

NAEO Exams article September 2025

JCQ regulations and the shaping the exams officer role

The publication of JCQ's 2025/26 regulations sees a continuation of a very encouraging, and welcome, pattern of support in shaping the exams officer.

In recent years, JCQ have welcomed feedback from the exams officer community via the NAEO, and where appropriate, this has been incorporated within their regulations. Whilst the NAEO does not expect every suggestion to be included within their annually updated regulations, we would like to thank them for their support in providing greater clarity over the role and responsibilities of an exams officer in the management, administration and conducting of examinations.

This thanks extends to key staff within JCQ and the responsible officers from their member awarding bodies who form the various committees which confirm the regulations.

This article has been produced to support exams officers when engaging with their senior leadership team/line manager to confirm their role and responsibilities.

An exams officer should use the contents of this article if they feel that they are being asked to undertake a task which is not their responsibility or for which they do not possess the expertise...and where they feel that their involvement may introduce risk in the form of maladministration or centre/staff malpractice.

What do the regulations state?

Exams officers in every centre must be fully aware of the JCQ regulations which directly impact their role, and present these to their senior leadership team/line manager to ensure that all parties are clear over their responsibilities.

The role

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Updated JCQ regulations in their *General Regulations for Approved Centres* document (section 5.3) for the 2025/26 academic year require the head of centre to ensure that their exams officer undertakes regular CPD, such as attending an annual update course.

As the CPD needs of each exams officer will vary based upon a range of personal factors, including knowledge, experience, skill level, type of centre, qualifications administered etc. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the exams officer and their senior leader/line manager to meet to confirm the areas which will be covered within a CPD programme and how any targets will be achieved, monitored and rewarded upon completion.

With regard to an annual course, it is imperative that an exams officer is aware of JCQ regulations, and any changes made each academic year. Although the type of update course is not specified - it could be a [face-to-face training event](#) or an online course – exams officers should ensure that they are suitably aware of the latest regulations if they are required to provide evidence to an awarding body as part of any investigation.

The NAEO Exams Officer Professional Standards have been designed to provide senior leaders/line manager with a framework to manage their exams officer's professional development and acquire certification upon completion.

Support & Supervision

JCQ's *General Regulations for Approved Centres* (section 5.3) state that the head of centre must ensure that a member of the senior leadership team is in place who has a good working knowledge of the examination system which will allow them to provide effective line management support and supervision of the exams officer to ensure that the integrity and security of examinations and assessments are maintained throughout an examination series

Effective support and supervision from a senior leader/line manager ensures that the exams officer has a senior colleague to whom they can refer any issues, such as unreasonable parental requests/pressure, and for effective exam-related decisions to be made in line with the published regulations.

Time

The regulations also insist that exams officers are given sufficient time to perform their role, which includes understanding relevant awarding body and JCQ documentation.

Consequently, it is imperative that an exams officer is allowed time as part of their role/contracted hours to not only familiarise themselves with the JCQ regulations, but the latest updates from key stakeholders including the Department for Education, Ofqual, JCQ and its' member awarding bodies, The Exams Office and National Association of Examinations Officers (NAEO).

The NAEO recommends that exams officers allocate a period of time (two to three hours) each week to read the latest information from stakeholders.

Responsibilities

JCQ publications

JCQ's publish a range of documents which detail the regulations which centres must adhere to when managing, administering or conducting examinations and assessments. It is a misconception amongst senior leaders in some centres that it is only the exams officer who should be aware of the contents of these documents.

The table below confirms which members of staff should be familiar with the various JCQ documents.

Document	Staff who should read/be aware of this document
General Regulations for Approved Centres	Heads of centre, senior leaders, exams officers
Instructions for conducting examinations	Heads of centre, senior leaders, exams officers
Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments	Senior leaders, SENCos (or equivalent role), assessors
AI Use in Assessments: Your role in protecting the integrity of qualifications	Senior leaders, teachers and assessors
Guidance for centres on cyber security	Centre staff

A guide to the special consideration process	Heads of centre, senior leaders, exams officers
A guide to the awarding bodies' appeal processes	Senior leaders, teaching staff, exams officers
Exam room posters	Senior leaders, exams officers , invigilators (and candidates)
Information for candidates' documents	Senior leaders, exams officers , invigilators (and candidates)
Instructions for conducting coursework	Heads of centre, senior leaders and subject leaders
Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments (GCE and GCSE specifications)	Heads of centre, senior leaders and subject teachers
Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments (Vocational and Technical Qualifications)	Heads of centre, senior leaders and subject teachers
Key dates in the examination cycle	Senior leaders, teaching staff, exams officers
Notice to Centres - Informing candidates of their centre-assessed marks	Heads of centre, senior leaders, subject leaders and subject teachers
Plagiarism in Assessments – Guidance for Teachers/Assessors	Heads of centre, senior leaders and staff who have responsibility for supervising and/or marking candidates' non-examination assessments or portfolio work
Post-Results Services	Senior leaders, teaching staff, exams officers
Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures	Senior leaders, teaching staff, exams officers , invigilators

Access arrangements

JCQ's *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* document states the following roles and responsibilities:

Head of centre must...

- be familiar with the entire contents of the *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* document
- ensure that the SENCo has sufficient time to both manage the access arrangements process within the centre and familiarise themselves with the *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* document
- ensure that the SENCo and the centre's appointed assessor undertake regular CPD, such as attending an annual update course on these regulations
- approve any individual who is appointed to facilitate an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment

Senior leaders must...

- be familiar with the entire contents of the *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* document
- support the SENCo in leading on the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process and identifying, determining and implementing appropriate and practicable access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

SENCo must...

- lead on the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process
- be familiar with the entire contents of the *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* document
- undertake regular CPD, such as attending an annual update course on these regulations
- work with teaching staff, support staff (such as learning support assistants and teaching assistants) and exams office personnel to ensure that approved access arrangements/ reasonable adjustments are put in place for internal school/college tests, mock examinations and examinations
- work with specialist advisory teachers, educational psychologists and medical professionals
- work with the centre's appointed assessor to ensure a consistent, joined-up process, including discussing individual candidate cases with the assessor before making final decisions
- work with teaching staff to identify the most appropriate published format of modified papers to enable the candidate(s) to access their examinations
- liaise with the exams officer in relation to any candidates who must sit their examinations at home through an alternative site arrangement
- support the acquisition of medical guidance in relation to any candidates who have a contagious disease (e.g from a local GP surgery)
- produce a list of processed and approved candidates who have access arrangements/reasonable adjustments
- confirm whether they - or the exams officer - will generate populated cover sheets for a practical assistant and a scribe

Assessor(s) must...

- be familiar with the entire contents of the *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* document
- undertake regular CPD, such as attending an annual update course on these regulations

Teaching staff must...

- support the SENCo in leading on the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process and putting approved access arrangements/ reasonable adjustments in place for internal school/college tests, mock examinations and examinations
- support the SENCo in identifying, determining and implementing appropriate and practicable access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

Exams officer must...

- support the SENCo in putting approved access arrangements/ reasonable adjustments in place for internal school/college tests, mock examinations and examinations
- take responsibility for a person who is appointed to facilitate an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment
- ensure that aversive sounds in the room where the candidate will be accommodated for their GCSE examinations, such as a clock ticking, will be minimised
- process applications for special consideration in instances such as a candidate who has access to a scribe as a temporary access arrangement and consequently becomes highly anxious and stressed as the use of a scribe is not her normal way of working, or when a candidate cannot continue with their exam as they feel unwell
- liaise with the SENCo in relation to any candidates who must sit their examinations at home through an alternative site arrangement
- support the acquisition of medical guidance in relation to any candidates who have a contagious disease (e.g from a local GP surgery)
- plan and identify the number of additional rooms required within the centre to accommodate candidates with access arrangements, invigilation resources and the number of computer readers, readers and scribes that will be needed

Special consideration

Although exams officers may be involved in the process relating to special consideration, their role is largely administrative, whilst the decision-making responsibility rests with a member of the senior leadership team.

The table below details the relevant roles and responsibilities.

Senior leader - Responsibilities	Exams officer - Role
To be satisfied that the candidates' circumstances warrant special consideration, as set out within the JCQ <i>A guide to the special consideration process</i> document, and that applications are sufficiently evidenced	To support the gathering of evidence in relation to the candidate's circumstances as instructed by a member of the senior leadership team
To authorise any evidence used to support an application for special consideration	To process an online application for special consideration via the relevant awarding body/bodies secure site
To produce a statement to support an online application for special consideration. This may be applicable if the centre is aware of an ongoing medical condition which may cause sudden absence, or the candidate was known to be unwell in the run-up to the examination or the candidate turned up for the examination unwell and was sent home	To inform a candidate when an application for special consideration is submitted to the awarding body (although the candidate may also be informed by the member of the senior leadership who has confirmed their satisfaction that the candidates' circumstances warrant special consideration)
To produce compelling evidence to support a late application made after the published deadline or the publication of results	To retain evidence until after the publication of the results

Policies

The table below shows the exams-related policies which centres must have available to meet JCQ requirements...and those which involve the input of the exams officer in the **creation** of the policy.

Section 3.21 of JCQ's *General Regulations for Approved Centres* state that it is the responsibility of a member of the senior leadership team to review, update and communicated within their centre these written policies which must be available for inspection.

A senior leader must decide which policies they will devise or delegate, and whether they will be the individual who will approve/'sign off' each policy.

MEETING JCQ REQUIREMENTS		Confirm documentation/processes in place	Involves EO
1	Cyber security requirements (GR 3.21) (including: annual certificated cyber security training developing and maintaining a comprehensive cyber security policy for the centre implementing and enforcing robust security measures)		No

2	Escalation process (should the head of centre, or a member of the senior leadership team with oversight of examination and assessment administration, be absent) (GR 5.3)	No
3	Child protection/safeguarding policy, including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance (which satisfies current legislative requirements) (GR 5.3)	No
4	Complaints policy (GR 5.3, 5.8)	No
5	Conflicts of interest policy (GR 5.3)	No
6	Contingency plan (which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery) (GR 3.17, 5.3; ICE 15)	Yes
7	Data protection policy (GR 5.3)	No
8	Equalities policy (GR 5.3)	No
9	Internal appeals procedure (which must cover at least appeals regarding internal assessment decisions, access to post-results services and appeals, and centre decisions relating to access arrangements and special consideration) (GR 5.3, 5.7, 5.8, 5.13; NEA 1)	Yes
10	Malpractice policy (which covers all qualifications delivered by the centre) (GR 5.3) The policy must detail how candidates are informed and advised to avoid committing malpractice in examinations/assessments, how suspected malpractice issues should be escalated within the centre and reported to the relevant awarding body. It must also acknowledge the use of AI (e.g. what AI is, when it may be used and how it should be acknowledged, the risks of using AI, what AI misuse is and how this will be treated as malpractice).	Yes
11	Policy regarding the management of non-examination assessments, including controlled assessments and coursework (which includes details on how candidates' work will be authenticated) (GR 5.3, 5.7; NEA 1) (For CCEA GCSE centres this would be a controlled assessments policy)	No
12	Whistleblowing policy (GR 5.3)	No
13	Policy on the use of word processors in examinations (GR 5.3; AARA 5.8)	Yes
14	Process in place to check the qualification(s) of the centre's assessor(s) and that the correct procedures are followed (as in Chapter 7 of the JCQ document <i>Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments</i>) (GR 5.4; AARA 7)	No
15	Procedures to verify the identity of all candidates at the time of the examination or assessment (GR 5.9; ICE 16)	Yes
16	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 (GR 5.13)	Yes
17	Policy for dealing with an emergency evacuation of the examination room (ICE 25)	Yes

Key

- GR - General Regulations for Approved Centres
- ICE - Instructions for conducting examinations
- AARA - Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments

- NEA - Instructions for conducting non-examinations assessments