



Stockport School

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments for Exams Policy

2020-21

This policy is written in line with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Regulations document: 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties – Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments' – with effect from 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2021.

What are the rules about how students sit exams and who makes them?

For internal exams, set and marked by the school, the school has choices about how students will take the exam (for example, whether to give students extra time).

For external exams, such as GCSEs, there are strict rules about how exams must be conducted to make sure that assessment is fair. The school has to follow these rules. These rules are made by the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications), a national organisation, and have to be followed by all schools and colleges. Breaking these rules could have serious consequences for the school, as it would be considered to be malpractice. The JCQ states that "failure by a centre to notify, investigate and report to an awarding body all allegations of malpractice or suspected malpractice constitutes malpractice in itself" and that "failure to take action as required by an awarding body, as detailed in this document, or to co-operate with an awarding body's investigation constitutes malpractice"; as a result, the school has to prioritise complying with the rules over individual student, parent or teacher preferences or requests, as otherwise the school could lose its status as an approved examination centre.

What are Exam Access Arrangements and what are they for?

Access arrangements are when special arrangements are made to meet the particular needs of an individual disabled students or student with SEN (special educational needs) without affecting the fairness of the assessment. They allow the student to access the assessment and to show what they know and can do, without changing the demands of the assessment. Access arrangements are a form of additional learning support that ensures that a learner is not significantly disadvantaged during assessments due to an additional educational need, thereby ensuring equal opportunities. Access arrangements are not intended to give candidates an unfair advantage, but to give all candidates the equal opportunity in which to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding.

The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the particular needs of an individual disabled candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. They are based on evidence of need and must be a student's usual way of working. This is because this is the standard set by JCQ and also because students need to get used to working in those conditions as their usual way of working to make sure that they are comfortable and confident with the arrangements by the time they sit their GCSE exams.

Some decisions about access arrangements can be made by the school and some require JCQ approval of formal written applications.

Access Arrangements allow candidates/learners with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment without changing the demands of the assessment. For example, readers, scribes and Braille question papers. In this way Awarding Bodies will comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person 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 the needs of the disabled candidate/learner and other factors appropriate to the individual situation.

The duty for an awarding body to make a reasonable adjustment will apply where assessment arrangements would put a disabled candidate at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a candidate who is not disabled. In such circumstances, the awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that a student with a substantial impairment which has a significant and long term adverse effect on an individual's ability to complete an examination is catered for. The reasonable adjustment will allow the individual to fairly access the examination creating an equitable opportunity and level playing field in comparison to non-disabled peers. The centre routinely and regularly discuss strategies and examination access arrangements to support children with learning difficulties which could impact their ability to access an examinations.

Section 6 of the Equality Act 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.

A candidate has 'special educational needs' as defined in the Education Act 1996 if he/she has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him/her.

A candidate has a 'learning difficulty' if:

- He/she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his/her age;
OR
- He/she has a disability which either prevents or hinders him/her from making use of the educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of his/her age in schools within the area of the local authority.

The existence of a medical diagnosis or physical disability in itself does not imply that the candidate in question has special educational needs or requires access arrangements. Not all students with disabilities will require access arrangements. Not all students with SEN will require access arrangements. Not all students entitled to access arrangements will come under the legal definition of either being disabled or having SEN.

Access arrangements may include (but are not limited to):

1. Supervised rest breaks
2. Extra time of up to 25%
3. Extra time of up to 50%
4. Extra time of over 50%
5. Reader/Computer reader e.g. ClaroRead
6. Read aloud
7. Reader Pens
8. Scribe/Voice Activated software
9. Word processor
10. Transcript
11. Prompter
12. Oral Language Modifier
13. Live speaker for pre-recorded examinations components
14. Sign Language Interpreter
15. Practical Assistant
16. Alternative accommodation away from the centre
17. Other arrangements for candidates with disabilities: amplification equipment; Brailers; closed circuit TV; colour naming by the invigilator for candidates who are Colour Blind; coloured overlays; low vision aid/magnifier; optical character reader scanners; separate invigilation with the centre.
18. Smaller exam room or individual exam room

Where there is evidence of need, support can be offered and trialled by the school in lessons and internal exams and assessments in lower years.

In lessons, teachers and teaching assistants will discuss and implement differentiated strategies (including the use of assistive technology) to overcome barriers to the curriculum, supporting students' needs including those regarding:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speed of working
- Sensory and physical impairments and disabilities

These students will then begin trialling those adjustments that have started to become their "normal way of working" in internal examinations and assessments.

This can be in the form of:

- **A scribe/voice recognition technology:** a trained adult/piece of software who/which writes for the student. The student would dictate their answers. The scribe would write exactly what they say.
- **A reader/computer reader:** a trained adult/piece of software who/which would read the question and any relevant text (with the exception of Section A of an English GCSE Exam) for the student. The student would then write the answer/s themselves. If a student is using a computer reader, they are able to use this in Section A of the English GCSE exam.
- **Extra time:** students may be entitled to an allowance of up to 25% depending on the history of evidence of need and the recommendation of the designated Specialist Teacher. In some exceptional circumstance's students may be entitled to an allowance up to 50% or beyond.
- **Rest breaks:** where students are permitted to stop for short break/s during the exam and the time stopped is added to the finish time, with the effect of making the exam last longer, but not actually using any extra time.
- **Prompter:** where a student has little sense of time or loses concentration easily, a trained adult can prompt them with a few permitted phrases to refocus, move the student on to the next question or indicate how much time is left.
- **ICT:** access to a computer for an exam (if appropriate - not for subjects such as Maths) so the student would word process their answers. Spelling and grammar checks would be disabled and a special exam account would be used with no internet access. In some exceptional circumstances, students may be entitled to use a spell check enabled computer.
- **This is not an exhaustive list.**

When can the school grant the use of IT in exams?

A word processor/ computer/IT cannot simply be granted to a candidate because they want to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they uses a laptop at home. It must be established that it is their 'normal way of working' within school and that there is a 'need' for such a provision. The school has a written statement detailing how computers are allocated for exams.

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 visually impaired person who could read Braille.

A reasonable adjustment for a particular person maybe unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. Whether an adjustment will be considered will depend on a number of factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- The needs of the disabled candidate/learner;
- The effectiveness of the adjustment;
- The cost of the adjustment; and
- The likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidates.

The responsibility of an awarding body is principally one of making reasonable adjustments for a candidate defined as disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010.

Duty to make a reasonable adjustment:

The duty for an awarding body to make a reasonable adjustment will apply where assessment arrangements would put a disabled candidate at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a candidate who is not disabled. In such circumstances, the awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.

Who will receive Exam Access Arrangements?

Following primary liaison visits and the Y7 screening tests, the SEN department will consider students on a case-by-case basis, based on primary school information given and Y7 screening results (as well as Stockport School staff recommendations). If the SENCO feels that access arrangements from primary school should continue in secondary school, or feels that a new access arrangement should be given, this will be established as their usual way of working and access arrangements will be granted for all internal exams and assessments (although eligibility will need to be assessed again in Y9 in some cases). All students have their reading ages screened each term in Y7, 8 and 9. (I have deleted the fact that spelling ability is screened as it isn't any more). This helps us identify students who may need access arrangements. Additionally, class teachers, form teachers or support staff will often refer students to the SEN department for individual testing of a range of difficulties. This helps us to establish who might need access arrangements. Parents can also refer their children to the SEN department.

The SEN department apply for GCSE access arrangements for students from the summer term of Y9. This is done under the JCQ rules.

In line with JCQ regulations, the school will make all decisions with regard to access arrangements based upon whether the candidate has a substantial and long-term impairment which has an adverse effect, or relevant SEN, in conjunction with the access arrangement being the candidate's normal way of working at the school.

Appropriate evidence of need must be available at the school for inspection.

Any student with scores which indicate a substantial impairment will be considered for access arrangements. The most recent test scores will usually determine any subsequent access arrangements.

Specialist assessments for access arrangements will be carried out by an appropriately qualified assessor.

Parents may request an independent assessment or provide their own evidence. However, the school may choose to accept or reject a privately commissioned report. In all instances, in accordance with the JCQ regulations, the school will perform further assessments to establish what access arrangements are appropriate to meet the students' needs in light of their normal way of working in the centre.

If a student chooses continually not to use the agreed access arrangements either because their needs change or they do not feel it aids their learning or achievement then access arrangements can be removed. Students will be asked to sign a disclaimer form to verify that they do not wish to use their access arrangements.

If the SENCO or other SEN department staff considers that access arrangements cease to be the student's 'normal way of working', they reserve the right to withdraw the permission, informing the students and parents/carers.

The school must, on request by a JCQ inspector:

- Provide relevant evidence of the nature and extent of the disability or difficulty/impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect (history of need/history of provision/intervention strategies)
- Provide evidence that the difficulties are persistent and significant (history of need-assessment results/provision/intervention strategies)

- Show evidence of how the disability/difficulty/impairment has impacted on teaching and learning in the classroom (intervention strategies – assessment results – history of need/ provision – staff observations)
- Confirm that the candidate would be at a substantial disadvantage when compared with other non-disabled candidates undertaking the assessment (history of need/provision/staff observations)
- Confirm that the access arrangement is the candidate's normal way of working within the school as a direct consequence of their disability (history of need/ provision/intervention strategies/staff and exam officer observations).
- Ensure that the arrangement (s) put in place reflect the support given to the candidate in school e.g.: (bullet point removed)
In the classroom; or working in small groups for reading and /or writing; or literacy support lessons; or literacy intervention strategies; and / or in internal school tests and mock exams.

As subjects vary, leading to different demands of the candidate, support may be needed in just one or two subjects; another candidate may need support in all their subjects. The key principle is that the specialist assessor can show a history of support and provision.

If a candidate never makes use of the arrangement granted to them – then it is not his or her normal way of working and the arrangement should not be awarded for examinations or indeed it should be removed*.

** The only exception to this is where an arrangement is put into place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment.*

Some applications may require supporting evidence; for example:

- A letter from CAMHS or a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist; or
- A letter from a hospital consultant; or
- A letter from the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service; or
- A letter from the Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service; or
- A letter from a Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)

In this case, the candidate's parents/carers must work with the school's SENCO to ensure that relevant documentation from a healthcare professional is available in school and shows that the candidate requires additional access arrangements.

When do access arrangements need to be in place by?

Due to the fact that we are required to have evidence of a "history of need" and for the arrangement to be the student's "usual way of working", access arrangements will rarely be applied for and will almost never be granted once the student is past the January of Y11. This is because a student who has not needed access arrangements for over eleven years of their school life cannot really be said to have had a history of need, and to be able to establish the arrangements as the usual way of working. Also, the JCQ deadline for applications or amendments is now usually mid-February and time will be needed to assemble the evidence.

There will always be exceptional cases, such as a student arriving at the school at an unusual point in time, but the standard rule is that parents and teachers need to make any enquiries about access arrangements as early as possible and certainly well before the January of the student's Y11 year.

Who has the final decision about access arrangements?

The SEN department have the specialist knowledge about which access arrangements will be appropriate in both meeting the needs of students and satisfying the JCQ criteria. They have received training on how the JCQ criteria must be applied and some staff are also approved by exam boards to carry out specialist assessments for decision-making about access arrangements. They have regard to both making sure that students can access their exams, but also making sure that the school does not jeopardise its status as an examination centre by failing to apply the JCQ rules or committing malpractice. The SEN department will therefore make all initial decisions about access arrangements.

However, there may sometimes be borderline or unusual cases, or cases where parents wish to discuss decisions made. Any queries about these decisions can be referred to Mrs H McNicholls, (SENCO) The final decision will always rest with the Headteacher, as Head of Centre.

Review:

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis in line with the Examinations Policy.

Last Review: September 2020

Next Review: September 2021