Appendix 3 – Access Arrangements Policy

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

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What are Access Arrangements 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 adjustment'.

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'.

The centre **must** ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates.

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

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that [insert centre name] has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements process 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 document is further referred to in this policy as GR

This policy is maintained and held by SENCo (or equivalent role) alongside the individual files/e-folders of each access arrangements candidate. Each file/e-folder contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

> Where the SENCo (or equivalent role) is storing documentation electronically they **mus**t create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder **must** hold each of the required documents for inspection. ([1]AARA 4.2)

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current JCQ document 'Adjustments t for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties - **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**'.

[1]This document is further referred to in this policy as AARA

General Principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, to coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine and implement appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties or disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language and those with a temporary illness or temporary injury. (GR 5.4)

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AARA (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 them 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, **must** ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

Although access arrangements/adjustments are intended to allow access to assessments, they cannot be granted where they will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question.

Candidates may not require the same access arrangements/reasonable adjustments in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. The need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments must be considered on a subject-by-subject basis

A centre **must** make decisions on appropriate access arrangements for their candidates. Although professionals from other organisations may give advice, they **cannot** make the decision for the centre. 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. It is the responsibility of the SENCo to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations.

Applications should be processed at the start of or during the first year of a two-year course having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working.

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 their first examination.

The Assessment Process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor(s) appointed by the head of centre. The assessor(s) is (are) appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in AARA, section 7.3.

Appointment of Assessors

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 AARA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

A photocopy of the assessor's certificate(s) is kept on file.

Reporting the appointment of the assessor(s)

- Evidence that the assessor(s) is/are suitably qualified is held on file for inspection purposes
- In the case of appropriately qualified psychologists (registered with the Health & Care Professions Council), or specialist assessors holding a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, who are directly employed within the centre, there is no need to record the names of these individuals within **Access arrangements online (AAO)**.
- The names of all other assessors, who are assessing candidates studying qualifications as covered by AARA must be entered into **Access arrangements online** to confirm their status. This will include all other professionals working outside the centre.

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

- Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor will be followed and Form 8 (JCQ/AARA/LD - Profile of Learning Difficulties) will be completed
- Arrangements must be made for the candidate to be assessed by an assessor
  Assessors must personally conduct the assessments. They must not sign off assessments carried out by another professional.
- The assessor must carry out tests which are relevant to support the application.
  A privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to award access arrangements and
  cannot be used to process an application using **Access arrangements online**.
- Relevant staff working within the centre should always carefully consider any privately commissioned assessment to see whether the process of gathering a picture of need, demonstrating normal way of working within the centre and ultimately assessing the candidate themselves should be instigated.

Painting a 'Holistic Picture of Need', Confirming Normal Way of Working

- Before the candidate's assessment, the person appointed in the centre must provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted as per Part 1 of Form 8. The centre and the assessor must work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.
- 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.
- 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 with the person appointed in the centre. The responsibility to request access arrangements specifically lies with the centre.
- (As applicable, also refer to Supplementary Guidance March 2026 which provides additional exemplification to support understanding of the evidence that may be used to support an online application for 25% extra time)

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/Adjustments Requiring Awarding Body Approval

Access arrangements online (AAO) is used to apply for approval of arrangements/adjustments for the qualifications listed within the JCQ document Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.

> AAO is a shared digital service that enables centres to request and manage pre-agreed adjustments, such as extra time, readers, scribes or modified papers, for students with specific needs, disabilities or temporary injuries in a consistent and efficient way across JCQ member qualifications.
>
> It sits within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal and is used by centres to submit a single application per student, rather than applying separately to each member, helping to streamline administration while supporting regulatory compliance and data protection requirements. (www.jcq.org.uk/about-us/shared-services/#aao)

Online applications **must** only be processed 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. (AARA 8.1 Summary)

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

The SENCo **must** keep detailed records for inspection purposes, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes a copy of the candidate's approved application; appropriate evidence of need (where required); evidence of the assessor's qualification (where required). (AARA, section 8.6)

Deadlines apply for each examination series for submitting applications using AAO.

Centre-Delegated Arrangements/Adjustments

Decisions relating to the approval of centre delegated arrangements are made by the SENDCo whom holds the appropriate evidence on file.

Centre-Specific Criteria for Particular Arrangements/Adjustments

Word Processor Policy (Exams)

An exam candidate may be approved the use of a word processor where this is appropriate to the candidate's needs and not simply because 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.

The policy is available to view in appendix 6.

Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy

A decision where an exam 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 SENCo (or equivalent role). The decision will be based on:

- whether the candidate has a substantial and long-term impairment which has an adverse effect
- the candidate's normal way of working within the centre
- ensuring the proposed arrangement does not disadvantage or advantage the candidate
- In the case of alternative rooming arrangements, the candidate's disability is **established within the centre** (see Chapter 4, paragraph 4.1.4). It is known to a Form Tutor, a Head of Year, the SENCo or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities. For example, a long-term medical condition which has a substantial and adverse effect.
- Alternative rooming arrangements **must** reflect the candidate's normal and current 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. (AARA, section 5.16)

Separate invigilation will be considered where the arrangement would prevent a candidate from being placed at substantial disadvantage and where the following conditions are met:

- The candidate has an established difficulty as defined in section 5.16 of the JCQ's Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments publication
- The candidate has a long-term medical condition or long term social, mental or emotional need
- The candidate's difficulties are established within the centre and known to relevant staff or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities
- Separate invigilation reflects the candidate's normal way of working in internal tests and mock examinations because of a long-term medical condition or long term social, mental or emotional needs
- Where a candidate is subject to separate invigilation within the centre, the regulations and guidance within the JCQ publication Instructions for conducting examinations will be adhered to, particularly in relation to accommodation and invigilation arrangements
- 1:1 invigilation and the use of an alternative room would apply where the candidate has a serious medical condition such as frequent seizures, Tourette's or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the examination room. (AARA 5.16)

Modified Papers

Modified papers are ordered through AAO

- Modified papers must be ordered in advance of a specific examination series, no later than the published deadline for the series concerned
- Modified papers are individually prepared for candidates for whom other access arrangements are unsuitable. The modification of papers involves additional resources. Therefore centres are required to provide the awarding bodies with early notification that a candidate will require a modified paper.
- Modified papers must not be ordered for candidates unless they intend to enter them for the relevant examination series
- For the adjustment to be effective, the candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practice using an awarding body's past modified papers before his/her first examination

Roles and responsibilities

When an access arrangement has been processed on-line and approved, the evidence of need (where required) must be made available to a JCQ Centre Inspector upon request. An awarding body may also request evidence of need when considered necessary. This can either be in hard copy paper format or electronically.

Where access arrangements documentation is stored electronically an e-folder for each individual candidate must be created. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection.

It is the responsibility of:

- the SENCo to collect a candidate's consent (a completed candidate personal data consent form) to record their personal data on-line through AAO
- the exams officer to submit applications for approval through AAO
- the SENCo to hold the file/e-folder for each individual candidate containing a copy of the candidates approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) and a signed candidate personal data consent form
- the exams officer to submit applications for approval directly to an awarding body for any qualifications that does not fall within the scope of AAO
- the exams officer to order modified papers.