

# Special Consideration Policy

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## Introduction

When candidates are disadvantaged during their assessment, we can sometimes make mark adjustments as part of a process called Special Consideration. Applications for Special Consideration can be submitted if candidates have been fully prepared for the assessment but their performance or attendance on the day of the assessment has been affected by factors beyond their control.

## Scope

This policy is aimed at our centres and candidates who have completed a CIOL Qualifications assessment.

This policy will also be used by our staff to ensure they are dealing with all Special Consideration requests in a fair and consistent manner.

## Covid-19 Pandemic

The impact of the pandemic has meant that our candidates have had to transfer to our Virtual Centre in which to continue their assessments and achieve their qualification.

This has posed some challenges with remote connectivity. Given the inherent challenges of connectivity, call/conference clarity/lag, managing a keyboard, screen and hardware and coping with time pressure, online invigilation; it is inevitable that this will impact on the experience of our candidates.

For this reason we have addressed this with an Enhanced Special Consideration process for those candidates that are able to evidence that they have experienced online technological issues.

Applications for Covid-19 related Special Consideration will still need to be submitted within the timelines specified and the more detail that candidates are able to provide will enable us to judge any uplift in a more efficient and consistent way.

## Definition of Special Consideration

Special Consideration is a post-assessment adjustment to a candidate's mark to reflect temporary illness, temporary injury or some other event outside of the candidate's control at the time of the assessment, which 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.

Special Consideration can only seek to go some way to assist a candidate affected by a potentially wide range of difficulties, emotional or physical, which may influence performance in assessment. It cannot remove the difficulty faced by the candidate. There will be situations where candidates should not be entered for an assessment. Only minor adjustments can be made to the mark awarded because to do more than this would jeopardise the standard of the assessment.

We align our Special Consideration Policy to the Joint Council for Qualifications guidance document –

[https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guide\\_to\\_spec\\_con\\_process\\_2021\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guide_to_spec_con_process_2021_FINAL.pdf)

## Principles of agreeing Special Consideration

These principles will be followed when making decisions about a candidate's need for mark adjustments under Special Consideration. Where long term circumstances have prevented the candidate from reaching the required standard, it may not be possible to make an adjustment.

Candidates will be eligible for Special Consideration if they have been fully prepared but performance in the assessment, is materially affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control.

These include:

- temporary illness or accident/injury at the time of the assessment
- bereavement at the time of the assessment
- domestic crisis arising at the time of the assessment
- serious disturbance during an assessment, particularly where recorded material is being used
- accidental events at the time of the assessment such as being given the wrong assessment paper, being given a defective assessment paper or CD, failure of practical equipment, failure of materials to arrive on time
- failure by the centre to implement previously approved access arrangements for that specific assessment session.

Candidates will NOT be eligible for Special Consideration if preparation for or performance in the assessment is affected by:

- long term illness or other difficulties during the course affecting revision time, unless the illness or circumstances manifest themselves at the time of the assessment
- 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

- domestic inconvenience, such as moving house, lack of facilities, taking holidays (including school/exchange visits and field trips) at the time of the assessment
- minor disturbance in the assessment room caused by another candidate, such as momentary bad behaviour or a mobile phone ringing
- 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.)
- the consequences of taking alcohol or recreational drugs
- the consequences of disobeying the centre's internal regulations
- the failure of the centre to prepare candidates properly for the assessment for whatever reason
- staff shortages, building work or lack of facilities
- misreading the timetable and/or failing to attend at the right time and in the right place
- misreading the instructions of the question paper and answering the wrong questions
- making personal arrangements such as a wedding or holiday arrangements which conflict with the assessment timetable
- missing the assessment
- a disability or learning difficulties (diagnosed or undiagnosed) unless illness affects the candidate at the time of the assessment or where the disability exacerbates what would otherwise be a minor issue (difficulties over and above those that previously approved access arrangements would have alleviated).

Special Consideration will normally be given by applying a set allowance of marks to the assessment affected within a specification. The size of the allowance depends on the timing, nature and extent of the illness or misfortune. The maximum allowance given will be 5% of the total raw marks available in the component concerned.

The decision made by the awarding organisation will be based on various factors which may vary from one subject to another. These may include:

- the severity of the circumstances
- the date of the assessment in relation to the circumstances, and
- the nature of the assessment, whether a written assessment or an oral assessment is involved.

Special Consideration cannot be applied in a cumulative fashion. For example, on the basis of a domestic crisis at the time of the assessment and the candidate suffering from a viral illness.

## Other problems

There are circumstances which arise by accident and where specialist input may be required. For example, an incorrect question paper was handed to the candidate or a question paper was defective in some way such as an incorrectly printed page.

These cases are given Special Consideration by other means than those detailed so far. They may need to be referred to Senior Assessor for a subject specific decision as to how Special Consideration should be awarded.

## Examples of Special Consideration that we may apply

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

5% Reserved for the most exceptional cases, such as:

- terminal illness of the candidate
- terminal illness of a parent/carer
- death of a member of the immediate family within two months of the assessment
- very serious and disruptive crisis/incident at or near the time of the assessment.

4% Very serious problems, such as:

- life-threatening illness of candidate or member of immediate family
- major surgery at or near the time of the assessment
- severe disease
- very recent death of member of extended family
- severe or permanent bodily injury occurring at the time of the assessment
- serious crisis/incident at the time of the assessment.

N.B. 'Very recent' is defined as within one month of the assessment(s) taking place.

3% A more common category, (more cases will fall into this category) including:

- recent traumatic experience such as death of a close friend or distant relative
- recent illness of a more serious nature
- flare-up of a severe congenital/medical condition or a psychological condition
- broken limbs
- organ disease
- physical assault trauma before an assessment
- recent crisis/incident
- witnessing a distressing event on the day of the assessment involved.

N.B. 'Recent' is defined as four months prior to the assessment(s) taking place.

2% The majority of cases will fall within this category:

- illness at the time of the assessment
- broken limb on the mend
- concussion
- effects of pregnancy (not pregnancy per se)
- extreme distress on the day of an assessment (not simply assessment related stress)

Supervised rest breaks must not be included in the total duration of the papers when applying for Special Consideration.

1% Reserved for more minor problems, such as:

- noise during assessment which is more than momentary
- illness of another candidate which leads to disruption in the assessment room
- stress or anxiety for which medication has been prescribed
- hay fever on the day of an assessment
- minor upset arising from administrative problems.

Where the request for Special Consideration fails to meet the criteria, it will be rejected.

## Process for applying for Special Consideration

Private candidates, or study centres entering candidates, who wish to apply for Special Consideration must inform CIOL Qualifications in line with our published dates, specifying in detail the circumstances that arose at the time of the assessment. Official evidence alongside the completed application form will need to accompany any application for Special Consideration. This evidence may take the form of one or more of the following:

- a detailed statement from the candidate's assessment centre
- invigilator's report
- supporting evidence, such as a copy of a medical or professional statement, or a psychologist's report, which includes recommendations.

## Special Consideration application form and timelines

The Special Consideration application form can be downloaded from [here](#) and when completed it should be emailed along with the required evidence to [appeals@ciol.org.uk](mailto:appeals@ciol.org.uk).

Special Consideration will need to be applied for each time and will not be carried over to future assessments.

Please refer to our timelines in the Key Dates document for return of the application to ensure that it is processed on time.

CIOLQ will confirm the outcome of a Special Consideration application at the point when exam results are released.

## Monitoring and evaluation

Data will be collected at the time of declaration by those candidates disclosing the need for Special Consideration. Confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

## Policy updating and reviewing

All policies relating to CIOLQ will be updated on an 18-month cycle or sooner as required.

## Policy version and owner

Policy review date	May 2023
Policy owner	Responsible Officer

## Regulatory references

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
Condition G7: Arrangements for Special Consideration
Qualifications Wales
Condition G7: Arrangements for Special Consideration