

TEO conferences – January & February 2026

**'JCQ from ICE and General Regulations changes to Inspection:
Understanding JCQ updates and centre compliance for summer 2026'**

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JCQ Centre Inspection Service

The JCQ Centre Inspection Service operates across the United Kingdom – England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- to support centres in delivering examinations
- to safeguard the integrity of the examination system
- to ensure examinations are administered fairly to all candidates

Inspector workforce

Workforce size and recruitment

The JCQ Centre Inspection Service in England retained 98 Inspectors and recruited 17 new Inspectors to meet inspection service demands.

Comprehensive training

Inspectors received thorough training on regulations, access protocols and pre-series briefings to maintain inspection quality.



Statistics

Type of inspection	Number completed 2024/25	% with no action required	Number completed 2023/24	% with no action required
General	6140	57%	6045	45%
Access Arrangement	657	46%	677	33%
QPI	1276		717	
Readiness	97		107	20%
Review	49	30%	177	41%
Total	8219		7723	

- Top issues identified in General Inspections: Secure material handling (9%), invigilation (5%), exam room setup (5%).
- Access Arrangement issues: Data consent forms (24%), Form 9 (18%), incomplete Form 8 (15%).

Improved compliance rates

Compliance rates increased across inspection types, with more centres requiring no further action.



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Top areas requiring actions by centre - General Inspections



	2024/2025	2023/2024
Handling secure material	9%	8%
Invigilation	5%	5%
Exam room	5%	5%
Handling secure electronic material	6%	6%

Access arrangement checks during general inspection raised was 13%

Lots of good practice seen

- Friendly and professional approach from exams officers
- Clear guidance on procedures
- Effective invigilator briefing sessions
- Secure handling of question papers and digital assessment content

Centre feedback

Positive feedback highlights

94.5% of centres found the inspection experience satisfactory, highlighting professionalism and support from Inspectors.

Concerns raised

Stress from unannounced inspections and inconsistencies in feedback caused some concern among centres.

Actions taken

- **Advance notice for Access Arrangements Inspections**
 - 48 hours notice provided to SENCos
- **Inspection process**
 - Increased focus on active listening and providing clear feedback
 - Standardising inspection checklists to reduce ambiguity
 - Providing recognition for adherence to standards on the day of the inspection
 - General Inspection report have clear Exams Section and SENCo section

Centre policies

Policy checks issued to senior leaders to complete between November 2025 and January 2026

Exceptions are:

- Word processor policy
- Identification of candidate written policy



Summer 2026 examination series

Things to note for this summer's exams



Changes to 2025/26 General Regulations – cyber security

3.21 a All members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems must undertake annual cyber security training. The requirements of the training are listed. Certificates of completed staff cyber security training must be downloaded and held on file for inspection

3.21 b Centres must develop and maintain a comprehensive cyber security policy

3.21 c Centres must implement and enforce robust IT security measures



Changes to 2025/26 General Regulations – cyber security

A centre or MAT-wide cyber security training programme is acceptable provided it covers the requirements as stated in **paragraph 3.21a** of the *General Regulations*



Changes to 2025/26 General Regulations



Paragraph 5.3z

Key requirement

Written policies required for inspection must be:

- reviewed and updated annually by a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- communicated within the centre





NCFE

Have now signed up to the General Regulations and 'ICE'

Where a centre is conducting a NCFE examination, the Inspector will ask to see the exam in progress

Details required in the log of receipt - JCQ ICE paragraph 1.5

Recording receipt details	Staff member identification	Tracking number logging	Package and awarding body details	Secure storage collection
The log must include the exact date and time when examination materials are received to ensure accountability.	The name of the staff member who receives the delivery must be recorded for clear responsibility and tracking.	The waybill or tracking number must be documented to verify shipment with courier services.	Count of packages and awarding body name must be recorded to ensure completeness and categorization.	Log the name and time stamp of staff collecting materials for secure storage to maintain chain of custody.

A log of the checking must be kept by the exams officer – JCQ ICE paragraph 2.4

The log must record:

- a. the awarding body;
- b. the waybill or tracking number;
- c. the number of packages, i.e. envelopes and boxes;
- d. the date and time question paper packets were checked against the despatch note in the secure room;
- e. confirmation that the question paper packets have been placed in the secure storage facility in timetable date order;
- f. the name and position of the member of centre staff performing tasks (d) and(e).

Changes to 2025/26 ICE

JCQ ICE paragraph 2.8

Question papers must always be kept in their sealed packets until the second pair of eyes check and log have been completed.

The second pair of eyes check must take place immediately before each question paper packet is opened in the designated examination room.

If the question paper packet needs to be split for different rooms on one or more sites or for an access arrangement, the second pair of eyes check must take place in the secure room.

JCQ ICE paragraph 2.8 guidelines

Question paper packets

Question paper packets must remain sealed until the 'second pair of eyes' check is completed, ensuring security.

Second pair of eyes check

A two-person verification process is used to log the checking of question paper packets to prevent errors.

Secure room for splitting question paper packets

Splitting question paper packets requires verification in the secure room to maintain exam integrity.



Question paper packets - remember

Question paper packets are stored chronologically, in timetable date order, and not by subject. (JCQ ICE 2.4)

Where there are several small rooms, split the question paper packets in the secure room and place into a sealed non-transparent envelope. (JCQ ICE 5.9)



The secure room – JCQ ICE section 3

- The secure room must be accessible throughout an examination series for the storage of question papers and be available for inspection. (JCQ ICE 3.1)
- Question paper packets must be moved to the secure storage room immediately on receipt. (JCQ ICE 2.1)



2025/26 ICE changes

Where an electronic question paper is downloaded from an awarding body's online system, the centre must ensure that the question paper is printed correctly, is of good quality and is collated in the right order



Reminders

Make sure:

- the right staff have access to download a question paper from an awarding body's online system
- those staff understand about phishing attempts, social engineering
- awarding body portal accounts are correct, up to date. Delete any old accounts
- you report immediately any unusual activity with an awarding body's portal account

The secure storage facility – JCQ ICE section 3

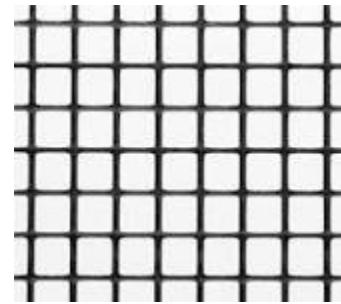


An electronic digital lock must meet EN1300 Class B, VDS Class 2 or a higher standard. It must support multiple identifiable users and include a designated lock manager. There must be an audit trail that records all activity, including user date and time of each event.

EN 1300 is the classification for high security locks according to their resistance to unauthorized opening. The standard was first published in 2004. It covers locks which are suitable for use in safes, strong rooms and ATMs.



Secure room



- Heavy duty mesh would be a strong grid of metal strands designed to withstand a substantial impact.
- Unless an electronic digital lock has been installed, there must be at least two keys rather than one key accessed by two or more members of staff.

2025/26 ICE changes – timetable variations

Where a GCSE candidate has **more than** five and a half hours of examinations in one day **or** where a GCE AS or A level candidate has **more than** six hours of examinations in one day **and** opts to sit all the examinations in the one day, the supervised break between each examination can be more than 20 minutes.

This would be an alternative to an overnight supervision arrangement (JCQ ICE 8.2)

Timetable variations

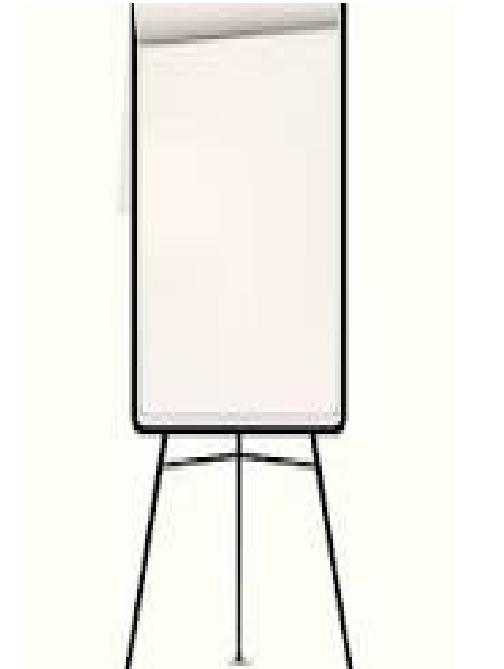
- Work with the candidate to plan the solution to sitting all exams in one day
- Involve the candidate when planning which exam they take first
- Inform them when they will be able to have something to eat and/or drink

Remember – an overnight supervision arrangement should only be applied as a last resort



Exam room set-up

- Candidates must be able to see the board, flip chart or whiteboard and clock when sitting down.(JCQ ICE 11.9)
- Remember to include the centre number, subject title, paper number, the actual starting and finishing times and date of each examination



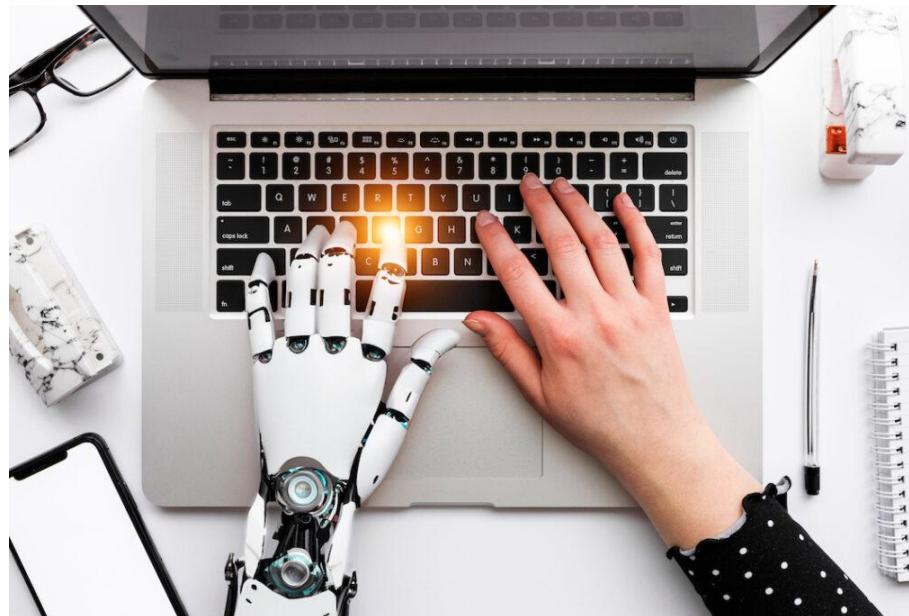
2025/26 ICE changes

Be aware of any candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties who may need the invigilator's announcement in an alternative format or may need to hear it more than once (JCQ ICE 19.3)



2025/26 ICE changes

Make sure that the school or college iPad, laptop, desk-top computer does not have any AI tools enabled



Please note - JCQ ICE 19.1

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.



Candidates must not talk to, attempt to communicate with or disturb other candidates once they have entered the examination room. If they do, this must be reported to the relevant awarding body.

Candidates must not open the question paper until the examination begins. If they do, this must be reported to the relevant awarding body.

2025/26 ICE changes

- Centres must ensure that script packages are available at the agreed pickup point 15 minutes before the beginning of the collection slot.

(JCQ ICE 27.4)



2025/26 ICE changes

Unused question papers must not be released to any individual until 24 hours after the awarding body's published finishing time for the examination.

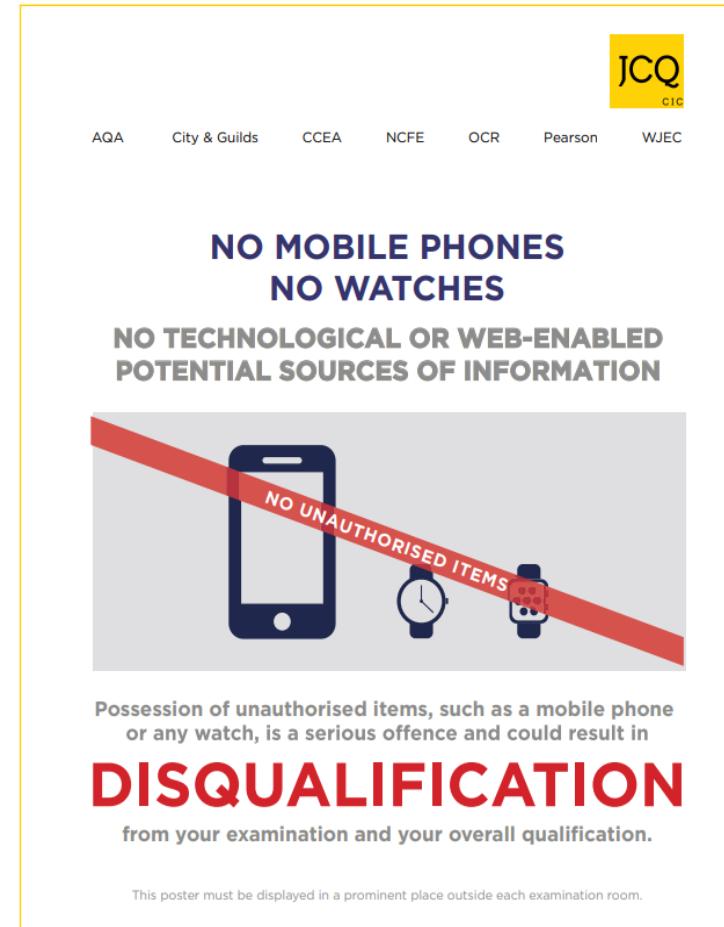


Where a candidate is sitting an examination scheduled for the afternoon session on the following morning under an overnight supervision arrangement, unused question papers for that examination must not be released to any individual until the candidate has completed that examination.

(JCQ ICE 31.1)

The Unauthorised Items and Warning to candidates posters have been updated to include NCFE

Appendix 7



Appendix 4 Warning to candidates



1 You **must** be on time for all your examinations.

2 Possession of a **mobile phone** or other unauthorised material **is not allowed** even if you do not intend to use it. You will be subject to penalty and possible disqualification from the examination or qualification.

3 You **must not** talk to, attempt to communicate with or disturb other candidates once you have entered the examination room.

4 You **must** follow the instructions of the invigilator.

5 You **must not** sit an examination in the name of another candidate.

6 You **must not** become involved in any unfair or dishonest practice in any part of the examination.

7 If you are confused about anything, only speak to an invigilator.

The Warning to candidates must be displayed in a prominent place outside each examination room. This may be a hard copy A3 paper version or an image of the poster projected onto a wall or screen for all candidates to see.

Reminders for summer 2026



Reminders

Make sure:

- invigilators are well-trained and know what they can and cannot do – every year the awarding bodies deal with cases of invigilators performing other tasks whilst invigilating
- readers and scribes understand their role and what they must, must not and may do. Going beyond their role could constitute maladministration and could impact on the candidate's result
- that where a candidate is subject to a timetable variation they are always supervised and do not have access to a mobile phone

Reminders

Make sure candidates understand that they must not write or draw anything offensive in their scripts. Every summer thousands of referrals are made by examiners

If they do, they could get zero marks for the examinations or even disqualification from the subject



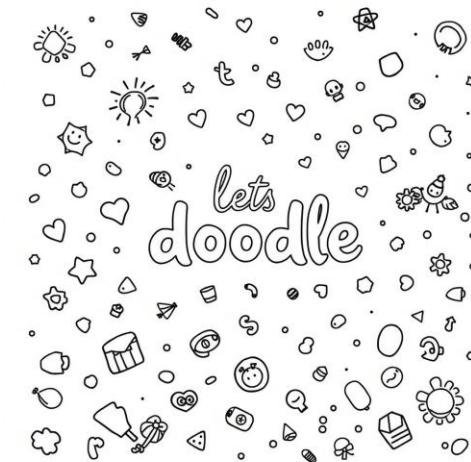
Reminders

- Remote invigilation **does not** mean an invigilator going to the candidate's home to conduct the examination. This is an alternative site arrangement
- Information on an alternative site arrangement can be found within paragraph 11.3 of the 'ICE' document
- Remote invigilation is conducting an examination using technology such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom where the **invigilator and the candidate are in different physical locations**

Reminders

- **Accurately complete attendance registers:** this is important so that candidates receive accurate results. See **section 22** of 'ICE' for full details on completing attendance registers.
- **Despatch exam scripts in a timely manner:** exam scripts must be despatched on the same day as the exam wherever possible. Scripts for late afternoon exams can be despatched the next working day; but they must be stored securely until collected. See **section 29** of 'ICE' for full details on despatching scripts.

JCQ AARA document – paragraph 5.16



<http://eale.io>

Doodle sheets

- Do not use awarding body continuation sheets
- Use centre headed paper to ensure a candidate does not bring in their own sheet of paper. This could be coloured for easy identification
- Must not be used for candidates who get bored during an examination

JCQ AARA document – paragraph 5.16

Timers and countdown clocks

Where a candidate has an established difficulty, they may have on their desk:

- small countdown clock
- a small analogue or digital clock
- a digital timer, sand timer or stopwatch



The candidate must control the device themselves

JCQ AARA document – paragraph 5.22.3

An application for a timetable variation may be processed in exceptional circumstances where a candidate:

- needs to start an afternoon examination earlier than 1 pm, due to them needing extra time and/or supervised rest breaks, which means the duration of the examination goes beyond the scheduled time for school transport; **or**
- has been identified as vulnerable by an educational provider or local authority and needs to start an afternoon examination earlier than 1pm because the duration of an afternoon examination goes beyond the scheduled time for school transport

