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DEALING WITH A SHORTAGE OF INVIGILATORS AHEAD OF THE
SUMMER 2023 EXAMS SERIES

Early indications suggest that, as witnessed ahead of the summer 2022 exam series, many centres will experience issues in recruiting a sufficient number of invigilators to manage the conducting of examinations during the summer 2023 exam series.

Evidence taken from training events delivered by The Exams Office during October reveal that 65% of centres anticipate a shortage of invigilators for the summer 2023 exam series (599 exams officers responded). If this transpires over the coming months, this would be a more severe situation than centres faced in summer 2022, when 58% experienced a lack of invigilators (see [NAEO 2022 exams officer survey](#), from 1359 respondents). It should also be noted that the data from The Exams Office reveals little regional variation, with 60-70% of centres expecting shortages across the country regardless of location.

Although the shortage of invigilators last year was addressed ahead of the start of the exam series, this seems to have come at a cost, with an increase of invigilator malpractice, as centres turned to inexperienced, poorly trained, and perhaps demotivated staff to fill the shortfall. Instances of invigilator malpractice included issues around the granting of extra time to candidates and inaccurate/insufficient information displayed to candidates at the front of the exam room.

The aim for exams officers across the country in the coming months is to avoid similar issues for the summer 2023 exam series. In this article, we consider the actions which centres can take to ensure they have an adequate number of competent and well-trained invigilators ahead of the next summer's exam series who will uphold the integrity and security of external examinations and the assessment process within their centre.

When to recruit

Centres are strongly encouraged to start recruiting invigilators at the earliest opportunity. Vacancies should be advertised and promoted as soon as possible and left open for the remainder of the academic year (unless the necessary number of invigilators are acquired).

In anticipation of the initial recruitment drive failing to deliver the required number of invigilators, further role advertisement/promotional campaigns should be planned for late December/early January, and again around February half term.

At the end of February, The Exams Office will be conducting a national survey to ascertain the situation, and if there is widespread concern amongst centres of a potential lack of invigilators

for the summer series, we will report this to the Department for Education and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

Where to advertise

Centres should utilise the most effective advertising opportunities to recruit invigilators, in particular those which are free to access. These include:

- Centre website – all schools/colleges should utilise the vacancy section of their centre website, including all relevant details such as job description, person specification, remuneration and any other requirements
- School/college newsletters – if centres publish newsletter updates for parents, include details of invigilator vacancies within these, signposting to the centre website for additional information
- Parents' evenings – utilise opportunities such as parents' evenings to promote your invigilator vacancies 'face-to-face' to parents/grandparents/carers
- NAEO Exams Recruitment & Vacancy Map – this tool has been developed to provide centres with an opportunity to advertise their exams-related vacancies at no cost. The map is also promoted by the Department for Education
- Local businesses – advertise in shops, supermarkets and other local businesses within the immediate locality of the centre

Before recruiting individuals from within the local community, centres should be aware that if they recruit any relative, friend or peer of a candidate in the examination room, then these individuals must not be the sole invigilator (see JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations, section 12.6c).

Who to recruit

In addition to any applicants who respond to vacancy advertisements, centres should also consider approaching staff who are associated with the centre and may consider acting as invigilators. These individuals may include:

- Retired or retiring teachers
- Governors
- Part-time centre staff
- Relatives of staff
- Friends/family of current invigilators

Centres will need to inform these – and other individuals appointed to invigilate – that they will need to be trained on the JCQ's *Instructions for conducting examinations*, and that their competence and understanding of these regulations will be rigorously tested.

Reducing the reliance upon invigilators

If a centre anticipates a shortage of invigilators during the summer 2023 exam series then consideration should be given to any measures which may reduce the number of invigilators required by a centre.

The use of technology

Such measures include discussing with the SENCo the possibility of utilising technology with students who require access arrangements. For example, candidates who require a reader could be made familiar with the use of an examination reading pen allowing these candidates to work independently and be accommodated in the main exam room (if using headphones plugged into the reading pen) or with a group of candidates in a smaller room, rather than in a separate room with a human reader which would also include the requirement for an additional invigilator or a roving invigilator.

Likewise, candidates requiring a scribe could be encouraged to use a word processor as their normal way of working during class time which would allow them to use this, rather than a human scribe, during their exams.

Candidate/parent requests for separate invigilation/rooming

Separate invigilation (or sitting the examination outside of the main examination hall/room, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates) within the centre is a permitted access arrangement for those candidates who have a substantial and long-term impairment which has an adverse effect. This must also be their normal way of working within the centre, at the very least during mock examinations and internal tests/assessments.

However, during the summer 2022 exam series over 94% centres (from 571 respondents surveyed during The Exams Office training which took place in October 2022) received requests for separate invigilation from candidates and/or their parents/carers as a consequence of nervousness, low level anxiety or those candidates who were worried about their examination(s). The regulations clearly state that this is not sufficient grounds for the granting of separate invigilation.

Although centres may accommodate rooming requests as they deem appropriate, careful consideration should be given for such a concession on the basis of nervousness, anxiety or worry ahead of an examination as this will add to the number of invigilators required on an exam day. This should be a particular concern for those centres which suspect that they will be experiencing a shortage of invigilators during the summer 2023 exam series.

Contingency planning

Centres should start to consider contingency plans in the event of a failure to recruit sufficient numbers of invigilators. This may include training specific/all centre staff at the earliest available opportunity or identifying reputable organisations who provide invigilators for centres and involving these individuals within your centre's invigilator training programme.

Exams officers should meet with their line manager (who should be a member of the centre's senior leadership team) to regularly update them on the progress made in recruiting invigilators and the measures which will be taken to address any shortage as the summer 2023 exam series approaches.

Conclusion

There is no single action centres can take to resolve a shortage of invigilators ahead of a summer exam series.

If a centre identifies the need for additional invigilators, they should act as early as possible by implementing a strategy which deals with the issue. Advertisements must be placed and

publicised via an effective communication strategy as soon as possible. Centres should also be patient with any recruitment programme, possibly repeating this on several occasions.

Centres should be proactive by approaching and encouraging centre staff – past and present – to join the centre’s invigilation team.

Centres should also be innovative in their approach to attracting potential invigilators by considering the most effective ways in which to attract individuals to invigilate within their centre. This can vary from providing an attractive remuneration package to adding the requirement to invigilate as part of other roles which are advertised within the centre, to approaching local university students who may have completed their studies before the start of the summer exam series.

If an exams officer identifies the need to recruit additional invigilators in the coming months, then they must inform their line manager/senior leader responsible for examinations, and work together to devise a plan/strategy, as it is not for the exams officer alone to deal with the issue of a lack of invigilators within a centre.

The contents of this article were correct at the time of publication (End of October 2022)