

HesFes Exams Workshop

Home-educated students are able to achieve qualifications in nearly all subjects, often in less time than it would take at school. It can be done, and you do not need to be structured learners, or to buy a correspondence course, unless you want to.

There is a great online support network for home educators considering formal qualifications.

Start with the **HE Exams Wiki** - an online reference site with general information about finding an exam centre and preparing for exams. There is also subject-by-subject advice on which qualifications are available, the differences between specifications, and recommended textbooks and resources. It is best to read the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) first. You can find it by searching for 'home education exams wiki' or typing in this link:

www.home-education-exams.org.uk or www.nwilts-he.org.uk/he_exams_wiki/

Next stop is the **HE-Exams group**. This is a Yahoo group (an email forum) dedicated to exams rather than general home-ed discussion. Members pool their experience and can usually help with any questions that the Wiki has not answered. You can find it by the link from the front page of the Wiki, or search for 'HE Exams Yahoo group', or http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HE-Exams-GCSE-A_AS_Levels-OU-Others/

Take-home points on qualifications for home educators

- Qualifications are achieved by many HE students, whether autonomous, structured, or neither.
- Correspondence courses are not necessary, though some find them helpful.
- Often a good textbook and free online resources are all that is needed.
- You can cover the course at your own speed – just make sure you make your entries in time.
- No need to take all subjects at once – can take a few each year if you prefer.
- HE students take exams at an exam centre such as a school and are called 'private candidates'
- You deal with the exam centre, not the exam board.
- Finding an exam centre can be difficult, but the HE Exams group can help.
- Please read the wiki and join the group before contacting an exam centre; you are more likely to get a positive response if you are well-informed.
- Most GCSEs involve coursework which can be impossible to organise for private candidates, so HE students usually take IGCSEs (International GCSEs) instead. These are equivalent to GCSEs, are accepted at universities, and have no coursework.
- Parents nearly always have to pay exam entry fees plus an admin fee. Total cost of exam fees per IGCSE are usually £75-£100.
- Pilot scheme in Hampshire where the Local Authority pays fees for up to 5 IGCSEs for HE students in Year 10 or Year 11 meeting certain criteria
- Some subjects not available to private candidates at GCSE/IGCSE, eg music, art, drama. Options are to join a weekend/evening GCSE course at a specialist college, or take alternative qualifications eg music grades, Arts awards etc.
- 14-16 year-olds may be able to attend college part-time for a limited range of qualifications.