

JCQ Questions and Answers

It would be useful to know about the relative roles of JCQ and Ofqual.

- The JCQ is the membership body for exam boards, comprising the eight largest providers of qualifications in the UK. JCQ provides a single voice for its members on issues of examination administration and policy. The JCQ is a not-for-profit, community interest, company funded by its members.
- Ofqual is an independent government department and part of the civil service. It regulates qualifications and awarding organisations. Ofqual ensures standards are maintained in GCSE, AS and A levels and vocational and technical qualifications. This includes ensuring results are fair to students.

JCQ regulations

As a large centre our biggest issue is that some of the JCQ rules and processes don't work for us e.g. the restriction times on opening exam papers and the review of marking processes. How can we feed this back and who to?

- We welcome comments from schools and colleges on our regulations. Comments should be sent to centresupport@jcq.org.uk marked for the Head of Examination Services. We will then share any comments with the awarding bodies and ensure that they are carefully considered in planning for the future.

Do the JCQ regulations now mean that water bottles must be transparent? Or can they be opaque but without labels?

- It is for a centre to decide on whether a water bottle is clear or opaque. We do have the requirement that all labels must be removed from drink containers and food packaging (ICE book **see paragraph 18.2 (g), page 34**). A centre must ensure that a bottle or food packaging only contains liquid or food and is free from unauthorised material such as notes.

Query about JCQ General Regulation 3.11 - Is it the case that staff have to keep confidential that they are examiners? It gives the example of written publications, does this include telling pupils/parents that a particular teacher is an examiner?

- Teaching staff who are examiners or moderators must not inform parents and pupils of their role. Schools and colleges cannot mention that staff members are employed as examiners or moderators. Once a member of staff is contracted by an awarding body they must inform their head of centre (or designated member of the senior leadership team). A Declaration of Interest must be completed and kept on file. A JCQ Centre Inspector may ask to see the Declaration.

The JCQ one new ruling is the clock, does this have to be on British Time or if the exam is started a few minutes later i.e. 9.04, is it ok to set the clock to 9am so that it is easier for students to know start and finish times?

- No: the clock must show the actual time at which the examination starts. (Please see ICE paragraph 11.7, page 18.)

Why have JCQ stopped sending out ICE documents to centres? We never receive any anymore.

- We have not stopped sending out printed copies of the ICE and Access Arrangements. If a centre did not receive in October our autumn 2018 despatch, please email centresupport@jcq.org.uk and we will investigate and make sure that you are on our distribution list. All centres entering candidates for GCSE and/or GCE qualifications should have received one copy of the JCQ ICE book together with two copies of the *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*. These publications are also available on the JCQ website.

Could JCQ run a session similar to support exams officers implementing ICE changes? If you understand why a regulation has changed it is easier to support a change.

- Our Head of Examination Services attends a wide range of conferences and meetings organised by the *Exams Office* over the autumn and winter terms to explain changes. We will also consider holding webinars for examination officers in the future.

Of most concern is to get more advice/explanation from JCQ regarding declaration of interest for staff. It is very unclear from the regulations how this should be handled and how much information needs to be given. Do we have to canvas all staff, or just teaching staff?

- JCQ and the awarding bodies will be providing clarity on the Conflict of Interest/Declaration of Interest process in early January 2019 for the start of the new term. This will be a detailed FAQ that will be made available on our website.

Does JCQ consult EOs about the practicality of some of the changes that they make?

- Examination officers are always encouraged to send any comments to centresupport@jcq.org.uk when they feel a rule or arrangement is challenging and/or impractical. Comments received are always carefully considered.

Mobile phones

Are we allowed to allow students to turn them off and place in a plastic wallet along with their watches and leave them on their desk?

- NO - candidates **must not** be in possession of a mobile phone during an examination. If a candidate is found with a phone they will be subject to malpractice sanctions. Centres must make candidates aware of this prior to sitting their examinations and at the start of each examination.
- A candidate may have a watch in the examination room provided it is a wrist watch and does not have any other functionality such as a calculator, smart watch etc. The watch must be placed on the candidate's desk, in direct sight of the invigilator.

Where can I find videos that I can pass onto SLT re phones, consequences etc?
Can we use the video in our EPR sessions with all students?

- The JCQ video can be found [here](#) or on YouTube [here](#). The video has been widely viewed and we welcome any centre who wants to post the video on any of their platforms or show it to candidates. You do not need our written position: please do use our video!

Is there any recommendation on which phone detectors to buy, we are looking into that at the moment?

It would help if Ofqual or JCQ could endorse a detector product - there are so many and they are very expensive and sometimes not that effective.

- There is no requirement for centres to purchase mobile phone detectors and/or scanners.

Exam paper handling

Please view the JCQ video [Procedures for handling exam papers](#)

Splitting packs – I have no issue with having two people present but why does splitting packs have to be done in the secure room? This is a tiny space in a lot of centres. Why can the split not be done in the exams office?

- We fully appreciate that some centres do have a very small secure room. However after careful consideration we feel that the secure room is the most appropriate location to undertake the second pair of eyes check. The checking of question papers in a secure location ensures the security of the papers and prevents the serious consequences of a breach.

Is it possible perhaps for some sort of app to be written which could scan the barcodes on the papers to confirm that the correct papers are being opened?

- This suggestion will certainly be shared with the awarding bodies.

It is challenging finding the space to store additional papers together with the exam papers in secure storage. It seems unbalanced as the boards are happy to send additional paper insecurely via Royal Mail. Can I ask about the extent of the security required around additional papers on the day of the exams? Are they to be treated in the same level of security as the exam papers themselves? I.e. delivered in a secure envelope and counted in and out of the room?

- If the reference to 'additional papers' is examination stationery, then items such as answer booklets and formula booklets, **must** be stored in the secure room. Although it is good practice to store this material in the secure storage facility, it is not mandatory.
- Confidential examination materials, such as question papers and pre-release materials, as issued by the awarding bodies, **must** always be stored in the centre's secure storage facility, e.g. safe, security cabinet.

I just wanted to check: is it OK to open packages in exam storage with two members of staff present before the papers are transported to satellite rooms?

- If a packet of question papers is to be split, then the question paper packet must first be checked by two members of staff and opened in the secure room. An additional member of staff, who can be an invigilator, must check the day, date, time, subject, unit/component and tier of entry, if appropriate, before the question packet is opened.

You say two people must open packages for each room. If packages are sorted into separate rooms by two people in the secure room does it then need two people to open the sealed envelope that is then given to the invigilators in the separate rooms?

- **No** - the key principle is to prevent any potential breaches of security - an additional member of staff checks that the correct question paper packet has been pulled from the centre's secure storage facility.
- An additional member of centre staff, who can be an invigilator, must check the day, date, time, subject, unit/component and tier of entry, if appropriate, before the question paper packet is opened.

It is difficult to have written evidence that two people have opened packages when you have 20 or more packages to be opened in a big hall. It is just another layer of paperwork that we don't have time for on a busy exam morning when we have to ensure that papers are put on correct desks and then set up the room (including laptops) all within an hour. As long as two people check the papers is it necessary to keep written evidence?

- The ICE book makes no reference to the need to keep written evidence – see paragraphs 5.1, page 7 and paragraph 18.1, page 33.

Do we need to document who is checking each pack of papers before we open? We usually initial the pack before opening but then these get thrown away after the exam so cannot be produced to show any inspector. Is this ok?

- Yes, this is ok as at the time of the inspector's visit you will be able to show him/her the question paper packets that have been initialled by the two members of centre staff that morning or afternoon.

We check the papers before we give them to the invigilator and then the invigilator checks them before they open the packets. Does that meet the 2 invigilator rule?

- There is no '2 invigilator rule'. As above, the key principle is to prevent potential breaches of security. An additional member of staff checks that the correct question paper packet has been pulled from the centre's secure storage facility. An additional member of centre staff, who can be an invigilator, **must** check the day, date, time, subject, unit/component and tier of entry, if appropriate, **before** the question paper packet is opened. The invigilator will of course further check each packet of question papers.

Why when 150 plus candidates take an exam why do some exam packets only contain 10 papers? That's a lot of checking when you are trying to set up a room.

- This is a matter for the awarding bodies and you should provide your feedback and concerns to the relevant body/bodies.

Results

Would really appreciate a way to receive paper level results for all A Level papers, if you could help suggest this to boards? We spend most of results day typing this data into our systems, rather than focusing on the security and integrity of the overall results.

- Since November 2010 our members have issued examination results solely in an electronic format. The JCQ document [Release of results from November 2010 onwards](#) sets out the rationale for this change.

Why have some exam boards (i.e. Edexcel) decided to not bother including information about English language speaking or A level science practical skills endorsements in the results download?

- Awarding bodies are best placed to answer your concerns on specific examinations.

Teachers and students want to know the results of the individual papers but with the linear qualification only the overall mark is downloaded. We have to then access the individual marks from the individual boards and manually enter them. Is there any progress with schools being able to download all results for all individual papers as well as the overall result?

- The JCQ awarding bodies are working together to try and resolve this issue.

Results files from exam boards for reformed A levels don't contain enough information. Overall marks and component marks are not issued in the encrypted results files. Trying to get that information into Centre MIS systems is very difficult within the timeframe.

- Again we are aware of this issue and are working together to try and resolve it.

Other (staffing/timetabling/space/equipment/breaks during exams)

Centres do not have the staff or resources to have a seconder to the EO. How do you suggest that centres have a contingency member of staff in times of absence for the EO? Support staff etc. are stretched to the limit with their own workload.

- We cannot (nor should we) tell centres how to manage their staff. As discussed during the webinar, the Exams Officer role is hugely important and integral to the smooth running of the exams system, so contingency planning is essential to ensure exam series run as planned in the event of staff absence. Ofqual and JCQ are planning communications to raise awareness of the importance of Exams Officers among senior leaders at schools and colleges.

Rest breaks: I'd appreciate clearer more specific guidance on this, to pass on to invigilators. For example, in a 1-to-1 situation (invigilator/candidate) are they able to speak during rest breaks, especially when escorted to toilet?

- There is nothing to stop the invigilator and the candidate having a conversation but this **must not** be in relation to the examination being sat. Common sense must prevail.

Any advice on how we check a student who wishes to go to the lavatory during an exam, to see if they have a phone on them?

- It **must** be reinforced to candidates that they **must not** have a mobile phone on them when they begin their exams and the potential consequences of breaching this rule. You can take steps to ensure they do not retrieve a mobile phone during a rest break by, for example, checking the toilets before they use them, but the most effective method may be to ensure students understand that they may receive a zero mark on their paper if they break rules.

If the room is big enough, can we use dividers to partition the room into smaller cubicles should the candidate's needs not cause a distraction to other candidates in the room?

- Screened booths may be used for GCE and GCSE MFL Listening examinations or for candidates awarded readers, scribes or word processors. However, the invigilator(s) **must** be able to see the candidates at all times. Additionally, candidates **must not** be able to overhear or distract one another. (See **paragraph 11.12, page 19** of the JCQ ICE book.)

I have an issue with maths staff sending students to check with me that their calculator is permissible. I am not an expert and neither are my invigilators. When I ask if there is a memory on it students are often unsure too. Any advice on checking would be useful please.

- Your awarding body will be able to advise you.

I know there are logistical problems fitting in all the summer exams, but could anything be done to ensure that no other GCSE/GCE exams are run at the same time as GCSE maths and English exams?

- The JCQ Common Timetable Working Group is very aware of the logistical challenges faced in particular by Further Education Colleges when conducting GCSE English Language and GCSE Mathematics examinations, often involving very large numbers of candidates. We appreciate that colleges were not built to accommodate such substantial cohorts sitting examinations.
 - i. Unfortunately it is not possible to timetable GCSE English Language and Mathematics examinations in isolation.
 - ii. GCE AS examinations need to be timetabled within the first two weeks of the timetable. Large entry A-level examinations need to be timetabled ideally within Weeks 2-4 of the timetable in order to facilitate timely processing, marking and awarding.
 - iii. To timetable GCSE English Language and Mathematics examinations in isolation would either lead to very significant timetable clashes for A-level candidates and/or large entry A-level subjects being timetabled in Week 6 which is simply not sustainable for the awarding bodies.

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