

FOR TEACHERS: ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS OVERVIEW

Rationale:

Some students have difficulties with access to the learning environment, unless special concessions are made. For instance, a student might process verbal information slowly and might need longer to assimilate information, whilst another student with cerebral palsy might struggle to write legibly and require a scribe or the use of a laptop.

Students that require additional support in or out of class, might also require a similar level of support in exams, these are known as access arrangements. Access arrangements aim to ensure a level playing field by removing individual barriers to attainment. They are NOT designed to give an unfair advantage to the candidate.

Students do not need a diagnosis for an application for access arrangements to be made. However, there must be a detailed assessment of need, in addition to evidence of need and normal way of working, because they are deemed to be reasonable adjustments under Equality Act legislation.

Access arrangements applications are made at the start of the examination series/course and after the start of Year 9.

Different types of evidence are required according to different types of need. It is essential that teachers provide any information which is requested by the SENCO as soon as possible, in order for evidence to be collated.

Identification of need:

Difficulties to be aware of which might indicate a need for access arrangements in exams:

- 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 or process information slowly
- Rest break – for candidates with poor concentration or extreme stress and anxiety
- Separate invigilation – for candidates who become anxious in a large room or who read aloud or fidget excessively
- Bilingual dictionary - for candidates whose first language is not English. Irish or Welsh
- Human or computer 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 or reading accurately
- Human Scribe or voice activated software - 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:

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 **current** 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; they do not have to follow the suggestions made by specialists, consultants or parents.

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.

The candidate must experience a demonstrable learning difficulty, disability or special educational need, as access arrangements are reasonable adjustments under Equality Act legislation.

Access arrangements must not be applied at the last minute.

If an access arrangement has never been used, the application cannot be made.