مدرسة جيمس كامبردج العالمية أبوظبي
GEMS Cambridge International School
ABU DHABI

Examinations Candidate Handbook 2026-27

This guide is developed to assist students and parents.

Reviewer: Alan Robinson, Head of Centre, Data and Assessment
Updated: September 2026
Approved by Vice Principal: Carl Bourke
Next Review Date: September 2027

Key Staff

Role	Name
Head of Centre	Alan Robinson
Exams Officer	Shaik Ahmed
Secondary Headteacher	Alan Robinson
Secondary Deputy Headteacher	Shaun Kirk

Introduction

GEMS Cambridge International School, Abu Dhabi (CIA) is committed to making the examination in our school as stress-free as possible, ensuring all candidates have the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability.

This handbook has been produced to ensure that candidates are fully briefed on the exam and assessment processes in place and are made aware of the required JCQ/awarding body instructions and information for candidates.

Should you have any questions or queries, please contact Mr Shaik in the Exams Office
ExamOfficer_cia@gemsedu.com

Contact Information

Role	Name	Email
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Examinations Boards' Websites for General Information

At iGCSE, AS and A Level, our subjects have selected exam boards to test the content of our courses. These are Edexcel/Pearson, Cambridge International Examinations, AQA and Oxford AQA.

AQA https://www.aqa.org.uk/

Edexcel https://www.edexcel.com/

Cambridge https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/

Joint Council for Qualifications

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) is a membership organisation comprising most exam boards in the UK who issue strict rules, regulations and guidance on exam administration. They have several Information for Candidates documents available on their website, which we advise you to familiarise yourself with.

https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/information-for-candidates-documents/

External Exams Key Dates 2026-27

Cambridge Exam Board October-November 2026 Exams

Month	Date	Event
September 2026	Early	Final Entries for November Exams
September 2026	28	Exams begin
November 2026	13	Exams end
January 2027	Mid	iGCSE and AS/A Level Results
March 2027	Late	Certificates Issued

Pearson/Edexcel and AQA November 2026 Exams

Month	Date	Event
October 2026	4	Final Entries for November Exams
November 2026	2	Exams begin
November 2026	18	Exams end
January 2027	14	iGCSE and AS/A Level Results

Pearson/Edexcel and AQA June 2027 Exams

Month	Date	Event
February 2027	21	Final Entries for June Exams
May 2027	10	Exams begin
June 2027	18	Exams end
August 2027	12	AS/A Level Results
August 2026	19	iGCSE Results

Entry Information

Candidates will be given a Statement of Entry which includes their personal details and all the qualifications they are entered for in each exam series. Please check these details carefully and advise the Exams Office of any errors as soon as possible.

Centre and Candidate Details

These details are required by candidates and are filled in on front of all exam scripts:
Centre Numbers are different for AQA, Pearson/Edexcel and Cambridge Exams. We display these at the front of each examination room and the lead invigilator calls out this information before starting the exam so that everyone can fill in the correct details.

Candidate Names are your legal names, as appears on birth certificate/passport is used to register candidates. This must be used for all exams, not preferred name. This is name that will be printed on Exam Certificates and therefore candidates should be able to prove their legal identity.

Candidate Number is individual to each candidate and is a four-digit candidate number allocated by the school. Next year's iGCSE students will have 8 as their first number and this generally progresses alphabetically for the next 3 digits, with girls preceeding boys. Therefore 8001 is probably going to belong to Aaisha! This number stays with you from iGCSE into A Level exams within our school. If you sit an exam elsewhere, that Exam Centre will give you a different candidate number.

Unique Candidate Identifier (UCI) is made up of 12 numbers and 1 letter and links all your qualifications together so if you transfer school this is the number which will identify you. It will be printed on your statement of entry and statement of results and is used for administration purposes: It is not necessary for you to remember it.

Exam Timetables and Dates

Your Head of Year will constantly update you with internal assessments and external examinations. Your subject teacher and Head of that Department will be able to provide you with detailed information on the question paper structures, the topics associated with each unit and the length of the exams.

For practical exams such as Foreign Language and ESL Speaking Components, Music, Art and ICT/CS practical, your subject teachers will communicate the details of these exams to you and your class.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CHECK YOUR TIMETABLE CAREFULLY.

- Ensure that you use the most up to date version of your individual timetable if changes have been made to your entries.
- Check that arrangements for exam clashes are shown.
- Check the finish time of your afternoon exams - you may have to organise transport home if it does not finish in time for you to catch the school buses.
- See the Exam Officer immediately if you have any queries.

Exam Clashes

A "clash" means that according to the official exam board timetable you have multiple exams on the same day at the same time. Unfortunately, this is due to how the exams have been timetabled at the national level and so is not something that we are able to change. We have been preparing you for this through your school journey when we gave you more than one assessment in a day, then more than one exam in a day.

If you think that you may have an exam clash, please contact the Exam Officer.

If an exam has been re-scheduled to another session on the same day, you will have to be supervised from the end of one exam until the start of the next one. You will be allowed to revise using your own books and notes; however, you must not be in possession of a mobile phone, watch or any other electronic device; have access to the internet; have contact with any students or teachers outside of the supervision room.

You should bring a packed lunch, snacks and plenty to drink between the sessions as you will not be able to visit the canteen.

At the end of your first clash exam, you must wait in your seat for the invigilator to give you instructions about your supervision period, which usually lasts 20 minutes.

Contingency Day

The awarding bodies will designate dates in June to be used as a contingency for exams within the timetable, this in the event of national or local disruption. All candidates need to ensure they are available up to and including on this date in case of rescheduling.

THEY ARE NOT USED FOR SCHOOLS TO RESCHEDULE EXAMS THAT CANDIDATES HAVE MISSED.

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are special concessions which can be applied for by the school. They enable a level playing field for students who would otherwise be placed at a substantial disadvantage. They are usually considered for students who have special and/or additional educational needs and/or disability and who usually receive additional help or support in class or in smaller support groups. They must also reflect the normal way or working that would be provided on a day-to-day basis.

There are different types of arrangements which can be applied for, to reflect the different types of need. The process of application for access arrangements is rigorous and must follow a set procedure, which is outlined in the JCQ regulations.

Evidence for applications must be collected by the school before an application can be made. Evidence may come from a teacher, internal assessment, specialist assessor or medical professional.

If you think access arrangements in external exams may apply, your parents should contact the Head of Student Support Centre within the school. Applications must be made after the start of Year 9 and before the exams begin.

Notices and Warnings

At the end of this Handbook, you will find copies of the two JCQ Notices and Warnings to candidates which are displayed outside every exam room. You must read and familiarise yourself with these notices as failure to follow these could result in disqualification. If you have any questions, please contact the Exam Officer.

Malpractice

To maintain the integrity of qualifications, strict regulations are in place. Malpractice means any act or practice which is in breach of the Regulations. We have been preparing you for this through all of our assessments under exam conditions, including our Progress Tests, CAT4 and internal assessments.

Any alleged, suspected or actual incidents of malpractice will be investigated and reported to the relevant awarding bodies. Personal data about the candidate will be provided to the awarding body (or bodies) whose examinations/assessments are involved. Personal data about the candidate may also be shared with other awarding bodies, the qualifications regulator or professional bodies in accordance with the JCQ-published document '*Suspected Malpractice - Policies and Procedures.'*

JCQ provides information regarding what constitutes malpractice, examples include:

- bringing unauthorised material into the exam room;
- collusion: working collaboratively with other candidates, beyond what is permitted;
- copying from another candidate (including the use of technology to aid copying);
- allowing work to be copied, e.g. posting work on social networking sites prior to an examination/assessment;
- disruptive behaviour in the exam room or during an assessment session;
- exchanging, obtaining, receiving, passing on information (or the attempt to) which could be assessment related by means of talking, electronic, written or non-verbal communication
- where notes are permitted, bringing them into the exam in the wrong format or inappropriately annotated texts (in open book examinations);
- the inclusion of offensive comments, obscenities or drawings; discriminatory language, remarks or drawings directed at an individual or group in scripts, controlled assessments, coursework, non-examination assessments or portfolios;
- plagiarism: unacknowledged copying from or reproduction of third party sources (including the internet and AI tools);

- incomplete referencing;
- use of social media for the exchange and circulation of real or fake assessment material.

Malpractice can occur as soon as an exam candidate enters the exam room, during the exam and after the exam as they are leaving the exam room. Any breach will be reported to the awarding body and may lead to an exam candidate being penalised. It is very important that you are aware of the following points to ensure you do not commit any malpractice during a written exam:

- you must not open an exam question papers until instructed to do so by the invigilator;
- you must only write what is required to be completed when instructed to do so;
- you must not add any extra notes or drawings to the front of your exam paper;
- you must not draw or doodle on your exam papers;
- you must not write inappropriate or offensive language/comments on your exam papers or any additional sheets used during your exam;
- you must not write on your skin during the exam or come into an exam with anything drawn or written on your skin.

Candidates must ensure they are fully aware of the information contained in this handbook and the JCQ Information for Candidates on Written Examinations to ensure that they do not commit any malpractice which could lead to disqualification.

Social Media

Candidates must NOT do any of the following on social media:

- Buy/ask for/share exam content;
- Pass on rumours of what's in exams;
- Share your work;
- Work with others so that your coursework is not your own independent work.

Furthermore, Federal Decree by Law No. (33) of 2023 Concerning Combating Cheating and Violation of Examination System is applicable within the United Arab Emirates.

Research and references

Where computer-generated content has been used in any coursework, your reference must show the name of the AI bot used and should show the date the content was generated. For example: ChatGPT 3.5 (https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt/), 25/01/2025. You should retain a copy of the computer-generated content for reference and authentication purposes.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves taking someone else's words, thoughts, ideas or outputs and trying to pass them off as your own. It is a form of cheating which is taken very seriously and will be reported as malpractice to the relevant exam board.

Reporting Malpractice

If a candidate or a parent/carer has a concern or reason to believe that malpractice has or will occur in an exam or assessment, this should be raised initially with the Exam Officer or Head of Centre as soon as possible.

There may be times when it may be more appropriate to refer the issue directly to the Principal, most often when the allegation is against the Head of Centre. The Exam Officer/Head of Centre or Principal will follow the school's Exams Malpractice Procedure.

We encourage anyone who has information regarding malpractice to come forward and report the matter. If you want to remain anonymous, this will be respected, unless an awarding body is legally obliged to report the identity of the person making the allegation.

Non-Examination Assessments

If candidates are studying for a qualification which includes a coursework/Non-Examination Assessment (NEA) element, the subject teacher will inform students of all the relevant dates and deadlines.

Candidates must familiarise themselves with the JCQ Information for Candidates on NEA.

An authentication statement must be signed by the candidate, confirming the work is their own and where applicable have referenced the use of AI tools.

In line with JCQ guidance, students will be issued with their NEA mark prior to the mark being submitted to the Awarding Body for external moderation, as outlined in our Non-Examination Assessment (including controlled assessments and coursework) Policy. This is to allow students the opportunity to appeal their mark should they feel they have sufficient grounds to do so. Please refer to the school's Internal Appeals Procedure.

Copyright and Personal Data

The copyright of any work created by candidates that is submitted to an awarding body for assessment belongs to the candidate. By submitting their work, candidates are granting the awarding body a non-exclusive, royalty-free licence to use their assessment materials.

If a candidate wishes to terminate the awarding body's rights for anything other than assessing his/her work, the awarding body must be notified by the school and it is at the discretion of the awarding body whether or not to terminate such rights.

The awarding bodies collect information about exam candidates. This personal data is securely stored by the individual exam boards. To understand what information is collected and how it is used, please see the awarding bodies' websites.

Results

Exams results are issued to students in August, see Key Dates.

We strongly advise students to attend with their parents/carers to collect results. This is particularly important for iGCSE students who wish to stay on with us at Sixth Form as you will may need to confirm your enrolment with us after receiving your results.

A senior leadership team will be on hand to offer you guidance and support in school. No results will be given out by telephone or via email under any circumstances. All students are provided with log in information for the exam boards' results services so that you can access your grades online from anywhere in the world, if you are unable to attend school.

Post Results Services

If your results are not as you expected there are various options available within the Post Results Services, however it is important that you discuss any review of marking options with your subject teacher before applying as marks can go up or down and there is no option to revert to a previous, higher mark.

You can request to receive a copy of your exam paper with no charge, however you must complete an 'Access To Scripts' approval form which is provided on results day to authorise your request.

The deadlines for applications for a Review of Marking are final and it should be noted that scripts are destroyed after a certain time so these services must be applied within the specified timescale.

There will be a fee for all clerical checks and reviews of marking as outlined by the Exam Boards. Applications will not be submitted to the Board without payment having been received. If you require a review of a subject involving more than one paper, the review fee is payable for each paper. It is most important that you consult with a senior leader before applying for Post Review Services. Further details will be sent to you nearer the time showing you the options and fees. JCQ also provide an Information Page on Post Results Services on their website.

Certificates

You will be able to collect your certificates from the Exams Office approximately three months after receiving your results. When collecting you will need to sign for your certificates and if you send someone else to collect them on your behalf they will need to sign on your behalf and note their relationship status to you.

Please keep your certificates safe as you will need to keep them for reference with universities and future employers.

Awarding bodies' guidance is that unclaimed certificates should be destroyed 12 months from the date of issue. If you do not collect your certificates within this period, they may no longer be available to you. After this period, awarding bodies will be able to issue you a statement of your results and will charge you for this service.

Complaints Policy and Procedures

Please refer to the Complaints Policy (Exams) information, along with all of our policies, plans and procedures for examinations in school.

Exam Day Procedures

Exam boards have AM and PM sessions. We will inform you of the start times and the reporting times, which are 30 minutes in advance of the start times. This is to allow time for you to check the daily seating plans and go to the toilet before making your way to your exam room.

Please note that public exams do not run to the timings of the normal school day. Exams can and will run into and over break times, lunch times and after school. You must check your timetable carefully and note any afternoons when you are finishing late. If you use School Transport, you will need to arrange an alternative on these days.

The start and finish time of each exam is always displayed clearly at the front of the exam room. We give you 15 minutes' warning before the end of each exam.

Venues and Seating Plans

Daily seating plans are displayed outside each exam room.

If you are sitting an exam in the Sports Hall, where there are a large number of candidates, we will hold you in the canteens before bringing you into the Hall. If there are a small number of candidates, usually less than 60, we will ask you to wait where lost property is located.

If you are sitting an exam in any other room, you will line up quietly outside the room.

Candidate Identification

All internal candidates (current students) sitting exams at CIA will be identified by your student ID card which will be placed on the floor beside your exam desk for each of your exams.

External candidates will be asked to bring their Emirates ID with them prior to the exam season starting. We will also ask you to provide a photograph to be used for your photo ID card. On exam days, please arrive at Reception 30 minutes prior to you the start time of your exam. You will need to sign in and then wait to be collected by a member of exam staff who will escort you to your exam venue. When your exam has finished you will be escorted back to Reception where you must sign out before leaving.

Invigilation

Exams are supervised by invigilators, with the usual ratio being one invigilator for 30 students. Our invigilators must follow the strict guidelines set by JCQ and have undergone invigilation training with the Head of Centre prior to the exams.

Please note that invigilators cannot discuss the examination paper with candidates or explain the questions during the exam.

If your exam involves 1:1 invigilation, a roving invigilator will visit your exam room at least once during your exam.

Exam Conditions

Candidates must not enter the exam room until directed to do so by the Exam Officer or an invigilator. An exam announcement for all candidates will be given by an invigilator in the exam venue before the exam begins.

Remember:

- You are under exam conditions from the moment you enter the exam room until you are given permission to leave the room;
- Candidates must listen to and follow the instructions of the invigilator at all times;
- Candidates must not talk to, attempt to communicate with or disturb other candidates once you have entered the exam room;
- Centre number, exam board, subject title, tier, paper number; date and the actual starting and finishing times of each exam will be displayed on the exam screen/whiteboard at the front of the exam room;
- Your Candidate Number is clearly displayed on your desk;
- An exam clock will be displayed in your exam room;
- The invigilator will announce when you can start your exam;
- The duration of your exam will be displayed on the exam whiteboard;
- Please remain quiet when outside of the exam room as other candidates may still be working.

Question Papers & Answer Booklets

Please remember that it is your responsibility to check you have the correct question paper and you are sitting the correct exam – check the day, date, subject, unit/component and tier of entry (if appropriate). Please raise your hand and notify an invigilator immediately if you think you have been given the wrong exam paper, even if this is after you have started your exam.

If you run out of space when answering questions, you can request additional sheets from an invigilator. Please ensure you complete all centre and candidate details on any additional sheets. Additional sheets should be tucked inside the answer booklet, with the exception for AQA exams where a treasury tag will be used to secure additional pages.

Items permitted in Exams

Only authorised items can be brought into the exam room: black pens, pencils, pencil sharpener, rubber, compass, ruler, protractor, highlighter and a calculator (back cover removed) in a clear pencil case only. You must bring all your equipment to every exam.

Do not use any of the following - correcting pens, fluid or tape, erasable pens, gel pens. Highlighters can only be used on question papers and must not be used on your answers.

Water bottles must be clear/transparent with labels removed. No other drinks or food will be allowed in the exam room unless you have a medical need that has been previously discussed with the Exam Officer.

If you bring a pack of tissues into the exam room you must remove the packaging. There are tissues provided in each exam room so if you require a tissue during an exam please ask an invigilator.

The instructions on the question paper will if calculators are allowed. If the instructions do not include such a statement, calculators should be treated as standard equipment and may be used. Where calculators are allowed, candidates are responsible for making sure that they meet the awarding bodies' regulations and must be free of lids, cases and covers which have printed instructions or formulae. You must place the calculator lid on the floor under the desk if you accidentally take it into an exam.

Calculators must not be designed or adapted to offer any of these facilities:

- Language translators;
- Symbolic algebra manipulation;
- Symbolic differentiation or integration;
- Communication with other machines or the internet.

During an examination a calculator must not give access to pre-stored information. This includes:

- Databanks;
- Dictionaries;
- mathematical formulae;
- text.

A calculator must not be borrowed from another candidate during an examination. An invigilator may give a candidate a replacement calculator.

Unauthorised Items

You must be familiar with the two JCQ Posters which are displayed outside of every exam room:

- Unauthorised Items Poster;
- JCQ Warning to Candidates Poster.

Candidates must not be in possession of the following items:

- AirPods, Earphones or earbuds;
- Mobile phones;
- iPods, MP3/4 players or similar device;
- Watches;
- Smart glasses;
- Any other smart devices.

If you enter the exam room with an unauthorised item, you must put up your hand to attract an invigilator's attention and hand the item in immediately. Failure to do this is malpractice which will be reported to the relevant exam board and could result in disqualification.

What to wear

You are expected to attend your exams in your school uniform (Years 10 and 11) or your business attire (Sixth Form).

External candidates are expected to dress appropriately, with reference to cultural norms and modesty required in the United Arab Emirates

Personal Belongings

If you have brought any items into school on the day of your exam that are not allowed in the exam room, you must store them in your schoolbag. These can be left outside the exam rooms, with invigilators providing you with information for each particular location. Please ensure that all phones are switched off and that any watches do not have alarms set.

Extra Time

If you are entitled to extra time as part of your Access Arrangements, you will not be allowed to leave the exam room until the end of your scheduled exam time including the extra time.

End of Exam

At the end of the exam an invigilator will make an announcement informing you to stop working and put down your pens, you must do this immediately. Please check that you have completed the front of your exam paper with the correct details before leaving your exam.

No candidate will be allowed to leave the room until the end of the published exam time. Candidates must remain seated until all papers have been collected and the invigilator instructs you to leave. When you leave the exam venue you should walk out in complete silence, and refrain from talking until you are well away from the exam room so that you do not disturb other exam candidates who are still working.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I forget to go to an exam?

- You can only take an exam at the published time so if you forget, you have missed the examination.
- If you fail to attend your exams or fail to complete your NEA/Coursework element of your exam, you will be invoiced for the full cost of the exam. There will be no exceptions made.
- You will not be able to sit your exam at an alternative date/time.

What if I am late for an exam?

- Please make every effort to be on time for your exams. If you find that you are running late, don't panic!

- Please call the School Reception to let us know as soon as possible.
- When you arrive at school you should come in via the main reception and inform the staff there that you are late for an exam and to let the Exam Officer know, you will then be collected from reception and escorted to your exam. If you have a mobile phone, you should switch it off and hand it straight into a member of staff.
- If you arrive within one hour of the published start time of an exam, you are considered 'late' you can still sit the paper and are entitled to the full time allowed.
- If you arrive more than one hour after the published start time, you are considered 'very late', you can still sit the exam and are entitled to the full time allowed but the Examination Board must be informed and may refuse to accept your paper. In this case you will need to prove that you have not had access to the internet whilst making your way into school.

If you are very late, you should:

1. Ask your parent to drive you to School and ensure you give them all internet enabled devices you may be carrying e.g. mobile phone, smartwatch etc;
2. You and your parent will be asked to sign a letter confirming that you have not had internet access;
3. You and your parent will be asked to make a written statement giving the details of your movements pre-your exam.

What if I am ill on the day of an exam?

- If you are feeling slightly ill, then you should try to sit the examination. Please let the Exam Officer, your Head of Year or a member of senior staff know before your exam. We will do what we can to help you – for example seat you close to an exit in case you need to leave the room.
- If you are very unwell, your parents should telephone the Exam Office by 8.30am on the morning of the examination. If you are so ill that you cannot sit the exams at all, a letter from your doctor will be required which must be given to the Exam Officer within two days of the missed exam. You will not be able to sit your exam on an alternative date/time.
- If you have missed an exam due to a genuine illness or feel you have been disadvantaged due to suffering from a recent injury or illness, the Exam Officer can apply for a Special Consideration and the Examination Board may award a grade, based on coursework or other written units, but only if a percentage of the overall award has been completed.

What if I feel unwell during the exam?

- If you feel unwell during an exam, put up your hand and let the invigilating team know as soon as possible so that they can take action to assist you. You can leave the exam room under supervision and return when you have recovered. You will be allowed any time you have missed.
- If you have a cold or suffer from allergies to bring plenty of tissues with you. If you need to take essential medication during an examination, please advise the Exams Officer in advance.

What if the Fire Alarm sounds?

- If a fire alarm sounds during an exam, the invigilator will tell you to stop working, put your pen down and sit in silence to await further instructions. You will be evacuated in an orderly manner to our assembly point for exams (large exams to the triangular shaded court, smaller exams to the shaded area at the bus bay) and you must not communicate with any other candidate while doing so.
- The length of time of the disruption will be noted and you will be given that time at the end of the examination. The Examination Board will be informed of the disruption.

What if I need to go to the toilet during the exam?

- If you really need to go to the toilet during the exam, raise your hand to get an invigilator's attention. The invigilator will then accompany you to the toilet and your candidate number and time away from your desk will be noted.

- Going to the toilet not only disturbs other people in the room, it also breaks your concentration so try to go before the start of your examination. We have discovered a correlation between frequent toilet breaks at iGCSE and lower grades on results day: this is not an urban myth!
- Toilet breaks are not allowed after the fifteen-minute warning has been given prior to the end of exams.

What if the school is closed due to exceptional circumstances e.g. power cut?

- The exam will still take place as it is not possible to change the date or time of the exam.
- If for any unexpected reason CIA is unable to be used as a centre, you will be notified of the alternative site arrangements via email as soon as possible prior to the start time of your exam.

What if we need to complete alternative arrangements like the Portfolios of Evidence in 2026?

- It is our belief that the shock to the system that was the Portfolios of Evidence will allow all of us to reflect on the effort we put in.
- Mock exams can potentially be future evidence. Do study, do stay focused and complete the entire paper.
- We are **Always Learning, Always On.** We just don't know when we will be in a position that requires you to prove that's the case.