



Standards
& Testing
Agency

Dispatch of exam scripts guide

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Introduction

This guide provides information for exam centres who are using the Standards and Testing Agency's yellow label service to dispatch their exam scripts for marking.

The yellow label service offers a high level of security for pre-arranged collections from exam centres. The service covers collections from schools, colleges and pupil referral units (PRUs) in England. Establishments in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Isles, the Isle of Man, British Forces Post Offices (BFPO) and international centres are not in scope.

There are also additional dispatch points at Parcelforce Worldwide depots and Parcelforce Express Services offices (a post office that accepts Parcelforce Worldwide packages).

Booking collections

Scheduled collections

Your centre will have daily scheduled collections if you have timetabled exams on 3 or more days during any week in the summer exam series (May to June). Parcelforce Worldwide will contact you before the start of the summer exam series to arrange a mutually convenient 2 to 3 hour time window to collect your exam scripts. This will be tailored to your centre's closing time and Parcelforce Worldwide schedules.

A Parcelforce Worldwide driver will visit your centre every day during the agreed time window. If the last exam in your centre finishes before the end of the series and you no longer need daily collections, please inform your driver.

If your centre has early exams, externally marked controlled assessments or coursework that needs to be dispatched before the main exam series, contact Parcelforce Worldwide to arrange an ad hoc collection, even if your centre normally has scheduled collections.

Functional skills

On-demand functional skills assessments, and those booked for a 5-day test window, will not count towards your scheduled collections. If you do not already have scheduled collections, book an ad hoc collection to dispatch functional skills exam scripts.

Ad hoc collections

If you have fewer than 3 timetabled exam days every week during the summer exam series (May to June) or any other exam series throughout the year, contact the Parcelforce Worldwide exams helpdesk to arrange your ad hoc collections, using the [Parcelforce Worldwide website](#) or telephone 0344 561 7998.

Collections can be arranged up to 14 days before your first exam and need to be booked at least 24 hours in advance. You will be given a booking reference number for each ad hoc collection, which you should note on the dispatch log for your reference.

Standardisation

Occasionally, your awarding organisation may need you to dispatch a sample of exam scripts for a standardisation meeting, using a courier other than Parcelforce Worldwide. The awarding organisation will take responsibility for the exam scripts. You should follow the awarding organisation's instructions.

Labelling

You must only use the most recent pre-addressed yellow labels supplied by your awarding organisations. The labels are unique to each exam and contain important information to enable safe delivery and tracking of each package.

Pearson has an integrated attendance register and examiner address label. The other awarding organisations have separate examiner address labels and attendance registers.

Receipt and storage of labels

Awarding organisations will send pre-addressed yellow labels for each exam. These labels should be stored safely and in exam date order.

You will be sent labels according to the number of candidates entered for an exam. Use only one pre-addressed yellow label per package, even if there are a number of packages being sent to the same address. Each label has a unique barcode, so using more than one label on a package will compromise the track-and-trace system.

If you opt to receive labels by email, you may not receive your allocation until the day of the exam. Please see the awarding organisation's website if you need further clarification.

Replacement labels

If your pre-addressed yellow labels have not arrived when expected or get lost or damaged, contact the relevant awarding organisation helpdesk and ask for replacement labels.

Your awarding organisation may send replacement labels by post. However, they may fax or email them to you so you can print them yourself. Some awarding organisations will provide blank yellow stationery for printing on. If your awarding organisation does not, print the labels on yellow paper where possible.

Awarding organisations try to avoid making last minute changes to labels but sometimes this is unavoidable, for example, if an examiner has changed or moved, or if your centre has made late entries. You should always check to see if you have received replacement labels before dispatching exam scripts.

Make sure you are using the correct labels by checking the 'label printed' date and destroy any old labels.

Packaging exam scripts

Get exam scripts ready for collection as soon as possible after the exam.

Always use the large plastic envelopes provided by the awarding organisations. Contact the relevant awarding organisation if you need more.

Do not pack scripts into paper-based envelopes, as these are more prone to damage during transit. Parcelforce Worldwide retains the right to reject scripts in paper envelopes at the point of collection.

Check that you have included every exam script or CD/memory stick for the exam. Include the top copy of the attendance register, placed at the top of the pile of exam scripts. If applicable, include any other documents requested by the awarding organisations. Make sure the plastic envelopes are securely sealed and not damaged in any way before dispatch.

Stick the whole yellow label firmly to the largest face of the package. Make sure it is crease-free and the bar codes are not distorted. Use clear tape or glue to fix labels that have been faxed, or emailed and printed on plain paper.

Do not use string to secure packages as it obscures the bar codes on the pre-addressed yellow labels and can cause delay or loss of exam scripts. Clear tape or glue can be used to secure packages.

Do not overfill packages. Never attach 2 packages together as they can easily become separated and get lost. If you have too many exam scripts to fit in one large plastic envelope, you will be sent extra labels so that you can split the exam scripts into separate packages. If you require additional pre-addressed yellow labels, you can request these from the awarding organisation.

You must never use the standard Royal Mail postal system for dispatching exam scripts as there is no way of ensuring their safe delivery or tracking them.

Small packages and storage devices

CDs, memory sticks and packages containing only a few exam scripts are significantly more likely to go missing or be damaged in transit. Some awarding organisations use bubble wrap, jiffy bags or cardboard when dispatching materials and exam papers to centres. Where possible, please reuse this packaging to protect and bulk out small packages before sealing them in one of the large plastic envelopes.

Please clearly label CDs and memory sticks to ensure they can be redirected in the event of loss. Memory sticks should be placed inside an envelope in the large plastic envelope to prevent them falling through any holes.

Managing collections

Ensure packages are ready to collect at the agreed pick-up point at the beginning of your collection time window. Make sure that a nominated person is available to give the packages to the driver.

Always make sure that packages are stored securely until your driver arrives. This could be in a safe or in a secure locked cupboard in an office that is occupied at all times.

The dispatch log

The dispatch log is your proof of dispatch for all exam script packages. Completed copies should be stored safely.

Use a new dispatch log for each day you have collections. Fill in the details at the top, including your booking reference number if you have ad hoc collections. Record the consignment number, exam date and paper number for the label you are using. Tick the appropriate column if you are only sending a blank attendance register. Make sure your driver signs the dispatch log to show proof of dispatch. Complete the dispatch log before your driver is due to arrive whenever possible.

Missed collections

Exam scripts should be dispatched on the day of the exam. If this is not possible, ensure the exam scripts are stored securely overnight.

Contact the Parcelforce Worldwide exams helpdesk on 0344 561 7998 to let them know the collection was missed and to rearrange collection for the following working day.

Alternatively, you can take exam scripts to a [Parcelforce Express Services office](#) or a [Parcelforce Worldwide depot](#).

Centres with multiple sites

Parcelforce Worldwide can only collect from sites with a registered National Centre Number (NCN) through which your entries will have been made.

Alternative sites that have entries during the exam series will need to arrange for packages of unmarked exam scripts to be taken to the registered address for collection.

Transferred candidates

Your centre may be hosting a candidate who was originally entered for the exam by another centre. When this happens, the awarding organisation will send pre-addressed yellow labels and a letter confirming the arrangements you should make to dispatch your exam scripts.

Managing collections before a half-term holiday

Scripts should be dispatched on the day of the exam or the following working day at the latest, in accordance with [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\) regulations](#). If you are holding exams on the Friday before the half-term holiday, have as many of your packages as possible ready for collection at the usual time.

If it is not possible to dispatch all of your unmarked exam scripts on the Friday, you should do one of the following:

- Take any remaining packages to a Parcelforce Express Services office that accepts Parcelforce Worldwide packages on the Friday before half term, or on the next working day and no later than the Tuesday. Check the time the Parcelforce Express Services office closes and bring your dispatch log to be stamped.
- Take your packages to your nearest Parcelforce Worldwide depot before 7pm on Friday or on the next working day and no later than the Tuesday.
- Book a Parcelforce Worldwide collection for the first working day of the next half term (this will usually be the Tuesday following the bank holiday Monday). Arrange for a responsible colleague to be in your centre to give the exam script packages to the driver. You will need to contact Parcelforce Worldwide to arrange this even if you have scheduled collections, as your driver will not usually visit your centre during the half-term holiday.

Ensuring the service runs smoothly

Contingency planning

If there is extremely adverse weather, or a major event that prevents a Parcelforce Worldwide driver from collecting scripts from your centre during an exam series, please follow the advice below.

In the event of widespread disruption, Ofqual, awarding organisations and government departments responsible for education have an agreed joint exam contingency plan for the exam system to ensure consistency of response. This is available on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Ad hoc centres

Ensure you have all, or as many as possible, of your packages ready for collection from your centre before the forecasted weather or major event disrupts collections. If it is not possible to dispatch all of your unmarked scripts by then, and if it is safe to do so, please follow option 1, 2, or 3.

1. Take any remaining packages to a [Parcelforce Express Services Office](#). Check the opening times for the Parcelforce Express Services Office and do not forget to take your exam dispatch log to be stamped. If you are unsure about this procedure call Parcelforce Worldwide on 0344 561 7998.
2. Take your packages to your nearest [Parcelforce Worldwide depot](#) before 7pm or on the next available working day. Please also take your exam dispatch log to be stamped.
3. Book another ad hoc collection for an alternative date (this is usually the first working day available). Please contact Parcelforce Worldwide in the normal way.

Scheduled centres

Keep your scripts in secure storage as detailed in the [JCQ guidelines](#). No further actions are required, as the Parcelforce Worldwide driver will make collections on the next available working day.

The joint contingency plan on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) describes the responsibilities of exams centres and awarding organisations in the event of disruption.

Briefing other members of staff

If you are an exams office staff member who also teaches, or if you work in a large centre and have other responsibilities that keep you away from your office, ask other members of staff to assist in the process of handing over packages and getting the dispatch log signed. This will avoid delays if you are not available when collections are made.

- Explain the collection process and the expected time of collections to your reception or administration team, and emphasise the need for the packages to be kept secure.
- Nominate one or more colleagues to be responsible for dispatching exam scripts when you are unavailable.
- Ensure colleagues understand how the process works, and which helpdesk to call if they have any questions in your absence.
- Make sure others know where the labels and large plastic envelopes are stored.
- Ensure your centre's reception staff know who to contact when the driver arrives, and what to do if an expected collection is not made.

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