



Joint Council for
Qualifications CIC

2025/26 JCQ Update – Nick Lait, Head of Examination Services

2025/26 JCQ regulations

Changes to the JCQ regulations



Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Additional qualifications

The regulations now include:

- Cambridge Advanced Nationals
- Essential Skills
- NCFE Vocational and Technical qualifications (as listed)

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations



- A signed candidate personal data consent form and Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENCo form are **no longer required**
but...
- Candidates **must** be informed that an application for access arrangements will be processed using Access arrangements online, complying with the UK GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018

2025/26 JCQ regulations – principal changes

- Wider positioning of access arrangements/reasonable adjustments
- Ensuring candidates are awarded appropriate arrangements, tailored to their individual needs
- Greater emphasis on centre-based evidence to support applications for 25% extra time

Wider positioning of access arrangements/reasonable adjustments

What has changed?

SENCos are encouraged ‘to consider and, where appropriate, implement access arrangements that will prepare candidates for the workplace’.

Wider positioning of access arrangements/reasonable adjustments

Rationale

Although 25% extra time should always be an adjustment available to candidates, it is important that candidates get the right arrangement(s) and support for their examinations/assessments.

A ‘one-size fits all’ approach may not work for all candidates. A single focus on 25% extra time may not always prepare candidates for real-world scenarios.

Wider positioning of access arrangements/reasonable adjustments

The primary purpose of access arrangements/reasonable adjustments remains unchanged: to remove or reduce barriers in assessment so that candidates can demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Although SENCos are encouraged to view access arrangements/adjustments holistically, in examinations the legal duty remains to provide appropriate reasonable adjustments for candidates' examinations/assessments.

Supervised rest breaks

What has changed?

The 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 JCQ regulations stated:

‘Where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty, the SENCo should have explored and trialled the option of supervised rest breaks through timed internal tests and mock examinations before making an application for 25% extra time.’

The 2025/26 JCQ regulations state:

‘Where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty, the SENCo **must have trialled and exhausted** the option of supervised rest breaks through timed internal tests and/or mock examinations before making an application for 25% extra time’.

Supervised rest breaks

Rationale

There was variability in practice, with some centres defaulting to 25% extra time without considering whether supervised rest breaks might be a more appropriate adjustment.

The revised wording ensures centres properly consider supervised rest breaks. It aligns with the intent of previous wording used in the 2021/22 JCQ regulations ('considered and thoroughly exhausted') while removing ambiguity and ensuring centres follow a clear, robust and defensible process.

Supervised rest breaks

Rationale (continued)

A needs-led approach which encourages schools and colleges to consider the individual assessment needs of their candidates when considering the most appropriate arrangements. This ensures the process is fair and operates with integrity.

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Supervised rest breaks

Supervised rest breaks are often a more appropriate, a more proportionate arrangement for candidates:

- with neurodivergent conditions such as ADHD, ASD
- with a medical condition
- with mental health needs
- who tire easily or struggle to concentrate over an extended period

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Supervised rest breaks

- Extra time can simply extend the period a candidate must remain in a potentially stressful environment, which can intensify anxiety and affect exam performance
- Supervised rest breaks allow the candidate to step away from the exam setting, use structured self-regulation strategies and return when they are calm and better able to focus
- This targeted approach can lead to more effective exam performance while also supporting the development of long-term self-management skills

Supervised rest breaks

What is required?

Assessment evidence is not required to demonstrate that supervised rest breaks have been trialled and exhausted.

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Supervised rest breaks

Example

The candidate has a medical condition, and 25% extra time has always been their normal way of working in timed internal assessments since Year 9.

The SENCo would explain within Part 1 of Form 9 that 25% extra time is the candidate's normal way of working, is appropriate to their needs and is supported by teachers.

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Candidates requiring 25% extra time

- May need a more targeted approach in determining which candidates really need 25% extra time
- Will need a personalised approach to Part 1 of Form 8 or Form 9
- Will need to tell 'a story' through the centre based evidence why the candidate needs 25% extra time



Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Candidates requiring 25% extra time

A JCQ Centre Inspector will want to see an individual 'candidate story' within Part 1 of Form 8 or Form 9:



- feedback from teaching staff
- how the candidate's difficulties impact in the classroom, in internal tests and/or mock exams, showing a clear need for 25% extra time
- arrangements for internal tests, mock exams

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Candidates with learning difficulties requiring 25% extra time

- Part 1 of Form 8 ‘feeds through’ to Part 2. There is a consistency between Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the form
- A picture of need, feedback from teaching staff, the demonstration of normal way of working, is consistent with the standardised scores recorded within Part 2 of Form 8
- This then leads to 25% extra time being recorded as the agreed access arrangement within Part 3 of Form 8

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Candidates requiring 25% extra time

- ‘Skeleton’ information within Part 1 of Form 8 prior to the assessment is no longer sufficient
- Comments from parents cannot be recorded within Part 1 of Form 8 or Form 9
- The statements within Part 1 of Form 8 must be addressed prior to the assessment



Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Candidates requiring 25% extra time

In addition to Form 8, Form 8RF (where required) or Form 9 there **must** be:

- a sample of internal tests and/or mock exam papers across relevant subjects showing the application of 25% extra time
- comments and observations from teaching staff in relevant subjects as to why the candidate needs 25% extra time and how they use the 25% extra time awarded

25% extra time

How much assessment evidence is needed?

The focus should be on the **quality of the evidence** and not quantity. A small, representative sample is sufficient rather than a full subject portfolio.

Example 1

A GCSE candidate studying nine subjects

- Three **marked** assessments across three different subjects, such as one assessed through extended writing like English or History, a numerical subject like maths/science and a short answer MFL paper, depending on the candidate's difficulty and the subjects in which they will be having extra time

25% extra time

How much assessment evidence is needed?

Example 2

An A level candidate studying three A levels – English Literature, Psychology and Sociology

Three **marked** assessments across the three different subjects – one for English Literature, one for Psychology and one for Sociology.

Example 3

A Level 3 BTEC National student

One to two **marked** assessments across the BTEC qualification.

25% extra time

Examples of acceptable assessment evidence

Any of the following would be acceptable:

- A copy of a marked internal test or mock exam script showing the use of 25% extra time (i.e. a change of pen colour or font to show the additional time).
- A scanned extract or digital record from an online test/mock exam showing that the extra time was granted and used effectively.

25% extra time**Examples of acceptable assessment evidence (continued)**

A subject teacher proforma for the subject or unit recording that the candidate used the extra time and that it resulted in improved quality, completeness or accuracy of work together with a brief written comment from the teacher and, if appropriate, the candidate confirming that the extra time was used and was beneficial.

25% extra time

Examples of acceptable assessment evidence (continued)

- Assessment evidence supported by brief, focused teacher comments. For example, the candidate requires and consistently uses their extra time, it makes a difference to the quality or completeness of the candidate's work

25% extra time – example of a subject teacher proforma – Part 1

Student name:

Subject:

Date:

Evidence of use of 25% extra time	
✓	Student used 25% extra time
	Student did not use 25% extra time

25% extra time

Example of a subject teacher proforma – Part 2

What was the impact of the extra time?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Student completed more questions/sections
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student improved or extended their answers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student reviewed and corrected their answers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

25% extra time

Example of a subject teacher proforma – Part 3

Teacher comment/signature:

James effectively used 25% extra time in this assessment. It has enabled him to answer all questions and effectively demonstrate his subject knowledge. 25% extra time makes a real difference for him.

(Optional) Student comment:

Please note – the information provided on this document must relate to an existing internal test or mock exam paper which can be accessed and shown to the JCQ Inspector where requested.

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Candidates requiring 25% extra time



A more robust and needs-led approach to 25% extra time

Ensures decision making is based on a well-rounded view of the candidate's day-to day learning profile – teacher feedback, actual evidence of using 25% extra time

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Evidence requirements when a Form 8 or Form 9 is used for GCSE resits

- Where a candidate is entered for GCSE examinations in the June 2026 examination series to improve upon a previous grade, the SENCo may use an existing Form 8 or Form 9
- Samples of additional evidence (comments and observations from teaching staff, timed tests or mock exam papers showing the application of extra time) **are not required**

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Reading assistance

- Where candidates only require occasional words or phrases to be read, they may use an examination reading pen
- A reader is for a candidate with poor reading skills as opposed to someone who only needs occasional words or phrases to be read

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

A practical assistant

- Before an online application for a practical assistant is processed subject teachers must be consulted
- This will ensure that the proposed tasks the practical assistant would perform in an examination, or a non-examination assessment, would not invalidate the published assessment objectives and the skills a candidate is independently required to demonstrate

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

A new centre delegated arrangement



- A blank sheet of paper for doodling where a candidate has persistent and significant concentration difficulties is a new centre delegated arrangement
- The candidate's doodling sheet must be included with their completed answer booklet

Changes to the 2025/26 JCQ regulations

Bilingual dictionary with 25% extra time



Where the three-year period from the candidate's entry into the United Kingdom falls within an examination series, the candidate is permitted to complete the exam series in full using a bilingual dictionary with 25% extra time

Reminders



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 section 5.15 of the JCQ regulations
- 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

Listening to music/white noise due to a substantial impairment

- The candidate must use a device which is not connected to the internet and is not Bluetooth enabled
- The centre provides the device such as a CD player, a centre laptop operated by the invigilator, an MP3 player, a white noise machine
- The candidate may choose the music or white noise

Reminders

Question papers on coloured paper

- Given the logistical challenges on exam days where question papers need to be photocopied onto coloured paper, the SENCo must ensure that a question paper on coloured paper is appropriate to the candidate's needs
- Alternative ways of working such as the use of a coloured overlay, the candidate wearing coloured glasses, should be explored
- The SENCo may wish to consider the provision of a single colour such as buff or grey

Reminders

Modified papers

- Orders must be processed in a timely manner. Deadlines must be adhered to. The deadline for the June 2026 series is 31 January 2026
- **Do not** select all formats of modified papers

Reminders

Painting a picture of need

Part 1 of Form 8 or Part 1 of Form 9 can include:

- observing the candidate in the classroom to see their style of learning
- reviewing the candidate's workbooks to check their spellings, legibility of writing, whether classroom tasks have been completed

Reminders

Processing online applications

- If a candidate requires an additional arrangement, then only process that new arrangement
- For example, if a candidate has an approved online application for 25% extra time and now requires a reader, then only process a new online application for a reader
- **Do not** process another online application for 25% extra time. Processing another online application for 25% extra time causes a duplicate application and will affect the 'hygiene' of the data within AAO

Resources (infographics)

Infographics setting out the evidence requirements for:

25% extra time

More than 25% extra time (26% to 50%)

A computer reader/reader

A scribe



Resources to use with teachers

Access arrangements – a guide for teaching staff

Visual flowchart - The role of the teacher in the access arrangements process



Resources to use with parents

Information sheet for centres to use with parents (PDF version)

Information sheet for centres to use with parents (editable Word template)

Visual flowchart - Managing parent, carer or student requests where the centre has no evidence of need

Guidance regarding parental/candidate requests for access arrangements when the centre has no evidence of need

Resources

These resources can all be found at:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance/>



Thank you for listening!



thanks

