

Exams Handbook

For UK-based students

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www.nec.ac.uk

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Introduction

At NEC, we have worked over the years to build an exam booking service for students who are enrolled with us. As a registered exam centre, we work with a network of partnership exam centres across the UK to give you a seamless experience.

Once you have enrolled with NEC, you will have access to all our detailed partnership exam centre information which includes our exam application form.



Taking your exams: your choices

Book a guaranteed exam place at one of NEC's partnership exam centre

Complete an application form and return it with your photo ID.

NEC's exams team will contact you for exam fee payment. Once you have paid, we will make your exam entry and you are then entered.

You will check your Statement of Entry/timetable to make sure your personal details are correct.

NEC's exams team will send updates and provide support.

Arrange your own transport to get to your exam centre.

You sit your exams.

NEC or our partnership exam centre sends you your results.

Book your own exams

Research local schools and colleges.

Contact your preferred centres and ask if they accept private candidates. Ensure they can complete practical endorsements, oral exams or coursework if applicable.

Check the deadline for exam entry.

Complete and check your form. Ensure you have the correct information for your course.

Pay your exam fee to the centre.

Check the examination confirmation. It should correspond to the course you are studying.

Arrange your transport to get to your exam centre.

Sit your exam.

The exam centre sends you your results.

Exam fees

NEC partner centres

The cost of sitting your exams is in addition to your course fee. This is because the cost varies depending on your choice of exam centre and whether your subject involves oral exams, coursework, spoken language endorsements, or practical science endorsements. You will also need to budget for travel arrangements to attend your exam. Once you have entered for your exam, NEC will be unable to offer any refund of your exam fee, even if you change your mind. For the most up-to-date list of locations, visit our [Exams](#) page.

What is included?

Your exam fee includes:

- The awarding organisation fee, to enter you for the exam
- An administration fee to cover expenses incurred in providing you with NEC's exam entry service
- An administration fee to cover expenses incurred by the centre hosting the examinations.

How much do exams cost?

Exam costs change every year so these prices are purely indicative and the exact amount will be different.

A levels - £500

A level sciences including the practical endorsement - £1500

GCSEs/IGCSEs - £250

If you are a current NEC student, you can access a full list of exam fees on the *Exams and Assessment* page of learn@nec.

If you are booking your own exam centre, bear in mind that they will have their own fee structure which may differ from the NEC offer.

What is included in the fees for practical endorsements?

Practical endorsements offer students the ability to perform scientific assessments in a supervised environment following Health and Safety requirements. Your fee includes insurance, access to all equipment and materials required, all overseen by an appropriately trained supervisor.

Access arrangements

What are special access arrangements?

If you have special educational needs (SEND), a disability or temporary injuries, you may want to book access arrangements.

If you are using our exam booking service, we'll be able to work with you and the exam centre to see what is possible. Our partnership exam centres will do their best to accommodate this where the appropriate evidence has been accepted. Additional fees may apply to cover our administrative costs. NEC will not profit from making these special arrangements.

Special access arrangements may include:

- Supervised rest breaks
- Use of a laptop
- Smaller venue
- Reader/scribe/prompt
- Modified question papers
- Extra time

You can find more information about access arrangements, including the use of Assistive Technology on the [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\) website](#).



When do I need to inform NEC of special access arrangement needs?

Preferably you can let our team know about your special access arrangement needs upon enrolment, and at the latest when you complete your exam application form. You will need to complete the *Access Arrangement Questionnaire* (available on learn@nec) and send this to our exams team along with any evidence and your application form.

What type of evidence is appropriate for special access arrangements?

The evidence required depends on the type of access arrangements you have requested and the reasons it is required. You can find out more about the evidence you may need to provide on the [JCQ website](#).

The sort of evidence you may be asked for include:

- The original signed copy of any previous *Form 8 Assessment* from your school or college, including assessment scores from a specialist assessor, and a copy of the assessor's qualification.
- Reports containing reference to the need of support within learning or tests. These can be from a school, college or private tutor.
- An *Individual Education Plan* (IEP) or equivalent stating the need and use of support during learning.
- An *Education Health and Care Plan* (EHCP) relating to a learning disability or issue.
- A letter showing evidence of a disability or other issue that will affect you during an examination. This letter could be from a SENCo, educational psychologist, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), local authority, occupational health and specialised therapist. A letter from your GP is not acceptable.
- Mock exam papers.
- If you are requesting extra time, you may also need to provide other supporting evidence that shows your way of working requires it.

The awarding organisation is responsible for approving access arrangement requests and your application may not be approved if they feel your evidence does not show need.

For information about SEND (special education needs and disabilities) see your local council's website or visit www.gov.uk.

Entry deadlines

As a guideline, summer exams usually have an entry deadline set by the awarding bodies in February. To give us time to make your booking and ensure we have all of the correct information for you, our exam entry service deadline is in January. Special access arrangements require more tailored organisation so the deadline will be earlier, along with entries that include practical science endorsements. Deadlines can be found on the *Exams and Assessment* page of learn@nec.

Please note that all centres will have their own deadlines, so if you are not booking through NEC, ensure you know what these are.

Non-examination assessments

For some subjects there will be an element of non-examination assessment.

Students studying subjects such as an A level in English literature, English language or history need to complete a non-examination assessment as well as the written papers to achieve the qualification.

When you enter for one of these subjects with NEC, we will be responsible for all aspects of the NEA. This includes supervision, authentication, marking and following all administration requirements specified by the awarding organisations. Your written exams will then either be sat at one of our partner centres, or at another centre of your choice. Further information can be found on learn@nec.

Oral exams (modern foreign languages)

For subjects that include an oral examination as part of the assessment we can guarantee you a place at one of our partnership exam centres.

If you are organising exams yourself, remember to check that the exam centre can deal with all aspects of the assessment, including orals.

Students studying A level French or A level Spanish also have to produce an individual research project (IRP) which will be authenticated by their tutor. This will need to be passed on to their examination centre. Further information can be found within the course information.

Spoken language endorsement

Our GCSE English Language course includes a spoken language endorsement. It will not contribute to your overall GCSE grade, but will be reported separately on your certificate. Although NEC would always advise you to complete the endorsement, it isn't essential to complete it in order to get your GCSE. However, failing to pass the endorsement could affect any future further education applications.

Some of our partner centres are unable to facilitate the endorsement, so you can choose to do this at an alternative partner centre or select our online assessment.



Science practical endorsements

What is a practical endorsement?

Science is a practical subject so you can gain an endorsement to confirm your practical skills. This supplement to the qualification may be taken alongside science A levels and is assessed in laboratories while you are doing the experiments. This is taken separately from the written exam and your A level grade is not affected by taking the practical endorsement.

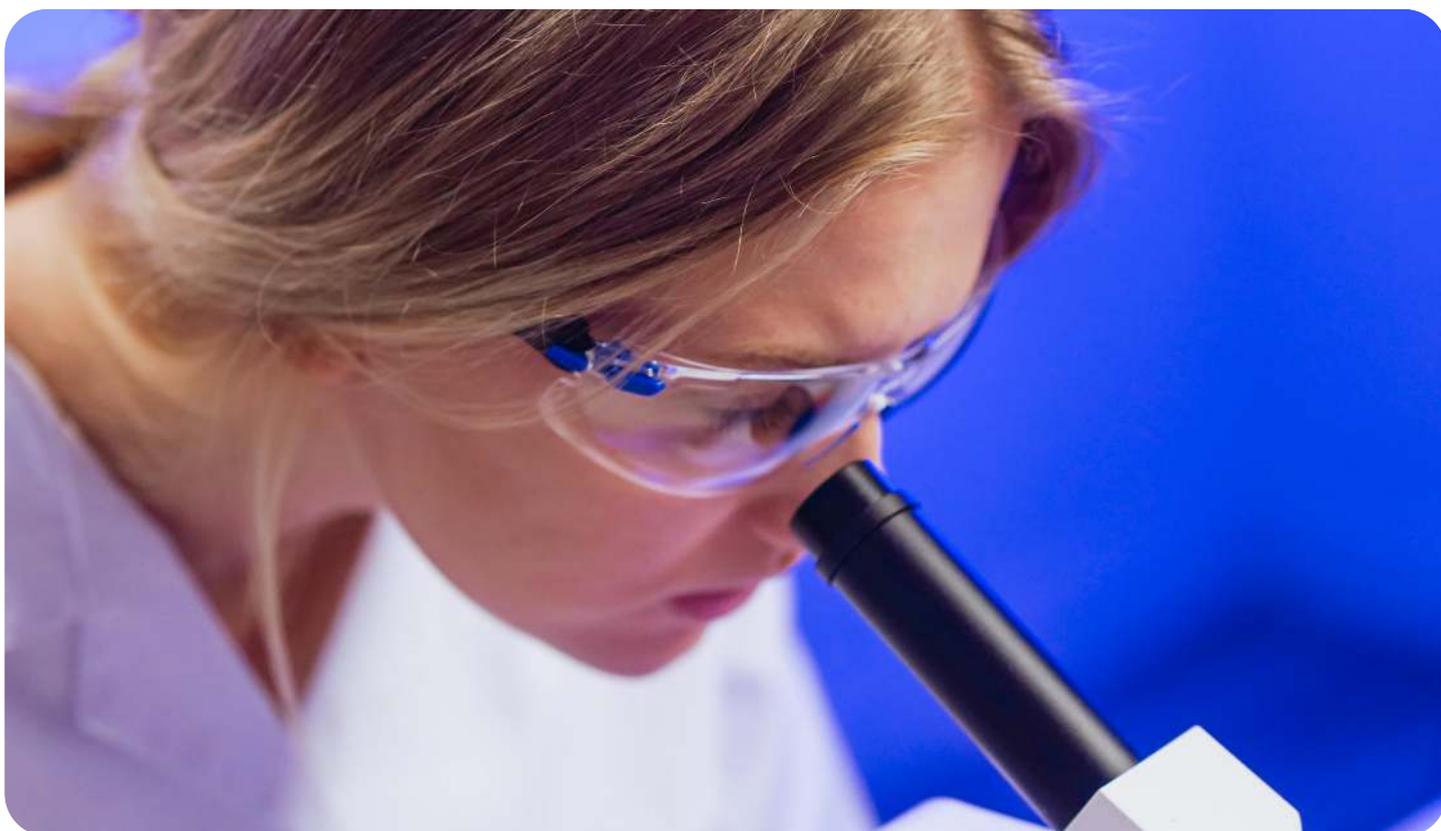
Why does NEC recommend the practical endorsement?

Some universities may specify the practical endorsement as an entry requirement for certain courses. **We advise you to check the entry requirements of any university you are considering prior to booking your exams.**

It is also a way to enhance your understanding of practical science and will make you a better scientist.

Why should I book practical endorsements with NEC?

The practical endorsement is designed to be assessed by teachers during practical classes in schools. NEC's A level science students complete all core practical experiments under laboratory conditions in one of our partnership exam centres. Currently our partnership exam centres in Birmingham, Harrow, Brixton Hill and Oxford accept entries for all three science A levels. Written exams can be taken at any of our partnership exam centres.



How to enter for the practical endorsement

All you need to do is fill out our exam application form and we'll do the rest, making sure you are entered for the correct exams and endorsements and ensuring that we are then able to support you fully.

You can sit the written exams at the same centre, or another NEC partnership exam centre that may be closer to home. However, you should be aware that it is cheaper for you to complete everything at the same centre.

If you are organising your exams yourself, you will need to make sure the exam centre is able to offer you the chance to take the practical endorsement, whether you decide to complete it or not. Be sure to ask them to confirm that your fees include the practical endorsement.

Some partnership exam centres also offer lab familiarisation days. These sessions have been valuable for many and give students a good head start for the official endorsement sessions. The emphasis will be on safety, equipment, mocks and what you can expect on the day. The tutors will be able to advise on the best approach to collecting, analysing and presenting the data. This provides a fantastic opportunity for those that have little or no prior lab experience.

International students

When you enrol with NEC from overseas, you will receive the same high quality course materials, tutor-marked assignments and Student Support as our UK-based students. However, it is important to be aware that not all of the UK awarding organisations hold exams overseas; AQA exams are not available for private candidates to sit outside the UK at all.

If you wish to sit an exam at the end of your course, it's essential that you check that the exam is offered in your country and how much it will cost.

This information can be found on the awarding organisations websites or the British Council website.

For more information about sitting exams as a private international student, download our [Exams Handbook for International Students](#).

Preparing for your exams

Make sure that you are ready for your exam. In addition to your revision, the day before the exam check that you know:

- where the exam is taking place; how to get there and how long it will take you to get there
- the start time
- your candidate number / centre number
- what you are allowed to bring to your exam.

Plan the details of your journey, allowing plenty of time to get to the exam centre to make sure that you arrive at the examination room about 30 minutes early.

Get ready your proof of identity or photo ID, anything you need to take such as pens, pencils, a calculator if you are allowed one, any maths equipment you are permitted to take into the examination room, and a bottle of water to keep you hydrated.

Build in contingency time, in case the exam is running late.

The invigilator will tell you when to start the exam. Sometimes the exam may start a little later than planned. If you have transport booked, children to collect from school, caring responsibilities, or other plans for after the exam, make sure you have allowed extra time in case your exam is running late. You don't want to have to leave before the end.

Be prepared for minimal noise.

Whilst your exam centre will do their best to make sure that the examination room is as quiet as possible, there may be some minimal noise. Invigilators may need to have a short, quiet conversation; other students may need to leave the room for short periods; and there may be external noise that is beyond the control of the exam centre. Don't expect complete silence.

Leave your mobile devices at home.

If a mobile phone, smartwatch or other electronic device such as an iPod or MP3/4 player, even turned off, is found on you during your exam you are likely to receive a penalty and may even be disqualified from the exam and overall qualification. So, make sure that you leave your devices outside the examination room, or even at home.

You must also:

- make sure you have read any notices displayed outside the examination room before you enter
- follow the instructions of the invigilator
- not talk to or attempt to talk to or distract in any way, other candidates once you enter the examination room.

Organising your own exams

If you decide not to use NEC's exam entry service, you can enter privately with a centre which accepts private candidates.

There are a number of exam centres across the UK that accept private candidates but you will need to be resourceful to find your own exam centre. Most people approach their old school or a local school or college where you may know people or have previously studied. Some awarding organisations publish a list of centres that may accept private candidates on their website.

Before you start the process of finding your own exam centre, you will need to be sure that you are very clear about the full title of the course you are studying, the name of the awarding organisation and the specification number. If you are enrolled on a course with NEC, you will find these on your online learning platform learn@nec. If in any doubt, please email exams@nec.ac.uk. You will also need to check the date that the exam is scheduled to take place on the awarding organisation's website.

We recommend that you book your exams at least six months before the exam session starts. Private exam centres will have their own exam entry deadlines that are likely to be earlier than those listed by the awarding organisations. Please note late entries incur additional charges and centres do not have to take late entries.

If you are organising your exams yourself, you should check with your exam centre to see if the fee for the written exams is included with the practical endorsement fee as sometimes these are charged separately.

