

FAQ Home Education and Exams

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<http://edyourself.org/examsfaq.pdf> via <http://edyourself.org/articles/examsfaq.php>

Please check the web page for the latest information

How Do We Get Started?

A very good way to start is to read the Home Ed Exams Wiki and join the home education support group for parents whose children are taking exams: <http://www.home-education-exams.org.uk>
http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/HE-Exams-GCSE-A_AS_Levels-OU-Others/info

SEE ALSO

http://www.nwilts-he.org.uk/he_exams_wiki/index.php/FAQs_about_taking_exams_as_an_EHEer

1. What are private candidates?

A private or external candidate is one who pursues a course of study independently, but makes an entry and takes an exam at an approved centre. A private candidate is responsible for his or her own entry, which must be made through an approved centre and not directly with an awarding body. [QCDA guidance to exam centres about private candidates](#) [AQA Guidance on Private Candidates](#) [Edexcel Guidance on Private Candidates](#) CIE find a centre, updated October 2013 <http://www.cie.org.uk/i-want-to/find-a-cambridge-school/>

2. How can we study for GCSEs at home?

GCSEs in many subjects are problematic because of [controlled assessments](#). It may be simpler to look at taking [IGCSEs](#) To study for exams at home it is necessary to choose an exam which is suitable for private candidates. Read more about home education and exams [here](#)

3. My daughter is currently in school and is half way through GCSEs. If she starts being home educated, can she go back into school just to take the exams?

It is unlikely that this will be possible, although it is always worth asking the school. If the school says no, it may not be possible to carry any controlled assessments over to a new exam centre. In such cases, some families may find it easier to start again with [IGCSEs](#) Read more about home educating families' experience of taking exams [here](#)

4. Once he starts being home educated, what will happen to the Controlled Assessments my son has already done in school?

It may not be possible to carry [controlled assessments](#) over to a new exam centre. In such cases, some families may find it easier to start again with [IGCSEs](#) Read more about home educating families' experience of taking exams [here](#)

5. What is the deadline for finding somewhere to sit an exam?

This should be done as early as possible and any special [Access Arrangements](#) for private candidates (use of laptop, scribe, extra time etc) must be completed well in advance of schedule. For June exams, the normal deadline for the exam centre to submit details is February, but private candidates are recommended to find an exam centre well in advance of the deadline. Read more about home educators' experience of finding exam centres [here](#)

6. Do all the exams have to be taken in June?

For private candidates, IGCSEs continue to be scheduled for June and November since these are not modular exams. However, [as a result of the changes to GCSEs](#), exams now take place at the end of the course of study and exams for the majority of subjects will be restricted to summer, although for

English, English language and mathematics GCSE there will be an additional exam opportunity (ie resit) in November. Candidates will be required to take all GCSE assessments at the end of the course for awards made from summer 2014 onwards. See Ofqual for more details <http://www2.ofqual.gov.uk/help-and-support/94-articles/839-timeline-for-the-introduction-of-changes-to-gcses>

7.If my son doesn't do any GCSEs while he is home educated, can he catch up with exams at college later?

It depends. Many Further Education colleges and 6th forms don't routinely offer GCSEs, or only offer a limited range of short-course catch-up GCSEs as resits, which presume that the syllabus has already been covered. It may or may not be possible to start an A Level course without GCSEs, depending on the attitude of the college and whether the applicant has alternative evidence of achievement/skills/experience + good references. It is advisable to make inquiries with local Further Education providers and - where possible - to ask home educators in the area. In future the funding for Further Education will require colleges to offer Maths and English as part of a full programme of learning. Read more about home educators' experience of exam centres [here](#). Read about full-programme funding reforms for college [here](#)

How many GCSEs does my son need for college?

It depends on the course your son wants to do, and whether he has other relevant skills/experience/references. IGCSEs are equivalent to GCSEs and are becoming increasingly well-known. The standard answer from the prospectus or admissions office is 5 A-C GCSEs for a Level 3/A Level course, but this may be flexible, depending on the attitude of the college and whether the applicant has alternative evidence of achievement/skills/experience + good references. It is advisable to make inquiries with local Further Education providers and - where possible - to ask home educators in the area. Read more about home education and exams [here](#)

8.My son wants to be a [insert chosen career] Which exams should he do?

It depends on his age, whether he wants to go on to university and whether he has other relevant skills/experience/references. Read what home educators say [here](#)

9.How much does it cost to do exams?

It depends. At the lower end, you might pay £50 to the exam centre for each subject, while at the higher end you could pay hundreds of pounds for a distance learning course or private tutor in each exam subject plus £100-£150 being charged by some centres for a place to sit the exam. Read what home educators say [here](#)

10.Where can my daughter take her exam/Do you have a list of exam centres?

The exam boards have lists of exam centres which have been known to take private candidates in the past. Click [here](#) for more details. Some local authorities also keep their own list of local schools and centres, but this is relatively rare. Click [here](#) for more details. A number of home educators recommend approaching private schools for somewhere to sit exams. See also CIE <http://www.cie.org.uk/i-want-to/find-a-cambridge-school/> Read what home educators say [here](#)

11. I just asked a couple of local schools if we could take exams and they said no. Can you get them to reconsider?

Local authorities can't make schools take private candidates as this is a decision for the school, though a minority of councils will try and build bridges with schools or find alternative local exam centres for home educated young people. Click [here](#) for more details

12. Do you have a list of tutors?

The council would not generally recommend tutors but lists can be found by searching the internet. Local libraries are another source of information.

13. Is there any way I could share the cost of a tutor?

Some home education groups do share the cost of a tutor, but this tends to be organised by families themselves. Read what home educators say [here](#)

14. I've contacted the schools on your list but none of them will let my son take his exams. Can you help?

This is ultimately a decision for the school. The council may look to amend its list after speaking to the school. Other alternatives might include private schools or the local FE colleges. Read what home educators say [here](#)

15. My son is doing GCSEs with NEC/Oxford Homeschooling but none of the schools on their list will let him take exams. Can you help?

This is ultimately a decision for the school. There is no guarantee that any school on the list will accept a particular private candidate. Read what home educators say [here](#) [The AQA Guidance for Private Candidates](#) says "it is advisable to ensure that a centre has agreed to submit your entry before paying any money to a tutor or distance learning organisation"

16. Can my daughter take exams early?

Exams can be taken at any age, though it may be more difficult than usual to find an exam centre. Home educators also tend to begin exams earlier and take one year courses rather than two. Read what home educators say [here](#)

17. I've read that home educators can't do GCSEs and have to do IGCSEs instead. What does this mean?

GCSEs in most subjects are a problem because of controlled assessment. Read more [here](#) and see what home educators say [here](#) [IGCSEs](#) are recognised by 6th forms and FE colleges, as well as universities, since they are taken in private schools and in an increasing number of state schools. See [Guardian article, October 5th 2012](#)

18. My son will need extra time in his exam and he will need to use a keyboard. Who do I talk to about this?

When a student requires exam conditions to be modified, this is called Access Arrangements and must be sorted out with the exam centre in good time. Some Access Arrangements are granted on the basis that it is the student's normal way of working, whereas other special arrangements will only be granted if the student has a statement of special needs or if an appropriate recent report by a suitably qualified professional is given to the exam centre. Read more about Access Arrangements [here](#)

For more detailed information about special arrangements in exam centres, click here <http://ehe-sen.org.uk/exams.php>

19. Is there a package we can buy which covers everything we need for the exam?

In principle there is no single package which covers everything. In distance learning the student generally receives regular assignments which are marked by the tutor. However, the student will need somewhere to sit the exam. To improve the final result, students may also opt for private tutoring. Many families also recommend going through past papers and digesting the examiners' comments, as well as taking mock exams to get used to exam-type conditions. Click [here](#) to read how other home educating families have prepared for exams and the range of costs involved.

20. My daughter is currently home educated but we'd like her to enrol in school for the last year just to take exams. How do we go about this?

This may not be possible, as GCSEs are taken in schools over two years and by the final year, students will have already banked their controlled assessments and covered most of the syllabus. If a home educated young person wants to take exams in a single year, as many do, then the choice is between taking the exams as a private candidate, which will usually be [IGCSEs](#), or finding a 1-year GCSE college course, which will be a resit course for students who have failed the exam and will only

be available in a very limited range of subjects.

21. Can my daughter attend school part-time just to take exams in certain subjects?

This is unlikely now, although I understand some people have arranged it. It is called flexischooling. Read more about flexischooling [here](#)

22. My son is 15. Can he go to college early to do GCSEs?

Colleges will take students under 16. However, most colleges don't routinely offer GCSEs. From September 2013, [home educated under 16s are able to apply directly to college.](#) and get free courses. You can still apply to college after the start of the academic year.

23. My son is 14. Can he do Open University instead of GCSEs/A Levels?

It is possible to do Open University courses below the age of 18, but the OU will require proof that the applicant is mature enough to cope with the course. In the past, under-18s were assessed on their own income and received study grants, but this system has now been changed in England for new applicants. Read more about Open University and home education [here](#)

24. How do home educators take AS and A Levels as external candidates?

It is possible to do this successfully but there is very little information available, partly because most home educated young people do tend to go into college or school at 16. The Home Ed Exams Wiki is very helpful <http://www.home-education-exams.org.uk/> Click [here](#) to read a successful case study of home education and A Levels published in the Huffington Post, August 2012. [Pembrokeshire College](#) offers private candidates access to science labs and tutorials for Science A Levels. The practical workshops cover the essential laboratory skills for each science and also the assessment. (As an example, AQA Physics requires a total of 4 days.) There are separate workshops for AS and for A2. The college can assist with accommodation for students who have to travel to the centre. Fast track students are recommended to speak to the college about taking both workshops in the same year, rather than spread over 2 years. <http://online.pembrokeshire.ac.uk/contact.html>

25. Do our exam results count in the school league tables?

No, results for external candidates are not attributed for accountability purposes for state funded schools. As long as state schools complete their census returns correctly, the inclusion of private candidates in performance tables should not be an issue for the centre. In independent schools, however, results for external candidates are initially attributed because these schools do not complete a pupil level census. Read more here

<http://edyourself.org/articles/privatecandidates.php>