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TEN REASONS WHY AN EXAMS OFFICER SHOULD NOT INVIGILATE DURING AN EXAM SERIES

‘Should I act as an invigilator?’ This is one of the most frequently asked questions by exams officers, particularly those new to the role, usually as a result of their centre encountering difficulties in recruiting a sufficient number of invigilators and senior leaders, or the head of centre, viewing the exams officer as an obvious contingency measure to help address the shortfall.

In this article, we consider the circumstances under which an exams officer may – and in some cases, even must - act as an invigilator during an exam series, and the risks which exist/tasks which may be uncompleted if an exams officer is occupied in the exam room during an examination.

JCQ regulations

Unfortunately, there is no definitive guidance on exams officers acting as invigilators in the JCQ regulations. JCQ believe that this is a centre decision.

The *Instructions for conducting examinations* document (sections 12.8 and 12.11) includes 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 staff who teaches the subject being examined, or a Learning Support Assistant, who has supported one or more candidates, wherever possible is not an invigilator during the examination *
- Timed Art examinations will normally be invigilated by an Art and Design teacher

** In exceptional circumstances, a teaching assistant or a Learning Support Assistant, who has supported one or more candidates in the room, may act as an invigilator. However, they must not be the sole invigilator. Where a candidate with a particular need is accommodated in another room and their allocated teaching assistant or Learning Support Assistant must act as the invigilator, another invigilator will be required*

The view of the NAEO

The National Association of Examinations Officers believes 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 role of an exams officer on an exam day(s), the tasks for which they are responsible, and key aspects of exams administration which would not be completed if they were required to be present in the exam room for the duration of the examination.

Exceptional circumstances

However, there may 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 'on demand' or standalone examination with only a small number of candidates outside of the summer exam series 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 if an exam is taking place only a few weeks into the start of a new academic year. Indeed, utilising invigilators who are unfamiliar with the current regulations may increase the possibility of malpractice.

It should also be noted that it is a breach of the regulations if new invigilators are not thoroughly trained in the current regulations or the existing invigilation team not made aware of any changes in the current regulations.

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 the roving invigilator, the exams officer will not only be fulfilling a requirement as stipulated by Jcq (*Instructions for conducting examinations, section 13*), but they can use this as an opportunity to check upon all exam rooms to ensure that any issues are dealt with effectively and efficiently.

Ten reasons why an exams officers should not act as an invigilator

In conjunction with the subject matter experts at The Exams Office, the NAO highlights ten reasons why an exams officer should not act as an invigilator – these should be presented to senior leaders/heads of centres who are placing pressure upon an exams officer to invigilate during an exam series.

An exams officer has a series of key tasks which must be performed on an exam day and during an examination. 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).

Senior leaders/Heads of centres must be aware of the consequences – including engaging in malpractice/maladministration - if an exams officer was unable to undertake these tasks due to a requirement for them act as an invigilator.

Reason/scenario 1

- The JCQ Centre Inspector arrives

Actions to be taken by the exams officer

- Meet and greet the Inspector
- Accompany the Inspector, answer their questions and present any documentation as 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 room/secure storage facility and exam room(s)

Reason/scenario 2

- There is a suspected or an actual issue with the question paper

Actions to be taken by the exams officer

- Enter the exam room to address any concerns raised by candidates – valid or invalid – when summoned by the invigilator
- Verify the error or omission with the relevant subject teacher before reporting the matter to the relevant awarding body

Reason/scenario 3

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

Actions to be taken by the exams officer

- Ratio of invigilators-to-candidates as stipulated by the JCQ in section 12.8b of *Instructions for conducting examinations* must be maintained. In this instance, the exams officer should be available as a 'contingency measure' to act as an emergency invigilator... assuming that the individual is fully trained and aware of any changes to regulations for the current academic year

Reason/scenario 4

- There is a major disruption in the exam room before, during or at the end of the examination (including the need for an emergency evacuation)

Actions to be taken by the exams officer

- Ensure that all rooms are evacuated
- Deal with any issues when summoned by the invigilator
- In extreme situations where the exam cannot be restarted, contact the awarding body for guidance

Reason/scenario 5

- A candidate arrives with a temporary indisposition (e.g. broken limb) and requires an emergency access arrangement

Actions to be taken by the exams officer

- Deal with the candidate – address any concerns the candidate may have and assess if the indisposition impacts their ability to sit the examination
- Assess any access arrangement/adjustment(s) which may be required
- If required, allocate and organise an alternative rooming arrangement
- Organise an appropriately trained member of staff to facilitate any relevant access arrangement and/or to act as the invigilator
- If required, apply for approval for the arrangement(s) through *Access Arrangements Online (AAO)*

Scenario Reason/scenario 6

- A candidate arrives for an exam feeling unwell or is extremely distressed

Actions to be taken by the exams officer

- 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
- If required, arrange alternative rooming and access arrangement(s)
- Make any change that may be required to the seating arrangements
- Inform invigilator(s) if the candidate may need to leave the exam room temporarily under supervision

Scenario Reason/scenario 7

- A candidate is absent from an exam

Actions to be taken by the exams officer

- Instigate/apply the centre policy for dealing with candidate absence
- Contact the candidate to ensure that they arrive at the earliest possible opportunity (if this is the centre's policy)

Scenario Reason/scenario 8

- A candidate arrives late for an exam

Actions to be taken by the exams officer

- Instigate/apply the centre's policy for candidates who arrive late for an examination
- Brief the candidate on any erratum notices and JCQ regulations (e.g. highlight the contents of the *Unauthorised items* and *Warning to candidates* posters)
- 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
- 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

Scenario Reason/scenario 9

- A candidate arrives very late for an exam

Actions to be taken by the exams officer

- 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)
- 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 items) and warn the candidate that the relevant awarding body may not accept their script for marking

Scenario Reason/scenario 10

- A candidate is suspected of or commits malpractice

Actions to be taken by the exams officer

- Deal with any instances of suspected/actual malpractice during the examination when summoned by the invigilator
- 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

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 any instances of malpractice/maladministration will be dealt with, and whether 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 relevant awarding body.

In summary, the priorities for every centre during an examination series are to 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 due to the exams officer being required to act as an invigilator, then the answer is clear – your exams officer should not invigilate during an examination series.

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