

APRIL 2026

**BRIEFING PARENTS AHEAD OF THE SUMMER EXAM SERIES:  
AREAS TO COVER**

JCQ's *General Regulations for Approved Centres* document requires centres to provide parents with the following:

- Appropriate support and information, for example, information about access arrangements, special consideration and post-results services (section 3.22)
- Instructions that they are not permitted to directly contact awarding bodies/JCQ (section 3.22)
- Access to/draw attention to the centre's:
  - written complaints policy, which covers general complaints regarding the centre's delivery or administration of a qualification and the internal appeals procedure (section 5.8e)
  - written internal appeals procedure to manage disputes when a candidate disagrees with a centre decision not to support an application for a clerical re-check, a review of marking, a review of moderation or an appeal (section 5.13i)

It is good practice to give parents a broad range of exam-related information prior to the exam series so they can better support their child during their examinations. Providing clear guidance on regulations and centre-specific procedures will also help reduce unrealistic requests and minimise disputes about the centre's actions.

In this article we consider the information which should be shared with parents ahead of the summer exam series.

**JCQ regulations**

Centres are encouraged to share the *Clarifying exam regulations: guidance for parents and candidates* document - available in The Exams Office Hub - with both parents and candidates. A link to the *Instructions for candidates* video should be shared with parents (this video is available from The Exams Office Hub). This animated video provides many of the instructions as detailed in JCQ's *Information for candidates - written examinations 2025-2026*.

The above guidance outlines the regulations governing the conduct of examinations and reminds centres of their obligation to comply with JCQ requirements when delivering awarding body qualifications by answering the following questions:

- Am I permitted to request an access arrangement (such as 25% extra time, the use of a word processor, a reader, or scribe) on behalf of my child, and/or to provide evidence such as an educational psychologist's assessment?

- Can I request that my child's examination(s) is(are) moved to another day due to a family commitment?
- What happens if my child is absent for an examination?
- Is my child permitted to have a room to themselves if they are nervous about sitting an examination?
- Will my child be permitted to leave the examination room temporarily to visit the toilet?
- What happens if my child is late for an examination?
- What is malpractice and what happens if my child is suspected of, or engages in malpractice?
- What are special considerations and when do they apply?
- As a parent/carer, can I have access to my child's examinations results?
- What is the process if my child wants to enquire about their examination result(s)?

Centres are also advised to publish the guide on their website and refer parents and candidates to it before the exam series and when responding to enquiries during and after summer examinations.

### **Centre policies/procedures**

Centres should publish any policies/procedures which they feel parents should be aware of to ensure that they understand how their child's examinations will be conducted. This may include the following policies/procedures:

- Child protection/safeguarding policy (relevant to examinations)
- Complaints policy
- Contingency plan
- Data protection policy (relevant to examinations)
- Equalities policy (relevant to examinations)
- Internal appeals procedure
- Malpractice policy
- Policy on the use of word processors in examinations
- Procedures for how the centre will deal with candidates' requests for access to scripts, clerical re checks, reviews of marking, reviews of moderation and appeals to the awarding bodies
- Policy for dealing with an emergency evacuation of the examination room

However, it may be more appropriate to develop and publish the following optional policies and procedures, which - although not required by JCQ regulations - can help address issues that commonly arise within the centre during an exam series:

- Access Arrangements Policy
- Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy (Exams)
- Candidate Absence Policy
- Candidate Late Arrival Policy
- Certificate Issue Procedure and Retention Policy
- Food and Drink Policy (Exams)
- Leaving the Examination Room Policy
- Lockdown Policy (Exams)
- Managing Behaviour Policy (Exams)
- Overnight Supervision Arrangements Policy
- Private Candidates Policy
- Special Consideration Policy

Parents should be informed that these policies and procedures have been developed in line with JCQ regulations and the centre's specific circumstances, and have been approved by senior staff. As a result, they take precedence over JCQ regulations where applicable. Any enquiries from parents should be handled according to the relevant centre policy.

### **Access arrangements**

Parents of candidates with approved access arrangements should be informed about how these arrangements will be facilitated and supervised during examinations.

They should also be given specific information about the centre's approach to extra time - whether candidates are required to remain in the exam room for the full duration of their extra time or whether they may leave earlier. If early departure is permitted, centres should clarify whether candidates must provide written confirmation that they have decided not to use their full allocation of extra time before leaving the examination room.

### **Rooming**

One of the most common requests from parents is for their child to sit exams in an alternative room, usually because of exam-related anxiety.

However, parents should be informed that JCQ regulations state that (*Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*, section 5.16):

*The use of an alternative room with one-to-one invigilation must only apply where the candidate has a serious medical condition, such as frequent seizures, Tourette's or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the examination room.*

Parents should be informed that decisions about separate invigilation or alternative rooming are based on factors such as a candidate's disability/established needs, or the likelihood of disturbing other candidates. They should also understand that these arrangements must reflect the candidate's normal and current way of working in internal tests and mock examinations. Nervousness, low-level anxiety, or feeling worried or overwhelmed about exams are not sufficient reasons for separate invigilation or alternative rooming.

### **Malpractice**

As with candidates, parents should be made aware of what constitutes malpractice – and that this is not limited to cheating alone – and includes:

- Collusion: working collaboratively with other candidates, beyond what is permitted
- Copying from another candidate (including the use of technology to aid the copying)
- Allowing work to be copied, e.g. posting work on social networking sites prior to an examination/assessment
- Disruptive behaviour in the examination room or during an assessment session (including the use of offensive language)
- Exchanging, obtaining, receiving, passing on information (or the attempt to) which could be assessment related by means of talking, electronic, written or non-verbal communication
- Bringing into the examination room notes in the wrong format (where notes are permitted in examinations) or inappropriately annotated texts (in open book examinations)
- The inclusion of offensive comments, obscenities or drawings; discriminatory language, remarks or drawings directed at an individual or group in scripts, controlled assessments, coursework, non-examination assessments or portfolios
- Plagiarism: unacknowledged copying from or reproduction of third party sources (including the internet and AI tools); incomplete referencing
- Use of social media for the exchange and circulation of real or fake assessment material

Centres should explain the process for managing cases of suspected or actual malpractice. This includes informing parents that personal data relating to any candidate suspected or alleged to be involved in malpractice will be shared with the relevant awarding body or bodies. In line with the JCQ *Suspected Malpractice – Policies and Procedures* document, this information may also be shared with other awarding bodies, the qualifications regulator, or professional bodies.

Parents should also be made aware that if their child is suspected of, or alleged to have engaged in, malpractice, they will receive, as example, a *Suspected Malpractice: Candidate*

*Notification Form.* This form informs them that a report of suspected, alleged, or actual malpractice is being submitted. A template of this form is available in The Exams Office Hub.

### **Special consideration**

Many parents are unaware of when special consideration applies in examinations. They should be informed that special consideration does not apply:

- For trivial cases (e.g. a bird tweeting outside the examination room, a lorry reversing, a toilet being flushed, doors in a corridor adjacent to the examination room opening and closing, very short, momentary noise from, for example, aeroplanes, helicopters or lawnmowers)
- If a candidate was not able to develop their subject knowledge and understanding due to absence during the course, joining the course late or teaching and learning being disrupted by staff shortages
- In the event of planned building work or lack of specialist facilities

Candidates are not eligible for special consideration if their preparation for, or performance in, an examination or assessment is affected by factors as outlined in JCQ's *A guide to the special consideration process*.

Parents should be informed that special consideration is normally applied only when a candidate is present for the examination or assessment but is disadvantaged. In such cases, a small percentage adjustment may be applied to each affected component, in line with JCQ regulations. Centres should provide examples from the JCQ guidance to explain when special consideration may be granted, and indicative examples of the percentage adjustment.

Parents must also understand that it is the centre's responsibility to decide whether a candidate meets the published criteria for special consideration (where a candidate is present but disadvantaged or absent for an acceptable reason). Applications can only be submitted when they are supported by the centre and when appropriate evidence is available. If the centre does not support an application, it cannot be forwarded to the awarding body. Speculative or unfounded applications will not be accepted by awarding bodies.

### **Results and post-results**

Parents must be informed that, under JCQ regulations, centres cannot share results data more widely until candidates themselves have received their results. This means parents cannot request or view their child's results before they have been issued to candidates.

Results should only be collected by another person (such as a parent, carer or grandparent) if the candidate has provided written or email consent.

For any queries about examination results, parents should understand that candidates must follow the centre's published process. They should be made aware that:

- Awarding bodies set strict deadlines for reviews of results
- Awarding bodies only accept review requests submitted by centres - not by candidates or parents/carers

- Candidates must submit their requests by the deadline set by the centre's exams officer
- A clerical re-check or review of marking can only be requested once the centre has obtained the candidate's written consent, as these services may result in marks or grades being lowered
- Candidate consent can only be obtained after results have been issued
- Consent confirms that the candidate understands their marks or grades could go down as well as up
- Failure to obtain candidate consent is considered centre malpractice

*The contents of this article were correct at the time of publication (March 2026)*