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The Damara School

Specialist SEMH Independent School

Exams policy

Approved by:	Trust Board	**Date:** May 01 2024
Last reviewed on:	Sep 2026	
Next review due by:	Sep 2027	

Contents

1. Introduction and aims 3
2. Roles and responsibilities 3

3. Qualifications offered 6
4. Exam series 6
5. Exam timetables 6
6. Entries (including entry details and late entries) 7
7. Exam fees 8
8. Equalities 9
9. Access arrangements 9
10. Contingency planning 10
11. Estimated grades 10
12. Managing invigilators 11
13. Malpractice 11
14. Exam days 11
15. Candidates 12
16. Special consideration 13
17. GCE and GCSE non-examination assessments 13
18. Results and certificates 14
19. Monitoring and review 15
20. Links with other policies 15

1. Introduction and aims

The Damara School is committed to ensuring that exams are managed and administered effectively.

The aim of this policy is to ensure:

- The planning and management of exams is conducted in the best interest of candidates
- Our system of exams administration is efficient and clear, and staff and pupils understand what is required and expected of them
- We comply with requirements and guidance set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and awarding bodies

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Everyone

Everyone involved in our exam processes, including staff and pupils, must read, understand and implement this policy.

2.2 Head of centre

The head of centre:

- Has overall responsibility for The Damara School as an exams centre
- Is the individual who is accountable to the awarding bodies for ensuring that the centre is compliant with the JCQ regulations and awarding body requirements
- Is responsible for ensuring that all staff comply with the JCQ guidelines
- Is responsible for ensuring that all suspected or actual incidents of malpractice are reported, in line with the JCQ guidance on malpractice in examinations and assessments
- Ensures that JCQ guidance for centres on cyber security is followed
- Ensures that accurate candidate contact information is obtained and maintained
- Ensures appropriate controls are in place that allow accurate data to be submitted to the awarding bodies, e.g. entries and internally assessed marks
- Ensures that candidates are entered under names that can be verified against suitable identification such as a birth certificate, driver's license or passport. A candidate should only be entered under alternative names in exceptional circumstances

Our head of centre is Mrs S Govender.

2.3 Exams Officer

The Exams Officer is responsible for the administration of exams. They:

- Manage the administration of internal and/or external exams.
- Advise the leadership team (LT), subject and class tutors, and other relevant support staff on annual exams timetables and procedures as set by awarding bodies
- Oversee the production and distribution of an annual calendar for all exams in which candidates will be involved and communicate regularly with staff about imminent deadlines and events. This calendar must be provided to all staff and candidates
- Ensure that candidates and their parents/carers are informed of, and understand, aspects of the exams timetable that will affect them
- Check with teaching staff that the necessary coursework and/or controlled assessments are completed on time and in accordance with JCQ guidelines
- Provide and confirm detailed data on estimated entries
- Maintain systems and processes to support the timely entry of candidates for their exams
- Receive, check and securely store all exam papers and completed scripts, and ensure that scripts are dispatched as per the guidelines
- Administer access arrangements and make applications for special consideration following the regulations in the JCQ guidance on the special consideration process
- Identify and manage exam timetable clashes
- Account for income and expenditures relating to all exam costs/charges
- Line manages the senior exams invigilator in organising the recruitment, training and monitoring of a team of exams invigilators responsible for the conduct of exams
- Ensure candidates' coursework/controlled assessment marks are submitted correctly and on schedule, along with any other material required by the awarding bodies

- Track, dispatch and store returned coursework/controlled assessments
- Arrange for dissemination of exam results and certificates to candidates, and forward, in consultation with the SLT, any post-results service requests
- Report all suspected or actual incidents of malpractice, in line with the JCQ guidance on suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments
- Advise on appeals and re-marks
- Is one (1) of the key holders to the secure room with question papers and pre-release materials

Our Exams Officer is Mrs J Cox.

2.4 Subject Leads

Subject Leads are responsible for:

- Advising the Exams Officer of any changes to syllabus or assessment details for their subjects
- Advising the Exams Officer of entries for their subjects
- Guidance and pastoral care for candidates who are unsure about exams entries or amendments to entries
- Accurately completing entry and mark sheets, and adhering to deadlines as set by the Exams Officer
- Accurately completing coursework/controlled assessment mark sheets and declaration sheets
- Decisions on post-results procedures

2.5 Teachers

Teachers are responsible for:

- Supplying information about entries, coursework and controlled assessments as required by the Subject Leads and/or the Exams Officer

2.6 Special educational needs co-ordinator (SENDCO)

The SENDCO is responsible for:

- Identifying and testing candidates' requirements for access arrangements and notifying the Exams Officer in good time so they can put exam day arrangements in place
- Processing any necessary applications to gain approval (if required)
- Working with the Exams Officer to provide the access arrangements required by candidates in exam rooms

Our SENDCO is Mrs Sandra Govender and SENDCO in training is Miss Mahler-Strzelecki.

2.7 Lead invigilator(s)

The lead invigilator(s) are responsible for:

- Assisting the Exams Officer to run Exams efficiently, according to JCQ regulations
- Collecting exam papers and other material from the exams office before the start of the exam

- Collecting all exam papers in the correct order at the end of the exam and ensuring they are returned to the exams office

2.8 Candidates

Candidates are responsible for:

- Confirming and signing entries
- Understanding coursework/controlled assessment regulations, and signing a declaration that confirms the coursework to be their own
- Ensuring they conduct themselves in all exams according to the JCQ regulations

3. Qualifications offered

The CEO decides the qualifications we offer.

We offer the following types of qualifications:

- Entry level
- Functional Skills
- GCSE
- BTECs

The subjects offered for these qualifications in any school year may be found on our website.

Decisions on whether a candidate should be entered for a particular subject will be taken in discussion with the class teacher/SENDCO/Head of Centre.

4. Exam series

Internal exams (mock or trial exams) and assessments are scheduled to begin in the 2026/2027 exam series.

External exams and assessments are scheduled to begin in the 2026/2027 exam series.

Internal exams are held under external exam conditions.

5. Exam timetables

Once confirmed, the Exams Officer will circulate the exam timetables for internal and/or external exams at a specified date before each series begins.

6. Entries (including entry details and late entries)

Candidates or parents/carers can request subject entry, change of level or withdrawal.

We do not accept entries from private candidates.

We do not act as an exams centre for other organisations.

Entry deadlines are circulated to Subject Leads/Head of Centre email.

Head of Centre will provide estimated entry information to the Exams Officer to meet JCQ and awarding body deadlines.

Entries and amendments made after an awarding organisation's deadline require authorisation, in writing, by Head of Centre/Exams Officer.

6.1 Re-sits

We allow re-sits for the following types of qualifications:

- Entry level
- Functional Skills
- GCSE
- BTEC

Re-sit decisions will be made by Head of Centre in consultation with the Exams Officer.

7. Exam fees

Candidates or departments will not be charged for changes of tier, withdrawals made by the proper procedures or alterations arising from administrative processes, provided these are made within the time allowed by the awarding bodies.

The Exams Officer will publish the deadline for actions well in advance of each exams series.

We will charge for:

- Exams or re-sits the pupil has not been prepared for at school, even if they are on the list of prescribed public examinations
- Exams not on the list of prescribed public examinations
- Withdrawal from an exam (where charges would be applied by an exam board), if the parent/carer requests withdrawal

We may waive these fees in certain circumstances. If you would like to discuss waiving relevant fees, please contact The Exams Officer.

8. Equalities

All our staff must ensure that they meet the requirements of any equality legislation.

We will comply with the legislation, including making reasonable adjustments to the service that we provide to candidates in accordance with the requirements defined by the legislation, awarding bodies and JCQ. This is the responsibility of Head of Centre/Exams Officer.

9. Access arrangements

The SENDCO will inform subject teachers of candidates with special educational needs (SEN) and any special arrangements that individual candidates will need during the course and in any assessments/exams.

A candidate's access arrangements requirement is determined by the SENCo.

Ensuring there is appropriate evidence for a candidate's access arrangement is the responsibility of SENDCO.

Room arrangements for candidates using access arrangements will be organised by Exams Officer.

Invigilation and support for candidates using access arrangements, as defined in the JCQ access arrangements regulations, will be organised by Exams Officer. Where candidates sit their examinations in a smaller environment away from the main examination room (the suitability of which is to be assessed in conjunction with JCQ guidelines.

See internal appeals policy.

9.1 Use of word processors

We may allocate the use of a word processor to a candidate as part of access arrangements or as a reasonable adjustment where appropriate, including:

The proposed arrangement will not disadvantage or advantage a candidate

- When it is their normal way of working, ie. Where the curriculum is delivered electronically and word processors are provided to all candidates
- If they need help with handwriting
- If they have a:
    - Physical disability
    - Learning difficulty that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly
    - Medical condition
    - Sensory impairment

The SENDCO will use their judgement, in collaboration with relevant members of staff where necessary, to make decisions about when a word processor is appropriate outside the specific listed examples above.

We will make sure that:

- The proposed arrangement will not disadvantage or advantage a candidate.
- The use of a word processor will not compromise the assessment objectives or the integrity of the assessment and will be used under secure conditions. Where these objectives would be compromised, then a word processor will not be granted for use by a candidate

We will also make sure that the word processor:

- Has the spelling and grammar check and predictive text software disabled
- Does not have internet connectivity during the exam
- Has been cleared of any previously stored data, along with any portable storage medium used (and where any authorised memory stick is provided to or used by the candidate, the memory stick will be cleared of any previously stored data)
- Does not allow access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited), spreadsheets or emails
- Does not have graphic packages or computed-aided design software, unless permission is given
- Does not have computer reading (text to speech) software, unless the candidate has permission
- Does not have speech recognition technology, unless the candidate has permission

The word processor will not be used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe.

All equipment will be checked to make sure it's in working order and sufficiently charged for the duration of the examination.

Candidates provided with the use of a word processor will be accommodated in such a way that other candidates are not disturbed and cannot read the screen. Where we accommodate a candidate in another room, a separate invigilator will be present.

Candidates will be:

- Reminded to make sure that the centre number, candidate number and the unit/component code appear on each page as a header or footer, or to handwrite their details on the printed documents where this feature is not available (where the candidate needs to handwrite their details, they will be supervised to make sure that's solely what they're doing and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way)
- Reminded to save their work at regular intervals, unless 'autosave' has been set up on the device to make sure that the candidate's work is not lost because of a technical issue
- Advised to use a minimum font size of 12pt and double spacing

Each page of the typed script will be numbered.

The word processor will be connected to a printer so that the script can be printed off and will be done once the examination is over. The candidate must be present to verify that the work is their own and then the script will be attached to any answer booklet that contains some of the answers. We may also be required by the awarding body to include a word processor cover sheet with the candidate's typed script.

We may retain electronic copies of a word-processed script and this may be accepted by an awarding body where the printed copy has been lost and it is demonstrated that the file has been kept securely.

10. Contingency planning

Contingency planning for exam administration is the responsibility of Head of Centre and Exams Officer (See Examination Contingency Policy.

All relevant centre staff must be familiar with the contingency plans, which are available via the schools website and are in line with the guidance provided by Ofqual, JCQ and awarding organisations.

11. Estimated grades

Teachers are responsible for submitting estimated grades to the Exams Officer when requested.

12. Managing invigilators

External staff will not be used to invigilate examinations but the school will use trained school volunteers, known to the children. The Head of Centre, a senior member of centre staff, such as an assistant headteacher, or the Exams Officer must ensure that a teacher, teaching assistant, tutor or senior member of centre staff who teaches the subject being examined, or a learning support assistant who has supported 1 or more candidates, is not an invigilator during the examination.

13. Malpractice

The Head of centre, in consultation with the Exams Officer, is responsible for ensuring that suspected malpractice is thoroughly investigated. Malpractice doesn't necessarily involve an intention to cheat or gain an unfair advantage. Examples of malpractice include, but are not limited to:

- Unauthorised use of a mobile phone or internet-enabled device in examinations
- Copying or allowing work to be copied
- Posting work on social media prior to an exam
- Collusion or working collaboratively

Candidates and invigilators will receive written guidance that will also be shared at the beginning of each examination. If malpractice is suspected or reported, it will be investigated by the Exams Officer and then escalated to Head of Centre.

See Malpractice Policy for further information

14. Exam days

The Exams Officer will:

- Book all exam rooms (after liaising with other relevant users)
- Make question papers, exam stationery and materials available for the invigilator

Site management staff are responsible for setting up the allocated rooms and will be advised of requirements one week in advance.

The invigilators and the exams Officer will start and finish all exams in accordance with JCQ guidelines.

Part of starting any examination or assessment is to verify the candidate's identity. The following procedures will apply:

- The subject teacher carrying out an assessment will ensure a register is taken at the start of the lesson to ensure the correct students are present.
- A folder containing candidate photographs and names will be available in each exam room allowing invigilators to identify candidates at the beginning of the examination.
- Appropriate arrangements will be in place to allow invigilators to carry out adequate checks on the identity of all candidates.
- Where the head of centre has allowed a senior member of staff, such as an Assistant Headteacher, to be present in the examination/assessment room, he/she can identify the candidates as they enter the exam room.
- In cases where it is impossible to identify candidates due to the wearing of religious clothing, such as a veil, the candidate should be approached by a member of staff of the same gender and taken to a private room where they should be politely asked to remove the religious clothing for identification purposes. Once identification has been established the religious clothing should be replaced and the candidate should proceed to the exam

- Subject staff may be present at the start of the exam to assist with identification of candidates. Any staff present must be in accordance with the rules defined by JCQ concerning who is allowed in the exam room and what they can do.

In practical exams, subject teachers' availability will be in accordance with JCQ guidelines.

Exam papers must not be read by subject teachers or removed from the exam room before the end of a session. Papers will be distributed to Subject Leads in accordance with JCQ's recommendations.

After an exam, the Exams Officer will arrange for the safe dispatch of completed exam scripts to awarding bodies, working in conjunction with the school's administrator.

Emergency evacuation of the examination room will be outlined within the centre's exam contingency policy, which will be subject to inspection by the JCQ Centre Inspection Service.

In the event of an emergency, a full report of the incident must be produced and retained on file and any breach of question paper security or malpractice must be reported to the awarding body immediately.

15. Candidates

The Exams Officer will provide written information to candidates in advance of each exam series. A formal briefing session for candidates may be given by the Exams Officer.

Our published rules on acceptable dress and behaviour apply at all times. Candidates' personal belongings remain their own responsibility and we accept no liability for their loss or damage.

In an exam room, candidates must not have access to items other than those clearly allowed in the instructions on the question paper, the stationery list, or the specification for that subject.

This is particularly true of mobile phones and other electronic devices with text or digital facilities.

Any precluded items must not be taken into the exam room.

Disruptive candidates are dealt with in accordance with JCQ guidelines. Candidates are expected to stay for the full exam time at the discretion of the Exams Officer.

Candidates who leave an exam room must be accompanied by an appropriate member of staff at all times.

The Exams Officer is responsible for handling late or absent candidates on exam day.

15.1 Clash candidates

The Exams Officer will be responsible for making arrangements for clash candidates, including:

- Supervising escorts
- Identifying a secure venue
- Arranging overnight stays where necessary

16. Special consideration

If a candidate is unable to attend an exam because of illness, bereavement, or other trauma, or if a candidate becomes ill or otherwise disadvantaged during an exam, they are responsible for alerting the Exams Officer to that effect.

The candidate must support any special consideration claim with appropriate evidence within 5 days of the exam.

The Exams Officer will make a special consideration application to the relevant awarding body within 6 days of the exam.

17. GCE and GCSE non-examination assessments

Teaching staff who deliver non-examination assessments will follow the correct specifications and the specification and instructions provided by the awarding body, or JCQ instructions for conducting non-examination assessments if appropriate.

It is the duty of Subject Leads to ensure that all non-examination assessment is ready for dispatch at the correct time. The Exams Officer will assist by keeping a record of each dispatch, including the recipient details, and the date and time sent.

Marks for internally assessed work are provided to the Exams Officer by Subject Leads. The Exams Officer will inform staff of the deadline date for appeals against internal assessments.

Any appeals will be dealt with in accordance with our internal appeals procedure document (see website for procedure).

17.1 Artificial intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Claude. The Damara School recognises that AI has many uses to help pupils learn, but may also lend itself to cheating and plagiarism.

Pupils **may not** use AI tools:

- During assessments, including internal and external assessments, and coursework
- To write their homework or class assignments, where AI-generated text is presented as their own work

Pupils **may** use AI tools:

- As a research tool to help them find out about new topics and ideas
- When specifically studying and discussing AI in schoolwork, for example in IT lessons or art homework about AI-generated images all AI-generated content must be properly attributed

Where a pupil uses an AI tool, the pupil should retain a copy of the question(s) asked and the AI-generated responses. Pupils must submit this along with the assessment.

Staff should:

- Be aware that AI tools are still being developed and should use such tools with caution as they may provide inaccurate, inappropriate or biased content
- Make students aware of the risks of using AI tools and that they need to appropriately reference AI as a source of information to maintain the integrity of assessments

See our Teaching and Learning Policy for more information on how students can and cannot use AI for their assignments.

18. Results and certificates

Candidates will receive individual results slips in person on via post on results days.

Arrangements for the centre to be open on results days are made by the Exams Officer and Head of Centre.

The provision of the necessary staff on results days is the responsibility of the Exams Officer and Head of Centre.

Dates of results days each year will be publicised for all candidates through a letter.

18.1 Enquiries about results (EARs)

Enquiries about results (EARs) may be requested by centre staff or the candidate following the release of results.

A request for a re-mark or clerical check requires the written consent of the candidate. A request for a re-moderation of internally assessed work may be submitted without the consent of a group of candidates.

The cost of EARs will be paid by the candidate.

All decisions about whether to make an application for an EAR will be made by Subject Leads.

If a candidate's request for an EAR is not supported, the candidate may appeal and we will respond by following the process in our internal appeals procedure document.

All processing of EARs will be the responsibility of the Exams Officer, following the JCQ guidance.

18.2 Access to scripts (ATS)

After the release of results, candidates may ask subject staff to request the return of written exam papers within 60 days of the receipt of results.

Centre staff may also request scripts for investigation or for teaching purposes. For the latter, the consent of candidates must be obtained.

Applications for EARs cannot be submitted once an original script has been returned.

The Exam Officer is responsible for processing requests for ATS.

The cost of ATS will be paid by the candidate.

19. Monitoring and review

The Head of Centre is responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed every two years, unless there are changes to:

- The exams system

- JCQ guidance
- The Damara School's curriculum offer