

Guidance for parents, carers and students about access arrangements

What are access arrangements?

- Access arrangements allow students with specific needs, such as special educational needs or disabilities, to access an exam.
- They allow students to show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the exam.
- The JCQ is the governing body when it comes to exams. The school must ensure any access arrangement they put in place is in accordance with the JCQ rules, which are updated each year in August.
- Each year, key staff attend update training provided by the JCQ to ensure the school is aware of any changes to rules and can be compliant
- All Access Arrangements are agreed in advance of an examination.

How will the process start?

- Parents and carers should let the SENCo know as soon as possible if their child has additional needs. Good and open communication is important.
- The SENCo will work with teachers and the student to identify possible arrangements.
- Where it is considered, a student may need support to access exams, teachers will trial various arrangements and compile evidence of 'normal way of working in lessons'.
- Once 'normal way of working' has been established, the SENDCo will collate the evidence and proceed to the next phase of the process.
- Access arrangements should be considered on a subject-by-subject basis, not all students will need the same access arrangements for each subject.
- Various access arrangements are available. For example, support for students who have difficulties with reading, writing, speed of working or concentration. Details about different arrangements and the evidence required are at the end of this document.
- For students with learning difficulties (including dyslexia), once a pattern of 'normal way of working' has been established, an assessment to confirm needs must be undertaken, no earlier than the start of year 9.
- For students who fall into the JCQ category of medical needs (including autism and ADHD), once a pattern of 'normal way of working' has been established, there is no need for assessment, as long as proof of diagnosis can be provided.
- Not all students with additional needs will require access arrangements. This depends on whether their difficulty affects their access to exams. Additional needs or a diagnosis alone do not entitle a student to access arrangements.

Who will make the assessment for students with learning difficulties?

- If a student has learning difficulties, the school or college's appointed assessor must conduct the assessment to determine the need for access arrangements, such as 25% extra time.
- If an external or private assessor diagnoses a learning difficulty (for example, dyslexia or dyscalculia), the assessment can only be used as evidence for access arrangements if the assessor has liaised with the school or college and



received the necessary access arrangements paperwork, including 'normal way of working' in advance of the assessment taking place.

- If a private assessor recommends access arrangements that are not already in place as 'normal way of working', the school must trial these to gauge impact. The school must then decide which access arrangements are most appropriate for the student, in accordance with the JCQ rules.

How will access arrangements be decided for students with medical needs, including Autism and ADHD?

- Specialists (for example, a medical consultant or a psychiatrist) are responsible for providing a formal diagnosis. They are **not** responsible for decisions about access arrangements.
- The school or college must decide which access arrangements a student has for their exams.
- Teachers must give evidence to show that an access arrangement is needed. The school or college will record how effective the arrangement is in the classroom, in internal tests or in mock exams.

In all cases, the school has final say over which access arrangements are in place, and must ensure they comply with JCQ rules.

What else needs to be done?

- The school or college will have to apply for some arrangements.
- If a student has complex needs, a school or college can discuss their needs with the exam board.

Finally

Schools and colleges **must** follow the rules. They are inspected and if they are found to be breaking the rules, this will be malpractice.

Appendix 1: Some Common Access Arrangements and Evidence Required

Arrangement	Evidence for Learning Difficulty such as dyslexia	Evidence for medical needs such as Autism/ADHD
25% Extra time	Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas Mock exam papers, annotated by subject teachers, showing impact of extra time. Assessment from no earlier than the start of year 9 from the schools Access Arrangements assessor showing below average processing in 2 different areas of speed of processing.	Supervised rest breaks must have been trialled and discounted before extra time is considered. The SENDCO must provide evidence at inspection as to why SRB is not an appropriate arrangement. If SRB have been trialled and discounted, Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas Mock exam papers, annotated by subject teachers, showing impact of extra time. Confirmation of medical diagnosis.
Reader	A human/electronic screen reader should only be used where a student needs the whole paper read to them to enable access to the exam. Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas	A human/electronic screen reader should only be used where a student needs the whole paper read to them to enable access to the exam. Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas Confirmation of medical diagnosis

Scribe	A scribe is a 'last resort' arrangement. Schools must ensure they have trialled and discounted more independent means of access to exams, such as a word processor, prior to trying a scribe. Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas An assessment of handwriting ability, no earlier than the start of year 9, that shows below average spelling with incomprehensible spelling attempts OR below average free writing speed.	A scribe is a 'last resort' arrangement. Schools must ensure they have trialled and discounted more independent means of access to exams, such as a word processor, prior to trying a scribe. Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas Confirmation of medical diagnosis.
Supervised Rest Breaks	Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas	It is considered that SRB is likely to be a more appropriate arrangement for candidates with medical or mental health needs. SRB will always be trialled for students with medical needs, including autism and ADHD, before consideration of extra time. Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas
Word processor with spell check turned off	A word processor must not be used simply because a student prefers to type rather than handwrite. Please see our Word Processor Policy here	A word processor must not be used simply because a student prefers to type rather than handwrite. Please see our Word Processor Policy here

	Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas	Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas
Word processor with spell check turned on	A word processor with spell check turned on must only be used where this is the students 'normal way of working' and where the student meets all the requirements for a scribe (see above) Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas	A word processor with spell check turned on must only be used where this is the students 'normal way of working' and where the student meets all the requirements for a scribe (see above) Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas
Prompt	A prompt is an adult who can support a student to regain focus in an exam. A prompt cannot advise a student on timing or which questions to answer. A prompt can use an agreed strategy (e.g. saying a student's name, or tapping a student's desk) to re-focus a student if they have lost concentration in an exam. Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas	A prompt is an adult who can support a student to regain focus in an exam. A prompt cannot advise a student on timing or which questions to answer. A prompt can use an agreed strategy (e.g. saying a student's name, or tapping a student's desk) to re-focus a student if they have lost concentration in an exam. Statements from teachers as to normal way of working from at least 3 subject areas