



06 May 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

### Special Consideration & Access Arrangements

Sometimes, when children take their GCSE examinations, it is necessary to submit a special consideration application on their behalf. Schools do this when there is an event, such as an illness or bereavement that is likely to affect the student's performance on that examination. In a normal year, if special consideration is granted, exam boards will consider the effect of the event on the student's performance when awarding a final grade.

This year, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) have modified the process for special consideration applications. They have widened the list of things that might lead to special consideration being awarded, in response to the pandemic, and they have also asked parents and students to raise requests for special considerations with schools **before** the submission of the teacher assessed grade.

We are writing to you today to explain this process, and to give you the opportunity to make special consideration applications.

#### Mitigating circumstances/special consideration:

Special consideration recognises students that may have been affected by a potentially wide range of difficulties, emotional or physical, which may have influenced their performance in their assessments. Examples of special circumstances include:

- temporary illness or accident/injury at the time of the assessment.
- bereavement at the time of the assessment (where whole groups are affected, normally only those most closely involved will be eligible).
- domestic crisis arising at the time of the assessment.
- serious disturbance during an examination, particularly where recorded material is being used.
- 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.
- 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.
- failure by the centre to implement previously approved access arrangements for that specific examination series.





Further examples of what is and what is not considered as special circumstances can be found [here](#). Please note that the examples stated above refer to guidance that was produced before the announcement that exams were not to take place; we have shared them with you only to provide some examples of special consideration.

**COVID Related Disruption:** In addition to the usual definition of special circumstances the JCQ has asked that parents make centres aware when they believe that their child has faced additional disruption to their teaching and learning as a result of COVID 19, in comparison to their class/cohort peers.

We understand this to be circumstances such as a student who has been repeatedly identified as a close contact and as a result has been asked to self-isolate and study remotely for an extended period of time whilst the rest of their year group has been learning face to face.

### **How have centres been instructed to deal with special circumstances?**

This year grades will be based on a holistic, objective judgement of the evidence of the students' performance on the subject content they have been taught. Centres will consider the quality of students' work in relation to the assessments they have taken as well as considering the grade descriptors and grading exemplification the JCQ have made available. Where a student has identified that their performance in one of their assessments has been affected by special circumstances the JCQ has indicated that centres either:

- A. Use the assessment evidence when assigning a grade on the basis that it is the most appropriate evidence available but disregard the assessment if it would disadvantage the student. OR
- B. Use alternative evidence to replace an assessment that is appropriately representative of individual students' performance.

In other words, the JCQ has instructed centres to adjust the evidence that students' grades are based on rather than adjust the grades of the students.

You will have seen from our recent letter regarding the assessments sources that we are considering all the assessment evidence that meets the quality standards outlined by the JCQ and Ofqual that is available to us. You will also be aware that the JCQ and Ofqual have said that more recent evidence is likely to be more representative of student performance. We are providing students with a final opportunity to demonstrate their current performance in the assessments in the final two weeks of the May half-term. It is therefore more likely that in cases of special circumstances we will choose to disregard the affected assessments if they disadvantage a student.



### How do I inform the school if I believe my child should receive special consideration?

Please follow [this link](#) to complete the Microsoft form. All submissions must be made by 1PM on May 11<sup>th</sup>. We understand this is a short deadline but it is important that we have time to process requests and inform staff before grading begins.

In order to avoid the need for our administration team to have to make additional follow-up calls, we will be asking you to provide the following information:

- Details of the category (as indicated above) which you believe the special circumstances correspond to.
- Specific details of how the special circumstances affected your child's performance.
- The dates between which the assessments you believe were affected occurred.
- The subjects and the specific assessment that you believe were affected.

### Access Arrangements/Reasonable Adjustments:

If your child qualifies for access arrangements or reasonable adjustments for SEND, you do not need to complete the form above. We already know if these apply to your child. The JCQ publication [Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#) provides further detailed information. Please be assured that we continue to work with the guidance provided by the JCQ to ensure that we are able to award grades that are fair and reflect very carefully considered judgements of performance across a range of appropriate evidence for all our individual students. Thank you for your help and support as we continue to support you and your child and work through this over the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely

Mr T Wraith  
College Leader

