Seven steps to creating an effective invigilation team

A key responsibility of an exams manager/officer is to ensure that examinations are conducted effectively and in accordance with JCQ requirements. This includes recruiting, training, deploying and managing an effective team of invigilators.

Having sufficient invigilators is only part of the challenge. They must also understand the regulations, be competent in applying them and be able to follow centre-specific procedures.

A structured annual approach to managing your invigilation team will help ensure that you have the right people, with the right knowledge and skills, available when needed.

The following seven steps provide a framework for developing and maintaining an effective invigilation team.

Step 1 – Evaluate your existing team

Review the performance and availability of your current invigilators to establish whether you have sufficient, and the right type of, people to meet the demands of each examination series.

Consider:

- Whether you have enough invigilators to cover all examination sessions and rooming arrangements
- The performance, reliability and competence of individual invigilators
- Whether any invigilators require additional training or support
- Whether any changes to your invigilation team are necessary

Use this evaluation to identify recruitment and training requirements for the coming academic year.

Step 2 – Recruit invigilators

Ensure that you recruit sufficient invigilators to meet your centre's requirements, taking account of anticipated examination numbers, rooming arrangements and potential absences.

Recruitment also provides an opportunity to address any performance concerns identified during your evaluation. Where necessary, replace ineffective or unreliable invigilators with individuals who can follow instructions, apply the regulations and fulfil their responsibilities.

Develop a recruitment strategy that establishes when and how you will recruit invigilators, including whether recruitment will be an ongoing process. Consider the methods you will use, such as advertising on the centre's website, seeking recommendations from existing invigilators or running a local community recruitment campaign. Consider what information you provide to prospective invigilators to attract the type of candidates you wish to recruit. Prepare interview questions that will help identify individuals with the skills, experience and personal qualities required to perform the role effectively.

Step 3 – Train your invigilators

Invigilator training must ensure that individuals have the knowledge and competence required to conduct examinations in accordance with JCQ requirements.

Your training should cover three key areas:

- Knowledge of regulations: A thorough understanding of the relevant JCQ requirements.
- Practical competence: The ability to apply the regulations in the examination room, including responding appropriately to situations not explicitly covered by the regulations.
- Centre-specific procedures: An understanding of how examinations are conducted within your centre, including decisions and arrangements delegated to centres under the regulations.

Consider how each area will be assessed:

- Knowledge can be assessed through online training and assessment modules.
- Competence can be evaluated by observing invigilators during examinations or through scenario-based discussions during face-to-face training.
- Centre-specific procedures should be explained through online or face-to-face training sessions and meetings.

Training should be more than simply providing information. You need to establish that your invigilators understand what is required and can apply that knowledge in practice.

Step 4 – Deploy your invigilators effectively

Allocate examination sessions based on invigilator availability, experience and competence.

Consider identifying individuals who have the skills and confidence to undertake additional responsibilities, including:

- Lead invigilators: Appointing suitably experienced invigilators to lead examination sessions can reduce the pressure on the exams manager/officer before, during and after examinations.
- Sole invigilators: Identify those who have the necessary experience and confidence to conduct examinations independently.
- Scribe responsibilities: Identify invigilators who may be suitable to act as scribes when an emergency access arrangement is required.

Effective deployment ensures that you make the best use of your available resources while maintaining appropriate examination arrangements.

Step 5 – Plan for contingencies

Ensure that you have sufficient invigilators available for every examination session, together with contingency arrangements should staffing requirements change unexpectedly.

Consider what action you would take if:

- An invigilator is unable to attend or perform their duties due to illness or another unforeseen circumstance.

- Additional invigilators are required at short notice because of an emergency access arrangement.
- Unexpected rooming changes require additional invigilation staff.
- An invigilator needs to be replaced during an examination session.

Having contingency arrangements in place will help you respond quickly and minimise disruption to the examination process.

Step 6 – Monitor invigilator performance

Monitoring your invigilators throughout the examination series is essential to maintaining standards and identifying areas for improvement.

Where possible, arrange opportunities to observe invigilators conducting examinations. Mock examinations can be particularly useful for assessing their competence before the main examination series begins.

You should also:

- Review examination room incident logs to identify recurring issues and establish whether suspected or actual malpractice, irregularities and other incidents are being recorded appropriately.
- Monitor how invigilators respond to unexpected situations and whether they follow the required procedures.
- Arrange a short online or face-to-face meeting during the examination series, perhaps during the summer half-term, to discuss issues raised by invigilators and highlight areas requiring improvement for the remainder of the series.

Regular monitoring allows you to address concerns promptly rather than waiting until the end of the examination series.

Step 7 – Obtain and provide feedback

At the end of each examination series, obtain feedback from your invigilators while their experiences are still fresh.

Use *The Exams Office Invigilator Feedback Form template* to capture feedback on areas such as:

- The effectiveness of the training provided.
- The clarity and usefulness of the information and instructions supplied.
- The level of support provided by the exams manager/officer.
- The effectiveness of examination arrangements and procedures.
- Any issues, challenges or suggestions for improvement.

Review the feedback and use it to inform your planning, training and management of the invigilation team for the following academic year.

Feedback should also be an opportunity to recognise good performance and communicate any changes or improvements that will be introduced.

Developing an effective invigilation team

Managing an invigilation team is an ongoing responsibility, not something that should only be addressed immediately before an examination series.

By following these seven steps each academic year, exams managers/officers can develop a reliable, knowledgeable and competent team of invigilators who understand their responsibilities and can conduct examinations in accordance with JCQ requirements.

Ultimately, an effective invigilation team will help reduce the operational pressures on the exams manager/officer and contribute to the smooth, secure and compliant delivery of examinations.

Useful resources

The following resources within The Exams Office Hub support exams managers/officers in managing their invigilation team:

- A guide to interviewing invigilators – A brief guide which provides an overview of areas that may need to be considered in the recruitment – and interviewing – of invigilators
- A guide to managing invigilator recruitment and training - An overview of areas that may need to be considered when recruiting, training and deploying a team of invigilators
- A guide to preparing for invigilator training - A brief overview of issues that might need to be considered as you prepare to train your invigilators
- Invigilator availability and information form template – A template to collect availability and required information from invigilators
- Invigilator availability summary spreadsheet template - An example spreadsheet to collate invigilator availability information into a single point of reference
- Invigilator confidentiality and security agreement template – A template to record confirmation that JCQ and awarding body regulations and instructions are known, understood and followed by invigilators
- Invigilator job description template - An example job description that can be customised
- Invigilator training evaluation form template