before, during or after the examination please contact: The Vice Principal (Teaching and Learning) Mr Anderson or the Examinations Officer, Mrs Norris. The school telephone number is: 9047 1595.

**Remember – we are here to help.**

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- Although we encourage all students to arrive in plenty of time to avoid a last minute panic, it is important that we have up-to-date contact telephone numbers for both you and your parents, or anybody else who might be able to help in an emergency. If you have recently moved or changed telephone numbers, please alert reception.
- Please save the **school telephone number 9047 1595** on your mobile phone (if you will be carrying one) so that you can phone in if you have a serious problem on your journey to school.

## **Equipment:**

- Make sure that you have all the correct equipment before your exam. Check the regulations in the Information for Candidates document (Appendix 1) and the information on the following pages.

## **Special Arrangements:**

- Special Arrangements are made for those pupils who have permanent or long-term disabilities and/or learning difficulties and, where appropriate, for those pupils who suffer temporary disabilities, illness and indispositions during the examination period. After consultation with the Learning Support Coordinator, Mrs Norris will make an application to the relevant Awarding Bodies for the appropriate Special Arrangement to be approved.

## **Special Consideration:**

A candidate may be eligible for Special Consideration if:

- (a) Performance in an examination is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the candidate, e.g. recent personal illness, bereavement.
- (b) Part of an examination is missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the candidate e.g. an accident (note that there are minimum examination requirements that need to be met for a grade to be awarded).

Parents should contact Mrs Sinnerton (VP Pastoral) regarding Special Consideration. Evidence, e.g. a doctor's letter, may be required to support the application. Mrs Norris applies to the relevant Awarding Body for Special Consideration to be given to a candidate. The Awarding Body decides the level of consideration given to a candidate, but parents should be aware that no feedback is ever given.

In a situation where the school felt that an application for Special Consideration was not appropriate, the pupil/parent has the right to appeal by making contact with the School Principal (Head of Centre). Any such appeal must be initiated within 5 working days of the pupil's last written exam.

## **Timetables:**

- You will have received an individual timetable showing your own specific exams with details of date, time and duration of exam. Check it carefully – **if you think something is wrong see Mrs Norris immediately.**

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- Some candidates may have a clash where two exams are timetabled at the same time. The school will make special timetable arrangements for these candidates. Mrs Norris will make each candidate aware of how their clash has been resolved and check that they are happy with the arrangement. **If you think there is a clash on your timetable that has not been resolved, please see Mrs Norris immediately.**

## During the Examinations

### Examination Regulations:

- A copy of the 'Information for Candidates' notice for written exams, which is issued jointly by all Awarding Bodies, is shown in Appendix 1 of this booklet. All candidates must read these carefully and note that to break any of the examination rules or regulations could lead to disqualification from all subjects. The school must report any breach of regulations to the Awarding Body.

### Attendance at Examinations:

- Candidates are responsible for checking their own timetable and arriving at school on the correct day and time, properly dressed and equipped. Candidates must arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the start time of their exam. Please wait quietly outside the exam venue until you are invited to enter by the examination invigilators.
- All items of equipment, pens, pencils, mathematical instruments etc., should be visible to the invigilators at all times. You must either use a transparent pencil case or clear plastic bag.
- Pens should be **black ink or ballpoint only**. NO ink erasers, highlighter, gel pens or correction pens are allowed.
- For exams that permit the use of a calculator, students should check their calculators conform to the examination regulations – see Appendix 5. If in doubt, check with your teacher. Remove any covers or instructions and clear anything that has been stored in the calculator. Please make sure batteries are new.
- Candidates are not to bring mobile phones or other electrical devices such as iPods, smart Watches, MP3 players, pagers, reading pens or any other products with text or digital facilities into the examination room. If candidates have unauthorised items in an examination, this may represent malpractice and lead to disqualification. The school must forward a report to the Awarding Body.
- Wrist watches are not permitted in the exam hall. They must be removed before entering the hall.
- Any mobile phones/smart Watches/wrist watches that are accidentally brought into the exam hall must be switched off and handed to the Invigilator at the start of the examination – **they must not be left in your pocket**. Even if you do not intend to use it, if it is still in your possession, you will be subject to a penalty. In the past this has been awarding the candidate 0 marks in that unit. If you lift the phone out of your pocket, this is regarded as a Sanction 5 which results in disqualification from the exam series.

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- Please also ensure that you have emptied your pockets of any loose notes. Even if you don't intend to use these, they can easily drop out of your pocket during an exam. If this happens it will be viewed as malpractice and sanctions, similar to those outlined above, will be enforced. Pupils should get into the way checking their pockets before they enter the exam venue.
- On entering the exam venue, exam conditions will apply. This means no communication between candidates. Failure to comply to this represents malpractice.
- Listen carefully to instructions and notices read out by the invigilators – there may be amendments to the exam paper that you need to know about.
- Check you have the correct question paper – check the subject, paper and tier of entry.
- Read all instructions carefully and number your answers clearly. Make sure you have filled in all the details on the front of the exam paper. You will be given a chance to do this before the exam starts.
- If you have finished the paper use any time remaining to check over your answers and ensure you have completed your details correctly. All candidates must remain in the exam hall for the full duration of the exam.
- At the end of the exam all work must be handed in – remember to cross out any rough work neatly but do not make it illegible as it will be forwarded to the examiner. If you have used more than one answer book or loose sheets of paper, ask for a treasury tag to fasten them together in the correct order.
- It is your responsibility to ensure you produce legible writing.
- Invigilators will collect your exam papers before you leave the room. Silence must be maintained during this time. Remember you are still under examination conditions until you have left the room and any communication between candidates will be viewed as malpractice.
- Question papers, answer booklets and additional paper must **NOT** be taken from the examination room.
- Remain seated in silence until told to leave the examination room. Please leave the room in silence and show consideration for other candidates who may still be working.
- You must not leave the hall during an exam without being accompanied by an invigilator. If you do, you will not be permitted to return.
- There are a number of candidates in the hall who are in receipt of different access arrangements which results in numerous finishing times. If you are unsure of your revised finishing time, please do check with an invigilator before leaving the hall. Once you have left the hall, you cannot return, so best to double check beforehand.
- If the fire alarm sounds during an exam the invigilators will tell you what to do. Don't panic. If you have to evacuate the room, you will be asked to leave in silence and in the

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order in which you are sitting. You will be escorted to the designated assembly point in the back car-park. Leave everything on your desk. You must not attempt to communicate with anyone else during the evacuation. When you return to the examination room do not start writing until the invigilator tells you to. You will be allowed the full working time for the exam and a report will be sent to the Awarding Body detailing the incident.

- If you receive access arrangements which result in you finishing your exam after the published finish time, please ensure that you have received your full time allowance **before** you leave the hall. If you are in doubt, please ask the invigilator to clarify your revised finish time.

## **Invigilators**

- The school employs external invigilators, led by Mrs Millar, to conduct the exams in a number of venues around the school. Students are expected to behave in a respectful manner towards all invigilators and follow their instructions at all times.
- Invigilators are in the exam rooms to supervise the conduct of the exam. They will distribute and collect the exam papers, tell candidates when to start and finish the exam, hand out extra writing paper if required and escort pupils if they need to leave the hall.
- If a pupil has any concerns during the exam, do not hesitate to highlight them to the invigilators.
- To attract the invigilator's attention, raise your hand and wait for the invigilator to come to you.
- Invigilators cannot discuss the exam paper with you or explain the questions. They will simply instruct you to read the questions/instructions again.

## **What to do if you are ill on the day of the exam**

- If you are ill and are unable to attend an exam, it is vital you phone the school first thing in the morning to inform us.
- You must also obtain a note from your doctor detailing the reason for non-attendance. There is the possibility of submitting this note to the Awarding Body to ask for Special Consideration.
- If you are feeling unwell, but still able to travel, I suggest you come to school and we can assess the situation then. In most cases it is better to take the exam, if you can.
- **If in doubt – PHONE THE SCHOOL.**

## **After the Examinations**

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## Notification of Results

GCSE results will be issued on Thursday 24 August.  
Results will also be posted out to your home address via first class mail on this date.

## **Post Results**

If you need post results advice, school staff will be available on results day. The following services are available:

## Enquiry about Results

- Review of Marks
- Access to Scripts

There is a charge for these services. The Awarding Bodies have set deadlines for the submission of requests for review of marks, access to scripts and appeals. Information is issued with the results regarding the deadlines, cost and other matters relating to the Post Result Services available to pupils.

Pupils may speak to Mrs Norris or their subject teacher for advice on the review of marking process but ultimately the final decision rests with the candidate. It will be the candidate who signs the consent form and submits payment to the Awarding Body.

Before a pupil can submit a review of mark request, they must complete a consent form. This is a signed acknowledgement that a review of marking may result in marks going up, leading to a grade change but it may also lead to a drop in marks which can lead to a grade being lowered. If a grade is lowered, the original grade cannot be reinstated.

If a pupil has any concerns regarding the outcome of a marks review, they should contact Mrs Norris as soon as possible to discuss the Appeals Procedure set up by the Awarding Bodies. Appeals are made by the school on the behalf of the pupil. Please note that there is a deadline of **30 calendar days** after the receipt of the outcome of a mark review in which the school may instigate an appeal. Pupils may also wish to discuss their concerns with the relevant Head of Department but should not delay in informing Mrs Norris of a possible appeal being made.

Please note that candidates and/or their parents/carers are not entitled to appeal directly to the awarding body. Representations must be made to the Head of Centre where the candidate was entered or registered. It will be the Head of Centre's decision as to whether to proceed with an appeal.

## Appendix 1

**This document has been written to help you.  
Read it carefully and follow the instructions.**

If there is anything you do not understand, especially which calculator you may use, ask your teacher.

### **A. Regulations – Make sure you understand the rules**

- 1** Be on time for all your exams. If you are late, your work might not be accepted.
- 2 Do not** become involved in any unfair or dishonest practice during the exam.
- 3** If you try to cheat, or break the rules in any way, you could be disqualified from all your subjects.
- 4** You **must not** take into the exam room:
  - (a)** notes;
  - (b)** an iPod, a mobile phone, a MP3/4 player or similar device, or a watch.

Any pencil cases taken into the exam room **must** be see-through.

**Remember: possession of unauthorised material is breaking the rules, even if you do not intend to use it, and you will be subject to penalty and possible disqualification.**

- 5** If you have a watch, the invigilator will ask you to hand it to them.
- 6 Do not** use correcting pens, fluid or tape, erasable pens, highlighters or gel pens in your answers.
- 7 Do not** talk to or try to communicate with, or disturb other candidates once the exam has started.
- 8** You **must not** write inappropriate, obscene or offensive material.
- 9** If you leave the exam room unaccompanied by an invigilator before the exam has finished, you **will not** be allowed to return.
- 10 Do not** borrow anything from another candidate during the exam.



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## **B. Information – Make sure you attend your exams and bring what you need**

- 1** Know the dates and times of all your exams. Arrive at least ten minutes before the start of each exam.
- 2** If you arrive late for an exam, report to the invigilator running the exam.
- 3** If you arrive more than one hour after the published starting time for the exam, you may not be allowed to take it.
- 4** Only take into the exam room the pens, pencils, erasers and any other equipment which you need for the exam.
- 5** You **must** write clearly and in black ink. Coloured pencils or inks may only be used for diagrams, maps, charts, etc. unless the instructions printed on the front of the question paper state otherwise.

## **C. Calculators, dictionaries and computer spell-checkers**

- 1** You may use a calculator unless you are told otherwise.
- 2** If you use a calculator:
  - (a)** make sure it works properly; check that the batteries are working properly;
  - (b)** clear anything stored in it;
  - (c)** remove any parts such as cases, lids or covers which have printed instructions or formulae;
  - (d) do not** bring into the exam room any operating instructions or prepared programs.
- 3 Do not** use a dictionary or computer spell checker unless you are told otherwise.

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## **D. Instructions during the exam**

- 1 Always listen to the invigilator. Always follow their instructions.
- 2 Tell the invigilator at once if:
  - (a) you think you have not been given the right question paper or all of the materials listed on the front of the paper;
  - (b) the question paper is incomplete or badly printed.
- 3 Read carefully and follow the instructions printed on the question paper and/or on the answer booklet.
- 4 **Do not** start writing anything until the invigilator tells you to fill in all the details required on the front of the question paper and/or the answer booklet before you start the exam. **Do not open the question paper until you are instructed that the exam has begun.**
- 5 Remember to write your answers within the designated sections of the answer booklet.
- 6 Do your rough work on the proper exam stationery. Cross it through and hand it in with your answers.  
Make sure you add your candidate details to any additional answer sheets that you use, including those used for rough work.

## **E. Advice and assistance**

- 1 If on the day of the exam you feel that your work may be affected by ill health or any other reason, tell the invigilator.
- 2 Put up your hand during the exam if:
  - (a) you have a problem and are in doubt about what you should do;
  - (b) you do not feel well;
  - (c) you need more paper.
- 3 You **must not** ask for, and will not be given, any explanation of the questions.

## **F. At the end of the exam**

- 1 If you have used more than one answer booklet and/or any supplementary answer sheets, place them in the correct order.  
Place any loose additional answer sheets inside your answer booklet. Make sure you add your candidate details to any additional answer sheets that you use.
- 2 **Do not** leave the exam room until told to do so by the invigilator.
- 3 **Do not** take any stationery from the exam room. This includes the question paper, answer booklets used or unused, rough work or any other materials provided for the exam.

**This information must be made available to all candidates in advance of their examination(s) for each series. It may be provided electronically to candidates or in hard copy paper format.**

## Appendix 2

### RESULTS

Result packs will be posted home to the address we currently have stored on the system.

If you would like your results posted to an address other than what we hold on the system please complete the form below and return it to Mrs L Wright, School Secretary, Strathearn School.

This must be done before the end of June.

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Address to which results should be sent (if not home address). *Please include post code:*

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## Appendix 3

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q What do I do if there is a clash on my timetable?**

**A** Mrs Norris will re-schedule one of your exams and issue a new revised timetable for that day. If the combined time of the 2 exams is more than 3 hours, candidates will sit one paper in the morning and one in the afternoon. Otherwise, the papers will be done one after each other. When candidates take an exam earlier or later than the published start time they will be supervised for the duration and must not have any communication with other candidates. It will be necessary for you to bring a packed lunch if you have exams in the morning and afternoon as you will have to remain in isolation until both exams are completed. If in doubt consult Mrs Norris. Please remember to bring all material for the second exam when you turn up to sit your first exam and leave this at the front of the exam hall for collection before you go into isolation. When you are in isolation you must give your mobile phone and any other electronic device to the supervisor. Failure to do so could lead to disqualification penalties. You will be escorted to the bathroom and whilst there, must not communicate with any other pupil.

**Q What do I do if I think have the wrong paper?**

**A** Invigilators will ask you to check the paper before the exam starts. If you think something is wrong put your hand up and tell the invigilator immediately.

**Q What do I do if I forget my Candidate Number?**

**A** Candidate numbers are printed on desk cards on the top corner of your allocated desk.

**Q What do I do if I forget the School Centre Number?**

**A** The Centre Number is 71279. It will be clearly displayed in the examination rooms.

**Q What do I do if I have an accident or am ill before the exam?**

**A** Inform the school as soon as possible so we can help or advise you. You may need to obtain medical evidence (from your GP or hospital) if you wish the school to make an appeal for Special Consideration on your behalf (see below).

**Q What is Special Consideration?**

**A** Special consideration is a post-examination adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade. This is to reflect temporary illness, temporary injury or some other event outside of the candidate's control at the time of the assessment. It is applied when the issue or event has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a candidate's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment.

The maximum allowance given will be 5% of the total raw marks available in the component concerned however, parents should be aware that any adjustment is likely to be small and no feedback is ever provided. Candidates will only be eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and covered the whole course but

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performance in the examination or in the production of coursework is affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control. Mrs Norris must be informed immediately, so that the necessary paperwork can be completed and the candidate will be required to provide evidence to support such an application. Special consideration must be applied for during the exam series. It cannot be applied once results have been received.

**Q What do I do if I feel ill during the exam?**

**A** Put your hand up and an invigilator will assist you. You must not leave the exam hall unsupervised. If you do this, you will not be permitted back in to sit the remainder of the exam.

If you feel ill before the exam starts, inform Mrs Norris and the invigilators. If you feel this may have affected your performance speak to Mrs Norris directly after the exam.

**Q If I am late can I still sit the examination?**

**A** Provided you are not more than 1 hour late after the published start time, it may still be possible for you to sit the examination. You should get to school as quickly as possible and report to Reception. If possible, contact the school to inform us you are running late. A member of staff will escort you to the examination room. You must not enter an examination room without permission after an examination has begun. It may not be possible to allow you any extra time if you start the examination late.

If you arrive at school more than 1 hour after the published start time, the school must inform the relevant Exam Board and it is very likely that the Board may decide not to accept your work.

Please ensure that you allow enough time to get to school so that if you are delayed (e.g. through transport problems) you will still arrive on time.

**Q If I miss the examination can I take it on another day?**

**A NO.** Timetables are regulated by the Awarding Bodies, and you must attend on the given date and time.

**Q How do I know how long the exam is?**

**A** The length of the examination is shown in minutes on your individual timetable under the heading 'duration'. Invigilators will tell you when to start and finish the exam. There will be a clock in all the examination rooms. There will also be a board at the front of the exam hall that will specify the duration of each exam.

**Q Can I go to the toilet during the exam?**

**A** If it is absolutely necessary. You will be escorted by an invigilator but will not be allowed any extra time.

## Appendix 4

### EXAM CHECK LIST

- Aim to arrive at school 15 minutes prior to an exam. It is much better to leave yourself a safety margin on timings in case you encounter problems on the journey.
- When taking exams, bags and coats should be left in lockers. Only equipment required to complete the exam should be taken into the exam hall. Please do not leave anything valuable in any of the changing rooms in the Sports Hall.
- You are not allowed to have notes, papers, iPod, MP3 players, smart watches, wrist watches or mobile phones in your possession.
- You should bring a **BLACK** pen, pencil, rubber and any other writing equipment needed to do your exams. Only clear pencil cases are allowed on your desk, any others should be left in your bag. Do not use gel pens – this is because many of the exam papers are now scanned and sent electronically for marking – gel pens do not scan well.
- In an exam where you have the use of a calculator, all calculator covers should be removed.
- You are responsible for ensuring your calculator is working. You are not permitted to borrow a calculator from another candidate during the exam session.
- There must be no talking or communication between students once you enter the exam hall. If you have any questions, you should raise your hand once seated and an invigilator will come to you.
- No food is allowed in the exam hall. If you have a special requirement – please see Mrs Norris, Exams Officer, before the exam.
- Water bottles are allowed in the exam hall if necessary. These should be transparent with the label removed.
- If you have an exam clash you must bring all notes for both exams when you arrive for your first exam. These notes must be left at the front of the hall for collection after your first exam.

## Appendix 5

### **Calculators must be:**

- of a size suitable for use on the desk;
- either battery or solar powered;
- free of lids, cases and covers which have printed instructions or formulae.

### **Calculators must not:**

- be designed or adapted to offer any of these facilities:
  - language translators;
  - symbolic algebra manipulation;
  - symbolic differentiation or integration;
  - communication with other machines or the internet;
- be borrowed from another candidate during an examination for any reason;
- have retrievable information stored in them. This includes:
  - databanks;
  - dictionaries;
  - mathematical formulae;
  - text.

### **The candidate is responsible for the following:**

- the calculator's power supply;
- the calculator's working condition;
- clearing anything stored in the calculator.

Where access is permitted to a calculator for part of an examination, it is acceptable for candidates to place their calculators on the floor under their desks in sight of the invigilator(s) for the non-calculator portion of the examination.