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Statistical Bulletin

Special Consideration in GCSE and GCE: June 2012 Exam Series

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Summary

Awarding organisations must have procedures in place for making adjustments to the marks of candidates who have not been able to demonstrate attainment because of exceptional circumstances. Adjustments may be made for candidates who were present for an assessment but disadvantaged due to temporary injury, illness, indisposition or other unforeseen incident immediately before or during the exams period. Awarding organisations must also have procedures for making a qualification award by special consideration where a candidate has covered the course but is unable through temporary illness, injury or indisposition to be present for the exam of a unit/component and therefore to fulfil all of the usual assessment requirements.

Awarding organisations approved 341,500 requests for special consideration during the June 2012 exam series, representing 2 per cent of the total number of exam scripts completed by candidates.

They received 365,900 requests, of which 93.3 per cent were approved. The approval rate decreased from 95.1 per cent in 2011; the difference is statistically significant. The proportion of requests approved by awarding organisations has declined slightly year on year since 2009.

Of the approvals, 320,200 were for candidates who were present for assessments but disadvantaged in some way (94 per cent of all approvals), and 21,400 were for candidates who were not able to be present for an assessment due to temporary illness, injury or indisposition.

Introduction

This statistical bulletin, published on behalf of the regulators for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, presents data on the number of requests for special consideration approved for GCSE and GCE exams in relation to the June 2012 exams series. These qualifications are offered by six awarding organisations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (Northern Ireland) (CCEA)
- Edexcel
- International Curriculum & Assessment Agency (Examinations) ICAAE
- Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- WJEC.

Please note: figures within this commentary have been rounded to the nearest hundred.

About special consideration

The qualifications covered by this report are regulated by Ofqual, the Welsh Government and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). Each regulator publishes conditions that set out the requirements that the awarding organisations it regulates have to meet. These conditions state that 'An awarding organisation must have in place clear arrangements for Special Consideration to be given to Learners in relation to qualifications which it makes available.' This may be for a student who has temporarily experienced an illness or injury, or some other event outside of their control, which has had, or is reasonably likely to have had a material effect on that student's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment.

In addition, the *GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice (2011)*¹ aims to promote quality, consistency, accuracy and fairness in assessment and awarding. It helps maintain standards, both within and between awarding organisations, and from year to year. The code lays down agreed principles, processes and practices for the awarding organisations that develop and deliver these qualifications.

Section 7 of the code of practice requires awarding organisations to have procedures for making adjustments to the marks of candidates who have not been able to demonstrate attainment because of exceptional circumstances. Adjustments may be given to candidates who were present for an assessment but disadvantaged due to temporary injury, illness, indisposition or other unforeseen incident immediately before or during the exams period. These procedures allow for only relatively minor adjustments to a candidate's mark: up to 5 per cent of the maximum mark of a question paper. The maximum adjustment is reserved for exceptional cases, such as candidates disadvantaged by the recent death of an immediate family member. Most adjustments for special consideration are smaller, such as a 2 per cent adjustment of the maximum available mark for candidates who have a minor illness on the day of the exam. Each case is assessed on its merits and the decision made by the awarding organisation is based on various factors, which could include the severity of the circumstances, the date of the exam in relation to the circumstances, and the nature of the assessment.

The code also requires awarding organisations to have procedures for making a qualification award by special consideration where a candidate has covered the

¹ www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/93-codes-of-practice?download=680%3Agcse-gce-principal-learning-and-project-code-of-practice-2011

course but is unable, through temporary illness, injury or indisposition, to be present for the exam of a unit/component and therefore cannot complete all assessment requirements.

To be eligible for a qualification award by special consideration candidates must have met the following minimum requirements:

- for GCE, normally at least 50 per cent of the total assessment must have been completed.
- for linear GCSEs, with 100 per cent of the assessment at the end of the course of study, 35 per cent of the total assessment must have been completed.
- for modular GCSE specifications, with assessment opportunities throughout the course of study, 50 per cent of the total assessment must have been completed.

The awarding organisations specify the eligibility criteria for special consideration and must ensure that the criteria, application procedures and deadlines are available to schools and colleges.

Summer 2012 exam series

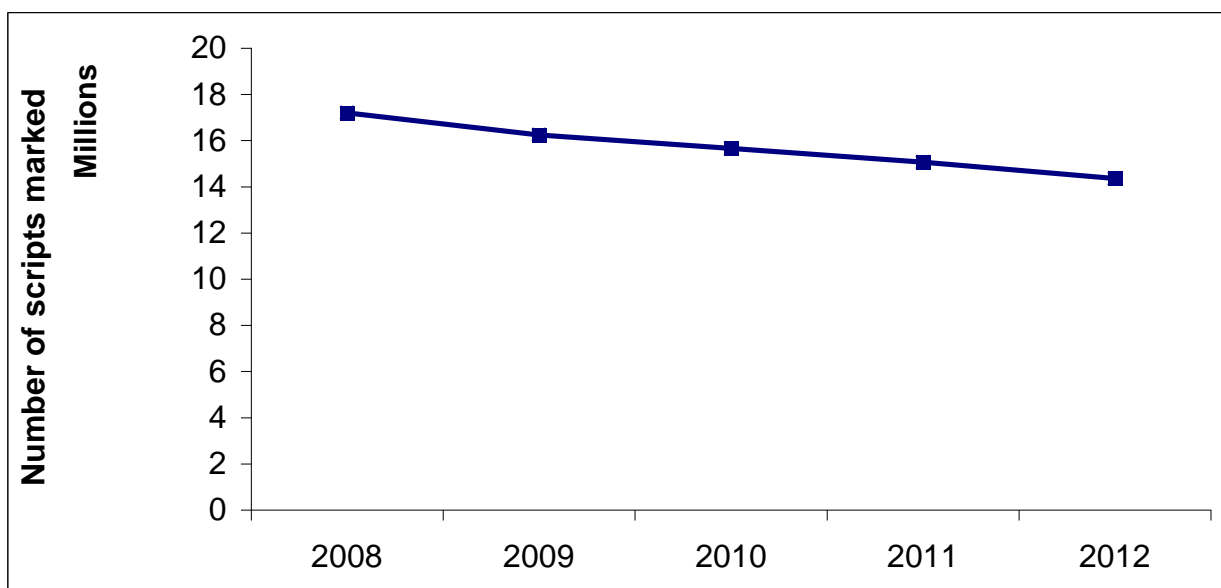
Awards made

In the June 2012 exam series, more than 2.4 million GCE A level (AS and A level) awards were made. More than 5.9 million GCSE qualifications were awarded in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during the June 2012 series.

Scripts

In the June 2012 exam series, 14.4 million scripts were marked (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Figure 1 covers GCE, Applied GCE, GCSE, Applied GCSE, GCSE Short Course and overseas entries. There has been a consistent decrease in the number of scripts in the summer series. The change in structure of qualifications, such as the move from six to four units in A levels and the unitisation of GCSEs, is likely to have contributed to the reductions seen over the past five years.

Figure 1: Total number of scripts marked for GCSE and A level, summer exam series, 2008–12



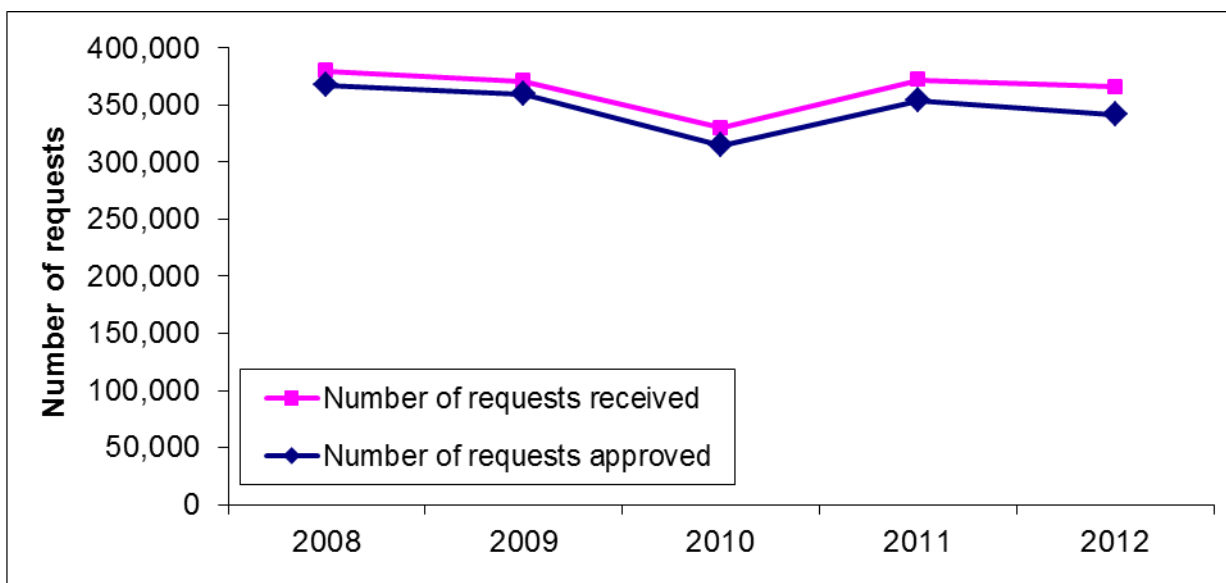
Special consideration may be applied to a candidate at question paper/script level or in the qualification award.

Special consideration in 2012

During the June 2012 exam series, 365,900 requests were received for special consideration, a decrease of 1.7 per cent when compared with 2011. This decrease in requests for special consideration was in the context of a 5 per cent decrease in the total number of exams taken by candidates in summer 2012 when compared with summer 2011 (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

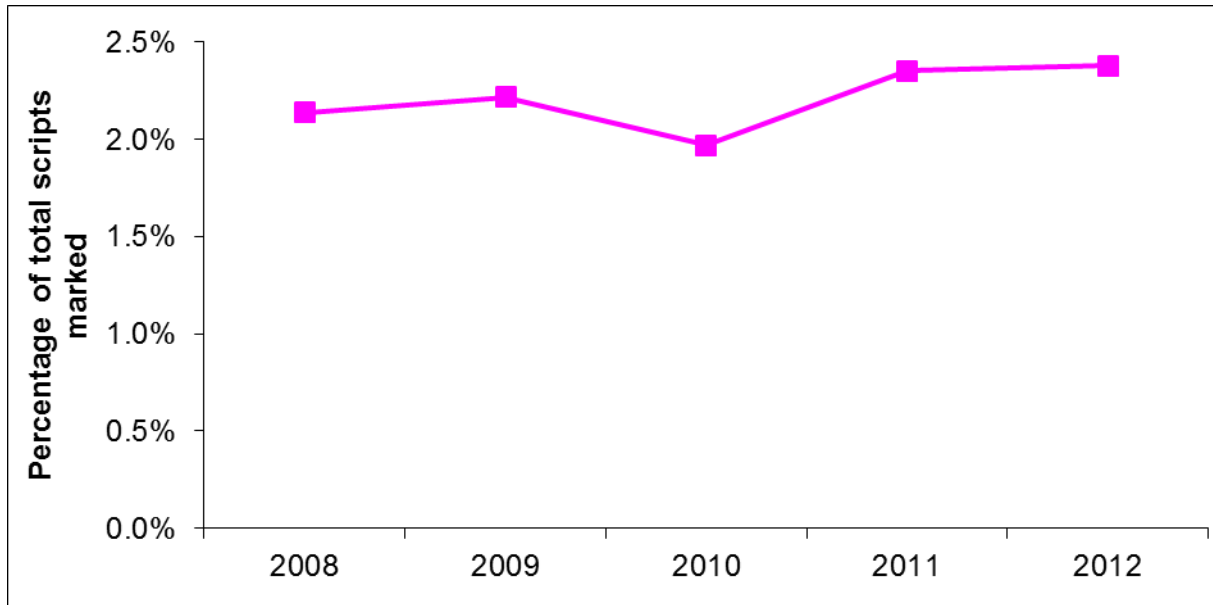
Awarding organisations approved 341,500 requests for special consideration, representing 93.3 per cent of requests received. The approval rate decreased from 95.1 per cent in 2011; the difference is statistically significant.

Figure 2: Number of requests received and approved for special consideration, 2008–12



The requests approved for special consideration represent 2.4 per cent of the total number of scripts marked during the June 2012 exam series. This is consistent with 2011 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Special considerations as a percentage of total scripts marked, 2008–12



These figures represent the number of requests for special consideration rather than the number of candidates. This is because an individual candidate may require special consideration for a number of exam papers and is likely to take exams with more than one awarding organisation for which the same special consideration may be appropriate. Special consideration needs to be requested from each awarding organisation separately.

The two categories of special consideration

A breakdown of figures for the two types of special consideration has been included in the report (see Table 3) and covers:

- those candidates who were present for an assessment but disadvantaged in some way
- those who could not be present to complete all of the normal assessment requirements.

This is the second year this data has been collected with a breakdown based on these two categories. Overall, the percentage of special consideration requests that resulted in extra marks being granted where candidates were present for assessments was 93.7 per cent, compared with 92.3 per cent in 2011. Of the overall special consideration requests granted, 6.3 per cent were for candidates who could

not be present for part of the assessment, compared with 7.7 per cent of the special consideration requests granted last year.

Special consideration requests resulting in mark adjustments

The procedures allow for relatively minor adjustments to a candidate's mark: up to 5 per cent of the maximum mark of a question paper. The maximum adjustment is reserved for exceptional cases, such as for candidates disadvantaged by the recent death of an immediate family member.

For the 2012 data, awarding organisations have reported a breakdown of the figures showing the extent of mark adjustments made as the result of special consideration requests (see Table 4).

The most frequent mark adjustment was for marks worth 3 per cent of the total marks available for the exam to be added to a candidate's overall score. Of the 321,400 approved requests resulting in a mark adjustment:

- 17 per cent resulted in a 1 per cent mark adjustment,
- 25 per cent resulted in a 2 per cent mark adjustment,
- 26 per cent resulted in a 3 per cent mark adjustment,
- 21 per cent resulted in a 4 per cent mark adjustment, and
- 8 per cent resulted in a 5 per cent mark adjustment.

In 3 per cent of cases, no extra marks were allocated, where the request was considered valid by the awarding organisation, but due to the total mark of the exam concerned and the nature of the disadvantage experienced, mark adjustment was not appropriate (see Table 4).

Tables

Table 1: Total number of scripts marked for the summer exam series, 2008–12

England, Wales & Northern Ireland							
Year	Number of scripts						Total
	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	
2008	7,300,482	3,836,345	4,217,159	1,317,327	523,449		17,194,762
2009	6,800,493	3,778,240	3,829,081	1,335,063	492,576		16,235,453
2010	6,411,172	3,619,804	3,660,339	1,423,949	538,131		15,653,395
2011	6,089,628	3,661,614	3,238,906	1,610,075	444,771	19,858	15,064,852
2012	5,719,303	3,661,462	2,939,135	1,573,038	467,825	898	14,361,661

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. 2008 includes GCE, GCSE and overseas and coursework entries.
3. 2009 includes GCE, GCSE, Principal Learning, and overseas entries.
4. 2010 includes GCE, GCSE and overseas entries.
5. ICAAE awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011. In previous years, specifications were delivered in conjunction with CCEA.

Table 2: Number of special consideration requests received and approved by awarding organisations, 2008-12

England, Wales & Northern Ireland								
	Year	Requests for special consideration						Total ¹
		AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	
Number of requests for special consideration	2008	141,743	102,043	89,693	26,340	20,025		379,844
	2009	143,588	101,522	74,259	33,569	18,220		371,158
	2010	134,269	77,919	65,033	34,094	18,605		329,920
	2011	156,443	82,189	73,690	33,533	26,279	202	372,336
	2012	143,270	90,108	72,734	39,538	20,271	13	365,934
Number of requests approved	2008	139,699	101,737	82,765	23,394	19,904		367,499
	2009	140,230	100,819	70,911	29,804	18,002		359,766
	2010	129,429	72,302	62,562	31,981	18,540		314,814
	2011	146,398	80,544	70,517	31,124	25,385	202	354,170
	2012	126,855	87,111	69,941	37,801	19,816	3	341,527
Percentage of requests approved	2008	98.6%	99.7%	92.3%	88.8%	99.4%		96.7%
	2009	97.7%	99.3%	95.5%	88.8%	98.8%		96.9%
	2010	96.4%	92.8%	96.2%	93.8%	99.7%		95.4%
	2011	93.6%	98.0%	95.7%	92.8%	96.6%	100.0%	95.1%
	2012	88.5%	96.7%	96.2%	95.6%	97.8%	23.1%	93.3%
Special considerations approved as a percentage of total scripts	2008	1.9%	2.7%	2.0%	1.8%	3.8%		2.1%
	2009	2.1%	2.7%	1.9%	2.2%	3.7%		2.2%
	2010	2.0%	2.0%	1.7%	2.2%	3.4%		2.0%
	2011	2.4%	2.2%	2.2%	1.9%	5.7%	1.0%	2.4%
	2012	2.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	4.2%	0.3%	2.4%

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. ICAAE awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011. In previous years, specifications were delivered in conjunction with CCEA.

Table 3: Number of special consideration requests received and approved by awarding organisations, where candidate was/was not present

England, Wales & Northern Ireland								
Requests for special consideration								
	Year	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	Total
Number of requests for extra marks where candidate was present for assessment	2011	145,478	71,730	69,588	30,368	25,835	174	343,173
	2012	130,397	83,195	68,524	36,044	19,691	13	337,864
Number of requests for extra marks that were approved	2011	136,637	70,192	67,051	28,053	24,941	174	327,048
	2012	118,129	81,475	66,316	34,849	19,402	3	320,174
Number of requests for a qualification award where candidate was not able to be present for	2011	10,965	10,459	4,102	3,165	444	28	29,163
	2012	12,873	6,913	4,210	3,494	580	0	28,070
Number of requests for a qualification award that were approved	2011	9,761	10,352	3,466	3,071	444	28	27,122
	2012	8,726	5,636	3,625	2,952	414	0	21,353
Requests where candidate was present as a percentage of total approved	2011	93.3%	87.1%	95.1%	90.1%	98.3%	86.1%	92.3%
	2012	93.1%	93.5%	94.8%	92.2%	97.9%	100.0%	93.7%
Requests where candidate was not present as a percentage of total approved	2011	6.7%	12.9%	4.9%	9.9%	1.7%	13.9%	7.7%
	2012	6.9%	6.5%	5.2%	7.8%	2.1%	0.0%	6.3%

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. Data not collected prior to 2011

Table 4: Approved special consideration requests for extra marks - percentage allocated

England, Wales & Northern Ireland									
Approved requests for special consideration - Number of cases for GCSE and GCE combined									
	Year	% of extra marks allocated	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	Total
Number of approved requests where candidate was present for assessment	2012	0%	773	2,714	451	304	5,651	0	9,893
		1%	25,794	14,882	7,406	3,958	2,891	0	54,931
		2%	22,894	22,603	17,547	13,403	2,373	0	78,820
		3%	31,350	20,558	19,230	7,552	3,731	2	82,423
		4%	25,829	16,666	15,256	6,530	3,075	1	67,357
		5%	11,489	4,052	6,426	3,102	1,681	0	26,750
		Total	118,129	81,475	66,316	34,849	19,402	3	320,174

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. Data not collected prior to 2012

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