

November 2019 blog

This month's blog is written by Jugjit Chima, co-founder of The Exams Office and Head of Training, who considers the risks associated with exams officers acting as invigilators.

Should exams officers act as invigilators?

During October we delivered training to over 1100 new and experienced exams officers. Those new to the role engaged in our [Actions for Autumn](#) training, and one piece of good practice/advice which was offered to over 400 new exams officers was that it is not recommended that they also act as an invigilator on exam days.

Many delegates are surprised to hear this, and often we are asked to provide further clarity on this as it has also been questioned by Heads of centre or SLT.

Firstly, it should be stressed that nowhere in the JCQ regulations does it state that exams officers should/should not act as an invigilator. In addition to this, there are some centres where the staffing structure necessitates that staff engage in several roles – for example, Pupil Referral Units - and therefore, it may be wholly appropriate, and even a necessity, that the exams officer is part of the invigilation team.

This is what the JCQ regulations stipulate regarding who can/cannot invigilate ([Instructions for Conducting Examinations](#), sections 12.3 & 12.4, page 22):

- Invigilators are suitably qualified and experienced adults
- Any relative, friend or peer of a candidate in the examination room must not be the sole invigilator
- Current students at the centre cannot act as invigilators
- A teacher who teaches the subject being examined, or a senior member of teaching staff who has had overall responsibility for the subject department and/or preparing the candidates for the examination cannot act as an invigilator
- Timed Art examinations will normally be invigilated by an Art and Design teacher

However, many centres – e.g. 11-16, 11-18, Colleges etc. – may be adding significant risk to their examination processes if they require their exams officer to be involved as an invigilator during an exam day. To understand this, you need to consider what could occur during any exam day and the consequences of not having your exams officer at hand to deal with these issues.

Below are some scenarios which require immediate action to be taken on an exam day... something which may not be possible for an exams officer to undertake if they are invigilating:

1. A candidate requires an emergency access arrangement at the time of an exam

Who will:

- deal with the candidate?
- assess which access arrangements are required?
- allocate and organise a separate room, if required?
- organise an appropriately trained member of staff to facilitate the access arrangement?

- apply for approval for the arrangement(s) through Access Arrangements Online (AAO)?

2. A candidate arrives for an exam who is clearly unwell or extremely distressed?

Who will:

- keep the candidate calm and comfortable and under centre supervision from the required time if alternative seating, rooming or access arrangements need to be put in place?
- make any change that may be required to the seating plan?
- inform invigilator(s) if the candidate may need to leave the exam room temporarily under supervision?

3. A candidate is absent from an exam

Who will:

- instigate/apply the centre policy for dealing with candidate absence?
- if an absent candidate subsequently arrives late or very late, ensures that they are informed of JCQ regulations?

4. A candidate arrives late for an exam

Who will:

- instigate/apply the centre policy for candidates who arrive after 9.30am for a morning exam and after 2pm for an afternoon exam?
- brief the candidate on any erratum notices and JCQ regulations (e.g. the possession of any unauthorised materials)?
- ensure that invigilators are aware that if the candidate is permitted to sit the exam, then they must be allowed the full time for the exam?

5. A candidate arrives very late for an exam

Who will:

- instigate/apply the centre policy for candidates who arrive more than one hour after the awarding body's published starting time for an exam of more than one hour (after 10am for a morning exam and after 2.30pm for an afternoon exam)?
- inform the parent/carer of the required supervision arrangements where prior notification of a possible late arrival is given to the centre?
- record the time the candidate came under centre supervision, brief the candidate on any erratum notices and JCQ regulations (e.g. the possession of any unauthorised materials) and warn the candidate that the relevant awarding body may not accept their script for marking?

6. A candidate is suspected of or commits malpractice

Who will:

- at the end of the exam, quietly instruct the candidate to remain in the exam room, inform the candidate that a report will be made to the relevant awarding body and warn of the possible penalties an awarding body may apply (which could include disqualification) and allow the candidate the opportunity to provide a written statement?

7. There is a major disruption in the exam room (including emergency evacuation)

Who will:

- (in extreme situations where the exam cannot be restarted) contact the awarding body for guidance?

8. The JCQ Centre inspector arrives

Who will:

- meet and greet the inspector?
- accompany the Inspector throughout the course of the centre visit, including inspection of the centre's secure storage facility?

9. There is a suspected, or actual, issue with the question paper

Who will:

- (where a candidate(s) believes that there is an error or omission on the question paper) verify the error or omission with the relevant subject teacher before reporting the matter to the awarding body?

10. An invigilator informs the centre, at very short notice, that they are unable to invigilate, or they fall ill during an exam

Who will:

- invigilate to ensure that the ratio of invigilators-to-candidates as stipulated by the JCQ is maintained? In this instance, the exams officer could be used as a 'contingency measure' and act as an emergency invigilator... assuming that he/she is fully trained and aware of any changes for the current academic year

In addition to the last scenario, perhaps a better use of an exams officer's time during an exam day is for them to act as the 'roving invigilator'. This a role which is defined by the JCQ as (Instructions for Conducting Examinations, section 13, page 23):

'Where the invigilator additionally acts as a practical assistant, a reader and/or a scribe... the centre must additionally use a 'roving' invigilator.

The 'roving' invigilator will enter the room at regular intervals in order to observe the conducting of the examination, ensuring all relevant rules are being adhered to and supporting the practical assistant/reader and/or scribe in maintaining the integrity of the examination.'

By acting as the roving invigilator, the exams officer not only fulfils this requirement as stipulated by the JCQ, but they can also check upon all exam rooms to ensure that any issues are dealt with quickly and in the correct manner.

The advice that we offer in relation to exams officers acting as invigilators is given as good practice, and although Heads of centres/SLT are within their rights to ignore our recommendation, they should consider the scenarios listed above and who would deal with these if their exams officer was otherwise engaged as an invigilator.

Consideration should also be given to the consequences of issues being dealt with in the incorrect manner, or not dealt with at all. Heads of centre/SLT will also need to consider the impact that malpractice/maladministration may have upon candidates, and the centre's reputation amongst parents/carers, not to mention the possible repercussions from the JCQ and the Awarding Bodies.