Qualifications Scotland
Teisteanasan Alba

Your Exams

What you need to know about National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams

School edition

Qualifications Scotland

We, Qualifications Scotland, took over from the Scottish Qualifications Authority on 1 February 2026. This does not change how you complete your qualifications. Your teacher will tell you what you need to do and when.

You will still see information with SQA branding on our website. This will be changed to Qualifications Scotland as we update the website.

The information in this document applies only to exams in 2026.

Contents

Getting ready for your exams 4

Important things you need to know about exams in 2026 5

Support during exams 6

Preparing for your exams 7

- Timetable 8
- Qualifications Scotland apps 9
- Past papers 9
- Your Scottish Candidate Number 10
- Make sure your details are correct 11

On exam day 12

- Arriving for your exam 13
- Desks 13
- Prohibited items 14
- Invigilators 15
- Question papers and answer booklets 16
- Writing your answers 17
- Leaving the exam room 18
- Fairness 19
- Dos and don'ts 20

If something unexpected happens 22

- What if I cannot sit the exam or there is a serious disruption? 23
- Exceptional circumstances 24

Your results 26

- Getting your results 27
- Appeals service 27
- Support 27
- Your information 28
- Remember 29

Getting ready for your exams

Exams show what you've learned in your courses.

It's OK to feel nervous about sitting your exams – almost everybody does. It helps if you're prepared. This 'Your Exams' guide aims to help you do your best. It explains how to prepare for your exams, and the rules that are in place to make sure exams are fair for everyone. It's important that you read and understand these rules before your exams start. You might find it useful to share this information with your parent or carer.

If you're not sure about the rules, speak to your teacher. They'll explain what could happen if you break the rules.

Visit our website at **qualifications.gov.scot** for more information.

If you need this 'Your Exams' guide in a different format, including in large print, Braille or a different language, please email **customer@qualifications.gov.scot** or call **0345 279 1000**.

Important things you need to know about exams in 2026

- Exams start on **Wednesday 22 April** and end on **Tuesday 2 June**.

- If an exceptional circumstance affects your performance on the day of an exam, you may be able to use the **Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service.** See page 24 for more information.

- Your school will provide an estimated grade for each of your courses before the exams start. You can talk to your teachers about your progress and estimated grades before your school sends them to us. This will help you understand how your estimated grade relates to your performance in the assessments you have completed this year.

- You'll get your results by post on **Tuesday 4 August**. You can sign up for **My Qualifications Scotland** to also get your results by text or email (or both) from 8 am on results day.

- There's an appeals service that you can access directly or through your school. If you use this service, one of our senior markers will review the marking of your Qualifications Scotland-marked assessments. More information will be available by **June 2026**.

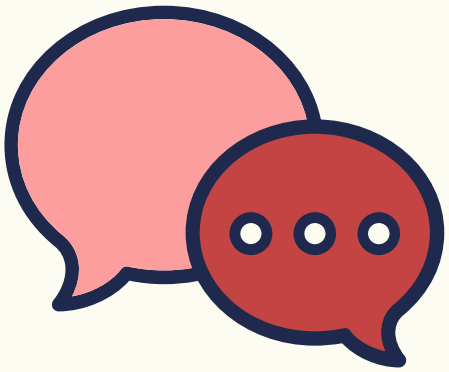
Support during exams

Assessment arrangements allow learners who are disabled or need additional support to complete their exams in different ways. If you have an assessment arrangement for an exam, it will usually be the same as the additional support you receive in class.

Assessment arrangements vary by subject, level and learner. They include adapted question papers and changes to exam times and locations.

If you need additional support, speak to your school so arrangements can be made to give you an equal chance to show what you know and can do.

To find out more about assessment arrangements, go to **qualifications.gov.scot** or speak to your teacher.



Preparing for your exams

Timetable

We've made some changes to the exam timetable, which shows the dates and times of exams, since it was first published in September 2025. You can see the updated version on our website at **qualifications.gov.scot**.

- Always use the latest version of the timetable in case the dates or times of your exams have changed.
- Double-check exam times with your teachers because schools can adjust start times slightly.
- Make sure you know what exams you're taking, and when and where they are.
- Ask your school which teacher will be in charge of the Qualifications Scotland exams. You need to know who this is so you can report to them if you arrive late.

Qualifications Scotland apps

We have free apps that can support you at exam time. You can download the apps from **qualifications.gov.scot**.

The MyExams app lets you create a personal timetable, view your exam schedule, add notes, and add your personal timetable to other calendars.

The MyStudyPlan app helps you organise your revision by creating your own study plan, and allows you to update your plan after timetable changes.

You can also create your own timetable using the **personal timetable builder**, and find study and revision tips on **qualifications.gov.scot**.

Past papers

Practising with previous exam papers can help you to prepare for exams.

You can download past papers and marking instructions at **qualifications.gov.scot**.

Your Scottish Candidate Number

Your Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) is your personal identification number. We use it to record all your achievements.

Your school will tell you your SCN. Make sure you know it as you'll need to write it clearly on your exam answer booklets.

Your teacher will give you an SCN card to write your name, school name, date of birth and SCN on. You can take this card into the exam room as long as you don't write anything else on it.

If you write anything else on the card, your exam entry could be cancelled. This may mean that you don't receive any results.

If you lose your SCN card, ask your teacher for another one.

Make sure your details are correct

A common reason for learners not receiving their results certificate is that we haven't been told about a change of address. Check your school has your correct details, including your name and address.

Remember you can also get your results by text and email by signing up for **My Qualifications Scotland** at **qualifications.gov.scot**.

If your details are going to change over the summer, tell your school before the summer holidays.

On exam day

Arriving for your exam

Be at the exam room at least 10 minutes before your exam starts. If you're late, report to the teacher in charge of the exam. They'll tell you if you can sit the exam.

Desks

In most schools, you'll have a desk or seat number for each exam. Make sure you know this before each exam.

Prohibited items

Prohibited items are things you must not have at your seat or desk, unless you've had them approved as part of an assessment arrangement. Prohibited items include the following.

- Mobile phones (even if switched off).

- Electronic devices such as tablets, earbuds, smartwatches or any device that stores information or connects to the internet. This includes devices with AI software, such as smart glasses.

- Extra information such as:
    - books, sketches, paper
    - anything written on your clothes or body, and
    - notes or unauthorised information on your SCN card.

- Pencil cases, including clear pencil cases.

- Calculators, except when allowed for the exam. (If calculators are allowed, they must not have cases, covers or lids).

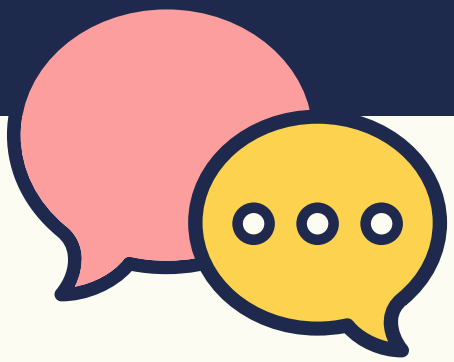
- Dictionaries, except when allowed for the exam.

Check your bags and pockets carefully before going to your seat and leave prohibited items in the school's designated storage place. Taking a prohibited item to your seat or desk would give you an opportunity to cheat, and could result in your exam entry being cancelled and you not receiving a result, or you getting a lower grade.

When calculators or dictionaries are allowed, they must meet our rules and regulations.

Visit **qualifications.gov.scot** for information on when calculators or dictionaries are allowed. Your teacher can also give you more information.

You cannot share equipment during an exam.



Invigilators

The people who supervise exams are called 'invigilators'. They supervise exams to make sure the rules are applied fairly. You must listen to them and follow their instructions.

If anything unexpected happens during an exam, such as you feeling unwell, tell the invigilator immediately.

Question papers and answer booklets

Read all the instructions on your question paper and check the subject and level are correct. If the subject and level aren't correct, tell the invigilator immediately.

You'll get either:

- a combined question paper and answer booklet, or
- a separate question paper and answer booklet.

Fill in your details clearly on the front page of the booklet.

If you need extra paper, raise your hand and ask the invigilator. In some subjects, there are extra pages or graph paper at the end of the answer booklet.

If you use extra sheets, write your name, SCN and school name on each sheet and put them inside your answer booklet.

Work through your question paper until you see 'END OF QUESTION PAPER'. There will be no questions after this.

Pages without any questions will say 'BLANK PAGE'. No page should be completely blank. If you find a completely blank page before 'END OF QUESTION PAPER', tell the invigilator.

Writing your answers

You must use a pen with black or blue ink. Don't use gel pens or pencils as these can fade or smudge if your paper is scanned, making it difficult for markers to read your writing. Markers will do their best, but might not award marks if your writing is too difficult to read. If you have any concerns about your handwriting, speak to your teacher.

When writing on unlined pages, leave about one centimetre between lines.

In some subjects, poor spelling and punctuation could result in you losing marks. If you have any concerns about this, speak to your teacher.

Cross out any rough work or unwanted answers. You must not use correction pens, tape or fluid.

Remember

- Take your time.
- Read the questions carefully.
- Answer the exact questions asked.
- Double-check your answers if you finish early.
- Stay calm and do your best.

Leaving the exam room

You'll be expected to stay in the exam room for the full length of the exam. If you finish early (or have done as much as you can), and you want to leave the exam room, raise your hand and ask the invigilator for permission.

If the exam is longer than one hour, the invigilator may allow you to leave after 30 minutes from the start. If it is less than one hour, you must stay until the end of the exam.

If you need to leave the exam room for another reason (such as to go to the toilet), raise your hand and ask the invigilator for permission.

At the end of the exam, leave all exam materials on your desk and the invigilator will collect them.

You must not remove any question paper or answer booklet from the exam room. If you do this it can have serious consequences for you, including having your exam entry cancelled and not getting a result.

Fairness

Everyone should have a fair chance to do their best. Cheating and causing a disturbance are unfair to other candidates.

Examples of cheating and unfair behaviour include the following.

- Having prohibited items at your seat or desk
- Pretending to be someone else or getting someone else to take an exam for you
- Disruptive behaviour
- Using rude, abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or images
- Copying from another person
- Collusion – working with others on work that is supposed to be just yours
- Plagiarism – failing to reference sources (including AI-generated information) properly or presenting someone else's work as your own

Cheating or unfair behaviour can have serious consequences for you, including losing marks, getting a lower grade, or having your exam entry cancelled and not getting any result. Your school can explain more.

Dos and don'ts

Do

- Arrive at least 10 minutes before the exam starts
- Bring the right equipment, including black or blue ink pens
- Make sure you don't have prohibited items with you when you go to your seat or desk
- Check you have the correct exam paper
- Put your name, SCN and school name on every piece of work
- Write clearly
- Read all instructions and listen for announcements
- Cross out rough work
- Stay until the exam finishes (unless you get permission to leave early)
- Wait for the invigilator to collect your exam papers before leaving the exam room

☒ Don't

- ✗ Take prohibited items to your seat or desk
- ✗ Take your exam paper or any exam materials with you when you leave the exam room
- ✗ Use rude, abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or images
- ✗ Get someone else to sit your exam, or pretend to be someone else
- ✗ Be disruptive or cause a disturbance
- ✗ Copy from anyone else
- ✗ Share your work with anyone else
- ✗ Share equipment
- ✗ Use gel pens, correction pens, tape or fluid

If something unexpected happens

What if I cannot sit the exam or there is a serious disruption?

You or a parent or carer should contact your school immediately, explaining what happened. They'll discuss your options and whether you're entitled to use the Examination Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service (EECCS). If you're eligible for the service, your school would need to contact us **within 10 days after the exam**, so speak to them as soon as possible.

Exceptional circumstances

The EECCS supports you if:

- you could not attend or complete the exam due to circumstances beyond your control (such as a medical issue)
- you were affected during the exam by a disruption or other circumstance that has been reported to us by the chief invigilator, or
- your performance on the day was affected by a personal circumstance or unplanned incident beyond your control.

Exam nerves, being distracted or losing concentration are not valid reasons for needing to use this service.

If you think you can use this service, speak to your school as soon as possible after the exam, giving them all the necessary information about the circumstance or incident. To be eligible you must have completed all the compulsory parts of your course that aren't on the question paper, such as performances and portfolios. You must also have an estimated grade from your school.

If you are eligible, your school will request the service **within 10 days of the exam**. You must give your school permission to do this for you.

Your school will provide evidence based on assessments you've done throughout the year, such as prelims, class tests, class work or performance records. Our examiners will review this evidence, and any exam and coursework materials, to decide your grade. **Your EECCS grade may be different from your estimated grade.**

If you use the EECCS, you cannot appeal against your grade through the appeals service.

Go to **qualifications.gov.scot** for more information.

Your Results

Getting your results

You'll receive your results by post on **Tuesday 4 August**. You can also receive them by text or email (or both) if you sign up for **My Qualifications Scotland**.

Your school will also receive your results. If you've applied for university through UCAS, they'll receive them too.

If you think there's a mistake on your certificate, or something looks wrong, contact your school.

Appeals service

There's an appeals service that you can access directly or through your school. More information will be available on **our website** by **June 2026**.

Support

You can find out more about your certificate, and get answers to common questions, at **qualifications.gov.scot**. You can also contact us by filling in a **candidate enquiry form**.

For any other questions,
email **customer@qualifications.gov.scot**
or call **0345 279 1000**.

Your information

We collect information about you from your school and local authority, and from your exam papers and assessment materials.

We use this information to:

- make arrangements for you to do Qualifications Scotland exams and assessments
- award and issue your results certificate
- provide services you've asked for, such as My Qualifications Scotland
- answer your questions
- investigate evidence of rule breaking (malpractice), and
- carry out research and produce statistics.

We may share some information with other organisations, including the Scottish Government, UCAS, your school, and organisations that help us provide services. On our website there are details of **how we use your information**.

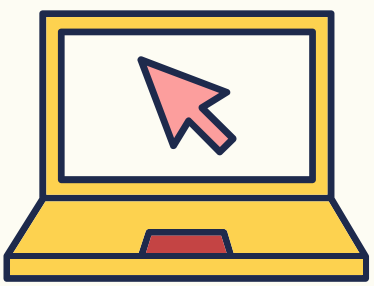
You can request a copy of the information we hold about you from **qualifications.gov.scot**.

Remember

- Read the instructions on the front of your exam paper.
- Take your time.
- Read questions carefully.
- Answer the exact questions asked.
- Double-check answers if you finish early.
- Stay calm and do your best.
- Stay up to date with the **exam timetable**.
- You may find **past papers** useful.

To find out where you can get more support, including organisations to speak to if you're feeling anxious, go to **qualifications.gov.scot**.

We're asking learners to take part in surveys and other research. Sign up to **'Your Voice'** to have your say on a range of issues.



Customer Service Team

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