



Exam Access Arrangements Policy

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Headteacher



Exam Access Arrangements Policy

Rationale

Our Exam Access Arrangements Policy explains the activity undertaken to ensure inclusion throughout the school for all students with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), which will include those with formally diagnosed Special Educational Needs Disabilities (SEND). The policy supports and facilitates the school's aim to create a learning environment in which every student can fulfil his or her full potential.

AA (Definitions, page 3) state... **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 adjustments'.

1. What are Access Arrangements?

These are arrangements, for instance, extra time, a reader or a scribe that are put in place to make sure that all students have a 'level playing field' when sitting examinations.

They are only available to students with substantial, long-term difficulties that are known to have an adverse effect on normal day-to-day activities in school.

In some cases, where there is a substantial, but short-term difficulties (e.g. a broken arm), the exam officer and the centre may choose to make access arrangements available (e.g. a scribe).

According to JCQ guidance, 'the Equality Act 2010 requires an awarding body (examination board i.e. AQA, OCR, EDEXCEL) to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled as defined in 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.' 'The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the particular needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment.'

Kirkstone House School is committed to providing equal opportunities for all students. This means ensuring that students are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged in examinations. The School abides by the strict regulations set out by the JCQ.

This document is written in line with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidance: 'Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments,' which can be found via the link below:

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-specialconsideration/regulationsand-guidance>

2. How do we know who needs Access Arrangements?

Assessment Process

- A candidate will be identified as needing further recommendations by staff. This may be done via the SEN referral system where staff complete a referral form



highlighting their concerns, and a member of the SEN team will investigate through screening or observations.

- A picture of need will be completed by the SENCo/Assessor looking at the candidate's history of difficulties, current needs, and what support and adjustments are already in place.
- A picture of need will be built by speaking with the candidates Teachers.
- For candidates with an EHCP or medical needs, the SENCo or assessor will write a detailed note to place on file explaining the candidate's difficulties, their normal way of working within the centre and how the need affects them.
- For candidates with learning difficulties, further testing may be done to assess speed of working and a Form 8 will be completed.
- An application will then be made via AA online.

The final approved arrangements are logged on a central spreadsheet which can be accessed by the SENCo and Examinations officer.

Painting a 'holistic picture of need, confirming normal way of working

- At the start of the academic year, the school collects data from new students about previously held exam access arrangements. The school may use this information from feeder schools as evidence of picture of need.
- A pupil recommendations note is created which identifies the recommended support the candidate needs and helps Teaching staff to support and build up their normal way of working in the classroom and in assessments.
- Teachers and the SENCo identify students needing exam access through:
 - Screening tests
 - Mock exams
 - Candidate's self-reported difficulties.
 - Information from feeder schools.
 - Comments and feedback from teachers via a questionnaire.
 - Data collection and tracking information.
 - Information contained in agency reports

Use of private commissioned reports

The School recognises there are sometimes long waiting lists for external services (e.g. CAHMS assessments), however, referrals for private assessments should be made in conjunction with the School. A growing number of children are being assessed by privately and privately commissioned reports are being submitted by parents to the SENCO as evidence that their child should be awarded extra time, or other Access Arrangements. Private reports (e.g. Educational psychologist's reports) cost a significant amount of money, putting those unable to obtain a private report due to financial circumstances at a disadvantage.

We can only accept private reports as part of wider school evidence. A student's 'normal way of working' in school is key, and Access Arrangements will not be awarded purely on the basis of a private report.

JCQ guidance outlines 'whilst privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre and without the assessor having obtained Form 8 Part 1 before the assessment cannot be used as evidence for access arrangements and cannot be used



to process an application thorough AA Online, such a report may contain useful information for the centre. Therefore, the JCQ recommends that SENCOs and Assessors working in 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 (JCQ p78)

External Assessors are required to contact the SENCO before carrying out the assessment. The SENCO will provide the Assessor with any existing information about previous support and current difficulties so that the results are reflective of School and home.

In line with JCQ guidelines, where we choose to accept or reject a privately commissioned report from an external professional, the head of centre will provide a brief, written rationale to support this decision which will then be available for inspection purposes.

3. Medical grounds

Access arrangements awarded on medical grounds will only be accepted by JCQ if the School has been made aware of the student's medical history and relevant evidence has been gathered for the arrangement to be put into place (see below). For students who require temporary access arrangements due to medical problems such as broken limbs, the School must have a medical letter before the arrangement can be put into place and the School Exams Officers must be made aware of the situation as soon as possible. Medical letters relating to anxiety or depression which the School was not made aware of before the deadline for access arrangements will not be considered.

The School must be made aware of any on-going medical problems as soon as they have been diagnosed. The School must also be made aware of a student's medical history prior to any diagnosis.

It is good practice for parents to liaise with their son or daughter's year leader and/or the SENDCO prior to any diagnosis as the problems will impact upon academic progress. This means that the School will be able to work with parents to take early intervention and put in place support in internal assessments and elsewhere prior to any diagnosis, if supporting evidence exists. It will also provide the evidence of a history of need and provision that is required for public exams.

If the School is not made aware of a student's medical history prior to receiving a medical letter, then an access arrangement cannot be put into place for public examinations, as the School will be unable to build this evidence of need and provision. Schools are not obliged to accept private medical reports and are required to evidence that any medical problem presents as a long-term (more than 12 months) substantial difficulty or impairment that places the candidate at a substantial disadvantage compared to other candidates without the medical problem. Medical evidence should not normally be more than 24 months old, at the time of application for the allowance.

4. Extra time/allowances in some or all subjects

Access arrangements may vary between subjects due to their different demands. If this is the case, then access arrangements may be awarded only for those subjects e.g. a laptop may be required for longer written exams such as English or History but not for a Maths exam. Where formal access arrangements are determined and agreed these become the



'normal way of working'. This means that the appropriate access arrangements should be taken into consideration in all planned assessments. An access arrangement must be the student's normal way of working in order for the application to comply with regulations. If a student chooses to continually not use their access arrangement in class or in internal tests or assessments, then the access arrangement will be removed for public examinations.

5. What do we need to evidence access arrangements?

JCQ inspections require all schools to have the required evidence for every student that has been awarded access arrangements. Schools are subject to at least two unannounced inspections from the JCQ every year. If the School fails to provide sufficient evidence, in line with JCQ regulations, then the student in question could have marks deducted due to their unfair advantage and our status as an approved examination centre could be jeopardised.

The required evidence needed from the School for JCQ inspection is:

- Relevant evidence of the nature and extent of the disability or difficulty/impairment which has a substantial and long term effect i.e. history of need/history of provision.
- Evidence that the difficulties are persistent and significant (this will be ascertained from progress data)
- Show evidence from School staff of how the disability, difficulty or impairment has had long term impact on teaching and learning in the classroom.
- Confirmation that the student will be at a substantial disadvantage when compared with other non-disabled candidates undertaking the assessment.
- Evidence that the student is using any allowances provided, as part of the 'normal way of working' requirements as set by the JCQ.

6. The 'use it or lose it' rule

The JCQ are very clear that any access arrangements given should be a student's 'normal way of working', and so if the school believes that students are consistently not using the additional allowances agreed (e.g. extra time or use of a laptop), then the school is at liberty to withdraw such allowances, this could be for all subjects or select subjects. This can be evidenced by the school through mock examinations, end of term tests, or by comments by subject teachers. Also, if allowances are misused, as viewed by their teachers e.g. such as using the internet or gaming during subject lessons; then the school is at liberty to withdraw such allowances both at school and for formal examinations.

7. Who can assess and how are decisions made?

The Head of Centre (the Headteacher) is ultimately responsible for appointing an appropriately qualified Access Arrangement Assessor with the required level of competence. Schools are not obliged to accept private reports from specialists under JCQ guidance. The JCQ only allows educational assessors with a relationship with the School. The assessor's qualifications are kept on file in preparation for JCQ inspection.

In addition, access arrangement assessments cannot be completed without JCQ's Form 8, and section A and B must be first completed by the School. This will only be done if, in the School's opinion, there is a sufficient history of need; this must be supported with School data and evidence. If there is insufficient School evidence, the School will reject the assessor's recommendations and notify parents in writing of this decision. Final decisions regarding access arrangements are made by the Headteacher.



8. Assistive technologies

Where possible students should work towards greater independence; scribes should only be considered when a student does not have sufficient word processing skills to use a laptop, and readers should only be considered for a student who has below average reading skills assessed by means of tests approved by JCQ.

9. Supervised Rest Breaks

Supervised rest breaks must always be considered before making an application for extra time. Rest breaks are the appropriate provision for a range of difficulties including:

- Cognition and learning needs
- Communication and interaction needs
- A medical condition
- Sensory and physical needs
- Social, mental and emotional needs

10. Supervised Rest Breaks

Supervised rest breaks will only be awarded to those students with an impairment that has a substantial and adverse effect, and where the impairment is long term - it has existed for at least 12 months. (In exceptional cases, rest breaks can also be used by students with a temporary condition such as an injury.)

The School recognises that exams are stressful and this is especially true for students with evidenced social, emotional and mental health difficulties such as anxiety. School will collate evidence based on the child's normal way of working.

For students with physical difficulties, it is fair to assume that these candidates will experience more discomfort as time passes in the exam. Therefore, they will be allowed to take a supervised rest break when half of the exam time has passed. In addition, no supervised rest break will last more than five minutes and no student can take more than 25% of the overall time.

11. English as an Additional Language

Up to 10% extra time may be awarded for students who have lived in the UK for less than three years, providing they arrived in the UK with no prior knowledge of English and English is not the spoken language at home; the extra time is for the use of a bilingual dictionary. Due to the nature of set assessment objectives this provision will not be awarded in GCSE: English Language, English Literature, Geography, and History.

12. Data Protection

Students will have to sign a Data Protection Notice giving the School permission to make an application online to the JCQ. Failure to do so will mean that an application cannot be made and examination access arrangements cannot be granted.



13. Some examples of examination access arrangements (EAA)

Extra time of 25%	For the student who has slower than average speed of processing information or handwriting speed.
Reader	For the student who has below average reading skills assessed by means of tests of single word reading, reading comprehension and reading comprehension speed.
Scribe	The student who has below average spelling and illegible handwriting, below average handwriting speed, unable to use a laptop or a medical condition
Laptop	For the student who has a handwriting difficulty, processing difficulty or medical condition. Spelling and grammar checks are disabled. Access to the internet is prohibited.
Supervised Rest Breaks	For the student who is unable to concentrate for long periods of time due to a medical condition or social and emotional difficulties.
Prompter	For the student who loses concentration/focus and is not aware of time often caused by a medical condition such as ADHD
Separate Room	For students who have a medical condition such as epilepsy/diabetes where it is not appropriate for them to sit in the main hall. Students who are agoraphobic/have a psychological condition may also need to sit an exam in a separate room.

14. Personnel

Reader - A reader is a trained adult who reads the question and any relevant text (with the exception of Section A of a GCSE English Language Exam) for the student. The student writes the answers themselves.

Scribe - A scribe is a trained adult who writes for the student. The student dictates their answers. The scribe writes exactly what the student says. The student forfeits marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Authorised by

Mr Stuart Judge
Headteacher
On behalf of the Proprietors & Advisory Board

Dated

September 2022

Date of next review

September 2023