

## Access Arrangements in Examinations Policy 2016-2017

This document outlines the school policy on Access Arrangements in Public Examinations. These are arrangements put in place to ensure **all** students have equal access to examinations. Students should not be disadvantaged by any learning, medical, physical, sensory or psychological difficulty they may experience.

The school must comply with the rules for Access Arrangements as set out in the most recent Joint Council for Qualifications publication.

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/Download/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance/access-arrangements-and-reasonable-adjustments-2016-2017>

Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make '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 disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. According to statutory guidance, disability means 'limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'.*

A candidate with a disability or difficulty which has a **substantial and long term effect** on performance in examinations may qualify for Access Arrangements. Access Arrangements should allow students with substantial long term special educational needs or short term illnesses or injuries to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding without affecting the integrity of an assessment or examination. Access Arrangements are not intended to help certain candidates, or give them an advantage, but to give them a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

*'Failure to comply with the JCQ regulations (permitting Access Arrangements within the centre which are not supported by appropriate evidence) has the potential to constitute malpractice which may impact on the candidate's result(s).'*

Access Arrangements encompass a wide range of provisions which include:

- being allowed to sit examinations in a smaller room
- supervised rest breaks
- use of colour overlays
- prompter
- extra time
- reader or e-reader pen
- scribe
- use of a word processor
- practical assistant

## **The Identification of candidates who might need access arrangements**

There are several ways in which this might occur:

1. JFS School acts on the information provided by students' previous schools to identify those who may need Access Arrangements. These students normally have a history of Special Educational Needs (SEN). An Inclusion Register is in place from Year 7 onwards which is made up of Educational Psychologists Reports which have been carried out both internally or externally\*.
2. A teacher may voice a concern about a student with difficulties that prevent them from completing tests or practice papers.
3. A parent / carer may raise concerns about their child who is attempting but unable to complete work set in class and as homework.
4. In Year 9 a whole year timed testing programme takes place (in January) which gives us an indication of need. From the results of this testing any students with very low scores are assessed and added to the Inclusion Register. Confirmation will be sent to parents by the end of the Spring Term outlining the Access Arrangements that have been put in place.
5. By the beginning of Year 10 a full up to date Inclusion Register is in place which includes a list of students who receive Access Arrangements in Public Exams.

External Educational Psychologists Reports must be submitted in a timely manner giving the school the opportunity to concur and ensure there is a reasonable opportunity to put any suitable adjustments in place if required.

We will endeavour to take all evidence into consideration when making judgements; however, the decision must ultimately rest with the school who is required to evidence all judgements to an external verifier.

In all cases, there must be a genuine need for the arrangement. The school *must be satisfied that the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties. 'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months, or is likely to do so.*

Students with special educational needs are not automatically eligible for Access Arrangements in public exams. For example, a student with a slight hearing impairment, a previous diagnosis of 'mild dyslexia' or a physical disability that does not affect performance in an examination may not meet the criteria for Access Arrangements.

However, when concerns are raised about a particular student, the SENDCo or Specialist Teacher will gather information from all the student's teachers to see whether they have similar concerns. If the initial concerns are echoed by others, the student will be assessed for Access Arrangements.

### **Candidates with a history of SEN**

#### **Candidates with medical, physical, sensory, behavioural or complex needs**

Where Access Arrangements are requested due to medical or physical difficulties, a letter from a consultant is required. The SENDCo or Specialist Teacher will ask parents/carers to obtain a letter with a brief outline of the student's condition or disability and the Access Arrangements that are deemed to be necessary.

## Candidates with learning difficulties

There would normally be a long history of learning difficulties. Late identification of learning difficulties can occur in very exceptional circumstances, but concerns should be raised during the early months of a course leading towards an examination. JCQ publish deadlines by which arrangements must be processed, in advance of an examination series. Arrangements should not be requested just before or at the time of a candidate's examinations, unless they are temporary, or due to illness or injury. *'The arrangement is not suddenly granted for the candidate at the time of his/her examinations.'*

A student with learning difficulties must be formally assessed by a Specialist Teacher. The assessment must have taken place no earlier than the start of Year 9. An approved range of standardised tests are used and Form 8 is completed.

An application is made online, and the awarding bodies approve Access Arrangements only if the student's scores meet the criteria issued by JCQ. Supporting evidence must be filed and available for inspection by a JCQ Inspector.

In all cases, Access Arrangements should reflect the support that is usually given to the student in the classroom, internal tests and mock examinations. This is commonly referred to as the 'normal way of working.'

The decision to apply for access arrangements is based on evidence of a history of need, history of provision and reports from teachers or the SENDCo or Specialist Teacher.

### Notification about Access Arrangements

Parents / carers are informed by letter when formal applications for Access Arrangements are approved. The arrangements are named and this information leaflet is provided.

### Conduct and procedures

The SENDCo or Specialist Teacher liaises with the Examinations Officer, departmental and associate staff to ensure sufficient rooms and staffing are organised for candidates with Access Arrangements when examinations or controlled assessments are taking place.

It must be noted that staffing and room constraints mean that candidates **cannot normally be seated alone** in a separate room.

The Examinations Officer monitors the need for renewal of Access Arrangements when necessary and liaises with the SENDCo or Specialist Teacher to ensure that reassessment is carried out for students with additional arrangements (reader / scribe etc.) that expire after their GCSEs. This is to ensure that candidates still meet the criteria for those additional arrangements.

## **Candidates transferring into Year 12**

When a student requests Access Arrangements following transfer to JFS School in Year 12, the school is compelled to follow the rules and guidelines issued each year by JCQ. For instance, where a candidate has been allowed extra time for GCSEs at another centre, *the SENDCo or Specialist Teacher must have available evidence which clearly shows that extra time is still needed for GCSE, AS and A2 examinations, and that the candidate continues to have an impairment which has a substantial and long term effect on his/her speed of working.*

It is likely that some re-assessment is necessary on entry to JFS School, and some students may find they are no longer eligible for Access Arrangements if they do not meet the criteria.

## **Vocational Qualifications**

A large number of Access Arrangements and reasonable adjustments can be used to facilitate access to vocational qualifications, *as long as they do not impact on any competence standards being tested.* They must not ***affect the reliability or validity of assessment outcomes nor must they give the learner an unfair advantage.***

## **Recording the use of access arrangements**

JFS School follows the advice given by JCQ and maintain a record of the use of Access Arrangements, particularly in the case of the use of word processors. If an Access Arrangement is never used then it is not a candidate's normal way of working and *the arrangement should not be awarded for examinations.*

## **Temporary arrangements**

Temporary arrangements may be required by candidates suffering from medical or psychological illness or injury. Candidates with an illness or injury that has a direct impact on their ability to access the examination should obtain a letter from a consultant or other professional giving a brief outline of their condition and the Access Arrangements that are deemed to be necessary. For example, a right-handed candidate whose right arm is broken may need a scribe and some extra time, as it is not their normal way of working and dictating to a scribe may be difficult for them. A candidate with a painful back condition may require supervised rest breaks in order to stand and move around.

In all cases where an Access Arrangement or a reasonable adjustment is needed, the school is entitled to expect reasonable notice to carry out its responsibilities. Where a need for Access Arrangements has been identified before an examination session, the SENDCo, Specialist Teacher and Examinations Officer should be provided with medical evidence in reasonable time.

For example:

- a candidate who suffers from panic attacks in test or exam situations should obtain a note from their GP or consultant well before the start of formal examinations
- in an emergency, a scribe can be provided with 24 hours notice. It may not be possible to provide a scribe if the request is made without notice.

Temporary arrangements last for one examination session. If the condition persists a letter from a consultant or other professional may be required for the next session.