

How we timetable our exams

Video transcript

Every year over a million learners from 10,000 schools across 160 countries take Cambridge exams. All these exams must be carefully timetabled.

Cambridge International produce seven timetables for each of the June and November exam series.

We allocate each country to one of six administrative zones. We publish a timetable for each administrative zone and one for the UK. Having a timetable for each administrative zone helps us ensure the security and integrity of our exams.

It takes about nine months to create our timetables. Feedback from our schools, regional teams and assessment experts has helped us to develop some useful guidelines which we try to consider when creating our timetables.

We always consider major national and international holidays although it is not always possible to work around all of these.

We consider the number of students taking each exam.

We schedule English and Maths syllabuses as early in each exam series as possible. Lots of students will take these exams so this is to give as much time as possible for marking those papers.

We try to avoid setting science practical exams on consecutive weekdays, so schools have time to prepare, and to clean up.

We carefully consider the impact on students, for example, we try to avoid timetabling Maths and English for the same qualification on the same day, or more than one science syllabus for the same qualification. We also avoid setting papers together that would add up to more than six hours of exams a day.

It's vital that all our timetables meet our security regulations.

We design them so that all the candidates across the world taking the same exam are in the exam or under supervision at the same time. This means students can't access or share exam material until everyone has finished. This is the Key Time rule.

Each timetable is divided into sessions. This is the period in the day when the exams takes place, which is either in the morning, afternoon or, for a limited number of exams, in the evening.

Each country has a Key Time for the morning and afternoon timetable session. There is also an evening session Key Time for countries in administrative zones 4 and 5.

After we've taken all these factors into account, we publish a provisional timetable on our secure online tool for exams officers CIE Direct. We publish the provisional timetable at the end of May for the following year's June exam series and at the end of October for the following year's November exam series. Over a four-week period, schools can review the timetable and make comments. It's very important for schools to tell us about any potential problems at this stage.

Although it's not always possible to make changes to the timetable, we review all the comments and make amendments if we possibly can.

The final timetable is published on our website and sent directly to schools in the *Cambridge Exams Officers eNewsletter* about six months before the start of the exam series so that schools can then make their own timetables. It's the school's responsibility to inform all learners of the date, time and location of their exams.

Very occasionally we might have to change a final timetable after it's been published. If this happens, we let schools know in the *Cambridge Exams Officer eNewsletter* so they can inform students of the revised date.

If a school has a timetable clash with another of our subjects, with other exam boards, or in the event of a school closure, we have clear guidance on what to do. Schools can find this in the *Cambridge Handbook*.

View our latest timetable on our website: www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables