



# Guidance on running exams in the November 2023 series

## A guide for exams officers and Heads of Centre

Many Cambridge schools are no longer being impacted by the widespread closures and other issues seen at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. If your school is no longer impacted by any issues related to, or caused by, the pandemic then you do not need to use this guide. You should use the Cambridge Handbook, and any other standard guidance we publish for the November 2023 series.

We have updated this guide to support schools which may still be managing some ongoing issues caused by the pandemic. If this applies to your school, make sure you use this guide alongside the *Cambridge Handbook* when planning the exam series in your centre. To make it easier to use and understand, we have structured this guide around the phases of the Cambridge Exams Cycle.

Exams will go ahead in November 2023, where it is permitted and safe, as this is the fairest and most accurate way of assessing a candidate's performance. To help you to run the November exam series safely and securely we are continuing with the support measures to help schools prepare for exams. From November 2023 there are some important changes to these measures that you need to be aware of:

- the criteria and deadlines for applying for component exemptions has changed
- component adjustments and guidance for components will not be available in our November 2023 series.

### What support is available to help me to prepare candidates?

Wherever possible, you should try to deliver all exams, coursework, speaking and practical tests according to the syllabus requirements because this gives candidates the best chance of showing what they know and can do. However, we know that you may be facing different challenges in managing teaching, learning and assessment. We have component exemptions still available for November 2023:

- **Exemptions** – Candidates do not take a particular component but still receive an overall syllabus grade. You must apply for permission to use component exemptions.  
**NEW** You can apply for exemptions if your centre has been closed for one or more of the following periods:
  - **20 weeks/100 days or more** (excluding school holidays) between 1 January and 31 December 2022
  - **13 weeks/65 days** (excluding school holidays) between 1 February and 21 September 2023.



### Important information

The health and safety of candidates and centre staff is more important than running exams and remains the responsibility of your centre. Our guidance does not overrule or replace advice or regulations provided by any central or local government at federal or state level, including any public health authorities or regulators, in your country. Such regulations should be followed as normal. You must also follow the regulations set out in the *Cambridge Handbook*. Where these conflict or are difficult to combine, please contact us.

To be eligible to apply for component exemptions based on school closures in either of the eligibility windows, your school must have been closed by a local or national government directive and you must provide evidence of this when you apply.

You can only apply for component exemptions if you meet the full criteria for either of the eligibility windows. You cannot combine shorter periods of closure from the different windows e.g. 10 weeks of closure from 1 January 2022 to 21 December 2022 and 5 weeks of closure from 1 February 2023 to 21 September 2023. If you apply, and you cannot provide evidence that your centre meets the criteria in full for at least one of the windows, we will not accept your application.

You can find more details about available component exemptions, and how to apply, at:

[www.cambridgeinternational.org/november-2023-exemptions](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/november-2023-exemptions)

- **Special consideration** – We adjust a candidate's mark to allow for adverse or unexpected circumstances. To find out more about special consideration, go to:  
[www.cambridgeinternational.org/november-2023-special-consideration](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/november-2023-special-consideration)

## Phase 1: Preparation

### Key Times and Full Centre Supervision

You can use our Key Time regulations to help you manage your exam timetable. You must also make sure you are using the correct timetable for your administrative zone.

- Find your administrative zone: [www.cambridgeinternational.org/adminzone](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/adminzone)
- Check your Key Times: [www.cambridgeinternational.org/keytimes](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/keytimes)
- Find your timetable in the 'Support Materials' area of Direct: [www.cambridgeinternational.org/direct](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/direct)

Full Centre Supervision can be conducted with candidates in lessons providing you follow our Full Centre Supervision guidelines, as outlined in the *Cambridge Handbook*.

### Preparing your exam timetable

When planning your exams you should think about how you can fit all of your candidates into an exam while also maintaining any remaining local social distancing arrangements. This may include running your exams in multiple exam rooms with extra invigilators. To help you with this, you can ask us for additional sittings, timetable deviations, or for candidates to take exams at an alternative venue. If you need to apply for a timetable deviation you must apply for each sitting separately.

You must refer to the current *Cambridge Handbook* to find out how to apply, and the regulations you need to follow. You can also find out which form you need to complete,



### Administrative forms

All forms are available on our website:

[www.cambridgeinternational.org/forms](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/forms)

- Timetable Deviation: Preparation – Form 2
- Additional Sittings: Preparation – Form 8
- Using an Alternative Venue: Entries – Form 5.

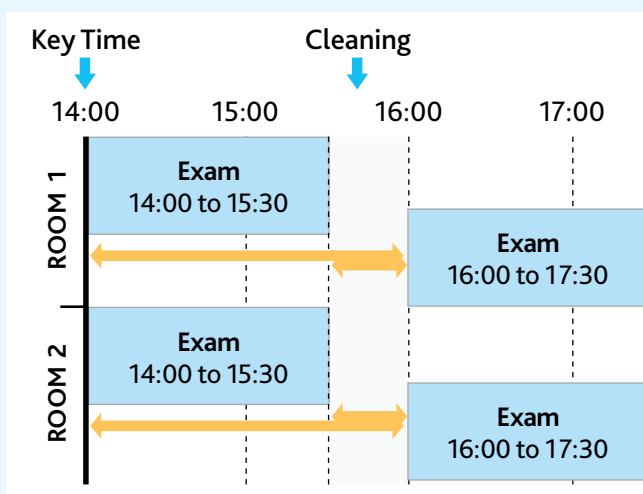
and the deadline for sending it to us. We recommend you schedule any windowed exams at the start of a window, in case your centre is closed at short notice. Exam timetables are available at: [www.cambridgeinternational.org/direct](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/direct)

If you need to put candidates under Full Centre Supervision, you will also need to maintain any national or local social distancing arrangements. This may impact you in different ways, depending on how many candidates you have, and how much space is available in your centre:

- You may need to use more rooms for Full Centre Supervision because social distancing means you can fit fewer candidates into a room than normal.
- This may mean you need more trained supervisors available to watch candidates.
- You may wish to provide hand sanitiser in each of the rooms, and also allow time to clean the rooms between different periods of Full Centre Supervision.

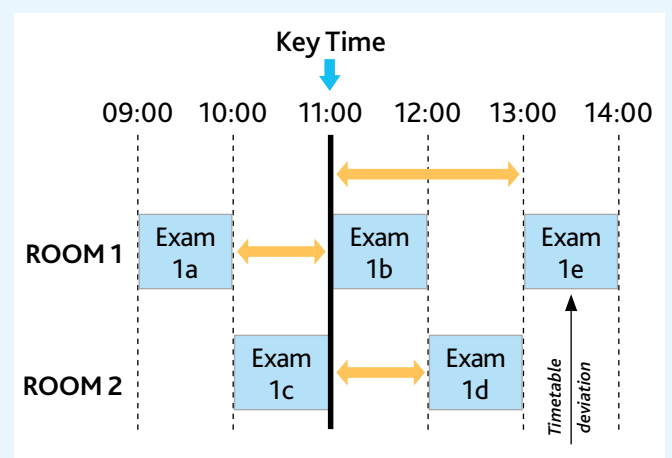
The diagrams below are **examples only** and not necessarily the same as Key Times for your centre. The yellow arrows show Full Centre Supervision.

#### Example 1



You may use multiple rooms for the same exam. If you need to clean the rooms between sittings, you may need to stagger start times and create additional sittings. You can do this, as long as the relevant candidates are under Full Centre Supervision. See section 1.2.4 of the *Cambridge Handbook* for more information about applying for additional sittings.

#### Example 2



You may be unable to fit your planned additional sittings into the relevant timetabled session. In this diagram, Exam 1e is no longer in the morning session. You will need to apply for a timetable deviation to have this start time approved. See section 1.2.3 of the *Cambridge Handbook* for more information about applying for timetable deviations.

## Alternative venue

If you have approval to use an alternative venue, you must find out about any Covid-19 related restrictions or guidance at the new venue, before the day of the exam.

You should also check in advance what measures are being taken to protect your candidates. Measures may include a requirement to wear protective equipment, such as a face covering or gloves, or maintaining social distancing.

You should make your candidates aware of these kinds of requirements before they arrive at the venue on exam day so they feel reassured and they know what to expect.

Examples of an alternative local venue could include:

- a Cambridge International registered centre
- a college or university
- a school
- a hotel conference room
- a conference centre
- a hall or sporting venue.

## Contingency plans for running exams

We recommend you make the following contingency plans before the exam series:

- Check that all contact details for staff, students and invigilators are up to date in case there is a last-minute change. Is everyone aware of how they will be contacted (phone or email)?
- Make sure you have additional invigilators trained in our regulations so they can step in at the last minute if another invigilator becomes ill, or social distancing measures are increased and more exam rooms are needed.
- Think about which additional exam rooms may be suitable if social distancing or other government restrictions mean that more rooms need to be used as exam rooms.
- Make sure that more than one member of staff understands how to contact us and knows which forms to use to ask for emergency alternative venues, timetable deviations etc.
- Plan what will happen if you suspect a candidate or member of staff has symptoms of Covid-19 in the exam room.

## Access arrangements

If you have candidates who need access arrangements then you might need to put in place extra provisions when planning exams in your centre.

You may also consider using a computerised alternative for the following access arrangements:

Access arrangement	Alternatives
Human reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer reader</li> <li>• Reading pen</li> <li>• Reading aloud</li> <li>• 25 per cent extra time.</li> </ul>
Scribe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice-activated software</li> <li>• Word processor.</li> </ul>

In all cases, you must make sure you follow any national or local government advice. This may include a minimum space between your candidate and the person assisting them. This advice must be followed if it is a regulation in your country.

Candidates should be allowed their approved access arrangements – even if these arrangements involve extra time in the exam room. During extra time, or rest breaks, candidates must remain supervised and social distancing regulations must be maintained. If this contradicts any local or national regulations, please contact us so we can advise you.

## Modified question papers

If you are using an alternative venue to help with social distancing during exams, you must make sure you transport any modified papers to your alternative venue.

## Phase 2: Entries

### Entries

It is particularly important that you submit your entries to us by the deadlines below, or earlier wherever possible.

- Final entries deadline for first-time entries (international centres): 16 August 2023
- Final entries deadline for first-time entries and retakes (UK centres): 21 September 2023
- Late entries deadline for first-time entries: 21 September 2023

Centres can make first-time entries until 16 August 2023. After 16 August, changes you make to your entry options are charged, but you can still amend your candidate information, without charge, until the late entries deadline on 21 September 2023. See section 2.4 of the *Cambridge Handbook* for our full entry regulations.

If you are a UK centre, you may have different entry deadlines. See our website:

[www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsOfficersKeydates](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsOfficersKeydates)

## Withdrawals

You can withdraw candidates via Direct until 21 September 2023. If you need to withdraw candidates after 21 September you must email us at: [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org) or phone, so that we can arrange the withdrawal and credit for you. We generate invoices monthly. We recommend you pay for the entries you know you have made within normal payment terms and the credit will follow.

## Statements of entry

You can download your statements of entry from Direct. We no longer send printed copies to you. You can find them by selecting the 'Reports' tab. Share them with your candidates, including private candidates, so they can check their entry details. Let us know if there are any errors before the final entries deadline to avoid late entry fees.

## Phase 4: Before the exams

### Submitting forecast grades and internally assessed marks

You need to submit your forecast grades and the majority of your internally assessed marks using Direct. This means that you cannot use an Internal Assessment Mark Sheet (MS1) to submit your internally assessed marks to us. Please include a copy of the marks you have submitted in the packet you send to us with your candidates' work. This can be a print-out of the marks you have submitted on Direct.

### Pre-exam despatches

Your pre-exam despatch will not include Forecast Grade Forms or Internal Assessment Mark Sheets. We will send your pre-exam despatch in mid to late September 2023.

### Receiving and storing question paper despatches

Security of your question papers is a priority. You must follow the regulations in sections 4.3 and 4.4 of the *Cambridge Handbook* when you receive and store your question paper despatches. You must make sure you comply with any local or national requirements, such as wearing personal protective equipment and maintaining social distancing, when working alongside others.

You must not quarantine the despatches we send you. The contents of all despatches must be checked as soon as possible once you receive them. Two suitably trained people must still check all your question paper despatches. If your secure storage does not allow two people to be in the room while still maintaining local social distancing requirements, you may need to change the way you check your question papers. For example:

- Check your question papers in a different room from your current secure storage.
- Once you have checked them, one person must move the papers to your secure storage.

You must not move or change your secure storage facilities to allow social distancing without written permission from us. If you have questions about this, please contact us to discuss your secure storage arrangements.

If, for any local or national reasons, our couriers cannot deliver to your centre, they will return your question paper despatches to us. If this is because your country is currently closed for despatches, we will send your despatch at a later date. If you have not received your question papers within two working days of the exam, you should contact us. If we cannot send question papers to you in time for the exam we will discuss with you whether alternative arrangements can be made. **We are unable to deliver your question papers to a different address.**

### Speaking tests

You should comply with national or local guidance on social distancing, but make sure that examiners and candidates are near enough to the recording device so they can still be clearly heard. If face masks need to be worn during speaking tests, you should remind examiners and candidates to speak loudly and clearly.

For speaking tests with confidential materials, the test must be conducted face to face with the examiner and cannot be conducted remotely. This is because of the security of the confidential materials, and how they are used during the test. See our website for which components have confidential materials: [www.cambridgeinternational.org/november-2023-components](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/november-2023-components)

### Practical exams

If you have candidates sitting practical exams, you may need to comply with any local or national regulations in place due to Covid-19, and that you are also able to comply with our regulations.

To help you plan your practical exams you may want to think about the following:

#### Cambridge IGCSE™ Art & Design (0400/02)

You must provide all candidates with the equipment they need for their practical exams, such as brushes, paints and pencils. Candidates should not need to share basic art equipment. We give centres a final date by which the exam must be completed and you can schedule the exam date(s) within that period. In some cases it may be necessary for centres to schedule different groups of candidates to take the same exam on different days. For example, candidates with names beginning *A to M* take the exam on 3, 4 and 5 October and candidates with names beginning *N to Z* take the same exam on 10, 11 and 12 October.

#### Cambridge International AS & A Level Chemistry

If you are not able to find the equipment or chemicals you need for your practical exam please contact us so we can advise you.



### Cambridge International AS & A Level Physics and AS & A Level Biology, and Cambridge IGCSE Physics

We know that candidates usually swap equipment, such as microscopes for biology and whole sets of apparatus for physics during their practical exams. If you have enough room in your centre, you may want to set out more workstations for your candidates so they do not have to share equipment. If you do provide extra workstations and equipment, you must still follow the timings for the use of each piece of equipment as set out in the confidential instructions for each exam.

However, we understand many centres will not have the space to do this. Instead, you may wish to clean equipment between candidates using it, or encourage candidates to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser before and after using any equipment.

Please note: For A Level Biology we supply one slide for every two candidates. You should make sure there is one microscope per candidate and the slide is cleaned between candidates using it.

### Preparing the exam room

You must make sure your candidates and invigilators feel as safe and as comfortable as possible before, during and at the end of an exam. You should also follow any local social distancing measures, such as:

- increasing the distance between exam desks – you must follow the regulations in section 4.5 of the *Cambridge Handbook*. If national or local regulations mean that desks have to be further apart, you should include this extra space even if it means you can fit fewer candidates into the exam room.

### Invigilator requirements

It is the responsibility of the centre to make sure invigilators are fully trained and understand our regulations. An invigilator does not have to be a member of centre staff. The behaviour of your invigilators should be the same as it normally is during exams, and you should follow the regulations in section 4.6 of the *Cambridge Handbook*. If national or local government regulations mean your invigilators cannot work in the usual way, please contact us so we can support you.



#### Extra guidance

Extra documents are available on our website:

- *What to Say to Candidates in an Exam* document: [www.cambridgeinternational.org/examday](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/examday)
- *Invigilating Cambridge exams: A training presentation for exams officers to train invigilators*: [www.cambridgeinternational.org/beforetheexams](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/beforetheexams)

You must make sure **all** your invigilators receive training on any new procedures and you should update your training materials. For example, make invigilators aware of any additional hygiene procedures, and make sure you have a plan in place so that invigilators can deal with any suspected malpractice before or during the exam. If you need more invigilators than usual, you will need to train them and make sure they understand our regulations. You must also follow our invigilator ratios.

If invigilators wear masks while in the exam room, it is important that candidates still receive all the instructions and information they need, and can hear the invigilator. Candidates must not miss out on important information about their exam because your invigilators are wearing masks.

You must make sure candidates have access to the instructions in the *What to Say to Candidates in an Exam* document. To do this, you could:

- pre-record the content and then play it to your candidates at the start of the exam
- give candidates a printed copy of the document
- use a microphone.

If your exams officer or your invigilators suddenly become unwell, or need to self-isolate, you should use your contingency plan so that exams can still take place.

If you need to keep candidates under Full Centre Supervision you might need to use extra rooms so that social distancing between candidates can be maintained. Therefore, you may need extra supervisors. You will need to train your supervisors so they understand our regulations and feel confident keeping candidates safe and secure.

**A** If you work with us through another organisation, you should contact your Cambridge Associate if you have questions.

## Phase 5: Exam day



### Important information

**All** unused question papers and answer booklets must be stored securely until at least **24 hours** after the Key Time for the exam. After this time you can dispose of the unused question papers or you can give them to candidates/centre staff if you want to.

### At the beginning of an exam

It is your responsibility to make sure your candidates feel as safe and as comfortable as possible. You must follow the regulations in the *Cambridge Handbook* and also comply with any national or local social distancing regulations.

## Face coverings

Candidates may wear face coverings during their exam. Remember to tell your invigilators that masks and face coverings might be used by candidates to conceal unauthorised materials such as notes or communication devices. Your invigilators must monitor candidate behaviour closely during the exam. They should particularly look for candidates who may be talking, or any activity which suggests a candidate has concealed unauthorised materials in their face covering.

## Identifying candidates

You must still identify candidates, even if they are wearing a face covering. If you have questions about this, please contact us at least three days before the exam so we can discuss different options with you.

## Authorised materials

Candidates can take hand sanitiser and medication into the exam room. Your invigilators should check that it follows the regulations in the *Cambridge Handbook* – for example, that the packaging does not contain any notes or communication devices. Candidates must make sure they take all their belongings with them when they leave the exam room.

## Checking washrooms

We understand that centres have concerns about hygiene; however, you must still check the washrooms before the start of an exam to make sure no unauthorised materials are hidden there.

## Inspections

We are planning to carry out inspections in the November 2023 series. Therefore, we may inspect your centre during the exam series. Find out more about our exam security inspections on our website.

## During the exam

If candidates need to use the washroom during the exam, they must be accompanied by an invigilator and social distancing should be maintained.

## At the end of the exam

At the end of the exam the invigilator should read out the 'Finishing the examination' section of our *What to Say to Candidates in an Exam* document. You may wish to use the same method as you used at the start of the exam e.g. a pre-recorded version (see page 5 of this guide).

You must collect all candidate scripts and question papers before candidates leave the room. You may wish to provide your invigilators with extra equipment to help them collect exam materials safely e.g. gloves or hand sanitiser.

Candidates must leave any additional exam materials on their desks but make sure they take all their personal belongings with them.

To help candidates leave the exam room safely, and to support social distancing, you may wish to put some extra measures in place. This could include:

- having a one-way system to allow candidates to move through the exam room to the exit
- allowing candidates nearest the exit to leave first
- allowing candidates to leave the room gradually, in smaller groups.



### Extra guidance

Watch our 'Packing and despatching scripts' video at: [www.cambridgeinternational.org/examday](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/examday)

Fill in our Script Return Form at: [www.cambridgeinternational.org/scriptreturn](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/scriptreturn)

## Packing and sending scripts

You must send your exam scripts back to us as soon as possible, following the regulations in section 5.4 of the *Cambridge Handbook*. You should not quarantine or make copies of your scripts before you send them to us. You should also tell us if your script collection is delayed for any reason.

It is really important that you complete our Script Return Form every time you send scripts to us. It will help us track the progress of your scripts, and quickly identify any disruptions or delays in transit.

**A** Cambridge Associates are responsible for sending scripts from their Associate Centres to us. Cambridge Associates should make arrangements with their Associate Centres for receiving their scripts safely and securely, complying with any national or local Covid-19 regulations.

## Candidates with a contagious disease

Section 4.5.3.3 of the *Cambridge Handbook* explains how to deal with candidates who may have a contagious disease.

## What should I do if I think someone has symptoms of Covid-19 during an exam?

You should develop your own plan in case someone displays symptoms of Covid-19 during the exam. If this happens, it is very important to handle the situation sensitively. It may be upsetting for the candidate, and for the other candidates and staff in the exam room.

Candidates and staff in the exam should follow your local or national regulations for anyone who has been in contact with a suspected case of Covid-19. You must also make sure the security of the exam is maintained.

### **NEW** Special consideration

The special consideration process is for candidates who unexpectedly, for an acceptable reason, cannot take some components they were entered for. As long as these

candidates have covered the whole course and completed a minimum of 15 per cent of the total assessment by component weighting in the relevant exam series they can receive a grade (eligible components only; carry forward marks do not count). See our website for guidance:

[www.cambridgeinternational.org/november-2023-special-consideration](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/november-2023-special-consideration)

### Instructions for particular exams

Component adjustments and guidance for components will not be available in our November 2023 series.

You must make sure your teachers teach the whole syllabus in the usual way. For special instructions for particular exams, see section 5.7 of the *Cambridge Handbook*.

### Malpractice

We want all candidates to feel safe and secure during their exams. We also understand that the majority of candidates wish to sit their exams fairly and honestly. However, some of the regulations which have arisen because of the Covid-19 outbreak, such as social distancing and the need to wear face coverings, may provide an extra opportunity, and make it easier, for a small number of candidates to try to bring unauthorised materials into the exam room. It is very important that your invigilators are aware of this. Invigilators must have a plan in place to deal with any suspected malpractice. As detailed in the 'Before the exams' section of this supplement, invigilators should monitor candidates closely during their exam.

You must still follow the regulations in section 5.6 of the *Cambridge Handbook*. Please make sure you familiarise yourself with this section.

### Will there be any allowance for loss of teaching time?

We are not able to offer special consideration to centres or candidates to compensate for lost preparation and teaching time. An exam grade on a certificate indicates to users of the grade (such as universities and employers) that

the candidate has demonstrated a particular level of achievement to us in their exam. If we awarded grades to some candidates who had *not* shown us that level of achievement, that would be unfair to other candidates, disadvantaging them as they compete for opportunities in education or employment.

Perhaps more fundamentally, awarding grades to some candidates who have not demonstrated the necessary level of achievement would be misleading the employers and universities that use the grades. Public trust in qualifications can evaporate if exam boards dilute their standards. If we allowed that to happen, then all of our candidates, past, present or future, would be cheated of the recognition their achievements deserve.

The purpose of special consideration is to make a small allowance for circumstances on the day of the exam which prevent a candidate from demonstrating fully what they know and can do. This does not undermine the standard – we have reason to believe that the candidate's knowledge and skills are there, it is the *demonstration* of them that has been affected.

Making a small allowance under these circumstances does not threaten the integrity and recognition of the grades. This is not the same as making allowances for a loss of learning. To award grades to candidates who do not have the knowledge and skills required for the grade is to undermine the standard, and risks the recognition and value of everybody's grades.

### More support

- Make sure you are receiving our [monthly exams officer eNewsletter](#)
- We run [monthly webinars](#) to support our exams officers, and to give you a chance to ask us questions
- You can contact us 24 hours a day, Monday to Saturday: [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org)

**Learn more!** For more information please visit [www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsOfficers](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsOfficers) or contact Customer Services on +44 (0)1223 553554 or email [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org)

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If you need this document in a different format contact us at [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org) telling us your name, email address and requirements and we will respond within 15 working days.