CANDIDATE EXAM HANDBOOK

ACADEMIC YEAR 2026-27

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Success for All

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Introduction

The Buckingham School is committed to ensuring that students are fully briefed on the exam and assessment process in place at the Centre and are made aware of the required JCQ awarding body instructions and information for candidates.

This booklet contains all the information that you need to know regarding the examination regulations and procedures that students are required to follow for the academic year 1st September 2025 — 31st August 2026. You will also find some useful dates and frequently asked questions. Please read this booklet carefully and show it to your parents/carers so that they are also aware of the examination regulations and procedures.

All Students Must:

- Read and fully understand the JCQ Notices to Candidates (Appendices 1-7)
- Check all the details on your Individual Candidate Timetable (issued prior to written exams and available by logging into Edulink One) and report any errors to the Exams Office
- Inform the School, via the Exams Officer, of any event for which special consideration might be sought from the Awarding Bodies (e.g. illness during an exam, bereavement or other trauma, disadvantage or disturbance during an exam)
- Read the instructions of each exam paper very carefully

If you break any of the examination rules or regulations, you could be disqualified from all subjects. The school must report any breach of regulations to the awarding bodies.

Key Dates for 2026-27:

4th January - 15th January 2027	Y12 / 13 External BTEC exams
1st February - 26th February 2027 (either side of half term)	Y11 / 13 Mock exams
4th May – 23rd June 2027	Summer Series (GCSE/BTEC/A level)
23rd June 2027	Exam Contingency Day
12th August 2027	A Level Results Day
19th August 2027	GCSE Results Day

Why are Mock exams run as if they were real GCSE/GCE exams?

Mock exams are your opportunity to practice for the real exams, bring in the correct equipment and learn how to follow the JCQ Regulations in full.

All mobile phones, iPods, smartwatches/watches/fitbits, smart glasses and other valuables should be switched off and placed in your bag. Your bags will be locked away in a container for the duration of your exam. You should line up quietly by the lockers in row / seat order until you are told to enter the exam room. You will be scanned by a hand-held metal detector before every exam to ensure that you have not forgotten to hand in any unauthorised materials. This will also be the case for all Mock exams.

Coursework/controlled assessments/non-examination assessments and written exams

Please see **Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4** at the end of this booklet for the full JCQ Notices.

You will receive an individual candidate exam timetable around Easter, which indicates: the date and time, subject title, exam level, room and seating arrangements, for all of your exams. You are also able to view the most up-to-date version of your timetable by logging into Edulink One and clicking on the Exams tab.

You must check that the information is correct on your individual exam timetable, including your name; if you have any queries or questions then please contact the Exams Officer at this time.

Please ensure you have read the JCQ Information for Candidates documents, Written Examinations (**Appendix 4)** and Social Media (**Appendix 6**), at the end of this booklet. Please also read the Exam Room posters, Warning to Candidates and Unauthorised Items (**Appendices 6 & 7**).

Where will I sit my exams?

The majority of our exams take place in the Sports Hall. A small number of you may sit your exams in another, smaller room. Generally, this is for students who have a substantial and long-term impairment that is well-established in the centre. They may have an Access Arrangement, such as a reader or a scribe and cannot, therefore, be accommodated in the main Exam Hall.

JCQ regulations state that '*general anxiety or nervousness about sitting examinations are not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation*'.

Please ensure you read your timetable to confirm the room in which your exam is scheduled.

If necessary, refer to the seating plans on the Examinations noticeboard; these will be on display throughout the entire exam period.

What time will my exams start and finish and when should I arrive?

Morning exams usually start at 08.40, afternoon exams usually start at 13:00; however, sometimes these may differ and you should refer to your individual timetable for accurate timings.

Check the Examinations noticeboard on the day of your exams for any changes.

You must arrive to school at least 15 minutes before the start time so you can sign in and be ready to enter the Exam Room.

What should I do if I have one or more exam papers timetabled at the same time (an exam clash)?

Candidates may have two subjects which are timetabled at the same time by the awarding bodies.

If this happens, you will normally sit one paper then have a break. If the two exams total three hours or less, you will be allowed a supervised break of 20 minutes under exam conditions. If the exams that clash total more than 3 hours, one of the exams will be moved to an earlier / later session. You will need to be kept under supervision during the break but this will not need to be under exam conditions. You may have access to revision notes, food and drink, but you will be unable to access any internet enabled devices.

If you are affected by a clash, you will receive a letter detailing the arrangements for the affected exams. Correct times should be on your individual candidate timetable.

Supervision during your exams

Exams are supervised by a team of Invigilators employed by the School.

Students are expected to behave in a respectful manner towards all Invigilators (in line with our School Behaviour Policy) and follow their instructions at all times.

Refusal to follow Invigilator instructions is malpractice and will be reported to the awarding bodies.

The role of the Invigilator is to supervise the conduct of examinations; they must follow strict rules and regulations, as directed by JCQ awarding bodies, when conducting exams.

They will:

- Distribute and collect the examination papers
- Tell you when to start and finish the examination
- Hand out extra paper, if required
- Deal with any problems that occur during the examination

Invigilators cannot discuss the examination paper with you or explain the questions.

The Exams Officer and / or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will remove any student who is disruptive or behaves in an unacceptable manner from the Exam Room.

During Mock exams, all acts of inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy. During external exams, all acts of inappropriate behaviour must be reported to the awarding bodies; the awarding bodies will impose sanctions as they deem fit.

Centre and Candidate Numbers

You will need to write your Centre Number and Candidate Number on all of your exam answer papers.

Our Centre Number is 52127, which will be clearly displayed on the whiteboards in each Exam Room. Your Candidate Number is a 4-digit number and can be found on your individual candidate timetable and on your Exam Identity Card.

Examination conditions

As soon as you enter the Exam Room, you are under exam conditions (for the full set of rules, please read **Appendix 4: Information for Candidates - Written Exams**).

You must not:

- Speak
- Take any notes into the exam
- Distract or communicate with other candidates
- Take any technologies into the Exam Room such as
  - mobile phones
  - iPods
  - headphones / earpods
  - fitbits
  - watches
  - smart glasses



If you are found to have anything with you which is not allowed, even if you did not intend to use it, this will be reported to the awarding bodies. The awarding bodies' normal practice in these circumstances is to disqualify the candidate from the paper or the subject.

You must:

- Listen to and follow the instructions of the Invigilator at all times in the Exam Room
- Face the front at all times
- Raise your hand if you need anything and wait for the Invigilator to come to you
- Only take in a clear plastic pencil case and water bottle with all labels removed

Please be aware of the following from JCQ's 'Information for Conducting Exams' (Effective from Sept 2026):

Candidates are under formal examination conditions from the moment they enter the room in which they will be taking their examination(s) until the point at which they are permitted to leave.

Candidates must not talk to, attempt to communicate with or disturb other candidates once they have entered the examination room. If they do, this must be reported to the relevant awarding body.

Candidates must not open the question paper until the examination begins. If they do, this must be reported to the relevant awarding body.

How is my identity confirmed in the exam room?

You will be issued with an Exam Identification Card which you must bring with you to every exam; this is the way in which the Invigilators will identify you and ensure that attendance registers are correct. Your card also shows your 4-digit Candidate Number. This number is used by the awarding bodies to identify who you are and must be written on every exam paper.

If you misplace your card, you must contact the Exams Officer immediately for a replacement.

You must write your legal name and number exactly as it appears; please note legal names are used for exams, not 'known-as' names. It is also your legal name that will appear on your certificates.

At the beginning of the exam, the Invigilators will come round the room to take the register; they may ask you to confirm your name.

Length of Examinations

The length of an examination is shown on your individual candidate timetable and also under the heading duration on the question paper.

Invigilators will tell you when to start and finish the exam.

The start and finish times will be displayed on the board at the front of the Exam Room. There is at least one clock in all Exam Rooms. Candidates with extra time will be given a note on their desk showing their finish time.

You will not be allowed to leave an Exam Room early, even if you have finished. If you are sure you have finished, use the remaining time to check over your answers. Check the exam instructions and check that you have completed everything correctly. If you have finished, you need to sit quietly facing the front - do not turn around or look about the room, make any noise or distract other candidates in any way.

What equipment do I need to bring to my exams?

You are responsible for providing your own equipment for examinations.

- You must not lend equipment or attempt to borrow from another candidate in the Exam Room
- Only material listed on the question paper is allowed in the Exam Room
- You must not have on your person, or near you, any other material.

You will need:

- Transparent pencil case or clear plastic bag
- **Black** ball point pens - no blue pens and **no gel pens** (scanners cannot read blue/gel ink)
- Pencil, sharpener and rubber eraser - **no correction fluid or pens**
- Ruler (marked with cm and mm)
- Highlighters - these must not be used on your answer papers but can be used on question papers if these are not being sent to the examiner
- Calculators - these may be allowed for some Maths, Science, Business, Geography, Computer Science and Psychology exams. **No instructions or lids** are allowed; make sure that you have new batteries and that they are re-set (please see section on Using Calculators). Calculators must be put in 'Exam Mode' before entering the exam
- Clear plastic drinks bottle (if desired) containing water only and with the label removed. Reusable drinks bottles must be free from writing and any form of measurement eg. millilitres etc. All drinks bottles must be kept on the floor and not on the exam desk

Using calculators

You must be aware of the JCQ instructions regarding the use of calculators in your exams.

Candidates may use a calculator in an examination unless prohibited by the awarding bodies' specification. Where the use of a calculator is allowed, candidates are responsible for making sure that their calculators meet the awarding bodies' regulations:

During an examination a calculator must not be able to offer any of these facilities:
a) language translators
b) symbolic algebra manipulation
c) symbolic differentiation or integration
d) communication with other machines or the internet

During an examination a calculator must not give access to pre-stored information. This includes:
a) databanks
b) dictionaries
c) mathematical formulae
d) text

A calculator must not be borrowed from another candidate during an examination.

Some calculators have an 'exam mode'. This is acceptable in examinations where the exam mode is activated and the exam mode results in the calculator becoming compliant with the above requirements.

An invigilator may give a candidate a replacement 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.

A series of FAQs on the use of calculators in examinations may be found at:
https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/

What should I do if I think there is an error on the paper?

If you think something is wrong, raise your hand and wait for the Invigilator to come to you; they will investigate.

What should I do if I think I have the wrong paper?

Invigilators will ask you to check your paper before the exam starts. If you think something is wrong you must raise your hand and tell an Invigilator immediately.

Can I go to the toilet during the exam?

Only if it is necessary and in line with School Policy i.e. you have a medical or toilet pass which you can show to the Invigilator. You will be escorted by an Invigilator and will not be allowed any extra time.

Can I bring food and drink into the exam room?

In accordance with JCQ guidelines, you are not allowed to bring any food or drink into the exam room other than a plastic drink bottle (if desired) containing water only and with the label removed.

What should I wear for my exams?

Whenever you come into school, you must wear full school uniform.

Sixth Form students should dress according to the Sixth Form Dress Code. You must avoid wearing coats and jackets with pockets and hoods on them. You will be asked to remove your coat when entering an Exam Room.

Where will my personal belongings be stored during my exam?

We strongly advise that you bring as few personal belongings as possible to an exam. However, if you have a bag, all your personal belongings should be kept in this (**with any/all electronic devices switched off**). Bags will be stored in a designated container which will remain locked for the duration of the exam so that all belongings are kept safe.

What should I do if I arrive late for an exam?

You should get to school as quickly as possible and report to Student Reception. If it is still possible for you to sit the examination, a member of staff will escort you to the Exam Room.

You must not enter an Exam Room, without permission, after an examination has begun. It may not be possible to allow you the full time for the exam.

If you arrive very late (an hour or more after the published start time), the School must inform the awarding body, giving the reason and evidence for your lateness. The awarding body may decide not to accept your work.

The published start times for exams are 09.00 and 13.30 and are set by the awarding bodies. As a school, we can choose to start our exams up to half an hour either side of the published start time. All of our morning exams will start at 08.40 and the majority of our afternoon exams at 13.00.

What should I do if I am unwell on the day of an exam?

If you are unwell on the day of an exam, you must inform the School immediately so that we can help or advise you. For example, if you have an injury which makes you unable to write, it may be possible to provide you with a scribe or laptop. You must obtain medical evidence (from your GP or hospital) if you wish the school to make an appeal for Special Consideration on your behalf. You will also be provided with a form to complete if you are unwell on the day of an exam or absent on the day of an exam.

If you feel unwell during the exam, raise your hand and an Invigilator will assist you. You should always inform an Invigilator if you feel unwell before or during an exam. If you think this may have affected your performance, you may be eligible for Special Consideration. If you feel unwell before the examination, please let an Invigilator or the Exams Officer know.

What happens if you have an unauthorised absence from an exam?

If you miss the examination, you cannot take it on another day. Timetables are regulated by the awarding bodies and you must attend on the given date and time.

If you miss an exam, without good reason, you will be charged the entry fee. You also risk not gaining your final qualification.

What happens in the event of an emergency in the Exam Room?

If the fire alarm sounds during an examination, the Invigilators will tell you what to do.

- Do not panic
- Leave everything on your desk
- If you have to evacuate the room, you will be asked to leave in silence and in the order in which you are sitting
- You will be escorted to a designated assembly point
- You must not attempt to communicate with anyone else during the evacuation

When you return to the exam room, do not start writing until the Invigilator tells you to do so.

You will be allowed the full working time for the examination and a report will be sent to the awarding bodies with details of the incident.

At the end of the examination

The Invigilator will announce when you have 5 minutes left and tell you when to stop. You must stop writing immediately and remain silent, facing the front. Remember that you are still under examination conditions until you have left the room.

Please note, some of your peers may still be sitting an exam as they may be doing a different paper, which is longer, or have extra time - the Exam Room must remain silent. Students who disrupt an exam, in any way, must be reported to the awarding body.

Invigilators will collect all question papers, answer booklets and additional paper. Remember to cross out any rough work.

If you have used more than one answer book, or loose sheets of paper, ensure your full name and Candidate Number is written on them all and insert them inside your answer booklet.

Remain seated in silence until you are told to leave the Exam Room.

Leave the room in silence, showing consideration for other candidates who may still be working.

Candidates with Access Arrangements

Some students are entitled to access arrangements.

'They allow candidates with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment.' **(JCQ Access Arrangements Document)**

An application to the awarding bodies for access arrangements will only be accepted if there is a bank of evidence in School to support the need. Access arrangements are awarded to students with a substantial, long-term impairment and must reflect the student's normal way of working within School over a prolonged period of time. An access arrangement may not be in place for all of the subjects that you study; it is assessed on a subject by subject basis and is dependent on need in a particular subject.

If you are entitled to access arrangements, these will be communicated to you via an Access Arrangement Confirmation Form before the main summer series exam period starts. You will also be given the opportunity to use the agreed access arrangement/s during your Mock exams.

What is Special Consideration?

Special consideration is an adjustment to the marks of a candidate who is eligible for consideration, under special circumstances such as illness, bereavement, injury, domestic crisis etc. The allowance for special consideration is from 0% (consideration given but addition of marks considered inappropriate) to 5% (reserved for really exceptional cases).

You should be aware that any adjustment is likely to be small and no feedback is provided. Students are only eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared for the whole course but their performance in the examination, or in the production of coursework, is affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control. The Exams Officer must be informed immediately so that the necessary paperwork can be completed. You will be required to provide evidence to support your application and to complete a form detailing the nature of the problem.

Alleged, suspected or actual incidents of malpractice

'Candidate malpractice' means malpractice by a candidate in the course of any examination or assessment, including the preparation and authentication of any controlled assessments, coursework or non-examination assessments, the presentation of any practical work, the compilation of portfolios of assessment evidence and the writing of any examination paper.

Examples of Candidate Malpractice include:

- A breach of the instructions or advice of an Invigilator, supervisor, or the awarding body in relation to the examination or assessment rules and regulations
- Failing to abide by the conditions of supervision designed to maintain the security of the examinations or assessments
- Collusion: working collaboratively with other candidates, beyond what is permitted
- Allowing work to be copied e.g. posting work on social networking sites prior to an examination/assessment
- Disruptive behaviour in the Exam Room or during an assessment session (including the use of offensive language)
- Exchanging, obtaining, receiving, passing on information (or the attempt to) which could be examination related by means of talking, electronic, written or non-verbal communication
- Bringing into the Exam Room notes in the wrong format (where notes are permitted in examinations) or inappropriately annotated texts (in open book examinations)
- Impersonation: pretending to be someone else, arranging for another person to take one's place in an examination or an assessment
- Plagiarism: unacknowledged copying from, or reproduction of, published sources (including the use of AI - Appendix 8) or incomplete referencing
- Bringing into the Exam Room or assessment situation unauthorised material, for example: notes, study guides and personal organisers, own blank paper, calculators (when prohibited), dictionaries (when prohibited), instruments which can capture a digital image, electronic dictionaries (when prohibited), translators, wordlists, glossaries, iPods, mobile phones, MP3/4 players, pagers, smartwatches or other similar electronic devices
- The unauthorised use of a memory stick, or similar device, where a candidate uses a word processor
- Behaving in a manner so as to undermine the integrity of the examination
- The alteration or falsification of any results documents, including certificates

Penalties for Malpractice

If a candidate is suspected of malpractice, the Invigilator must warn the candidate that he/she may be removed from the Exam Room.

The candidate will also be warned that the awarding body will be informed and may decide to disqualify the candidate.

Penalties for malpractice range from a warning to loss of certification or even being disqualified from all exams with that awarding body. Penalties are dependent on the seriousness of the offence.

For Example:

- A mobile phone or other electronic device making a noise but not in the candidate's possession will constitute a written warning in the first offence; if it occurs again this would be escalated to a loss of marks
- A mobile phone in the candidate's possession, but no evidence of being used by the candidate, could result in a loss of all marks gained for a unit.
- A mobile phone or other electronic device in the candidate's possession, and evidence of it being used by the candidate, would result in disqualification from the qualification taken in that series.

The Buckingham School has a duty to notify an awarding body immediately of any alleged, suspected or actual incidents of malpractice.

Results

A Level / BTEC Level 3: Results can be collected from School **from 8:00am on Thursday 12th August 2027**

GCSE / BTEC Level 1/2: Results can be collected from School **from 8:00am on Thursday 19th August 2027**

If you are unable to collect your results in person, you can log into Edulink One to view them from **11.15am** on Results Day by clicking on the Exams tab (Written instructions are available from the Exams Officer on request).

If you wish for any other person to collect your results on your behalf, you must give your written authorisation to School before Results Day. Please email this to exams@buckinghmaschool.org before the end of the summer term.

Results will not be given over the telephone.

Post-results services

On Results Day, if you have not achieved the grades you need for Sixth Form/college/university, there are various options available to you:

- Speak with either the Head of Year, Head of Sixth Form or other members of staff who will be available for advice
- Speak with your chosen place of Further Education and explain your situation. They can advise if you are still eligible for admission
- If you feel strongly that it is necessary to make an inquiry about your result, you should first speak to your subject teacher
- You should be aware that, if you apply for a Review of Marking, there is no grade protection; your marks could go up, down or stay the same
- If you wish to go ahead with a Review of Marking, after speaking to your teacher, you must see the Exams Officer for the relevant forms and fees. All students have to sign a consent form before a review of marking can be submitted

For any review of marking, the School will access the scripts for free, in the first instance. An internal review will then be completed by the relevant department. After this, if they feel that you may gain extra marks, we can apply for a Review of Marking. If you are within 2 marks of the next grade boundary, the School will fund the remark. If you are more than 2 marks away from the next grade boundary, this will need to be self-funded. Awarding bodies set their own fees; information about these fees can be obtained from the Exams Officer.

Please note that there is a deadline (usually the 3rd week of September) for the Review of Marking and Access to Scripts services.

Certificates

Certificates arrive in School in November and are usually ready for collection by mid-December. Students who are no longer at the School will be contacted by email when a date has been arranged for collection.

If you are leaving School and would like your certificates collected by someone else we will require this in writing from yourself.

The School only needs to keep certificates for 12 months after receipt; we currently keep them for 5 years and then destroy them.

If you need replacement certificates, you will have to contact the awarding bodies directly to request a replacement. Please be aware that this can be costly - awarding bodies charge a fee of approximately £50 per replacement certificate.

Appendices

Appendix 1: JCQ Information for Candidates – Coursework Assessments
https://drive.google.com/file/d/12ApqtknpWpDbfO3YP_qhBQofsWMzDXfl/view

Appendix 2: JCQ Information for Candidates – Non-Examination Assessments
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kK8zWNF5MucxEl4CGgjMc88miOpWG6_y/view

Appendix 3: JCQ Information for Candidates – On-Screen Tests
https://drive.google.com/file/d/12cmxuAxEJGNvbNtjJIXTiQRQ9u3kyhnu/view

Appendix 4: JCQ Information for Candidates – Written Exams
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1irs0YBaZ8wCc7VceQiRmVOUFo6zGaELs/view

Appendix 5: JCQ Information for Candidates – Social Media
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1X8MCKPBG4DMrsjcMgOZPadQ7uYILBKtG/view

Appendix 6: Unauthorised items Poster
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aNgXc3XbbxGnt76OFYLqUKHK2yXhZkjF/view

Appendix 7: Warning to Candidates
https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JCQ-ICE-Warning-to-candidates-2025.pdf

Appendix 8: AI Poster for Students
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-5MbGbNrktnPzAQQ-sclLKQQeWDqJsXm/view

Please find below a summary guide to all of the information booklets currently available. These booklets contain a wide range of useful information to support students, parents and carers throughout their time at The Buckingham School.

Each booklet has been designed to provide guidance on specific aspects of school life, helping you to access key information quickly and easily. We encourage you to review the summaries below to identify the resources most relevant to your needs.

All of the booklets are available to view on our website at your convenience.

Booklet Index	Contents	Aimed at
Transition Guide for Students	A guide for students on what to expect when you join The Buckingham School	Year 6 into Year 7
Transition Guide for Parents	A guide for parents/carers on what to expect when your child joins The Buckingham School	Year 6 into Year 7
Transition Activity Book	Fun activities for Year 6 students to complete over the summer break before joining us in Year 7	Year 6 into Year 7
Parental Consents	Details of all the consents you need to give permission for via EdulinkOne	Year 6 into Year 7
Getting Ready & Organised for Secondary School	Hints and tips for parents/carers and students to help them prepare for starting secondary school	Year 6 into Year 7
Our Curriculum	A guide to how our Curriculum is structured	All
Culture Curriculum	A guide to the culture and expectations at The Buckingham School	All
Enrichment Week	Explores the activities on offer for Enrichment Week which takes place in July each year	Years 7-9
LIFT Programme	A guide to what the LIFT Programme is and how it benefits students	Specific Year 9 students
Your Options	A detailed guide to all the subjects available to study in Years 10 and 11	Year 9
Candidate Exam Handbook	***A guide for students about to embark on Mock or final summer exams***	***Year 10 – 13***
Sixth Form Prospectus	A detailed guide to all the subjects available to study in Sixth Form	Year 11
Sixth Form Handbook	A guide for Sixth Form students setting out our expectations and offers an insight into Sixth Form life	Year 12
Working Together	This booklet outlines what support parent/carers can expect from The Buckingham School and in return, what support we expect from parent / carers	All

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