



Tulip Siddiq MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

By email: tulip.siddiq.mp@parliament.uk

27 March 2024

Dear Ms Siddiq,

Written PQ 16935: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of denial of mitigated circumstances as a result of their parent or guardian passing away outside of the current 6 month cut off prior to examinations on children's educational attainment.

Minister Hinds has asked Ofqual to respond directly to your recent Parliamentary Question. A copy of this response will be placed in the library of both Houses.

We sympathise greatly with any student who has suffered a bereavement during their course of study – particularly in the case of a loss of a parent or guardian. It is important that arrangements are in place to take circumstances into account appropriately for any students who finds themselves in such a position.

Ofqual's rules require all awarding organisations to have in place clear arrangements for Special Consideration, and to publish those arrangements, including details as to how a student qualifies for Special Consideration, and what Special Consideration will be given. These rules can be found in section G7 of our [General Conditions of Recognition](#).

The four awarding organisations which deliver GCSEs, AS and A levels have chosen to [make and publish these arrangements](#) through the Joint Council for Qualifications.

It is important to be clear, as JCQ is in its rules, that the Special Consideration system is in place to apply Special Consideration for students who temporarily experience illness, injury or some other event outside of their control **at the**

time of their assessment. This is because Special Consideration is designed to compensate students where they are unable, at the point of assessment, to demonstrate fully what they know, understand and can do, having covered their course content, due to circumstances outside their control. Special Consideration does not attempt to credit students for knowledge, skills and understanding which they have not gained but which they may have gained had circumstances been different for them.

It is important to note that JCQ's rules do not apply a blanket 6 month cut-off for bereavement – they are clear that there may be circumstances such as an anniversary, an inquest or court case which mean that a student is acutely affected at the time of the assessment and Special Consideration may be appropriate. If a student feels that their performance has been impacted they should discuss this with the school, which can speak to the exam board and ask it to consider the individual circumstances of the student. Together with the student, the school can also consider whether applying for access arrangements might be appropriate. Every application for Special Consideration or access arrangements is treated on a case-by-case basis.

I hope this is useful in clarifying the purpose of Special Consideration, and the fact that while there is a clear policy in place, applications are treated on a case-by-case basis, taking each student's circumstances into account.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Bauckham'.

Sir Ian Bauckham CBE
Chief Regulator, Ofqual.