



Trinity High School

A Guide to Exams and Assessment for Parents and Carers

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Introduction

All parents, carers and guardians want their children to achieve to the best of their ability and do as well as they can in their exams.

Research shows that children whose parents become involved in their education are more likely to perform better in exams. Many parents would like to do the same ... but unfortunately don't know where to start.

"The future is not a gift - it's an achievement"

Harry Lauder

Exams can be a stressful time for students and parents alike, sometimes for the whole family. However, there is a lot that we can do to alleviate these pressures and help your child achieve success and perform to the best of their ability.

You may already appreciate and understand the importance that your contribution can make and are aware of all the processes involved and the challenges that lie ahead.

Nevertheless, the value of a common approach where parents, teacher and the school all share the same aims, can only serve to strengthen and enhance the support and guidance on offer.

"Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety nine percent perspiration"

Thomas Edison

You can rest assured that, here at Trinity High School, we shall endeavour to make every effort to ensure that our pupils receive the best possible preparation and

This booklet is, therefore, intended to help you to become better informed about the examination and assessment procedures and to provide useful information, advice and guidance about the steps you can take to help your child revise and prepare for the exams.

Remember that your child will be taking exams or assessments **at levels** which reflect their ability. Your participation and involvement could be crucial in laying the foundations towards their success.

These recommendations are not necessarily new nor are they applicable to all students but nevertheless, they are practical suggestions, tips and strategies that might help you to improve your child's chances of success.

"We all have ability. The difference is how we use it"

Stevie Wonder

We have also included some frequently asked questions, which will enable you to have a clearer understanding of the whole process.

So whether you are a parent, carer, guardian, or relative with responsibility for children, this booklet can help you to understand the important role you can play in helping and supporting your child through the critical exam period. Although the term 'parent' is used throughout this document it refers to carers, guardians, relatives, and indeed any adult with an interest in the success of one of our young people.

If you have any concerns or further suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact the school **on 0141 646 3650**. Or for further detailed information on exams and assessments visit www.educationscotland.gov.uk

Now all that remains for us to do is to wish you and your child, good luck and every success.

“There are three types of people in this world: those who make things happen; those who watch things happen; and those who wonder what happened. We all have a choice. ”

Mary Kay Ash

Helping them succeed

As we all know, being a parent, carer or guardian, can be a daunting challenge at times, particularly when dealing with teenagers. And even more so when trying to get them to study!

Wouldn't it be great if we could just sprinkle them with some magic dust and they would do whatever we told them?

Bear in mind that experts state that many children do not fulfil their potential, not because they lack ability or are not capable but because they simply do not know how to study. They just have not learned the skills. Simply nagging them will probably make them rebellious and confrontational and turn the whole issue into a constant battle of wits.

"Nowadays some people expect the door of opportunity to be opened with a remote control"

M. Charles Wheeler

Being available, supportive and encouraging will go a long way to help build their confidence and contribute to alleviating any worries, concerns or anxieties they may have.

There are no quick fixes, just hard work on your part to get them to establish some good study habits.

Organisation

Start by getting them organised. This is a vital area.

- Discuss with your child how he/she intends to organise their study leave and revision programme.
- From the SQA exam timetable, find out which exams they will be taking and on what days, dates and times.
- Check their student planners to find out when they have internal assessments.
- All candidates will be issued with a copy of the exam schedule.
- Note and highlight these in a calendar, diary or timetable.
- Pin up a copy of the exam timetable in a prominent place with the exam dates highlighted to act as a reminder.
- Help them to draw up a weekly study schedule/revision plan for their subjects in conjunction with the exam timetable. Use the SQA link to build a blank timetable.
- Make sure they allocate enough time to study for each of their subjects and they vary what they study.
- Try and get them into a routine and habit of studying on a regular basis.

"A goal without a plan is just a wish"

Thomas A. Edison

- Teachers usually provide study notes and past papers for their subjects, make sure these are available, particularly for National 5 and Higher candidates.
- Get them to tick off the topics or areas they have completed and make sure they have taken notes and made a summary of the information for quick revision. Coloured index cards are good for this. Easily carried around and the colours can be categorised for each subject.
- Offer to test them or ask them to explain to you what they have learned.

Time Management

“99% of the failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses”

George Washington Carver

With the exams looming, isn't it amazing that our students become busier than ever. They somehow manage to be able to find a million and one other things to do and constantly put off revising until the last minute ... leading to higher levels of stress and panic! We all lead busy lives and even we may find it difficult to manage our time effectively at times.

Teenagers need a lot of help and support in this area if they are to use their time wisely.

- Remind them that there are an incredible 168 hours in the week.
- Obviously you have to subtract time for sleeping, eating and leisure time
- Be realistic about how much time they should devote to studying.
- As a general rule, short study periods of 30- 50 minutes are best with regular 10-15 minute breaks.

Motivation - Keeping them on Track

This is a challenging time for you and your child, particularly if they are not used to studying. Some students may appear uninterested or in 'couch potato mode' but with some persuasive tactics, we can get them to make a start on their revision.

“Motivation is like food for the brain. You cannot get enough in one sitting. It needs continual topping up.”

Peter Davies

Start with a reminder of the opportunities available and the impact that a good set of grades can have on their future life and career.

- Perhaps it could result in being accepted on a college course that they want.
- This could be the first steps to get further qualifications that will help get them a career that they are interested in.

- It could provide them with more choices. Wider job opportunities and career or further education options with good prospects
- This could be seen as a challenge that they can overcome and be satisfied and proud of their achievements.

“Some of us are like wheelbarrows, only useful when pushed,.....and easily upset.”

Jack Herbert

There’s a fine line between positive encouragement and pressure. So we need to tread carefully. Every child is unique and some may need more ‘cajoling’ and gentle persuasion more than others. However, many of us tend to forget that we have several powerful negotiating tools at our disposal and sometimes we just don’t use them often enough.

- Who cooks the meals?
- Who provides the taxi service?
- Who washes their clothes?
- Who provides them with pocket money and treats?
- Who pays the mobile phone bill?
- Who pays or provides them with???????

Do you recognise this person?

Believe it or not, research and studies have shown that many teenagers prefer having clear limits and boundaries with consequences for breaking them. Withdrawal of certain privileges may work but you could also adopt a more positive way to encourage them without the lectures, constant battle of wits and nagging. A two –pronged approach might be more beneficial.

You may wish to consider:

- Always reward or praise your child for sticking to their study plan.
- Give them additional incentives or treats for their efforts.
- Reassure them that they are more than capable of learning.
- Discuss any difficulties that they have and try to come up with a solution together.
- Leave them a note wishing them good luck.
- Make a phone call, text their mobile or email to find out how they are getting on.
- Remind them that exams are there not to highlight what they don’t know but for them to ‘show off’ what they do know.

“Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me and I may not forget you”

William Arthur Ward

The more positive you are, the more positive they will become and increasingly less stressed as their confidence and self-esteem grows.

Compiled by J Gilroy, Former PT Modern Languages, Trinity High School.
Adapted by P Bollen, Head Teacher, Trinity High School 2020

Environment

Create a Designated Study Space

Whether it is the kitchen table, dining room or bedroom, it should preferably be a dedicated space where the student can work as required, free from the usual distractions such as the TV, radio, games consoles etc. This is crucial for effective studying and learning to take place. Of course, other family members' views and assistance may be required.

Try and provide them with files, boxes or plastic wallets to keep all their resources, such as past papers, revision notes so that they are readily available.

Also include paper, index cards, pens, pencils, erasers, rulers etc. as well as reference materials such as dictionaries etc.

Good investments are 'highlighter pens' and 'post-its'. Research has shown that any texts or notes, which are highlighted, tend to be easier to remember. Post-its are handy for a variety of tasks.

All of the above saves time and does not give them any opportunity for making excuses and NOT studying. It also provides them with a fixed space or area which becomes associated in their mind with work and study.

Even a little space can go along way.

Of course, in a busy home, this may be easier said than done, particularly with a young or large family.

However, you may want to investigate the possibility of setting up a study area at a relative's house e.g. grandparents/aunts if they live close-by.

If you are worried about them being left unsupervised at home during the day, it may be better to encourage them to attend school or the local library.

Consider allowing them to revise with friends on the understanding that they show what they have done or it will just turn into a 'chat' session.

"He who asks a question is a fool for a minute; he who does not remains a fool forever"

Friends can be a great source of knowledge and help and of course, can share revision notes and they can also test one another.

Music

Difficult one this! Music may be beneficial or it could prove distracting. Studies have shown that some elements of music - and in particular soft classical music - can help to stimulate the brain and increase the chances of the information being absorbed into the memory. So letting them play music may prove to be a winner!

Advantages

- It blocks out other noises in the household.
- Background music may help to relax them.
- A lot of students like listening to music. It can help to sustain learning.

Disadvantages

- Loud music can be a distraction and intrusive at times.
- Students pay more attention to singing along with the music rather than concentrating on their task.
- They begin daydreaming and 'doodling'
- They become more interested in organising the 'play list' and sequence of tracks.

"There is little difference in people...the little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative"

Computers

Not everyone has access to a computer and although they can be an invaluable aid, they can also prove to be a distraction. There are some good educational software packages available and some excellent interactive websites specialising in revision for and help for specific subjects, coupled with study and exam strategies. However, a lot of time is sometimes wasted by searching for suitable sites.

The concern is the temptation for students to be emailing their friends, browsing on social networking sites, playing games or simply surfing the net with no real study or learning taking place.

A list of useful websites is included at the back of the booklet.

Don't worry if there is no computer available. All pupils should have their coursework, teachers' revision notes and of course, course books - so they already have a wealth of material to work from.

Dealing with Stress

Healthy Lifestyle = Healthy Body and Healthy Mind

Some students are able to handle the pressures and challenges of studying with no major problems. They may get nervous or slightly anxious at times, which is only natural, but they have learned to cope. Others become agitated, bad-tempered, over – anxious, moody or even become ill.

That is why it is so important to try and adopt a healthy lifestyle. A few changes to their diet will pay big dividends.

- Try to ensure that they eat sensibly. Unfortunately, too much junk food, sweets chocolate and sugary drinks sap energy levels affecting concentration and may also disturb sleep patterns.
- Avoid too much caffeine-rich drinks such as coffee, tea and fizzy drinks. Although caffeine is a stimulant and can keep you awake, it has also been linked to an increase in nervous tension and stress levels.
- The best drink by far for maintaining a healthy lifestyle is water. Or a milky drink at bedtime.
- Make sure that they exercise on a regular basis. A short, brisk walk would suffice. Stress is eased by any form of physical activity. Exercise helps to release nervous energy and lowers anxiety levels. It makes you more alert.
- Encourage them to have a set pattern for bed in order to get enough sleep. 8 hours should be enough for most people.
- Chewing sugar free gum can also help them to relax and improve concentration levels.

Try any relaxation techniques which may help ease their tension.

You may be feeling just as nervous as they are, but you have to stay 'Cool Calm and Collected.' Don't panic if they panic! It can be contagious! Remind them that it will all be over shortly and 'that ' is something to look forward to and perhaps celebrate.

Should they show signs of nervousness the night before an exam, reassure them that they can only do their best and that some of their fears are probably unfounded.

If you would like to find out more or have any concerns or worries, please contact the school or:

www.childline.org.uk/Examstress.asp

www.youngminds.org.uk/

Youth Counselling Services Agency

48 Darnley Street

Pollokshields

Glasgow

G42 2SE

Compiled by J Gilroy, Former PT Modern Languages, Trinity High School.

Adapted by P Bollen, Head Teacher, Trinity High School 2020

The night before the exam

- For National 5 and Higher and Advanced Higher Candidates - Double check the time of the exam and remind them that they need to be there at least 15 minutes before the official starting time.
- Get them to lay out the clothes they are wearing. Nothing worse than trying to find a clean shirt or one that needs ironing in the morning. That will only add to their stress.
- Help get them organised by packing their bag with:
 - Extra pens, pencils etc
 - Calculator (if required)
 - Revision Notes
 - Bottle of water
 - A suitable watch or timepiece for checking the time.
 - Candidate Number
- Remind them about taking prohibited items with them. (See Frequently Asked Questions)
- Finally, make sure the alarm clock is set and that they manage to get a good night's sleep so that they are fresh and alert for the next day.

Feeling organised about the little things will ease the pressure and help to cut down on stress.

The Final Countdown – the waiting is over

Although the exams and assessment period may be over, your child may still be feeling apprehensive and anxious as the waiting game begins. This is perfectly understandable. Constant reassurance is required and let them know that it is not the end of the world if they do not do as well as anticipated. Tell them that you are proud of them for getting this far and for all their effort and hard work.

So the day has finally arrived when a very large envelope appears and everyone is anxiously waiting to hear the news. For the students, it could be a feeling of:

- Simple relief now that the worry and waiting are over.
- Euphoria and happiness because the results are good or better than expected
- Or disappointment and sadness because the grades are lower or worse than expected.

Be prepared for either one of them.

If results did not go to plan, remain calm, upbeat and reassure them that there are other avenues to explore.

- Exam Appeals may be possible for National 5 or Higher candidates.
- Discussion with the Guidance/Pastoral Care Teacher and SDS Officer to explore alternatives and other options.

Summary/Checklist

- Organise and help them to plan and prioritise their workload.
- Have the exam timetable on display.
- Create a designated study space and have a supply of materials on hand.
- Reassure them that they **can** do it!
- Minimise distractions and interruptions.
- Provide plenty of encouragement and praise and rewards.
- Make sure they get enough sleep
- Help by testing them on their revision.
- Encourage them to eat properly, exercise and rest when appropriate.
- Make sure they are well organised the night before.

Frequently Asked Questions?

What are the criteria for SQA Awards?

National 5, National 4 and National 3

- 2 or 3 units of work (40 or 60 hours per unit)
- National 4 course has a value-added component.
- One final exam in May/June for National 5 candidates only (except PE)
- Certificate awarded at A, B, C, D for National 5 only

Higher

You usually take Highers in S5 and S6, or at college.

You normally need Highers to get into higher education courses (degrees, Higher National Diplomas and Higher National Certificates) at university or college.

Every pupil sitting an external exam will be given an examination timetable.

Grade Bands

Grade	Percentage
A	70% and above
B	60% - 69%
C	50% - 59%
D	40% - 49%
No Award	39% and below

Further information can be obtained from the National Qualifications website at:

www.ceg.org.uk/nq/

Or

From the Scottish Qualifications Authority website at www.sqa.org.uk/

* The majority of information above has been taken from the SQA' s website

Whilst pupils are on study leave they need only attend Trinity High when they have examinations. However, we would encourage them to seek additional help from teachers when required at mutually agreed times as long as they adhere to the school's uniform policy.

For any exam, pupils should arrive in their school uniform and we would ask for your cooperation in this matter.

What is study leave?

This is a period of time when all SQA candidates are given permission to be absent from school in order to prepare, revise and study for their forthcoming exams. Students, therefore, need only attend when they have examinations.

It is not a holiday and should not be treated as such.

Experience suggests that a large number of students do not have the necessary skills or are not inclined, to make the best possible use of this time and consequently, it becomes for many a hap hazardous affair with no structure or plan for revising.

Therefore, it may be more beneficial and appropriate for some pupils to continue to attend school where they will be more than welcome. For our part, the school will endeavour to provide a suitable area for study. And of course teachers will be on hand to offer any further help and support. However, as always, we expect all pupils to respect our school dress code.

Please contact us if your child is experiencing any difficulties in respect of any aspect of preparation or study. Our Pastoral Care/Guidance Team will be glad to offer any support or assistance.

Where will examinations be held?

The main location for the majority of exams is the **games hall** . Students should arrive preferably 30 minutes but at the very least **15** minutes before the scheduled start time to enable seating arrangements to be carried out quickly and efficiently. On the day of each exam, a list will be placed **ON THE NOTICE BOARDS IN THE STREET AREA**. It is the candidate's responsibility to check where the exam is being held and to note their seat number. Candidates will be seated according to their designated desk numbers as it appears on the exam list. All exams are conducted under the auspices of invigilators and per the rules and regulations of the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Every year a few candidates miss an examination because they have misread the timetable. Make sure your child is not one of them.

What happens if a student is late?

If you are aware that your son/daughter is running late, you should contact the school immediately so that a message can be passed on to the chief invigilator who will determine whether the candidate can be admitted. Depending on how long the exam has been in progress, it may be possible for the candidate to be admitted to the examination. In the case of a Modern Languages listening exam, no student will be allowed entry whilst this particular exam is in progress.

Please help us by checking your son/daughter's timetable and ensuring that they arrive in plenty time before the exam.

What if a student is unable to attend due to illness etc?

You should immediately telephone the school and inform us of the situation. A medical certificate is essential if the school is to consider making an appeal for an award on your behalf.

Similarly, any illness, accident, bereavement or family circumstances which may affect the student's overall performance, arising shortly before or during the exams, should be discussed with the student's Head of House or Pastoral Care/Guidance teacher as soon as possible so that an appeal may be considered and an application made to the exam board for consideration for an 'absentee award'.

What happens if a candidate fails to attend?

Should a candidate fail to attend for no valid reason, then an asterisk will appear opposite the subject name on the student's awards certificate.

This may indicate to any prospective employer or further education college that there appears to be a lack of commitment on the young person's part and has failed to complete the outcome of the course.

Therefore, 'not turning up' damages future employment prospects not to mention the fact that all the previous years of work up to that point will have been totally wasted.

What should students wear?

All candidates should arrive wearing the school uniform as per the school's dress code. We do not wish to cause any undue stress or anxiety by reminding them of the school's policy. Students not dressed in the appropriate manner may not be permitted to sit the exams.

Candidates will be told to place all coats and bags etc. at the front or back of the room.

It is advisable that students bring as little as possible in the way of coats and baggage etc.

What should students bring with them?

- Students should bring only the materials appropriate for the exam.
- At least two ballpoint pens with black or blue ink. (Not gel/felt tip pens)
- A calculator if permitted and instructed for specific exams.*
- Coloured pencils or inks for diagrams, maps, charts etc. if required.
- A bottle of water preferably with a 'sport' cap top.
- Scottish Candidate Number Card.

*Candidates will have been advised of the type of calculator required for each exam.

It is the student's responsibility to bring the necessary equipment on the day.

What standards of behaviour are expected during examinations?

The candidates will be subject to the school's behaviour policy and the rules and regulations imposed by the examination board.

Candidates are asked to enter and leave the examination hall in an orderly manner and in silence, so as to avoid disturbing other students who may still be taking examinations in another room.

Any candidate attempting to communicate with another student or turn round for any reason whilst the exam is in progress will be asked to leave and subsequently be reported.

It would be greatly appreciated and helpful if parents could impress upon their son/daughter the importance of good behaviour in any examination.

Again any disruptive students will be removed and reported which will inevitably result in disqualification and 'no award' being given.

What is not permitted?

- Mobile Phones*
- Any electronic product or device capable of storing information or accessing the internet.
- Tippex or any form of correction fluid, tape or pens
- Notes, books, paper of any kind
- Pencil Cases/calculator cases
- Sharing or borrowing of any equipment
- No food, sweets or chewing gum.

*Mobile Phones

Any student found to have a mobile phone in the exam room will be reported for a breach of regulations and possibly disqualified from that paper.

The school can take no responsibility for the security of mobile phones brought to the school and subsequently handed to the invigilator.

Candidates will be told to surrender any items in their possession, which may infringe the regulations.

Possession of any unauthorised item in an examination constitutes an infringement of the exam regulations.

What about toilet breaks?

As a school, we encourage all students to make use of the toilet facilities before any exam and unless advised otherwise about a medical condition, generally, no student will be allowed to go to the toilet whilst the exam is underway. However, should an emergency occur, the candidate must be accompanied by an invigilator or other authorised person and be escorted to the toilet.

Visits to the toilet should be the exception rather than the rule.

What should students do if they finish early?

It is imperative that students use all the available time reviewing and checking their answers. A candidate may be permitted to leave the exam room at the invigilator's discretion by raising their hand so as not to distract others. All exam papers must be handed to the invigilator before leaving the room.

Under no circumstances will any candidate be permitted to re-enter the exam room for any reason.

No candidate will be allowed to leave during the last ten minutes of any exam except in an emergency.

What is malpractice?

Malpractice is a term that the Scottish Qualifications Authority uses to refer to any form of infringement, irregularity or breach of regulations.

Generally speaking it is a form of cheating by whatever means. A student will be reported for malpractice by the invigilator if there is any suspicion of any of the following:

- Using a prohibited item or making use of any unauthorised aids.
- Communicating in any way with other candidates by whatever means
- Copying or attempting to copy another student's answers.
- Removing a question paper or answer book/sheet.
- Using any other questionable practice

When will the certificate arrive?

For National Qualifications, the certificate should arrive at your home around the beginning of August

If you do not get it by then, contact your school or college at once. SQA sends results directly to them so they will be able to tell you your results. They will also get in touch with SQA to find out what has happened to the certificate

What if there are errors or omissions?

If a course, or some units of a course are missing from the certificate, or you think they are wrong, contact the school or college at once. If there is a problem they will sort it out with SQA.

How can I request a review of marking?

Before the exams the school or college sends SQA an estimate of how they think each candidate will do. If the result is not as good as expected, the school can request a marking review.

Marking Reviews

Marking reviews may only be made by the **head of your school or college** and only if:

- The candidate has attempted all parts of the assessment
- The school or college has suitable evidence.

If you want to request a review, you should contact your school or college as soon as the new term starts. SQA deals with Higher and Advanced Higher reviews first, usually in August and National 5 appeals in September. SQA will let your school or college know the results of your appeal.

Timeline

- Urgent reviews, if the candidate hopes to go on to college or university, by September.
- Higher or Advanced Higher by the end of August.
- National 5 the by beginning of September.
- There are no review procedures for National 3 or National 4.

If your request is successful a replacement certificate will be issued at the end of November.

For further information please refer to: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/65427.html>

What happens if the certificate gets lost?

You should keep the certificate safe – your child will need it when they apply for courses or jobs. But if you cannot find it and it is lost, then, you can get a copy from SQA, for a fee. You can download a 'Replacement Certificate Form' from the SQA website.

If you have any further questions?

Contact the school. Read the SQA leaflet 'Your Exams' what you need to know, what you need to do, and what happens next'.

Or phone the SQA Customer Contact Centre on 0845 278 8080 – they will ask for your name, address, date of birth and Scottish candidate number.

For general information check the SQA website: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/>

The Internet can be an invaluable resource for a variety of school subjects as well as revision and study techniques. Many non-commercial organisations provide valuable on-line resources for schools. Included are the equivalent GCSE revision sites which may prove useful in some subject areas.

However, should you have any concerns about the use of computers and the internet in general, can we suggest the site below which provides useful advice to parents on many aspects of your child's use of computers and the internet.

www.parentscentre.gov.uk/forum/categories.cfm?catid=38

Please see below some online resources which may be of value to you. Our pupils have found these useful.

www.schoolsnet.com
www.bbc.co.uk/schools
www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize
www.projectgcse.co.uk
www.s-cool.co.uk
www.topmarks.co.uk/
www.sparknotes.com/
www.gcse.com/
www.revisioncentre.co.uk/
<https://glow.rmunify.com/>
<https://scholar.hw.ac.uk/>
<https://www.w3schools.com/>
<https://quizlet.com/en-gb>
<https://kahoot.com/>