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Statistical Bulletin

Special Consideration in GCSE and GCE: June 2011 Examination Series

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Key finding

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 examination of a unit/component and therefore to fulfil all of the usual assessment requirements.

Awarding organisations approved 354,200 requests for special consideration in relation to the June 2011 examination series, representing 2 per cent of the total number of examination scripts marked.

They received 372,300 requests, of which 95.1 per cent were approved. The approval rate decreased slightly from 95.4 per cent in 2010; although this was a very small decrease, the difference is statistically significant.

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 examinations in relation to the June 2011 examinations 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.

Once published, data may be revised in subsequent bulletins due to late-received data or if an error is identified. In this bulletin some figures have therefore been revised since last year's report.

About special consideration

The regulators in England (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation – Ofqual), Wales (Department for Education and Skills – DfES) and Northern Ireland (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment – CCEA) have worked together to produce the *General Conditions of Recognition* (2011). The conditions set out the requirements that all regulated awarding organisations have to meet. Condition G7, ‘Arrangements for special consideration’, requires all awarding organisations to have clear arrangements in place for special consideration to be given to a learner who has temporarily experienced an illness or injury, or some other event outside of the learner’s control, which has had, or is reasonably likely to have had a material effect on that learner’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) 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 five per cent of the maximum mark of a question paper. The maximum adjustment is reserved for exceptional cases, for example, candidates disadvantaged by the recent death of an immediate family member. Most adjustments for special consideration are smaller, for example, two per cent of the maximum available mark for candidates who have a minor illness on the day of the examination. 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 examination 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 course but is unable, through temporary illness, injury or indisposition, to be present for the examination of a unit/component and therefore complete all of the usual 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 GCSE legacy specifications, 35 per cent of the total assessment must have been completed
- for new GCSE specifications, 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 2011 examination series

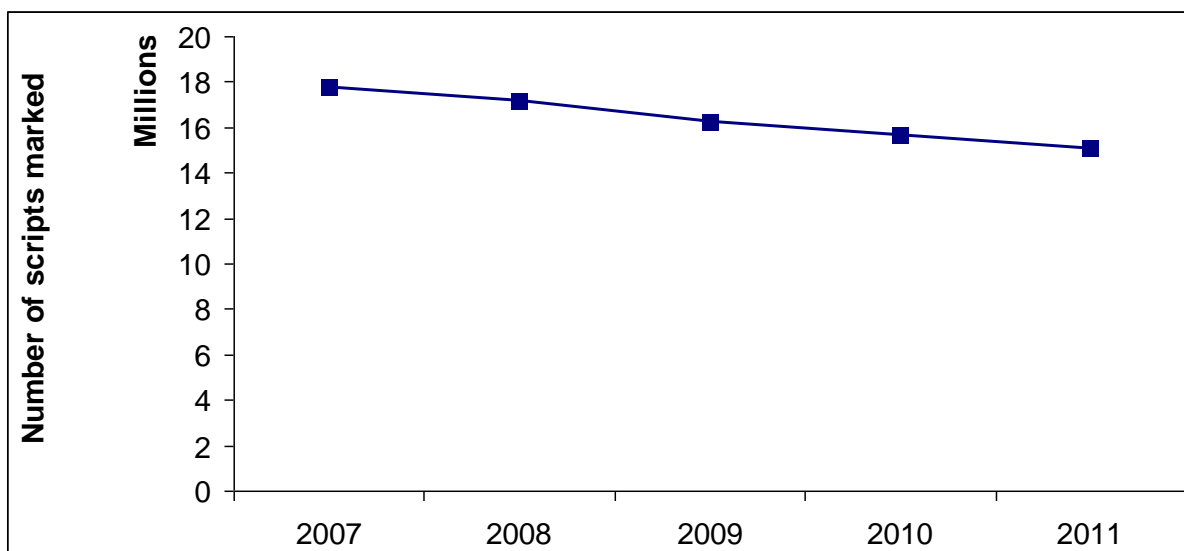
Awards made

In the June 2011 examination series there were over 2.5 million GCE A level (AS and A level) awards made. Over 5.5 million GCSE qualifications were awarded in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during the June 2011 series.

Scripts

In the examination series 15.1 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.

Figure 1: Total number of scripts marked for GCSE and A level, summer examination series, 2007-2011



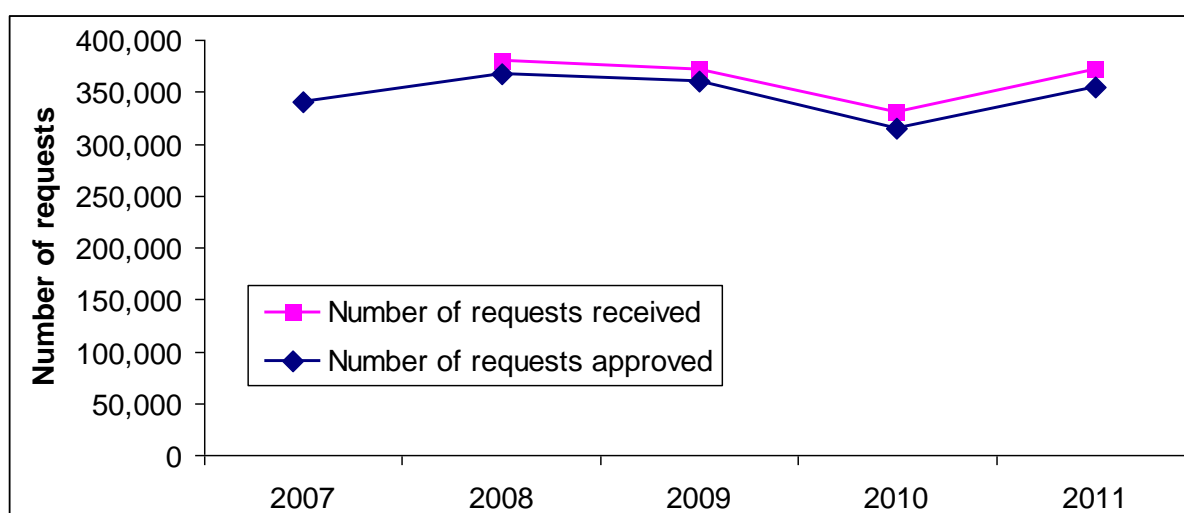
Special consideration may be applied to a candidate at question paper / script level or in the qualification award.

Special consideration in 2011

During the June 2011 examination series, there were 372,300 requests received for special consideration, an increase of 13 per cent when compared with 2010. This increase in requests for special consideration was in the context of a 4 per cent decrease in the total number of examinations taken by candidates in summer 2011 when compared with summer 2010 (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

Awarding organisations approved 354,200 requests for special consideration, representing 95.1 per cent of requests received. The approval rate decreased slightly from 95.4 per cent in 2010; although this was a very small decrease, the difference is statistically significant.

Figure 2: Number of requests received and approved for special consideration, 2007–2011 (NB, The total number of requests received was not available for 2007)



The requests approved for special consideration represent 2.4 per cent of the total number of scripts marked during the June 2011 examination series. This is an increase from 2010, when special consideration was applied to 2 per cent of scripts; this increase is statistically significant (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Special considerations as a percentage of total scripts marked, 2007–2011



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 examination papers and is likely to take examinations 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.

For the first time in 2011 awarding organisations reported a breakdown of figures for the two types of special consideration (see Table 3) – for those candidates that were present for an assessment and those that could not be present. Overall the percentage of special considerations that resulted in extra marks being granted where candidates were present was 92.3 per cent. 7.7 per cent of candidates were granted a qualification award where they were unable to be present for part of the assessment. Special consideration data will be collected with this breakdown each year from now on.

Tables

Table 1: Total number of scripts marked for the summer examination series, 2007–2011

England, Wales & Northern Ireland							
Year	Number of scripts						Total
	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	
2007	7,370,974	4,329,425	4,269,737	1,255,627	553,782		17,779,545
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

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, PL, 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

England, Wales & Northern Ireland		Requests for special consideration						Total ¹
	Year	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	
Number of requests for special consideration	2007	144,765	89,816	73,551	23,086	-	-	-
	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
Number of requests approved	2007	139,842	89,036	71,500	19,951	20,124	-	340,453
	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
Percentage of requests approved	2007	96.6%	99.1%	97.2%	86.4%	-	-	-
	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%
Special considerations approved as a percentage of total scripts	2007	1.9%	2.1%	1.7%	1.6%	3.6%	-	1.9%
	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%

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Totals for 2007 requests made only cover the four awarding organisations where data was available. Therefore the Total and Percentage of requests approved cannot be accurately calculated for these years.
2. '-' indicates data not available.
3. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
4. 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 where candidate was / was not present received and approved by awarding organisations

England, Wales & Northern Ireland							
	Requests for special consideration						Total
	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	ICAAE	
Number of requests where candidate was present for assessment	145,478	71,730	69,588	30,368	25,835	174	343,173
Number of requests approved	136,637	70,192	67,051	28,053	24,941	174	327,048
Number of requests where candidate was not able to be present for assessment	10,965	10,459	4,102	3,165	444	28	29,163
Number of requests approved	9,761	10,352	3,466	3,071	444	28	27,122
Requests where candidate was present as a percentage of total approved	93.3%	87.1%	95.1%	90.1%	98.3%	86.1%	92.3%
Requests where candidate was not present as a percentage of total approved	6.7%	12.9%	4.9%	9.9%	1.7%	13.9%	7.7%

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. Data relates to 2011 summer examination series

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