



Joint Council for  
Qualifications<sup>CIC</sup>

## FAQs – special consideration, June 2022 series

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For the attention of heads of centre,  
senior leaders and examination officers in England

Produced on behalf of:



## 1 What measures have been put in place to ensure that candidates can sit their timetabled assessments?

A range of measures have been put in place this summer to support candidates taking GCE AS, A-level and GCSE examinations. These measures include:

- advance information on the focus of examinations for most subjects to help candidates revise
- provision of support materials for some examinations (formulae and equation sheets)
- changes to non-examination assessment and fieldwork requirements in some subjects
- optional content in some GCSE specifications
- generous grading in comparison to the June 2019 examination series, providing a safety net for this summer's candidates
- a minimum of ten days between the first and last examination in each GCE AS, A-level and GCSE specification. This will reduce the chance of a candidate missing all examinations in a subject.

The JCQ awarding bodies providing other general and vocational qualifications have also put a range of measures in place to support candidates taking examinations and assessments this summer. The relevant awarding bodies will have published these measures.

## 2 What is special consideration?

Special consideration is given to a candidate who has temporarily experienced illness, injury or some other event outside of their control at the time of the assessment. It is applied when the issue or event has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a candidate's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment. There are two categories of special consideration:

- for a candidate, who on the day of their examination/non-examination assessment, is **present** for the examination/non-examination assessment **but disadvantaged**; (see section 3, page 6 of JCQ's [guidance on the special consideration process](#))
- or
- for a candidate, who on the day of their examination/non-examination assessment, is **absent** from the examination/non-examination assessment **for an acceptable reason** (see section 4, page 8 of JCQ's [guidance on the special consideration process](#)).

## 3 Which candidates are eligible for special consideration?

Candidates will be eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but performance in the examination, or in the production of coursework or non-examination assessment, is materially affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control **at the time of the assessment**. Section 2, page 4 of JCQ's [guidance on the special consideration process](#) includes a list of such adverse circumstances as well as examples of when candidates would not be eligible for special consideration.

#### 4 Is there additional guidance on eligibility for special consideration in the context of COVID-19?

JCQ has provided supplementary guidance for centres in England on page 17 of JCQ's **guidance on the special consideration process** in the context of the June 2022 examination series and the UK Health Security Agency's **Guidance for people with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19, or a positive test result for COVID-19.**

A candidate who is staying at home and avoiding contact with others, in line with UKHSA guidance, at the time of the examination, is considered to be absent from the examination for an acceptable reason.

If a candidate has tested positive for COVID-19 or is unwell with relevant symptoms, UKHSA guidance is clear that he/she should stay at home. The candidate **should not** attend examinations for the time period recommended by UKHSA. This is 3 days for children and young people who are 18 years old and under, or 5 days for adults 19 and over. UKHSA guidance covers what to do if someone has symptoms of a respiratory infection at the end of this period.

#### 5 What is the minimum requirement for a candidate to receive a grade through the special consideration process this summer?

Due to the exceptional circumstances this summer, for GCE AS, A level and GCSE qualifications offered by **AQA, Eduqas, OCR and Pearson** a grade will be awarded where eligible candidates, absent for an acceptable reason, have completed the assessment(s) for at least one whole component within the specification, even if the completed component/unit contributes less than 25% to the overall qualification.<sup>1</sup>

#### 6 Would a candidate who was worried about other candidates in the exam room having COVID-19, or any other illness, be eligible for special consideration?

Where a candidate chooses not to enter the exam room because he/she is concerned that other candidates may have COVID-19, or any other illness, this **would not** be an acceptable reason for missing the examination. The candidate **would not** be eligible for special consideration.

#### 7 A candidate tests positive for COVID-19 but wants to sit their examination. What should the centre do?

If a candidate has tested positive for COVID-19 or is unwell with relevant symptoms, **UKHSA guidance** is clear that he/she should stay at home. The candidate **should not** attend examinations for the time period recommended by UKHSA. This is 3 days for children and young people who are 18 years old and under, or 5 days for adults 19 and over. UKHSA guidance covers what to do if someone has symptoms of a respiratory infection at the end of this period.

A candidate who is staying at home and avoiding contact with others, in line with the UKHSA guidance, at the time of the examination, is considered to be absent from the examination for an acceptable reason.

Where the candidate is aged 18 or under the centre should provide him/her with Form 14 -JCQ/ME - *Self-certification for candidates who have missed an examination*. The candidate will complete the form along with their parent/carer/guardian.

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<sup>1</sup> A candidate **cannot** receive a grade for A-level Biology, Chemistry, Geology or Physics by only completing the Practical Skills Endorsement. Similarly, a candidate **cannot** receive a grade for GCSE English Language by only completing the Spoken Language Endorsement.

Centres are advised to read Chapter 2: infection prevention and control of the [UKHSA's publication Health protection in schools and other childcare facilities \(updated 11 April 2022\)](#) where it states:

*'If a parent or carer insists on a child with symptoms attending your setting, where they have a confirmed or suspected case of an infectious illness, you can take the decision to refuse the child if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other children and staff from possible infection.'*

## 8 What evidence is required if a candidate is absent from an assessment for an acceptable reason?

The centre will make an application for special consideration if they are confident that the candidate meets the criteria as detailed in JCQ's [guidance on the special consideration process](#).

The JCQ awarding bodies have adapted Form 14 - JCQ/ME - *Self-certification for candidates who have missed an examination* to additionally assist centres in dealing with candidates who are absent from an examination for an acceptable reason in line with the UKHSA guidance. Centres will expect parents/carers/guardians and candidates to complete the relevant sections of the form.

There is **no requirement** for a candidate to complete a COVID-19 test to provide evidence of their absence from an examination.

## 9 What should centre staff do if they are concerned about the reliability of the information provided by a candidate on Form 14?

Where a centre suspects the authenticity of the details provided by a candidate within Form 14, they should investigate the matter as suspected candidate malpractice using the standard [JCQ policy and procedure](#).

If the malpractice investigation concludes that the candidate provided false information on eligibility for special consideration, the candidate's results could be withdrawn, or the candidate could be disqualified from the specific qualification, and potentially other qualifications.

## 10 Can candidates receive a qualification grade, via the special consideration process, if they do not complete the assessment(s) for at least one entire component/unit?

As is normal in a standard examination series, candidates are expected to complete examinations to receive a grade. Centre staff **should** wherever possible encourage candidates to attend their examinations.

A qualification award **will not** be made where none of the examinations/assessments within a specification have been completed.

Candidates will only be eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but performance in the examination, or in the production of coursework or non-examination assessment, is materially affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control **at the time of the assessment**. The special consideration process will only apply for a candidate who on the day of their examination/non-examination assessment is:

- present for the examination/non-examination assessment but disadvantaged
- or
- absent from the examination/non-examination assessment for an acceptable reason.

Due to the exceptional circumstances this summer, for GCE AS, A level and GCSE qualifications offered by **AQA, Eduqas, OCR and Pearson** a grade will be awarded where eligible candidates have completed the assessment(s) for at least one whole component within the specification, even if the completed component/unit contributes less than 25% to the overall qualification.<sup>2</sup>

**11 How will a grade be awarded if a candidate is absent for an acceptable reason for the examination/assessment in a whole component within a specification this summer?**

As in any examination series, when a candidate is absent from an examination/assessment for an acceptable reason, being eligible for special consideration, the awarding body will produce a mark for the missing examination(s)/assessment(s) in the specification based on:

- the mark(s) the candidate has been awarded for the other completed component(s) in the specification
- and
- the candidate's performance in their completed component(s) in that specification compared to all other candidates.

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<sup>2</sup> A candidate **cannot** receive a grade for A-level Biology, Chemistry, Geology or Physics by only completing the Practical Skills Endorsement. Similarly, a candidate **cannot** receive a grade for GCSE English Language by only completing the Spoken Language Endorsement.

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