

**Ofqual**  
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## **Statistical bulletin**

Special consideration in GCSE and GCE: June 2009  
examination series

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## Introduction

This Statistical Bulletin published on behalf of the regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland presents data on the number of requests for special consideration approved for GCSE and GCE examinations during the June 2009 examinations series. These qualifications are offered by five awarding organisations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

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

In the June 2009 examination series over 1 million GCE AS qualification awards and over 840,000 GCE A level qualification awards were made. Nearly 5.5 million GCSE qualification awards were made during the June 2009 series. Over 16 million GCSE and GCE scripts were marked by the awarding organisations.

## Special consideration

The regulators in England (Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator; Ofqual), Wales (Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills; DCELLS) and Northern Ireland (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment; CCEA) produce the *GCSE, GCE and AEA code of practice* 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 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 an 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 be completed
- for GCSE, 35 per cent of the total assessment must be 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.

## **June 2009 examination series**

For the June 2009 examination series, the number of requests for special consideration had fallen by 2.3 per cent as compared to 2008. This decrease in requests for special consideration was in the context of a 5.6 per cent decrease in the total number of question papers sat by candidates in June 2009 as compared to June 2008. Awarding organisations approved 359,766 requests for special consideration, which was equivalent to 2.2 per cent of the total number of examinations sat by candidates. This was consistent with 2008 when the number of requests approved accounted for 2.1 per cent of the total examinations sat.

**Table 1: The number of special consideration requests received and approved by awarding organisations**

	Year	Total	AQA	Edexcel	OCR	WJEC	CCEA
Number of requests for special consideration	2009	371,158	143,588	101,522	74,259	33,569	18,220
	2008	379,844	141,743	102,043	89,693	26,340	20,025
Number of requests approved	2009	359,766	140,230	100,819	70,911	29,804	18,002
	2008	367,499	139,699	101,737	82,765	23,394	19,904
% of requests approved	2009	96.9	97.7	99.3	95.5	88.8	98.8
	2008	96.7	98.6	99.7	92.3	88.8	99.3
% of total question papers to which special consideration was applied	2009	2.2	2.1	2.7	1.9	2.2	3.7
	2008	2.1	1.9	2.7	2.0	1.8	3.8

These figures are 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 may take examinations with more than one awarding organisation.

The proportion of requests approved for June 2009 examinations (96.9 per cent) was consistent with the proportion of requests approved in 2008 (96.7 per cent).

The percentage of examinations to which special consideration was applied varied across the awarding organisations. Overall, special consideration was applied to 2.2 per cent of examinations in the June 2009 series.

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