Examination Timetable Clashes

A clash occurs when a candidate enters for examinations that are timetabled for the same examination session, i.e., a morning or an afternoon.

The Examination Timetable has been developed with reference to previous entry data to minimise potential clashes, and is published in December of the year prior to examinations. Candidates, subject teachers, form teachers, and deans should be aware of the examination timetable, and where a timetable clash occurs the candidate should be informed of the impact of the clash.

Role of the Principal’s Nominee

Candidates who have examination clashes are listed on the Key Indicators page of the school’s Provider login. The Principal’s Nominee should check examination timetable clashes after each data file submission and advise any candidates of timetable clashes. The examination clash management timeline and sequestering guidelines may assist in the management of clashes.

The Principal’s Nominee must:

- publish an examination timetable at the beginning of the year so candidates can identify clashes which will impact on option choices
- discuss clashes with candidates to see if these can be removed or minimised
- confirm arrangements for 3-way clashes and clashes with digital entries with your School Relationship Manager
- provide each candidate with a letter outlining their timetable clash, how it is to be resolved and their respective responsibilities
- provide the Examination Centre Manager with a list of clash candidates with NZQA-approved arrangements so they can plan appropriately
- check that late entries made after 1 September do not create clashes
- confirm arrangements to accommodate candidates, which impact on examination centre resourcing, by 8 October so that Examination Centre Managers can complete their planning.
- contact their School Relationship Manager, after 8 October, if any additional clashes arise.

Managing examination timetable clashes

Key Principles

The key principles for managing examination clashes are:

- maintaining credible assessment and the integrity of the examinations
- minimising impacts on the exam centre and the school’s management of exams
- meeting student needs.
In accordance with these principles candidates with clashes will sit their examinations at the published time in the following order of priority:

1. NZ Scholarship examinations
2. examinations with technology e.g. those with a listening, speaking or video recording component
3. digital examinations
4. the higher-level examination.

It is assumed that every clash has been considered and checked against the examination timetable by the candidate and staff at the school, and that all understand the implications of the clash on the candidate’s examination timetable. The examination for each standard is designed so it can be completed within one hour.

NZQA will discuss options that allow candidates to complete all of their scheduled examinations. Where a clash requires an extra examination session for a candidate, the time allocated for that session will be based upon the number of standards entered. In agreed circumstances, NZQA may allow an earlier start or a later finish to an examination. Examinations will not be scheduled to start before 7.00 am or to finish after 5.30 pm, including for candidates with Special Assessment Conditions.

NZQA is the final arbiter of all arrangements for examination timetable clashes.

**Resolving Examination Clashes**

Schools are responsible for resolving any two-way examination clashes in line with the above principles. It is advisable to discuss any clashes with your Examination Centre Manager. If there are issues, or the clashes involve digital examinations, refer these to your School Relationship Manager.

NZQA may require extra supervision arrangements to be put in place for a candidate, or the candidate may need to sit an examination outside of the timetabled session. In managing examination clashes, the security of the examination booklets is paramount for maintaining the credibility of external assessment.

NZQA is mindful of its obligations as an employer, and will ensure that the Examination Centre Manager and supervisors are not required to start an examination too early, nor continue an examination too late, for the convenience of the candidate.

**Examples of how clashes could be resolved:**

**If the candidate is entered for a total of three standards (across multiple subjects) within an examination session:** The candidate will be required to sit all examinations within that single examination session. A break may be requested when a candidate transitions to another subject during the examination.

**If the candidate is entered for more than three standards across multiple subjects in an exam session:** The candidate will sit the higher-level examination at the scheduled time and will be sequestered (closely supervised) between the morning and afternoon sessions. They must stay in the examination room for the entire examination morning session but may leave after 45 minutes following the start of the afternoon session.

**If the candidate has 3 examinations timetabled for the same day:** the candidate will be provided with an extra examination session on the day, to accommodate all three examinations (unless overnight sequestering is approved). The timing and duration of each session will be according to the principles outlined above. Sequestering will be required between some sessions.

**If there is a listening or speaking component for an examination, (eg, Languages or Music):** the candidate must sit the examination with the listening or speaking component at the published time, with all other candidates. Note: if this examination makes up part of a three-standard entry for an examination session the candidate will be required to sit all examinations within that single examination session (as above).
The candidate decides not to attend an examination: if the candidate elects not to attend an examination to resolve a clash the school must ensure the candidate confirms this in writing. An Intention not to attend an examination (DOCX, 15KB) form is available for confirming this arrangement with the candidate. This completed form is to be given to your Exam Centre Manager so they are aware that no additional supervision resources are required to manage the candidate.

Clash arrangements that will impact on examination centre resourcing must be resolved by 8 October so that the Examination Centre Manager can complete their examination planning as required by NZQA.

Clash letters for candidates
All candidates with examination clashes are to be provided with letters which detail the special arrangements put in place for managing these.

Two-way clashes
The two-way clash letter template (DOCX, 65KB) is also available from the Key Indicators page of your school’s Provider login. Each candidate must sign a copy of their letter and return it to the Principal’s Nominee before 8 October. Candidates must be given a copy of their completed letter for reference.

Where a clash involves entries in only two or three standards the two-way clash letter - 3 standards template (DOCX, 50KB) should be used.

Principal’s Nominees should discuss arrangements on the management of two-way clashes with their school’s Examination Centre Manager. Any issues should be referred to your School Relationship Manager.

The resolution of any clash involving entries for digital examinations must be confirmed with your School Relationship Manager.

Three-way clashes
Three-way clash arrangements must be confirmed with the School Relationship Manager, who will provide a letter for each candidate, detailing the specific arrangements to manage their clash. Each candidate must sign a copy of their letter and return it to the Principal’s Nominee before 8 October. Candidates must be given a copy of their completed letter for reference and a copy of each three-way clash letter must also be sent to your School Relationship Manager.

The Principal’s Nominee is not to provide a letter to any candidate or approve any resolution of a three-way clash without the prior approval of their School Relationship Manager.

Can a candidate request to sit an examination at a time different from that published?
A candidate may request to sit an examination earlier or later in the day, eg, to be able to participate as a national representative in a sporting or cultural event. The candidate must have been selected by a national body and provide NZQA with appropriate written confirmation of that selection. In all such instances the Principal’s Nominee must contact their School Relationship Manager in writing. If NZQA agrees to such an arrangement, any actual and reasonable costs associated with extra supervision, including sequestering, may be charged.

Self-interest requests will be declined. This includes requests to:

- sit an examination earlier in the day so that a cheaper airfare to an overseas destination may be purchased.
- attend pre-arranged family events.
Clash information for Examination Centre Managers

The Principal’s Nominee should provide the Examination Centre Manager with a list of all candidates with clashes, together with copies of the candidate letters detailing how each clash will be managed. This will enable the Examination Centre Manager to finalise their planning.

Candidate responsibilities

Candidates must understand that failure to follow all procedures for a timetable clash, such as those related to supervision over lunchtime, remaining in the examination room for the duration of any morning examination, being sequestered over lunchtime, and use of the toilet under the direct supervision of a member of the school staff will be regarded as a breach of the Assessment (including Examination) Rules for schools. An investigation will occur and the possible outcome may be loss of results.

Candidates from other schools with examination clashes

When making arrangements for candidates from other schools to sit examinations at your exam centre check for any exam clashes. If there are clashes, contact your School Relationship Manager urgently as this could have implications for you and your staff.

NZ Scholarship exams and overnight sequestering

Where NZ Scholarship candidates have three-way clashes involving NZ Scholarship and NCEA Level 3 (where they are entered in all standards) in a single day (eg, two NZ Scholarship examinations and one NCEA Level 3 or one NZ Scholarship examination and two NCEA Level 3), overnight sequestering might be considered as an option with the approval of both NZQA and the Principal at the candidate’s school. Because NZ Scholarship is a high-stakes, competitive examination with the possibility of significant monetary awards for high-achieving candidates across a number of NZ Scholarship examinations, a three-way clash between NZ Scholarship and NCEA examinations should neither present a barrier to a candidate’s access to these awards nor confer an advantage over other candidates. NZQA requires the completion of the NZ Scholarship examinations on the correct examination day. Should overnight sequestering be approved, the NCEA Level 3 examination must be completed the following morning.

The school’s Principal, with the approval of NZQA, will be responsible for the secure, overnight sequestering of any candidate. Any costs relating to overnight sequestering will be the responsibility of the candidate.

Note: There is no overnight sequestering of candidates for NCEA only, at any level, because of logistical constraints and equity considerations. Overnight sequestering may only be approved for clashes between NZ Scholarship and NCEA Level 3 subjects.

Will a candidate with a clash be required to pay for supervision or sequestering?

When a candidate has elected to sit an examination at a time different from that published, and NZQA has agreed, any actual and reasonable costs associated with extra supervision, including sequestering, may be charged.