Why you should be known as an exams manager and not an exams officer

Introduction

The NAEO believes that anyone responsible for the day-to-day management, administration and delivery of examinations and assessments within a school, college or other educational setting should be recognised as an **Exams Manager**, not an **Exams Officer**.

Although some centres already use this title, most staff carrying out these responsibilities are still referred to as Exams Officers – a title that no longer reflects the level of responsibility and expertise required. This needs to change.

The sample job description [see Job Description], created by the NAEO in partnership with The Exams Office, outlines the key responsibilities of individuals who manage, administer and deliver examinations and assessments within their centre.

This article sets out those responsibilities in detail, providing a clear reference point for discussions with senior leaders about the true nature of the role.

Key aspects of the role

The argument for recognising this position as a managerial role is supported by the following responsibilities.

- Managing a team, including performance
- Managing a department
- Setting goals
- Organising work
- Ensuring productivity/outcomes within exams
- Focusing on day-to-day operations which maintain the smooth running of the examination system within the centre, including:
    - performing a range of administrative tasks
    - delivering customer service
    - managing people
- Implementing strategies/decisions set by senior management or a higher, external authority (for example, the Department for Education, Ofqual, JCQ, the awarding organisations)
- Delegating tasks
- Making operational decisions, including routine, short-term choices to manage daily activities effectively
- Possessing skills related to:
    - leadership
    - communication
    - project management (with reference to the Exam Cycle)

An analysis of the Exams Manager role

A more detailed examination of the responsibilities involved in managing examinations and assessments shows that the role aligns closely with that of a managerial position.

<u>Detailed technical knowledge</u>

There is a requirement to possess a thorough understanding of JCQ regulations (across a range of documents including *General Regulations for Approved Centres, Instructions for conducting examinations, A guide to the special consideration process, A guide to the awarding bodies' appeal processes, Post-Results Services* and *Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures*) and awarding body requirements, including:

- JCQ exam-related policies
- Online systems
- Conducting examinations and managing a series of scenarios

<u>Managing the results and post-results process</u>

Once results are issued, it is the responsibility of an Exams Manager to manage a range of enquiries about results, including requests for:

- Access to scripts
- Clerical re-checks
- Reviews of marking
- Reviews of moderation
- Appeals to awarding bodies

<u>Responsibility for the conducting of examinations/assessments</u>

An Exams Manager is required to oversee the administration and delivery of all examinations and assessments across every qualification and subject offered by their centre. This task is undertaken whilst serving as the sole point of accountability for the secure and compliant conduct of all examinations and preventing errors or non-compliance.

<u>Managing operational and regulatory risk</u>

An Exams Manager ensures that:

- Candidates are entered for, and sit, the correct examinations
- Substantial unbudgeted costs are avoided in late/very late exam entry fees
- The centre's - and head of centre's - reputation is protected against cases of centre/staff malpractice/maladministration

<u>Leading and co-ordinating teams/staff members</u>

An Exams Manager is responsible for managing and/or directing the following:

- The recruitment, interviewing, training, deployment and analysis of the performance of invigilators
- The receipt of confidential examination materials in line with JCQ requirements by reception staff
- The set up of the main examination hall/room(s) by premises/site staff

- The delivery of online assessments and the provision of assistive technology where applicable to candidates with access arrangements involving IT staff

Supporting contingency and succession planning

Centres are required to ensure that contingency arrangements, including the absence of the Exams Manager/Officer at critical stages of the examination cycle, and succession arrangements for members of staff involved in examination and assessment administration, are in place. The Exams Manager ensures that:

Temporary cover guidance is in place. This includes providing clear instructions for any staff member temporarily taking over the exams manager/officer role, such as:

- A list of essential tasks
- Step-by-step guidance on how to complete each task
- Relevant deadlines and timeframes

Succession procedures are devised to support the smooth transition to a new Exams Manager, such as:

- Handover documentation
- Training recommendations
- Key contacts and secure transfer of system access details

Advising and guiding the head of centre and senior leadership team

An Exams Manager plays a critical role in ensuring that the head of centre fulfils their exam-related responsibilities, including:

- Meeting the obligations outlined in the annual *Head of centre declaration*
- Ensuring full compliance with JCQ regulations and awarding body requirements
- Protecting the centre from incidents of malpractice and maladministration

Stakeholder liaison

An Exams Manager liaises/collaborates with a range of internal stakeholders, including:

- Head of Centre
- Senior Leadership Team / Line Manager
- Heads of Year
- Heads of Department
- Teaching and Subject Staff
- SENCo (or equivalent role) and Teaching/Learning Support Assistants
- Finance Team
- IT Staff
- Reception Staff
- Site Staff
- Invigilators
- Students
- Parents and Carers

...and external stakeholders to acquire information/guidance, including:

- Department for Education – regarding exam-related policy
- Ofqual – for regulatory compliance
- JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) – for adherence to examination regulations
- Awarding Bodies – for exam administration

<u>Mandatory training to uphold standards and security</u>

An Exams Manager is required to complete a range of mandatory training activities in line with JCQ regulations. These include:

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) such as attending an annual update course to stay informed of regulatory changes and best practices

Role-specific training and support to facilitate the effective delivery of examinations and assessments within the centre and ensure full compliance with JCQ and awarding body requirements

Annual cyber security training covering key areas outlined in JCQ regulations to safeguard sensitive exam-related data and systems

Key skills

An Exams Manager must possess a range of skills to perform their role effectively, efficiently and in line with JCQ regulations.

Below is an example of these skills and the situations in which they apply.

Skill	Description
Time management	Organising a range of tasks within the exam cycle efficiently to meet a range of JCQ and awarding organisation deadlines
People management	Managing, directing and supporting staff including invigilators, reception staff, IT staff and premises/site staff
Contingency planning and risk management	Planning for a staff member to temporarily and permanently take over the Exams Manager/Officer role, and to deal with a range of exam-related scenarios before, during and after an exam session/day
Task prioritisation and multitasking	Managing a busy workload and handling multiple responsibilities simultaneously across several exam series and tasks within an exam cycle
Problem solving	Responding calmly and effectively to challenges as they arise before, during and after an exam session/day
Communication skills	Conveying information clearly to and from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders
Handling difficult conversations	Managing sensitive and difficult discussions with professionalism and empathy with internal and external stakeholders

Presentation skills	Delivering training (for example to invigilators and facilitators of access arrangements) and briefings (for example to heads of departments, subject staff and candidates) confidently and clearly
Decision making	Making informed choices under pressure, particularly during an exam session/day
Deadline management	Ensuring all exam-related tasks are completed to strict deadlines as set by the Joint Council for Qualifications and the awarding organisations
Collaborative working	Building strong working relationships across with a range of internal stakeholders

Role comparison to support contractual/salary discussions

The following roles are classified as school business professionals within the school workforce census:

- Bursar
- Business Manager
- Finance Officer
- Office Manager
- Premises Manager
- ICT Network Manager

Below is a list of key responsibilities for these roles taken from information in roles advertised by a range of recruitment agencies.

Role	Responsibilities (this is not an exhaustive list)
School finance manager Average base salary - £44k (see payscale.com)	- Managing budgets - Preparing financial reports - Ensuring compliance with regulations - Overseeing accounts payable and receivable - Managing payroll and procurement activities - Providing strategic advice to support centre's mission and goals
School bursar Average base salary - £44k (see payscale.com)	- Devising/supporting strategy - Financial management - Financial responsibilities: - Budgeting and accounting - Financial reporting - Cash management - Student financial services - Compliance and risk management responsibilities - Service to students and families

School business manager Average base salary - £35k (see payscale.com)	• Financial management • Administrative functions • Health and safety compliance • Leadership and strategy • Compliance and administration • Ensuring that the school operates efficiently and effectively
School office manager Average base salary - £30k (see payscale.com)	• Planning and delivering school organisation and administration functions • Financial management • Managing staff and pupil information • Administrative support • IT management • Compliance - First aid and safety • Marketing and promotional activities • Supporting students • Communication skills, empathy, and the ability to work under pressure
School premises manager Average base salary - £33,500k (see indeed.com)	• Maintain safety and security/carrying out regular health and safety inspections and ensuring appropriate access controls are in place • Managing the day-to-day maintenance and inspections • Ensuring compliance with regulations and standards • Maintaining a high-quality environment and addressing premises-related issues • Collaborating with internal and external stakeholders
School ICT manager Average base salary - £52k (see glassdoor.co.uk)	• Leading, managing and developing ICT systems to support high-quality teaching and learning • Advising senior leaders on ICT strategic development and technical matters to ensure systems perform effectively to support teaching and learning • Monitoring and managing the health and safety of ICT equipment • Training and development for staff, including performance management meetings • Technical expertise to ensure awareness of trends in hardware and software