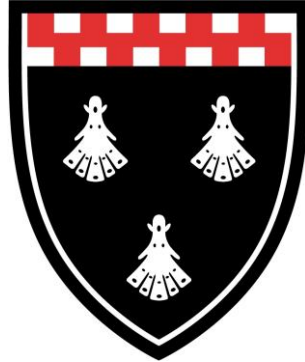


# PONTELAND HIGH SCHOOL



## External Examinations A Guide for Students and Parents

Centre Number: 49057

### Introduction

The information in this guide is intended to inform students **and** their parents about examination procedures and to answer some of the most frequently asked questions.

Exam time can be stressful for students and parents so it is important that all those involved are as well informed as possible to ensure that the exams run as smoothly as possible.

Awarding bodies and examination boards set down strict criteria for the conduct of exams and school is required to follow them precisely.

School will make every effort to ensure that candidates are well prepared for their examinations and that the examinations are conducted in a way that supports students in achieving their best.

The school website also has the formal notices that are required by regulation to be seen by each candidate. These links will also be sent by email to students' school gmail addresses each year.

If you have any other questions please contact the Exams Office by telephone on 01661 824711

**NB: On exams days please contact School Reception or a Pastoral Manager on 01661 824711 and leave a message, as Exams Staff will be dealing with the practicalities and setting up of exams and any last minute issues.**

### **How can parents best help their son/daughter during the examination period?**

Exams can be a stressful time for some students and support from both school and parents can be helpful. School will provide advice about revision sessions and examination techniques. In our experience, the biggest cause of stress is a sense of not being in control therefore it is essential to plan ahead and organise a revision timetable. It is helpful to discuss this with your son/daughter and explore how they intend to organise their revision and to provide a quiet place to work without distractions. Once students begin study leave it is especially important to maintain a good routine and students should ensure they get enough sleep (going to bed at an appropriate time, not having long lie-ins).

### **Who is responsible for the examinations?**

The school's Exams Officer is responsible for administering all public examination arrangements and for the oversight of students during exams, under direct responsibility from the Headteacher. There is a team of external invigilators who will also be present during the exams.

### **Who is entered for public examinations?**

It is school policy to enter every student who is being taught a subject, for the most appropriate level of exam. Only by exception and after consultation with parents will students not be entered.

### **What information will students receive about their examination entries?**

When all exam entries have been made to the exam board, students will receive a **Statement of Entry** (usually at the end of January for the summer exam period), which shows the subjects and tier of entry (if applicable) they have been entered for.

**NB: *Students and parents should check this very carefully to ensure all entries have been made and are correct, please contact the subject teacher if there are any issues or concerns.***

***In particular please check how your personal details appear (date of birth, spelling of names) as these are how they will appear on certificates, the exam board will charge you a fee to amend these later so it is very important to check they are correct.***

### **How do I know when the exams will take place?**

The main written exam period in the summer is usually from about the middle of May – until the end of June but some oral examinations and practical examinations (e.g. languages and art) take place earlier. All students will receive a **Provisional Timetable** of all their examinations in February; this will again show their entries (with any amendments that were necessary from reviewing the Statement of Entry) and the dates/times of their exams – it is a final opportunity to review their entries.

Nearer the start of the exams, students will receive a personalised Candidate Timetable, which will show the location and seat number for all exams, as well as their start times. It is helpful if parents make sure a copy of the timetable is always available at home and that a note of the dates and times of the exams are in the student planner. Students will also receive an electronic copy sent to their school Gmail account. Parents will receive a copy sent to the primary email address that we have on the school MIS system, please keep school notified of any changes to personal details.

### **Can students take holidays during the exam period and sit them on their return?**

Dates for exams are rigidly fixed by the exam boards. It is not possible to postpone an exam if it clashes with a booked holiday. Parents are reminded that they require the Headteacher's permission to take students out of school and they book holidays during term time at their own risk. We would

strongly advise against taking holidays in term time, particularly the exam season, as it runs counter to established good practice and school policy.

### **What arrangements are made for study leave?**

Study leave begins for year 11 and 13 students in May; you will be notified by the school of the exact date once the exam schedule is finalised. After those dates, students are only required to be in school when they actually have examinations or revision sessions.

### **What time do the exam sessions start?**

The exam boards dictate the permissible start times for exams. Morning sessions at Ponteland High School start at 9.05am and afternoon sessions start at 1.15pm. The length of examinations varies and they will occasionally not finish until after 3.30pm. **Students and parents should be aware of this and make appropriate arrangements for getting home if necessary.**

**Important – please look closely at the length of afternoon exams.**

Some students may also receive an allowance of extra time for the examinations and so their finishing times will be even later. It is the candidates' responsibility to be aware of the start time of each exam, **be careful not to confuse morning and afternoon sessions.**

**Please ensure your son/daughter checks his/her exam timetable for each day on the previous evening.**

### **Where will the examinations be held?**

The main locations for written papers are the Sports Hall and the Gym. Candidates should arrive 10-15 minutes before the start time to enable seating procedures to be carried out efficiently, and to allow for any unforeseen room changes.

### **What happens if a student has more than one exam at the same time?**

If a candidate is timetabled to sit two or more exams at the same time this is known as a 'clash'. If these are for the same subject this is intentional on the part of the exam board and the exams are intended to run one after another. If not, then this will be picked up during the checking process and the Exams Officer can grant permission for one of the papers to be taken at a different time on the **same day**. The candidate will have to remain under staff supervision between the two papers.

If it is necessary to delay an exam from a morning to an afternoon session due to a clash with another exam the candidate will be supervised over lunchtime. They should bring some revision or reading material and their lunch/drink, as they will not be able to communicate with any other candidate.

Students are allowed by the exams boards to sit up to 5½ hours of exams in one day at GCSE and 6 hours at AS/A-level.

### **How are students supervised during exams?**

External invigilators are appointed by the school and will supervise students throughout the exam. Once candidates enter the exam room they are under exam conditions and must follow the invigilators instructions at all times. Students will be required to place their bags in the designated area and should ensure that any mobile phones are stored in their bags and have been switched off. Students should find the desk with their seat number on, it is helpful if candidates have their exam timetable with them, but these must not be written on. They must also bring their ID badge with them to every exam, these are issued with the final individual Candidate Timetables in April – please keep them safe.

**The ID badge and Exam Timetable will also have their 4-digit candidate number, which they must put on all of their examination papers. This is their unique candidate number they use throughout their time in school.**

In most sessions, papers will already be on exam desks - these must not be opened until candidates are told to do so.

### **What happens if a student is late?**

If you are aware that you have got the timing of the examination wrong and have missed the starting time, you or your parent/carer should telephone school immediately and arrange to **get a message** to the Exams Officer. Depending on how long the exam has been in progress it may be possible to be admitted. However, we are bound by exam board regulations on this matter and would have to notify the exam board accordingly. The rules surrounding lateness vary depending on the length of the exam but normally candidates with a genuine reason and who are brought straight to school may be admitted within the first 45 minutes of the start time, **after this time it is the exam board who will decide whether to accept any paper sat.**

***It is the candidates' responsibility to be on time for their examinations.***

### **What should students bring to the examinations?**

Candidates should bring the required equipment for the exam and students will have been informed of this in advance. This would include writing equipment (black pen only), pencils, rulers etc. but could include for some subjects coloured pencils etc. All equipment should be in a **transparent plastic bag or pencil case**. Non-transparent pencil boxes or cases are not permitted in the examination room.

Pens should be black biro and not gel pens. Some subject papers will require the use of calculators, dictionaries or set texts, and again candidates will have been advised by their subject teachers about this and should bring them as necessary. Set texts etc. are only allowed in certain exams and again candidates will have been informed by the subject teachers in advance what is required for each exam paper.

***Candidates are responsible for ensuring that they bring the correct equipment to the examination.***

### **What should candidates not have on their person?**

Any potential technological/web enabled sources of information such as:

- iPods
- mobile phones
- MP3/4 players and
- wrist watches which have a data storage device

**are not permitted.**

**Wristwatches (non-smart ones) must now also be removed and placed on the candidate's desk in full view of the invigilators.**

The use of tippex or correction pens is not permitted. Candidates should cross through work they do not want to be marked.

Candidates should also not bring lucky mascots etc. into the examination room.

### **What are the regulations regarding mobile phones?**

The regulations state that students should not be in possession of a mobile phone in an examination room under any circumstances as they can present opportunities for malpractice. Any student found to have a phone on them in the exam room would have to be reported to the appropriate examination board. Should this happen they are likely to be disqualified from that paper and possibly from the whole examination in that subject.

## **Food/Drink Policy**

Candidates may bring water with them into the exam room in a clear plastic bottle, please remove any label before arriving at the exam room.

No food items or chewing gum is allowed.

## **Do students need to come in school uniform?**

Examinations are a school activity and students must wear normal school uniform. We ask for the co-operation of parents in ensuring candidates are correctly dressed as we would prefer to avoid causing stress to candidates before the examination by pointing out when they are not in correct uniform. We reserve the right to refuse access to the exam hall for students not in full school uniform – this point is communicated clearly to students in advance of the exam season.

***All students know the uniform rules and it is their responsibility to ensure they observe them.***

## **What is meant by ‘malpractice’?**

Malpractice is the term that the exam boards use for any irregularity, or breach of the regulations of any type. The school is required to report all infringements to the appropriate awarding body who will decide on what action to take. The exam boards take the integrity of exams very seriously and it is important that candidates heed the exams officer/invigilator instructions carefully.

## **What happens if the fire alarm goes off during an exam?**

This is very rare, however, if the fire alarm sounds during an examination the invigilators will tell students what to do. Do not panic. If it is necessary to evacuate the room, students will be asked to leave in silence and in the order in which they are sitting. They will be escorted to a designated assembly point leaving everything on their desk. Students must not attempt to communicate with anyone else during the evacuation. When they return to the exam room they do not start writing until the invigilator tells them to. Students will be allowed the full working time for the examination and a report will be sent from school to the awarding body detailing the incident.

## **What happens if a student does not turn up for an examination?**

A student who absents themselves from any examination without presenting a doctor's note or a satisfactory reason for a request for special consideration will receive a grade based only on those elements of the examinations that have been marked.

***Parents should be aware that school may seek to recover the exam fees if a student does not turn up for an examination without a good reason. It is in all our interests to ensure that the school's examination budget is not wasted.***

## **How are exams started?**

An invigilator or member of the Senior Leadership Team will announce the exam formally, and candidates cautioned that they are subject to the regulations. Any instructions or board notices, erratums etc. will be read out and the candidates then asked to complete their details (candidate name and number, etc.) on their answer papers before the exam is then officially started.

## **What standards of behaviour are expected during examinations?**

Please see the link to 'Information for candidates – written exams' produced by the examining bodies, which gives general guidelines for conduct which must be observed in exams.

## **What do I do if my son/daughter is unwell at the time of one of the examinations?**

Even if you would not normally visit your doctor's surgery for minor illnesses, you will need to at examination time. Your doctor will advise as to whether your son/daughter is fit to sit the examination.

If the candidate takes the paper, your doctor should give you a letter, which the school can forward to the examination board asking for special consideration on the grounds of illness. If the candidate is unable through illness to sit a paper the exam board may, after examining the doctor's letter and any evidence of performance on other papers, decide to award a grade. The exam board, and not the school, take this decision.

It is essential that you see your doctor on the same day of the examination or previously as retrospective information is not accepted by the exam boards and any doctor's letters must be given to the Exams Officer without delay, as there is a very tight deadline for this request to be submitted.

Please telephone the school if your son/daughter will not be attending an examination or if he/she will be present but is unwell as it is helpful for the invigilator to be aware when a candidate is feeling unwell.

Please be aware that any medical certificate must be accompanied by a note, which details the examinations it refers to and the date on which the papers were sat.

### **What do students do who finish their paper early?**

Students should use **all** of the available time on their exams and spend any time at the end checking their answers. They are not permitted to leave before the full duration of the exam has completed and must sit quietly so as not to disturb other candidates.

### **Students with special requirements**

Some candidates are eligible for extra time or special examination arrangements. These will be identified by the school and appropriate applications made, supported by an educational psychologist's report well in advance of the start of the external exams season (usually during year 9). The SENCO and curriculum support department will make arrangements for providing special assistance and inform the candidates of any special rooming arrangements.

### **What do I need to do if a student has problems that may affect his/her examination performance?**

Any illness or adverse change in family circumstances, arising shortly before or during the exams, which may affect examination performance, should be notified as soon as possible to the Exams Officer so that an application for special consideration can be made to the exam boards. Parents should be aware that any adjustment is very small and no feedback or reasons for decisions from exam boards is ever provided.

### **When and how are the results distributed?**

#### **2020 results**

**A level GCE results** are available to students on Thursday, 13 August. Results will normally be available for collection from 8.00am for year 13 students and 9.30am for year 12 students.

**GCSE results** are available to students on Thursday, 20 August. GCSE results are available for collection by students from 8.30am.

Students who require a relative to collect their results for them must ensure that the collector brings a signed letter of authorisation with them and this must have been agreed in advance (results belong to the student and it is them who must give their permission). Students must complete the form 'For students not available to collect results' available from the school website, this must be submitted before midday on the last school day of the summer term in order for the request to be actioned. Forms must be returned to the Exams Officer. Any uncollected results will be posted to the home address registered on the school's computer system on the day, so please ensure that if you have recently changed your address you have let school know.

### **What can I do if results are substantially different from what is anticipated?**

Examinations can only measure performance on the day and candidates can do better or worse than anticipated for a variety of reasons. It is advisable to obtain a copy of the script and mark scheme before proceeding to an EAR (enquiry about result) as that is very expensive. If there are grounds for concern about a result then the school can initiate an enquiry with the appropriate board (the fee for this must be paid at the time of submission of the EAR by the candidate). Details of the procedures and the fees involved are available from the Exams Officer and the process should be started as soon as possible after consultation with a relevant member of teaching staff.

### **How do students go about obtaining copies of marked examination scripts?**

It is currently possible to have access to marked scripts for most AS/A2 units and some GCSE. You will need to see the Exams Officer and pay a fee for each subject/paper. Copies of marked scripts prior to an enquiry about results (EAR) must be ordered within one week of the issue of results.

### **How can candidates apply to re-sit?**

For students continuing from year 11 into year 12, GCSE English and maths re-sits are available in November. These are the only GCSE subjects that are available for re-sit at this time.

Re-sits for A/AS levels are only available the following summer. For CTEC resits please speak with the teacher about resit possibilities.

Requests to re-sit exams must be made on the correct form, available from the sixth form office, or exams office and accompanied by the correct examination fee(s). Students should discuss their decision to re-sit with their subject teacher or a member of staff from the relevant department, who will then also need to sign the form to give their approval.

Fees may vary depending on the subject and must be paid by the deadlines set; these will be notified nearer the time. Refunds cannot be given after the deadline.

### **How should fees be paid?**

Where students are requesting a chargeable service, fees should be paid at the time of making the request in the exams office and cheques should be made payable to **Northumberland County Council**.

### **When do students receive their examination certificates?**

Certificates arrive in school 3-4 months after the examinations have taken place. Summer examination certificates are usually in school by the end of November each year and can be collected from Reception. Students are required either to collect them in person or a friend or family member may collect them (useful if you are away at university), but only with some form of ID and a letter of authorisation from the candidate or a completed 'Certificate Collection Form' available on the school website.

A notification will be added to the school website and tweeted on the school twitter feed @PontHigh once certificates are available for collection. Students who continue into year 12 will receive their GCSE certificates during registration once they are available.

### ***Important notice:***

***Please keep your certificates in a safe place once collected. You will need them in the future and obtaining replacements from exam boards is difficult, lengthy and expensive.***

***Certificates uncollected after one year are not required to be kept in school and can either be destroyed or returned to the exam board, it is very important that you collect your certificates once they are available.***

Candidates and parents should also read all the information for candidates available on the school website under the 'Examinations Guidelines Information' title.