

## EXAMINATIONS & ASSESSMENTS POLICY - Special Consideration

### Introduction

Special consideration is a post-examination adjustment to a mark or grade and can only be awarded where a candidate has been fully prepared for assessments and has covered the entire course but their ability to demonstrate their subject knowledge and understanding is materially affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control **at the time of the assessment(s)**. It cannot be applied to time spent studying or revising in preparation for the assessment.

Special consideration can only go some way in assisting candidates affected by a potentially wide range of difficulties, emotional or physical, which may influence performance in their examinations. It cannot remove the difficulty itself. This means that there could be situations where a candidate should not be entered for a qualification or a unitised examination. This is because only minor adjustments can be made to the mark awarded. Making larger adjustments would jeopardise the standard of the examination.

Marks for disadvantage are awarded on a scale of 1% to 5%, 5% being given only in the most exceptional circumstances. How missing marks are estimated when a candidate is absent from an exam or assessment is explained in chapter 4 of the JCQ's A guide to the special consideration process.

### Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to identify roles and responsibilities in the special consideration process and confirm that STCG colleges submit applications for special consideration where candidates are taking in-scope general and vocational qualifications and where they meet the published criteria.

### Eligibility 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.

Special consideration must be applied for at the time of the assessment

Candidates will not be eligible for special consideration if preparation for, or performance in, the exam is affected by the reasons detailed in the JCQ document A guide to the special consideration process, examples of which are absence during the course, joining the course late or teaching and learning being disrupted by staff shortages.

The college must decide whether the candidate meets the published criteria for special consideration. An awarding body cannot determine the candidate's eligibility and make the decision for the college

Applications must only be processed where they are supported by the college and the candidate meets the published criteria for special consideration with evidence in place.

If the college does not support an online application for special consideration, then it must not be submitted to the relevant awarding body or bodies. Speculative applications for special consideration cannot be accepted.

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Where a candidate does not meet the published criteria for special consideration, the awarding body will reject the application and provide clear reasons for doing so.

**Roles and responsibilities**

**Heads of Centre/Senior Management**

- Are familiar with, refer to and direct relevant college staff to the contents of the JCQ’s A guide to the special consideration process (effective from 1 September 2024)
- Ensure where a candidate meets the published criteria, applications for special consideration are submitted to relevant awarding bodies by Exams
- Sign appropriate evidence to support all eligible applications

**Heads of Exams**

- Refer to the criteria detailed in the JCQ’s A guide to the special consideration process to determine when candidates are/are not eligible for special consideration, and do not submit applications for trivial reasons
- Where candidates meet the published criteria, submit applications for special consideration to the relevant awarding bodies within correct timescales
- Ensure there is supporting evidence for each application, signed by a member of senior management whenever possible

**Teaching staff**

- Provide any appropriate evidence or information that may be required to determine a candidate’s eligibility for special consideration
- Where a student is known to have an ongoing medical condition, which may cause sudden absence, or is known to be unwell in the run-up to the exam and is ill on the exam day to the extent that they are sent home by the college, acceptable appropriate evidence will be a statement from the member of staff who makes that decision, if it is not possible to acquire formal medical evidence

**Candidates (or parents/carers)**

- Provide any medical or other evidence that may be required to determine eligibility for special consideration within given timescales

**Applying for special consideration**

At STCG colleges, where a candidate is eligible, special consideration will be applied for at the time of the assessment in accordance with the regulations as detailed in the JCQ’s A guide to the special consideration process.

For candidates who are present for the assessment but disadvantaged, STCG must be satisfied that there has been a material detrimental effect on candidate examination performance or in the production of coursework or non-examination assessment.

Examples where candidates may be eligible for special consideration include:

- 1) A candidate arrives for the exam and is clearly unwell, extremely distressed and/or may have sustained an injury that requires emergency access arrangements to be put in place:
  - the candidate is kept under centre supervision, while appropriate arrangements are put in place for them to take the exam, subject to the resources available

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- special consideration is applied if this indisposition has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on the candidate’s ability to demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in the examination
- 2) Special consideration for an allowance on the last paper taken will be applied for if a candidate has been entered for 3 or more exams timetabled for the same day, and the total duration of those papers is more than 6 hours for GCE/Level 3 exams or more than 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hours for GCSE/Level 1/Level 2 exams, including any approved extra time but not time taken for supervised rest breaks
- 3) Serious disturbance during the examination

Candidates will not be eligible for special consideration if preparation for, or performance in, the exam/assessment is affected by a minor disturbance in the examination room caused by another candidate, such as momentary bad behaviour, a mobile phone ringing, or a momentary fire alarm.

**Candidates who are absent from a timetabled component/unit for acceptable reasons**

If a candidate is absent for acceptable reasons, and the relevant college is prepared to support an application for special consideration, it will be applied for if the examination missed is in the terminal series and the minimum requirements for enhanced grading in cases of acceptable absence can be met.

For unitised examinations taken in an examination series prior to certification, candidates must be re-entered for any missed units at the next assessment opportunity. Unless there are difficulties arising, e.g. group performances which cannot be repeated, special consideration will not be awarded.

**Other issues**

Where other issues or problems affect a candidate or a group of candidates, JCQ’s A guide to the special consideration process will be referred to and special consideration applied for if the eligibility criteria are met.

This may include, for example:

- Other certification
- Coursework/non-examination assessment extensions
- Shortfall in work (coursework/non-examination assessment)
- Lost or damaged work (non-examination assessment components)
- Candidates taking an incorrect or defective question paper
- Candidates undertaking the wrong controlled assessment or non-examination assessment assignment

Where a candidate may be eligible for special consideration (a post-assessment adjustment) in a vocational qualification, STCG will follow JCQ’s A guide to special consideration and awarding body guidance to determine if, when and how an adjustment can be applied for.

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## Processing applications for special consideration

### Heads of Exams/Exams

- Before processing online applications, the college must be satisfied that the candidates' circumstances warrant special consideration, as set out within the JCQ guidance, and that applications are sufficiently evidenced.
- Ensure all eligible applications are supported by the college appropriate evidence signed by a member of senior management whenever possible
- If the centre does not support an online application for special consideration, then it must not be submitted to the relevant awarding body or bodies. Speculative applications for special consideration cannot be accepted.
- Ensure applications are processed as required by the awarding bodies
- Ensure candidates (or parents/carers) understand that all cases must be dealt with by the colleges
- Ensure that special consideration is applied for at the time of the assessment
- Ensure special consideration is not applied for in a cumulative fashion and where a candidate may be affected by different indispositions, ensure special consideration is only applied for the most serious indisposition
- Keep evidence to support all applications on file until after the publication of results and provide the appropriate signed evidence to support an application where this may be requested by an awarding body
- Meet the awarding body deadlines for submitting applications

### Submitting applications for special consideration

Where a candidate or group of candidates is/are eligible for special consideration, applications will be submitted to the relevant awarding body following the published processes in A guide to the special consideration process.

In cases of online applications for special consideration, candidates will be informed when an application for special consideration is submitted to the awarding body (to ensure compliance with the UK GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018).

Evidence to support all applications will be retained on file until after the publication of results.

### Timetabled written examinations

- Applications for individual candidates will be submitted online by logging into the relevant awarding body secure website and following the links to special consideration (where the awarding body's secure site accepts applications online)
- Form 10 Application for Special Consideration will only be completed and submitted to the awarding body where the online system does not accept applications for a particular qualification
- A single application to cover all examinations affected where a candidate is present but disadvantaged, and a separate application for each day on which examinations are missed where a candidate is absent from an examination for an acceptable reason will be submitted
- For cases involving groups of candidates, applications will be made online where the awarding body's secure system accepts group applications or a Form 10 will be completed
- Form 14 Self certification form (Self certification for candidates who have missed an examination) will only be completed by a candidate/parent/carer where circumstances warrant this and will not be used where the centre knows the candidate was ill

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**Internally assessed work**

- Where appropriate, applications will be made online where the awarding body’s secure system accepts them or a Form 10 will be completed and submitted to the awarding body
- Where a short extension to a work submission deadline for an individual candidate is being requested, the awarding body will be contacted directly
- Where an application relates to a shortfall in work for an individual candidate, this will be submitted online or by completing a Form 10, dependent on the awarding body

**Post-assessment adjustments - special consideration (Vocational qualifications)**

- Where the learner's circumstances are eligible, Form 10 or Form VQ/SC Application for special consideration - Vocational qualifications will be completed and submitted to the awarding body

**Applications post-publication of results**

If, after the publication of results for a particular examination series, a claim is made that special consideration was not applied for at the time of an assessment where a candidate was eligible, the claimant will be informed that late applications will only be accepted by an awarding body in the most exceptional circumstances and where a member of senior management is able to produce compelling evidence to support a late application.

If a claim is made after the completion of a review of results, the claimant will be informed that an application for special consideration cannot be submitted.

**Appeals regarding decisions relating to Special Consideration**

This may include decisions not to make/apply for special consideration in circumstances where a student does not meet the criteria for, or there is no evidence/insufficient evidence to support, the application of special consideration.

Where a decision is made in relation to special consideration for a student:

- If a student who is the subject of the relevant decision (or the student’s parent/carer) disagrees with the decision made and reasonably believes that STCG has not complied with its responsibilities or followed due procedures, a written request setting out the grounds for appeal should be submitted to the Principal. This should be done within 10 working days of the decision being made
- The Principal will instruct the appropriate Vice Principal or other senior member of staff to investigate, and written feedback should be provided within 5 working days of receiving the appeal

To determine the outcome of the appeal, the colleges will consult JCQ’s A guide to the special consideration process to confirm that STCG has complied with the principles and regulations governing special consideration and followed due procedures.

The appellant will be informed of the outcome of the appeal no later than 5 working days after submission of the appeal in writing.

If the appeal is upheld, STCG will proceed to implement the necessary arrangements/submit the necessary application without delay in order to meet awarding body deadlines.

Where a learner is dissatisfied with the way in which the appeal has been handled, they may complain in writing to their College Principal who will review the investigation and provide a written response to the complainant within 20 working days. The response will provide a written explanation and information on how the college will deal with the matter if the appeal is upheld.

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