



Stockport School

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments for Exams Policy

2025-26

This policy is written in line with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Regulation's document: *'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties – Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments'* – with effect from 1st September 2025 to 31st August 2026.

What are Exam Access Arrangements?

Access arrangements are when special arrangements are made to meet the particular needs of an individual disabled students or student with SEND (special educational needs and disability) 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.

What are 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.

What Access Arrangements/Reasonable Adjustments might a student be granted?

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

- Supervised rest breaks
- Extra time
- Reader/Computer reader e.g., ClaroRead
- Read aloud
- Reader Pens
- Scribe
- Word processor

- Prompter
- Live speaker for pre-recorded examinations components
- Practical Assistant
- Alternative rooming arrangement e.g., a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs.
- Colour naming by the invigilator for candidates who are Colour Blind
- Coloured overlays
- low vision aid/magnifier
- Access to a mobile phone for medical purposes

Who is responsible for determining what Access Arrangements/Reasonable Adjustments a student is granted?

Responsibility for decisions regarding the Access Arrangements/Reasonable Adjustments a student is granted lies with the Access Arrangements Assessor, in consultation with subject teachers. Although other professionals from other organisations may give advice, they **cannot** make decisions regarding access arrangements as they will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments.

Final decisions regarding examinations lies with the Headteacher, as Head of Centre.

For external exams, such as GCSEs, there are strict rules about how exams must be conducted to make sure that the assessment is fair. 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. As a result, the school must comply with these rules, even where this is contrary to individual student, parent or teacher preferences/requests. Failure to do so may result in the school losing its status as an approved examination centre.

For internal exams, set and marked by the school, the school can determine how examinations are conducted and whether any adjustments should be put in place (for example, whether to give students extra time). The school will be guided by the JCQ regulations when determining access arrangements for internal examinations to ensure assessments are fair and students receive adjustments commensurate with those, they are likely to be granted in external examinations.

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 use 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.

How are Access Arrangements/Reasonable Adjustments assessed?

Access Arrangements/Reasonable Adjustments are assessed based on the individual needs of a student and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments.

Subject teachers regularly assess the progress of students in their class and identify barriers to their students' ability to learn. Where the teacher determines that a student **requires an Access Arrangement/Reasonable Adjustment to be made to enable them to fully demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding**, the subject teacher will make an internal referral requesting the student is formally assessed for this access arrangement.

Access Arrangement requests will usually be made in Years 7-9. Emergency requests for Access Arrangements may be made in Years 10 and 11 may be accepted in the following circumstances (where there is sufficient time to complete the process prior to the relevant exam series):

- A student develops a new impairment or disability.
- The student is new to the school.
- There are unforeseen circumstances that could not be predicted.

On receipt of an Access Arrangement referral, the Access Arrangement Coordinator will gather evidence to access it the student is **likely to be significantly disadvantaged during assessments due to an additional educational need**. This evidence may take a variety of forms which may include:

- Year 7 cognitive screening data
- Year7-9 reading data
- Teacher observations
- Evidence from internal assessments

For students where is determined that they are **likely to be significantly disadvantaged during assessments due to an additional educational need and requires an Access Arrangement/Reasonable Adjustment to be made to enable them to fully to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding** the Access Arrangement Coordinator will gather the statutory evidence required to complete the Access Arrangement application process and confirm the requested Access Arrangement may be granted. This may include:

- Psychometric Testing Data from a qualified Access Arrangement Assessor
- Teacher evidence of a student's needs, how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments and what strategies they employ to support the student.
- Teacher evidence that the requested access arrangement is the student's normal way of working
- A letter of diagnosis
- An Education Health and Care Plan
- Letters from external agencies and/or medical professionals

When will Access Arrangements/Reasonable Adjustments for external exams be applied for?

The JCQ state that, whilst Access Arrangement/Reasonable adjustment must be applied for no earlier than the start of year 9, they must be processed at the start of start of a course of study. The schools should process applications at the start of or during the first year of a two-year GCSE course having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working during previous years.

As all students at the school begin a course of study in Year 9, the processing of all Access Arrangements applications will begin in Year 9 and be completed by the first term of Year 10. Where an emergency requests for Access Arrangements is made in Years 10 or 11, due to exceptional circumstances, an application may be made after the first term of Year 10.

How will the school ensure training and competency regulations are met?

The head of the centre will ensure that:

- The Access Arrangement Coordinator has sufficient time to both manage the access arrangements process within the centre and familiarise themselves with the JCQ document Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.
- The Access Arrangement Coordinator and the centre's appointed assessor undertake regular CPD such as attending an annual update course on these regulations.
- The appointed Access Arrangement Assessor has the required level of competence and training.
- Evidence of the Access Arrangement 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) are held on file for inspection purposes and be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the Access Arrangement Coordinator.

The Access Arrangement Coordinator will:

- Work with teaching staff, support staff (such as Learning Support Assistants and Teaching Assistants) and exams office personnel to ensure that approved access arrangements/reasonable adjustments are put in place for internal school tests, mock examinations and examinations.
- Where appropriate, work with specialist advisory teachers, educational psychologists and medical professionals.

- Work with the centre's appointed assessor to ensure a consistent, joined-up process. This will also allow the Access Arrangement Coordinator to discuss individual candidate cases with the assessor before making final decisions.
- Refer to the JCQ Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties: Access Arrangements reasonable adjustments" guidance when processing applications using Access arrangements online.
- Only process online applications where they are supported by the centre and the candidate meets the published criteria for the arrangement(s) with the full supporting evidence in place.

The exams officer will:

- Work with teaching staff to identify the most appropriate published format of modified papers (see Chapter 6) which will enable the candidate(s) to access their examinations.

What if a parent/carer is not happy with a decision regarding Access Arrangements/Reasonable Adjustments for their child?

If a parent/carer is not happy with a decision regarding Access Arrangements/Reasonable Adjustments for their child, they should direct their concerns to the Access Arrangement Coordinator using the following email: SENEnquiries@stockport.stockport.sch.uk

Review:

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

Last Review: September 2025

Next Review: September 2026