

External Examinations
Controlled Assessments
Coursework and NEA
Internal Exams

Frequently asked questions
for students and parents

1. External Examinations

Whatever courses you are studying at New College, you will have external exams at some point. External exams are the official exams which are set by the exam boards and which determine your final grades. They are extremely important and the whole purpose of your two years at New College is to sit these external exams, along with any controlled assessments and formal coursework that contribute to your final grade.

When do external exams take place?

For *A level courses*, these nearly all take place at the end of Year 13, in May / June.

For *applied general courses*, such as BTEC courses, there are four points at which you might potentially have external exams:

- January in Year 12
- May / June in Year 12
- January in Year 13
- May / June in Year 13

For *GCSE maths and English* resit courses, external exams take place in November of Year 12 and/or May/June of Year 12. If you still haven't achieved a level 4 at the end of Year 12, you will sit the exams again in Year 13, at the same points.

How will I know the dates and times of my external exams?

When the exam boards have published information and when the college has finalised seating plans and rooming, personalised information about dates, times, locations and seat numbers is available to each student via Cedar. If two exams clash, the college will make arrangements in line with the regulator's requirements so that you can sit both exams.

What am I not allowed to take into exams?

Coats, hats, scarves, gloves, watches, mobile phones, electronic data storage devices, calculator lids, headphones, books, notes, food or drink (other than non-coloured plastic bottles of water with no labels). This also applies to controlled assessments, mock exams and Year 12 progression exams.

Can the dates of external exams be changed?

No. The college has no control over this and the exam boards will not change the dates in any circumstances. If a student misses an exam during a particular exam series, there is no opportunity to sit that same paper at a different time. This is why it is vital that students are available for external exams and that they attend. Students must attend at the correct time on the published date for all external exams.

What happens if I miss an external exam?

If you miss your external exam there will not be another opportunity to sit that paper in that same exam series. This means that if you are a Year 13 student sitting an exam in the summer you will probably fail the course outright if you do not attend the exam. This also applies to students sitting GCSE exams in November or in the summer.

If you miss an external exam in Year 12, or in January of Year 13 you should expect that the college will take formal disciplinary action and if there are already serious concerns about commitment or attendance, that your place in college may be withdrawn. You will also be issued with an invoice and

required to pay a fee of £30 to cover costs associated with examination entry fees, examination administration and examination staffing costs. You will not be permitted to sit future exams if you do not pay this fee and your place in college would then be withdrawn. You also may not be permitted to progress into Year 13 if you miss an external Year 12 exam.

What if there are mitigating circumstances?

The exam board regulations are very strict and there have to be extremely serious reasons for a student to miss an exam, or for special consideration to be applied. The college itself has no say in the exam board regulations and criteria. Feeling under the weather, minor illness, nerves or anxiety, long term illnesses or other prior commitments are not factors which would be taken into consideration by exam boards and missing the exam for those reasons is likely to result in failing the course.

If a student is too ill to be able to attend an external exam because of more serious illness, the college would require proof via a doctor's note, and this would be provided to the exam board for consideration. If there are major unexpected issues that might affect how a student has performed in the exam, such as an accident or injury at the time of the exam, bereavement at the time of the exam or a domestic crisis at the time of the exam, students should contact their progress tutor urgently, ideally on the day of the exam, to discuss next steps. The college may waive the £30 fee for a missed exam in rare cases where the exam board approves special consideration, or where a doctor's note is provided.

Can I have special arrangements to help me with an external exam?

Only if these have been discussed, assessed and approved in advance by the college's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCo), and by deadlines given by the exam board. A small number of students may have approved access arrangements for exams, usually to provide support for medical or learning difficulties. For example, some students may be able to use a laptop in exams, or may have a scribe, or extra time. These are usually considered when a student joins the college at the end of Year 11, or if there is a new diagnosis when at New College.

Please be aware that it is not possible to provide special arrangements for students simply upon request and which haven't been formally assessed and reviewed. For example, a student without an assessed and approved access arrangement who arrives at an exam requesting to sit the exam in a different location for any reason should expect their request to be declined.

Can I resit an external exam if I'm not happy with my result?

Not if the exam is a final exam at the end of Year 13. If you're studying GCSE resit for English or maths, there is a further resit opportunity after your November sitting if needed, in the summer, provided you sat your exam in November.

If you are sitting an external exam for an applied general qualification in Year 12, or in January of Year 13, there may sometimes be a resit opportunity later in the course, but this cannot be guaranteed. It is important that you work hard in preparation for an applied general external exam so that you can perform at your best the first time. A resit for an applied general external exam should be very rare, and students would usually have to pay for the cost of the entry. The college may make an exception to this in 2021/22 because of the unique circumstances of the pandemic, provided a student has attended all their external exams. In 2022/23 students wishing to resit an external exam will be required to pay for the cost of the entry, as normal. Resits for applied general courses should not be necessary in most cases if students have worked hard in preparation for external exams.

2. Controlled Assessments and Set Tasks

Some courses, particularly applied general courses such as BTEC and WJEC courses, will include controlled assessment. Controlled assessment can take many forms, but this often involves completing a piece of written work or coursework, or a practical task, in supervised exam-like conditions. Controlled assessments are a formal examined part of the course which are regulated by the exam boards and the results from them contribute to the final result of the qualification. For this reason, they are just as important as the external exams that students will complete and must be treated with the same seriousness.

When do controlled assessments take place?

These could take place at any point of your 2-year course. Your teachers, and your programmes of study, will identify clearly for you when your controlled assessments will take place. You will have plenty of notice, and you will have time to prepare, with lots of support and guidance from your teachers in advance. You do need to work hard and treat the controlled assessment like an exam.

Can the dates of controlled assessments be changed?

No. The college is required to carry out controlled assessments within a clearly defined window. The dates and times cannot be changed to accommodate individual students and so it is extremely important that students attend on the correct date at the official time.

What happens if I miss a controlled assessment?

If you miss a controlled assessment you should expect that the college will take formal disciplinary action and if there are already serious concerns about commitment or attendance, that your place in college may be withdrawn. You will also be issued with an invoice and required to pay a fee of £30 to cover costs associated with examination entry fees, examination administration and examination staffing costs. You will not be permitted to sit future exams if you do not pay this fee. There may not be any other opportunity for you to complete a controlled assessment, in which case you will achieve no marks for this component and you are then at serious risk of failing the course and being withdrawn from college.

What if there are mitigating circumstances?

If a student is too ill to be able to attend a controlled assessment because of more serious illness, the college would require proof via a doctor's note. Disciplinary action would not be taken if there is a doctor's note verifying illness. Feeling under the weather, minor illness, nerves or anxiety, long term illnesses or other prior commitments are not legitimate reasons to miss a controlled assessment.

Just as with external exams, if there are major unexpected issues that might affect how a student has performed in the controlled assessment, such as an accident or injury at the time of the controlled assessment, bereavement at the time of the controlled assessment or a domestic crisis at the time of the controlled assessment, students should contact their progress tutor urgently, ideally on the day of the controlled assessment, to discuss next steps.

Am I able to resit a controlled assessment if I'm not happy with my result?

Not necessarily – this will all depend on when your controlled assessment takes place and if there are any further controlled assessments planned before you finish your course. Having to resit a controlled assessment is not ideal as it will involve additional work and time from you which could otherwise be spent on your other subjects. It's important to work hard in preparation for your first controlled assessment so that you perform at your very best.

3. Coursework and NEA

Nearly all applied general courses, such as BTEC and WJEC courses, and a small number of A level courses include a coursework component. This is sometimes referred to as NEA – *non-examination assessment*. Coursework or NEA are different to regular pieces of *directed independent learning (DIL)* in that they contribute to a student's overall final grade. It is regulated by the exams board, there are very clear rules about how it should be completed, and the way in which feedback is permitted. Because it contributes to the overall grade, coursework and NEA is just as important as external exams and must be treated with the same seriousness.

Students will be provided with clear support and guidance by their teachers before completing coursework and NEA.

Can the deadlines for coursework be changed?

No, and the college has to follow exam board regulations regarding deadlines, feedback and resubmission arrangements, in the interests of fairness and consistency. This means that the deadlines you are given are extremely important and it is critical that you submit work by the given deadlines.

Can I improve my coursework after I've submitted it?

This depends on the qualification you are completing. For BTEC qualifications, students have a submission deadline for units or assignments, after which their teacher will provide feedback. Students then have a window of time in which they can make further improvements, before making one final resubmission of their work. There is no further opportunity to resubmit work after the resubmission deadline.

What if I miss a deadline for BTEC coursework?

This is a serious problem and you should expect that disciplinary action will be taken. In serious cases, your place at college may be withdrawn. If you fail to meet the initial submission deadline for BTEC courses, BTEC regulations mean that you forego the opportunity to receive feedback and to make a resubmission. This means that you will be issued with a new deadline and if you fail to meet it, or if the work is not of the required standard to pass, you will fail the unit outright.

What if I fail a mandatory coursework unit?

This should never happen if you are working hard, meeting deadlines and listening to the guidance of your teacher. However, if by the final deadline for a BTEC unit you have either not submitted work, or the work submitted does not satisfy the pass criteria, you will fail the unit outright. If the unit is a mandatory unit, this means that you will fail the course in its entirety. As a result, you should expect that your place in college will be withdrawn as you will no longer have a full programme of courses to study.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is when a student includes work within their coursework that is not their own. For example, passing off material from another student's work, or the internet, or other sources, as their own work. This is a breach of the exam board regulations and so students must take care to ensure that their work is entirely their own, both to avoid disciplinary action and to avoid the risk of failing a unit.

4. Internal Examinations / Assessments

Internal exams / assessments are ones organised by the college to help gauge your progress, to support your learning, and to help you focus your work and revision. Internal exams / assessments are an important part of your learning journey and students are required to complete them. The results in internal exams / assessments do not contribute to your final awarded grade, but the better you perform in them the more likely you are to do well in your final external exams.

Examples of internal exams / assessments at New College are:

- **Initial Assessments** in the first few weeks of Year 12
- **Formal Cedar Assessments** which you complete in lessons throughout your two years of study, the results of which are posted in your Cedar markbook
- **Formal Mock Exams** which are organised like the final external exams, in the sports hall – these take place in Year 13 for A level courses, and in both Year 12 and Year 13 for applied general courses depending on when the external exam takes place
- **Informal Assessments and Tests** which teachers might use during lessons
- **Year 12 Progression Exams** – towards the end of Year 12, usually in the sports hall

How do I know what will be assessed?

Your Cedar assessments won't only assess topics you've studied recently, but will also include lots of content from earlier in the course. Your programme of study for each course will provide you with further information to help you prepare. Similarly, mock exams will contain a very wide range of topics from across all the topics you have studied.

What are Progression Exams?

Progression Exams take place at the end of Year 12 for all A level and some applied general courses. They are formal exams which usually take place in the sports hall. They will assess wide-ranging topics from across the whole of Year 12, and they will be used to assess your readiness to progress into Year 13 and to consider whether your continued study on your current courses is appropriate. Every student will have a one-to-one interview to discuss their Progression Exam results, their attendance, commitment and behaviour before the end of the summer term.

What if I miss a Progression Exam or Mock Exam?

We will treat Progression Exams and Mock Exams just like external exams. If a student fails to attend them they should expect disciplinary action to follow and their place in college may be at risk and their grade will be recorded as a fail. Students will not be permitted to progress into Year 13 if they have not completed their Year 12 Progression Exams. Feeling under the weather or nervous will not be a legitimate reason to miss these exams. If a student is seriously unwell, the college would expect to see a doctor's note as evidence to support the absence and separate arrangements might be made in this circumstance.

Can I have special arrangements to help me with a Cedar assessment, mock exam or progression exam?

Only if these have been discussed, assessed and approved in advance by the college's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCo). Some students will have approved access arrangements, such as extra time or use of a laptop, and you are entitled to these during internal college assessments as well as external exams if they have been formally approved.

Watch this video for the key points in this booklet

<https://vimeo.com/699390797/bda5b85ee4>