

Exam Centres: Home Educators Experience

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<http://edyourself.org/examshomeedexp.pdf> via

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

Please check the web page for the latest information

- The most useful advice was to find a centre first, then work out how to take the exams
[Case Study 1](#)
- The LA gave us a list of exam centres but the local schools didn't do IGCSEs so we used the Edexcel list
[Case Study 2](#)
- I approached 189 schools before I found one where my son could take exams
[Case Study 3](#)
- The most helpful advice was to get the school on board before you decide what exams are do-able.
[Case Study 4](#)
- This time around we are doing all IGCSEs because he can just go in and take the exams
[Case Study 5](#)
- If you are going to do exams, you might as well get sorted out earlier and make it less stressful
[Case Study 6](#)
- The centre will accommodate any board, can arrange practicals and is only a 30 minute drive away.
[Case Study 7](#)
- The home education group had set up a parents co-op group to help children prep and work towards exams, meeting only one morning a week in a hired community village hall. Luckily for us the drive there is no more than 60 miles away.
[Case Study 8](#)
- Bridgend local authority came to an arrangement for home educated children to sit their exams at the FE college. The authority also gives the local home education group money to spend on access to exams.
[Case Study 9](#)
- Minimal cost in terms of exam preparation, just the actual cost of exams at around £250 for the five qualifications
[Case Study 10](#)

- **We didn't have any difficulty finding somewhere to sit exams and it wasn't particularly expensive. The most helpful advice was to join the online exams support group**

[Case Study 11](#)

Home educators frequently discover that schools will only let private candidates sit exams in the same subjects and with the same exam boards which are being taken by pupils at the school. [The AQA Guidance for Private Candidates](#) notes that "in most cases, a centre will normally only accept an entry from you if it is entering its own candidates for the specifications you are interested in or has other exams for AQA scheduled at the same time as the papers you wish to take."

Schools are generally not able to assist with [private candidates' controlled assessments for GCSEs](#), resulting in home educators opting for IGCSEs which are not widely available in mainstream state schools or at Pupil Referral Units.

Consequently, home educated young people may have to sit different exams at different centres. Families may also discover that there is a timetable clash or that there is not sufficient time to travel between centres in order to sit all the scheduled exams. Therefore although we have described the problem in the singular as "finding an exam centre" it should not be taken to mean that the home educating family only has to find one centre.

During the course of my research several independent exam tutors expressed surprise that more home educators did not approach local FE colleges in the first instance and I would be grateful for feedback on this. One local authority reports trying schools and the local PRU, before coming to an arrangement with the local college for home educators to sit exams as private candidates.

There are mixed views on correspondence courses. Some home educators say it depends on the quality of the tutor assigned to the course and that this can be extremely variable. Providers are under no obligation to find the candidate somewhere to sit the exam. [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". Correspondence courses cost around £350 per subject for the course. Exam fees (to the awarding body) and admin fees (to the exam centre) will need to be paid on top of this.

[Useful Links on Home Education and Exams](#)

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- Our Council - with help from us - has registered the PRU as a centre for CIE exams and identified a local school to set up for GCSEs and IGCSE for home educators. Local Independent school is already being used.

- The council does nothing. We have asked the EHE officer repeatedly, as individuals as as a group) for help in finding an exam centre locally. We have provided the Councils with examples from neighbouring LA plus contact details for further enquiries. Every month or so we ring to see how they are getting on and they either say "Sorry, I forgot all about you" or "Wait until the next head teachers' meeting and I'll try asking there" or "I'm planning to set aside a whole afternoon to ring around the secondary schools to ask. Just give me a few more weeks."
 - This year we received a letter from our Council telling us that we could use the Pupil Referral Unit to sit exams and listing most of the exam boards.
 - We had initial consultations with the Council at the start of their policy review. When the LA asked was there anything we felt home educators needed from the LA, we said help for somewhere to sit exams. EHE officer said the Council had spoken to various centres but none had been willing to allow private candidates. Not heard anything since.
 - The local private school took private candidates for years and years then the parents kicked off about why such young candidates were sitting exams alongside their children. They didn't say no to future candidates but they added a £50 or so "admin" fee to the £100 or so exam cost.
 - Nearby we have [Southdowns Small School](#) and Etudeo both of which are run by home educators and organise exams.
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Questions

If you are a home educator with experience of taking exams [I would be very interested to hear from you](#) and would like to post more case studies on this web page. The message box may appear tiny but you can just keep typing! Optional questions:

1. How did you get started?
2. At what stage in the process did you begin looking for an exam centre?
3. Did you receive help with any aspect of taking exams outside the system?
4. What advice was most helpful at the time?
5. Did you approach your local authority for help and if so, what was your experience?
6. How many exams did you/your child take?
7. Was the candidate 16 when he/she sat exams?
8. Did you have difficulty finding somewhere to sit exams?
9. Did you ask FE colleges/Adult Learning Centres?
10. Did you find the process expensive?
11. What were your main areas of expenditure: textbooks/student laptop/tutor/exam fees/correspondence course/exam centre fees/other?
12. Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently?
13. Do you need exams in order to access further education at 16?