



**Access Arrangements -
Guidelines for
Parents/Carers**

25th September 2025

All exam Access Arrangements are regulated by the Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ) who make awards on behalf of the Examination Boards. It is the JCQ regulations to which the school must adhere.

We have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with a disability under the Equality Act of 2010. Access arrangements are the main way that those adjustments are made in formal GCSE and GCE A Level examinations and associated assessments. Access arrangements may also be made available to students with temporary difficulties but who do not have a disability – for example, because they have an injury or illness at the time of the assessment.

Not all students with additional needs will require access arrangements. It depends on whether their difficulty affects their access to exams. Additional needs alone do not entitle a student to access arrangements.

The JCQ state that *Supervised Rest Breaks are often more effective and appropriate as they better address the needs of neurodivergent candidates, as well as those with a medical condition or mental health needs. Allocating extra time simply extends the period a candidate must remain in a potentially stressful environment, which can intensify anxiety and reduce productivity. Moreover, extra time does not address the underlying issue which is often related to difficulties with attention or emotional regulation. Supervised rest breaks allow the candidate to use structured self-regulation strategies to calm and better able to focus. This targeted approach can lead to more effective exam performance while also supporting the development of long-term self-management skills. Teaching candidates how to use these strategies equips them to advocate for themselves in further education or the workplace, fostering independence and resilience.*

Access Arrangements allow students to show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the exam and under JCQ regulations only evidence of support from year 9 onwards is admissible for consideration in formal examinations. Access arrangements must not unfairly advantage any candidate.

In year 7 and 8 all student support is given at the discretion of the teachers both in class, tests and end of year examinations. As they get to know the students in the lower years of the school, they are best placed to support the students and help them grow to become independent learners.

All students in year 9 are given the opportunity to undertake comprehensive literacy screening tests which, whilst they do not give rise to any access arrangements, helps us understand more how students perform in test situations. In addition, teachers continuously give feedback to the Learning Support Department, our SENCo and our Access Arrangements Officer.

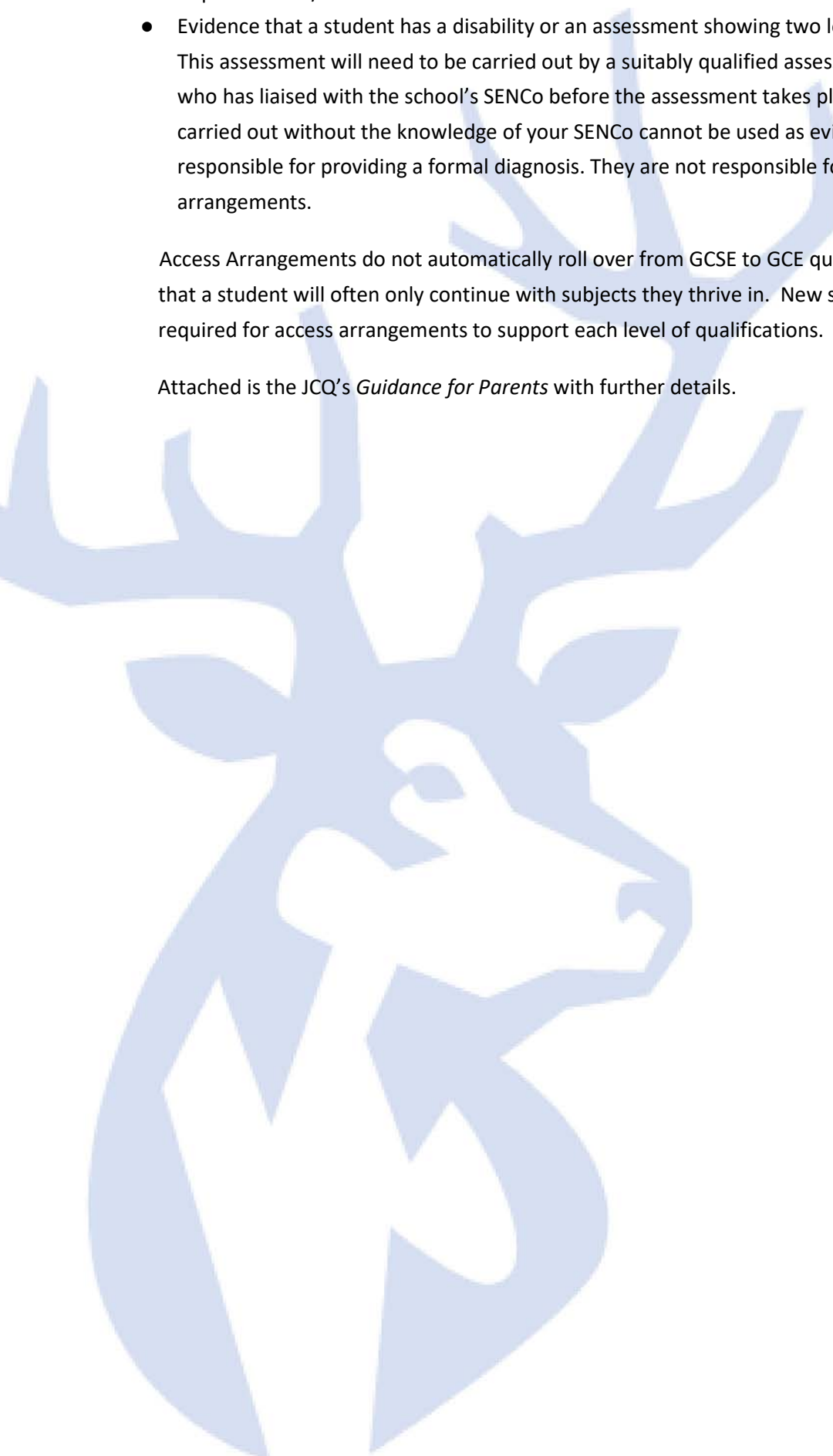
If an access arrangement is identified, this may be offered on a trial basis, and both students and their parent/carer will be notified. All trials will be reviewed at which point it may continue trial or alternative support be suggested, there may be an application to the JCQ or the trial may cease.

If we are able to make an application to the JCQ, it must be supported by subject specific:

- Teacher evidence both from the classroom and assessments / Pre Public Exams (PPEs) with comment
- Evidence of student use from the classroom and assessments / PPEs
- Copies of tests/assessments
- Evidence that a student has a disability or an assessment showing two low scores in a particular area. This assessment will need to be carried out by a suitably qualified assessor appointed by the school or who has liaised with the school's SENCo before the assessment takes place. Independent assessments, carried out without the knowledge of your SENCo cannot be used as evidence. Specialists are responsible for providing a formal diagnosis. They are not responsible for decisions about access arrangements.

Access Arrangements do not automatically roll over from GCSE to GCE qualifications. The JCQ believe that a student will often only continue with subjects they thrive in. New supporting evidence is required for access arrangements to support each level of qualifications.

Attached is the JCQ's *Guidance for Parents* with further details.





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.



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.
- Students in further education should record their additional needs on the college's enrolment form.
- The SENCo will work with teachers and the student to identify possible arrangements.
- Various access arrangements are available. For example, support for students who have difficulties with reading, writing, speed of working or concentration.
- 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?

- 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 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 in advance of the assessment taking place.
- 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.



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.

If you have any questions about access arrangements, please speak to the school, college or SENCo.