

Date:

Dear Head Teacher or College Principal

Sickness and Special Consideration in Public Examinations

I write on behalf of Somerset LMC, which is the statutory representative body for all general practitioners in the county.

Dr..... has recently been approached to provide a medical certificate for
..... re Sickness and Special Consideration in Public Examinations

This letter is to explain the contractual and legal position of GP practices in such circumstances.

GPs are sometimes asked to provide medical certificates concerning young people whose performance in a public examination may have been impaired for health reasons. Correspondence with the Joint Council for Qualifications shows that such certificates should not normally be required:

“The issue you are raising with the JCQ is not new and QCA, the former qualifications regulator for England, informed JCQ and its member awarding bodies that General Practitioners should not be expected to routinely write letters or notes in support of special consideration applications. The General Medical Council had raised their concerns with the qualifications regulator. The examples in the JCQ publication 'Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration' should guide you in dealing with special consideration applications. The examples are found in the special consideration section of the booklet. Schools and colleges should not automatically direct candidates to their GP, expecting him/her to write a supporting statement to substantiate an application for special consideration. This has been standard practice for some years now and is not a sudden change in 2013.

I can therefore confirm that the guidelines from the Somerset Local Medical Committee are entirely correct.”

(Nick Lait, Senior Manager, Examination Services, JCQ)

The background to this decision is set out below.

Somerset Local Medical Committee Crown Medical Centre Venture Way Taunton TA2 8QY

Chairman: Dr Nick Bray
Vice Chairman: Dr Karen Sylvester

Medical Director: Dr Harry Yoxall
Executive Director: Jill Hellens
Deputy Medical Director: Dr Barry Moyse

Phone: 01823 331428 Fax: 01823 338561
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Sometimes applications for special consideration are made by examination centres for adverse circumstances affecting examination performance, controlled assessment or coursework. This is conveyed using JCQ Form 10. Again medical or psychological evidence *may* be attached but is not essential. What is vital is that the Head of Centre or Examinations Officer must support the application. Furthermore GPs are often approached to provide supporting information in retrospect when an illness did not require medical attention at the time which is clearly impossible.

We are aware that, very occasionally, a candidate may be absent unexpectedly from an examination for which a resit cannot be arranged. In this case the candidate or his or her parent, guardian or carer will be asked to complete JCQ self-certification Form 14 which may require some supporting evidence of a medical problem in Part B. The supporting notes state that Form 14 is not to be used if the candidate was known to the examination centre to have a long-term medical condition known to cause sudden absences was noted to be falling ill at the centre the day before or was sent home ill by the centre. If medical evidence is required this does not have to be provided by a GP but can be from a nurse or receptionist.

I hope you will therefore understand that it was not possible for the GP to issue a medical certificate as requested on this occasion.

Yours faithfully



Dr Harry Yoxall
LMC Medical Director

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