

# PRIVATE CANDIDATE EXAM GUIDE

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# CLOUDLEARN GOLD STANDARD EXAM SERVICE

## Take Your Exams in a CloudLearn Exam Centre

### REMOVE THE HEADACHE OF HAVING TO FIND A CENTRE - USE ONE OF OURS.

There are thousands of exam centres in the UK, but not all of them accept private candidates. In fact for some subjects that require coursework or practicals, finding a centre as a private candidate can prove tricky. That is why we have partnered with a network of centres in the UK.

Channeling thousands of students through examination gives us some buying power. We use this leverage to get CloudLearn students preferential pricing for exam fees. Taking your exam at one of our affiliated centres could save you hundreds of pounds, not to mention the hassle in locating a centre in your local area.

Take the stress out of exam time. Bundle the cost of your exams when you enrol and spread the cost using one of our payment plans.

If you want us to arrange your exam you will need to give us at least 6 months notice. We can only guarantee prices at our Bolton, Birmingham, Coventry, Doncaster, High Wycombe, London, Middlesex, Romford, St Neots and Taunton centres. Other centres are available but exam fees will vary.

Written exam papers are available in our Birmingham, Bolton, Coventry, Doncaster, High Wycombe, London, Romford, St Neots and Taunton exam centres. Science practicals are available in our Bolton, Coventry, London Middlesex and Taunton labs.

**If you'd like us to book your exam in one of our centres, call us on 0330 111 4006 or apply online at [cloudlearn.co.uk/exams](https://cloudlearn.co.uk/exams)**



**IF YOU WANT TO ARRANGE YOUR OWN EXAMS, READ THE GUIDANCE ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES IN THIS DOCUMENT.**

# FINDING AN EXAM CENTRE

It is best to try to register with an exam centre around six months before the exams are due. It is possible to enter much later, even up to a week before the exam, but exam board fees rise sharply for late entries, and you risk not being able to find a convenient exam centre. Exams fees are addition in cost and are paid directly to the exam centre. Exam fees vary significantly so we always recommend that you 'shop-around' to get the best deal. You should expect to pay upwards of £100 for an IGCSE exam. Full A-Level exams start at around £400 depending on the subject chosen.

Check our exam centre finder which displays centres available to private candidates taken from the awarding bodies site. Please bear in mind that just because a school appears on the map doesn't mean that they will accept private candidates generally - it can just mean that they have in the past, or may have allowed a current student to take an extra qualification. It does mean, however, that it is worth asking. It is also worth asking local schools even if they are not listed as having taken private candidates before. Often people find that independent schools are more willing to accept private candidates.

If you're aiming for Edexcel IGCSEs then the school does not need to be one which offers IGCSEs to its own students in order to take private candidates. If the school is registered with Edexcel for GCSEs then they can accept candidates for IGCSEs too. They just put in the exam code in their online entry system. It is possible that the school might not be aware of this but you can ask them to contact Edexcel, who will confirm it for them.

If the school does not have any other students sitting the same IGCSE as you want to sit, they may have candidates sitting another exam at the same time, e.g. a GCSE in another subject. In that case, the private candidate can usually sit in the same room and share an invigilator. If the exam centre does not have anybody else taking an exam on that day then you would normally be asked to pay for an invigilator.

It can take some legwork and speaking to quite a few schools to track down a centre, but people generally do find somewhere, very occasionally people have travelled and stayed near the centre for the exam period, but this is rare.

Exam centres are under no obligation to accept private candidates; it creates extra work for them and may involve some disruption to their schedule or difficulties for the school. They are entitled to charge an admin fee which compensates for this to some degree, and that fee varies hugely - from £15 per subject at some schools to over £150 at others.



# MAKING ENTRIES & SITTING EXAMS

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Once you have found a centre which has agreed accept you as a private candidate, you will need to make your exam entries.

1. Make sure you are crystal clear about the exam code for the papers you want to sit. If in any doubt, send an email to [info@cloudlearn.co.uk](mailto:info@cloudlearn.co.uk) and a student advisor will be able to confirm your exam code.
2. Check the date that the exam is scheduled - see the awarding body websites for confirmed IGCSE and A-level dates. It is usually easy to find simply by searching, eg, “Edexcel IGCSE exam timetable”.
3. Email the exams officer, giving the exam code and date, candidate’s full name and date of birth. If the candidate has taken any UK public exams before then they should have a UCI (Universal Candidate Identification) number, which you can quote. If not, one will be allocated to him or her by the exam board. You may be asked if you/your child has a ULN. This is a new ID number for the government’s pupil database, the Learning Records Service. ULN s are now issued for all state school pupils, but they are not needed for private candidates.
4. Ask what proof of identification they will require. Usually they request a current passport, so if the candidate doesn’t have one you will need to ascertain what they will accept instead, eg bus pass, other photocard. They will probably want photo ID.
5. The exam centre may require additional information and may have its own form for you to fill in.
6. Payment is usually required at the time of making the entry. Once the exam centre has made the entry on your behalf, they have incurred costs such as exam board fees and administration costs, so if you later decide to withdraw from the exam, you will still need to pay some or all of these costs. Failing to do so may lead that centre to refuse to take other students as private candidates in future.
7. If you/your child has any special needs for extra time, a scribe, a prompt, or access to a keyboard (known as ‘Access Arrangements’), you will need to discuss this with the exam centre well before making your entries as they may not be able to accommodate you. They are under no obligation to do so.



# EXAM ENTRY DEADLINES

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Exam boards each have their own standard entry deadline. This is usually Feb-March for the summer exam series, although it will change slightly each year. However, exam centres will usually have their own deadline for accepting entries and this will be earlier, to allow them time to complete the paperwork.

Often the centre deadline is December or early January. Note that the entry deadline is not your last chance to enter the exam - all boards accept late entries - but it does incur late entry fees. If you wish to make a late entry and the exams officer at your centre says this is not possible, you can look up the exam board's own last entry dates and then go back to the exams officer saying that the published final entry date is X, and you are prepared to pay late entry fees. It is still up to the exam centre whether to accept your entries. You can try another centre. Commercial centres such as tutorial colleges are likely to be flexible.

Summer exams have a booking deadline (usually) in January or February. Winter exams have deadlines around September - October. Booking beyond these deadlines are still possible, however are subject to late booking fees.

For booking exams that contain coursework or practicals, you will need to book at least 8 months in advance to ensure availability.





# SCIENCE A-LEVELS

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UK science A-levels have moved to a new system in which the AS is a separate, optional qualification and not part of the A-level, while CIE International A-levels retain the old AS and A2 structure.

For new A-levels, you can take the exams without doing any practicals, but the qualification will not then have the 'practical endorsement', which universities are likely to require for science-related courses.

The practical endorsement requires a programme of practicals, though it is possible to do this during a residential or day release course lasting a few days at a few UK exam centres.

New AS-level sciences do not have a practical endorsement.



# A-LEVEL CHANGES

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## Old vs New System

Under the old system being phased out, AS-levels were studied in the first year, with exams taken in May-June that were worth 50% of your overall A-level qualification.

Under the new system being introduced, all A-level exams will take place at the end May/June, with no marks from AS-levels (if you take these) contributing to the overall final grade.

Across the board, there will also be less coursework and fewer practical assessments under the new system (in Wales, practicals will still count in biology, chemistry and physics A-level) - making that exam revision all the more important. Grades will continue to be awarded on an A\*-E scale.

## What's happening to AS-levels?

AS-levels will still exist, and you can continue to take a separate AS-level qualification before dropping the subject or going on to take the full A-level - but unlike before, your AS results won't count towards your A-level grade.





# NEW A-LEVEL SCIENCES



You can do the new science A-levels without doing practical work, but this means your certificate won't have the "practical endorsement" on it. However, most universities will still require this endorsement if you wish to study a science subject at university. If you do wish to have the practical endorsement, there are routes, but they may be expensive. AS-level science qualifications do not have a practical endorsement, although the question papers do contain questions on carrying out practical work.

## Do you need the Practical Endorsement?

UCAS has given the following advice in its Guide to Qualification Reform:

**"From 2015, revised science A levels in England (biology, chemistry and physics) will include a separate result for the practical element of the qualification.**

**At present, up to 30% of the overall A level grade is derived from assessment of the candidate's practical skills.**

**Practical work in the new science A levels will be assessed in two ways. First, 15% of the marks in the written exams will assess learners' understanding of practical work. Learners' performance here will contribute to their subject grade. Second, learners will have their practical skills assessed separately. They will receive an additional pass or fail result for this, which will be recorded on their qualification certificate. Each learner will carry out a minimum of 12 practical activities over their two-year course of study. These activities will be referenced in the final written exams and will contribute to their separate practical result, although evidence of competency in the practical skills is not limited to these activities.**

**Individual universities and colleges will have their own policies in relation to the science practical result and the requirement for it is likely to vary. However, it is likely that they will ask for a pass in the science practical for courses that involve laboratory and practical work from the outset, such as STEM courses. Where this is the case, they will make it clear in their entry requirements."**

# HOW CAN I DO NEW SCIENCE A-LEVEL PRACTICALS?

You can qualify for the new practical endorsement by attending a short course at a tutorial centre. There is also the theoretical possibility of arranging for the exam board to verify arrangements you have made yourself.

Some of the tutorial centres which currently offer A-level practicals are moving to a series of classes to meet the new requirements for reformed A-levels. A one-off exam won't be sufficient any more; you need to have completed key practicals.

You should be able to do the practical assessments at a tutorial centre, and then take your written exams at a different centre. AQA has confirmed in writing to the Faregos Home Education exam centre that this is possible, and it is likely that other exam boards will also allow this - but do check first.

Edexcel have published FAQs on the new CPAC which specifically mention external candidates. They seem to be saying that a tutor/parent/group which has home educated A-level science candidates could arrange direct with Edexcel for them to do the science practical assessments on your own territory, much as if they'd gone out to check on a school's practicals. This would be to arrange in practice, but is potentially an option.

## What if I can't do the practical assessment?

It is always worth contacting universities to explain your situation, as there is a vast difference between someone who failed the practical assessment, and someone who simply didn't have the opportunity to take it.

UCAS recommends that applicants who do not have the science practical endorsement should contact universities to discuss their situations as "The universities will take on students at their own discretion and hence this should not be a deterrent to students when applying."

The science in education lobby group SCORE advises university admissions staff to use their discretion:

**"The SCORE partners would encourage you to distinguish between public statements of admissions policy, which we strongly recommend should refer to the need to pass the endorsement, and any individual student who may have failed to achieve the practical element, for example due to ill health."**

# EXAM CENTRES FOR SCIENCE A-LEVEL PRACTICALS

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All Physics, Chemistry and Biology A-level science exams available in the UK include an option for practical endorsement (New A-levels). AS-level sciences do not have the practical endorsement, so you don't need to obtain the endorsement unless you are doing the full A-level.

Here are some test centres for practical science tests. Note that fees quoted by exam centres are often per module, so make sure the exam centre confirms what they are offering for the price.

- | **Bolton School Science Lab, Bolton**
- | **King Henry VIII Science Lab, Coventry**
- | **Harrow Science Lab, London**
- | **South Bank UTC Science Lab, London**
- | **King's College, Taunton**

# CENTRE FINDER

Finding an exam centre can be a challenge especially if you are located in a rural area. Use our centre finder to locate a centre. The centre information listed in our Centre Finder has been taken from awarding bodies for centres that have facilitated Private Candidates in the past. This isn't to say that these centres will guarantee you a place, so do check to make you can find availability for your chosen exam diet.

## Instructions:



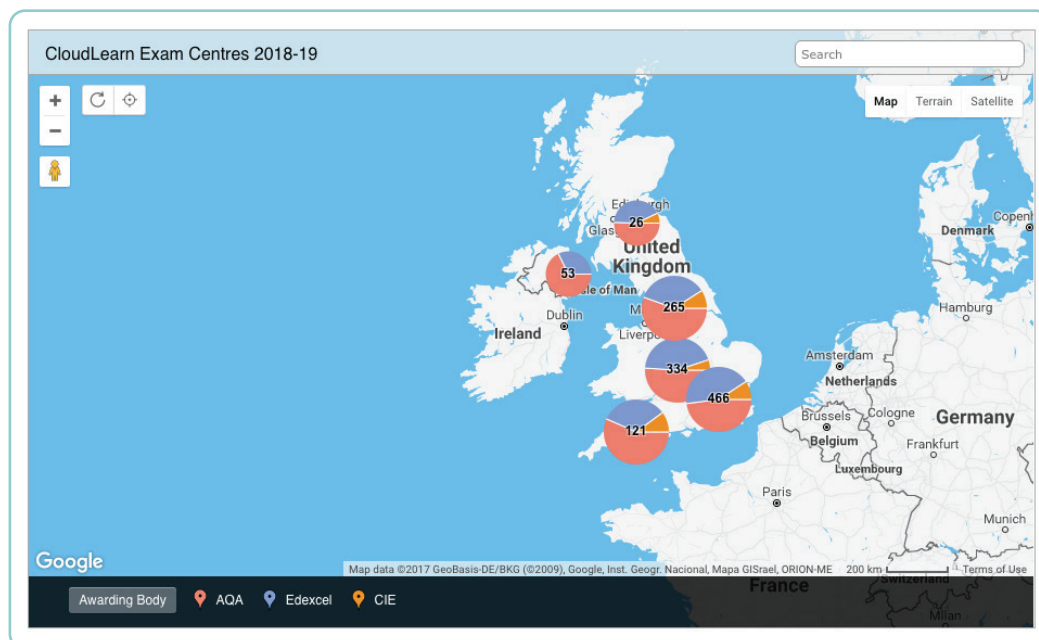
Choose Awarding Body.



Input your postcode & press enter.



Find local centres.



Please Note: Our Centre Finder pulls information from data published on Awarding Body websites. We are not responsible for the maintenance of this information, nor do we guarantee that you will find an exam centre in your local area. We will however do what we can to help you locate a centre for examination.

# PRICING

Exam centre prices can vary dramatically between centres. There are thousands of centres in the UK where you can potentially take exams. Each of these centres will have their own pricing structure.

Below you will find some of the most competitively priced exam fees in the UK from our friends at Tutors and Exams. Do let them know that you are a CloudLearn student as you will qualify for preferential pricing. Discounts for multiple exams are also available. Do also enquire about additional venues as they look to expand into areas that are underserved.

Exam	Awarding body	Course Code	Exam Fee
IGCSE English	Edexcel	4EB1	£260
IGCSE Maths	Edexcel	4MA1	£260
IGCSE Science (DOUBLE AWARD)	Edexcel	4SD0	£390
A-Level History (Including NEA)	Edexcel	9HI0	£660 (inclusive)
A-Level English Literature (Including NEA)	Edexcel	9ET0	£660 (inclusive)
A-Level Maths	Edexcel	6360	£520 for full A Level (6 units)
A-Level Economics	Edexcel	9EC0	£520
A-Level Physics (Including Practicals)	AQA	7408	£1,749
A-Level Physics (Without Practicals)	AQA	7408	£520 (lab exp still available)



# EXAM DATES

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Depending on the awarding body that endorses your qualification there will be a unique exam code and specific exam dates relating to your GCSE or A-Level exam.

You can locate the specific exam code from within your course under the introductory section entitled 'Exam Information'

Once you have the code you can find the exam date and time using the awarding body exam timetable link below:

[Exam Timetable for Edexcel \(Pearson\) qualifications.](#)

[Exam Timetable for CIE qualifications.](#)

[Exam Timetable for AQA qualifications.](#)

**Edexcel IGCSE** exams are available twice per year:

1. October/November (Winter Diet)
2. May/June (Summer Diet)

**CIE IGCSE** exams are available twice per year:

1. October/November (Winter Diet)
2. May/June (Summer Diet)

**Edexcel & AQA A-Level** Exams are available once per year:

1. May/June (Summer Diet)

Although you can still book your exam weeks in advance of the exam date, we strongly recommend that you book your exam 6 months in advance to ensure availability but also to avoid paying 'Late Fees'.

Be aware that for A-Levels that include a Coursework (NEA) component the Exam Centre deadline for any academic year is 1st March. Late fees will apply for late submission.

# EXAM DAY

## What Should I Take To The Exam Centre?

- Photo ID - usually a passport, or other form of ID previously agreed with the exams officer.
- Your Statement of Entry (listing the exams you're entered for) may be helpful but don't worry if you can't find it, as long as you're sure you are entered for the exams. The exam centre will have your candidate number and will have you on the register for each individual paper.
- Clear pencil case or bag
- Black pen for writing, dark pencil for diagrams, ruler, rubber (more details on pens/pencils below)
- Calculators are allowed unless the exam paper specifies otherwise eg the non-calculator GCSE maths. Any memory function must be cleared before the exam and you must be able to demonstrate how this is done, if requested. No wifi-enabled calculators. If the calculator has a case then this must be removed (in case notes are written on it).
- Maths - protractor, compasses etc.
- Bottle of water with label removed.

## What Should I Do On The Day?

The exams officer should have told you where to go and who to ask for on the day; if not, go to the centre's main reception and explain that you are a private candidate. You may be required to sign a visitor's book.

Standard JCQ guidelines (see below) state that candidates should be ready to enter the exam room 10 minutes before the scheduled start. You also need time to find your way to the correct place etc, so allow plenty of time.

Here are some suggestions for previous private candidates:

### Before The Exam:

- Arrive at least half an hour before the exam. Sometimes it's hard to find the exam room, and it's better to be early and calm, rather than late and panicking!
- Go to the loo before the exam, even if you think you don't need to!
- Take a bottle of water, with label removed. Staying hydrated keeps the brain alert.
- Wear layers; exam rooms can be freezing cold or stiflingly hot and stuffy....be prepared.
- The invigilator should tell you clearly when you may start. If you are not clear about this, raise your hand, making sure it is easy for the invigilator to see that you are trying to get his/her attention, and wait for the invigilator to come to you.

# EXAM DAY

## Banned Items

Check your pockets for banned items. You must not take the following into the exam:

- Mobile phone
- Smart watch / Apple Watch, or any other communication device
- Pieces of paper eg scrap paper even if blank, tracing paper, notes etc.

If a mobile phone is found on you during an exam, even if turned off, then you are likely to be disqualified from that exam. The exam centre has no leeway on this - it's a JCQ rule

You are no longer allowed to take your own tracing paper into an exam. If you need tracing paper for a maths exam, ask the invigilator to supply some. This way they can check it does not have any notes written on it. If you're worried that the exam centre may not have any available, you could hand an unopened packet to the invigilator on entry to the hall, so that they can check it and hand a sheet out if necessary.

## During The Exam

- A clock should be clearly visible to you and your start and finish times noted on a board, but just in case, take a watch that you can read easily, and you can note down your start and finish times on rough paper.
- Keep an eye on timings. If candidates sitting several different exams are all in the same room, the invigilator may make a mistake about when you are due to finish. If you think a mistake has been made, raise your hand and ask. You will not be penalised for asking - the invigilator will not be marking your paper!
- If you need extra paper, raise your hand and wait for the invigilator to come to you. Remain in your seat.
- If you need the toilet, raise your hand and wait for the invigilator to come. Remain in your seat until told to move. You will probably need to be accompanied to the toilet by someone who will wait outside the cubicle.
- If you feel unwell, raise your hand and wait for the invigilator.
- Don't take any exam papers or other exam materials out of the room. This is no longer allowed - spare papers are usually kept secure for at least 24 hours after the exam. This is because some candidates will sit the exam later due to clashes.



# GENERAL EXAM TECHNIQUE

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## More tips from students and parents:

- Read the question. Then read it again, more carefully. Many marks are lost because people misread questions.
- Note the marks available and work out how long to spend on this question (see above re practice papers)
- Pick the low-hanging fruit first; work through the paper, doing everything that you know how to do. Don't get hung up on questions that you don't know how to do, because if you spend too long on them you may miss out on 'easy marks' later.
- If you don't know how to do a question or find it is taking a long time, move on to the next question but make a mark on the exam or fold the corner over, to remind you to come back to the tough question if you have time.
- ALWAYS attempt a question, even if you don't really know how to do it. Marks are usually available for method, which means that even if you get the wrong answer, you may get some credit for going about it in the right way. Do all your working on the answer booklet, and only cross it out if you are sure you have a better answer; method/working marks are available for what is on the answer booklet, but not what's on rough paper, and not what's crossed out.
- Marks are often dropped if a question asks you to do several things; sometimes students don't answer all parts or carry out all tasks. You could cross off each task or keyword on the question paper as you do it.
- Use all the available time; if you finish the paper, go back and check your answers carefully. Look at the marks available per question and check your answers are of a sufficient length. Don't just sit there staring into space, as sometimes invigilators will collect the papers early in this situation and then you have lost the chance to check your work.



# AFTER THE EXAM

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## Collecting Your Results

Your exam centre should tell you how they will make results available. Make sure you know how this will happen.

Some will email results to you on the day they come out, while others will only post them and may require an SAE. Some require them to be collected in person, and may require written permission to release them to parents if the candidate is not present.

Some exam centres use online results services like Edexcel Results Plus, where candidates are given an PIN and can log in to obtain their results plus, sometimes, analysis of their score in relation to grade boundaries.

AQA has a helpful page with information about results day. It tells you about how marking works, what a statement of results might look like, and where to get more information relating to results.

## Enquiries About Results

Enquiries about results (known as EARs) can include a review of scripts, review of marking, or requesting “access to scripts”. These are all known as “post-results services”. Normally you must make these enquiries via the exam centre where you sat the exam. AQA say that they will respond to enquiries about results directly from private candidates, but in practice you may well get a speedier response via the exam centre.

Access to scripts means you get a copy of the marked exam paper back so you can see where marks were lost. You can’t usually get this until after any review of marking has been carried out.

**Edexcel guide to post-results services**

**AQA guide to post-results services**

**CIE Enquiries About Results**

