

**NOVEMBER 2023****SHOULD AN EXAMS OFFICER ACT AS AN INVIGILATOR DURING AN EXAM SERIES?**

As we approach the November exam series, one of the most frequently asked questions received by The Exams Office in recent weeks is whether an exams officer should act as an invigilator during an exam series.

Firstly, before we consider this question in relation to the wider exams officer community, it is recommended, as part of their professional development that new exams officers complete the relevant invigilator training and consider acting as an invigilator in some examinations. Not only will this develop their knowledge and understanding of JCQ's [Instructions for conducting examinations](#), but it will also give in an insight into the role and responsibilities of the invigilators whom they will be managing.

However, the question of exams officers serving as invigilators on a regular basis during an exam series is more complex and requires considering several factors, including:

- JCQ regulations in relation to exams officers acting as invigilators
- The advice and guidance as provided by The Exams Office and the National Association of Examinations Officers (NAEO, in relation to exams officers acting as invigilators
- Exceptional circumstances under which an exams officer may act as an invigilator
- Situations where it is advantageous for an exams officer to act as an invigilator
- The risks which may be introduced if an exams officer is required to invigilate during an exam day

**JCQ regulations**

The regulations do not stipulate whether an exams officer should, or should not, invigilate within their centre.

The *Instructions for conducting examinations* publication (sections 12.6 and 12.9) state the following in relation to who can/cannot and must/must not invigilate during an examination:

- Invigilators must be 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, a teaching assistant, a tutor or a senior member of centre staff who teaches the subject being examined or a Learning Support Assistant who has supported one or more candidates, cannot act as an invigilator during the examination
- Timed Art examinations will normally be invigilated by an Art and Design teacher

### **The view of The Exams Office and NAO**

The Exams Office and NAO appreciate that the decision over whether an exams officer should or should not act as an invigilator is one which must be made by the head of centre and senior leadership team.

However, The Exams Office and the NAO are in agreement that, unless there are exceptional circumstances, exams officers should not act as invigilators during an examination series. This view has been formed after considering the information detailed later in this article which highlights the role of an exams officer on an exam day, the tasks for which they are responsible, and key aspects of exams administration which would not be completed if an exams officer was required to be present in the exam room for the duration of the examination.

### **Exceptional circumstances**

There may, however, be exceptional circumstances in which it may be acceptable, even necessary, for an exams officer to act as an invigilator.

These include:

- The absence of a scheduled invigilator at short notice
- An 'ad hoc' or standalone examination with only a handful of candidates early in the academic year when it may be less of a logistical challenge, or risk, if the exams officer opted to invigilate
- Within centres with a small number of staff (for example, a Pupil Referral Unit) where it is common for staff to undertake several roles

In some cases, it may be easier for an exams officer to invigilate rather than training one or two colleagues to perform the role, or to update existing invigilators (on any changes to the current *Instructions for conducting examinations* and/or centre-specific arrangements) if an exam is taking place only a few weeks into a new academic year. Indeed, utilising invigilators who are unfamiliar with the current regulations may inadvertently increase the possibility of potential malpractice/maladministration.

### **Roving invigilator**

There may be some form of invigilation (for example, roving invigilation) where it is acceptable, even preferable, for an exams officer to undertake the role. By acting as a roving invigilator, the exams officer will not only be fulfilling a requirement as stipulated by the JCQ (*Instructions for conducting examinations*, section 13), but can use this as an opportunity to check all exam rooms to ensure that any issues can be dealt with effectively and efficiently and observation can confirm if invigilators are displaying competence in their role.

### **A lack of invigilators**

We must also consider the post-pandemic situation which sees a shortage of invigilators in the majority of centres. In such cases, and to protect the integrity and security of the exams within

a centre, there may be no option but for the exams officer to help fill any shortage of invigilators.

### Exam day duties

However, the most compelling case for an exams officer not to be acting as an invigilator is derived from the tasks which an they may be required to perform during an exam day, and the risk to the integrity/security of exams if the exams officer is unable to undertake these tasks.

Below are some of the scenarios which an exams officer may be faced with on an exam day, and the actions which they will need to take (note that the actions listed are examples only and are not an exhaustive list).

Scenario	Actions to be taken by an exams officer
The JCQ Centre Inspector arrives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet and greet the Inspector</li> <li>Accompany the Inspector, answer their questions and present any documentation requested (for example, exam related policies, a record of the content of the training given to invigilators, etc.) throughout the course of the centre visit, including an inspection of the centre's secure storage facility</li> </ul>
There is a suspected/actual issue with the question paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enter the exam room to address any concerns raised by candidates – valid or invalid – when summoned by the invigilator</li> <li>Verify the error or omission with the relevant subject teacher before reporting the matter to the relevant awarding body</li> </ul>
An invigilator informs the centre, at very short notice, that they are unable to invigilate, or they fall ill during an exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ratio of invigilators-to-candidates as stipulated by the JCQ in section 12.6b of <i>Instructions for conducting examinations</i> must be maintained. In this instance, the exams officer could be available as a 'contingency measure' and act as an emergency invigilator... assuming that they are fully trained and aware of any changes to regulations for the current academic year</li> </ul>
There is a major disruption in the exam room before, during or at the end of the examination (including the need for an	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that all rooms are evacuated</li> <li>Deal with any issues when summoned by the invigilator</li> </ul>

emergency evacuation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In extreme situations where the exam cannot be restarted, contact the awarding body for guidance</li> </ul>
A candidate arrives with a temporary injury (e.g. broken arm or leg) and requires an emergency access arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deal with the candidate – address any concerns the candidate may have and assess if the indisposition impacts the candidate's ability to sit the examination</li> <li>• Assess which access arrangement(s) is required</li> <li>• If required, allocate and organise an alternative room</li> <li>• Deploy an appropriately trained member of staff to facilitate the access arrangement and/or to act as the invigilator</li> <li>• If required, apply for approval for the arrangement(s) through <i>Access Arrangements Online</i> (AAO)</li> </ul>
A candidate arrives for an exam feeling unwell or is extremely distressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the candidate calm and comfortable and under centre supervision from the required time if alternative seating, rooming or access arrangement(s) need to be put in place</li> <li>• If required, arrange alternative rooming and access arrangement(s)</li> <li>• Make any change that may be required to the seating arrangements</li> <li>• Inform invigilator(s) if the candidate may need to leave the exam room temporarily under supervision</li> </ul>
A candidate is absent from an exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instigate/apply the centre policy for dealing with candidate absence</li> <li>• Contact the candidate to ensure that they arrive at the earliest possible opportunity (if this is the centre's policy)</li> </ul>
A candidate arrives late for an exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instigate/apply the centre's policy for candidates who arrive late for an examination</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief the candidate on any erratum notice(s) and JCQ regulations (e.g. highlight the contents of the <i>Unauthorised items</i> and <i>Warning to candidates</i> posters)</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Ensure that a trained invigilator is available to allow the candidate the full working time to complete their examination, as they will continue after the normal finishing time</li> </ul>
A candidate arrives very late for an exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instigate/apply the centre's 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)</li> <li>• Inform the parent/carer of the required supervision arrangements where prior notification of a possible late arrival is given to the centre</li> <li>• Record the time the candidate came under centre supervision, brief the candidate on any erratum notice(s) and JCQ regulations (e.g., the possession of any unauthorised items) and warn the candidate that the relevant awarding body may not accept their script for marking</li> </ul>
A candidate is suspected of or commits malpractice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deal with any instances of suspected/actual malpractice during the examination when summoned by the invigilator</li> <li>• At the end of the exam, quietly instruct the candidate(s) to remain in the exam room, inform the candidate(s) 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</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

The advice offered in this article is provided as good practice, and although heads of centres/senior leaders are well within their rights to ignore these recommendations, they

should only do so after considering the scenarios listed above and ensuring that another individual (who is suitably trained in the JCQ regulations) is available to deal with any issues if the exams officer is otherwise engaged as an invigilator.

If an exams officer is to act as an invigilator on an exam day, particular consideration should be given to how instances of malpractice/maladministration will be dealt, and that these are in line with JCQ regulations. If regulations are not adhered to, the head of centre must consider the impact this may have upon candidates, and the centre's reputation amongst parents/carers, not to mention the possible repercussions from the JCQ and the relevant awarding body.

In summary, the priorities for every centre during an exam series are to ensure the integrity and security of the examination process, prevent malpractice, eliminate any risk within the examination process and ensure the best possible conditions for their candidates to enable them to perform to the best of their ability within the regulations. If this cannot be guaranteed as a consequence of the exams officer being required to act as an invigilator, then the answer is clear – your exams officer should not invigilate during an exam series.

*The contents of this article were correct at the time of publication (October 2023)*