

Exam time

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Exam time

This section covers the procedures necessary for the smooth running of exams.

Inspections:

- preparing for a JCQ inspection
- what to do during an inspection.

Starting an exam:

- checking for paper and stationery shortages
- following the regulations
- briefing invigilators.

Late, absent or disruptive candidates:

- briefing candidates and invigilators
- procedures for dealing with incidents.

Oral and practical exams:

- conforming with regulations
- preparation.

Malpractice:

- making candidates aware of the consequences
- spotting incidents
- reporting incidents.

Finishing an exam:

- making sure invigilators are familiar with regulations
- collecting scripts and exam papers.

Inspections

You need to be well prepared for unannounced inspections by JCQ inspectors that will happen at least once a year at any time during the exam periods. It is useful to refer back to the previous year's report and use that report's headings as a checklist. You will need to familiarise yourself with any agreed action points.

Good practice

- **Check the previous year's inspection report** and ensure all points raised in that report have been actioned.
- **Read the latest copy of the JCQ *Instructions for the conduct of examinations***, published each September, available from the JCQ website, www.jcq.org.uk. Pay particular attention to the regulations for the secure storage of exam papers.
- **Remember that an inspector can ask to view any of the exam rooms.** Each one will need to meet JCQ requirements.
- **Keep documentation safely to hand at all times.** The inspector will want to see evidence of how you are meeting requirements. Your documentation should support anything relating to access arrangements and granting candidates extra time etc.
- **Welcome the inspector**, no matter how inconvenient the visit. Greet him or her promptly and ask how the inspector would like to conduct the inspection. This way you know what to expect and how to conduct the inspection in the most expedient manner.
- **Use the inspection as an opportunity to ask questions** on any points you are unsure of, rather than seeing it as a threat. As long as you are following JCQ instructions and guidelines, it is unlikely you will run into any problems. If the inspector does offer any major recommendations, you can discuss them together. You may find it helpful for a senior manager to be present when feedback is given, as the responsibility for change lies with the centre. If there are any key changes to be made, a second inspection will follow.

Starting an exam

As soon as exam papers arrive at the centre, you should check that you have the correct question papers and the correct quantity of stationery for each exam. The relevant awarding body should be contacted immediately if there are any shortages.

At the beginning of every exam at your centre, you are responsible for ensuring that invigilators read out the statutory regulations and any erratum notices. They will then be responsible for distributing the exam papers and materials and for giving the instruction to start.

You will need to brief the invigilator(s) fully on the requirements for the session and ensure that all stationery and other materials needed for the session, including spare sets, are on hand in the room. It may help to make a checklist of precisely what needs to be said and done for each individual exam.

Good practice

You may find it helpful to have subject staff available at the beginning of an exam to deal with any paper and/or candidate issues.

You or your trained invigilators should:

- **check the register**, note any absentees and ensure you can identify all candidates
- **follow the regulations for starting the exam** in accordance with JCQ *Instructions for the conduct of examinations*; this is the time to inform the candidates that they are now subject to the regulations of the exam and to give them the chance to hand in unauthorised material
- **have an established procedure for handling all candidates' possessions** such as bags and mobile phones
- **have a standardised procedure for starting the exam** and only in special circumstances should question papers be laid out on desks before the start of the exam; if in any doubt, check the JCQ requirements
- **have a centre policy for chasing up absent candidates** and make sure everyone knows what to do

- **read out any erratum notices**
- **start the exam on time**, do not start before the advertised time on your centre timetable if there are any absent candidates, and remember you may not always be able to start all the exams yourself, but you may decide to check things are running well once the exam has started
- **post up the start and finish times** on a board so that everyone can see
- **where there are subject clashes or where a candidate is taking the exam at a later time** than others because of special circumstances, ensure that you seal the remaining question paper(s) and return them to you exam stores
- **if your centre practice is to change invigilators mid-exam**, pass on clear instructions to the invigilator taking over.

Late, absent or disruptive candidates

There may be candidates who are late, who fail to turn up for an exam or who prove disruptive in the exam room.

It is important to ensure that absent candidates are marked as such on the attendance register so that neither you, nor invigilators, waste valuable time hunting for scripts that do not exist. Make sure that invigilators are aware of the procedures to follow as laid down by the JCQ guidelines for late candidates and the extra work it could cause you all if they are not followed.

Good practice

- **It is a good idea for your centre to have a policy for late or absent candidates** and ensure invigilators are trained on this.
- **Remember that not all candidates are deliberately late** and may be very distressed on arrival. It may be helpful to take a few moments to help the candidate to calm down, as this will limit disruption.
- **Late candidates should be reminded** not to enter the room with any mobile phones or disallowed equipment and like any other candidate, must be taken through the JCQ guidelines and read any erratum notices.
- **Have a policy prepared in advance to deal with disruptive candidates** in the exam room. You may need to involve the management team, the heads of department and pastoral staff in setting up such a policy to deal quickly and effectively with these candidates, leaving enough flexibility for unexpected circumstances.
- **Warn candidates in their briefing session about the penalties for disruption.**
- **Ensure that invigilators are trained to act quickly** and in accordance with the agreed procedure in the case of a disruptive candidate.

Oral and practical exams

Awarding bodies generally give centres discretion to choose when to set orals and practical exams, within a designated time limit. As with any other form of exam, all rooms should be set up in accordance with the JCQ regulations.

Good practice

- **Oral and practical exams are generally held ahead of the written exams** in order to avoid further exam clashes. It is useful for you to check well in advance the awarding body's spectrum of dates within which the exams must take place. This will avoid running too close to the deadline and allow for flexibility, for example where candidates are absent.
- **It will be necessary to liaise with heads of department** over essential arrangements, such as technical and support staff to be on hand.
- **Note:**
 - **to conform with regulations**, a sole invigilator in a science practical may not have taught any of the candidates
 - **all necessary equipment and materials could be prepared by staff in advance** and logged in and out by you at the time of the exam
 - **you will need to provide a silent, invigilated preparation room** for oral candidates where awarding body regulations require it
 - **ensure that other classes who would normally have been using the exam areas have been relocated**
 - **be especially vigilant concerning numbers and timetables** when one practical session follows another and it is essential at such times to follow timetable regulations; it is useful to arrange for the second group to be gathered together just before the first group is scheduled to finish their exams to keep continuity and keep to the schedule.

Malpractice

Malpractice includes any kind of irregular conduct in connection with all coursework and any exam. It is vital to create an exam environment where malpractice can be spotted. This will include briefing and placing invigilators and setting up the exam room. You will need to familiarise yourself with the JCQ document *Guidance for dealing with instances of suspected malpractice in examinations*.

Good practice

- **Candidates should be given examples of malpractice and reminded of the consequences and penalties of malpractice** or any other irregular behaviour, as detailed in their earlier briefing document.
- **Check all regulations** concerning the creation of the exam environment, and the JCQ *Instructions for the conduct of examinations* have been carefully followed.
- **Ensure all breaches of regulations are reported immediately** to the head of centre and to the awarding body.

Finishing an exam

There will almost certainly be a number of exams finishing in the same room during any one session. It may be useful to produce a sheet of instructions for the invigilator so that there can be no doubt about the procedure to be followed at your centre. Remember it may not be possible for you to finish every exam yourself.

Good practice

- **Establish a policy in accordance with JCQ regulations** on the collection of question papers, spare paper, etc., and ensure all invigilators are trained on this procedure.
- **Ensure all question papers are collected and accounted for** before candidates leave the exam room.
- **Do advise the invigilator to sort the collected scripts** into the order on the attendance register and to check that there is a script for every candidate marked present on the register. The invigilator must ensure scripts are not left unattended and are safely delivered to exams office personnel.