Frequently Asked Questions – June 2012 Exam timetables

The dates for June 2012 are at the end of this document.

Who chooses when the exams take place?
JCQ tells us the nine slots when A level Maths papers can be timetabled (JCQ stands for Joint Council for Qualifications – an inter-board body.) This ensures that a candidate will not have a clash between their OCR Maths and Edexcel Physics exams.

Each awarding body chooses where their papers go within these nine slots. The MEI spec has 21 papers to fit into the nine slots.

So how do you decide?
There are two basic major principles that I follow.

- In general try to put AS units before A2 units
- Try to minimise clashes

Why do you have that first principle?
This is a JCQ rule. It is intended to make it possible for Year 12 students to go back into school/college after their AS exams, and to maximise the time for revision for Year 13 students. Of course this does not always work very well for Maths candidates: some students sit Mechanics 1 in Year 12, others in Year 13 so should it be early or late? Further Mathematicians follow a variety of paths through their modules.

How do you minimise clashes?
I have historical data about the number of candidates who sit each possible pair of papers in the same series. For example, in June 2009, 243 candidates sat both Core 4 and Mechanics 3. I try to put papers on at the same time that minimise the total number of clashes.

Where do you start?
I put the seven biggest units (Core 1 – 4, M1, S1, D1) in seven different slots. Then I try to place the remaining units so as to minimise the total number of clashes.

Do you consult anyone?
Yes. When the current structure was set up my predecessor consulted with MEI, who used their newsletter to consult with centres. I have continued to consult with MEI – see for example the May 2010 newsletter.

Each series there is always a consultation period about the provisional exam timetable in all subjects. The problem is that this happens so far in advance that many teachers do not know about it until too late. Usually it takes place in the summer term a year in advance; your Examinations Officer should have details. All feedback is welcome.

What's different about June 2012?
Half term is a week later than usual (because of the Queen's Jubilee) so there are five slots before half term. The usual structure would put Core 4 before half term, which seems undesirable, so I have changed things round. The clashes are still the

same, but the order that the papers are sat has changed. Unfortunately I cannot avoid Year 13 students having an applied paper before half term.

Why is Core 4 always before Core 3?
This is the one concession I make to the needs of the examiners. Because of the comprehension paper, Core 4 is more complex to mark, and the marks for the two papers have to be put together at the end for each candidate. I like to allow more time for Core 4 to be marked than Core 3.

Why does Core 2 have to clash with FP1? We always have a clash in my school.
Obviously there will be clashes and I cannot please everybody. Actually this is the biggest clash that remains – about 1600 students. If the pattern of entries changes I might swap FP1 and Numerical Methods in the future.

Examination Dates June 2012 GCE Mathematics (MEI)			
Day	Date	Session	Papers
Wednesday	16 May 2012	Morning	Core 1 (4751) Differential Equations (4758) Numerical Methods (4776)
Friday	18 May 2012	Morning	Core 2 (4752) Further Pure 1 (4755)
Thursday	24 May 2012	Morning	Statistics 1 (4766) Statistics 4 (4769) [AS Statistics Z1 (G241)]
Thursday	31 May 2012	Morning	Mechanics 3 (4763) Statistics 2 (4767) Decision 1 (4771) [AS Statistics Z2 (G242)]
Friday	1 June 2012	Morning	Mechanics 1 (4761) Mechanics 2 (4762) Mechanics 4 (4764) [AS Statistics Z3 (G243)]
Half term			
Thursday	14 June 2012	Morning	Core 4 (4754) Further Pure 3 (4757)
Thursday	21 June 2012	Afternoon	Core 3 (4753) Further Pure 2 (4756)
Friday	22 June 2012	Afternoon	Statistics 3 (4768) Decision 2 (4772)
Monday	25 June 2012	Afternoon	Decision Computation (4773) Numerical Computation (4777)

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