

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 exam venues 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.

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 an assessment environment.

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/2024/11/JCQ-A-guide-to-the-special-consideration-process-24-25_FINAL_accessible.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 only if they have fully prepared for the assessment in question, but their performance in the assessment was materially affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control.

Such circumstances may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 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, audio recording or other exam material, failure of practical equipment, failure of materials to arrive on time

- failure by the exam venue to implement previously approved reasonable adjustment arrangements for that specific exam 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 a 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 caused by a third party, such as momentary inappropriate 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 not adhering to the CIOLQ Candidate Assessment Regulations
- the failure of a course provider 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/or 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, for example, 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 alongside the candidate also suffering from a viral illness.

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
- death of a member of the extended family near the time of the assessment
- severe or permanent bodily injury occurring at the time of the assessment
- serious crisis/incident at the time of the assessment.

N.B. 'near the time' 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 currently in expected recovery period
- concussion
- effects of pregnancy (not pregnancy per se)
- extreme distress on the day of an assessment (not simply assessment-related stress)

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

Candidates (or exam venues 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 must be submitted alongside the completed application form in 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 exam venue
- invigilator's report
- supporting evidence, such as a copy of a medical or professional letter or statement, or a psychologist's report, which includes recommendations. Screenshots from NHS apps or similar platforms, and/or shorthand printed summaries of medical appointments, may not be submitted.

Special Consideration application form and timelines

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

Special Consideration will need to be applied for separately for each exam session or occurrence, and will not be carried over to future assessments.

Please refer to our timelines in the relevant exam session Key Dates document for any and all appropriate deadline(s) for return of a Special Consideration 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	January 2027
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