

Access Arrangements Protocol

Rationale

To comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010*, awarding bodies (examination boards) are expected to make 'reasonable adjustments' to meet the particular needs of a disabled learner under the Equality Act without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access Arrangements are the principal means of removing any barriers to assessment and therefore remove substantial disadvantage.

Schools have a duty to ensure that the integrity of the assessment is maintained. Candidates may be unable to demonstrate the assessment objectives required by the specification (syllabus) and are therefore entitled to some support but help cannot be given where the skill to be performed is the focus of the assessment. Indeed, it is important to know that credit is only given for skills demonstrated by the candidate working independently.

Reasonable Adjustments

All reasonable adjustments should remove the difficulties a student may face and may put them at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to their peers. There must be firm evidence of a barrier to assessment before any reasonable adjustment may be put in place.

Examination centres (schools) must appoint a qualified assessor with required level of competence and training who will work with the SENCo to apply for Access Arrangements if there is evidence of need and the candidate meets the Five Conditions.

The Five Conditions

1. The candidate continues to have persistent/significant difficulties and is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act.
2. Evidence of current difficulties and how they substantially impact on teaching and learning in the classroom
3. Show the involvement of teaching staff in determining need
4. Confirm that without the arrangement the candidate would be at a substantial disadvantage when compared with non-disabled candidates.
5. The arrangement continues to be the normal way of working as a direct consequence of their disability.

Where there is evidence to back up the Five Conditions, such as a formal diagnosis, EHCP, OT report etc, there is no requirement for an assessment.

Parents should note that students are not entitled to the same Access Arrangement for all examinations, nor are they entitled to multiple Arrangements. The assessor must determine whether each assessment is necessary based on evidence.

Access Arrangements

Students may be assessed for the following adjustments against specific criteria:

A Scribe / Speech Recognition Software	For students whose handwriting, especially in timed conditions, is illegible or whose average speed of handwriting is below average for their age.
Use of a Word Processor	For students whose handwriting is poor or whose average speed of handwriting is below average for their age.

**Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on someone's ability to carry out normal day to day activities'.*

	<i>If a student chooses to use a word processor, but they are entitled to use a Scribe, they may have spell check/predictive text/grammar check enabled. However, they would not receive any marks for SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar) as this would give them an unfair advantage.</i>
A Reader / A Reading Pen	For students who have a low reading age and meet specific criteria, they will be entitled to a Reader in exams. The reader will read aloud certain questions and texts in all exams except where the reading element is the main component of the test (e.g.: English). Students may wish to use a Reading Pen. If they meet the criteria for a reader, we will contact parents to discuss this further.
25% Extra Time	Where there is a compelling and clear need for a student with learning difficulties to have additional time to complete an examination, they may be awarded 25% extra time. Students would have been assessed as below average cognitive processing (working memory) or poor reading speed or poor writing speed. Observations from teachers and the assessor would show that there is a significant improvement in student attainment when 25% extra time has been allowed in normal working conditions. Note: A below average age for reading comprehension does not entitle a candidate to extra time, only a reader or computer reader. <i>When students have been given a Reader or a Scribe as a reasonable adjustment, there may also be an opportunity to apply for 25% extra time. This is not an automatic entitlement.</i>
Modified Papers	For candidates with Visual or Hearing Impairment or if they have significant comprehension difficulties, examination centres may apply for modified papers. This includes: Enlarged print (A4 modified 18 point bold; A3 modified 24 point bold and in some papers A3 modified 36 point bold) Modified format Tactile diagrams with Braille/print labels Transcript of listening tapes (not MFL) Videos for lip reading Coloured paper
Bi-lingual dictionary	If the candidate has been in the UK less than three years (including holidays) and arrived with no prior knowledge of English, they will be allowed to have access to a Bi-lingual dictionary except for MFL. Rare and Exceptional circumstance: 10% extra time will be awarded if English is not spoken at home and there is a need to use the dictionary extensively therefore extra time is the normal way of working for the candidate.
A Prompter	For candidates who have a diagnosis of ADHD and therefore lose concentration easily, an invigilator may prompt them. The aim is to keep the candidate focussed on the question and the prompter may not communicate with the candidate in any other way such as give factual help or suggestions. They may say the candidate's name or tap the desk/candidate's arm.
Supervised Rest breaks	For candidates who have a recognised medical condition, sensory or physical needs or social, emotional or mental health difficulty, rest breaks may be given to enable the candidate to complete the examination. Time for rest breaks are added to the end of the exam.

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Assessing students for Reasonable Adjustments

In Year 9, we will begin to assess students to determine if they will require additional support in their GCSE examinations. We will complete Reading, Spelling, Handwriting and writing speed tests and where appropriate Cognitive Processing tests such as phonological awareness and short-term memory.

If a student meets the criteria for one (or in some cases more than one) adjustment, we will apply to the Joint Council for Qualifications. This application (Form 8) may be submitted up to two years before, but must be completed six months before the GCSE examinations take place. The Access Arrangement remains in place for 26 months.

In addition to the assessment, we have to submit evidence to the JCQ that the reasonable adjustment is required and is part of normal working conditions. Therefore there will be an opportunity for students to have Access Arrangements as part of their Mock examinations. Teachers will also be required to provide evidence to show that students continue to require this reasonable adjustment as it will make a significant contribution to their performance (without which the student would be severely disadvantaged).

Changes to Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are not obligatory and should a student no longer wish to access a reasonable adjustment, this is possible. However, students are not allowed to exchange one adjustment for another. (For example, not use a word processor but have extra time). There is a strict criterion that must be adhered to for each adjustment.

Dawn German
Assistant Headteacher & SENCo

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