



THE ORATORY

THE ORATORY SCHOOL (OS)

Exam Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustment Policy

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Linked policies	SEND Policy Curriculum Policy More Able Pupil Policy EAL Policy

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name(s)
SENCo	Kally Maan
Exam's officer/SENCo line manager (Senior leader)	Nick Jones/Matthew Syddall
Head of centre	Matthew Fogg
Assessor(s)	Kally Maan/Sally Eccleston//Jennifer Simpson
Access arrangement facilitator(s)	Kally Maan/Jo Walsh

This document is written in line with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidance, which can be found via the link below:

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

Failure to comply with the regulations contained in this document has the potential to constitute malpractice which may impact on the candidate's result(s).

What are access arrangements and reasonable adjustments?

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are agreed **before** an assessment. They allow candidates with **specific needs**, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments.'

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 centre **must** ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that The Oratory School has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements process and is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements.

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication. The school abides by the strict regulations set out by JCQ.

A centre **must** make decisions on appropriate access arrangements for their candidates. Although professionals from other organisations may give advice, they **cannot** make the decision for the centre. They will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's need and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments. It is the responsibility of the SENCo to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations.

General principles

The principles for the centre to consider include:

The purpose of an access arrangement/ reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing him/her from being placed at a substantial disadvantage due to persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.

The SENCo must ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the start of the course.

Arrangements must always be approved before an examination or assessment.

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

The candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before his/her first examination.

The assessment processes.

Assessments are carried out by an assessor(s) appointed by the Head of Centre. The assessors are appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations.

The qualification(s) of the current assessor(s)

Kally Maan- Level 7, PGCE in Education, Children with Literacy Difficulties awarded by Oxford Brookes University

Sally Ecclestone- SpLD Assessor, awarded by BDA

Jennifer Simpson- Psychologist registered with HCPC

The Head of Centre will ensure that evidence of the assessor's qualifications is obtained at the point of engagement/employment and prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate. JCQ rules dictate that school must work with external assessors with whom they have an established relationship. In any event, schools are not obliged to accept private reports.

Process for the assessment of a candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor

SENCOs and assessors working within the centre should always carefully consider any privately commissioned assessment to see whether the process of gathering a picture of need, demonstrating normal way of working within the centre and ultimately assessing the candidate themselves should be instigated. Evidence of need and normal way of working in the centre is the key issue in awarding any AA.

The following cannot be used for processing and inspection purposes:

Spreadsheets

A diagnosis of Dyslexia

Diagnostic assessment reports

Educational psychologists' reports

Email messages

What do we need to evidence access arrangements?

JCQ inspections require all school to have the required evidence for every candidate that has been awarded access arrangements. Schools are subject to at least two unannounced inspections from the JCQ every year.

Failure to comply with the regulations contained in the regulations has the potential to constitute malpractice, which may impact on the candidate's result(s).

The required evidence needed from the school for JCQ inspection is:

Relevant evidence of the nature and extent of the disability or difficulty/impairment which has a **substantial** and **long-term effect** i.e. history of need/history of provision

Evidence that the difficulties are **persistent** and **significant** (this will be ascertained from progress data)

Comments and observations from teaching staff in relevant subjects as to why the candidate needs 25% extra time and how they use the 25% extra time awarded.

A sample on internal school tests/mock exam papers across relevant subjects showing the application of 25% extra time.

For access arrangements awarded on **medical grounds** the school will **also** need to present the following evidence to enable an application to be made:

A **current Education**, Health and Care Plan, which confirms the candidate's learning difficulty, medical condition, physical disability, sensory or multi-sensory impairment or

A letter/report from CAMHS, a HCPC registered psychologist, a medical consultant, a psychiatrist, a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) or;

A report from the Local Authority Specialist Service, Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service or Occupational Health Service.

A letter from a GP is not sufficient.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Access arrangements online (AAO) is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for centres to apply for required access arrangement approval for the qualifications covered by the tool. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications included.

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by logging in to one of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

The SENCo must keep detailed records, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. When an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment has been processed online for GCSE and GCE qualifications, the evidence of need must be made available by the SENCo to a JCQ Centre Inspector upon request. An awarding body may also request evidence of need when considered necessary.

The JCQ stipulates that SENCos **must** consider the need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments on a subject-by-subject basis. As subjects vary, leading to different demands of the candidate, support may be needed in just one or two subjects; another candidate may need support in all their subjects. Where formal access arrangements are determined and agreed these become the 'normal way of working'. This means that the appropriate access arrangements should be taken into consideration in all assessments. An access arrangement must be the student's 'normal way of working 'in order for the application to comply with regulations. If a student chooses to continually not use their access arrangement, then it is not their normal way of working and the SENCo may consider withdrawing the application, provided the candidate will not be placed at a substantial disadvantage.

Progressing from GCSE to GCE qualifications.

Where a candidate with an existing Form 8 progresses from GCSE to GCE AS and/or A level qualifications a new online application for 25% extra time must be processed. However, so as to not give an unfair advantage, the SENCo must have available evidence, which clearly shows that 25% extra time is still needed for GCE AS and/or A level examination. There must be a sample of internal school tests/mock papers across relevant subjects showing the application of 25% extra time and also comments and observations from teaching staff in relevant subjects as to why the candidate needs 25% extra time and how they use the 25% extra time awarded.

Assistive technologies

Where possible pupils should work towards greater independence; human scribes should only be considered when a pupil does not have sufficient word processing skills to use a laptop or a computer scribe, and readers should only be considered after the possibility of using a computer reader has been explored.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

The SENCo **must** make their decision 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.

These include the following:

- Blank sheet of paper for doodling, where a candidate has persistent and significant concentration issues.
- Coloured overlays
- Non-electronic ear defenders/ear plugs
- Non-electronic headphones
- Timer on a candidate's desk – a small countdown clock, a small analogue or digital clock, digital timer
- Word processor (see separate word processor policy which is available on the school website.)

Supervised Rest Breaks

The SENCo **must** confirm the nature of the candidate's impairment and that supervised rest breaks reflect their normal way of working within the centre. Where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty, the SENCo **must** have explored and trialled the option of supervised rest breaks through times internal tests and/or mock examinations before making an application for 25% extra time. Candidates **cannot** be given as many supervised rest breaks as they like for as long as they like. The duration of the supervised rest break must be determined by the SENCo based on their knowledge of the candidate's needs and the candidate's normal way of working when placed under timed conditions.

Supervised rest breaks are often more effective and appropriate than 25% extra time for candidates who experience anxiety or attention difficulties. They may better address the needs of neurodivergent candidates, such as those with ADHD or ASD, as well as candidates with medical conditions or mental health needs. For a candidate who tires easily or struggles to concentrate over an extended period, supervised rest breaks will be more appropriate than 25% extra time.

Allocating extra time simply extends the period a candidate must remain in a potentially stressful environment, which can intensify anxiety and reduce productivity. Moreover, 25% extra time may not address the underlying issue, which is often related to difficulties with attention or emotional regulation. In contrast, supervised rest breaks allow the candidate to step away from the exam setting, use structured self-regulation strategies and return when they are calm and better able to focus. This targeted approach can lead to more effective exam performance while also supporting the development of long-term self-management skills. Teaching candidates how to use these strategies equips them to advocate for themselves in further education or the workplace, fostering independence and resilience.

Alternative rooming arrangements

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved alternative rooming arrangements within the centre will be made by the SENCo.

In the case of alternative rooming arrangements, the candidate's difficulties are established within the centre and known to their Form Tutor, the SENCo, or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities.

Alternative rooming arrangements **must** reflect the candidate's normal and current way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations.

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about the examinations **is not** sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre.

Deadlines

AAs must be in place near the start of the exam course, so they can be applied to all internal/mock tests. The deadline for considering applications is December for 4th Form (Year 10) and Lower 6th (Year 12). This will ensure we adhere to JCQ regulations, and the pupil has time to practice using any awarded AA.

Emergency applications are not included in this e.g., a broken arm. The application will be made as soon as possible but would be for a temporary application.

The JCQ and the awarding bodies can only discuss access arrangements/reasonable adjustments with the centres and **not** with the parents/carers.