

OCTOBER 2023

## SELECTED JCQ CHANGES WHICH IMPACT THE EXAMS OFFICER ROLE

Exams officers who have been in post for more than 12 months will be aware that JCQ regulations are updated and added to each academic year. These changes are made to ensure that the highest possible standards are maintained in relation to the integrity and security of examinations and assessments. JCQ and the awarding bodies are required to make amendments and additions to the regulations in response to a range of factors including centre and candidate behaviour, the increasing threat posed by the use of technology, and feedback from centre inspections.

In this article, we highlight the main changes across several key JCQ publications which impact the exams officer role.

Please note:

- the changes/updates listed below are only a selection of the changes for the 2023/2024 academic year. Exams officers must make themselves familiar with the entire contents of all relevant JCQ publications
- text highlighted in bold is the change within an existing regulation

### General Regulations for Approved Centres

#### Head of centre responsibilities

Heads of centre must ensure that:

- senior leadership teams and exams office personnel familiarise themselves with the entire contents of this booklet. In particular, heads of centre must familiarise themselves with sections 5.1, 5.3 and 5.4 (and sections 1.3 and 1.11)
- the examinations officer has sufficient time to perform their role and familiarise him/herself with relevant awarding body and JCQ documentation (Section 5.3c)
- a member of the senior leadership team is in place who will provide **effective support and supervision of the examinations officer** to ensure that the integrity and security of examinations and assessments is maintained through an examination series (Section 5.3e)

#### Exam policies

The following policies are required from the 2023/24 academic year in addition to existing policies for JCQ inspection purposes:

- a written complaints policy
- a written conflicts of interest policy
- The written examination contingency plan will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency **or where the head of centre, examinations officer or SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle**

- a written malpractice policy which covers all qualifications delivered by the centre. The policy must detail how candidates are informed and advised to avoid committing malpractice in examinations/assessments, how suspected malpractice issues should be escalated within the centre and reported to the relevant awarding body (Section 5.3z)

#### TEO comment

JCQ has provided further clarity over the support which senior leaders/line managers must provide for exams officers. The stipulation that exams officers must be afforded sufficient time to perform their role and familiarise themselves with relevant awarding body and JCQ documentation confirm the significance that JCQ and its awarding bodies places upon the exams officer role.

The additional information required in the examination contingency plan for the 2023/2024 academic year also highlights the increased focus which JCQ is placing on the responsibilities of senior leaders in managing examinations within their centre.

#### Instructions for conducting examinations

##### The secure room

The secure room must only be used for the purpose of administering secure examination materials, with **access restricted to two to six key holders only**. (The exams officer must be one of the key holders.) (Section 3.1)

Keys must either be kept on the key holder's person or in a coded key safe (**securely attached to the wall**) which is only accessible to the designated key holders (Section 3, Table 1)

##### Invigilation arrangements

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**, is not an invigilator during the examination (Section 12.6)

##### General principles for invigilating candidates with access arrangements

Where a person is appointed to facilitate an access arrangement... The person appointed must not normally be the candidate's own subject teacher, **Learning Support Assistant** or teaching assistant. Where the candidate's own subject teacher, **Learning Support Assistant** or teaching assistant is used, a separate invigilator must always be present.

##### Alternative rooming arrangements

This was formerly known as separate invigilation.

Alternative rooming arrangements are defined, for example, **a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs**. A candidate may only take their examinations **in a smaller environment away from the main examination room** where he/she has an established difficulty – see section 5.16 of the JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments document for further information. **Where candidates sit their examinations in a smaller environment away from the main examination room**, the regulations and guidance within JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations must always be adhered to. (Section 14.18)

##### Contingency sessions

The awarding bodies have designated the following 'contingency sessions' for examinations in summer 2024:

- 6 June (pm)
- 13 June (pm)
- 26 June (all day)

Centres must ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer.

The following has been removed from section 15.5: *'The awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course'*

#### Unauthorised items

**Airpods** and **earphones/earbuds** have been added to the items which candidates must not have in their possession in the examination room. This is in addition to iPods, mobile phones, MP3/4 players or similar devices and watches. (Section 18.2d)

#### Starting the examination

Candidates are under formal examination conditions from the moment they enter the room in which they will be taking their examination(s) until the point at which they are permitted to leave. **Any malpractice suspected or actual, from this point must be reported to the relevant awarding body.** Candidates must not open the question paper until the examination begins (Section 19.1)

(Note: formal examination conditions are defined as candidates not being permitted to talk to, attempt to communicate with or disturb other candidates once they have entered the examination room)

#### TEO comment

Although there are no major changes in the Instructions for conducting examinations publication for the 2023/2024 academic year, exams officers should be aware of the addition of 'Learning assistants' amongst the members of staff who are not permitted to invigilate candidates who they have supported in the classroom. Any exceptions must be decided and managed by the SENCo/ALNCo

Additional guidance has been provided over alternative rooming arrangements (previously referred to as separate invigilation) which will support centres in dealing with candidate and parental requests for rooming arrangements.

As expected, Airpods and earphones/earbuds have been added to the list of unauthorised items in the examination room, and additional guidance has been given on when candidates are under formal examination conditions.

Centres must inform candidates of the contingency sessions for the summer 2024 exams series – 6 June (pm), 13 June (pm) and 26 June (all day). It should be noted that although awarding bodies no longer insist that candidates must be available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course, centres must still inform candidates that they should be available if their examination(s) has been moved to a contingency session/day.

## Access arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments

### Clarification of the term SENCo

The term refers to the person appointed by the head of centre to coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre. (Introduction)

### JCQ forms

Exams officers involved in the processing of access arrangements applications must be aware of three new forms which they may be required to deal with:

- **Form 8RF:** Evidence to accompany Form 8 when a candidate progresses from GCSE to GCE qualifications
- **Form BD25%:** Bilingual translation dictionary with 25% extra time
- **Form 9:** Profile of need

### Supervised rest breaks

Where a candidate requires supervised rest breaks and extra time, the supervised rest break(s) may be taken at any point during the examination (Section 5.1.3)

### Use of a reader

Additional guidance has been provided on how readers should support vision impaired candidates retrieve information from diagrams, graphs, maps and tables (Section 5.5.8)

### Invigilation arrangements

Where the candidate and a reader, scribe and/or practical assistant are accommodated in another room, on a one-to-one basis, the reader, scribe and/or practical assistant cannot additionally act as the invigilator where he/she is the candidate's subject teacher, Learning Support Assistant or teaching assistant (Section 5)

*Note: This regulation now also refers to a Learning Assistant who must also not normally facilitate an access arrangement(s), but where this is required to the candidate's needs, a separate invigilator must always be present.*

### Access Arrangements Online (AAO)

Three new arrangements have been added to AAO:

- Access to a mobile phone for medical purposes
- Remote invigilation (this application will be automatically rejected – applications should then be referred online to the relevant awarding body)

Timetable variation requiring overnight supervision for a candidate with a disability (Section 8.5)

### TEO comment

*As JCQ has provided further clarification over the definition/role of the SENCo/ALNCo, exams officers should only expect to play a role within the access arrangements process as directed by their senior leadership team/line manager. Although the SENCo/ALNCo must lead on the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process within their centre, exams officers may be involved in/support the following areas (if requested):*

- Processing applications for access arrangements via AAO (with the SENCo/ALNCo present)
- Arranging and confirming with candidates the arrangements for rooming, timetabling and seating candidates
- Informing candidates of specific arrangements on exam days
- Training invigilators and facilitators of access arrangements (in conjunction with the SENCo/ALNCo)

*It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the SENCo/ALNCo to determine when, how frequently and where supervised rest breaks must be taken. It is not acceptable for a SENCo/ALNCo to expect an exams officer to make this decision, or to ask JCQ/TEO for guidance. Only the SENCo/ALNCo will be aware of the candidate's circumstances and their normal way of working in the classroom or in mock examinations/internal tests.*

*Centres should be aware of the addition of 'Learning Support Assistants' amongst the members of staff who are not permitted to facilitate an access arrangement(s) for a candidate(s) who they have supported in the classroom. Any exceptions must be managed by the SENCo/ALNCo.*

*Finally, exams officers must also be aware of the regulations relating to readers who support candidates with a visual impairment and incorporate this within training sessions.*

## **Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures**

### Meeting deadlines

Centres must take all reasonable steps to prevent malpractice. This includes ensuring that staff involved in the delivery of assessments and examinations understand the key dates and deadlines and that there are robust procedures in place to ensure these are met. (Section 3.3.1)

*Note: This year, there is an increased focus on the importance of meeting awarding body deadlines. Not meeting deadlines puts students at risk of not receiving their results on results days.*

### TEO comment

*Senior leaders/line managers of the exams officer must note the increased focus on the importance of meeting awarding body deadlines. Not meeting deadlines puts students at risk of not receiving their results on results days. This further emphasises the need to ensure that the exams officer is given sufficient time to perform their role.*

## **Other**

### Artificial intelligence (AI)

Guidance has been provided on the use of AI by candidates in the Instructions of conducting non-examination assessments and Instructions for conducting coursework publications. JCQ has also produced a new publication - [AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications](#) - and updated the guidance within [Plagiarism in Assessments](#) – which provide teachers/assessors involved in delivering JCQ qualifications with the information they need to manage the use of AI in assessments.

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