



Joint Council for  
Qualifications<sup>CIC</sup>

# An overview of the access arrangements and reasonable adjustments process for centres accepting private candidates

For the attention of SENCos, assessors and senior  
leaders within schools and colleges.

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# 1 Introduction

This document has been specifically written to support SENCOs, assessors and senior leaders within centres who enter private candidates for examinations. The aim is to provide an understanding of the process for access arrangements and reasonable adjustments from the perspective of a private candidate.

The document is intended to support, but **not** replace, the JCQ publication *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* which SENCOs, equivalent members of staff within FE colleges and assessors, **must** continue to refer to.

This document may also help a private candidate and their parents/carers when discussing and identifying potential access arrangements/reasonable adjustments for examinations with the entering centre.

## 2 What are access arrangements?

Access arrangements are agreed **before** examinations. 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'.

### 3 What are 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 computer reader, 50% extra time and a word processor which would be reasonable adjustments for a vision impaired candidate. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual.

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'.

In most cases it **will not** be reasonable for adjustments to be made to assessment objectives within a qualification. To do so would likely undermine the effectiveness of the qualification in providing a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of the candidate. There is no duty to make adjustments which the qualifications regulators have specified should not be made.

For further information, heads of centre, senior leaders, SENCos and assessors should refer to Chapters 1 and 3 of the JCQ publication *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*:

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

## 4 Types of access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

Nineteen access arrangements/reasonable adjustments are delegated to centres. These arrangements **do not** require an examination centre to process an online application or, in most cases, any evidence of need. The SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff within a FE college, is empowered at a local level to determine the appropriateness and reasonableness of the arrangement.

The SENCo will base their decision on the private candidate's normal way of working and whether their impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect.

### **The following arrangements are delegated to centres:**

- Amplification equipment
- Bilingual dictionary
- Braille transcript
- Braille
- Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)
- Colour naming by the invigilator for candidates who are colour blind
- Coloured overlays
- Communication Professional (for candidates using Sign Language)
- Examination on coloured/enlarged paper
- Fidget toys and stress balls
- Live speaker for pre-recorded examination components
- Low vision aid/magnifier
- Non electronic ear defenders/ear plugs
- Optical Character Reader (OCR) scanners
- Prompter
- Read aloud (which can include an examination reading pen)
- Separate invigilation within the centre (sitting the examination outside of the main examination hall/room, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates)
- Squared paper for visual spatial difficulties
- Supervised rest breaks
- Word processor

It is recommended that the SENCo confirms in writing any agreed centre delegated access arrangement(s) with a private candidate.

**The following arrangements require an online application to be submitted by the centre, supported by evidence of need:**

- Bilingual dictionary with 10% extra time (solely for GCSE qualifications)
- Computer reader/reader
- 25% extra time
- Extra time over 25%†
- Practical Assistant†
- Scribe/speech recognition technology

†The arrangement will be automatically rejected. Applications will then be referred online by the centre to the relevant awarding body.

A disabled candidate may require other adjustments which are not listed in this document. Accordingly, the list of arrangements is not exhaustive. Where a candidate has substantial needs which are not accommodated by *Access arrangements online*, the centre **must** make an online referral to the relevant awarding body/bodies. This **must** be done via *Access arrangements online* by selecting 'Other'.

Additional paperwork may be required to justify the request being made. Awarding bodies may require more compelling evidence of need before approving an arrangement that would otherwise unfairly advantage the candidate. The requirement for evidence of need is important to maintain the rigour and standard of the examination system. Evidence is also necessary to ensure that those using examination certificates can continue to have confidence in the awarding of qualification grades.

## 5 Applying for access arrangements

Arrangements **must** be processed and approved online **before** an examination or assessment, no later than the published deadline as below.

Exam series	Access arrangement	Final deadline
June 2023	Modified papers	31 January 2023
June 2023	All other access arrangements	21 March 2023

**Private candidates should be aware that an examination centre will set an earlier internal deadline to enable them to gather, collate and produce the required evidence to support an online application.**

When applying to a centre and completing an application form, a private candidate **must** set out their needs, i.e. their difficulties when working under timed and controlled conditions, and any potential access arrangements/reasonable adjustments. The private candidate should then contact the centre as soon as possible thereafter to discuss their needs. This will enable the centre to meet its internal deadline and discuss with the private candidate whether the choice of qualification(s) is/are appropriate as well as exploring possible access arrangements/reasonable adjustments.

A private candidate should always check with a centre what their internal deadline for access arrangements is.



## 6 Overview of evidence requirements

### Access arrangements

### Evidence requirements (in all cases normal way of working unless a temporary illness/injury)

#### Physical disability, sensory impairment

25% extra time, extra time of more than 25%, scribe

\*Centre based evidence from the SENCo on centre headed paper/template, signed and dated, confirming the candidate's normal way of working and that the candidate has persistent and significant difficulties which substantially impact on teaching and learning, confirmed by a formal diagnosis from a specialist such as a clinical paediatrician or a hospital consultant (not a GP).

#### Medical condition (e.g. ADHD, ASD, mental health conditions)

25% extra time, extra time of more than 25%, scribe

\*Centre based evidence from the SENCo on centre headed paper/template, signed and dated, confirming the candidate's normal way of working and that the candidate has persistent and significant difficulties which substantially impact on teaching and learning, confirmed by a formal diagnosis from a specialist such as a clinical paediatrician or a hospital consultant (not a GP).

#### Learning difficulties (dyscalculia, dyslexia)

25% extra time

Form 8† - **assessment by the centre's appointed assessor from Year 9 onwards** using recent editions of nationally standardised tests (assessor selects tests).

**At least two below average standardised scores of 84 or less, or one below average standardised score (84 or less) and one low average standardised score (85-89),<sup>†</sup> relating to two different areas of speed of working (cognitive processing/reading/writing).**

**Only Form 8 is acceptable.** Spreadsheets, email messages, centre devised equivalents of Form 8, educational psychologists' reports and other reports **are not** acceptable for processing and inspection purposes.

Scribe/speech recognition technology (including the use of a word processor with the spelling and/or grammar check enabled)

Form 8† - **assessment by the centre's appointed assessor from Year 9 onwards** using recent editions of nationally standardised tests (assessor selects tests).

The candidate cannot produce written work through any other means due to:

- spelling in the **below average range (a spelling accuracy standardised score of 84 or less)** with unrecognisable spellings; **or**
- below average writing speed (**a standardised score of 84 or less**).

**Only Form 8 is acceptable.** Spreadsheets, email messages, centre devised equivalents of Form 8, educational psychologists' reports and other reports **are not** acceptable for processing and inspection purposes.

Language Modifier

**(The evidence required applies to all candidates irrespective of their impairment)**

Form 8† - **assessment must have been carried out by the centre's appointed assessor within 26 months leading up to the examination(s)** using recent editions of nationally standardised tests (assessor selects tests).

- Results **must** be given as standardised scores.
- Candidate's standardised score **must** be **very substantially below average (a standardised score of 69 or less)** for reading comprehension and/or vocabulary. **This is a rare and exceptional arrangement.**

**Only Form 8 is acceptable.** Spreadsheets, email messages, centre devised equivalents of Form 8, educational psychologists' reports and other reports **are not** acceptable for processing and inspection purposes.

## Access arrangements

## Evidence requirements (in all cases normal way of working unless a temporary illness/injury)

Extra time between 26% and 50%

Form 8† - **assessment must have been carried out by the centre's appointed assessor within 26 months leading up to the examination(s)** using recent editions of nationally standardised tests (assessor selects tests).

- Results **must** be given as standardised scores.
- Speed of cognitive processing/reading/writing **must be very substantially below average (two standardised scores of 69 or less which relate to two different areas of speed of working). This is a rare and exceptional arrangement.**

**Only Form 8 is acceptable.** Spreadsheets, email messages, centre devised equivalents of Form 8, educational psychologists' reports and other reports **are not** acceptable for processing and inspection purposes.

Computer reader/reader

Centre based evidence from the SENCo confirming the nature of the candidate's impairment and that the use of a computer reader/reader reflects his/her normal and current way of working.

## EAL

Bilingual dictionary

A candidate with EAL might be eligible for a bilingual dictionary. The bilingual dictionary **must** be stored at the centre.

Bilingual dictionary and 10% extra time

\*The candidate **must** meet the published criteria. **This is a rare and exceptional arrangement.**

**This arrangement is not available to candidates entered for GCE AS and A-level qualifications and WJEC Level 3 Applied qualifications.**

\* SENCos **must** refer to the JCQ publication *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*:

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

‡ **JCQ Form 8 (Parts 1, 2 and 3) must be completed.**

The SENCo **must** complete Part 1 of Form 8 **before** the candidate is assessed.

The assessor **must** record the results of their assessments within Part 2 of Form 8, signing and dating this section of Form 8.

The SENCo **must** complete Part 3 of Form 8, signing and dating this section of Form 8.

†In very exceptional circumstances two low average standardised scores (85 to 89) relating to two different areas of speed of working may be accepted.

## 7 How do SENCos establish the candidate's normal way of working when completing assessments?

There are a variety of sources a SENCo could use to paint a picture of need and establish normal way of working:

- having a detailed conversation with the private candidate, and where relevant their parent(s)/carer(s), or those with other caring or educational responsibilities, identifying their self-reported difficulties when working under timed conditions;
- where relevant, information relayed by telephone or email from the candidate's distance learning provider or private tutor;
- if known, arrangements made for Key Stage 2 tests and/or any previous external examinations;
- an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), or equivalent, from a previous school;
- a privately commissioned educational psychologist's report;
- the conducting of screening tests;
- setting the private candidate timed assessments to assess the need for 25% extra time, a scribe or a word processor. For example, some assessments with 25% extra time and others without 25% extra time. Where a private candidate is unable to sit assessments at the centre, remote supervision may be used. Centres **do not** need to have specialist remote invigilation software. The private candidate could be observed remotely using standard video conferencing software such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

## 8 Contact information

Private candidates should contact the SENCo at the centre which has entered them for examinations to discuss possible access arrangements/reasonable adjustments.