

Access arrangements policy

What are access arrangements?

Access Arrangements

Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. Access Arrangements fall into two distinct categories: some arrangements are delegated to centres, others require prior JCQ^{CIC} awarding body approval.

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'.

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 several factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

There is no duty on the Awarding Bodies to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested in an assessment.” [JCQ website [An overview](#)]

General principles

The general principles of access arrangements for the centre to consider are detailed in [AA](#) (section 4.2). These include:

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 a disabled candidate.

The SENDCo, or an equivalent member of staff within a FE college, must ensure that the proposed access arrangement does not disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

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.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Dixons Sixth Form Academy fulfils “its obligations in respect of identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements.”

[JCQ ‘General regulations for approved centres’ Chapter 5.5]

This document is further referred to in this policy as [GR](#)

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that arrangements are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication

‘Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments

General and Vocational qualifications’

This publication is further referred to in this policy as [AA](#).

Exams Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Exams Policy, which is also available to view on the college website. The access arrangements policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

The assessment process

Roles and responsibilities

The head of centre will:

be familiar with the contents, refer to and direct relevant centre staff to annually updated JCQ publications including [GR](#) and [AA](#)

ensure that processes for identifying the need for access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (referred to in this policy as ‘access arrangements’) for individual candidates is clearly defined and documented

ensure that staff roles and responsibilities in identifying, requesting and implementing access arrangements are clearly defined in this policy

ensure a qualified specialist assessor is appointed and that evidence of the appropriate qualification(s) of the person(s) appointed is held on file

ensure that the assessment process is administered in accordance with the regulations

ensure a disability policy showing the centre’s compliance with relevant legislation is in place

The SENDCO (special educational needs and disabilities) will:

be familiar with the contents, refer to and direct relevant centre staff to annually updated JCQ publications including [AA](#)

lead on the access arrangements process including the use of Access Arrangements Online
if not the qualified specialist assessor, will work with the person appointed, on all matters relating to assessing candidates and the administration of the assessment process
ensure that all assessments carried out and arrangements put in place comply with JCQ and awarding body regulations and guidance
ensure arrangements put in place reflect a candidate's *normal way of working*¹ within the centre
ensure the need for access arrangements for a candidate will be considered on a subject-by-subject basis
present when requested by the JCQ Centre Inspector, evidence of the specialist assessor's qualification

In addition, the SENDCO will:

provide and annually review a centre policy on the **Access Arrangements**
provide and annually review a centre policy on the **Use of Word Processors in Exams and Assessments**

The Exams Officer will:

provide the Head of SEND with a timetable that allows staff to be assigned to students requiring Access Arrangements
ensure that suitable rooms are provided for all external and internal examinations
ensure criteria for candidates allowed **separate invigilation within the centre** is clear, meets the requirements of JCQ access arrangements and best meets the needs of individual candidates and remaining candidates in main exam rooms

Teaching staff will:

inform the SENDCO of any support that might be needed by a candidate
provide information to evidence the *normal way of working* of a candidate
support the SENDCO as required in identifying the need for access arrangements

The specialist assessor will:

conduct appropriate assessments to identify the need(s) of a candidate
provide appropriate evidence to confirm the need(s) of a candidate
complete appropriate documentation as required by the regulations of JCQ and the awarding body

Assessments are carried out by an assessor appointed by the head of centre. The assessor is appropriately qualified as required in JCQ regulations as follows:

- an access arrangements assessor who has successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment. An access arrangements assessor may conduct assessments to be recorded within Section C of Form 8; and/or
- an appropriately qualified psychologist registered with the Health & Care Professions Council who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Section C of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments; and/or
- a specialist assessor with a current SpLD (Specific Learning Difficulty) Assessment Practising Certificate, as awarded by Patoss, Dyslexia Action or BDA and listed on the SASC website, who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Section C of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments.

and

An access arrangements assessor must have successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment, which must include training in all the following:

- the theoretical basis underlying psychometric tests, such as the concepts of validity and reliability; standard deviations and the normal curve; raw scores, standard scores, quotients, percentiles, and age equivalent scores; the concept of statistically significant discrepancies between scores; standard error of measurement and confidence intervals.
- the appropriate use of nationally standardised tests for the age group being tested.
- the objective administration of attainment tests which can be administered individually. This must include tests of reading accuracy, reading speed, reading comprehension and spelling. Appropriate methods of assessing writing skills, including speed, must also be covered.
- the appropriate selection and objective use of tests of cognitive skills, **see paragraph 7.5.12, page 86.**
- the ethical administration of testing including the ability to understand the limitation of their own skills and experience, and to define when it is necessary to refer the candidate to an alternative professional...

[AA 7.3]

Checking the qualification(s) of the assessor

The SENDCO will check the assessor's qualifications and take copies, which will be stored in the SEND section of the staff SharePoint site. Any feeder school assessor certificates will also be stored in this way.

Private Education Reports (Psychology/Specialist Assessor)

A parent may have their children assessed by a private educational psychologist or specialist assessor and submit the report to the Academy's SENDCO as evidence that their child should be awarded EAA. Private educational psychologists' report cost a significant amount of money. Therefore, this means that parents who are unable to obtain a private report through their financial circumstances are put at a disadvantage. As an exam centre Dixons Sixth Form Academy must be consistent in its decisions and ensure that no student is either given an unfair advantage or disadvantaged by any arrangements put in place. Therefore, when parents submit such reports to Dixons Sixth Form Academy, we will look for evidence of a history of need. Such privately commissioned reports can be in conflict with what the specialist assessor working within the Dixons Academy Trust recommends. If the Academy's diagnostic tests and evidence of need contradict privately commissioned reports, then the Academy's tests and assessments will take precedence and will inform EAA decisions and no further negotiation regarding this matter will take place with the parent/carer.

How the assessment process is administered

Feeder schools will be contacted and requested to forward on the previous Form 8. The SENDCO will check that the Form 8 has been correctly signed and completed and this can then be taken as suitable evidence, assuming the most recent eligibility criteria have been met.

Teachers can notify the SENDCO of any student who may potentially requiring access arrangements and an assessment will be conducted by a qualified assessor.

The SENDCO, SEND Administrator, Examinations Officer, and teaching staff all work together to ensure that appropriate access arrangements are put in place for all tests and examinations.

Recording evidence of need

As per JCQ regulations certain applications may need to be supported with for example:

- A letter from CAMHS or a clinical Psychologist or Psychiatrist
- A letter from a hospital consultant
- A letter from the local Authority Educational Psychology Service
- A letter from the Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service or
- A letter from a Speech and Language Therapist
- Staff information sheets/ data collection.

Gathering evidence of normal way of working

Evidence is gathered to record normal way of working from:

- Classroom working environment
- Group work
- Intervention sessions
- Mock examinations

Processing applications for access arrangements

Access arrangements online

Access arrangements online is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for GCSE and GCE qualifications. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for GCSE and GCE qualifications.

“For GCSE and GCE qualifications, Access arrangements online enables centres to make a single on-line application for a candidate requiring access arrangements using any of the secure awarding body extranet sites. Access arrangements online will provide an instant response and will only allow a maximum of 26 months for any arrangement.

Further information on Access arrangements online is available from:

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/aao-access-arrangements-online>”

[AA 8.1]

At Dixons Sixth Form Academy the SENDCO will:

- determine if the arrangements identified for a candidate require prior approval from the awarding body before the arrangements are put in place or if approval is centre-delegated
- follow guidance in [AA](#) Chapter 8 to process approval applications for access arrangements for GCSE qualifications
- have a username and password for one or more awarding body secure extranet site in order to gain access to *Access arrangements online*² (AAO)

- apply for approval where this is required, through AAO, or through the awarding body where qualifications sit outside the scope of AAO
- ensure appropriate evidence is held on file to confirm validation responses in AAO; examples might include:

painting a picture of need on section A of JCQ form 8

a completed specialist assessment to substantiate the picture of need recorded on section C of form 8

a body of evidence to substantiate the candidate's normal way of working within the centre

- confirm by ticking the '*Confirmation*' box prior to submitting the application for approval that the '*malpractice consequence statement*' has been read and accepted
- make an *awarding body referral* through AAO where the initial application for approval may not be approved by AAO, where it is deemed by the centre that the candidate does not meet the criteria for the arrangement(s)
- ensure that arrangements, and approval where required, is in place before a candidate takes his/her first exam or assessment (which is externally assessed or internally assessed/externally moderated)
- ensure that where approval is required that this is applied for by the awarding body deadline
- maintain a file for each candidate that will include:
 - completed JCQ/awarding body application forms and evidence forms
 - appropriate evidence to support the need for the arrangement
 - appropriate evidence to support normal way of working within the centre
 - in addition, for GCSE and GCE qualifications (where approval is required), a print out of the AAO approval and a signed data protection notice (which provides candidate consent to their personal details being shared)

will present the files when requested by the JCQ Centre Inspector

At Dixons Sixth Form Academy the Examinations Officer will:

create an exam timetable for all external exams, KS4 exams and KS3 core subjects which includes suitable rooming and allows the SENDCO to assign staff

order modified papers, where these may be required by a candidate for GCSE and GCSE qualifications, through AAO by the deadline date for the November (GCSE only) and summer exam series

order modified papers, where these may be required by a candidate for all external exams to the awarding body at least 10 weeks before the date of the assessment

Once all applications are submitted the form 8, data protection notice, and evidence of normal way of working are all stored within an electronic folder, in the SEND section of the staff SharePoint site.

Implementing access arrangements

Extra Time in Examinations

Following an assessment, students who meet the current criteria for 25% or 50% extra time will initially be considered for rest breaks. If, in the opinion of the SENDCO or the assessor, the granting of extra time will be more appropriate for the individual needs of the student, then a request for extra time will be made.

[AA 5.2.2]

Separate invigilation within the centre

Access arrangements online is not required for this arrangement, though a SENDCO note must be provided to show this is the students normal way of working in all major assessments. The Examinations Officer will ensure the appropriate rooming.

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved separate invigilation within the centre 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 5.16]

Use of a Prompter

Access arrangements online is not required for this arrangement.

A prompter may be permitted where a candidate has a substantial and long-term adverse impairment resulting in persistent distractibility or significant difficulty in concentrating.

For example, the candidate:

- has little or no sense of time (e.g., candidates with ADHD or ASD); or
- persistently loses concentration; or
- is affected by an Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder which leads them to keep revising a question rather than moving onto other questions.

[AA 5.10.1]

In such instances a candidate may be assisted by a prompter who can keep the candidate focused on the need to answer a question and then move on to answering the next question

Use of a Scribe

So as not to give an unfair advantage, a scribe will only be allowed where:

- an impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the candidate's writing; or
- a candidate cannot write, type or Braille independently, or at sufficient speed to record their answers even with extra time allowed, because of a substantial and long-term impairment.

The use of a scribe must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre in

the light of their substantial and long-term impairment

The SENDCO must complete a detailed note on centre headed paper, signed, and dated to address the 3 bullet points below:

- confirm that a scribe is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.
- provide evidence from teaching staff that the candidate has persistent and significant difficulties, and how these substantially impact on teaching and learning.
- confirm that the candidate is not sufficiently competent or confident in using a word processor with the spelling and grammar check or predictive text facility disabled (switched off) in every subject.

The scribe cover sheet must be completed, the scribe must have received training and follow the JCQ guidance and these rules:

- must write or type accurately, and at a reasonable speed, what the candidate has said.
- must draw or add to maps, diagrams, and graphs strictly in accordance with the candidate's instructions, unless the candidate is taking a design paper, in which case a scribe will only be permitted to assist with the written parts of the paper.
- must abide by the regulations since failure to do so could lead to the disqualification of the candidate.
- must write or word process a correction on a typescript or Braille sheet if requested to do so by the candidate.
- must immediately refer any problems in communication during the examination to the invigilator or examinations officer.
- must not give factual help to the candidate or indicate when the answer is complete.
- must not advise the candidate on which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which questions should be answered.
- may, at the candidate's request, read back what has been recorded

[AA 5.7.11]

Use of an Examination Reader Pen

There is not a requirement to process an application for read aloud and/or the use of an examination reading pen using Access arrangements online. No evidence is needed to support the arrangement for inspection purposes.

The use of an examination reading pen, provided by the centre, might benefit those candidates who wish to work independently. It may increase the independence of candidates who needed a reader for accuracy rather than comprehension.

The use of an examination reading pen might also benefit those candidates who only require occasional words or phrases to be read to them.

An examination reading pen may be used in papers (or sections of papers) testing reading. However, the candidate cannot additionally be granted up to a maximum of 50% extra time in place of the reader

[AA 5.6]

Supervised Rest Breaks

Access arrangements online is not required for this arrangement. The SENDCO must produce a short concise file note on centre headed paper, signed, and dated, confirming the need for supervised rest breaks

The SENDCO is allowed to provide a supervised rest break to a candidate where it is his/her normal way of working within the centre.

The SENDCO must be satisfied that:

- the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties (the candidate is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act); and
- there is a genuine need for the arrangement

The timing of the examination should be paused and re-started when the candidate is ready to continue.

During the supervised rest break the candidate must not have access to the question paper/answer booklet.

If the candidate needs to leave the examination room, an invigilator must accompany the candidate.

[AA 5.1]

Roles and responsibilities

External assessments

These are assessments which are normally set and marked/examined by an awarding body which must be conducted according to awarding body and/or JCQ [Instructions for conducting examinations](#) (ICE).

At Dixons Sixth Form Academy the SENDCO will:

appoint appropriate centre staff as facilitators to support candidates who have been approved the use of:
a practical assistant

a prompter

a reader

a scribe

a Sign Language Interpreter

ensure facilitators supporting candidates are appropriately trained and understand the rules of the access arrangement(s)

ensure candidates are aware of the access arrangements that are in place for their exams and assessments

liaise with the EO regarding facilitation and invigilation of access arrangement candidates in exams

liaise with the EO where a facilitator may be required to support a candidate requiring an emergency (temporary)

access arrangement at the time of exams

The EO will:

liaise with the SENDCO regarding the facilitation and invigilation of access arrangement candidates

liaise with the SENDCO regarding rooming of access arrangement candidates

ensure invigilators supervising access arrangement candidates are trained in their role and understand the

invigilation arrangements required for access arrangement candidates as detailed in ICE 7 and 8

ensure cover sheets are completed as required by facilitators

provide cover sheets prior to the start of an exam where required for particular access arrangements and will ensure that these have been fully completed before candidates' scripts are dispatched to examiners/markers

print pre-populated cover sheets from AAO where this is required for GCSE and GCE qualifications

will check in advance of dated exams/assessments that modified paper orders have arrived (and if not will contact the awarding body to ensure that papers are available when required)

make modifications that are delegated to the centre (a question paper on coloured/enlarged paper) that may be required and will open the question paper packet in the secure room within 90 minutes of the published starting time for the exam

ensure that where a candidate has been approved for a computer reader, will open the question paper packet in the secure room within 90 minutes of the published starting time for the exam

ensure that where an electronic script is required, it is downloaded and tested prior to the exam

have a process in place to deal with emergency (temporary) access arrangements as they arise at the time of exams in terms of rooming and invigilation

where required for emergency (temporary) access arrangements, apply for approval through AAO or through the awarding body where qualifications sit outside the scope of AAO

Internal assessments

These are assessments which are normally set by a centre/awarding body, marked and internally verified by the centre and moderated by the awarding body.

The SENDCO will:

liaise with teaching staff to implement appropriate access arrangements for candidates

Teaching staff will:

support the SENDCO in implementing appropriate access arrangements for candidates

Internal exams

These are exams or tests which are set and marked within the centre; normally a pre-cursor to external assessments (exams).

The SENDCO will:

liaise with teaching staff to implement appropriate access arrangements for candidates

Teaching staff will:

support the SENDCO in implementing appropriate access arrangements for candidates