

## **Special Consideration 2022 – summary of Ofqual guidance including update – April 2022**

<https://www.icq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/A-guide-to-the-special-consideration-process-202122-%E2%80%93-General-and-Vocational-qualifications-Updated-8-April-2022.pdf>

The standard guidance document has been updated, 8 April 2022, to take account of 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: People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19 - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)) which was published on 1 April 2022. This specific guidance can be found from page 6 below. A separate, specific summary guide for students and parents is also available.

### **Special Consideration 2022 – summary of Ofqual guidance**

#### **Section 1 – what is SC?**

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 and is applied when the issue (emotional or physical), 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.

This means that there will be some situations where candidates should not be entered for an examination.

Where **long term circumstances** have prevented the candidate from reaching the competence standards, it may not be possible to make an adjustment.

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

#### **Section 2 - Who is and who isn't eligible?**

2.1 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. These include:

2.1.1 temporary illness or accident/injury at the time of the assessment;
2.1.2 bereavement at the time of the assessment (where whole groups are affected, normally only those most closely involved will be eligible);
2.1.3 domestic crisis arising at the time of the assessment;
2.1.4 serious disturbance during an examination, particularly where recorded material is being used;
2.1.5 accidental events at the time of the assessment such as being given the wrong examination paper, being given a defective examination paper or CD, failure of practical equipment, failure of materials to arrive on time;
2.1.6 participation in sporting events, training camps or other events at an international level at the time of the assessment, e.g. representing their country at an international level in chess or football;
2.1.7 failure by the centre to implement previously approved access arrangements for that specific examination series.

2.2 When candidates have been fully prepared for the specification but the wrong texts have been chosen, special consideration may be given at the discretion of the awarding body. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the correct texts are taught. Where this has not happened, there can be no guarantee that a candidate will receive special consideration. Such instances will be investigated by the awarding body on a case-by-case basis.

Where the wrong texts have been taught, the texts studied must have been examined in the current specification in a previous examination series.

2.3 Candidates will **not be eligible** for special consideration if preparation for, or performance in the examination is affected by:

2.3.1 long term illness or other difficulties during the course affecting revision time, unless the illness or circumstances exacerbate what would otherwise be a minor issue at the time of the assessment (i.e. difficulties over and above those that previously approved access arrangements would have alleviated);
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2.3.2 bereavement occurring more than six months before the assessment, unless an anniversary has been reached at the time of the assessment or there are on-going implications such as an inquest or court case;
2.3.3 domestic inconvenience, such as moving house, lack of facilities, taking holidays (including school/exchange visits and field trips) at the time of the assessment;
2.3.4 minor disturbance in the examination room caused by another candidate, such as momentary bad behaviour or a mobile phone ringing;
2.3.5 the consequences of committing a crime, where formally charged or found guilty; (However, a retrospective application for special consideration may be considered where the charge is later dropped or the candidate is found not guilty.)
2.3.6 the consequences of taking alcohol or recreational drugs;
2.3.7 the consequences of disobeying the centre's internal regulations;
2.3.8 the failure of the centre to prepare candidates properly for the examination for whatever reason;
2.3.9 quality of teaching, staff shortages, building work or lack of facilities;
2.3.10 misreading the timetable and/or failing to attend at the right time and in the right place;
2.3.11 misreading the instructions of the question paper and answering the wrong questions;
2.3.12 making personal arrangements such as a wedding or holiday arrangements which conflict with the examination timetable;
2.3.13 submitting no coursework or non-examination assessment at all, unless coursework or non-examination assessment is scheduled for a restricted period of time, rather than during the course;
2.3.14 missing all examinations and internally assessed components/units;
2.3.15 failure to cover the course because of joining the class part way through;
2.3.16 a disability or learning difficulties (diagnosed or undiagnosed) unless the disability or circumstances exacerbate what would otherwise be a minor issue at the time of the assessment, i.e. difficulties over and above those that previously approved access arrangements would have alleviated;
2.3.17 failure by the centre to process access arrangements by the published deadline.

### **Section 3 - Candidates who are present for the assessment**

The maximum allowance given will be 5% of the total raw marks available in the component concerned, including coursework/non-examination assessment. The centre 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.

The decision made by the awarding body will be based on various factors.

Special consideration cannot be applied in a cumulative fashion.

The following are examples of circumstances which must apply at the time of the assessment.

5% This is the maximum allowance and will be reserved for the most exceptional cases, such as:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• terminal illness of the candidate;</li> <li>• terminal illness of a parent/carer;</li> <li>• death of a member of the immediate family within two months of the examination;</li> <li>• very serious and disruptive crisis/incident at or near the time of the examination.</li> </ul>
4% Very serious problems such as:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• life-threatening illness of candidate or member of immediate family;</li> <li>• major surgery at or near the time of the examination;</li> <li>• severe disease;</li> <li>• very recent death of member of extended family;</li> <li>• severe or permanent bodily injury occurring at the time of the examination;</li> <li>• serious crisis/incident at the time of the examination.</li> </ul>
<p><i>NB 'Very recent' is defined as within one month of the examination(s) taking place.</i></p> <p><i>The centre 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.</i></p>
3% A more common category (more cases will fall into this category), including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recent traumatic experience such as death of a close friend or distant relative;</li> <li>• recent illness of a more serious nature;</li> <li>• flare-up of a severe congenital/medical condition or a psychological condition;</li> <li>• broken limbs;</li> <li>• organ disease;</li> <li>• physical assault trauma before an examination;</li> <li>• recent crisis/incident;</li> <li>• witnessing a distressing event on the day of the examination involved.</li> </ul>
<p><i>NB 'Recent' is defined as up to four months prior to the examination(s) taking place.</i></p> <p><i>The centre 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.</i></p>
<p><b>2% The most common category of allowance (most cases will fall within this category):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• illness at the time of the examination;</li> <li>• broken limb on the mend;</li> <li>• concussion;</li> <li>• effects of pregnancy (not pregnancy per se);</li> <li>• extreme distress on the day of an examination (not simply exam related stress);</li> <li>• allowance on the last paper taken in a day when a candidate has been entered for three or more examinations timetabled for the same day and the total duration of those papers is more than 5 hours 30 minutes (GCSE examinations) or more than 6 hours (GCE examinations). (Where extra time has been used following formal approval, this should be included in the calculation.) (Supervised rest breaks must not be included in the total duration of the papers when applying for special consideration.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>1% Reserved for more minor problems:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• noise during examination which is more than momentary;</li> <li>• illness of another candidate which leads to disruption in the examination room;</li> <li>• stress or anxiety for which medication has been prescribed;</li> <li>• hay fever on the day of an examination;</li> <li>• minor upset arising from administrative problems.</li> </ul>

#### **Section 4 - Candidates who are absent from a timetabled component/unit for acceptable reasons**

The minimum requirements for enhanced grading in cases of acceptable absence are detailed below. In all cases, candidates must have been fully prepared and covered the whole course.

#### **Section 4.3 Minimum requirements for enhanced grading in cases of acceptable absence**

<p><b>GCE AS and A-level qualifications (AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC specifications):</b></p>
<p>at least 25% of the total assessment must have been completed†.</p> <p>partially completed AS or A2 units are not acceptable.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AS linear specifications: 25% of the total assessment must have been completed.</li> <li>• AS unitised specifications: 25% of the total assessment must have been completed.</li> <li>• Enhancement given at AS level (unitised specifications) will be carried forward to A-level.</li> <li>• A-level linear specifications: 25% of the total assessment must have been completed.</li> <li>• A-level six unit award (unitised specifications): 25% of the total assessment must have been completed with at least one A2 unit completed.</li> <li>• A-level four unit award (unitised specifications): 25% of the total assessment must have been completed with at least one A2 unit completed.</li> <li>• An A-level award (unitised specifications) will not be issued based on AS units alone.</li> </ul>
<p><b>GCSE (AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC specifications):</b></p>
<p>25% of the total assessment must have been completed†</p>
<p>Projects (including Extended Project): where the project is not completed, a grade cannot be issued.</p>

When a candidate has missed a timetabled component/unit **for acceptable reasons** and the centre is prepared to support an application for special consideration, an adjustment may be made to the terminal grade. However, the component/unit must have been missed in the terminal series and the minimum requirements of section 4.3 (above) must be met. Centre staff must follow their internal procedures for dealing with candidates who feel unwell on the day of an examination.

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.

### **Section 5 - Other issues**

Guidance on death following entry can be found in full guidance.

Where an individual candidate meets the published criteria for special consideration, i.e. a temporary illness, temporary injury or other indisposition, prior to the submission of their work, it may be possible to allow a short extension to the deadline. An extension of no more than ten days to the deadline for the submission of work may enable the candidate to complete his/her work. The centre must contact the relevant awarding body to request this arrangement.

#### **Shortfall in work (coursework/non-examination assessment)**

If a candidate has been subject to an unforeseen prolonged illness or other misfortune during the period when the work was being produced, it may, in some subjects, be possible to accept a reduced quantity of work without penalty. However, all of the assessment objectives must have been covered at least once. This will not be possible if the specification only requires one piece.

Where several pieces of work are required, the reduction will only be accepted if those pieces are testing the same criteria. It will not be possible to give this consideration in every case. For example, if work has not been submitted, the assessment objectives have not been satisfied or the candidate joined the course late.

No adjustment to the marks must be made by the centre. Form 10 – JCQ/SC† should be submitted to the awarding body, attached to a breakdown of marks across the assessment objectives.

Candidates must have been fully prepared for the course but unable to finish the work.

#### **Other problems**

Guidance includes incorrect paper being given and / or sat or where candidates have taken the wrong coursework or non-examination assessment assignment.

### **Section 6 - Processing applications for special consideration (GCSE and GCE qualifications)**

This section includes procedural information relevant for Exams Officers who will process applications.

#### **Some examples of when special consideration is and is not appropriate**

##### **Example 1**

A Year 12 candidate is sitting GCE AS qualifications in June 2022. The candidate is unable to attend any of his AS examinations (Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics) due to ill health. The centre will re-enter him again for GCE AS Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics at the next available assessment opportunity – June 2023.

##### **Example 2**

A candidate misses two GCSE papers in one day, French in the morning and Computer Science in the afternoon, due to ill health. She meets the minimum requirements for a GCSE award in June 2022, having completed over 25% of the total assessment in both GCSE subjects\*. The centre applies for special consideration. As the centre knows that the candidate has been struggling with her health over the past few days, there is no need for them to ask the

candidate to produce a letter from her GP. The centre can write a supporting letter to substantiate her absence from the two GCSE papers.

### Example 3

A candidate sits a GCE A-level Government and Politics examination on Thursday morning. He is known to be struggling with a chest and ear infection yet is adamant that he must sit his examination. The candidate's illness is clear to the invigilation team. However, the candidate is unable to attend his GCE A-level German examination the following morning. He meets the minimum requirements for a GCE A-level German award since he has already sat one paper. The centre can write a statement supporting the application for special consideration since they know he was falling ill prior to his absence from Friday morning's examination.

### Example 4

A candidate sits a GCSE Russian examination on Thursday afternoon. There were no known problems during Thursday's examination. However, she does not attend for her GCSE Geography examination on Friday morning. Her mother contacts the school office on the morning of the Geography examination to report her absence owing to a stomach upset. Medical evidence is not available to substantiate the request. **The centre advises the parent to complete the relevant part of Form 14 – JCQ/ME** which is then brought into the school office. The centre having received Form 14 feels able to support the application and submits an online application for special consideration. Form 14 is retained on the centre's files.

### Example 5

A candidate sits a GCE A-level Economics examination on Monday morning. He is undergoing treatment for a serious illness. The candidate has recently been prescribed medication which is causing serious side effects. The candidate sits his GCE A-level Economics examination as scheduled but is unable to sit his remaining GCE A-level Media Studies and A-level Physical Education examinations. He can satisfy the rules for special consideration since he has completed a minimum of 25% of the specification in both GCE A-level Media Studies and GCE A-level Physical Education. The candidate visits his GP who, on account of her knowledge of her patient and his condition, is more than willing to produce a note for the school. Similarly, his school is willing to write a supporting statement.

## **Section 7 - Post assessment adjustments – special consideration (Vocational qualifications)**

An awarding body's decision to award special consideration in vocational qualifications will be based on various factors, which may vary from learner to learner and from one assessment to another. These factors may include the severity of the circumstances, the date of the assessment and the nature of the assessment.

It is important to note that it may not be possible to apply special consideration where:

- an assessment requires the demonstration of a practical competence;
- the assessment criteria must be fully met;
- units/qualifications confer 'Licence to Practise'.

Where an assessment has been missed or is in the form of an on-demand test, such as an electronic test set and marked by a computer, the centre should offer the learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date.

Advice must always be sought from the relevant awarding body.

Special consideration will not be considered once learner achievement has been claimed and certificated.

### 7.3 Lost or damaged work (internally assessed work)

When a learner's work has been lost or damaged, an awarding body may consider an application for special consideration. In all cases, the centre must be able to verify that the work was done and that it was monitored whilst it was in progress.

The centre must follow the awarding body's published procedures for lost or damaged work.

### **Appendix 1 Supplementary guidance on the special consideration process for centres in England June 2022 examination series**

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 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 because of illness.

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. These measures will have been published by the relevant awarding bodies.

Supplementary guidance for the June 2022 examination series for people with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19, or a positive test result for COVID-19:

This supplementary guidance should be read in conjunction with the other sections of the JCQ publication 'A guide to the special consideration process' (summarised below, link above) which sets out the procedures where a candidate has been fully prepared and 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. Centres should also refer to the sections on the application of special consideration tariffs and the processing of applications.

The two categories of special consideration being:

- 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 the document - JCQ guidance on the special consideration process)

or

- a candidate, who on the day of their examination/non-examination assessment, is absent from the examination/non-examination assessment for an acceptable reason

#### **Key extracts from the UKHSA Guidance as of 1 April 2022**

People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19 - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)). For children and young people 18 and under:

- "Children and young people with mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough, who are otherwise well, **can continue to attend their education setting.**"
- "Children and young people who are **unwell and have a high temperature** should stay at home and avoid contact with other people, where they can. They can go back to school, college or childcare, and resume normal activities **when they no longer have a high temperature and they are well enough to attend.**"
- "**It is not recommended that children and young people are tested for COVID-19 unless directed to by a health professional.**"
- "If a child or young person has **a positive COVID-19 test result they should try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 3 days after the day they took the test, if they can.**"

• **“Children and young people who usually go to school, college or childcare and who live with someone who has a positive COVID-19 test result should continue to attend as normal.”**

• For further information on high temperature (fever) in children, please see the NHS website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fever-in-children/>

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 for their examinations. There may be exceptional cases though where this will not be possible, e.g. a temporary illness on the day of the examination. Centres and candidates should adhere to the UKHSA guidance as it applies on the day of the candidate’s examination(s). The JCQ awarding bodies will update this supplementary guidance as soon as possible should the relevant public health guidance change. Centres should also consider any differences in the guidance based on the candidate’s age (e.g. 18 and under or 19 and over) and ensure they refer to the right guidance.

**Special consideration when a candidate is absent for an acceptable reason**

Candidates must be reminded that the awarding of a grade through the special consideration process can only be made where they are absent from an examination or non-examination assessment component for an acceptable reason. 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. This includes candidates who are displaying the symptoms described in the UKHSA guidance as advising them to stay at home (e.g. a high temperature for those aged 18 and under) as well as those with a positive COVID-19 test result.

Where a candidate still wishes to attend an examination, despite having symptoms (e.g. a high temperature) or a positive COVID-19 test the centre should encourage the candidate to follow the UKHSA’s guidance.

The centre could also consider the advice in UKHSA’s updated health protection in education and childcare settings guidance. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-otherchildcare-facilities>)

**Evidencing candidates’ eligibility for special consideration**

The JCQ awarding bodies will be adapting **Form 14 -JCQ/ME - Self-certification for candidates who have missed an examination** to 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.

Centres can verify the candidate’s circumstances, where provided in Form 14, to process an application for special consideration using the category ‘absent candidate’. There is no requirement for a candidate to complete a COVID-19 test to provide evidence of their absence from an examination.

**Minimum requirements for a candidate to receive a grade through the special consideration process**

Section 4.3. page 8 of the JCQ guidance outlines the minimum requirements for an adjustment to be made to the grade where a candidate is absent for an acceptable reason. However, for the June 2022 examination series, due to the exceptional circumstances, the awarding bodies will award a grade where eligible candidates have completed the assessment(s) for at least one whole component within the specification.

N.B 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. As in all previous standard examination series, a qualification award will not be made where none of the examinations/assessments within a specification have been completed.

**Additional information**

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. Candidates

should be made aware that their results can be withdrawn, or they can be disqualified if they provide false information on eligibility for special consideration.

#### **Examples of possible scenarios:**

##### **Example 1**

An A-level candidate who is 18 is unwell and has a high temperature on the day of one of their A-level examinations.

- a) The centre advises the candidate to stay at home and not attend their examinations until he no longer has a high temperature and is well enough to attend his examinations.
- b) The centre asks the candidate to self-certify their illness using Form 14.
- c) The centre submits an online application for special consideration for each of the missed A-level examinations to the relevant awarding bodies using the category 'absent candidate'.
- d) As the candidate's examinations have been spaced by at least 10 days he will be able to receive A-level grades based on the other components completed.

##### **Example 2**

An A-level candidate who is 19 is displaying symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as COVID-19, and has a high temperature or does not feel well enough to attend their examination.

- a) The centre advises the candidate to stay at home and not attend their examinations, until he no longer has a high temperature (if he had one) or no longer feels unwell.
- b) The centre asks the candidate to self-certify their reason for absence using Form 14.
- c) The centre submits an online application for special consideration for each of the missed A-level examinations to the relevant awarding bodies using the category 'absent candidate'.
- d) As the candidate's A-level examinations have been spaced by at least 10 days in every subject, he will be able to receive A-level grades based on the other components completed.

##### **Example 3**

A candidate who is 16 has taken a COVID-19 test under the direction of a health professional or has chosen to take a COVID-19 test (against UKHSA guidance recommendations) and has a positive test result.

- a) The centre advises the candidate to stay at home and not attend their examinations for 3 days after the day she took the test.
- b) The centre asks the candidate to self-certify their reason for absence using Form 14.
- c) The centre does not require the candidate to provide proof of a test but could keep a record of the test, such as a photograph, as evidence if it is available.
- d) The centre submits an online application for special consideration for each of the missed GCSE examinations to the relevant awarding bodies using the category 'absent candidate'.
- e) As the candidate's GCSE examinations have been spaced by at least 10 days in every subject, she will be able to receive GCSE grades based on the other components completed.

##### **Example 4**

An A-level candidate who is 17 has a positive COVID-19 test result or is unwell and experiencing a high temperature but wishes to attend their examination.



- a) The centre refers the candidate to the UKHSA guidance. In the case of a positive test result, the candidate is advised to stay at home and not attend their A-level examinations for 3 days after the day the test was taken. In the case of symptoms, the candidate is advised to stay at home until she no longer has a high temperature.
- b) The centre reassures the candidate about their eligibility for special consideration. As the candidate's examinations are spaced by at least 10 days in every A-level subject, grades can be awarded on the other completed components.
- c) The centre submits an online application for special consideration for each of the missed A-level examinations to the relevant awarding bodies using the category 'absent candidate'.
- d) If the candidate still requests to attend the examination, the centre should follow the advice in UKHSA's updated health protection in education and childcare settings guidance.  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-otherchildcare-facilities>)

**SKL – 23/04/2022**