



Approved by: Head of Centre | Owner: Data & Exams Team

Academic Year: 2025/26

Dixons Academies Trust

Private Candidates Examination Policy

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1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how Dixons Academies Trust (the Trust) accepts, manages and conducts examinations for private candidates in compliance with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations and guidance. It applies to all Trust schools approved as examination centers and covers general and vocational qualifications within the JCQ common arrangements (e.g. GCSE, AS/A level, Functional Skills and others, where applicable).

2. Definitions

A private candidate is a learner who studies independently and enters for assessments at a JCQ-approved centre, but is not enrolled as a mainstream student at that centre. The Trust follows JCQ guidance on private candidates and awarding body requirements for each specification and component.

3. Regulatory framework (JCQ compliance)

The Trust and its centres will comply with:

- JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres (current academic year).
- JCQ ICE – Instructions for Conducting Examinations (current academic year).
- JCQ Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration, and associated guidance.
- Awarding body specifications and rules for private candidates, including non-examination assessments (NEA), endorsements and practical components.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Head of Centre

Accountable for ensuring JCQ compliance, signing the annual declaration, and approving whether the centre accepts private candidates for specified qualifications. Oversees security, integrity and contingency arrangements.

4.2 Exams Officer / Data Manager

Manages entries, fees, timetables, secure materials, invigilation, rooming and post-results processes for private candidates, following JCQ ICE and awarding body instructions.

4.3 SENCo / Inclusion Lead

Determines and evidences access arrangements in line with JCQ AARA, ensures normal way of working, and liaises with the Exams Officer to implement approved adjustments.

4.4 Invigilators

Conduct examinations in accordance with JCQ ICE, including candidate identification, late arrivals, disturbances, and incident reporting.

4.5 Private candidate

Responsible for providing accurate entry information, required identification, payment of fees, and complying with centre rules and JCQ Information for Candidates. Where NEA/practical/endorsement components exist, candidates must arrange participation with the centre before entry.

5. Acceptance of private candidates

Centres within the Trust may accept private candidates at their discretion for qualifications they are approved to deliver, subject to capacity, staffing, security, safeguarding and ability to meet specification requirements (including NEA, language orals, science practical endorsements, and spoken language endorsements).

5.1 Eligibility and subjects

The centre must be confident it can meet all assessment conditions for the chosen specification. Some subjects/components may not be available to private candidates where the centre cannot meet JCQ or awarding body requirements (e.g. controlled assessments or mandatory endorsements).

5.2 Application and deadlines

Private candidates must apply by the centre's published deadlines. Late entry and amendment fees follow awarding body fee schedules plus an agreed centre administration fee. The centre reserves the right to decline applications that cannot be supported compliantly.

5.3 Fees

Fees include awarding body entry fees, centre administration charges, invigilation, and any additional costs (e.g. materials for practicals, language examiner fees). Fees are payable in advance; entries may be withdrawn if fees are not received by the due date.

5.4 Identification and authentication

Centres will verify identity using photographic ID (passport, driving licence). Where not available at entry, a centre identification form must be completed, with identity confirmed prior to each assessment. For NEA, the centre must supervise, authenticate and securely store work in accordance with JCQ requirements.

6. Access arrangements and special consideration

Access arrangements are determined based on evidence of need and the candidate's normal way of working. Applications are processed via AAO where applicable and must meet JCQ evidence requirements. Some arrangements are centre-delegated; others require awarding body approval. Special consideration requests are submitted post-exam in line with JCQ guidance.

6.1 Evidence and timelines

Private candidates must supply relevant medical/educational evidence in time for processing. The SENCo will review and confirm the normal way of working where practicable; arrangements cannot be guaranteed if evidence is late or insufficient.

6.2 Reasonable adjustments and limitations

Adjustments will not compromise assessment objectives or exam integrity. The centre may offer alternatives (e.g. supervised rest breaks) where more appropriate. Modified papers require early application within awarding body deadlines.

7. Conduct of examinations (ICE)

Examinations will be conducted strictly under JCQ ICE, including secure storage of materials, seating plans, start times, invigilation ratios, device policies, and handling of incidents (suspected malpractice, emergencies, evacuation). Late arrivals and timetable variations/clashes will be managed per JCQ rules, including supervised breaks where permitted.

8. NEA, orals and practical endorsements

Where specifications include NEA, language speaking/oral components, or science practical endorsements, the centre must confirm capacity, qualified staff, supervision and authentication before accepting entries. For A level Science, candidates may decline the endorsement; GCSE English Language spoken endorsement is mandatory for entry. Where components cannot be supported, the centre will advise alternative specifications or decline entry.

9. Safeguarding and candidate conduct

Movement around the site must be supervised or restricted to exam areas.

Candidates must sign in and out at reception.

Private candidates must wear a "visitor" lanyard at all times while on site.

Private candidates are bound by centre safeguarding, site access and behaviour policies. Any misconduct will be reported under JCQ Suspected Malpractice procedures. The centre reserves the right to remove a candidate from site where safety or integrity is at risk.

10. Results, certificates and post-results services

Results will be issued per awarding body timelines. Certificates are retained or posted in line with centre policy. Access to post-results services (reviews of marking, clerical re-checks, access to scripts) is available to private candidates subject to fees and deadlines.

11. Data protection and records

Candidate data will be processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Trust's privacy notices. The centre will retain records and evidence to meet JCQ and awarding body requirements, including attendance, incident reports and access arrangements documentation.

12. Contingency and cyber security

Centres will maintain contingency plans covering loss of accommodation, staff shortages, late delivery of papers, or system outages, and uphold cyber security controls per JCQ General Regulations.

13. Publication and review

This policy is published on Trust/centre websites and reviewed annually to reflect changes in JCQ and awarding body requirements. The Exams Officer proposes updates; the Head of Centre approves.

Appendix A – Key JCQ references

- JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres (current year).
- JCQ ICE – Instructions for Conducting Examinations (current year).
- JCQ Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration – Regulations and Guidance (current year).
- JCQ Information for Candidates documents (current year).