



Access Arrangements

Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. Access Arrangements fall into two distinct categories: some arrangements are delegated to centres, others require prior JCQ awarding body approval.

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, prompters and scribes. In this way Awarding Bodies will comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010, Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and SENDO require an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment.

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 (AA):

- **A scribe:** a responsible adult who writes for the student. The student will dictate their answers. The scribe will write exactly what they say.
- **A reader:** a responsible adult who will read the question and any relevant text (with the exception of The Reading Sections of an English Language GCSE Exam: Unit 1 Section B & Unit 4 Section B. A candidate may use a computer reader/reading pen in the section that assesses reading) for the student. The student will then write the answer/s herself.
- **ICT:** access to a computer for an exam (if appropriate – not for subjects such as Maths) so the student will word process their answers. Spelling and grammar checks will be disabled and there will be no internet access.
- **Extra time:** students may be entitled to an allowance of 25% (or more in exceptional circumstances) depending on the history of evidence of need and the recommendation of the designated Specialist Teacher.
- **Rest breaks:** where students are permitted to stop for short break/s during the exam and the time stopped is added to the finish time, with the effect of elongating the exam but not actually using any extra time.
- **Prompter:** where a student has little sense of time or loses concentration easily, a responsible adult can prompt them with a few permitted phrases to refocus, move the student on to the next question or indicate how much time is left.

When might students need to be given Exam Access Arrangements?

Scribe	Where there is a physical disability; where their writing:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is illegible and may hamper their ability to be understood • speed is too slow to be able to complete the exam in the allotted time
Reader	Where a student is a slow or inaccurate reader and there is a standardised score of below 85 in a test delivered by the specialist assessor (100 is the average).
ICT	Where there is a physical disability; their writing would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illegible and may hamper their ability to be understood • speed is too slow to be able to complete the exam in the allotted time
Extra Time	Where a student's ability to process information is slower than average. Candidates must have 2 below average scores or one below and one low average score in 2 different areas of working in timed assessments.
Rest Breaks	Where a student has a physical disability which prevents her from concentrating for long periods of time. This is now the recommended option from the exam boards before considering extra time.
Prompter	For a student who loses concentration/focus, and is not aware of time.
Separate Room/ Shared room	For a student with a medical condition such as epilepsy/diabetes where it isn't appropriate for them to sit an exam in the main exam hall. Students who are agoraphobic/have a psychological condition may also need to sit an exam in a separate room/shared room with a smaller number of candidates.

Teacher evidence is also required to support the application for AA.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Mount Lourdes Grammar School fulfils *"its obligations in respect of identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements."*

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that arrangements are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication:

*'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties
Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments'*

The assessment process

Assessments are carried out by the specialist assessor appointed by the Head of Centre. The assessor is appropriately qualified as required in JCQ regulations as follows:

- *an access arrangements assessor who has successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment. An access arrangements assessor may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8; **and/or***
- *a specialist teacher assessor with a **current** SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments; **and/or***
- *an appropriately qualified psychologist registered with the Health & Care Professions Council who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full a diagnostic assessment.*

An access arrangements assessor **must** have successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment, which **must** include training in **all** of the following:

- the theoretical basis underlying psychometric tests, such as the concepts of validity and reliability; standard deviations and the normal curve; raw scores, standard scores, quotients, percentiles and age equivalent scores; the concept of statistically significant discrepancies between scores; standard error of measurement and confidence intervals;
- the appropriate use of nationally standardised tests for the age group being tested;
- the objective administration of attainment tests which can be administered individually. This must include tests of reading accuracy, reading speed, reading comprehension and spelling. Appropriate methods of assessing writing skills, including speed, must also be covered;
- the appropriate selection and objective use of tests of cognitive skills;
- the ethical administration of testing including the ability to understand the limitation of their own skills and experience, and to define when it is necessary to refer the candidate to an alternative professional.

(Section 7.3)

How the assessment process is administered

Exam Access Assessment processes are administered with regard to the Equality Act 2010, DDA, and SENDO

The school makes every attempt to identify students needing exam access as early as possible

- At the start of each academic year, the school collects evidence from feeder schools for new students about previously held exam access arrangements.
- Teachers and the Learning Support Co-ordinator (LSC) identify students needing exam access arrangements through diagnostic assessment, class observations and from information contained in Statements, professional reports and Education Health Care Plans and other documentation. Teachers refer students to the Learning Support Department for exam access assessment via an online/paper referral system.
- The LSC works with teachers to gather further evidence. Teachers provide written evidence detailing how a candidate's difficulties impact on teaching and learning.

Once students needing exam assessments have been identified, the specialist assessor conducts the assessments.

Students and Teachers are informed via school communication systems and verbally of the outcome of their exam access assessment.

A record of a candidate's access arrangements are recorded on the Learning Support Register and on each pupil's Individual Education Plan.

Students with exam access arrangements will have these arrangements in class tests, mock examinations and assessments where reasonable.

Recording evidence of need

For candidates requiring exam access, JCQ forms FORM 8 are used to record assessment and application information. Parts 1 and 2 are completed by the LSC. Part 3 is completed by the specialist assessor/LSC. LSC completes the AAO.

For candidates with an EHCP/statement who only require extra time the LSC, in line with JCQ guidance, writes a file note confirming the candidate's difficulties. The file note:

- *confirms that the candidate has persistent and significant difficulties when accessing and processing information and is disabled within the meaning of the disability legislation;*
- *includes evidence of the candidate's current difficulties and how they substantially impact on teaching and learning in the classroom;*
- *shows the involvement of teaching staff in determining the need for 25% extra time;*
- *confirms that without the application of 25% extra time the candidate would be at a substantial disadvantage; (The candidate would be at a substantial disadvantage when compared with other, non-disabled candidates undertaking the assessment.)*
- *confirms that 25% extra time is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre as a direct consequence of their disability.*

The SENCo file note **is supported with** appropriate documentation such as

- *a letter from CAMHS, a HCPC registered psychologist, a hospital consultant, a psychiatrist; or*
- *a letter from the Local Authority Specialist Service, Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service or Occupational Health Service.; or*
- *a letter from a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT); or*
- *a Statement of Special Educational Needs relating to the candidate's secondary education, or an Education, Health and Care Plan, which confirms the candidate's disability and includes evidence of the candidates current difficulties and how they impact on teaching and learning in the classroom.*

Accepting privately commissioned psychological reports

In accordance with JCQ regulations 2022/23 the school cannot accept privately commissioned psychological reports for the purpose of processing access arrangements, unless prior permission has been granted from the school and the psychologist has an established relationship with the school.

*"A privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre **cannot** be used to award access arrangements and **cannot** be used to process an application using Access arrangements online."*

*"The SENCo **must** provide the assessor complete at least a 'skeleton' Part 1 of Form 8 **prior** to the candidate being assessed."*

Gathering evidence of *normal way of working*

The school gathers evidence of normal way of working as defined by JCQ in the following ways:

- Class tests, mock examinations, internal and external examinations including: KS3, GCSE, AS & A2.
- Candidates self-reported difficulties.
- Information from feeder schools.
- Comments on teacher questionnaires about candidate's difficulties.
- Information contained in Statements, EHCP, Educational Psychologist reports/ PLPs or other documents.

The arrangement(s) put in place reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre

- in the classroom;
- mock examinations.

The only exception to this is where an arrangement is put in place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment.

The tests that the specialist assessor uses are replaced/upgraded periodically in line with current practice.

The test that the specialist assessor uses depends upon the type of barrier to learning that the student may have. Should the student need further testing to assess for other learning issues or further AA, the specialist assessor will arrange this. Following a report produced by the Specialist Teacher an application is made to the Exam Boards for permission to implement the specified arrangement/s. Students are tested formally in Term 1 of Year 10; so that any permitted exam access arrangements are in place for the full GCSE period of both Year 11 and 12.

What support is given to students with AA?

- Students with AA are encouraged to use their AA during internal assessments and exams so that they gain practice at using it effectively.
- Students who have access to a reader or scribe are shown how to use them appropriately in exam situations, and it is explained to them what they can and can't do with the reader/scribe during the exam, and how much support the adult is allowed to give.
- Students who have a reader can be supported by the teacher supervising the test. Learning Support can provide a separate room, access to ICT and a scribe. Learning Support require advance notice so that classroom assistants can be redeployed if necessary to other students.
- Students with AA are monitored regularly through the use of data from School Reports, IEP Reviews, Annual Reviews, SIMS Tracking and exam results.

What are the procedures for processing an application?

Once the tests have been conducted and there is a recommendation from the assessor for AA, the LSC then applies to the exam boards. The feedback is instant and at this point the AA is added to the list of students and the parents are informed of the AA.

The application will require evidence of need, and the centre will need to hold evidence on file that can be inspected by JCQ at short notice. This can include:

- Recommendations by teachers
- Educational Psychologist reports
- Letters from outside agencies such as CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services), hospitals or doctors, ASD services, Sensory services.
- Information from SALT (Speech and Language Team)

- Statement of Educational Need
- Permission from the exam boards for the arrangement/s
- A signed copy of the Form 8 report by the designated tester
- A data protection form signed by the student &/or parent
- A record of all occasions when a student has been supported by AA
- For Extra Time – history of evidence of need in the form of copies of work completed under timed conditions where a student has regularly used more than the allotted time.

Processing applications for access arrangements

Access arrangements online

Access arrangements online is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for GCSE and GCE qualifications. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for GCSE and GCE qualifications.

“For GCSE and GCE qualifications, Access arrangements online enables centres to make a single on-line application for a candidate requiring access arrangements using any of the secure awarding body extranet sites. Access arrangements online will provide an instant response and will only allow a maximum of 26 months for any arrangement.

Further information on Access arrangements online is available from:
<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/aao-access-arrangements-online>

In line with JCQ regulations the LSC makes the online applications by the published deadline of the **21st March 2024.**

The LSC keeps a record of the printed online application, letters from awarding bodies, Form 8s/Form 9s, a copy a data protection form, assessments and any additional forms or documents for inspection.

The files for inspection are locked away and stored confidentially. They can be located in the **LSC’s Room**

Late applications will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

Centre-delegated access arrangements

The school follows JCQ guidance when providing centre delegated access arrangements.

The LSC allocates candidates a prompter or rest breaks if;

- the need is a result of substantial and long term impairment and it is their normal way of working
- there is medical evidence to substantiate this arrangement and it is their normal way of working.

Word processor policy

The use of a word processor is to address an identified need following a formal assessment and candidates may not simply elect to type out of preference.

- The use of a word processor may be an appropriate access arrangement for students who:
 - Have a physical disability or medical condition which impacts on handwriting
 - Have a sensory impairment
 - Write slowly as evidenced by a below average standardised score for handwriting speed
 - Have illegible handwriting
 - Have substantial difficulty in planning and organising work when writing by hand.
- The use of a word processor will not be granted to a candidate because they prefer to type or they can work faster on a keyboard or because they use a word processor at home.
- Candidates will not be allowed to use their own laptop. Word Processors will be provided for GCE and GCSE exams and students will not have access to spelling and grammar check facilities unless they meet the published criteria for a scribe as detailed in JCQ Guidelines.
- It is permissible for a candidate using a word processor in an examination to type certain questions, i.e. those requiring extended writing, and handwrite shorter answers.
- The candidate is advised to name and save their document at the start of the exam. Thereafter the student is responsible for frequently saving their work.
- The invigilator will print out the script and ask the candidate to verify that it is all there.
- An awarding body may require a word processor cover sheet to be completed.

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved separate invigilation within the centre will be based on whether the candidate

- *...has a substantial and long term impairment which has an adverse effect; and*
- *the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.*

The school requires students who claim a need for a separate room to provide medical evidence to confirm their need for this arrangement.

This must be given to the LSC or SLT Teacher in charge of student well-being.

The evidence can take the form of a letter from the GP, CAMHS or an EHCP.

This policy will be reviewed annually by Mrs Mary Keaney (LSC) to ensure compliance with current regulations.

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