

Parental Guidance regarding Access Arrangements

The school receives a number of requests for each year regarding Access Arrangements for pupils in public examinations. Over the last year the Joint Council for Qualifications has changed both the requirements for, and the evidence needed in order that Access Arrangements can be granted. The guidance the school received is in excess of 200 pages so we have created this document in order to try to give parents a useful brief outline as to what is required for Access Arrangements to be granted and the evidence the school needs to provide to the Examination boards in order to support this claim.

Access Arrangements

When applying for Access Arrangements we are obliged to work within the framework laid down by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

These regulations are very complex, and there have been major changes for this academic year. The current guidance can be viewed at www.jcq.org.uk

In particular, some parents choose to provide the school with either a private report from an educational psychologist or/and a letter from a GP.

It should be noted that neither of these on their own is a guarantee that a student will receive the Access Arrangements requested.

In particular when looking at any student's needs the school must always consider granting supervised rest breaks before making a request for extra time, as the former will often be a more appropriate response. Extra time can never be given if there is any possibility that the student would thereby be given an unfair advantage over other students.

An outline of evidence needed for the most common request of Extra Time

As extra time is the Access Arrangement requested most often we will look at some of the associated regulations here. JCQ lay down similar guidance for each of the other possible arrangements.

Extra time with a private report

The school has to present a 'compelling' case that the student's learning difficulty has 'a substantial and adverse effect' on the student's performance in exams.

This will generally require statements from subject staff that a student is underperforming in classroom tests, as well as evidence in the form of incomplete mock examinations or similar.

The student must also have made use of extra time over a substantial period of time in both classroom tests and mock examinations before the arrangement can be used in external examinations.

Extra time with a letter from a GP

In order for a student to be granted extra time on medical grounds, the school has to:

- Show that a student has **an impairment** which has a **substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her speed of processing**
- Confirm that he or she has **persistent and significant difficulties when accessing and processing information**
- Show evidence of how the disability/difficulty has impacted on teaching and learning in the classroom
- Show the involvement of teaching staff in determining the need for extra time of up to 25%
- Confirm that without the application of extra time of up to 25% the candidate would be at a **substantial disadvantage**
- Confirm that extra time of up to 25% is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre **as a direct consequence of their disability.**

A letter from a GP on its own is not sufficient. In addition to the evidence listed above, the school must also be able to show at least one of the following:

- A letter from CAMHS, a clinical psychologist, a hospital consultant or a psychiatrist
- A letter from the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service or Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service
- A letter from a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT)
- A Statement of Special Educational Needs relating to the candidate's secondary education **which confirms the candidate's disability**

The second most common request is for the use of a word processor.

An outline of evidence needed for the use of a word processor (laptop)

Under certain circumstances a student may be allowed to use a word processor in exams. This will normally be a laptop with spellcheck disabled, unless the student is also entitled to a scribe, in which case they will have the choice of using a laptop with spellcheck enabled. Note that in the latter case marks available for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) in certain papers will not be given if spellcheck is used.

The principal criteria when the school is deciding whether to grant the use of a word processor are that it should be **the candidate's normal way of working** and that it should be **appropriate to their needs.**

In assessing the latter, the school will need to have observed that the candidate has, for example:

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly
- a medical condition
- a physical disability
- a sensory impairment

- poor handwriting
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand

In all cases the school's decision will be final.

What does the School do to provide evidence for such claims?

Access Arrangements Testing

The Learning Support Department carries out testing of pupils in all year groups in consideration for Access Arrangements.

The Learning Support department will also carry out group testing at planned points in the year as a result of pupils either:

by them being referred by teaching staff based on their concerns over performance in class/test situations over an extended period

Or

through concerns raised by parents.

This testing again includes literacy tests as well as other specific tests, depending on the need which can include working memory, phonological processing and others.

JCQ set specific guidelines regarding the standard scores that enable a pupil to be eligible for Access Arrangements; these are not set by the Learning Support Department. A pupil may find, for example, completing tests in a fixed time period difficult but without the appropriate evidence or scores below a certain level, they will not be eligible for Access Arrangements.

What can you do as a parent?

If under the schools testing system, *as we are only able to carry out certain tests within school*, a pupil does not qualify for Access Arrangements parents can, if they wish, obtain a **Private Educational Psychologist (EP) Assessment**.

If parents wish to submit an EP report as part of their request for school to consider their child for Access Arrangements parents should be aware that the school will require to see:

A full copy of the report

And

Original copies of all the tests completed

This will enable the School (which, under JCQ guidelines, must be the sole referrer for Access Arrangements) to have full confidence in the testing that has been undertaken and ensure that testing has been robust and valid.