



Access Arrangements - Guidelines for Candidates

Yr 9 – 13 GCSE & GCE Exams

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

As a school 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 exams and 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.

Access arrangements require supporting evidence that a student has a disability, or assessment outcomes which show you have low scores in a particular area. Assessments must be carried out by a suitably qualified assessor/specialist and are arranged by the school SENCo who will liaise with them before the assessment takes place. Independent assessments/diagnosis carried out without the knowledge of your SENCo cannot be used as evidence. Assessors/specialists are responsible for providing a formal diagnosis of need. They are not responsible for decisions about access arrangements.

Access arrangements allow students to show their knowledge and skill without changing the demands of the exam and, under JCQ regulations, only evidence from year 9 onwards is admissible for consideration in formal examinations.

The main access arrangements are listed below and outlined in this guide.

- **Supervised Rest Breaks**
- **Prompt**
- **Coloured Overlay**
- **Computer Reader**
- **Word Processor / Laptop**
- **Scribe**
- **Extra Time**
- **EAL**
- **Bilingual Dictionary**

Students in year 9, and new students who join via in-year transfer in year 9 and above, are given the opportunity to undertake comprehensive literacy screening tests which can help guide the SENCo with considerations for access arrangements. In addition, teachers continuously give feedback to the Learning Support Department, our SENCo and our Access Arrangements Officer.

If a student has been identified as possibly needing an access arrangement, this may be offered in one or more subjects, on a trial basis, subject to JCQ guidelines. Students must consistently use the arrangement(s) offered in classes, for homework, in assessments and PPEs to prove this is their normal way of working.

Under JCQ regulations, if we are unable to obtain the required evidence from teachers during trials, and/or prove a candidate's normal way of working, the school can not make an application to JCQ to seek a formal award, and the access arrangement trial(s) must cease. Students will be notified.

When considering a JCQ application, it must be supported by evidence from teachers. This includes (but is not exclusive to) copies of assessments / PPEs, teacher feedback statements, details of why the candidate needs the support, how it was used, in which subjects, and the difference made to the candidate's mark / overall score in that assessment. All applications to the JCQ must give the candidate's full legal, their date of birth and examination number.

The JCQ regulations also state that an exam access arrangement should end and be removed if the candidate does not continue to use their access arrangement(s) as their normal way of working. This is the case even after an exam access arrangement has been approved.

All access Arrangements are specific to each series of examinations meaning access arrangements awarded for GCSE courses do not automatically roll over to GCE A levels and BTEC courses in Sixth Form.

Supervised Rest Breaks

The JCQ state that where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty, the SENCo should have trialled the option of supervised rest breaks in timed internal tests and/or mock examinations before considering an application for extra time. The JCQ state supervised rest breaks *“may be more effective and appropriate for candidates who experience anxiety or attention difficulties. They may better address the needs of many neurodivergent candidates such as those with ADHD or Autism as well as many of those with a medical condition and mental health needs.”*

There are two ways to take a supervised rest break.

- Stay at your desk. You will not be able to look at the exam paper during the break and this should not be used as ‘thinking time’
- Take a short break outside the room. You must go with a member of staff/invigilator. You will not be able to talk about the exam during your break

The full time taken for your supervised rest break(s) will be added on to the end of the exam, meaning you receive the full time of the exam.

If there are other students needing breaks you might have to wait until a member of staff/invigilator is available to help you. Under JCQ regulations, you will be advised how many supervised rest breaks you can have and how long you can take for each break. Remember that if you have another exam on the same day you need to allow enough time to take a proper break between the two exams and still fit in both exams before the end of the day.

Prompt

A prompt is an invigilator designated to support all students in the room who have been allocated this arrangement. To help keep you focused on the paper a prompt will attract your attention by:

tapping:

- the table or your arm

saying:

- your name
- “focus on the question”
- “there are x minutes left”

The prompt cannot:

- speak to you, except to say your name or one of the above instructions
- advise you on which question(s) to choose
- tell you in which order to do the questions

The prompt is not a LSA who has supported you in class and will not sit with you on a 1:1 basis.

Coloured Overlay

Coloured overlays are tinted, see-through sheets that lay over a page to reduce visual stress. Once the suitable colour of the overlay has been determined by the SENCo, we ask students to provide their own plain overlay for all exams.

Computer Reader

A laptop with reader software (Read&Write) will be provided for the examination. You will not be able to use your own device. A computer reader enables you to highlight text within an examination paper so that the words are read aloud to you via headphones (provided) as many times as you like. Users can change the voice speed, pitch and word pause to match the levels that you normally use.

The Read&Write software is available for students to download onto their personal laptops for use at home and in lessons. To benefit fully from this arrangement, it is highly recommended that students practice using the software.

To download go to:

School Cloud

Core Information for Students

Laptops for Learning

Using FPSS Systems

Read&Write – Both Read&Write Installation Instructions and Read&Write Take Home Code. The Take Home Code **MUST NOT** be shared as this is unique to FPSS.

Word Processor / Laptop

The school will provide you with a word processor/laptop with ExamWritePad software to use in your exams. You will not be able to use your own device.

- You cannot type directly onto the exam paper but your typed script will be attached to the paper
- You will be prompted to record your candidate number, unit name and the unit code which will automatically insert a header or footer on all pages
- You will not be allowed access to files on the word processor, or to spreadsheets, graphic or design packages or to the internet
- You will not have access to a spell check, predictive text, grammar check, thesaurus or calculators
- You must label answers clearly.
- You must not disturb other candidates
- Other candidates must not see the screen

At the end of your examination, your word processor will be connected to a portable storage device to save your work and a member of staff will print it. You must remain at your desk until the invigilator returns with your printed script. You must then sign every page to confirm this is your work.

Scribe

If the SENCo determines that a Scribe is an appropriate exam access arrangement, the school will provide a laptop with the Spelling and Grammar (SPAG) function turned **on**. You will not be able to use your own device. Candidates should be aware SPAG marks are not awarded when using a Scribe which may impact the grade achieved in the exam.

In **exceptional circumstances** a student may alternatively dictate answers into a laptop or to someone who will write or type word for word as you dictate to them. Both spelling and punctuation should be given precisely. You should also be aware:

The scribe will:

- record answers **exactly** as you dictate them
- read back any of your answers if you ask them to
- change an answer if you ask them to record something different

- **strictly** follow your instructions when drawing maps, diagrams and graphs (if possible, it is best if you can draw maps diagrams and graphs yourself)

The scribe **cannot**:

- explain or clarify any of the paper
- help you to choose which questions to do
- tell you when to move on to the next question, or in what order to do the questions
- make any corrections unless you tell them to
- read any of the exam paper to you unless you are also allowed a reader.

25% Extra Time

Where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty the SENCo should have trialled supervised rest breaks in timed internal tests and/or mock examinations before considering extra time.

In Pre-public exams (PPEs) to show that you have used your extra time you must change the colour of your pen once your extra time begins in the assessment / examination. If you use a word processor, you must note when your extra time begins or, if possible, change the font. Teachers must provide evidential copies of assessments / internal examinations along with explanation as to why extra time is needed and how it was used by the candidate. This is submitted to the JCQ to allow us to make an application and seek approval of this award.

If 25% extra time is awarded, for example an exam that is one hour will have 15 minutes added. Therefore, the official exam is 1 hour duration. The extra time exam is 1hr 15mins.

The JCQ regulations state that all students must stay in an exam hall throughout the official duration of an exam.

Students awarded extra time, therefore, stay in the exam for the official duration of the exam **plus** the full extra time. If students use their extra-time arrangement, they cannot leave before the end of the extra time period. A student who does not wish to stay for the extra time period is able to leave the exam at the end of official time, however they will be deemed to have waived their right to the extra time. This could mean we are unable to gain teacher evidence to support an application to JCQ and the trials could cease, or if an award has been already made, the support could permanently end.

EAL

If English is not your first language you may be allowed to use a Computer Reader or a Bilingual Dictionary.

Bilingual Dictionary

This must be a paper dictionary that has word for word translation from your native language to English. There can not be any no explanation or definition of the word. You cannot use a translator, wordlist or glossary.

The dictionary must be left at school and staff will check to make sure there are no notes or unauthorised information in it. You will not be able to use your dictionary in an English exam or in exams that have marks allocated for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG). In most Modern Foreign Language exams dictionaries are not allowed. Check with your MFL teacher whether you can use one in your exam.

If you came to the UK less than 3 years ago you may be allowed 25% extra time to use the dictionary, although this is not common for GCE A Level examination. Please ask the school SENCo if this applies to you.

Please remember:

A candidate's access arrangements are usually indicated on the candidate placement card situated on the examination desk. It is the candidate's responsibility to check they have the expected access arrangement(s) for each exam. If not, they should put up their hand and attract the invigilator's attention to seek clarification. From year 10, access arrangements are identified in your Exams Assist Account.

All suitable access arrangement identified in Year 9 or Year 10 will be offered and available for a student to use in assessments up to and including the March PPEs in Year 10. After these PPEs all trials will be reviewed and the trial may continue or alternative support be suggested, an application to the JCQ may be considered and begun, or the trial may cease.

Exam Access Arrangements awarded for GCSEs do **not** automatically roll over to GCE A levels. Should you stay at Furze Platt we will begin new trials subject to JCQ regulations. Should you move to another education setting, once enrolled, relevant paperwork will be forwarded directly to your new setting upon request. Should you join Furze Platt in year 12 we will request, from your previous school, copies of the GCSE application(s) they made to the JCQ and follow our procedure.

The teachers must make sure that a student is not given an unfair advantage over their peers being allowed an access arrangement. The rules are strict, and if you, or a member of staff, are found to be breaking the rules you may lose marks in your assessments or be disqualified from your examinations and access arrangements may be withdrawn.

If you have any questions about access arrangements, you should discuss them with the SENCo or Access Arrangements Officer. Unless exceptional circumstances arise, the deadline for exam access arrangements for summer examinations is 31st December.