

A guide to organising examinations staff network meetings

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Purpose of this document

As an examination officer it is important that you get the chance to meet other exams officers in your area. The Department for Education (DfE) would encourage you to arrange these meetings to share good practice and to gather information. Many small networks already exist and it is beneficial to secure attendance from key representatives such as awarding bodies, Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), and the Examination Officers' Association (EOA). Such meetings would provide the opportunity for a two-way exchange of information and concerns.

These meetings will need to be organised locally by exams officers themselves. If you are thinking of starting or are planning on maintaining a local network meeting we have provided some handy tips within the next few pages to help get you started.

The benefits of running a local network meeting

There are many benefits to running local network meetings. These include:

- Providing the platform for meeting other exams officers in your area
- Allowing the sharing of good practice
- Allowing delegates to voice concerns or queries where other exams officers may be able to support or provide advice
- Providing a forum for the sharing of new information

Organisers will need to

Firstly you should identify whether there is already a local network meeting. The EOA website contains details of some local meetings:

<http://www.examofficers.org.uk/component/content/article/1-latest-eoa-news/400-examinations-staff-network-meetings>. It is also a good idea to check that your local authority isn't already running meetings.

If there are no meetings in your area, you will need to organise your own in a convenient location to allow as many exams officers to attend as possible, remembering these two key points:

- The meetings will need to be coordinated centrally to avoid overlap between smaller group meetings and awarding body network meetings which are regularly run by [AQA](#) and [Edexcel](#) for example.
- The meetings should ideally be low/no cost for those attending, with only their travel costs to the venue to pay

In addition to this you will need to arrange the following:

1. Arrange a venue

You will need to organise a venue (for example your own or a school or college) which is willing to host the meeting free of charge and to also provide some light refreshments (tea and biscuits or a light sandwich lunch depending on the length of the meeting). The likelihood is that there will be no budget

available for these meetings, so don't be afraid to ask delegates to bring along their own lunch rather than run the risk of not being able to host a meeting.

Some of the key points you need to think about when looking for a suitable venue are:

- Is the venue accessible (no more than 10 minutes) walking distance from major public transport station?
- Are directions to the venue downloadable from a website?
- Are there sufficient car parking spaces?
- Does the venue have a suitably sized room to hold all delegates?
- Does the venue have the appropriate equipment required (that is laptop, projector, screen?)
- Check accessibility to the venue for all delegates

DfE has created a checklist you can use when sourcing your venues to ensure that all the basic venue requirements are being met. See appendix 1. *Please note not all of these requirements need to be met for a local exams officers meeting; this is purely for reference.*

2. Establish the purpose of your meeting

Prior to organising the agenda for the meeting you will need to establish its purpose. Is it going to be a small group of exams officers gathering together to share good practice, or are you planning to run a larger half day meeting with the possibility of external presenters coming along to provide you with key updates and information?

If you want to invite presenters we suggest you contact the following bodies:

- Awarding body representatives (AQA, Edexcel, OCR, WJEC)
- The JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications)
- The EOA (Examination Officers' Association)
- MIS provider
- Local further education colleges
- Local authority representatives
- SENCOs

In order to invite a representative from the organisations above we suggest you use their website to obtain the necessary contact details.

EOA

The EOA has a dedicated area on its website for exams officers' network meetings, where they also provide free support for members. You can view this by [selecting this link](#).

Alternatively, you can email them directly at info@examsofficers.org.uk or use alternative contact details on the [EOA website](#).

3. Prepare an agenda

Once you know which presenters (if any) will be attending you will need to prepare an agenda. Whether the meeting is for a couple of hours or a whole day, it is essential that it is structured and runs to time. This will also allow yourselves and presenters to carefully prepare your presentations to ensure that all of the key information is provided within that slot.

The agenda should address local and national concerns and issues, as well as allow time for updates and information sharing.

Don't forget that agendas are seasonal and the topics will change depending on what time of the year you are running your meeting.

An example agenda for a morning meeting with numerous awarding bodies could be as follows:

Time	Topic
9.00 am	Welcome and update
9.20	Sharing good practice/concerns
9.40	Access arrangements (AQA)
10.00	Entries (Edexcel)
10.20	Break
10.40	Timetabling
11.00	Invigilation
11.20	Hot topics (group discussion)
11.40	Question time
12.00	Finish

4. Promote the meeting around your local area

As the meeting organiser you will need to promote the meeting in a wide area around your proposed venue/location to encourage as many other exams officers as possible to attend.

Ways in which you could do this would be:

- Email your colleagues from local centres
- Check your local directory for nearby centres
- EDUbase
- Place a message on an EOA forum promoting the meeting within your area
- Send a letter addressed directly to exams officers at other centres within the area inviting them to contact you and attend the meeting
- Local area prospectus

5. Invite delegates

As well as promoting the meeting around your local authority you will also want to contact exams officers directly to inform them of the meeting taking place. Below you will see an example invitational email you may wish to use as a template for a small group of exams officers meeting to share good practice and information:

Dear colleagues,

I would like to invite you to attend a local exam's officers' network meeting on the [insert date] to be held at [insert location].

This meeting has been arranged to allow local exams officers to gather together to build up our local network of support, and to allow us to share good practice and information.

Kind regards,

Below you will see an example invitational email you may wish to use as a template should you be running a meeting that external presenters are attending.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to invite you to attend a local exams officers' network meeting on the [insert date] to be held at [insert location].

This meeting has been arranged for exams officers to gather together to network with other exams officers within our area to share good practice and to gather/share information. Many small networks already exist but we have managed to arrange a larger meeting while also securing some representatives from awarding bodies, JCQ, and the EOA to come along and present for us. This meeting will provide the opportunity for a two-way exchange of information and concerns between us and many important educational organisations.

We are hoping the following organisations will be represented at this event:

- *[list presenters/organisations here]*

This is the suggested agenda for the day:

- *[insert agenda here]*

Should you wish to attend this event, please let me know by return email?

In the meantime if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

As well as inviting delegates you will also need to send them confirmations of their place once they have expressed an interest in attending. You should also send a reminder a few days prior to the meeting taking place. A useful tip is to assume everyone is attending and that if they are not, request in your email that they contact you directly. This will help you avoid spending your valuable time chasing delegates to ensure they are attending.

6. Budget and cost

The aim is to keep costs to a minimum, with any printing and advertising done through local organisations and your own centres, using 'freebies' wherever possible. The costs for refreshments will have to be negotiated between the local organiser or, failing that, arrange to bring a packed lunch!

7. Keeping delegates up to date

Once the meeting has been organised and you know which presenters and delegates will be attending, you need to ensure that everyone has the most up to date information on the date itself (e.g. venue, location, date, timings, directions to the venue, presenters, the agenda).

For an example email on the above, please see appendix 2. Please note that this is a detailed email which would only be used if external presenters were attending. Should you only be running a small local network meeting between five or six exams officers then a short to the point personal email would suffice.

8. Network meeting checklist

	Task	Responsibility	Notes	Date	Time	Complete
Venue liaison	Meet with your colleagues and assign each person a set of the following tasks	Chair				
	Select a suitable date and location for your meeting					
	Find and source a suitable venue					
	Confirm details of venue with the rest of the colleagues					
	Send agenda timings to venue					
	Send any special needs/dietary requirements to venue					
	Confirm final numbers with venue					
	Request a copy of final function sheet, check all details and amend as necessary, if using a contracted venue					
	Set up meeting room, set, staging and audio visual		Including testing all audio visual equipment and sound check			
	Set up registration desk, familiarise yourself with the format of the day, agenda, timings etc		To include delegate badges and letters			
Invites	Send invitational email out to other exams officers specifying date, location, venue and other important details					
	Collate delegate responses/attendance over a two working week period					
	Send reminder invitation email (to include a copy of the day's agenda)		5 days before your meeting			
	Liaise with EOA to secure external presenters for your network meeting					
	Send follow up email, and copies of presentations following the meeting					

Delegate management	Create delegate list					
	Turn delegate list into badge list					
	Produce delegate badges		4 days before your meeting			
	Put notes on badges for special dietary requirements		5 days before your meeting			
	Check stationery box has all necessary supplies - pens, extra badges, letters, post it notes, stapler, scissors, cellootape, paper clips etc					
	Ensure Powerpoint presentations, agendas, delegate lists are saved on a USB					
	Ensure that extras are printed of delegate lists, agendas and list of who is on which table					
Onsite	Set up meeting room, set, staging and audio visual		Including testing all audio visual equipment and sound check			
	Set up delegate registration desk, familiarise yourself with the format of the day, agenda, timings etc		To include delegate badges			
	Check all audio visual equipment and erect table numbers					
	Ensure refreshments are laid out					
	Ensure water, pads and pens are on tables					
	Doors open'					
	Welcome all delegates (Hand out badges, indicate cloakroom and toilets and direct delegates to refreshment area)					
	Manage delegate registration					
	Guide delegates to the main room					
	Manage all audio visual throughout the day					
	Main session to start					
	Meeting finishes					
	Tidy up the meeting room removing any sensitive information and debrief when guests have departed					

9. Roles and responsibilities

As the lead exams officer organising the network meeting, you shouldn't feel you have to do all of the hard work yourself. We would strongly suggest you ask other exams officers in the area to help with the workload and split it down into sections. For example;

- Person 1 – Meeting organiser (venue liaison, delegate management, arrange external presenters and agenda)
- Person 2 – Assist person 1
- Person 3 – Chair the network meeting
- Person 4 – Scribe the meeting

If you don't have three helpers then don't panic; just remember that you will need to allow yourself more time to carry out all of the required tasks on top of your normal day to day job.

10. Hints and tips

1. During your network meeting we suggest that you share all of your local contact details and assign a person to ensure that all of these details are logged centrally. These details should be regularly updated to make sure that any information about those exams officers leaving their role is captured, along with the contact details of the new exams officer taking over.

2. During your network meeting you should allow time within the agenda to plan and pick a suitable date for the next meeting, asking delegates to provide venue space or whether they have some time to help with the organising.

3. Make sure you regularly check awarding body and other stakeholder websites for updates and hot topics which can be used as agenda items and areas for discussion at your meetings.

4. We suggest that you always have a copy of the latest [induction training slides](#) available at your network meeting. These are invaluable for helping to resolve queries, and it may be that you have a new to role exams officer in your meeting who would benefit from being pointed in the right direction to this information by a more experienced exams officer.

Appendix 1 - Standard checklist for sourcing venues

		Yes	No	Notes
Location	Is the venue in or on the outskirts of a major town/city close to transport links?			
	Is the venue accessible (no more than 10 minutes) walking distance from major public transport station?			
	Is the venue well sign-posted?			
Venue and parking	Are directions to the venue downloadable from the website?			
	Are the directions to venue easy to follow?			
	Is the entrance clearly signed and accessible to all?			
	Is Reception either on ground floor or easily accessible with ramp/lift?			
	Are hearing enhancement systems in place throughout venue?			
	Does the venue have appropriate security measures in place (ie CCTV)			
	Are there sufficient car parking spaces?			
	Is car parking less than a 5 minute walk from conference room?			
	Is overnight accommodation available at the venue, and if so, how many does it sleep?			
	What hotels are located nearby?			
Catering	Are sample menus available?			
	Can all dietary requirements be met (i.e. Halal, Kosher, Vegetarian, Vegan), and will all food be clearly labelled with ingredients?			
	Are there separate arrangements for breaks and lunch?			
	Are there seating arrangements for lunch?			
	Refreshments and lunch must be under cover and located within two minutes of the conference hall and breakout rooms.			
Meeting facilities	Are the conference facilities fully accessible, including hearing loop, ramps etc?			
	Is there space for a registration desk outside the conference room?			
	Is there a secure area for coats/luggage?			
	Are all rooms in use securable during breaks?			
	Are heating/lighting adjustable in all meeting areas?			
	Are toilets easily accessible from all meeting areas?			
	Is there space for a stage and required delegate numbers?			
	Is there natural daylight in the room and blinds?			
	Are fire procedures available?			
	Is there a designated conference manager on site?			
	Does the venue have appropriate audio and sound equipment?			
	Can the venue accommodate various seating styles, (cabaret, lecture) for the stated number of delegates?			
Is there a business centre available to photocopy materials or send emails?				

Appendix 2 – Example email to presenters

Dear all

I am writing to you with further details about the forthcoming countywide exams officers' meeting on 6 July. You have responded to previous emails from me saying you hope to be able to attend and present on behalf of your organisations at these events.

Wednesday, 6 July

Timings: 09:00 start and finish by 12 noon

Venue: DfE, 53 – 55 Butts Road , telephone number 01234 223344.

The venue has limited free parking spaces and Coventry Station is within 15 minutes.

I am hoping the following organisations will be represented at this meeting:

AQA, [insert name of presenter]

Edexcel, [insert name of presenter]

Exams Officers' Association, [insert name of presenter]

JCQ, [insert name of presenter]

OCR, [insert name of presenter]

WJEC, [insert name of presenter]

This is my suggested agenda/timings for both events:

09:00 Welcome and updates

09:20 AQA

09:40 OCR

10:00 EOA

10:20 Break

10:40 WJEC

11:00 Edexcel

11:20 JCQ

11:40 Time for questions

12.00 Finish

You therefore have about 20 minutes each to present on a topic of your choice. If you would like me to gather any questions for you in advance of the meeting to use for your presentation, please let me know. If not I will explain to the delegates that there will be an opportunity for questions to speakers during the coffee break and at that the end of meeting but not during presentations.

If you have any queries, or are no longer able to attend, please let me know by [insert date].

Kind regards,

[Name]

[Job Title]

[Contact telephone number]

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