



Bexhill
Academy

Exams - Access Arrangements Policy

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Reviewed by: Mr F Tumi

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Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name(s)
SENCo	Mr Walton
Senior leader	Mrs Hillman
Head of centre	Dr Neal
Exams Officer	Mrs Heynes
Assessor(s)	Mrs Ward, Mrs Deeprose, Mr Walton
Access arrangement facilitator(s)	Mrs Ward, Mrs Heynes

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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'. (AARA Definitions)

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;
- the ability for the centre to reasonably provide the arrangement.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body;
- involves unreasonable costs to the exam centre;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; **or**
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'. (AA Definitions)

The centre **must** ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates. (AARA¹, Definitions)

*References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see AARA 1.8). The definitions and procedures in [AARA](#) relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Bexhill Academy 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.

(JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres, section 5.4)

This publication is further referred to in this policy as GR

This policy is maintained and held by the SENCo alongside the individual files/e-folders of each access arrangements candidate. Each file/e-folder contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

Where the SENCo is storing documentation electronically they **must** create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. (AARA 4.2)

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current JCQ document 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties - Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments'. This publication is further referred to in this policy as AARA

General principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, who will coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties and disabilities, candidates for whom English is an additional language, as well as those with a temporary illness or temporary injury. (GR 5.4)

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AARA (section 4.2). These 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 them 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 disabled candidates.

The SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff within a FE college, **must** ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

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 needs 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.

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 their first examination.

Equalities Policy (Exams)

A large part of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process is covered in the Equalities Policy (Exams) which covers staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements and the conduct of exams.

The paper copy of the Equality Policy is in the file marked 'Policies' above the EO's desk, a soft copy is also available on the Academy Website.

The head of centre/senior leadership team will... recognise its duties towards disabled candidates, ensuring compliance with all aspects of the Equality Act 2010†, particularly Section 20 (7). This **must** include a duty to explore and provide access to suitable courses, through the access arrangements process submit applications for reasonable adjustments and make reasonable adjustments to the service the centre provides to disabled candidates. Where the centre is under a duty to make a reasonable adjustment, the centre **must not** charge a disabled candidate any additional fee in relation to the adjustment or aid...

†or any legislation in a relevant jurisdiction other than England and Wales which has an equivalent purpose and effect (GR section 5.4)

This policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

The assessment process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor(s) appointed by the head of centre. The assessor(s) is (are) appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in AARA, section 7.3.

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

All of our assessors hold a Certificate of Psychometric Testing, Assessment and Access Arrangements (CPT3A) – Equivalent to Level 7

Appointment of assessors

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed in the centre, evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements in AARA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Checking the qualification(s) of the assessor(s)

A copy of the Assessors Certificates are held by the EO and will be available for the Inspector during his visit.

Bear in mind **all** relevant JCQ regulations and guidance provided in GR and AARA including:

The head of centre/senior leadership team will... have a **written** process in place to not only check the qualification(s) of their assessor(s) but that the correct procedures are followed as in Chapter 7 of the JCQ document Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments... (GR, section 5.4)

The head of centre **must** ensure that evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) is obtained at the point of engagement/employment and prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) **must** be held on file for inspection purposes and be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the SENCo. (AARA, section 7.3)

Make full reference to AARA, section 7.3 (Appointment of assessors and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Reporting the appointment of assessors

Signpost to the location of the evidence that the assessor(s) is/are suitably qualified held by the SENCo.

Make full reference to AARA, section 7.4 (Reporting the appointment of assessors) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

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

All assessments and forms are stored securely in Year files in the AEN department. Each file contains a combination of the following documentation to support the application as appropriate:

- The completed and analysed assessments,
- JCQ Form 8 (required for each application),
- Teacher 'evidence of need' requests that provide supplementary information for Form 8,
- Signed data protection notice (required for each application),
- Teachers Referrals,
- Academic Reports,
- Samples of work,
- Letters from parents,
- Reports/letter from other professionals,
- Medical evidence.
- Evidence of email correspondence between teachers and colleagues in the AEN department.

Finally, the students are advised of the outcome of the assessments and which EAA they are entitled to, if at all. They are advised that the arrangements will be in place in the first instance, for twenty-six months and they should become part of their normal way of working (in class, key assessments, mock exams and external examinations). They are also made aware that if they do not use the arrangement then it will be withdrawn. A student does not have to make use of an arrangement that has been approved although if they choose not to, then they need to sign a form acknowledging this and which confirms that the arrangement is being withdrawn. Parents/carers are advised.

Make full reference to AARA, sections 7.5 *Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor* and 7.6 *Completing Form 8 – JCQ/AA/LD, Profile of Learning Difficulties* and record your process that reflects the requirements

By detailing this, you should be confirming ...that the correct procedures are followed as per Chapter 7 of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments...* [GR, section 5.4]

Note

...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 (AARA, section 7.3)

Also detail any process (where relevant) for a private candidate such as a distance learner or a home educated student (refer to the requirement in GR, section 5.4)

Picture of need/normal way of working

The Inclusion department will: establish the level of need of any student raised as a concern and collate evidence where necessary. They should show that over a period of time a student has established a normal way of working which includes access arrangements being requested of the examining body. The forms 8 are held by the Inclusion department. The school has appointed specialist assessors to administer the appropriate tests and write a report which can be submitted as an online application (Form 8). Teachers must highlight students they are concerned about in good time and not as they do exam entry submissions. They must also gather evidence of need (see table below for examples) and put into place recommendations from the Inclusion department so that a normal way of working is established – for example where the student is regularly given extra time to complete tasks. Subject teachers need to provide evidence of their concerns in the way of copies of class work and/or assessments to support their request for Examination Access Arrangements. Once Examination Access Arrangements have been approved, subject teachers must ensure that students have access to concessions that have been granted to them for Key Assessments, Controlled Assessments etc. (if additional support is required from the Inclusion department, a minimum of two weeks' notice is required). Agreed Access Arrangements should be a student's normal way of working.

Teachers who are concerned about a student's performance in tests and assessments must approach either the SENCO or Deputy SENCO. They must provide evidence to support their concerns which is co-ordinated by the Deputy SENCO. There is always a requirement to establish a long term pattern of need. What is most important is that what happens in exams reflects a normal way of working in the classroom – not something different just for exams. Students needing exam concessions do not need them only in exams. If a student needs more time to complete an exam then he/she will need more time to complete classwork. When submitting evidence teachers can mark on the paper the time the student had to do the work, how they feel the student performed and how extra time may have benefitted them. If a student struggles with writing, encourage the use of a laptop, teachers can then also comment on how much better the student has done, or not as the case may be. It may be that students with students who have an impairment that restricts the ability to hand-write, type or maintain the posture required for writing will require a scribe application for some subjects. Evidence needs to be collected over a period of time (it should not be a one off concern) and should show a similar pattern of need. In general the extra time given is 25%. In exceptional circumstances additional time over 25% can be awarded, but in these cases, approval has to be sought from the Awarding Body. Teachers are given clear guidance on the body of evidence that is required.

Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCO **must** provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted as required in Part 1 of Form 8. The SENCO and the assessor **must** work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.

An independent assessor **must** contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This **must** take place **before** the candidate is assessed. Additionally, the independent assessor **must** be approved by the head of centre to assess the candidate.

All candidates **must** be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8.

An independent assessor **must** discuss access arrangements/reasonable adjustments with the SENCo. The responsibility to determine and request appropriate and practicable access arrangements/reasonable adjustments specifically lies with the SENCo. (AARA, section 7.5)

Make full reference to AARA, sections 7.5 (Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor) and 7.6 (Completing Form 8 – JCQ/AA/LD, Profile of Learning Difficulties) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

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. (Refer to AARA, chapter 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments) and chapter 6 (Modified papers)).

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

Online applications **must** only be processed where they are supported by the centre and the candidate meets the published criteria for the arrangement(s) with the full supporting evidence in place. (AARA 8 Summary)

The SENCo/specialist teacher will:

- determine if the arrangements identified for a candidate require prior approval from the awarding body before the arrangements are put in place or if approval is centre-delegated
- follow guidance in AA Chapter 8 to process approval applications for access arrangements for GCSE qualifications
- have a username and password for one or more awarding body secure extranet site in order to gain access to *Access arrangements online*² (AAO)
- apply for approval where this is required, through AAO, or through the awarding body where qualifications sit outside the scope of AAO
- ensure appropriate evidence is held on file to confirm validation responses in AAO; including:
 - painting a picture of need on section A of JCQ form 8
 - a completed specialist assessment to substantiate the picture of need recorded on section C of form 8
 - a body of evidence to substantiate the candidate's normal way of working within the centre
- confirm by ticking the 'Confirmation' box prior to submitting the application for approval that the 'malpractice consequence statement' has been read and accepted
- make an *awarding body referral* through AAO where the initial application for approval may not be approved by AAO, where it is deemed by the centre that the candidates does meet the criteria for the arrangement(s)
- ensure that arrangements, and approval where required, is in place before a candidate takes his/her first exam or assessment (which is externally assessed or internally assessed/externally moderated)
- ensure that where approval is required that this is applied for by the awarding body deadline

- maintain a file for each candidate that will include:
 - completed JCQ/awarding body application forms and evidence forms
 - appropriate evidence to support the need for the arrangement
 - appropriate evidence to support normal way of working within the centre
 - in addition, for GCSE qualifications (where approval is required), a print out of the AAO approval, a personal data consent form and a signed data protection notice (which provides candidate consent to their personal details being shared)
- will present the files when requested by the JCQ Centre Inspector

Deputy SENCO:

- order modified papers, where these may be required by a candidate for GCSE qualifications, through AAO by the deadline date for the summer exam series
- order modified papers, where these may be required by a candidate for Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Progression, ELC and Functional Skills qualifications, by submitting *JCQ Form 7 – Application for modified papers* to the awarding body at least 10 weeks before the date of the assessment
- order modified papers, where these may be required by a candidate for vocational qualifications, by submitting *JCQ Form VQ/EA – Application for reasonable adjustments; External assessments – Vocational qualifications* to the awarding body no later than 10 weeks before the date of the assessment

The SENCo **must** keep detailed records for inspection purposes, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes a signed candidate personal data consent form; a completed *Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENCo* form; a copy of the candidate's approved application; appropriate evidence of need (where required); evidence of the assessor's qualification (where required). (AARA, section 8.6)

Make full reference to AARA 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

Centre delegated access arrangements are those arrangements which may be granted by the centre with appropriate evidence held on file and/or those arrangements that do not need to be recorded).

Centre-specific criteria for particular arrangements/adjustments

Word Processor Policy (Exams)

An exam candidate may be approved the use of a word processor where this is appropriate to the candidate's needs and not simply because the candidate now wants to type rather than write in exams or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

The paper copy of the policy is in the file marked 'Policies' above the EO's desk.

Centres are allowed to provide a word processor (e.g. computer, laptop or tablet) **with the spelling and grammar check/predictive text disabled** to a candidate **where it is their normal way of working within the centre**, unless an awarding body's specification says otherwise. **For example, where the curriculum is delivered electronically and the centre provides word processors to all candidates**. This also includes an electronic braille or a tablet.

A member of the centre's senior leadership team must produce a word processor policy, specific to the centre, which details the criteria the centre uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations and assessments. This policy must be available for inspection. (AARA, section 5.8)

Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs (formerly known as separate invigilation) will be made by the Head of Centre in consultation with the SENCO.

The decision 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 (AARA, section 5.16)

Bexhill Academy appreciates that students with high level medical or psychological needs may require alternative rooming arrangements. We require a letter from an appropriate external professional to support this arrangement. Evidence is kept securely with other access arrangements documentation and is available for inspection if requested.

In the case of alternative rooming arrangements, the candidate's disability is **established within the centre** (see Chapter 4, paragraph 4.1.4). It is known to a Form Tutor, a Head of Year, the SENCo or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities. **For** example, a long-term medical condition which has a substantial and adverse effect.

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 examinations is not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre.

1:1 invigilation and the use of an alternative room would apply where the candidate has a serious medical condition such as frequent seizures, Tourette's or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the examination room. (AARA 5.16)

Please also refer to our 'Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy'.

Separate invigilation is defined as invigilation outside of the main Sports Hall.