



Access Arrangements Procedures - 2024/2025

This policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) publication 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties - Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments'. These are regulations with which HCCS must comply, and this policy will outline how we do this.

Next review date	01/09/2025
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Key Staff involved in this policy

Head of Centre	Nigel Bielby
Assistant Headteacher for Data, Assessments and Exams	Jason Jones
Examinations Officer	Rob McDermott
Specialist Assessor and Access Arrangements Coordinator	Megan Walker

What are Exam Access Arrangements?

Access Arrangements are actions taken to remove the disadvantages to a student accessing an examination caused by physical, learning, sensory or psychological difficulties, without creating any unfair advantage or compromising the integrity of an assessment. These arrangements are agreed **before** an assessment, and must reflect a student's **normal way of working** within the school. Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act (2010) requires awarding bodies 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 comparison to someone who is not disabled. A candidate with a disability or difficulty which has a **substantial and long term effect** on performance in examinations may qualify for access arrangements. Access Arrangements are intended to increase access to the assessment, but cannot be granted where they will directly affect



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performance in the skills that are the focus of the assessment. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- the needs of the disabled candidate;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; **and**
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; **or**
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'. ([AARA p13-15](#))

General Principles

The purpose of an access arrangement is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing him/her from being placed at a substantial disadvantage due to persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for disabled candidates.

HCCS **must** ensure that the proposed access arrangement does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

Access arrangements should be processed at the **start** of the course. This would mean Year 10 for GCSE and Year 12 for GCE.

Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment.

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

The candidate **must** have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s) before his/her first examination. This is to ensure the most suitable arrangement is in place. For example, if it is thought that an access arrangement hinders a student further then it may need removing e.g. if they trial a laptop and then it is found this slows them down further.

JCQ also states that students may not require extra time for every examination and every subject. As subjects and the methods of assessment vary, so the demands on the candidate will vary. Extra time may not be appropriate for practical examinations such as Art, for example. ([AARA 4.2](#))



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Identifying the need for Access Arrangements

Students will be identified for consideration for Access Arrangements via subject teacher referral, with a minimum of two members of staff from different subject areas required to trigger the testing. Parental requests for their child to be assessed will only happen if it is supported by teaching staff as per JCQ regulations.

Students who had Access Arrangements in place during their KS2 National Curriculum Tests will have their arrangements carried over if there is evidence this is necessary e.g. EHCP, a dyslexia report etc. Primary Schools are not subjected to the same standards and do not have to comply with JCQ regulations. Any student who has an Access Arrangement due to learning difficulties carried through from Primary school **must** be retested no earlier than Year 9 - even if they have a confirmed diagnosis of dyslexia. This is in line with JCQ regulations. ([AARA 5.2](#))

Picture of need/Normal way of working

When a need is identified a picture of need is created from teacher observations, performance in lessons and internal exams e.g. SATS as well as a history of need from primaries.

The referral and observation process is an integral part of the application; staff are informed that without quality feedback applications cannot be made.

Referral and observation paperwork detail the learners' normal way of working in the centre. This will be used as evidence for online submission for a formal Access Arrangement application.

The Access Arrangements Coordinator ensures that the Access Arrangement is the normal way of working for the candidate within school. All access arrangements are recorded. A spreadsheet with access arrangements is available to all teaching staff.

If it is deemed necessary, students with EHCPs can be tested for more than 25% extra time. A detailed picture of need must be drawn. The initial application will be automatically rejected, however referrals to awarding bodies will be made. In order to keep up-to-date with all regulations the Specialist Assessor attends refresher training each (mid) September. Records of this training and attendance certificates are held by the centre. This must be completed before any student is assessed in an academic year.

Please Note - **Medical letters from a GP are not sufficient evidence and cannot be accepted.** Evidence of a medical nature must be supplied by a Consultant / Specialist / CAMHS. In addition to this, JCQ regulations state that the centre **must** decide on what access arrangement to award a student. Although professionals from other organisations may give advice, they **cannot** make the decision for the centre. This is because they will not



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have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how their difficulties impact on the classroom and/or in timed assessments. ([AARA p9.](#))

Private Reports (Educational Psychologist, Dyslexia etc)

A growing number of parents are having their children assessed privately by professionals and submitting the reports to the SENCo as evidence that their child should be awarded extra time or other Access Arrangements. Private reports cost a significant amount of money, putting those unable to obtain a private report due to financial circumstances at a disadvantage. **External Assessors are required to contact the SENCo before carrying out the assessment**, when this does not happen, we cannot accept the report. The SENCo will provide the Assessor with any existing information about previous support and current difficulties. Reports from an external professional must be supported by school based evidence. A student's 'normal way of working' is paramount and Access Arrangements will not be awarded purely on the basis of a private report. In line with JCQ guidelines, where we choose to reject a privately commissioned report from an external professional, the head of centre or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will provide a brief, written rationale to support this decision which will then be available for inspection purposes. ([AARA 7.3](#))

Alternative Rooming Policy

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved for alternative rooming within the centre will be made by the Access Arrangement Coordinator.

The decision will be based on:

- whether the candidate has a substantial and long term impairment which has an adverse effect **and**
- the candidate's normal way of working within the centre

Separate Invigilation is assessed on individual need. Where this is due to behaviour that may impact on others sitting the examination the Headteacher will take the lead. Where this is based on a SEMH or learning need this will be led by the Access Arrangement Coordinator. Pastoral staff can communicate to the Access Arrangements Coordinator students who they feel may require this arrangement. JCQ regulations state that 1:1 invigilation and the use of an alternative room would only apply where the candidate has a serious medical condition e.g. frequent seizures

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations is not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre. ([AARA 5.16](#))

Deadlines for Awarding Access Arrangements

Year 11

The majority of access arrangements should be applied for as students start their courses in Year 10. The final school deadline (in line with JCQ guidelines), to submit evidence and request Access Arrangements for a student in Year 11 is **25th October 2024**. This final



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deadline is the last opportunity to trial any Access Arrangements and is there to 'pick up' issues previously not reported rather than the working norm for all Access Arrangements. This then allows the Access Arrangements Coordinator and Examinations Officer time to plan the examinations. The Year 10 examinations and other prior assessments should provide an opportunity to identify any difficulties a student may have.

Sixth Form

The deadline for sixth form Access Arrangements requests is **14th February 2025 for students in Year 12 only**, as long as a body of evidence has been collected by teachers in advance of this. Year 13 is too late to make requests for Access Arrangements as no history of need is available or provision is in place. However, we may consider Access Arrangements in exceptional circumstances, such as medical needs.

Candidates who join the sixth form from a different centre must declare any Access Arrangements they had at KS4 when they apply. The Access Arrangements Coordinator will then write to the previous centre for evidence.

JCQ regulations also state that when a student who had Access Arrangements in their GCSE examinations moves to GCE (or other Level 3 qualifications) a new online application must be processed. This requires updated teacher feedback and may also require updated specialist evidence. So as not to give an unfair advantage, the Access Arrangements Coordinator must have available evidence, which clearly shows that an arrangement is still needed for GCE (or equivalent) examinations. This updated centre-based evidence must specifically relate to GCE AS and/or A-level examinations. ([AARA 5.2](#))

Temporary Arrangements

Temporary arrangements may be required by students as a result of illness or injury. Students with an illness or injury that has a direct impact on their ability to access the examination should obtain evidence so that reasonable adjustments can be made. For example, a student breaks their arm on their writing hand and may require a word processor, scribe or extra time. Temporary arrangements last for one examination session. If the condition persists another letter may be required for the next session.

In all cases where an access arrangement or a reasonable adjustment is necessary, the school is entitled to expect reasonable notice to carry out its responsibilities. Where a need has been identified, the Examinations Officer and Access Arrangements Coordinator should be provided with medical evidence in reasonable time. ([AARA 8.3](#))

Evidence Held and Malpractice

Schools are subject to regular, unannounced inspections to ensure that they have followed JCQ regulations. HCCS is required to hold evidence of all Access Arrangements awarded.



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Each Access Arrangements candidate will have an individual e-folder containing detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations. A Data Protection Notice must be signed by a candidate prior to HCCS applying for Access Arrangements. Access to student e-folders are strictly limited to those involved in the Access Arrangement Process.

Failure to comply with regulations is considered malpractice. The consequences of which can be severe, including disqualification of the student from one or more examinations.

Examples of malpractice include:

- Students being granted Access Arrangements which are not their normal way of working
- Access Arrangements being granted when a student has no history of need or provision
- Access Arrangements being granted without sufficient evidence ([AARA 4.2](#))

Frequently Asked Questions - [FAQ](#)

Further Information

Further information can be found on the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) website:
www.jcq.org.uk