

FEBRUARY 2025

## BRIEFING CANDIDATES BEFORE AN EXAM SERIES

JCQ regulations require centres to inform their candidates of the following information either electronically or in hard copy format prior to assessments and/or examinations taking place (*General Regulations for Approved Centres*, section 5.8):

- JCQ *Information for candidates* documents (coursework, non-examination assessments, on-screen tests, social media and written examinations). This information should be provided to candidates in their first language
- Awarding body privacy notices
- JCQ *Unauthorised items* poster
- JCQ *Warning to candidates* poster

Centres are permitted to place the JCQ *Information for candidates* documents on their website with candidates being made aware of the location of these documents by email. This email should contain the respective link and an appropriately worded message.

The sharing of this information must be followed up with a briefing session or a special assembly led by a senior member of staff which reinforces what candidates must and must not do when sitting written examinations and/or on-screen tests, and when producing coursework and/or non-examination assessments.

To support centres in sharing examination information with their candidates, The Exams Office has produced an editable PowerPoint [candidate briefing](#) (with guidance notes) which addresses the relevant areas associated with activity before, during and after exams which candidates should be aware of. These include:

- Which exams they have been entered for
- When exams/assessments take place
- The rules to be followed in the exam room
- When and how results will be disseminated
- The actions to take if a candidate believes that an error may have been made with their grade(s)

The information in this article considers who should create the content for, and deliver, this presentation, and the information which should be covered during the candidate briefing/assembly.

### **Who should create the content and present the information at the briefing/assembly?**

Although the regulations state that the briefing session or a special assembly must be led by a senior member of staff, it is perfectly acceptable, as the individual with the most comprehensive knowledge of the regulations, for an exams officer to support the creation of the content and help to present this information during the candidate briefing.

### **Briefing/assembly content**

#### Exam entries

Candidates should be made aware of the significance of the information they will be receiving about the exams they will be taking this summer. This will include a **Candidate Statement of Entry** and their **Exam Timetable**.

Candidates must be asked to check these documents for accuracy, and to inform the exams officer if there is an error (for example, being entered for an incorrect exam, not being entered for an exam which they believe they should be sitting, or an error in their personal details)

It is also important that candidates are made aware of the arrangements for each exam day (for example, the date, time and location (room) of their exams /assessments) and information relating to any exam clashes and how such timetable clashes will be dealt with.

#### Contingency session/day

Candidates should be made aware of the contingency session/day (the afternoon of 11 June and all day on June 2025), why these exist and inform candidates of the importance of their availability for these sessions....even though for most awarding bodies, there are no exams scheduled for that session/day.

#### The exam day

The content of the briefing should include:

- The rooms in which exams will be taking place
- The time candidates are expected to arrive for an exam
- The time exams will be starting and finishing
- Where candidates will be sitting during each exam
- Where candidates' personal belongings will be kept

#### The exam room

The contents of the posters which will be displayed outside the exam room – the *Unauthorised items and Warning to Candidates* posters – should be highlighted to candidates.

The consequences for failing to adhere to the regulations stated on the posters should be emphasised to candidates, including the role of invigilators and the requirement to follow their instructions.

### Formal examination conditions

Candidates should be made aware of the definition of formal exam conditions, why they apply and the consequences for failing to adhere to these conditions

Candidates should be made aware that formal exam conditions are defined as:

- Not talking to other candidates
- Not disturbing other candidates
- Not communicating with other candidates

It is also important to confirm that formal examination conditions apply from the moment candidates enter the exam room in which they will be taking their examination(s) until the point at which they are permitted to leave.

The consequences of failing to adhere to formal exam conditions should be explained, including that any breach may be defined as malpractice and will be reported to the awarding body who will decide whether to apply a penalty which may include disqualification.

### The role of the invigilator(s)

It should be made clear to candidates that they must follow the invigilator's instructions, and the consequences if they fail to do so.

Candidates should be informed that the centre is required to appoint invigilators by the awarding bodies and that the invigilators have been trained and are fully aware of the rules and regulations relating to their examination. Therefore, if a candidate has an issue or requires additional paper or if they are confused or unsure of the regulations, they should raise their hand and ask the invigilator for assistance.

### Exam room conditions

The Exams Office has produced a video which explains the instructions for candidates as detailed in *JCQ's Information for candidates - written examinations 2024-2025* (see *Support materials* section below).

To ensure that candidates are aware of what to expect at the time of their exam(s), and to ensure that they do not engage in unintentional malpractice, the following areas must be covered during the briefing/assembly, for example:

- How to enter the exam room and the significance of entering the exam room under formal examination conditions
- The need to follow the invigilator's instructions at all times
- Being aware of exam information such as the centre number, subject title, paper number, where they will be sat, the starting time for morning and afternoon examinations
- How to complete the front of the answer booklet
- How to request additional answer sheets/booklets

### Exam room materials

Candidates must be informed of the materials they are required to bring with them to every examination, and the materials which will be provided by the centre.

It is also imperative that candidates are made aware of the materials which are not allowed in the exam room – these may have been highlighted when addressing the contents of the *Unauthorised items* poster. Regulations relating to mobile phones and watches, in particular, should be emphasised so they are understood by all candidates.

The briefing/assembly should also include the centre's policy relating to food and drink, and the type of drinks bottles which are permitted in the exam room. Candidates should also be informed that an invigilator may ask for large lids to drinks bottles to be removed to check for unauthorised materials such as notes.

For examinations which require the use of a calculator, candidates must be informed of the type of calculators which are/are not permitted. This may require the support of the Maths department.

### Emergency evacuation of the exam room

Candidates must be made aware of the actions which will be taken by the invigilator(s) in the event of an emergency which will require an emergency evacuation of the exam room.

The Exams Office has produced a video which could be shown to candidates to explain how an invigilator(s) will evacuate the exam room in the event of an emergency such as a fire alarm or bomb alert.

### Malpractice

As detailed in section 3.3.2 of JCQ's *Suspected Malpractice: Policies and Procedures* document, centres must ensure that:

- all JCQ notices, e.g. Information for candidates, non-examination assessments, coursework, on-screen tests, written examinations, social media, plagiarism are made available to candidates prior to assessments/examinations taking place
- candidates are informed verbally and in writing about the required conditions under which the assessments are conducted, including warnings about bringing prohibited materials and devices into the assessments, and access to restricted resources
- candidates are aware of actions that constitute malpractice and the sanctions that can be imposed on those who commit malpractice
- candidates are aware of the sanctions of passing on or receiving (even if the information was not requested) confidential assessment materials. If a candidate receives confidential information, they must report it to a member of centre staff immediately
- candidates involved in examination clash arrangements are aware of appropriate behaviour during supervision, i.e. ensuring that candidates cannot pass on or receive information about the content of assessments, thereby committing candidate malpractice

- candidates completing coursework or non-examination assessments are aware of the need for the work to be their own and are provided with clear instructions on how to avoid plagiarism (including AI misuse)

#### Leaving the exam room

Centres must clarify when candidates are permitted to leave the exam room. This may be in relation to candidates who require to leave the exam room temporarily for medical reasons, or those granted an access arrangement such as a supervised rest break, and any subsequent compensation in time (if applicable).

Candidates should also be informed of the centre policy relating to leaving the exam room before the end of the examination, and the repercussions of candidates who leave the exam room without permission.

#### Results and post-results services

Candidates must be made aware of the process relating to the issuing of results and the process and options when requesting a review of results.

Section 4.1.1 of JCQ's *Post-Results Services* document requires centres to provide candidates with written confirmation of the arrangements for clerical re-checks, reviews of marking and reviews of moderation prior to the issue of results. These regulations also require centres to inform candidates of the periods during which centre staff will be available after the publication of results to discuss results and make decisions on the submission of reviews of markings.

Candidates must also be informed that submissions for clerical re-checks and reviews of marking can only be made with written candidate consent as with these services candidates' marks and subject grades may be lowered, and that this consent can only be obtained after the publication of results.

#### Certificates

Although certificates will not normally be disseminated to candidates until early November, information should be provided about when and how candidates will receive their certificates and the centre policy relating to the retention of certificates.

#### Centre-specific instructions

Centres will need to make candidates aware of a range of centre-specific instructions and requirements, including:

- What candidates should do if they:
  - are late for their exam
  - feel unwell on the day of an exam
  - are absent from an examination
  - have a timetable clash

- Where candidates' personal belongings will be stored
- Toilet breaks for candidates who do not have a medical condition
- Food and drink in the exam room (for example, food required for medical needs, and which drinks are permitted in the exam room...is it water only?)

#### Access arrangements

Candidates who have been granted access arrangements, will need to be given information and instructions relating to their access arrangement. In particular:

- Supervised rest breaks – when, the duration of, and where supervised rest breaks will take place
- Extra time – how candidates who do not utilise their extra time, and how requests to leave the exam room before the end of the extra time will be managed

#### Support materials

The following resources which can be found in the *Training Videos* area of [The Exams Office Hub](#) could be utilised during a candidate briefing:

- *Instructions for candidates* video (duration 5 minutes and 9 seconds): This animated video provides many of the instructions as detailed in JCQ's *Information for candidates - written examinations 2024-2025* document
- *Emergency evacuation of the examination room* video (duration 1 minute and 51 seconds): This video details the actions that an invigilator will take during an evacuation of the exam room, and the instructions which must be followed by the candidates

Permission is granted for member centres of The Exams Office to use these videos in assemblies/briefings for candidates, and to add to their centre's website (permission is **not** granted to third party/commercial organisations).

*The contents of this article were correct at the time of publication (End of January 2025)*