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## IMPROVING THE EXAMINATION SYSTEM IN YOUR CENTRE : ACQUIRING FEEDBACK FROM CANDIDATES, INVIGILATORS AND STAFF

At the end of each academic year, it is good practice to gather feedback from candidates, invigilators and centre staff. Their experiences can help you identify what worked well before, during and after examinations and assessments, as well as highlight areas where improvements can be made.

Regularly reviewing this feedback supports the ongoing development of your centre's examination processes, helping to ensure they continue to meet the needs of all stakeholders while remaining compliant with JCQ regulations and awarding body requirements.

To support this process, The Exams Office provides a range of feedback form templates, available to members via the Hub, to help exams managers/ officers collect and review feedback consistently.

This article explores the key areas on which candidates, invigilators and staff can provide feedback, enabling exams managers/ officers to evaluate and continually improve their centre's examination system.

### **Candidate feedback**

Candidates can provide invaluable feedback on how effectively examinations and assessments were planned, communicated and delivered. Their experiences can help identify both strengths and areas for improvement across the examination process.

Before the examination period, candidates should be asked whether they received clear, accurate and timely information. This should include details of their qualification entries, examination timetable(s) (including dates, start times and durations), and relevant JCQ guidance.

Candidates can also comment on the guidance they received for coursework, non-examination assessments, on-screen tests and written examinations, as well as information relating to social media expectations and awarding body privacy notices. Their feedback will help determine whether communications were clear, accurate and easy to understand.

Another important area is candidate preparation. Candidates should be asked whether resources such as a Candidate Exam Handbook (where provided) and any briefing sessions or assemblies gave them a clear understanding of what to expect and what they must and must not do during examinations and assessments. Candidates with approved access arrangements should also be asked whether these arrangements were explained clearly before the examination period.

Feedback should also cover candidates' experiences on the day of their examinations. For example, candidates should be asked whether they knew:

- who to contact if they had a query
- which examination room to attend
- where they were expected to sit

- which materials they could and could not bring into the examination room
- what to do if they arrived late or became unwell

Responses to these questions will help determine whether candidates felt well informed, supported and confident throughout the examination process.

Finally, candidates should have the opportunity to provide wider comments and suggest improvements. Encouraging them to identify any information that was unclear, comment on examination arrangements and recommend changes for future examination series can provide valuable insights.

Overall, candidate feedback should focus on the clarity of communication, accessibility of information, effectiveness of candidate support, organisation of examination days and opportunities for continuous improvement.

### **Staff feedback**

Staff feedback should focus on the effectiveness of the centre's examination processes and invite colleagues to reflect on their understanding of key responsibilities, deadlines and communication throughout the academic year.

One of the main areas to review is the entries process. Staff should be asked whether they understood the requirements for making examination entries, were clear about their role and responsibilities, and were aware of the centre's internal deadlines. Feedback should also establish whether deadlines were met, whether staff understood the implications of late entries, and whether qualification entries were monitored throughout the year for any required changes (amendments or withdrawals).

Staff should also be invited to comment on pre-examination processes, particularly those relating to coursework and non-examination assessment (NEA), where applicable. This should include their familiarity with current JCQ requirements, whether candidates received the required JCQ information at the start of the academic year, and whether candidates were appropriately advised on avoiding malpractice.

Particular attention should be given to the use of artificial intelligence (AI). Staff should be asked whether they understand the current guidance on the acceptable use of AI, when its use must be acknowledged, the risks associated with misuse, and the potential consequences of malpractice.

Feedback should also establish whether staff understand the requirement to share centre-assessed marks with candidates before submission to the awarding body and are familiar with the centre's internal appeals procedure relating to internal assessment decisions. In addition, staff should comment on the processes for submitting marks and moderation samples, including whether internal deadlines are clear and achievable, whether they were met, and whether staff understand the consequences of late submission.

For externally assessed examinations, staff should be asked whether they are aware of the information that candidates should receive before examinations and assessments, and whether they feel sufficiently informed to answer candidates' questions accurately and confidently.

Finally, staff should be encouraged to identify examples of good practice, raise any concerns and suggest improvements to examinations procedures, communication and deadlines. Their feedback can help refine the centre's processes and support continuous improvement year on year.

## **Invigilator feedback**

Invigilator feedback should focus on the effectiveness of exam preparation and the delivery of examinations, helping to identify what worked well and where improvements can be made. Invigilators should be asked whether they received clear, timely and useful information before and throughout the summer examination series.

Feedback should include the quality of training and update sessions, including any online training modules where these were used. Invigilators should also be asked whether they received all the information they needed before the examination period, such as an Invigilator Handbook (where provided), their allocated examination dates and sessions, arrival times, reporting arrangements and payment information.

It is also important to assess invigilators' understanding of their responsibilities. This should include whether they felt confident in:

- securely receiving and handling question papers and examination materials
- preparing the examination room
- displaying the required examination information
- admitting and seating candidates
- carrying out candidate identification checks
- supporting candidates with approved access arrangements
- managing unauthorised items appropriately

Feedback should also establish whether invigilators felt confident in carrying out the key stages of an examination, including starting and finishing examinations, supervising candidates, responding appropriately to candidate queries, completing attendance registers accurately, collecting scripts and securely handling unused question papers, stationery, equipment and other examination materials.

Invigilators should also be asked whether procedures were clear and consistently applied across the invigilation team, particularly when dealing with:

- late arrivals
- candidates leaving the examination room
- suspected malpractice
- emergencies
- other examination irregularities

In addition, feedback should establish whether invigilators understood the role of any other adults present in the examination room, such as facilitators (for example, readers or scribes), and whether they knew what to do if a JCQ Centre Inspector visited during an examination.

Finally, invigilators should be encouraged to share any wider comments. They should have the opportunity to identify information that was unclear, comment on examination-day procedures and suggest improvements to future training, communication and invigilation processes. Their feedback can help ensure the invigilation team remains confident, consistent and well prepared for future examination series.

## **Conclusion**

Seeking feedback from candidates, staff and invigilators at the end of each academic year provides an invaluable opportunity to review the effectiveness of your centre's examination system. By considering the experiences of everyone involved in the examinations process, exams managers/officers can identify strengths, address areas for improvement and enhance future planning, communication and delivery.

A structured approach to collecting and reviewing feedback supports continuous improvement, helps ensure compliance with JCQ regulations and awarding body requirements, and contributes to a positive examination experience for all stakeholders. Using/customising the feedback templates available through The Exams Office Hub can make this process more consistent, efficient and meaningful, enabling centres to build on good practice year after year.

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