

Access Arrangements

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(unless required sooner due to legislation change)



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Definition and purpose

The purpose of an Access Arrangement is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for candidates with a special educational need or disability, preventing him/her from being placed at a substantial disadvantage as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for candidates with special educational needs or a disability.

Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. Access Arrangements fall into two distinct categories:

- Arrangements which are delegated to centres
- Arrangements which require prior JCQ awarding body approval

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment.

A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements.

How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the candidate/learner with a disability. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

Special Educational Needs

A candidate has “special educational needs” as defined in the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years, if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability includes substantial and long-term sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, mobility impairment mental health difficulties and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer.

Available Access Arrangements include:

- **Computer reader Practical Assistant**
- **Scribe/Speech recognition technology Sign Language Interpreter**
- **Extra time**
- **Word processor Bilingual translation dictionary**
- **Supervised rest breaks Coloured/Enlarged Papers**
- **Prompter Braille Papers**

Fundamental Principles

Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. The need for Access Arrangements are therefore considered on a subject-by-subject basis.

The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre:

- in the classroom; or
- working in small groups for reading and/or writing; or
- literacy intervention strategies;
- and/or in internal centre tests and mock examinations.
- This is commonly referred to as '**normal way of working**'.
- The key principle is that the SENDCo or the Access Arrangement Assessor working within the centre can show a history of support and provision. The arrangement is not suddenly being granted to the candidate at the time of his/her examinations.

The candidate must have appropriate opportunities to practise using the Access Arrangement(s) before his/her examination.

If a candidate has never made use of the arrangement granted to him/her, e.g. 25% extra time or supervised rest breaks, then it is **not** his/her normal way of working. In these specific circumstances, the arrangement may be rescinded at our discretion.

Deadlines for submitting applications for Access Arrangements

Applications for Access Arrangements must be processed by the published deadline. This will allow centres to make provision for Access Arrangements from the perspective of timetabling logistics, accommodation and staffing. If a referral to an awarding body becomes necessary, there may not be sufficient time to process the application if it is made after the respective deadline.

Core and Supplementary Evidence

All centres will be inspected by a member of the JCQ Centre Inspection Service. Inspectors will expect to see appropriate documentation to substantiate the use of an Access Arrangement processed electronically.

Core evidence for candidates with a Learning Difficulty

In order to award extra time/reader/scribe, etc. the centre must assess the needs of the

candidate based on one of the following documents:

- a statement of Special Educational Needs relating to secondary education, or an Education, Health and Care Plan, which confirms the candidate's disability; or
- an assessment carried out no earlier than the start of Year 9 by a specialist assessor confirming a learning difficulty relating to secondary/further education.

Assessment

We re-assess all students with existing access arrangements to check that the arrangement is still appropriate to their needs and to provide core evidence to corroborate an application for Access Arrangement(s) in all GCSE, BTECE/GCE AS/A-level written examinations. A series of psychometric tests (recommended by PATOSS and acceptable to JCQ) are administered to determine processing, reading and writing speeds using standardised scores.

The assessment is conducted in-house by either an External Assessor (1) (who has an established relationship with the centre) or an Access Arrangement Assessor (2) (appointed by the Head of Centre), qualified to administer the tests, which compare the literacy of an individual student against a standardised set of peer results. Subsequent support and practice in use of appropriate Access Arrangements is offered by the department.

Privately Commissioned Assessments

The Centre can only accept privately commissioned assessments where the external assessor has, before assessment, established a relationship with the centre (centre). This is set out in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) publication, Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustment.

A privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to award access arrangements and cannot be used to process an application using Access arrangements online.

The SENDCo must complete at least a 'skeleton' Section A of Form 8 prior to the candidate being assessed (Section C of Form 8).

Before the candidate's assessment, the SENDCo must provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted as per Section A of Form 8. The SENDCo and the assessor must work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.

1 Certificates of External Assessors are held on file along with written approval from the Head of Centre.

2 Access Arrangements Assessors have successfully completed a postgraduate course at or

equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment and attend annual CPD (communicate-ed JCQ Examination Access Arrangement - Update/Refresher).

An independent assessor must contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This must take place before the candidate is assessed.

The candidate must be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Section A of Form 8.

An independent assessor must discuss access arrangements with the SENDCo.

The responsibility to request access arrangements specifically lies with the SENDCo.

Literacy Difficulty Referrals

The centre must provide evidence of how a literacy difficulty significantly and persistently impacts on teaching and learning in the classroom. Information is gathered from the student, those who work with the student (teachers and/or support staff), progress grades and screening assessment results. The tests are undertaken purely for educational purposes and in no respect indicate a diagnosis of any underlying Specific Learning Difficulty.

Core Evidence for a candidate with a Medical/Health condition

Supervised rest breaks must always be considered before making a request for extra time, since they may be more appropriate for candidates with a medical condition, a physical disability or a psychological condition.

In addition to the supplementary evidence collated by the centre, the file note is supported with, for example:

- a letter from CAMHS, a HCPC registered psychologist, a hospital consultant, a psychiatrist; **or**
- a letter from the Local Authority Specialist Service, Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service or Occupational Health Service; **or**
- a letter from a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT); **or**
- a Statement of Special Educational Needs relating to the candidate's secondary education, or an Education, Health and Care plan which confirms the candidate's disability.

Please note that a letter from a G.P. is acceptable for supervised rest breaks or a request for a small room, though all other Access Arrangements (including extra time) require an up-to-date letter from one of the above.

Supplementary evidence for all Access Arrangements

In all cases, in addition to the core evidence, the centre must paint a picture of the candidate's normal way of working within the centre. So as not to give an unfair advantage, the SENDCo or the Specialist Assessor working within the centre must have available evidence which clearly shows that an Access Arrangement is (still) needed for GCSE, BTEC ,GCE, AS and A-level examinations:

- confirm that the candidate continues to have persistent and significant difficulties when accessing and processing information and is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010;
- include evidence of the candidate's current difficulties and how they **substantially** impact on teaching and learning in the classroom;
- confirm that without the application of extra time/reader/scribe, etc. the candidate would **continue to be at a substantial disadvantage** when taking GCSE/GCE AS/A-level examinations compared to other non-disabled candidates;
- confirm that extra time/reader/scribe, etc. continues to be the candidate's normal way of working within the centre **as a direct consequence of their disability**.

Special Consideration

Special Consideration is a post examination adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time of the examination or assessment. This will be processed by the examination's office.

Temporary Injury

Access Arrangement Online (AAO) is used for a candidate with a temporary injury or impairment, such as a broken arm during the examination period. These arrangements are processed as the need arises. Medical evidence is retained within the department, together with a file note detailing the circumstances, a signed data protection form and a copy of the AAO Approval.

Reviewing the Policy

In light of JCQ regulation annual updates, this policy is reviewed annually by the SENDCo.

Frequently asked Questions

https://sendiss.co.uk/downloads/access/handouts/14_frequently%20asked%20questions.pdf