

Managing timetable clashes securely, fairly, and consistently

Identify → Plan → Supervise → Secure → Record

What is an exam clash?

An exam clash occurs when a student is scheduled to sit two or more examinations at the same time.

Exam clashes must be managed in line with OxfordAQA regulations and guidance, ensuring examination security, appropriate supervision and that students are not disadvantaged.

Exam clash quick rules

- **Same-day solution first:** Examinations should normally be taken on the **same day** with supervised rest breaks.
- **Check the start-time window:** If an examination starts more than **30 minutes** before or after the published start time, a timetable variation request is required.
- **Maintain centre supervision:** Students must remain under **centre supervision between examinations** to maintain examination security.
- **Supervised rest breaks** must take place under formal examination conditions and **must not be used as revision time.**

1 Identify exam clashes early

Schools should identify clashes as early as possible to allow effective planning.

This may include:

- generating clash reports where available
- manual timetable checks
- asking students to check their timetables (*not relied on alone*)

Key principles

- ✓ Examination security must be maintained
- ✓ Students must not be disadvantaged
- ✓ Appropriate supervision must be in place
- ✓ All arrangements must be recorded

Exams taken at different start times

Where an examination is taken at a different start time from the published timetable:

- students must remain under centre supervision
- supervision continues until students are permitted to start the examination

Students starting an examination earlier than the published start time must remain under centre supervision until 1 hour after the published start time.

Students starting an examination after the published start time must remain under centre supervision from 30 minutes after the published start time until they begin the examination.

Multiple awarding bodies

Examinations from different awarding bodies may be conducted in the same examination room or venue.

Care must be taken when planning:

- seating arrangements
- examination timings
- access arrangements

OxfordAQA should be notified **only where a timetable variation is required** to manage a clash.

2 Managing exam clashes

Where a student is required to sit more than one examination on the same day, arrangements must be planned based on the **total time the student will spend under examination conditions**, including any approved extra time or supervised rest breaks.

Where possible, clashes should be resolved on the **same day** by:

- deciding the order of examinations
- allowing supervised rest breaks
- maintaining **centre supervision** between examinations
- scheduling examinations as **close as possible to the published start time**

Most exam clashes can be managed by the school without prior approval from OxfordAQA, provided that all published requirements are followed. OxfordAQA approval is required if an examination cannot start within 30 minutes before or after the published start time.

Where the total examination time is three hours or less, examinations may be taken consecutively on the same day with a **supervised rest break of up to 20 minutes under examination conditions. Students must remain under formal examination conditions during the supervised rest break and must not use this time for revision.**

Where the total examination time exceeds three hours, students must remain under centre supervision until 1 hour after the published start time of the examination or until their final examination has finished, whichever is later.

Timetable variations cannot be requested for personal commitments, school activities, or transport arrangements.

Timetable variation requests must be emailed to **OxfordAQAapproval@aqa.org.uk** and should include the exam details, reason for the variation, proposed start/finish times and candidate numbers affected.

During Centre supervision student(s):

- must be supervised at all times by a member of school staff or an invigilator
- may revise using their own resources
- must not have access to electronic devices or the internet
- must not have contact with students who have already sat the examination
- must not be coached by school staff

The supervising member of staff must not be the subject teacher for the examination.

Question paper security

Where examinations are taken in different sessions or on different days:

- question papers from earlier sittings must be sealed
- papers must be returned to secure storage
- papers remain secure until all students have completed the examination

Overnight supervision (only to be used in exceptional circumstances)

An examination may be taken on the following day only where all other same-day options have been exhausted.

This may be considered where total exam time exceeds:

- 5.5 hours – International GCSE
- 6 hours – AS/A-level

Overnight supervision:

- requires OxfordAQA approval
- must be formally documented
- places full responsibility for exam security with the Head of Centre

OxfordAQA Overnight Supervision Declaration forms must be completed before overnight supervision begins.

Example 2 (illustrative only)

Scenario:

Students are entered for examinations from different awarding bodies on the same day.

- Physics – 90 students
- Geography – 20 students
 - 5 students with no clash
 - 15 students with a clash
- Maths (different awarding body) – 30 students

How the clash is managed

- Physics starts at the published start time to minimise disruption for students with no clash
- Geography is split into two groups
- Students affected by the clash remain under centre supervision between examinations.
- Supervised rest breaks (**maximum 20 minutes**) are provided between examinations

Illustrative timetable:

14:30 – 16:00	Physics (90 students)
14:30 – 16:00	Geography – Group A (5 students, no clash)
14:30 – 16:00	Physics (90 students)
14:30 – 16:00	Geography – Group A (5 students, no clash)
16:20 – 17:50	Maths (30 students – different awarding body)
17:50 – 18:10	Supervised rest break
18:10 – 19:50	Geography – Group B (15 students, clash students)

Important: Because Geography Group B starts significantly later than the published start time, the school must submit a **timetable variation request to OxfordAQA for these students.**

Key points

- Examinations with **larger cohorts should start at the published start time** to minimise disruption for students without clashes.
- Students who **do not have an exam clash must sit their examination at the published start time.**
- Where a timetable variation is required, the variation should **affect the smallest possible number of students.** In cases involving multiple awarding bodies, schools should **first explore timetable variation options with the other awarding body.**
- Only the students affected by the clash should be included in the timetable variation request.

✓ Approval reminder

Where a timetable variation is required:

- OxfordAQA must be notified
- student numbers and exam details must be provided

Example 1 (illustrative only)

Scenario:

Students are entered for Physics and English, both scheduled at the same time at the same school.

How the clash is managed

- The school decides the **order of the examinations**
- One examination starts earlier or later **within permitted start times**
- A **supervised rest break (maximum 20 minutes)** is provided between papers. Students affected by the clash remain under centre supervision between examinations.

Illustrative timetable:

14:30 – 16:00	Physics
16:00 – 16:20	Supervised rest break
16:20 – 17:50	English

Important: This example requires a **timetable variation for the English examination** because the start time is more than **30 minutes after the published start time.**

Key points

- *Examinations may be taken consecutively on the same day, provided supervision and security are maintained.*
- If the second examination begins **more than 30 minutes after the published start time**, the school must submit a timetable variation request to OxfordAQA.

✓ Approval reminder

- No approval is required where examinations start within permitted start times
- Approval is required only if a timetable variation is needed for affected students

If approval is required for a timetable variation or you require further guidance please email OxfordAQAApproval@aq.org.uk

✓ Secure ✓ Fair ✓ Recorded

Examples are illustrative only. Schools must always follow OxfordAQA requirements and school procedures.

Worked example 1:

Two OxfordAQA examinations scheduled at the same time

Full student group (cohort) to sit two OxfordAQA exams at the same time

Note: An exam may begin 30 minutes before the published start time without OxfordAQA approval.

For example:

- Begin the Physics examination at 6.30am UK time (30 minutes before the published start time)
- Provide students a supervised break of no longer than 20 minutes.
- Begin the English exam after the break

How this may be scheduled in the China region

- 14:30 – 16:00 Physics exam
- 16:00 – 16:20 Centre supervised rest break
- 16:20 – 17:50 English exam

The variation of the English exam start time, including candidate numbers of all students affected, must be confirmed to us via email: OxfordAQAApproval@aqg.org.uk

Worked example 2:

Multiple awarding bodies and student clashes

Students entered for exams with multiple exam boards on the same day, and there is a clash.

For example:

OxfordAQA Physics (90 students), another exam board Maths (30 students, all taking Physics) and OxfordAQA Geography (20 students, 15 also taking Physics and Maths).

You can:

- Where possible, schools should explore timetable variation options with the other awarding body.
- Split Geography students into two groups, without clash (A) and with clash (B)
- Begin the Physics exam for 90 students at the published start time
- Begin the Geography exam for 5 students (Group A) at the published start time
- Centre supervised rest break – maximum 20 minutes, then begin Maths exam
- Centre supervised rest break – maximum 20 minutes, then begin Geography exam for 15 student (Group B)

A timetable variation request must be submitted to OxfordAQAApproval@aqg.org.uk for the Maths and Geography (Group B) examinations, as this affects the smallest number of students with an examination clash.

Example 2

How the clash is resolved

Group A – Geography only (5 students)

Maths students – also taking Physics (30 students)

Group B – Geography students with a clash (15 students)

Students	Exam	14:30 - 16:00		16:20 - 17:50		18:10 - 19:50
90	Physics	90	Supervised rest break - 20 minutes max		Supervised rest break - 20 minutes max	
5	Geography (group A)	5				
30	Maths			30		
15	Geography (group B)	(sitting Physics exam)		Students remain under Centre Supervision between examinations		15

Key:

- Students sitting an examination
- Students sitting a later examination due to clash
- Supervised rest break (maximum 20 minutes – no revision permitted)
- Students remain under centre supervision

A timetable variation request must be submitted to OxfordAQAApproval@aqg.org.uk for the Maths and Geography (Group B) examinations, as this affects the smallest number of students with an examination clash.