

Frequently ask questions

What is a GCSE?

GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. The qualification mainly involves studying the theory of a subject, combined with some investigative work. Some subjects also involve coursework and/or practical work. All GCSE subjects involve at least one written examinations at the end of Year 11.

In some subjects, there are two levels: 'higher' or 'foundation'; each level leads to a different range of grades.

- *Higher*, where students can achieve grades A*–D(E), or a U
- *Foundation*, where they can achieve grades C–G, or a U

Your subject teacher selects which level is best for you. If you are thinking about higher education, you may need GCSEs in certain subjects. Most universities and colleges will ask for five GCSEs grades A*–C, including English and Maths (as well as A levels or equivalent qualifications).

What is a GCE?

GCE stands for General Certificate of Education. GCEs are also known as A level qualifications. They normally take two years to complete and focus on traditional study skills. GCEs have areas of study called **units**. From September 2008 the new specification of GCEs are mostly **four units**; two AS units and two A2 units. There is assessment of practical skills in some subjects like Science or Art. Students who are unhappy with grades awarded may resit modules in the next available examinations series. Awards are **A–E**,

Who is responsible for entering students for examinations?

It is school policy to enter every student who is being taught a subject for the most appropriate level of exam. It is the subject teacher's role to select students for the most appropriate level of entry, based on attainment and projected grade. Resit entries are the responsibility of the individual student (after consultation with subject teacher) who must enter and pay for resits via the Examinations Office.

What information will students receive about their examination entries?

Students will receive two copies of their student statement of entry detailing the subjects and levels for which they been entered. This should be checked and one copy should be returned to the Examinations Office. You are asked to inform the school if you believe there are any errors or problems.

This document serves two purposes:

- I. to check that all entries have been made and are correct.
- II. to inform parents that they undertake to pay the entry fees should their son/daughter fail to take the examination without good reason.

Once the Examination Boards have received the school's entries, individual student timetables will be issued showing the subjects entered and giving the dates of the written examinations. These should be checked; one copy to be signed and returned to the Examinations Office and the remaining copy kept safely by the student. Students will receive updated statements if the entries made for them change.

Can students take holidays during term time?

No. Dates for examinations are rigidly fixed by the Examination Boards. The Examinations Officer will not give actual dates for examinations to parents or students in advance of the issuing of individual student timetables, but the exam sessions' dates can be found on the school's website. Please refer to the letter on the schools website, "School-information/Useful documents - Request for Leave of Absence in Term Time: Revised National Arrangements". Students who are withdrawn from examinations after entries have been made, due to a family holiday, will have to cover the cost of entry for the missed examination.

How can parents best help their son/daughter during the examination period?

Examinations are inevitably a stressful time for students and support from both school and parents can be helpful. The school will provide advice about revision programmes and examination techniques, and if this is followed, it should not be necessary for any student to work abnormally long hours during the revision period. It is probably helpful to discuss with your son/daughter how he/she intends to organise revision and to talk through any anxieties about particular techniques or subject matter. Testing knowledge of factual material can benefit the student if such help is requested, but often all that is needed is a quiet place to work and lots of encouragement. Students should get plenty of sleep and some opportunities for relaxation.

How do I know the dates when examinations take place?

The main periods for external written examinations are May and June with some oral examinations and practical examinations taking place at different times throughout the academic year.

All students will receive a school produced individual student timetable, which will give them the dates and sessions (a.m. or p.m.) of the written papers they are taking. This will include start times and the location of the examinations. Subject departments will inform students of oral and practical examinations dates.

When does Coursework need handing in?

For those subjects that still have an element of coursework included in them, the Examinations Boards have deadlines that must be met by school. Therefore, the coursework deadlines set by school must be adhered to. The subject teacher will inform students of their subject deadlines for coursework to be handed in. Students who do not submit coursework on time will not be allocated a mark and their overall grade will suffer.

Where will the examinations be held?

The main locations for examinations are the School Main Hall, the Boys' Gym and S1 in the Sixth Form block. Students are asked to be there 10 minutes before the advertised start time to enable seating procedures to be carried out efficiently, and to allow for any unforeseen room changes. They are asked to wait quietly outside the room until invited to enter. Where a student sits will be determined by their candidate number, which appears on all statements of entry. The student will sit at the desk bearing a card with their candidate number and name. This arrangement follows Examination Boards' rules and the school cannot change it.

At what times do the examination sessions begin?

The Examination Boards dictate the permissible start times for examinations. Students are asked to report to the examination room no later than 10 minutes before the start of the examination.

Examinations at Tadcaster Grammar School start at:

8.55am for morning examinations - AM Session

1.15pm for afternoon examinations - PM Session

The lengths of examination papers vary and will frequently not end until after the school day has finished. Students and parents should be aware of this and make appropriate arrangements for getting home. Students will not be allowed out of an examination early for any reason.

Some students may also receive an allowance of extra time for the examinations and so their finishing times will be even later. It is the students' responsibility to be aware of the start time of each exam, but parents should be warned there is a tendency for students to confuse AM and PM sessions. Please ensure your son/daughter checks his/her exam commitments for each day on the previous evening.

What happens if a student has more than one examination at the same time?

If a student is timetabled to sit two or more examinations at the same time, this is known as a clash. If these are for the same subject and/or do not exceed more than 3 hours, this is intentional on the part of the board and the examinations are meant to run one after another. If the total time of the examinations papers exceeds 3 hours in any one session, then this should be picked up during the checking process and notified immediately to the Examinations Officer who can grant permission for one of the papers to be taken at a different time on the same day. The student will have to remain under supervision between the two papers. In rare cases, it may be necessary for a paper to be taken the next day and it is a requirement that the student is supervised overnight. This is essential to avoid compromising the integrity of the examination and needs to be organised well in advance. If an exam is re-scheduled from a morning to an afternoon session due to clashes, the student will be supervised over lunchtime. They should bring some revision or reading material and their lunch and a drink.

What should students bring to the examinations?

Students should bring writing equipment, coloured pencils, erasers etc. in a transparent plastic bag or pencil case. Non-transparent pencil boxes or cases will not be permitted in the examination room.

Pens should be **black**. Modular papers require the use of a **black biro only**.

Some subject papers will require the use of calculators, dictionaries or set texts. Students will be advised by their subject teachers about this.

Students are responsible for ensuring that they bring everything they need to the examination.

What are the regulations governing the use of calculators?

Some subject papers, especially Maths, explicitly prohibit the use of calculators.

In addition, calculators with any of the following facilities are prohibited:

Data banks

Dictionaries

Language translators

Retrieval of text or formulae

QWERTY keyboards

Built-in symbolic algebra manipulations

Symbolic differentiation or integration

Capability of remote communication with other machines

The use, or attempted use, of any such calculators will be regarded as malpractice.

Calculators with graphic displays and programmable calculators are permitted if information and/or programmes stored in the calculator's memory are cleared before the examination. Retrieval of information and/or programmes during the examination is an infringement of the regulations. Students are responsible for clearing any information and/or programme before the examination.

What should students not bring with them?

Some items are strictly banned and should not be brought into the examination room under any circumstances. The Examination Boards treat mere possession of these items as an infringement.

Mobile phones

Personal MP3/CD/tape/minidisk players - unless permitted for individual language examinations.

These items can be handed to an invigilator **before the start** of an examination, but the school cannot be responsible for the security of these while the examination is in progress

The use of correcting fluid or correction pens is not permitted. Notes, papers and text books etc are only allowed in certain examinations and students will be informed by the subject teachers in advance. Students should not bring lucky mascots etc. into the examination room.

No food items or chewing gum are allowed.

Can students bring a drink into the examination room?

Students may bring a drink with them into the examination room; however, no more than 500ml of still water, preferably in a sport cap bottle. No fizzy drinks, cans or pouches will be allowed, due to the risk of spillage.

What are the regulations regarding mobile phones?

The regulations state that mobile phones are not to be brought into examination rooms under any circumstances. This applies to all public and school/mock examinations. They cause disturbance to other students if they ring and can present opportunities for malpractice. Any student found to have a phone in the examination room will be reported to the appropriate Examination Board. Should this happen they are likely to be disqualified from that paper and possibly from the whole examination in that subject. It is a very serious offence and our advice is that the phone should not be brought to school. We can take no responsibility for the security of mobile phones brought to school. At the start of all examinations students must hand in their mobile phones if they are in possession of one.

How are examinations started?

An Examinations Invigilator will announce the examination formally, and students cautioned that they are subject to the regulations. Any instructions or board notices, changes to papers, etc will be read out and the students asked to complete their details on the answer papers. Students will be asked to check that they have the correct paper in front of them. The start time and finish time will be announced and will be displayed at the front of the examination room.

What standards of behaviour are expected during examinations?

All students are given a copy of a 'notice to candidates' produced by the examining bodies, which gives general guidelines for conduct, which must be observed.

Malpractice is the term that the Examination Boards use for any irregularity, or breach of the regulations of any form. The school and the examination boards regard breaches of examination regulations very seriously. Parents should impress on their son/daughter the importance of good behaviour in an examination, as any activities that may disturb or upset other students will not be tolerated. The school has the power to remove disruptive students from examinations and not allow them to sit further examinations in the school.

Students are asked to wait quietly outside the examination venue, and to enter and leave in silence. This avoids disturbance to other students and does help to maintain a calm atmosphere for those students who are nervous about their examinations.

Students who try to communicate with other students inside the venue, or who create a disturbance in the examination room will be dealt with and the circumstances will be reported to the Examination Board. The school will report all infringements to the appropriate Examination Board who will decide on what action to take based on the nature of the infringement. This may result in the student not receiving a grade for the whole of that examination. The Examination Boards take the integrity of examinations very seriously and it is important that students pay attention to the Examination Officer's instructions carefully.

What should students wear for examinations?

Examinations are a school activity and students, except the Sixth Form must wear normal school uniform. All students know the uniform rules and it is their responsibility to ensure they observe them. Students not dressed properly or modestly will not be permitted to sit examinations. Jackets, jumpers or other clothing are not allowed over the backs of the chairs. Students should bring as little as possible in the way of coats and baggage into the examination room.

Items of jewellery, such as rings or bracelets should not be worn as they make a noise on the desk and would be deemed a disruption to other students; likewise keys around necks.

How are students supervised?

Adult external Invigilators will supervise students under the direct management of the Examinations Officer. Once students enter the examination room they must remain supervised and follow the Invigilators' instructions at all times. The Invigilators are experienced in examinations procedures and subject to strict regulation, references and police checks. They usually work in teams and can contact the Examinations Officer by radio to resolve any issues. The Invigilators call students in by candidate number or subject group. The student should find the desk with their candidate number card on it. In some sessions, papers will be already open or on examination desks; these must not be opened/looked at until students are advised to do so.

What happens if a student is late?

If parents are aware that their son/daughter has got the timing of the examination wrong and has missed the starting time, they should telephone the school immediately and get a message to the Examinations Officer. Depending on how long the examination has been in progress, it may be possible for the student to be admitted. However, we are bound by Examination Board regulations on this matter. Normally students with a genuine reason and who are brought straight to school may be admitted within the first 30 minutes of the start time. After this time the board will decide whether to accept any paper sat. Students who arrive more than 1 hour after the start or after the end of the exam will not be admitted.

What do I do if my son/daughter is unwell at the time of one of the examinations?

Please telephone the school if your son/daughter will **not** be attending an examination or if he/she will be present but is unwell. It is helpful for the invigilator to be aware that a student is not feeling well. Even if you would not normally visit your doctor's surgery for minor illnesses, it is important that you do so at examination time. Your doctor will advise as to whether your son/daughter is fit to sit the examination. If the student takes the paper, your doctor should give you a letter, which the school can forward to the Examination Board asking for special consideration on the grounds of illness. If the student is unable through illness to sit a paper the Examination Board **may**, after examining the doctor's letter and any evidence of performance on other papers, decide to award a grade. It is unlikely that an AS grade will be awarded if a unit is missed as the student will be expected to re-take it in January. It is essential that you see your doctor on the day of the examination. The Examination Boards do not normally accept retrospective information and any doctors' letters must be forwarded to the Examinations Officer **immediately**, as there is a tight deadline. Please be aware that any medical certificate must be accompanied by a note detailing the examinations to which it refers and the date on which the papers were sat.

What happens if a student does not turn up for an examination?

Students who absent themselves from any examination without a doctor's note or a request for special consideration will receive a grade based only on those elements of the examinations that they have taken. Parents should be aware that the school will seek to recover the examination fees if a student does not turn up for an examination. It is in all our interests to ensure that the school's examination budget is not wasted.

What do students do who finish early?

Students are not permitted to leave the examination room before the official finish time. Any remaining time the student has should be spent checking their answers. They must sit quietly at their desk so as not to disturb other students.

What do I need to do if a student has problems that may affect his/her examination performance?

Any illness, or family circumstances, which may affect examination performance, arising shortly before or during the examinations, should be notified as soon as possible to the Examinations Officer so that an application for special consideration can be made to the boards. Parents should be aware that any adjustment is likely to be small and that no feedback is ever provided.

When and how are the results distributed?

A level (GCE) and GCSE results are issued in August of each year. Please see the school's website for this current academic year's results days. Students wishing for a relative or friend to collect their results **must** send a signed letter of authorisation with the collector. Results will not be given over the telephone without prior arrangement. GCE and GCSE students not intending to collect in person but wishing their results to be posted, should leave a stamped addressed envelope (also bearing their candidate number), with the Examinations Office. Result slips for GCE and GCSE not collected or posted on Results Day will be retained in school for collection at the start of term.

What can I do if results are substantially different from what is anticipated?

It must be remembered that examinations can only measure performance on the day, and that students can do better or worse than anticipated for a variety of reasons. It is advisable to obtain a copy of the script and mark scheme before proceeding to an Enquiry about Result. If there are serious grounds for concern about a result then the school can initiate an enquiry with the appropriate board. Details of the procedures and the fees involved are available from the Examinations Officer and the process should be started as soon as possible after consultation with the Head of Faculty or Subject Leader concerned. The final date for submission to the board is four weeks after results. However, if the results have serious implications for the student's future plans. i.e. university place, then advice should be sought from your House Leader on Results Day.

How do I go about obtaining copies of marked examination scripts?

It is currently possible to have access to marked scripts for most AS/A2 units and some GCSE subjects. You will need to complete a post results request form that you will receive on results day along with your results. There is a fee charged for each subject/paper. You should be aware that copies of marked scripts prior to an enquiry on results must be ordered within one week of the issue of results.

How do students apply to resit?

It is possible to resit. Students should discuss their decision to resit with their subject teacher or relevant Head of Faculty, who will need to sign the form to signify approval. Unfortunately, school only receives funding from the local authority for the first examination entry; any subsequent resit entries must be funded by the student, regardless of the year the examination was sat. All resit entry fees vary depending on the Examination Board/subject and must be paid by the deadlines set. Refunds cannot be given once entries have been sent to the Examination Boards.

How should fees be paid?

Where students are requesting a chargeable service, fees should accompany the relevant completed form and handed in to the Examinations Office. Payment can be made by cash or cheque. Cheques should be made payable to Tadcaster Grammar School. Receipts are issued if requested.

When do students receive certificates?

The Examination Boards issue certificates well after the examinations have taken place. The school distributes certificates to students at the following school events:

GCSEs – Key Stage 4 Awards Evening

GCEs – Key Stage 5 Awards Evening

After the above events, students who have not attended can collect their certificates in person from the School Office. A family member may collect them with written permission from the student. Certificates uncollected after 1 year are destroyed; they can only be replaced by direct application to the relevant Examination Boards by the student, where a substantial fee per certificate is charged.