

Access Arrangements

Access Arrangements allow candidates/learners with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment without changing the demands of the assessment. For example, readers, scribes and Braille question papers. In this way Awarding Bodies will comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'. (JCQ Guidelines)

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 Equality Act 2010 definition of disability

Generally, impairments have to meet the statutory requirements set out in section 6 and Schedule 1 to the Equality Act 2010 and associated regulations. The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability is usually considered cumulatively in terms of:

- identifying a physical or mental impairment;
- looking into adverse effects and assessing which are substantial;
- considering if substantial adverse effects are long term;

- judging the impact of long-term adverse effects on normal day-to-day activities.

Statutory guidance on the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability has been produced by the Office for Disability Issues (within the Department for Work and Pensions) to help better understand and apply this definition:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570382/Equality_Act_2010-disability_definition.pdf

The clear starting point in the statutory guidance is that disability means 'limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'.

'Substantial' means 'more than minor or trivial'. Substantial adverse effects can be determined by looking at the effects on a person with the impairment, comparing those to a person without the impairment, to judge if the difference between the two is more than minor or trivial.

'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months or is likely to do so.

'Normal day-to-day activities' could be determined by reference to the illustrative, non-exhaustive list of factors on pages 47 to 51 of the statutory guidance relating to the Equality Act 2010. (Study and education related activities are included in the meaning of 'day-to-day' activities.)

The guidance from the Office for Disability Issues referred to above illustrates the factors which might reasonably be regarded as having a substantial adverse effect on normal day-to-day activities. Factors that might reasonably be expected not to have a substantial adverse effect are also provided.

Factors that might reasonably be expected to have a substantial adverse effect include:

- persistent and significant difficulty in reading and understanding written material where this is in the person's native language, for example because of a mental impairment, a learning difficulty or a sensory or multi-sensory impairment;
- persistent distractibility or difficulty concentrating;
- difficulty understanding or following simple verbal instructions;
- physical impairment – for example, difficulty operating a computer because of physical restrictions in using a keyboard.

Factors that might reasonably be expected not to have a substantial adverse effect include:

- minor problems with writing or spelling;
- inability to read very small or indistinct print without the aid of a magnifying glass;
- inability to converse orally in a language which is not the speaker's native spoken language.

Access arrangements must not give a candidate an unfair advantage.

Candidates may not require the same access arrangements/reasonable adjustments in each subject/examination.

What Are Exam Access Arrangements?

An Exam Access Arrangement (AA) is a provision or type of support given to a student (subject to exam board approval) in a national/public exam, where a particular need has been identified and it is provided so that the student has appropriate access to the exam. AAs are intended to give all candidates equal opportunity to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Procedures and practices relating to the awarding of AAs are governed by the statutory duty to make reasonable adjustments to provision under guidelines produced by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). The JCQ adjusts its regulations periodically and the School is bound to comply with the current regulations.

The most commonly used access arrangements at Ousedale School are as follows:

Scribe: a trained adult who writes for the student. The student would dictate their answers, and the scribe would write exactly what the student says. If possible, the student will dictate all punctuation, grammar and spellings. However, it is often not practical to dictate all spellings, so marks will be deducted for this if spelling is being assessed. This provision is usually not encouraged for Maths or Modern Foreign Languages. This provision also includes the use of a word processor with spelling and grammar functions enabled or disabled, depending on the student's ability to spell in a decipherable way. If the spelling and grammar functions are enable, no marks for spelling, punctuation or grammar (SPaG) will be awarded.

Reader: a trained adult who would read the question and relevant text (with the exception of an exam testing the student's reading, such as English comprehension and Modern Foreign Languages) for the student. The student would then write the answers themselves although this text could then be read back to the student, if requested. Under JCQ regulations, three or four candidates may share one reader and candidates with individual readers may be required to share a room. A **computer reader** can be used as an alternative to a human reader. This can be used for exams assessing reading as the computer does not provide any spoken nuance.

Speech Recognition Technology

If a student is awarded a scribe, they may prefer to use speech recognition technology to allow them more independence in the exam (i.e. they do not need an adult to scribe). This must be discussed and arranged with the specialist assessor and be the student's normal way of working. SRT must be used in 'exam mode' (e.g. no access to the internet, documents) with or without the spell/grammar check, depending on the student's needs and arrangements.

Word Processing: access to a computer for an exam will be awarded to students who would be at a substantial disadvantage if they were to hand-write their answers, **not simply because he/she prefers to type rather than write or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home.** This will be awarded on a subject-by-subject basis, as some assessments require calculations or short answers that are easier to hand-write. Spelling and grammar checks would be

disabled other than in exceptional circumstances where the student has 'scribe' provision (see above).

25% Extra Time: students may be entitled to an allowance of 25% extra time depending on their history of need and standardised scores below 85 relating to speed of reading, writing and processing.

The arrangement must not suddenly be granted to the candidate at the time of his/her examinations.

Rest Breaks: where students are permitted to stop for short breaks during the exam and this time is then added to the finish time, with the effect of elongating the exam but not actually using any extra time.

Prompter: used for students with little sense of time or ability to concentrate, a trained adult/invigilator can prompt them with a few permitted phrases to refocus or move the student on to the next question or indicate how much time is left.

Separate invigilation room:

A student may only be permitted to take their examinations under separate invigilation, in a small room, where he/she has an established difficulty such as a long term medical condition or a long term social, mental or emotional need. The school will expect to see documented medical evidence of this need prior to making any special arrangements.

The above list is not exhaustive but does cover the most commonly used exam access arrangements but the school would ensure each student's needs are met as required. AAs may also differ according to a student's needs within each subject ie. extra time may be awarded to extended writing subjects only.

Procedures for AA

Students may be identified for **provisional** access arrangements before formal testing has taken place:

- Information from the primary school, and evidence of previous need and use of access arrangements
- Diagnostic assessment report such as dyslexia or autism. Please note that reports make 'recommendations' and it is the school's responsibility to gather evidence and assess for AAs, in accordance with JCQ guidelines
- If students transfer to Ousedale during GCSEs or A levels and already have AAs granted/officially approved by previous secondary school, relevant paperwork will need to be sent to the SEND department at Ousedale School, in addition to clear evidence of need and confirmation of qualifications of prior school's specialist assessor;
- presentation of a recent medical letter/diagnosis from a qualified health care professional (consultant, not GP); and parental request to SENDCo.

The qualified assessor will take a history of need from the student and ask teachers about their normal way of working in the classroom. If the student does not meet the criteria of substantial and long-term need, no testing will take place and no access arrangements will be sought from Access Arrangements Online. All requests for access arrangements must be approved by JCQ with relevant evidence. The school is accountable for decisions and evidence is audited.

'Provisional' access arrangements granted in Years 7, 8 or 9 are not automatically guaranteed for GCSE exams. The student must be assessed by a qualified assessor in accordance with the JCQ Guidelines.

Access arrangements will be provided for trial exams and progress review tests in years 10-13.

Provisional access arrangements will be provided for Progress Reviews in years 7-9. They will not be provided for in-class tests, unless stipulated in an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Official approval is normally requested by the Spring Term of Year 10 and is subject to results from the school's designated specialist and/or a medical diagnosis/report. AAs have to be officially approved for all students taking GCSE and A Levels.

Students who are deemed eligible for access arrangements in **Key Stage 4** will be tested (at the earliest in Year 9) by the school's qualified specialist assessor to ensure the results are valid for official approval for the entire GCSE period. Arrangements should be in place at the start of or during the first year of a two-year GCSE course having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working.

All access arrangements for **Key Stage 5** students (A Levels) must be retested and resubmitted for official approval by the school and evidence of continued need within the classroom is essential for this process.

Access arrangements for students in Years 11 and 13 will only be considered for those students identified before the end of the half-term break in the autumn term. This allows the school sufficient time to gather evidence of need in the classroom, evidence of normal way of working (including the mock exams) and assessment by the school's designated specialist assessor. This evidence is required to meet the JCQ deadline for submissions (currently set in February).

As advised by the JCQ, the school will not accept privately commissioned assessments as sole evidence for exam access arrangements. Privately commissioned assessments will only be considered as background evidence, additional to qualitative and quantifiable evidence gathered by the school to reflect the candidates' significant, persistent and long-term need and their normal way of working in school.

With the exception of temporary illness, or injury on the day of the examination, students who require AA provision for medical purposes will need to provide written evidence from an appropriate medical professional, stating their current diagnosis, treatment and details of how it might affect their performance. Any AA provision will then be put in place to comply with current JCQ regulations, which may differ from that suggested by the medical professional.

The Special Educational Need & Disability (SEND) Department is responsible for AA provision and duties include the following:

- ensuring there is appropriate evidence for a student's exam access arrangement;
- informing subject teachers at regular intervals regarding student's exam access arrangements and how they should be supported in the classroom; liaison with Exams Team;
- informing parents/carers about student's provisional access arrangements, specialist assessor tests and official approval of arrangements for GCSE or A Levels;
- ensuring each student understands how to use their access arrangements and under what circumstances; and
- monitoring the use of exam access arrangements to ensure they remain appropriate and they become the student's normal way of working.

Please note, it is the responsibility of the student and the subject teacher to ensure AAs are put in place for trial exams and progress reviews (these do not include formal GCSE/A Level exams). If extra time is the only AA, this can be administered in the classroom by the class teacher. Teachers need to inform the SEND department in good time when assessments are taking place so other AAs can be put in place.

Ousedale Specialist Assessors:

Siân Waterhouse sian.waterhouse@ousedale.org.uk

Teachers or parents may refer a student to be assessed. Assessment will take place according to the assessment calendar.

Assessment calendar:

Year	Referral by:	Assessed:
9	May 2022	June-July 2022
10	December 2021	January 2022
11	October 2021	November 2021
12	December 2021	January 2022
13	October 2021	November 2021

Note re. JCQ Guidelines

