



30 April 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

As we have now entered the Year 11 and Year 13 assessment periods, I wanted to write to you to clarify two important features from the guidance issued by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) to schools and colleges at the end of March 2021. These two important features of the assessment system for this summer, along with the school's approach to dealing with such matters, are fully detailed in our Centre Policy which will now be available on our website.

Mitigating Circumstances (special consideration)

The usual process of centres submitting special consideration applications to awarding organisations for qualifications will not apply this summer. As the range of evidence is flexible and can be tailored to an individual student according to coverage of the specification, centres have been advised to select work completed by a student where they were unaffected by adverse circumstances.

Where this is not possible and a temporary illness, a temporary injury or some other event outside of the student's control may have affected their performance in assessments which will be used to determine a grade, teachers should take this into account and document how they have done so. Mitigating circumstances only apply to an unexpected or a sudden event that may have had an adverse effect on a particular assessment.

Centres must be satisfied that the issue or event has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a student's ability to demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment.

Special consideration cannot be applied due to lost teaching and learning or missing an assessment due to illness. This can be addressed through the flexibility of the range of evidence centres may use to determine students' grades, or can be addressed using additional assessments. Similarly, anxiety about taking assessments and increased stress levels would not be classed a mitigating circumstance.

Examples of mitigating circumstances which may be considered by schools are included in the guide *JCQ – A guide to the special consideration process, with effect from 1 September 2020*. This guide suggests the following incidents may be grounds for mitigating circumstances:

- 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**.

This guide also provides a list of incidences that would not be grounds for a mitigating circumstances request and this may prove a useful reference point when deciding whether to apply for special consideration.

For this assessment period, students are encouraged to raise any mitigating circumstances with their teaching centre.

The guidance states that:

“Students must be reminded to raise any mitigating circumstances which warrant special consideration. It is important that students raise these issues as soon as possible, ideally at the time of the assessment and prior to the submission of the teacher assessed grade.”

If you believe your child has been individually affected by particular circumstances that have had a significantly negative impact on their performance in any assessment that will contribute towards their final grade, you should complete the ‘Mitigating Circumstances’ form via this link [Special Consideration Application](#).

We will require information explaining why it is felt there are mitigating circumstances, and overview of which assessments this may have affected and how. Where appropriate, supporting evidence should also be supplied – for example a doctor’s note. You will receive a confirmation email from the school to confirm the receipt of your form within 48 hours of submission. If you do not receive a confirmation email, please contact me directly using the main school number.

As per our centre policy, to ensure consistency in the application of special consideration, we will ensure all teachers have read and understood the document: *JCQ – A guide to the special consideration process, with effect from 1 September 2020*. Our policy also states that an independent panel from one of our partner schools will consider and evaluate regarding mitigating circumstances. This panel will consist of a SENDCO, a Headteacher with responsibility for curriculum and one other senior teacher.

Malpractice

The guidance issued by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) to schools and colleges in March 2021 asks that centres are alert to and investigate any instances of possible malpractice. This can include a scenario where: “Students might attempt to gain an unfair advantage during the centre’s process by, for example, submitting fabricated evidence or plagiarised work. Such incidents would constitute malpractice.”

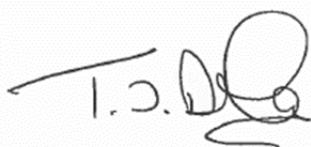
As per our centre policy, our teachers have been given training in the identification of malpractice and the potential consequences thereof.

In any incident of suspected malpractice, the school will report these to the awarding organisation, as per JCQ guidance. The JCQ suspected malpractice policies and procedures 2020-2021 continue to apply. Please find further guidance detailed in the JCQ suspected malpractice policies and procedures 2020-2021.

I would like to remind you that teachers are not in a position to disclose centre assessed grades to students or parents. Any attempts to discuss or influence grades will need to be reported to the exam boards. We will however be in a position to share the outcomes of individual assessments with students in the form of raw scores and percentages.

We understand that this is an anxious time for many of our students and if you have any further questions you would like to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T.J. Dolan'. The signature is stylized with a large loop at the end.

Mr T J Dolan
Deputy Head (Curriculum)