



BTEC Instructions for Conducting External Assessments (ICEA)

BTEC Firsts from 2012/2013
BTEC Nationals from 2016
BTEC Tech Awards from 2017/2022
BTEC Technicals from 2017
BTEC Nationals (AAQs) from 2025

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Introduction

This guide provides essential information for centres delivering external assessments for BTEC Firsts, Tech Awards, Technicals and Nationals. It sets out the key requirements for secure and effective assessment delivery, including practical guidance on preparing for, administering and completing assessments, and clarifies the responsibilities of centre staff throughout the assessment process. The guidance is intended to help centres apply assessment requirements consistently and confidently, while supporting best practice across the assessment cycle.

If you require further information or support, please visit the [contact us pages](#) on the Pearson Qualifications website. This will ensure your assessment-related query is directed to the most appropriate team and answered as quickly as possible.

Using this guide

This guidance should be used alongside the current JCQ regulations, qualification specifications and any assessment-specific guidance. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE) booklet continues to apply where assessments are conducted under examination conditions, while this guide provides BTEC-specific guidance for assessment formats such as supervised tasks and practical assessments, where further clarification is needed.

Key documents and guidance

JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations booklet (ICE)

The JCQ ICE booklet is the definitive guidance for administering qualifications from JCQ member awarding organisations, including GCSEs, A levels and vocational assessments. It sets out the standards and procedures centres must follow to support consistent, secure examination practice across UK educational institutions.

The ICE is essential guidance for heads of centre, exams officers, invigilators and other staff involved in administering examinations. It provides detailed instructions covering preparation, invigilation and post-examination procedures, and should be used to support consistent and secure assessment delivery. The latest version of the JCQ ICE booklet is available on the [JCQ website](#).

Before administering any external assessments, centres should familiarise themselves with the current JCQ ICE booklet. The ICE sets out the requirements for the administration of timetabled written and onscreen examinations and provides guidance on areas including:

- examination room requirements
- invigilation arrangements
- candidate identification
- secure handling of assessment materials
- access arrangements
- candidate conduct
- malpractice and irregularities.

Qualification specification and assessment guidance

Centres must refer to the relevant qualification specification and any qualification (or unit) specific guidance materials, including Administrative Support Guides (ASGs), where applicable. These documents set out the specific assessment requirements for each qualification or unit, including assessment formats, permitted resources, supervision requirements, assessment windows and subject-specific instructions. They should be used alongside this guide to ensure assessments are delivered in accordance with the relevant qualification requirements.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that all staff involved in the administration and delivery of external assessments are familiar with the latest qualification-specific guidance before each assessment series.

Responsibility for conducting external assessments

The Head of Centre is responsible for ensuring the secure and proper administration of external assessments. This includes making sure that all staff involved in the assessment process understand and follow the current JCQ ICE, the requirements set out in this guide, and any relevant qualification-specific guidance.

Types of external assessment

BTEC qualifications use a range of external assessment formats. As delivery requirements, supervision arrangements and assessment conditions vary by assessment type, centres must ensure they understand the requirements for each assessment.

Assessment type	Description
Set task	An externally assessed task based on a Pearson-set brief, completed under the conditions specified for the qualification.
Performance task	An assessment requiring learners to demonstrate practical skills or competencies. Evidence may be observed, recorded or otherwise captured for external marking.
Paper-based/ written test	A timetabled assessment completed under formal examination conditions, usually within a published assessment series.
Onscreen test	A computer-based assessment delivered through a secure testing platform. Depending on the qualification, tests may be available within scheduled assessment windows or on demand.

Centres must refer to the relevant qualification specification, assessment materials and task-specific guidance for the requirements that apply to each assessment type. Where assessments are conducted under formal examination conditions, centres must also follow the current JCQ ICE.

External assessment timetabling

Pearson publishes assessment timetables annually. Centres must refer to the latest published timetable for assessment dates, assessment windows, availability and submission deadlines.

Assessment type	Timetabling
Set tasks / performance tasks	Set tasks and performance tasks must be completed within the assessment window or by the submission deadline specified by Pearson. Centres may schedule assessment sessions within the permitted window, provided all qualification-specific requirements and assessment conditions are met.
Paper-based/ written tests	These assessments are scheduled within published assessment series and must be taken on the date specified in the Pearson assessment timetable. The published start times are: • Morning - 9.00am • Afternoon - 1.30pm Centres may vary the start time by up to 30 minutes before or after the published start time without prior approval from Pearson.
Onscreen tests	Onscreen tests may be available either within a specified assessment window or on demand, depending on the qualification. For on-demand assessments, centres may schedule the test when the learner is ready to be assessed.

Assessment conditions & levels of control

The assessment conditions and level of control vary by assessment type. Centres must refer to the relevant qualification specification, assessment materials and any task-specific guidance for the requirements that apply to each assessment.

Assessment type	Conditions
Set tasks/performance tasks	These assessments may include different stages, each with its own supervision requirements.
Paper-based/written tests & onscreen tests	Must be conducted under formal examination conditions in accordance with this guide and the current JCQ ICE.

Non-supervised conditions

Learners may be permitted to research, plan, prepare or practise independently where this is allowed by the qualification specification, assessment materials or any task-specific guidance.

Supervised conditions

Learners may be required to complete all or part of the assessment under supervision. The qualification specification, assessment materials and any task-specific guidance will define the required assessment conditions, supervision arrangements, permitted resources and time allocations. Centres must ensure the correct conditions are applied at each stage of the assessment.

Levels of control

Some assessments may include multiple stages, with different levels of control applying to each stage.

Level	Conditions
High control	Assessment is completed under formal examination conditions with direct supervision throughout.
Medium control	Assessment is completed under supervised conditions. Learners may access specified resources or prepared materials where permitted.
Low control	Activities are completed without direct supervision, such as research, planning, preparation or practice. Work produced under low-control conditions is not normally directly assessed.

Summary of conditions & controls

The level of control applied to an external assessment depends on the assessment type and qualification requirements. The table below provides an overview of the assessment conditions that typically apply to BTEC external assessments.

Important: Qualification-specific requirements, including supervision levels, permitted resources, time allocations and feedback arrangements, take precedence over this summary. Centres must always refer to the relevant qualification specification, assessment materials and any task-specific guidance for the requirements that apply to each assessment.

	Paper-based/written and onscreen tests	Set tasks and performance tasks	
Control type	Exam conditions	Supervised conditions	Non-supervised conditions
Authenticity	Learners work under direct supervision throughout the assessment.		Learners do not need to be directly supervised at all times, but sufficient supervision must be in place to ensure that work submitted for assessment can be authenticated.
Time	Exam duration/assessment window is specified by Pearson.		Preparation duration is specified by Pearson.
Resources	Only permitted resources may be used. Unauthorised materials must be removed. Learners must only have access to the resources specified		Permitted resources are defined in the qualification specification, assessment materials or any task-specific guidance. Unauthorised materials must not be used.
Collaboration	Learners must complete their work independently. Interaction with other learners is not allowed.	Learners must complete their work independently and must not interact with other learners unless group work is specifically permitted.	Learners may interact with others unless prohibited by any task-specific guidance.
Feedback	No assistance or feedback during the assessment.		General advice may be given unless any task-specific guidance states otherwise.

Conducting BTEC external assessments

Set tasks and performance tasks

This section provides guidance on administering externally assessed set tasks and performance tasks. It should be read alongside the relevant qualification specification, assessment materials and any task-specific guidance.

Different levels of control may apply at different stages of the assessment.

Task setting	All tasks are set by Pearson.
During the assessment	Different stages may require different levels of control. For example, research may be completed under non-supervised conditions, while responses are completed under supervised conditions.
Task marking	All tasks are marked by Pearson.

Pearson publishes tasks for each assessment opportunity. **Tasks are only valid during the specified assessment window, and centres must ensure the correct task is used.**

Centres must ensure that Pearson assessment materials and task content remain confidential before and during the assessment, and are only shared as permitted by the qualification specification, assessment materials or any task-specific guidance.

During the assessment

Centres must	Centres do not need to
✓ Ensure learners understand the assessment requirements and conditions, including the rules on referencing, authenticity and plagiarism. ✓ Ensure that learners: • understand they must reference information taken from published sources • understand how to acknowledge and cite sources appropriately • understand that plagiarism and other forms of malpractice are not permitted.	✗ Use external invigilators to supervise set tasks or performance tasks. These assessments may be supervised by centre staff, including the class teacher, unless qualification-specific guidance states otherwise ✗ Display the JCQ warning posters.

Supervised conditions

Permitted resources and assessment requirements are defined in the qualification specification, assessment materials and any task-specific guidance. Under supervised conditions, centres must ensure that:

- learners remain under direct supervision throughout the assessment and only access their work while supervised
- learners' work is stored securely between supervised sessions and during any permitted breaks
- any display materials that could assist learners are removed or covered
- learners only access permitted resources
- there is no access to email, the internet or mobile phones unless specifically permitted
- learners work independently and do not interact with others, unless group work is specifically permitted by the assessment guidance
- no assistance or feedback is provided.

Non-supervised conditions

Under non-supervised conditions, learners do not need to be directly supervised at all times. Centres must ensure that:

- learner participation in the assessment can be confirmed
- sufficient supervision is in place to authenticate the work submitted as the learner's own.

Advice & feedback

Before the assessment

Centres may provide general guidance on the following, unless the qualification specification, assessment materials or any task-specific guidance states otherwise:

- sources of information
- relevant concepts and materials
- general approaches to structuring a response
- data collection and presentation
- analysis and evaluation techniques
- health and safety requirements.

Model answers, writing frames and task-specific templates must not be provided unless explicitly permitted.

During the assessment

Once learners have started work under supervised conditions, centres must not provide advice or feedback of any description.

While learners are working under non-supervised conditions, centres may provide oral and written advice at a general level to propose broad approaches to the task or broad approaches for improvement unless the qualification specification, assessment materials or any task-specific guidance states otherwise.

Any advice given at this stage must:

- **not** refer to how to meet specific assessment criteria
- **not** provide detailed feedback on errors or omissions
- **ensure learners' work is their own** and there has **not** been direct intervention from centre staff to improve presentation or content.

Allowed	Not allowed
✓ Centres may remind learners how to identify relevant sources of information ✓ Centres may remind learners of general approaches to structuring a response	✗ Give specific feedback on particular sources learners have used ✗ Directly provide learners with additional sources to use ✗ Provide learners with a specific action plan on how to develop their own response

Resources

Centres must ensure learners only access resources permitted by the qualification specification, assessment materials or any task-specific guidance. Where assessments take place across multiple sessions, instructions regarding secure storage and permitted notes must be followed.

Learners must not be permitted access to artificial intelligence (AI) tools or embedded AI assistants within permitted applications. Where a permitted application includes embedded AI assistant functions, centres must disable or restrict those functions or have sufficient safeguards or supervision in place to prevent use.

Group work

Learners must work individually unless group work is specifically permitted. Where group work is allowed:

- any limits on group size must be followed
- assessable outcomes must be attributable to individual learners
- each learner must produce their own evidence
- individual contributions must be clearly identifiable.

Authentication

Where required, learners must sign a declaration confirming that submitted work is their own. Before submission, centres must confirm that the work was produced by the learner and completed under the required conditions. Work should **not be submitted where authenticity cannot be confirmed**.

Secure storage of confidential materials and learner work

Centres must ensure that confidential assessment content is kept secure before and during the assessment. This includes live task papers, briefs, stimulus materials, mark schemes, recording materials, prepared learner notes, partially completed learner work, materials identified as confidential in the qualification specification, assessment materials or any task-specific guidance. Confidential materials must only be accessed by authorised staff and learners at the point permitted by the qualification specification, assessment materials or any task-specific guidance.

Where assessments take place across multiple sessions, learner work and any permitted notes must be stored securely between sessions in line with the qualification specification, assessment materials or any task-specific guidance.

Secure storage may include:

- a safe or secure cabinet
- a locked classroom, studio or workshop with access restricted to authorised staff
- another supervised secure location suitable for the assessment

If learner work is lost, the following table summarises when special consideration may apply.

Learner responsible for loss	The loss is a consequence of negligence on the part of the learner.	✗ Not eligible for special consideration
Centre responsible for loss	The loss is not a consequence of negligence on the part of the learner. The centre is able to verify that the work was completed or partially completed and had been monitored while it was in progress.	✓ Eligible for special consideration

Loss of work must be reported to Pearson using JCQ Form 15 (JCQ/LCW).

Paper-based/written tests

Paper-based/written tests are conducted under formal examination conditions and the current JCQ ICE applies to their security and delivery. The requirements in this section repeat or summarise key JCQ ICE requirements where this is helpful for visibility, and also include any additional Pearson-specific instructions that centres must follow. Question papers and associated assessment materials are confidential and must be stored, handled and distributed securely in accordance with JCQ ICE and Pearson requirements.

Whenever learners are required to work under formal examination conditions, centres must follow the general requirements for preparing an appropriate examination room outlined in the JCQ ICE booklet.

Examination accommodation

Assessments may take place in an examination hall or suitable classroom, provided all JCQ requirements are met.

Display materials

Centres must:

- display the current JCQ Warning to Candidates and No Mobile Phones notices
- remove or cover any materials that could assist learners, including posters, charts, maps, diagrams and projected images.

Particular care should be taken in teaching rooms, libraries and specialist areas where subject-specific materials may be displayed.

Invigilation

Invigilator requirements

The Head of Centre must ensure invigilators are appropriately trained and experienced. A relative of a learner in the room must not act as the sole invigilator. Teachers who have prepared learners for the subject being assessed must not invigilate, except where specifically permitted by the qualification specification, assessment materials or any task-specific guidance.

Centres must provide:

- at least one invigilator for every 30 learners undertaking written assessments
- at least one invigilator for every 20 learners undertaking practical assessments.

Where only one invigilator is present, assistance must be available without the invigilator leaving the room.

Invigilator responsibilities

Invigilators must:

- supervise learners throughout the assessment
- be familiar with assessment regulations and malpractice procedures
- ensure all learners can be observed at all times
- give their full attention to invigilation and undertake no other duties

Seating plans

Centres must maintain signed records of seating and invigilation arrangements for each assessment session. Records must be retained for at least six months after the assessment and be available on request.

Unauthorised items

Learners must only have access to materials permitted by the qualification specification, assessment materials or any task-specific guidance. Unauthorised items include:

- mobile phones
- smart watches
- MP3/MP4 players
- iPods
- any device capable of storing, accessing or transmitting information.

Possession of unauthorised items may constitute malpractice and could result in disqualification.

Learner identification

Centres must verify the identity of all learners attending an assessment. Learners not personally known to the centre must provide photographic identification at each assessment session. A learner must never be permitted to sit an assessment under another person's identity.

Conducting the assessment

Before the assessment

Invigilators must:

- ensure learners are seated according to the approved seating plan
- read the required JCQ notices and warnings
- remind learners of assessment regulations
- instruct learners to complete required identification details
- check learners have the correct confidential assessment materials and only any permitted resources
- ensure unauthorised items have been surrendered.

Learners must not begin the assessment until instructed to do so.

During the assessment

Invigilators must:

- maintain continuous supervision
- ensure learners work independently
- prevent communication between learners
- provide no advice or feedback on assessment content.

For practical assessments, any spoken instructions must be limited to those necessary to conduct the assessment.

Late arrivals

Learners arriving after the published start time must be managed in accordance with the current *JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations*. Centres must follow all JCQ reporting requirements relating to late and very late arrivals.

People present

Only the following may be present in the assessment room:

- learners taking the assessment
- authorised centre staff directly involved in conducting or supervising the assessment
- Pearson representatives undertaking monitoring activities.

Supervising the learners

Invigilators must give all of their attention to supervising the learners while the assessment is in progress.

Practical assessments

During a practical assessment, learners may need to move around, so invigilators may need to give spoken instructions. Any spoken instructions must be limited to those essential to conduct the assessment. All other invigilation requirements continue to apply.

Irregular conduct

Any suspected or actual irregularity during an assessment must be reported to the Head of Centre and managed in accordance with Pearson and JCQ requirements. The Head of Centre must ensure that all suspected malpractice, misconduct or breaches of assessment regulations are reported appropriately.

Invigilators should remove and retain any unauthorised materials discovered during the assessment and record the circumstances.

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, centres must:

- follow the instructions of the relevant authority
- evacuate learners where required
- record the nature and duration of the disruption
- report the incident to Pearson.

Finishing the assessment

At the end of the assessment, invigilators must:

- instruct learners to stop work
- maintain examination conditions until all materials have been collected
- collect all question papers, scripts, answer booklets and any other assessment materials in accordance with JCQ requirements.

Question papers, scripts, answer booklets and any other assessment materials must remain secure and confidential until they are packed and returned to Pearson in accordance with JCQ ICE instructions.

Assessment scripts must be packed and returned to Pearson following the current JCQ ICE instructions.

Onscreen tests

Onscreen tests must be conducted under formal examination conditions and the current JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE) apply, unless otherwise stated in this section. The requirements in this section repeat or summarise key JCQ ICE requirements where helpful for visibility and also include any additional Pearson-specific instructions that centres must follow.

Preparing for onscreen tests

Safe custody of test materials

Centres must ensure that:

- testing software and assessment materials remain secure at all times
- only authorised staff have access to test administration passwords
- only entered learners are permitted to access tests
- appropriate systems are in place to prevent access to unauthorised software, websites or materials during the test
- assessment content remains confidential before, during and after the test.

As onscreen tests may remain live for other learners, centres must ensure that test content is not disclosed after a test has been completed.

Any actual or suspected breach of test security must be reported to Pearson immediately.

Technical requirements

Centres must ensure that:

- suitably trained staff are available to administer onscreen tests
- technical support is available during test setup and at the start of the test
- systems have been tested before use
- appropriate backup equipment is available
- virus protection and system maintenance are up to date.

Start times and test sessions

Where multiple learners are testing in the same room, centres should schedule a common start time wherever possible.

When tests are delivered across multiple sessions, centres must ensure learners do not communicate assessment content to other learners who have not yet taken the test.

Access to materials

Learners must only access materials permitted by the qualification specification, assessment materials or any platform-specific instructions.

Using calculators

Where calculators are permitted, learners may use either:

- the onscreen calculator provided
- an approved calculator that complies with JCQ requirements.

Onscreen notepad and rough notes

Learners may use the onscreen notepad provided during the test. Where centres permit handwritten rough notes:

- blank paper may be provided
- all rough notes must be collected at the end of the session and securely destroyed.

Accommodation

General environment and layout

The testing environment must:

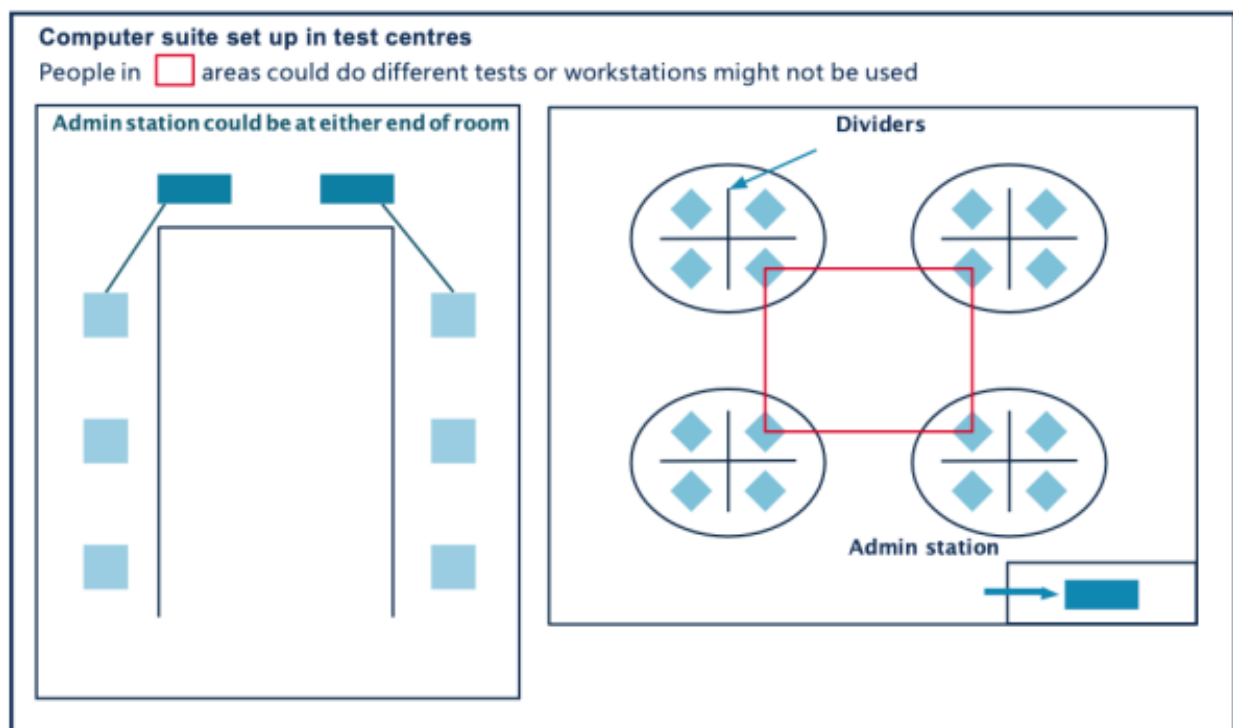
- be quiet and free from disruption
- provide appropriate lighting, heating and ventilation
- allow learners sufficient workspace
- be configured to support secure test delivery.

Positioning workstations

Workstations must be arranged to prevent learners from viewing other screens, accessing another learner's work, or communicating with other learners, and to allow effective invigilation. Workstations should be separated by:

- at least 1.25 metres (4 feet), measured between screen edges, or
- suitable partitions that prevent learners from viewing other screens.

Centres must ensure spare workstations and equipment are available in case of technical failure.



Seating the learners

Centres must:

- prepare and test all workstations before learners enter the room
- seat learners in candidate number order where possible
- maintain a seating plan for each session
- provide a visible and reliable clock.

Learners with infectious or contagious illnesses must be accommodated separately under the same assessment conditions.

Invigilation arrangements

Choosing an appropriate invigilator

The Head of Centre must ensure invigilators are appropriately trained and experienced. A relative of a learner in the room must not act as the sole invigilator. Teachers who have prepared learners for the subject being assessed must not act as the sole invigilator.

Invigilator responsibilities

Centres must provide:

- at least one invigilator for every 20 learners
- arrangements for summoning assistance without leaving the room.

Invigilators must:

- supervise learners throughout the assessment
- be familiar with the testing software and administration procedures
- be able to observe all learners at all times
- give their full attention to invigilation.

Seating plans

Signed records of seating and invigilation arrangements must be retained for at least six months after the assessment and be available on request.

Identification of learners

Centres must verify the identity of all learners attending an assessment. Learners not personally known to the centre must provide photographic identification at each test session. Learners must not complete an assessment under another person's identity.

People present

The only people allowed in the test room are:

- learners taking the assessment(s)
- anyone authorised by the Head of Centre to be present who is directly connected with the assessment.

Pearson may visit centres during the assessment period to inspect arrangements for the security of confidential assessment material and the conduct of assessments.

Conducting the test

Starting the test

Before the test begins, invigilators must:

- ensure learners are seated according to the seating plan
- read the required JCQ notices and warnings
- collect any unauthorised items
- confirm learners have been allocated the correct onscreen test and only any permitted resources
- explain the use of the onscreen notepad and any permitted rough paper
- remind learners not to use the *Complete Test* function without authorisation.

Learners must not begin the test until instructed to do so.

During the test

Invigilators must:

- maintain continuous supervision
- ensure learners work independently
- prevent communication between learners
- provide no advice or feedback on assessment content.

Technical problems

Technical failure during setup

If a technical issue prevents testing from starting, centres may delay the start by up to 15 minutes while attempting to resolve the issue.

If the issue cannot be resolved, the test must be rescheduled.

Technical failure during the test

Where a technical issue cannot be resolved within 30 minutes, the test session must be abandoned and rescheduled once the fault has been corrected and the system fully tested.

Power failure

Where a power outage lasts longer than 30 minutes, the test session must be abandoned and rescheduled.

Centres must record the nature and duration of any technical disruption and follow Pearson instructions before rescheduling or voiding a test.

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, centres must:

- follow the instructions of the relevant authority
- evacuate learners where required
- record the nature and duration of the disruption
- report the incident to Pearson.

Where an onscreen test is disrupted by an emergency, the session should normally be abandoned and rescheduled in accordance with Pearson instructions.

Pearson will confirm whether the test result can be voided to allow learners to re-sit the test at a suitable time.

Finishing the test

Tests will automatically close at the end of the allocated time.

Where a learner finishes early, they must obtain invigilator permission before selecting the *Complete Test* option.

Invigilators must ensure all assessment materials and rough notes are collected and disposed of in accordance with Pearson requirements.

Other information

Registrations, assessment bookings and certification

Full details on registration, assessment bookings and certification for these qualifications can be found in the Pearson Information Manual, available in the [Support section](#) of the Pearson Qualifications website.

Malpractice

All suspected malpractice must be reported to Pearson and will be investigated in line with the current *JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedures* and Pearson requirements.

Learner absence

Set tasks and performance tasks

Learners who miss an assessment session may complete the task separately, provided it remains within the permitted assessment window and all required controls are maintained.

Learners who become ill during an assessment may complete any remaining assessment time once recovered, provided this remains within the assessment window and the required assessment controls can be maintained.

Where a learner cannot attempt or complete the assessment within the permitted timeframe, they should be recorded as absent and either take the assessment at the next available opportunity or be considered for special consideration, where appropriate.

Paper-based/written tests

Learners absent from a timetabled assessment due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances should either take the assessment at the next available opportunity or be considered for special consideration in accordance with JCQ and Pearson requirements.

Special consideration & access arrangements

Full details on special consideration and access arrangements can be found on the [Special requirements](#) page of the Pearson Qualifications website.