

Preparing for an OxfordAQA Inspection

Tables 1 and 2 summarise the key requirements schools should be prepared to demonstrate during an OxfordAQA inspection, including areas reviewed at all inspections and requirements specific to each inspection type. The sections that follow provide detailed guidance on inspection processes, timings, what to expect on the day, and how to prepare.

Table 1:
Areas reviewed at ALL inspections

The areas listed below may be discussed and reviewed during any inspection. This list is **not exhaustive**.

Area reviewed	Details
School signage	External school signage must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and permanent • Display the school's name as registered with OxfordAQA • Visible from the road to support students, visitors (including Centre Inspectors) and the delivery and collection of assessment materials
Reception / administrative arrangements	Arrangements for the secure receipt of confidential postal deliveries. Note: Reception must be permanently staffed during school opening hours and term time
Confidential material logs	Logs used to record the secure receipt, storage and movement of confidential examination materials.
Secure storage arrangements	Secure storage arrangements, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated secure room with solid walls and ceiling for examination use only (not used to store non-examination materials), with appropriate secure storage unit(s). Refer to section 4.4.3.1 of the OxfordAQA Handbook for detailed room/unit requirements. • Key safes, doors and locking mechanisms • Approved keyholders
Examination accommodation	Examination accommodation, including suitability of conditions such as heating, lighting, ventilation and noise levels, and appropriate provision for students with approved access arrangements.
Examination processes and procedures	Examination processes and procedures, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt, handling and secure storage of confidential examination materials, including arrangements for the secure download and printing of electronic exam materials (where applicable) • Written procedures for verifying the identity of all students • Contingency planning, including: a named member of staff responsible for examination processes in the absence of the Exams Officer; procedures for managing unforeseen emergencies (including cyber-attacks); and named alternative site(s) to be used if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address. • Management of conflicts of interest • Management and reporting of malpractice • Secure dispatch of completed examination scripts and retention of return of script receipts.
Invigilator training	Training content provided to invigilators and staff supporting access arrangements
Access arrangements (where applicable)	Evidence relating to access arrangements, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of assessor's qualifications • Supporting evidence for approved access arrangements Note: Not required for change of address/secure storage inspections.
Policies	Relevant policies checked during approval and re-approval inspections. In some cases, inspectors may also request policies during other inspections if requested by OxfordAQA.

Table 2:
Inspection-specific focus and requirements

This table highlights requirements specific to each inspection type that apply alongside the areas reviewed at all inspections.

Inspection type	Additional components
Approval inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-specific written policies relating to examination delivery (see the OxfordAQA Handbook for the list of required policies) • Proposed examination facilities • Discussion with the Exams Officer and Head of Centre (and SENCo, where required)
Re-approval inspection	Verification that examination standards, procedures and arrangements previously approved continue to be met.
Live exam inspection	<p>Examination room setup during the examination series, including confirmation that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display material (such as maps, diagrams, wall charts and projected images) is not visible to students. • A reliable clock (analogue and/or digital) clearly visible to all students in the examination room • Desk spacing meets requirements, with a minimum distance of 1.25 metres in all directions measured from the centre of each student's chair • Where desks have shelves or drawers, a procedure is in place to check these before and during the examination for unauthorised materials. • A board, flipchart or whiteboard clearly visible to all students displaying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the centre number, subject title and paper number; and - the actual starting and finishing times and date of each examination • Security of live examination materials and script dispatch procedures.
Change of address / secure storage inspection	<p>New site or secure storage facilities must be inspected and approved before confidential materials are dispatched</p> <p>Note: Schools must notify OxfordAQA at least 6 weeks in advance by emailing OxfordAQAApproval@aqa.org.uk</p>

Further guidance

1. General information about inspections

- Inspection duration varies depending on the inspection type and typically ranges from 60 minutes (live exam inspections) to up to 2.5 hours (approval inspections).
- Inspections may be conducted remotely (via Microsoft Teams) or in person.
- An inspector from the Centre Inspection Service (CIS) will conduct the inspection and will confirm their identity at the start of the visit or meeting.
- Where required, a CIS office team member or translator may also attend. Schools will be notified in advance if this applies.
- Schools must be staffed during opening hours and term time to facilitate an inspection.

Staff availability

- For all inspections, the Exams Officer, Head of Centre, or a suitable senior member of staff who is an authorised keyholder and has access to all examination materials and secure storage areas must be available to accompany the inspector at all times.
- For approval inspections, both the Exams Officer and Head of Centre must be present. Where required, the inspector may also ask to speak with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo).

2. Inspection types and focus

OxfordAQA inspections vary in scope depending on the inspection type. The information below explains the purpose of each inspection.

- **Approval inspections**
For approval inspections, the inspector will assess the school's readiness to deliver OxfordAQA qualifications, including proposed facilities, policies, and examination arrangements.
- **Re-approval inspections**
All approved schools must undergo a re-approval inspection each academic year to continue offering OxfordAQA examinations. These inspections confirm that examination standards, procedures and arrangements previously assessed at approval continue to be met.
- **Live exam inspections**
Live exam inspections take place during an active examination series to ensure that exam procedures are being followed correctly. Inspectors will aim to contact schools in advance; however, inspections may occur without prior notice. While inspections are typically scheduled on non-exam days to minimise disruption, this is not always possible. Staff must be available to support the inspection process until all afternoon exams are completed and scripts are either dispatched or securely stored.

- **Change of address / secure storage inspections**
A change of address or secure storage inspection is required if a school moves to a new location, makes significant structural changes, or alters its secure storage arrangements. New sites or secure storage facilities must be inspected and approved before confidential materials are dispatched, and schools must notify OxfordAQA at least six weeks in advance by emailing OxfordAQAApproval@aqg.org.uk.

3. What to expect on the day of the inspection

- The inspector will review examination arrangements, facilities, records, and procedures relevant to the inspection type.
 - All exam venues, secure storage areas, and relevant documentation and logs must be accessible for inspection.
 - At the end of the inspection, the inspector will provide oral feedback outlining any potential actions or areas of concern.
Note: Schools are asked not to contact the inspector directly with follow-up questions or evidence. All post-inspection correspondence must be directed to OxfordAQAApproval@aqg.org.uk.
 - Final outcomes are not confirmed on the day. The inspection report is reviewed by the OxfordAQA Centre Approval team before approval, re-approval, or confirmation of standards is granted.
- ! Important:** Schools must not make any changes to secure storage arrangements following an inspection until contacted by the Centre Approval team.

4. Remote inspections (where applicable)

For inspections conducted via Microsoft Teams:

- The inspector will contact the school in advance to arrange a suitable date and time.
- The inspector may use a private email address when making contact as they are not directly employed by OxfordAQA. Schools are advised to check junk or spam email folders regularly for inspection-related communications.
- Schools must have access to a portable device (e.g. laptop, tablet, or mobile phone) to allow the inspector to view secure storage areas and examination rooms.

Remote inspection readiness checklist

Schools should ensure:

- A portable device is fully charged and has a working camera and microphone
- The Microsoft Teams app is installed (if using a tablet or mobile device)
- Internet connectivity is stable
- Staff are able to walk the inspector virtually to secure rooms and storage units

Joining the inspection on the day

Joining the Microsoft Teams meeting

- Click the Microsoft Teams link provided by the inspector in their email.
- When prompted, select '**Open Teams**' and allow time for the meeting to connect.
- Select '**Allow audio**' and turn your video on when prompted in order to communicate with the inspector.
- You will be placed in the Microsoft Teams virtual waiting room until the inspector starts the meeting.
- If you experience difficulties joining the meeting on the day and cannot connect, please contact the CIS team, who will advise on next steps.

During the Microsoft Teams inspection

- If more than one person is present on the call, all participants must introduce themselves at the start of the inspection. This includes interpreters or anyone not visible on camera.
- Please remain fully engaged throughout the inspection. If a short break is needed for comfort or refreshment (including health-related needs), this should be raised with the inspector.'
- Ensure a drink is available, as inspections may involve extended periods of discussion.
- At the start of the inspection, confirm with the inspector what to do in the event of a loss of connection, or follow the instructions provided by the inspector.

5. Policies required for approval and re-approval inspections

Inspectors will ask to see and discuss the following school-specific policies (**Refer to section 4.5.4 of the OxfordAQA handbook for further guidance**):

- Safeguarding / child protection policy
- Data protection policy
- Complaints and appeals policy
- Conflict of interest policy
- Examination contingency policy
- Internal appeals procedure (including reviews of marking decisions)
- Malpractice policy (including misuse of AI)
- Equality and diversity policy
- Non-examination assessments management policy

After the inspection

- The CIS team submits the inspection report and summary to the OxfordAQA Centre Approval team.
- A report summary is emailed to the school.
- Where required, schools will be asked to complete actions and submit evidence.
- Approval, re-approval, or confirmation that standards have been met is granted **only after review by the Centre Approval team**.