

Access Arrangements
in Exams and Assessments Policy
2021-2022



Ysgol Bryn Castell

Date of next review

September 2022

Contents

Introduction: Purpose of the Policy	3
What are Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments?.....	4
Who is eligible for Access Arrangements?	5
Normal Way of Working.....	6
Key staff involved in the Access Arrangements process.....	6
Naming access arrangements assessors.....	9
Supporting students with access arrangements.....	9
Evidence held and malpractice.....	10
Exceptional circumstances.....	11

Introduction - Purpose of the Policy

Each autumn the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) publishes a revised document setting out its regulations and guidance for the forthcoming academic year: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA). The document relates to examinations leading to qualifications from JCQ members: AQA, CCEA, City & Guilds, OCR, Pearson and WJEC/CBAC. This document can be downloaded at www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance/.

To inform all decisions, SENCO's and Assessors must read the JCQ regulations carefully each year and ensure that adequate evidence can be provided to demonstrate that a candidate is eligible for access arrangements, especially those processed online (PATOSS, 2021). JCQ regulations are updated annually and key staff must keep constantly up to date with changes in order to provide the best service to candidates.

Access arrangements are put in place to ensure that all students are given a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in examinations without being disadvantaged by any learning, physical, sensory or psychological difficulty that they may experience. Provision of access arrangements is the principle way in which Awarding Bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act (2010) to make 'reasonable adjustments' whereby a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment.

Access arrangements are available to candidates with cognition and learning needs, communication and interaction needs, sensory and physical needs, and social, emotional and mental health needs. The process often requires an assessment conducted by an appropriately qualified access arrangements assessor. The assessor's role is to work with the centre and to contribute to the required data by providing evidence of learning difficulties, not to make decisions on access arrangements themselves (PATOSS, 2021).

Applications are managed through the Access Arrangements Online (AAO) system. Centres must maintain a file of evidence for each candidate with approved access arrangements. A number of arrangements do not require formal evidence but they will still reflect the candidate's normal way of working and be appropriate to their needs (PATOSS, 2021).

This document outlines and confirms that Ysgol Bryn Castell is leading on the Access Arrangements process and is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements. The Access Arrangements in Examinations and Assessments policy is reviewed and updated annually, on the publication of updated JCQ regulations and guidance on Access Arrangements. References to Access Arrangements in this policy relate to/are directly taken from the **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2021-2022 (AA)** publication.

What are Access Arrangements?

Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments, intended to facilitate students with the required knowledge, understanding and skills, who are unable to demonstrate these in an assessment due to a difficulty or disability. They aim to simply allow candidates the opportunity 'to show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment' (AARA, 2021).

They are special arrangements that can be applied for which allow candidates with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access public examinations. For example, readers, scribes and Braille question papers. Access Arrangements are reasonable adjustments as defined by the Equality Act (2010) and are specific to the individual candidate. Awarding Bodies will comply with the duty of the Equality Act (2010) to make 'reasonable adjustments' where a candidate who is defined within the act as disabled who would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled.

Reasonable adjustments include any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty, which places the learner at a substantial disadvantage. When applied, reasonable adjustments enable candidates to access examinations on a level playing field.

A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements. How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment. There is no duty on the Awarding Bodies to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested in an assessment.

Access Arrangements encompass a wide range of provisions and fall into two distinct categories: some arrangements are delegated to centres; others require prior JCQ^{CIC} awarding body approval. Access Arrangements must not provide an unfair advantage therefore applications are heavily regulated by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and Exam Boards and must be based on rigorous evaluation of need.

Available access arrangements include:

- Supervised rest breaks
- Extra time
- Reader/computer reader
- Scribe
- Word processor

- Prompter
- Live speaker
- Alternative site for exams
- Bilingual translation dictionaries
- Separate room
- modified papers
- Language modifier

Some arrangements may be unique to an individual and therefore not appear in a standard list. A full list of available arrangements can be found in the AARA document at www.icq.co.uk

Who is eligible for Access Arrangements?

Access Arrangements are for candidates with the required knowledge, understanding and skills, who are unable to demonstrate these in an assessment due to difficulty or disability.

The JCQ outlines 4 areas of need including:

1. Cognition and Learning:

- Including specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia
- Candidates must be assessed by a qualified level 7 specialist assessor

2. Communication and Communication Need:

- Including candidates with autism
- Candidates with speech and language needs
- Candidates must be assessed by a Speech and Language Therapist, clinical specialist or specialist assessor
- Any difficulty must be within the candidates first language

3. Sensory and Physical Needs

- Including candidates with visual impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or other sensory need
- Candidates with physical disability such as cerebral palsy
- Candidates must be assessed by a specialist clinician, such as a physiotherapist, occupational therapist and other clinician
- Candidates must be assessed by a specialist teacher for VI and/or HI where there are sensory needs

4. Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs:

- Including candidates with ADHD/ADD and anxiety related conditions
- Candidates must be assessed by a specialist clinician, such as a neurodevelopmental paediatrician

A candidate does not necessarily have to have a diagnosed learning difficulty to be allowed an access arrangement.

In summary, Access Arrangements are available to give those candidates with difficulties which significantly affect their performance during examinations fair opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do in each subject, removing barriers to assessment for a disabled candidate and eliminating any substantial disadvantage.

Normal Way of Working

Access Arrangements must be based upon identified need and the candidate’s normal way of working. Each application must be considered carefully and individually and may vary between exams.

The arrangements should reflect the help usually given to the candidate in the centre i.e. if a candidate normally has a break after 30 minutes due to concentration difficulties, this is their normal way of working and an arrangement for a supervised rest break can be made based upon need.

Particular needs of the learner should be met without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Help cannot be given where the skill to be performed is the focus of the assessment – i.e. a reader in a reading exam.

Credit is only given for skills demonstrated by the candidate working independently. Even when a reader or a scribe is used, it is considered independent working.

If the candidate has never made use of an arrangement, it is not their normal way of working. The SENCo may consider withdrawing the arrangement provided the candidate will not be placed at a substantial disadvantage.

Key Staff involved in the Access Arrangements Process

The JCQ regulations emphasise that there must be a ‘whole centre approach’ to access arrangements and a range of people will be involved in the access arrangements process. The following staff are key in the process at Ysgol Bryn Castell and must be familiar with the contents of the JCQ AARA document.

<u>Role</u>	<u>Name</u>
Head of Centre	Helen Ridout
Exams Officer	Sarah Peel
In-House Specialist Assessor/Access Arrangements Co-ordinator (Acting ‘SENCo’)	Kayleigh Cattell
Access Arrangements Facilitators (readers, scribes, invigilators, prompter etc)	Selection of Special Support Staff

Examinations Administrator/s	Sian Buttery/Lynne Groom
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The Head of Centre

The Head of Centre is the head teacher within the school and carries ultimate responsibility for the quality of the access arrangements process within the centre. The Head of Centre is responsible for appointing the Access Arrangements Assessor following the criteria within the AARA document. The Head of Centre is also responsible for ensuring that those who are employed to facilitate access arrangements, including those staff acting as readers and scribes are appropriately trained and fully understand the rules of a particular access arrangement. This task is often delegated to the Examinations officer but it is the Head who carries ultimate responsibility.

The Examinations Officer

The Examinations Officer is responsible for facilitating exams, including making entries and administering the use of access arrangements. The Exams Officer will work with the SENCo to ensure that access arrangements are in place for internal examinations, including the mock exams and to ensure that all access arrangements are applied for online before the published deadlines so that permission is in place before an access arrangement is given in external exams.

Additionally, the Exams Officer needs to arrange to have the required number of trained Invigilators and examinations support staff e.g. a reader, and will work with the SENCo to ensure these personnel fully understand their roles and the rules that govern their behaviour.

Another important duty of the Exams Officer is to arrange to have sufficient resources such as word processors and examination reading pens available. For students who require exams on coloured or enlarged paper, the Exams Officer ensures that these papers are prepared and will also provide any cover sheets needed where, for example, a candidate is using a scribe. The Exams Officer will provide the Invigilator with this prior to commencement of the exam.

SENCo

The term SENCo is used throughout the JCQ publications to refer to the person who takes the lead on access arrangements within a centre and will co-ordinate the entire process. The SENCo's duties include:

- Identifying learners who may need access arrangements;
- Collating information from a range of sources, including feedback from teaching and support staff;
- Completing JCQ Form 8, Section A or the Centre File Note for candidates requiring access arrangements that require approval;

- Arranging for candidates to be assessed and providing the assessor with the centre-based evidence through JCQ Form 8, Section A;
- Storing access arrangements information on candidate within the centre;
- Presenting information to the JCQ Centre Inspector upon request;
- Determining the access arrangements for a candidate, ensuring that the agreed arrangements meet the published criteria;
- Processing applications online or, where the Examinations Officer processes applications, being available to oversee the process;
- Working with teaching staff and exams office staff to ensure that access arrangements are put in place for internal school tests, mock exams and external examinations.

The Access Arrangements Assessor

The JCQ requires that assessments for access arrangements are carried out by suitably qualified professionals. The Head of Centre is responsible for appointing assessors and the JCQ sets out the criteria that must be adhered to in order for an assessor to be deemed suitably qualified as one of the following:

- **HCPC registered Psychologist** (usually educational) who can where necessary carry out full diagnostic assessments (screenshot of HCPC registration is sufficient evidence)
- **Specialist Teacher with current SpLD Assessment Practicing Certificate** (awarded by PATOSS, Dyslexia Action or BDA and listed on the SASC website) who can where necessary carry out full diagnostic assessments (screenshot of SASC registration is sufficient evidence)
- **Education professional who has successfully completed a Level 7 (postgraduate) course** including at least 100 hours in individual specialist assessment (centre should be provided with a copy of certificate before assessing)
- **Other post-graduate (level 7) courses providing a qualification in Access Arrangements Assessment** (centre should be provided with a copy of certificate before assessing)

A privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to award Access Arrangements or process an application using Access Arrangements Online.

Assessments for a Scribe, Oral Language Modifier (OLM) and Extra Time (ET) must be carried out by an Assessor with the required level of training. The Assessor must not sign off assignments carried out by someone else; assessments must be completed by him/herself.

Assessor's qualifications must be checked before assessment takes place and the appointment should establish a relationship with the centre.

Assessments at YBC are carried out by a Level 7 qualified Access Arrangements Assessor who is employed by the centre and therefore, an in-house Assessor. The assessor is responsible for carrying out assessments required for Access Arrangements applications. An in-house Assessor can also act as SENCo. The Assessor at YBC carries out the role of the 'SENCo' (where 'SENCo' is used in publications and training and in this document), acting as the Access Arrangements Co-ordinator, gathering all required evidence and storing evidence in line with guidelines, completing all appropriate paperwork and overseeing and completing the applications process. The Access Arrangements Assessor at YBC carries out all duties listed in this section under 'SENCo' and 'Access Arrangements Assessor' and liaises with the Exams Officer as appropriate in both roles.

Access Arrangements Facilitators

Some access arrangements require a responsible adult to facilitate the arrangement during an examination. These can include a reader, scribe, practical assistant, prompter, oral language modifier and communication professional for sign language. In exams where a candidate and a scribe, a reader, or a practical assistant are accommodated in a separate room on a one to one basis, the invigilator may also act as the scribe, the reader or the practical assistant.

Support Staff at YBC take the role of facilitators as appropriate, managed and delegated by the Exams Officer and receive training and information as changes to regulations occur, carried out by the in-house Assessor.

Naming Access Arrangements Assessors

The SENCo/Exams officer have a responsibility to enter onto Access Arrangements Online (AAO) the names of: all external Access Arrangements Assessors and professionals without APC employed by the centre.

Assessors working within the centre do not need to be named which is the case at Ysgol Bryn Castell.

Evidence of Assessor's qualifications is required to be made available for inspection (copy of certificate or screenshot of listing on SASC, HCPC or PATOSS website).

YBC's Assessor has certificates kept on file and in the main school office, available for inspection.

Assessors are required to attend annual refresher courses and complete the Communicate-ed online assessment to update training.

YBC's Assessor attends the appropriate training each year as required and updates policies and processes as necessary, sharing information and changes with relevant staff.

Evidence held and malpractice

Schools are regularly inspected to ensure they have followed JCQ regulations. Ysgol Bryn Castell is required to hold evidence on file that can be inspected at short notice. Paperwork to be kept includes copies of evidence of need, Form 8, letters from outside agencies, any Statement of Special Needs, records of access arrangements being used and a signed Data Protection Notice from each student who requires an application.

The consequences of malpractice can be severe and could result in disqualification from one or more examinations.

- Examples of malpractice include: students being granted access arrangements when it is not their normal way of working
- Access arrangements being granted when a student has no history of need or provision
- Access arrangements being granted without sufficient evidence

Evidence needed could include:

- Form 8 report from assessor
- Previous access arrangements in former school
- Examples of work and feedback from teaching and support staff
- Results of baseline tests, e.g. reading comprehension, writing, spelling etc
- Letters from outside agencies
- Statement of Educational Need (SEN) or Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP)

Supporting students with Access Arrangements

Students with Access Arrangements in place will be well prepared and shown how to use their arrangements appropriately in exam situations and it will be explained to them what they can and cannot do and how much support an exam facilitator such as a reader or a scribe can give them.

All teachers and support staff will be made aware of students with access arrangements and will be asked for feedback about each student's normal way of working and receive regular and appropriate training to support students both in the classroom and in exams and assessments.

In the event that a student does not wish to make use of their Access Arrangement in any given exam, they will be required to sign a form to indicate that they were aware that the access arrangement was available to them, but it was their choice not to use it.

Exceptional circumstances

Temporary Arrangements

Temporary arrangements may be required for a student suffering from unforeseen illness or injury. In these cases, the school must be informed at the earliest opportunity, and a letter from a GP, consultant or other professional detailing the problem and any arrangement deemed necessary should be obtained as soon as possible. The school will make every effort to accommodate these arrangements.

Alternative accommodation

On very rare occasions, a candidate may need to sit an examination at a residential address, an offsite address or at a hospital due to a severe medical condition which prevents them from taking examinations within the centre. In this situation, the school will ensure that JCQ guidelines are followed with regard to conduct, procedures and staffing. We must be satisfied that the candidate is well enough to take the examination and there must be appropriate evidence of need held on file.

Special consideration

Special consideration is a post examination adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time of the examination/assessment. The candidate will have been fully prepared for the exams, but due to some unforeseen circumstance could not demonstrate what they know.