Key information for candidates and parents/carers

This article highlights a range of exam-related areas and scenarios which may impact candidates and provides information which will ensure that any candidate and parental requests are reasonable and consider the regulations which centres must adhere to.

Candidates and parents/carers should appreciate that JCQ regulations apply across thousands of centres which range in type (e.g. 11-16, 11-18, Further Education colleges, independent schools/colleges, Pupil Referral Units, Special Educational Needs centres, hospitals, prisons etc.).

The head of centre is responsible for ensuring that all centre staff adhere to JCQ regulations in order to maintain the integrity and security of the examination system within their centre.

Please note that the term 'centre' refers to all educational establishments which are delivering qualifications from awarding bodies who are subject to JCQ regulations.

Exam regulations

The head of centre/exams officer at your centre does not set the examination regulations, but they sign an annual declaration which states that they will follow the regulations as set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) on behalf of its member awarding bodies (the eight largest providers of qualifications in the UK).

Failure to adhere to these regulations may be defined as malpractice or maladministration and lead to sanctions which may include a centre being barred from delivering qualifications and examinations.

Candidates and parents/carers must understand that any requests they may make to the centre can only be considered in line with the regulations.

Timetables

The exams officer will notify candidates... of their examination entries and the dates and times of their examinations/ assessments based on the exam entry information which they have received from teaching staff.

In addition to teaching staff, candidates are required to check that their exam timetable reflects the subjects which they have studied and the exams they are expecting to take, including, if applicable, that they have been entered for the correct tier of entry.

Timetable variations/clashes

Unfortunately, some candidates may find that they have two examinations timetabled for the same time, or several examinations taking place during an exam session or exam day. In these instances, the centre may be permitted to vary the timetable/move an exam, but only if:

- Candidates are taking **two or more examinations in a session and the total time is three hours or less**. In this instance, the centre may decide the order of the examinations within the timetabled session and may, at the centre's discretion, give a supervised break of no more than twenty minutes between papers within a session. Any supervised break given must be conducted within the examination room, under formal examination conditions at all times which means that candidates cannot use this time to revise
- Candidates are taking **two or more examinations timetabled for the same session and the total time is more than three hours including approved extra time allowances and/or supervised rest breaks**. In this instance, the centre may conduct one examination in a later or earlier session within the same day, however, the final decision about which examination is to be conducted in a later or earlier session within the same day rests with the centre

If a candidate is taking an exam in the morning which has been timetabled for the afternoon or taking an exam in the afternoon which has been timetabled for the morning, they must be under 'centre supervision' during any break between the morning and afternoon sessions. This means that a member of centre staff, or an invigilator, must always be in the same room as the candidate. The invigilator must not be the subject teacher for the rescheduled examination. Candidates may revise using their own resources whilst under centre supervision between examinations but must not:

- be in possession of an electronic communication/storage device or have access to the internet
- have contact with any candidate who has sat the examination
- be coached by a member of centre staff

Candidates and parents/carers should be aware that failing to abide by the conditions of supervision designed to maintain the security and integrity of the examinations is malpractice.

Exams cannot be moved or the timetable varied if a timetabled examination clashes with any of the following:

- work experience
- a school function or closure

- a field trip
- sporting events below international level
- holidays and weddings
- a candidate's personal arrangements
- school transport arrangements

Rooming

Your school/college has a limited amount of space in which to conduct exams and therefore they may not be able to meet all rooming requests. The head of centre, senior leaders, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) and exams officer are the key decision makers in relation to exam rooming, and they are not obliged to meet any requests which are not detailed in JCQ regulations.

The regulations refer to 'alternative rooming arrangements' – which may include a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs away from the main exam room/hall, and not necessarily an individual room or separate (1:1) invigilation. The SENCo, in consultation with the centre's approved assessor and senior leadership team, is responsible for making decisions relating to candidates who due to special educational needs, persistent and significant difficulties or a temporary injury/impairment may require specific rooming arrangements to access the assessment.

The regulations state that schools/colleges are only required to offer alternative rooming in the following circumstances:

- A candidate with a disability or a long-term medical condition which has a substantial and adverse effect. The disability/condition must have been established within the centre and be known to a Form Tutor, a Head of Year, the SENCo or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities
- A candidate has a serious medical condition such as frequent seizures, Tourette's or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the examination room
- Where this type of rooming arrangement reflects the candidate's normal and current way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations is not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation/alternative rooming within the centre. If this arrangement is offered to a candidate, it will be at the discretion of the head of centre/exams officer and will very likely only be made available to avoid disturbing other candidates

Access arrangements

Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments are based on an individual candidate's needs.

JCQ regulations clearly state that the SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff within a FE college, fully supported by teaching staff and members of the senior leadership team, must lead on the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process within their centre.

It is the responsibility of the centre – not candidates or parents/carers – to make decisions relating to access arrangements for their candidates. Although professionals from other organisations may give advice, they cannot make the decision for the centre as they will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments. It is the responsibility of the SENCo (or equivalent role) to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations.

The SENCo must work with the centre's appointed assessor to ensure a consistent, joined-up process. This will also allow the SENCo to discuss individual candidate cases with the assessor before making final decisions.

The SENCo will need to identify a candidate's need – this may require consultation with heads of year and teaching staff – and then acquire an assessment from the centre's approved assessor.

Centres cannot accept an assessment from an assessor they have not approved.

Once a need has been identified and assessed, even if this meets the JCQ criteria for an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment, this can only be awarded if it reflects the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

Normal way of working is defined as the support given to the candidate in the centre, which includes:

- Support in the classroom (where appropriate);
- Working in small groups for reading and/or writing;
- Support lessons
- Intervention strategies
- Support in internal tests/examinations
- Support in mock examinations.

Failure to comply with JCQ regulations has the potential to constitute malpractice which may impact on the candidate's result(s).

Candidates and parents/carers should also note that centres are required to report anyone who attempts to unfairly influence/place undue pressure upon a centre staff member. As this is deemed as an attempt to undermine the integrity of the examination/assessment, it is defined as malpractice and may lead to one of the following sanctions:

- Disqualification from the unit
- Disqualification from all units in one or more qualifications taken in that series or academic year
- Disqualification from the whole qualification
- Disqualification from all qualifications taken in that series or academic year
- Barred from entering for examinations for a set period of time

Special consideration

Centres are only permitted to submit applications for special consideration where an adverse issue or event has had or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a candidate's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate their normal level of attainment in an assessment. For example, a candidate who has temporarily experienced illness, injury or some other event outside of their control at the time of the assessment.

Any applications submitted to the awarding bodies must be supported by appropriate evidence signed by a member of the senior leadership team.

Centres are not permitted to submit applications for special consideration for trivial cases such as:

- A bird tweeting outside the examination room
- A lorry reversing
- A toilet being flushed
- Doors in a corridor adjacent to the examination room opening and closing
- Very short, momentary noise from, for example, aeroplanes, helicopters, lawn mowers

For circumstances which are accidental (for example, an incorrect question paper was handed to the candidate, or a question paper was defective in some way, such as an incorrectly printed page) the centre will contact the relevant awarding body who may require specialist input to assess and resolve the issue. This may involve the issue being referred to a subject officer or a senior examiner for a subject-specific decision as to how special consideration may be applied. It is possible that such cases may be given special consideration by means other than those detailed above.

The tables below provide additional information relating to criteria and situations where candidates may, or may not, be eligible for special consideration.

Criteria where candidates <u>are</u> eligible for special consideration include:	Criteria where candidates <u>are not</u> eligible for special consideration include:
Temporary illness or accident/injury at the time of the assessment	Long term illness
Bereavement at the time of the assessment (where whole groups are affected, normally only those most closely involved will be eligible)	A bereavement occurring more than 6 months before the assessment, unless it is an anniversary or there are ongoing implications
Domestic crisis arising at the time of the assessment	Domestic inconvenience such as moving house, lack of facilities, taking holidays (including school/exchange visits and field trips) at the time of the assessment
Serious disturbance during an exam	Minor disturbance in the exam by another candidate such as momentary bad behaviour, a mobile phone ringing, or a momentary fire alarm

Criteria where candidates <u>are</u> eligible for special consideration include:
Accidental events at the time of the assessment such as being given the wrong exam paper, being given a defective exam paper or CD, failure of practical equipment, failure of materials to arrive on time
Participation in sporting events, training camps or other events at an international level at the time of the assessment, e.g. Representing their club or country at an international level for sport on the day of an exam
Failure by the centre to implement previously approved access arrangements for that specific exam series

Criteria where candidates <u>are not</u> eligible for special consideration include:
The consequences of committing a crime, taking alcohol or recreational drugs. However, a retrospective application for special consideration may be considered where the charge is later dropped or the candidate is found not guilty.
The consequences of disobeying the centre's internal regulations
The failure of the centre to prepare candidates properly for the exam
Quality of teaching, staff shortages, planned building work or lack of facilities
Misreading the timetable and/or failing to attend the exam at the right time and/or in the right place
Misreading the instructions on the question paper
Making personal arrangements such as a wedding or holiday arrangements on the day of an exam
Submitting no coursework or non-examination assessment at all

Missing all exams and internally assessed components/units
Failure to cover the course because of joining the class partway through
A disability or learning difficulties (diagnosed or undiagnosed) unless the disability or circumstances exacerbate what would otherwise be a minor issue at the time of the assessment, i.e. Difficulties over and above those that previously approved access arrangements would have alleviated
Failure by the centre to process access arrangements by the published deadline

Malpractice

The individuals involved in malpractice may include:

- candidates
- teachers, lecturers, tutors, trainers, assessors or others responsible for the conduct, administration or quality assurance of examinations and assessments including examination officers, invigilators and those facilitating access arrangements (e.g. readers, scribes and practical assistants)
- assessment personnel such as examiners, assessors, moderators or internal and external verifiers
- other third parties (e.g. parents/carers, siblings or friends of the candidate)

Regulations require the head of centre to notify the appropriate awarding body immediately of all alleged, suspected or actual incidents of malpractice.

Examples of candidate malpractice include:

- the alteration or falsification of any results document, including certificates
- a breach of the instructions or advice of an invigilator, supervisor, or the awarding body in relation to the examination or assessment rules and regulations
- the unauthorised use of alternative electronic devices or technology during remote assessment and remote invigilation
- accessing the internet, online materials or AI tools during remote assessment and remote invigilation, where this is not permitted
- failing to abide by the conditions of supervision designed to maintain the security of the examinations or assessments
- collusion: working collaboratively with others, beyond what is permitted
- copying from another candidate (including the use of technology to aid the copying)
- allowing work to be copied, e.g. posting work on social networking sites prior to an examination/assessment
- the deliberate destruction of another candidate's work

- disruptive behaviour in the examination room or during an assessment session (including the use of offensive language)
- failing to report to the centre or awarding body the candidate having unauthorised access to assessment related information or sharing unauthorised assessment related information online
- exchanging, obtaining, receiving, passing on information (or the attempt to) which could be assessment related by means of talking, electronic, written or non-verbal communication
- making a false declaration of authenticity in relation to the authorship of controlled assessment, coursework, non-examination assessment or the contents of a portfolio
- allowing others to assist in the production of controlled assessments, coursework, non- examination assessments, examination responses or assisting others in the production of controlled assessments, coursework, nonexamination assessments or examination responses
- the misuse, or the attempted misuse, of examination and assessment materials and resources (e.g. exemplar materials)
- being in possession of unauthorised confidential information about an examination or assessment
- bringing into the examination room notes in the wrong format (where notes are permitted in examinations) or inappropriately annotated texts (in open book examinations)
- the inclusion of offensive comments, obscenities or drawings; discriminatory language, remarks or drawings directed at an individual or group in scripts, controlled assessments, coursework, non-examination assessments or portfolios
- personation: pretending to be someone else, arranging for another person to take one's place in an examination or an assessment
- plagiarism: unacknowledged copying from, or reproduction of, third party sources or incomplete referencing (including the internet and artificial intelligence (AI) tools)
- theft of another candidate's work
- being in possession (whether used or not) of unauthorised material during an examination or assessment, for example: notes, study guides and personal organisers, own blank paper, calculators (when prohibited), dictionaries (when prohibited), watches, instruments which can capture a digital image, electronic dictionaries (when prohibited), translators, wordlists, glossaries, iPods, mobile phones, AirPods, MP3/4 players, pagers, or other similar electronic devices
- the unauthorised use of a memory stick or similar device where a candidate uses a word processor
- facilitating malpractice on the part of other candidates
- behaving in a manner so as to undermine the integrity of the examination

Candidates should note that watches of any kind are not permitted in the exam room.

Candidates and parents/carers should be aware that attempting to unfairly influence a centre staff member may be defined as malpractice and lead to sanctions as detailed in the *Access Arrangements* section above.

Contingency sessions

The awarding bodies are required to designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations during each summer series.

These sessions will only be invoked by the awarding bodies in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations in the United Kingdom. Contingency sessions are not available for candidates to reschedule their timetabled examinations due to absence for any reason, including illness, or a family event such as a holiday, wedding or funeral.

Contacting the awarding bodies

JCQ instructs centres to advise parents/candidates not to contact awarding bodies/JCQ directly. If contacted, the awarding body/JCQ will normally direct the parent/candidate back to the centre.

Correspondence on any aspect of a candidate's examination or assessment will be conducted between the awarding body and the appropriate member of centre staff.

In exceptional circumstances an awarding body may communicate directly with a parent or candidate. For example, where the parent wishes to make a formal complaint and has exhausted the centre's own complaints process.