

Mythbusting marking

What happens to exam papers in the period between students sitting their exams and Results Day is often misunderstood. See below for the truth behind some of our most common marking myths.

1	Myth: If students write outside the borders of a question paper, it won't get marked.	The truth: Students should write inside the designated border on an exam script so that their paper can be marked quickly and efficiently, as our scanners can only detect what is inside the border. But, if we see that students have written outside the lines, the script will be taken out of online marking and instead marked physically, meaning the student can get all due credit.
2	Myth: If students write in pencil or in a colour other than black, their work won't get marked.	The truth: Students are advised to write in black ink or a black ball-point pen because our scanners pick this up more effectively. But again, if the colour of the writing or even handwriting is at all unclear, the script is taken out of online marking and marked physically.
3	Myth: Additional pages are always marked by senior examiners.	The truth: Some people think that using additional pages is a way to make sure the work is marked by our most senior examiners, but additional pages are almost entirely marked online along with the corresponding scripts and are distributed evenly amongst examiners, who are all subject to the same quality controls.
4	Myth: Examiners start marking without any training.	The truth: Examiners must pass training before they can mark. Listen to our podcast episode on standardisation to find out more. Examiners are also subject to a number of quality assurance processes during marking. These include double marking, where two examiners will mark the same response to make sure there is a consensus, and 'seeds', which already have a pre-agreed mark and exist to ensure marking stays consistent across all examiners.
5	Myth: If a student doesn't write their name on a paper, they will automatically get zero marks.	The truth: Although students should include their full details on exam papers as instructed, we investigate all blank or incomplete details on exam papers. Sometimes students use nicknames or alternative names (our term for these students is 'pirates'), so we also have processes to reconcile these papers with the correct students.
6	Myth: Exam papers get sent to an examiner's house and that examiner will mark the whole script.	The truth: Only a small minority of exam papers will be sent out physically to an examiner. Approximately 85% of our subject components in summer 2019 were marked online – and, in most cases, those scripts are broken down into individual questions and marked by a number of different examiners.

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