



Access Arrangements Policy 2023-24

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What are Access Arrangement and Reasonable Adjustments?

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are agreed **before** an assessment. They allow candidates with **specific needs**, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010* to make 'reasonable adjustments'. ([AA Definitions](#))

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 comparison to someone who is not disabled. The awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. An example would be a Braille paper which would be a reasonable adjustment for a vision impaired candidate who could read Braille. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. 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'. ([AA Definitions](#))

*References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see [AA](#) 1.8). The definitions and procedures in [AA](#) relating to access arrangement and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland.

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Northleigh House School has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements processing and is complying with its '...obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements ... (JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres Section 5.4) This publication is further referred to in this policy as [GR](#).

This policy is maintained by the SEN Officer alongside the individual files/e-folders of each access arrangements candidate. Each file/e-folder contained details records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations

Where the SEN Officer is storing documentation electronically he/she must create a e-folder for each individual. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. ([AA](#) 4.2)

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication Adjustments for Candidates with Disability and Learning Difficulties – Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments. This publication is further referred to in this policy as [AA](#).

General Principles

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in [AA](#) (Section 4.2.) These include:

The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment 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 a disabled candidate.

The SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff within a FE college, **must** ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the **start** of the course.

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)/reasonable adjustment(s) before his/her first examination.

Equalities (Exams) Policy

A large part of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process is covered in the Equalities (Exams) Policy which covers staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements and the conduct of examinations.

The head of centre/senior leadership team will... recognise its duties towards disabled candidates, including private candidates, ensuring compliance with all aspects of the Equality Act 2010†, particularly Section 20(7). This **must** include a duty to explore and provide access to suitable courses, through the access arrangements process submit applications for reasonable adjustments and make reasonable adjustments to the service the centre provides to disabled candidates. Where the

centre is under a duty to make a reasonable adjustment, the centre **must not** charge a disabled candidate any additional fee in relation to the adjustment or aid ...

for any legislation in a relevant jurisdiction other than England and Wales which has an equivalent purpose and effect ([GR](#) 5.4).

The Access Arrangements Policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

The Assessment Process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor(s) appointed by the Head of Centre. The assessor(s) are appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in [AA](#) 7.3.

The Qualifications(s) of the Current Assessor(s)

The details of current assessors are:

Jane Clark – SpLD Assessment Practicing Certificate PATOSS

Louise Hayward – Postgraduate Award of Proficiency in Assessment for Access Arrangements

Appointment of Assessors of Candidates

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed in the centre, evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements in AA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Checking the Qualification(s) of the Assessor(s)

The head of centre/senior leadership team will: ... have a written process in place to not only check the qualification(s) of their assessor(s) but that the correct procedures are followed as in Chapter 7 of the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments... ([GR](#) Section 5.4)

The head of centre must ensure that evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) is obtained at the point of engagement/employment and prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) must be held on file for inspection purposes and be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the SENCo. ([AA](#)) Section 7.3

The head of centre will ensure that assessors of the requisite qualifications prior to an assessment being made, that the qualifications of assessors are up to date and copies of their qualifications are kept securely, should they be required for an inspection.

Reporting the Appointment of the Assessor(s)

SENCOs must hold on file for inspection purposes evidence that the assessor(s) is/are suitably qualified. ([AA](#) Section 7.4)

The assessor(s) copies of qualifications are held securely with candidates examination files and are available for inspection.

Process for the Assessment of a Candidate's by an Assessor

Picture of need/normal way of working

Where candidates have been referred for assessment, teaching staff and the SEN Officer will be asked to provide background information to the assessor, along with a picture of need, how the candidate is currently presenting and what is the candidates' normal way of working.

Before the candidate's assessment, the SEN Officer **must** provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted as required in Part 1 of Form 8. The SEN Officer and the assessor must work together to ensure a join-up and consistent process. ([AA](#) Section 7.5)

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. Additionally, the independent assessor **must** be approved by the head of centre to assess the candidate.

All candidates **must** be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8.

An independent assessor **must** discuss access arrangements/reasonable adjustments with the SEN Officer. The responsibility to determine and request appropriate and practicable access arrangements/reasonable adjustments lies with the SEN Officer. ([AA](#) Section 7.5)

The assessor is required to establish if results of test in literacy and/or cognitive abilities present evidence that the candidate has **an impairment which substantially affects their performance**. ([AA](#) Section 7.5)

If the centre is facilitating examination arrangements for private candidates, distance learners and home educated students, they must consider whether these candidates require assessment for access arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

Processing Access Arrangements and Adjustments Arrangements/Adjustments Requiring Awarding Body Approval

Access Arrangements Online (AAO) is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for centres to apply for required access arrangement approval for the qualifications covered by the tool. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications included. (Refer to AA, Chapter 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments) and Chapter 6 (Modified papers)).

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by logging in to one of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

The Examinations Officer keeps detailed records of all access arrangements/reasonable adjustments applications whether approved or not, together with any order(s) made for the modification of papers. Once an assessment has been completed and/or Form 8 an application will be processed through the appropriate awarding body in relation to specific qualifications to be taken. Applications, approvals, rejections will be printed and placed in individual candidates' examination files and held securely.

Note the requirements around completion of the Candidate **Personal data consent form** and the **Data protection confirmation by the Examinations Officer or SEN Officer**, prior to the processing of the online application, which must be retained for 26 months from the date of the online application being approved.

Centre Specific Criteria for Particular Arrangements/Adjustments

Word Processor Policy (Exams)

An examination candidate may be approved the use of a word processor where this is appropriate to the candidate's needs and not simply the candidate now wants to type rather than write in exams or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

Alternative Rooming Arrangements

A decision where an examination candidate may be approved alternative rooming arrangements e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs (formerly known as separate invigilation) will be made by the SEN/Examination Officer.

A large proportion of centre candidates have high levels of anxiety which might warrant alternative rooming arrangements. Those candidates who are eligible for a scribe and/or reader will normally have alternative rooming arrangements to facilitate these access arrangements and ensure that other candidates are not disrupted.

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 ([AA](#) Section 5.16)

For example, in the case of alternative rooming arrangements within the centre (this may include sitting the examination outside of the main examination hall/room e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates or one-to-one invigilation).

In the case of alternative rooming arrangements, the candidate's difficulties are **established within the centre** (see Chapter 4, paragraph 4.1.4) and known to a subject teachers, head of centre, the SEN Officer or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities.

Alternative rooming arrangements reflect the candidate's normal way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations. Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations is not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre. ([AA](#) Section 5.16)

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