

FOR PARENTS: ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

What are access arrangements?

Students who struggle to access the learning environment without additional help and support might also need help and support in exams. Access arrangements are special concessions which can be applied for by the school, to enable a level playing field for students who would otherwise be placed at a substantial disadvantage.

There are a range of different types of arrangements available and they require different types of evidence. Evidence is required before an application is made and usually requires a specialist assessment.

Access arrangements in exams cannot be placed at the last minutes and cannot provide an unfair advantage, but must be considered when there is a substantial level of need, as demonstrated through the student's normal way of working.

Identification of need:

Here are some difficulties to be aware of which might indicate a need for access arrangements in exams:

Student...

- rarely finishes tests and exams in the time allowed
- takes a lot longer than peers to complete their work and often doesn't finish in time
- reads slowly or has difficulty with reading comprehension
- requires support to maintain concentration, such as someone to keep them on task
- has slow, illegible or incomprehensible writing
- appears forgetful with short term memory difficulties
- experiences language difficulties that are not associated with EAL
- struggles with coordination which impacts upon using a ruler and interpreting diagrams and graphs
- often struggles with mathematical language and problem-solving due to deciphering the language involved
- is easily distracted or finds it difficult to remain on task, requiring someone to aid their attention
- needs regular breaks due to attention difficulties or difficulties associated with concentration, such as
- takes language literally
- may become particularly anxious under test conditions

The main types of access arrangements are as follows:

- Extra time – for candidates who work slowly
- Rest break – for candidates with poor concentration or extreme stress
- Separate invigilation – for candidates who become anxious in a large room
- Bilingual dictionary - for candidates whose first language is not English. Irish or Welsh
- Reader - for very poor readers with decoding and comprehension difficulties
- Read aloud or the use of a reading pen - for those who have difficulty in reading silently
- Scribe - for those who have very slow writing or whose writing is illegible, but are unable to use a word processor
- Word processor - for poor or slow writing where they are used to typing proficiently
- Prompt – for candidates who lose concentration easily or who struggle with time

Important Information:

- ❖ JCQ Regulations are updated annually in September of the academic year.
- ❖ It is a mandatory duty for schools to adhere to the JCQ Regulations.
- ❖ There is a cut-off point for applications each year
- ❖ There are specific criteria set out in the JCQ Regulations relating to application for access arrangements. It is the role of the SENCO to ensure any application meets the published criteria.
- ❖ It is the role of the SENCO to make the final decision regarding the application process, based upon the evidence collected and whether the candidate meets the current criteria.
- ❖ A diagnosis of dyslexia, dyspraxia or any other difficulty does not automatically 'qualify' a candidate for access arrangements; there must be the required evidence in place.
- ❖ If an access arrangement has never been used, the application cannot be made.

If you have questions relating to access arrangements, you should make contact with the SENCO.

