

A Penglais Guide to Exams

Please take the time to read through the following information carefully as I attempt to explain to you how exams are organised. A lot of information about exams will be added to the school website, under the exams tab. The better your understanding of exams the better prepared you will be and it will also reduce the chance of problems later in the year.

Mr P Jones is the Exams Officer and Miss N Hankey is the Exams Assistant. For most enquiries please e-mail Miss Hankey on N.Hankey@penglais.org.uk. The school's centre number for all examinations is 68204 – this number stays the same for all GCSE and GCE exams, and you will be required to write this number on all your examination booklets.

There are 3 main exam seasons during the year – November, January and May/June. Maths GCSE is offered in November, these are generally only for Year 12 and 13 students to resit these subjects. In January only, a few GCSE unit exam papers can be taken, these include unit 1 English Literature and ICT papers. All exams are offered in the summer exam season of May/June.

Entries for November exams have to be made by the start of October. January entries have to be made by 18th October and the summer entries are made during January. Entries can be made after these dates but they will incur late fees. All key dates, when confirmed by the exam boards, will be on the school. Students must take responsibility to make sure their entries are correct, and see Mr Jones or Miss Hankey before the entry deadlines if there are any problems – such as missing entries, entries at incorrect tiers, or entries no longer required.

Almost all exams in Penglais School are now with the WJEC exam board. Some subjects study courses by exam boards in England - AQA, Pearson and There are no longer any January exams in subjects with AQA, Edexcel or OCR.

Many subjects at GCSE and GCE (Sixth Form) with WJEC are modular i.e. pupils will sit 'chunks' of the course throughout the 2 years of study. However, with the changes in exams since 2015 more subjects are now linear i.e. pupils sit all the written exams at the end of the course. GCE subjects can also be split into AS Level (For the courses taught from Sept 2016 these are now only worth 40% of a full A Level and are usually completed in Year 12) and A2 (a full A Level and usually completed at the end of Year 13).

Most GCSE courses have units of controlled assessment. These have replaced coursework and the main difference is this work has to be done in a 'controlled environment' – this means in the classroom. Controlled assessment can vary from 20% of the overall marks for a course to 40%. Part of these assessments has to be completed under exam conditions where the teacher is not allowed to provide any further help. Science GCSE controlled assessed write ups will be completed in January. Some GCE courses still contain coursework.

With modular courses when the final 'chunk' of the course is taken we also have to make a separate entry to tell the board to add up all of the units and award the final (overall) grade (this is called certification). This entry is called a 'cash in'. With a linear course there is no cash in.

In the Sixth form AS cash ins are made with Year 12 exam entries, and A2 cash ins are made with Year 13 exam entries. If a Year 13 student is following a Year 12 course they must check their entries very carefully, and inform exams staff if any changes are needed to their entries. For GCSE modular courses and all WJEC A Level courses, if there is no 'cash in' then no grade will be awarded. A late request for a 'cash in' can go in immediately after

results' day, but these are expensive (in Aug 2020 this was £20). Students need to check this when they get their statement of entries at the beginning of February.

The mark a student scores on an exam paper is a raw mark. This is then converted by the exam board into a UMS mark (uniform mark scheme). The UMS mark is then checked against the fixed UMS grade boundaries to determine the final grade.

On Results Day the student will have a UMS mark and a unit grade for each exam component (shown by a lower case letter). If the course is being 'cashed in' or has a linear assessment there will also be an overall grade issued (this will be a capital letter). The final mark can then be checked against the fixed grade boundary to see how close the overall mark is to another grade. WJEC grade boundaries are on the exams tab on the school website.

After Results Day there are Post Results Services available (these are called Enquiries About Results – EAR). A student may request a re-mark and/or order the return of their script. For Year 13 students there is a priority service for urgent requests if university places are at stake. EAR requests should be discussed with a member of staff first. You must be aware that if a re-mark is requested a possible result could be a lower mark/grade. This risk should be taken into account when requesting a re-mark. A photocopied script can be ordered before deciding whether to put in for a re-mark, but if this is required then it should go in on the day of results or the following day. You may wish to ask one of your teachers to look at a script with you. For Year 10 and 12 students in particular you may wish to order your script back, this will allow you to see where you did well and areas where you did not do so well – this is very useful if you are thinking of re-sitting units the following year. There are strict deadlines for EAR requests; once the deadline has gone no further enquiries will be allowed.

At GCSE a student can only re-sit once before a cash in is made, and at least 40% of the assessment must be made when a cash in is made (i.e. a pupil cannot only re-sit 25% of a course and cash in). For any entry that is part of the 40% terminal assessment, this is the mark that will be used when calculating the final mark – even if it lower than a previous attempt. If the re-sit is in addition to the 40% rule then the better of your marks will be used when calculating the final grade. At GCE a student can only re-sit once, and there is no minimum % of the course that must be entered. However, if a student wishes to sit a unit for a third time or more this triggers a 'fresh start' and the student must sit all units in the qualification in that exam season,

Remember – for a modular course if there is no 'cash in' there will be no certification and the student will not receive a 'new' overall grade. If you are wishing to re-sit after you have received a final grade for a subject then you must also ask for a new 'cash in'.

In most cases if a student does re-sit an exam they are required to pay for this before the entry is made. The same applies for any post results services. Students may pay in cash or by cheque – any cheques should be made payable to 'CCC' (Ceredigion County Council).

Exams can be stressful for everybody involved, but if you prepare in advance, follow the rules and regulations, and ask about any problems in good time then most problems can either be solved or avoided!

Tips to avoid problems during the exam seasons

1) Check your exam timetable as soon as you receive it. If there are any concerns / questions you must contact Mr P.Jones or Miss N Hankey as soon as possible, this includes if there are exam clashes. For summer exams you will receive this at the start of February. Year 11 and 13 students must check that all modular courses have a cash in if you are expecting a final grade to be issued. The timetable includes the date, time, candidate number and seating plan information – you can take this sheet into the examination. It is your responsibility to know which exams you have, where and when. If you are taught in class, with other students, the exam regulations state you must sit your exams with the other pupils, however where you are seated in the Sports Hall or Main Hall can be changed – see Miss N Hankey or Mr P.Jones

2) Be on time for all exams. Exams start at 9am and 1pm you must be there at least 15 minutes before the start time. If you are going to be late for the exam, you must contact the school and explain the situation. When you arrive to school report to main reception. If you are very late and are with a parent make sure you don't have any contact with other students and that your parent has your phone. If you are very late the exam board may not accept your paper.

3) Make arrangements to leave your coat, books, bag and any electronic equipment in a safe place well away from the exam room – you cannot take these into the exam. Sixth Form students need to use the Sixth Form centre. Years 10 and 11 will use roll containers to put bags and coats into, and these will be locked away during the exams. The containers will be available at the end of the exam in the quad area if dry, or in the corridor if wet.

4) YOU MUST NOT TAKE ANY UNAUTHORISED ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT INTO

THE EXAM ROOM e.g. mobile phones, i-pods, i-watches. If you break this exam regulation you can expect to be disqualified, it makes no difference if the equipment is switched on or off.

5) Wear full school uniform – if you are not in full uniform you can be sent away.

6) Bring all required stationary to the exam. You must write in black pen and have spares. It is your responsibility to bring pens, calculators, rulers etc. to the correct exam. If you have a pencil case it must be see through. You may bring in a water bottle but any labels must be removed.

7) Remain in the examination room for the full duration of the examination. Do not ask to leave early.

8) If you have an exam finishing after 3.15 it is your responsibility to have made any necessary transport arrangements before the exam begins.

9) Follow all instructions from the invigilator(s) at all times, especially if the fire alarm goes off. If you do not follow these instructions and/or behave badly you can expect to be disqualified.

10) If you have any questions/concerns during the exam raise your hand and wait for the invigilator. Do not leave this until after the exam has finished, but remember they cannot help you with any of the questions.

11) Make sure you have read the information provided in this booklet. If you have any further questions you must see Mr P.Jones or Miss N Hankey, and as a general rule with examinations if you have any questions ask them asap. Most problems can be solved if we know about them early enough, and there are deadlines for late fees which can be avoided if you ask early enough.