



Candidate Exam Handbook

2026 - 2027

Northstowe Learning Community is committed to ensuring that candidates are fully briefed on the examination and assessment process in place in the centre and are made aware of the required JCQ/awarding body instructions and information for candidates.

This pack should be read and understood fully. Non-compliance with the rules and regulations outlined in this handbook, may result in malpractice and disqualification.

This document has been written to help you.
Read it carefully and follow the instructions.

If there is anything you do not understand, especially
which calculator you may use, ask your teacher.

A. Regulations – Make sure you understand the rules

- 1 Be on time for all your exams. If you are late, your work might not be accepted.
- 2 **Do not** become involved in any unfair or dishonest practice during the exam.
- 3 If you try to cheat or break the rules in any way, you could be disqualified from all your exams.
- 4 You **must not** take into the exam room any unauthorised material, including:
 - (a) notes
 - (b) earphones or earbuds (e.g. AirPods), mobile phones, MP3/4 players or similar devices, smart glasses, tablets (e.g. iPads or iPods)
 - (c) watchesAny pencil cases taken into the exam room **must** be see-through.
Remember, possession of unauthorised material is breaking the rules, even if you do not intend to use it, and you will be subject to sanctions and possible disqualification.
- 5 **Do not** use correcting pens, fluid or tape, erasable pens, highlighters or gel pens in your answers.
- 6 **Do not** talk to or try to communicate with or disturb other candidates once you have entered the exam room.
- 7 You **must not** write inappropriate, obscene or offensive material.
- 8 If you leave the exam room unaccompanied by an invigilator before the exam has finished, you **will not** be allowed to return.
- 9 **Do not** borrow anything from another candidate during the exam.

B. Information – Make sure you attend your exams and bring what you need

- 1 Know the dates and times of all your exams. Arrive at least ten minutes before the start of each exam.
- 2 If you arrive late for an exam, report to the invigilator running the exam.
- 3 If you arrive more than one hour after the published starting time for the exam, you may not be allowed to take it.
- 4 Only take into the exam room the pens, pencils, erasers and any other permitted equipment needed for the exam.
- 5 You **must** write clearly and in black ink. Coloured pencils or inks may be used only for diagrams, maps, charts, etc. unless the instructions printed on the front of the question paper state otherwise.

C. Calculators, dictionaries and computer spellcheckers

- 1 You may use a calculator unless you are told otherwise.
- 2 If you use a calculator:
 - (a) make sure it works properly; check that the batteries are working properly;
 - (b) clear anything stored in its memory;
 - (c) remove any parts such as cases, lids or covers which have printed instructions or formulae;
 - (d) **do not** bring into the exam room any operating instructions or prepared programs.
- 3 **Do not** use a dictionary or computer spellchecker unless you are told otherwise.

D. Instructions during the exam

- 1 Always listen to the invigilator. Always follow their instructions.
- 2 Tell the invigilator at once if:
 - (a) you think you have not been given the right question paper or all of the materials listed on the front of the paper;
 - (b) the question paper is incomplete or badly printed;
 - (c) you think you have not been given the expected access arrangement(s).
- 3 Read carefully and follow the instructions printed on the question paper and/or on the answer booklet.
- 4 **Do not** start writing anything until the invigilator tells you to fill in all the details required on the front of the question paper and/or the answer booklet. **Do not** open the question paper until you are told that the exam has begun.
- 5 Remember to write your answers within the designated sections of the answer booklet.
- 6 Do your rough work on the proper exam stationery. Cross it through and hand it in with your answers.
Make sure you add your candidate details to any additional answer sheets that you use, including those used for rough work.

E. Advice and assistance

- 1 If, on the day of the exam, you feel that your work may be affected by ill health or any other reason, tell the invigilator.
- 2 Put up your hand during the exam if:
 - (a) you have a problem and are not sure what you should do;
 - (b) you do not feel well;
 - (c) you need more paper.
- 3 You **must not** ask for, and will not be given, any explanation of the questions.

F. At the end of the exam

- 1 If you have used more than one answer booklet and/or any supplementary answer sheets, place them in the correct order.
Place any loose additional answer sheets inside your answer booklet. Make sure you add your candidate details to any additional answer sheets that you use. For CCEA examinations, any loose additional answer sheets should be placed **behind** your script.
- 2 **Do not** leave the exam room until told to do so by the invigilator.
- 3 **Do not** take any stationery from the exam room. This includes the question paper, answer booklets (used or unused), rough work or any other materials provided for the exam.

Information for candidates

Non-examination assessments

Effective from 1 September 2025

This document tells you about some things that you **must** and **must not** do when you are completing your work.

When you submit your work for marking, the awarding body will normally require you to sign an authentication statement confirming that you have read and followed the regulations.

If there is something that you do not understand, you **must** ask your teacher.

Preparing your work – good practice

If you receive help and guidance from someone other than your teacher, you **must** tell your teacher. They will then record the assistance given to you.

If you worked as part of a group on an assignment, for example undertaking field research, you **must** write up your **own account** of the assignment. Even if the information you have is the same, you **must** describe in your own words how that information was obtained. You **must draw your own conclusions from the data**.

You **must** meet the deadlines that your teacher gives you. Remember - your teachers are there to guide you. Although they cannot give you direct assistance, they can help you to sort out any problems before it is too late.

Take care of your work and keep it safe. **Do not** leave it lying around where your classmates can find it. **Do not** share it with anyone, including posting it on social media. You must always keep your work secure and confidential. If it is stored on the computer network, keep your password secure. Collect all copies from the printer and destroy those you do not need.

Do not be tempted to use any prepared or generated online solutions and try to pass them off as your own work – this is cheating. Electronic tools used by awarding bodies can detect this sort of copying.

You **must not** write inappropriate, offensive or obscene material.

Research and using references

In some subjects you will have an opportunity to do some independent research into a topic.

The research you do may involve looking for information in published sources, such as textbooks, encyclopedias, journals, TV, radio and on the internet.

You can demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of a subject by using information from sources, or generated from sources, which may include the internet and AI. Remember, though, information from these sources may be incorrect or biased. You **must** take care how you use this material - you cannot copy it and claim it as your own work.

Using information from published sources (including the internet) as the basis for your assignment is a good way to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of a subject. You **must** take care how you use this material though - you **cannot** copy it and claim it as your own work.

The regulations state that:

'the work which you submit for assessment **must** be your own';

'you **must not** copy from someone else or allow another candidate to copy from you'.

When producing a piece of work, if you use the same wording as a published source, you **must** place quotation marks around the passage and state where it came from. This is known as **referencing**. You **must** make sure that you give detailed references for everything in your work which is not in your own words. A reference from a printed book or journal should show the name of the author, the year of publication and the page number. For example: Morrison, 2000, p29.

For material taken from the internet, your reference should show the date when the material was downloaded and **must** show the precise web page, not the search engine used to locate it. This can be copied from the address line. For example: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthistday/hi/dates/stories/october/28/newsid_2621000/2621915.stm, downloaded 5 February 2026.

Where computer-generated content has been used (such as an AI chatbot), your reference **must** show the name of the AI tool used and should show the date the content was generated. For example: ChatGPT 3.5 (<https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt/>), 25/01/2026. You should also reference the sources used by the AI tool in generating the content.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves taking someone else's words, thoughts, ideas or outputs and trying to pass them off as your own. It could also include AI-produced material. **Plagiarism is a form of cheating which is taken very seriously.**

Don't think you won't be caught; there are many ways to detect plagiarism:

- Markers can spot changes in the style of writing and use of language.
- Markers are highly experienced subject specialists who will be very familiar with work on the topic concerned. They may have read the source you are using or even marked the work you have copied from.
- Internet search engines and specialised computer software can be used to match phrases or pieces of text with original sources and to detect changes in the grammar and style of writing or punctuation.

Sanctions for breaking the regulations

If it is discovered that you have broken the regulations, one of the following sanctions will be applied:

- you will be awarded zero marks for your work;
- you will be disqualified from that component for the examination series in question;
- you will be disqualified from the whole subject for that examination series;
- you will be disqualified from all subjects and barred from entering again for a period of time.

The awarding body will decide which sanction is appropriate.

REMEMBER - IT'S YOUR QUALIFICATION SO IT NEEDS TO BE YOUR OWN WORK.

You **must** retain a copy of the question(s) and computer-generated content for reference and authentication purposes in a non-editable format (such as a screenshot) and provide a brief explanation of how you used it. This **must** be submitted with your work for final assessment so that your teacher can review the work, the AI-generated content and how it has been used.

You may be required to include a bibliography at the end of your piece of written work. Your teacher will tell you whether this is necessary. Where required, your bibliography **must** list the full details of publications you have used in your research, even where these are not directly referred to. For example: Curran, J. *Mass Media and Society* (Hodder Arnold, 2005).

If you copy the words, ideas or outputs of others and do not show your sources in references and a bibliography, this will be considered as cheating.

Information for candidates

Coursework assessments

Effective from 1 September 2025

This document tells you about some things that you **must** and **must not** do when you are completing coursework.

When you submit your work for marking, you will be asked to sign an authentication statement confirming that you have read and followed these regulations.

If there is anything that you do not understand, you **must** ask your teacher.

In some subjects you will have an opportunity to do some independent research into a topic. The research you do may involve looking for information in published sources, such as textbooks, encyclopedias, journals, TV, radio and on the internet.

You can demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of a subject by using information from sources, or generated from sources, which may include the internet and AI. Remember, though, information from these sources may be incorrect or biased. You **must** take care how you use this material - you **cannot** copy it and claim it as your own work.

The regulations state that:

the work which you submit for assessment **must** be your own;
'you **must not** copy from someone else or allow another candidate to copy from you.'

If you use the same wording as a published source, you **must** place quotation marks around the passage and state where it came from. This is called 'referencing'. You **must** make sure that you give detailed references for everything in your work which is not in your own words. A reference from a printed book or journal should show the name of the author, the year of publication and the page number. For example: (Morrison, 2000, p29).

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You should also reference the sources used by the AI tool in generating the content.

You **must** retain a copy of the question(s) and computer-generated content for reference and authentication purposes in a non-editable format (such as a screenshot) and provide a brief explanation of how you used it. This **must** be submitted with your work for final assessment so that your teacher can review the work, the AI-generated content and how it has been used.

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If you copy the words, ideas or outputs of others and do not show your sources in references and a bibliography, this will be considered as cheating.

Preparing your coursework - good practice

If you receive help and guidance from someone other than your teacher, you **must** tell your teacher. They will then record the nature of the assistance given to you.

Your parent/carer may provide you with access to resource materials and discuss your coursework with you. However, they **must not** give you direct advice on what should or should not be included.

If you worked as part of a group on an assignment, you **must each** write up your **own account** of the assignment. Even if the information you have is the same, the description of how that information was obtained and the conclusions you draw from it should be in your own words.

You **must** meet the deadlines that your teacher gives you. Remember - your teachers are there to guide you. Although they cannot give you direct assistance, they can help you to sort out any problems before it is too late.

Take care of your work and keep it safe. **Don't** leave it lying around where your classmates can find it. **Don't** share it with anyone, including posting it on social media. You **must always** keep your work secure and confidential. If it is stored on the computer network, keep your password secure. Collect all copies from the printer and destroy those you do not need.

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- Internet search engines and specialised computer software can be used to match phrases or pieces of text with original sources. They can detect changes in the grammar and style of writing or punctuation.

Sanctions for breaking the regulations

If it is discovered that you have broken the rules, one of the following sanctions will be applied:

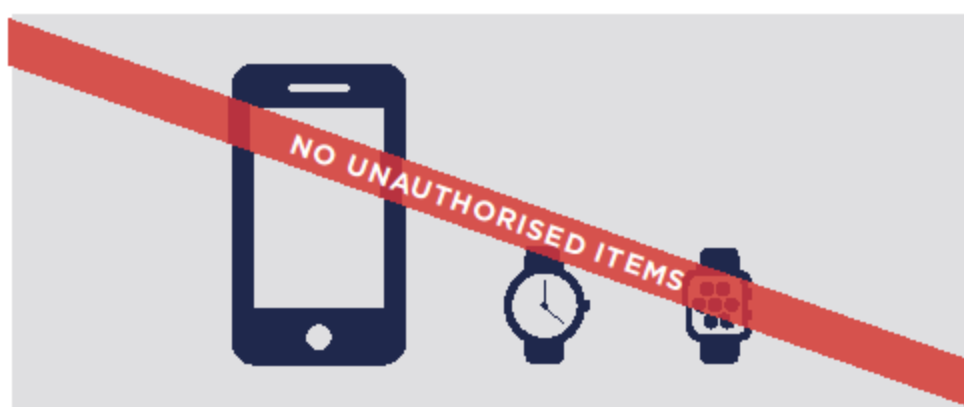
- you will be awarded zero marks for your work.
- you will be disqualified from that unit for that examination series.
- you will be disqualified from the whole subject for that examination series.
- you will be disqualified from all subjects and barred from entering again for a period of time.

The awarding body will decide which sanction is appropriate.

REMEMBER - IT'S YOUR QUALIFICATION SO IT NEEDS TO BE YOUR OWN WORK.

NO MOBILE PHONES NO WATCHES

NO TECHNOLOGICAL OR WEB-ENABLED
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION



Possession of unauthorised items, such as a mobile phone
or any watch, is a serious offence and could result in

DISQUALIFICATION

from your examination and your overall qualification.

This poster must be displayed in a prominent place outside each examination room.

Warning to candidates



AQA logo featuring the letters 'AQA' in a stylized, blue and red font.	City & Guilds logo with the text 'City & Guilds' in a blue and red font.	CCEA logo with the text 'CCEA' in a green and blue font.	NCFE logo with the text 'NCFE' in a black font.	OCR logo with the text 'OCR' in a blue font.	Pearson logo with the text 'Pearson' in a blue font.	WJEC logo with the text 'WJEC' in a blue font.
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1

You **must** be on time for all your examinations.

2

Possession of a mobile phone or other unauthorised material **is not allowed** even if you do not intend to use it. You will be subject to penalty and possible disqualification from the examination or qualification.

3

You **must not** talk to, attempt to communicate with or disturb other candidates once you have entered the examination room.

4

You **must** follow the instructions of the invigilator.

5

You **must not** sit an examination in the name of another candidate.

6

You **must not** become involved in any unfair or dishonest practice in any part of the examination.

7

If you are confused about anything, only speak to an invigilator.

The *Warning to candidates* must be displayed in a prominent place outside each examination room. This may be a hard copy A3 paper version or an image of the poster projected onto a wall or screen for all candidates to see.



Modern Foreign Languages Speaking Tests

Warning to candidates notice

You **must not**:

- become involved in any unfair or dishonest practice in any part of this assessment
- discuss this assessment with anyone who has not yet taken the assessment
- share information about this assessment in any way, including on the internet/social media.

Sharing information about Speaking tests can create an unfair assessment and could impact on your grades in this exam. Failing to report to your teacher any assessment-related information being shared may also lead to a malpractice investigation which could result in:

- a loss of marks for this component
- a disqualification from this component or the entire qualification
- a ban from sitting exams for a set period of time.

AQA monitors social media and student websites for evidence of malpractice.

**Remember: treat the Speaking tests as confidential.
Keep things fair for everyone.**

AI and Assessments

A quick guide for students



What is AI?

- AI stands for artificial intelligence and using it is like having a computer that thinks
- AI tools like ChatGPT or Snapchat My AI can write text, make art and create music by learning from data from the internet, but watch out – they can also make things up and be biased



How can AI be misused in assessments?

AI misuse is when you take something made using AI and say it's your own work.

THIS IS CHEATING!

How do I make sure I don't misuse AI?



1 Know the rules

- You're **not allowed** to use AI tools when you're in an exam
- Your teachers will tell you if you're allowed to use AI tools when doing your coursework – the rules will depend on your qualification
- Even if you're allowed to use AI tools, you can't get marks for content just produced by AI – your marks come from showing your own understanding and producing your own work

2 Reference reference reference!

- If you're allowed to use AI tools, you must reference them clearly
- Name the AI tool you used
 - Add the date you generated the content
 - Explain how you used it
 - Save a screenshot of the questions you asked and the answers you got

3 Declare it's all your own work

– When you hand in your assessment, you have to sign a declaration. Anything without a reference must be all your own work. If you've used an AI tool, don't sign the declaration until you're sure you've added all the references

REMEMBER

Misusing AI is cheating!

- Know the rules
- Talk to your teachers
- Reference clearly

What happens if I misuse AI?

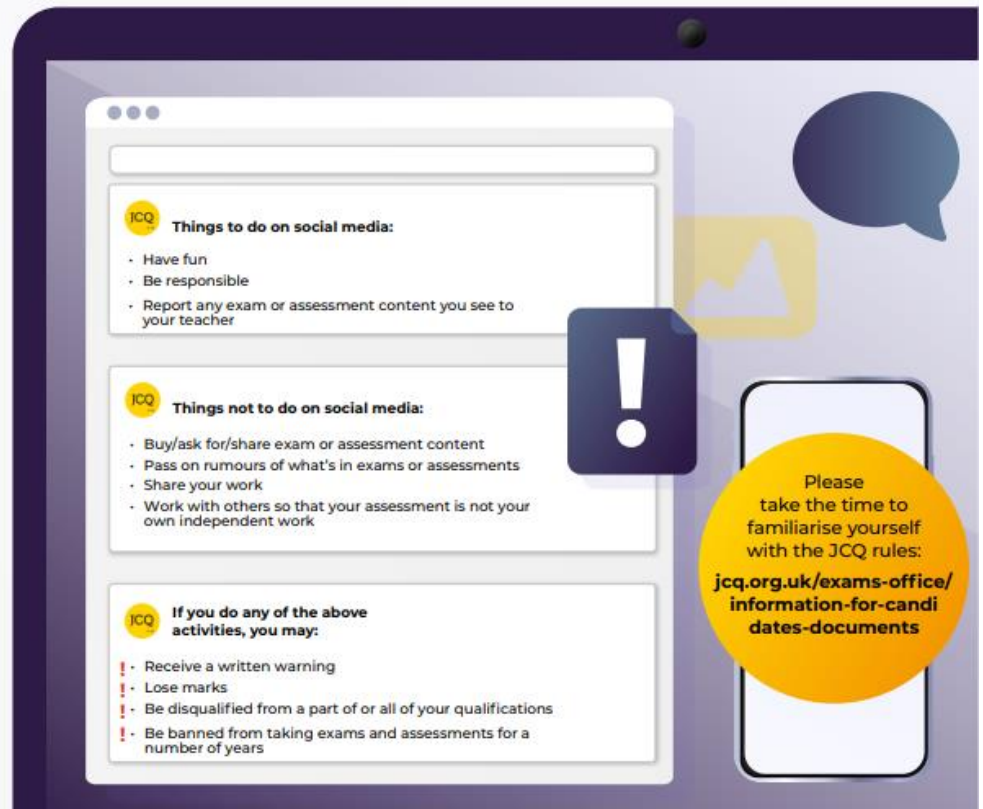
If you've misused AI, you could lose your marks for the assessment – you could even be disqualified from the subject.

DON'T RISK IT!



While we like to share our experiences online, when it comes to exams and other assessments, we have to be careful.

- Sharing ideas online can be helpful when you're studying or revising
- However, sharing certain information (see information on the right) can break the rules and could affect your results
- If you're not sure what you can and can't discuss online, check with your teacher
- If you receive exam content on social media, you must tell your teacher
- Don't be caught out by scammers selling fake exam papers

JCQ Things to do on social media:

- Have fun
- Be responsible
- Report any exam or assessment content you see to your teacher

JCQ Things not to do on social media:

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

JCQ If you do any of the above activities, you may:

- ! Receive a written warning
- ! Lose marks
- ! Be disqualified from a part of or all of your qualifications
- ! Be banned from taking exams and assessments for a number of years

Please take the time to familiarise yourself with the JCQ rules:

jqc.org.uk/exams-office/information-for-candidates-documents

PREPARING FOR EXAMS

A guide for students



Most of you will be sitting an exam for the first time, for others you might not have sat one for a while. Exams can be an anxious time but a great way to cope with them is to plan and prepare in advance.

PREPARING FOR YOUR EXAMS

Understanding exam rules

- Always follow the instructions and guidance issued by your school/college and the invigilator (*tip*: invigilators are the people in exam rooms responsible for conducting examinations in the presence of candidates).
- Read the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) [candidate information for written examinations](#), as this contains information to help you prepare for exam day.
- If you're in any doubt or have any questions about what you can or can't take into the exam hall, speak to your teacher or your exams officer.

Here are our *top tips*:

1. Understand your exam timetable

- Make a note of the important dates, whether your exams taking place in the morning or the afternoon and your seat number. Highlighting all the exams you're expecting to sit can help. If you're missing any or think something is incorrect, speak to your teacher.
- Don't forget to keep your timetable somewhere safe. Screenshot it or pop it in your locker.

2. Create an action plan a.k.a. a revision schedule

- Use your timetable as a guide.
- Be realistic and plan for breaks to avoid stress or burn-out.
- Check out our handy guide on '[How to manage your time](#)'.
- There are lots of online planners that you can download for free.

3. Start revising

- Find a revision style that works for you. It might be different from what your friends are doing, and that's ok! We've got lots of advice on our [tips for successful revision](#) webpage, but here are some ideas to get you started:
- Mind maps – a useful way of visualising lots of information.
- Flash cards – ideal for testing yourself.
- Quizzes – great to test topic areas.
- Teach-talk – teaching and talking it through with someone else can be an effective way to learn.
- Complete some [past papers](#) to practise answering the questions.
- Don't worry, procrastination can happen ... here's our tips on '[how to beat procrastination](#)'.

4. Look after yourself

- It's ok to ask for help – if you feel overwhelmed, speak to a friend, family member or teacher. Here are some tips about [managing exam stress](#).



EXAM DAY – YOU’VE GOT THIS

Before the exam starts

- Pack everything you need the night before (this might include black pens, pencils, erasers) and try to get a good night’s rest.
- Fuel up with breakfast, including a drink. Remember to check in advance with your school or college if you’re allowed to take a water bottle in with you.
- Aim to arrive at least ten minutes before it starts. If you’re going to be delayed, be sure to phone your school or college immediately.



Exam guidelines

- Watches and electronic devices (including smart watches, mobile phones, tablets, iPods, wireless earphones, electronic dictionaries) must **not** be taken into the exam room. They must be left at home or in your locker.
- You may use a calculator unless you’re told otherwise.
- Only take into the exam room the equipment which you’ll need for the exam, in a clear pencil case.
- You **must** write clearly and in black ink. Coloured pencils or inks may only be used for diagrams, maps, charts, etc. unless the instructions printed on the front of the question paper state otherwise.
- For more information, be sure to read the JCQ’s [candidate information for written examinations](#).



During the exam

- Always listen to the invigilator and follow their instructions.
- You must not talk in the exam room. If you have a question, raise your hand and wait for the invigilator to come to you.
- When you’re given your exam paper make sure to check it’s the correct title, subject and level.
- The invigilator will tell you when you can start writing.
- When told to start, breathe and take your time to read and understand the instructions on the question paper and/or the answer booklet.
- Take your time to read each question carefully before answering.
- Look out for command words – for example: analyse, compare, describe, explain – these will help you determine what is being asked.
- Use the allocated marks as a rough guideline for how much time to spend on each answer.
- If you can’t answer a question, move onto the next and come back to it later.
- Allow time to check your work before the end.
- The invigilator will tell you when the exam is finished.



AFTER EXAMS

Hooray! You've finished and hopefully you'll feel a sense of relief. Talk to your teacher if you have a concern about something in your exam but do try to take some time out to relax. We've answered some of your most popular [post-exam queries](#). There are also options after you get your results.

2025 results days

14 August – A Levels, Cambridge Technicals and other Level 3 qualifications

21 August – GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals and other Level 2 qualifications



HOW TO MANAGE YOUR TIME

Think about how you spend your time at the moment to see how you are using (and wasting!) it.

- Watch a [four-minute video](#) from Wellcast
- Free online tool: [Toggl](#)
- Free iPad app: [ATracker](#)
- Free Android app: [aTimeLogger](#)



Divide your week into hour-long slots and colour-code them according to what you do, e.g.

- Sleeping
- Eating
- Commuting
- Lectures
- Socialising
- Hobbies



Highlight the remaining slots for study. It is a good idea to have extra slots that you can use to catch up if you fall behind or if something affects your regular study schedule.

Group tasks according to how urgent and important they are. You might find a priority matrix helpful for this.

- Here's a good explanation of [how to prioritise your tasks](#)
- Free iPad app: [Focus Matrix](#)



Break tasks into smaller chunks. Allocate time for each task and work out what order you need to do them in. It helps to work backwards from your deadline to see when you should start and finish each chunk.

- Try the free [goal trainer tool](#)
- For help with managing the stages of written assignments, try the [ASK assignment calculator](#)



Try the pomodoro method. This involves you working for 25 minutes then taking a 5 minute break. You can work out how many 'Pomodoros' a study task will take to help you stay on track.

- Free iPad app: [Focus Keeper](#) is a simple pomodoro timer
- Free Android app: [Goodtime](#) – pomodoro timer



Be realistic – check how much independent study you are supposed to be doing on your course. And make sure you allow time for relaxation, exercise and sleep.



Effective time management is all about being realistic about how much time you have and how long jobs will take.

You'll also need to prioritise your tasks and break more complex ones down into simpler stages.

PROCRASTINATION HOW TO BEAT IT



01 INTRODUCTION

DEFINITION
Putting off a task until later

CHARACTERISTICS
We all do it – but some more than others
Wait until the deadline is very close
Then panic and work like mad

REINFORCEMENT
If you get a decent mark you'll keep doing this



02 WHY WE DO IT

PERFECTIONISM
Fear of not doing it well enough

FEELING OVERWHELMED
By the time and effort involved

DON'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN

DON'T HAVE REQUIRED SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE

FEELING RESENTFUL ABOUT HAVING TO DO THE TASK

BENEFITS

- PEACE OF MIND
- BOOSTS SELF ESTEEM
- FEELING IN CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE
- BETTER WORK, BETTER MARKS
- ENJOY YOUR FREE TIME WITHOUT GUILT

03



HOW TO BEAT IT

04



SELF AWARENESS
Realise you are procrastinating
Try to work out reasons why
Can you challenge these reasons?
Think what motivates you and what puts you off

PRACTICAL STEPS
Break tasks into manageable chunks – use pomodoro method and work in short bursts with breaks
Use study planners, and checklists
Set deadlines
Tick off tasks as you go
Reward yourself
Get people on your side to encourage you
Start in the middle if it helps
If you can't face a blank screen or piece of paper, just make yourself write anything for 20 minutes
Try to find a workspace where you won't get interrupted or distracted

FINALLY
Don't have the fun/reward before the work
Don't beat yourself up if it doesn't go perfectly
Keep chipping away at it

JCQ INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES PRIVACY NOTICE

INFORMATION ABOUT YOU AND HOW EXAM BOARDS USE IT

Each Exam board issues guidance with regards to the information that they collect about you and how they use it.

Full details can be found on the Exam Board websites



<https://www.aqa.org.uk/about-us/privacy-notice>



<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/Support/Centre%20administration/information-for-candidates-privacy-notice.pdf>



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

<https://ocr.org.uk/about/our-policies/website-policies/privacy-policy/candidate-privacy-policy/>



<https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/privacy-policy/>