

Examinations are to test the knowledge of the candidate, not to test how well they sit an exam. For some of our pupils there are barriers to them demonstrating this knowledge and for these pupils we make reasonable adjustments to reduce these barriers. These adjustments are called access arrangements. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) oversee the regulations and awarding of access arrangements (AAs) representing the main awarding bodies including AQA, Edexcel/Pearson, OCR and CIE.

In order for pupils to be considered for an access arrangement they have to be disabled using the definition of a disability from The Equality Act 2010:

“A person has a disability for the purposes of the Act if he or she has a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

<http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/docs/wor/new/ea-guide.pdf>

Long term is where it has lasted or is likely to last for more than 12 months.

Access arrangements available include:

- Supervised rest breaks
- Extra time
- Reading Pen
- Word processor
- Separate room
- Prompt

There are strict guidelines and thresholds that have to be met before we are allowed to award any access arrangements.

Applying for Access Arrangements

The school has its own internal procedure to identify pupils who may be eligible for access arrangements. If any parent or pupil would like to enquire about an access arrangement assessment they should contact the Head of Academic Support by email. This will trigger an internal investigation during which we will look at whether there is a learning need and whether this need is substantial enough to reach the threshold(s) set by JCQ to be awarded. If they do an assessment and latterly, if appropriate, an application will be made. If not we are not permitted to award the access arrangements as this is considered malpractice. The pupil and parent/carers will be informed.

Private Reports & Assessments/Medical Letters

JCQ explicitly say that we are not allowed to award access arrangements based on the recommendation of external/private assessments or medical/doctor letters. Normal way of working in the centre is the key element in awarding any access arrangement, and the access arrangement should be established long term rather than a last minute request.

We are allowed to use independent assessor reports who have a relationship with the school, but they must work in liaison with the school and always contact us in advance. There are strict guidelines as to what they are permitted to do following this contact.

If we receive a private report or letter requesting an access arrangement, it will trigger an internal investigation to establish if the pupil meets the JCQ threshold and pupil/parents will be notified.

Extra Time

Criteria for extra time eligibility is a below average speed of processing in one of the following three areas: Reading speed, handwriting speed, processing speed.

Rest Breaks

Pupils with established medical conditions, that the school are aware of, will only ever be considered for rest breaks, not extra time. Rest breaks are divided into '*medical* rest breaks' and '*supervised* rest breaks'. Medical rest breaks are implemented according to their medical needs. Supervised rest breaks are implemented after the first half an hour and entitle the pupil to a maximum of five minutes break per every half an hour. All rest breaks have to be agreed through the Head of Academic Support to comply with exam board regulations.

Word Processor

Using a word processor is considered an access arrangement and pupils must meet the JCQ threshold. A pupil cannot use a word processor simply because it is their preferred way of working, even if that that pupil regularly uses an iPad in class or for homework. There has to be an established and assessed learning need/disability.

Separate Invigilation

JCQ state that for pupils to be given a separate room, they must be disabled according to the The Equality Act 2010 and it must be their normal way of working.

Deadlines

Access arrangements must be in place by the end of the first term of the first year of the two-year GCSE / A Level exam course. This ensures they can be applied to all internal/mock tests. This will ensure we adhere to JCQ deadline regulations. We cannot award an access arrangement only for official examinations.

Emergency applications are not included in this e.g. a broken arm. This type of emergency application will be made as soon as possible.

For a more in-depth explanation of special educational needs and access arrangements please see both these policies on the school website.

