

The Priory School



ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY (Exams) 2023/24

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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'. (¹AA, 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.

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'. (¹AA, Definitions)

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

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that The Priory School 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 he/she **must** create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. (¹AA, section 4.2)

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties - **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**'.

¹This publication is further referred to in this policy as AA

General principles

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AA (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 him/her 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 candidate.

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.

Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the **start** of the course.

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 his/her 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.

Equality Information & Objectives Policy are saved in SharePoint – Policies & Procedures

The head of centre/senior leadership team will... recognise its duties towards disabled candidates, including private 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)

The Access Arrangements 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 AA, section 7.3.

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

Cheryl White CD7411 – Specialist Assessor in Assessing for Access Arrangements

Appointment of assessors of candidates with learning difficulties

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 AA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

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

The SENCO is responsible for ensuring that the qualifications of assessors meet JCQ requirements.

Reporting the appointment of the assessor(s)

After the appointment of the external assessor, their details are entered onto the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP)

Bear in mind **all** relevant JCQ regulations and guidance provided in GR and AA 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 publication 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. (AA, section 7.3)

Make full reference to AA, section 7.3 (Appointment of assessors of candidates with learning difficulties) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Reporting the appointment of the assessor(s)

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

Make full reference to AA, 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

Students will be identified for possible access arrangements through a combination of the following criteria:

- From Year 7 as a result of information from primary schools, prior access arrangements and/or low attainment scores in relevant assessments.
- Referral from a teacher and evidence supporting student's area of need.

- Exam Access arrangements (EAAs) granted/officially approved by previous secondary school – subject to relevant paperwork being sent to the SENDCo in addition to clear evidence of need and confirmation of qualifications of prior school’s specialist assessor.
- Presentation of a recent medical letter/diagnosis from a qualified health care professional.
- Parental concern expressed.

‘Provisional’ access arrangements granted in Years 7, 8 or 9 or below are not automatically guaranteed for GCSE exams. Official approval is normally requested in the Autumn Term of Year 10 and is subject to results from the School’s designated specialist and/or a medical diagnosis/report. EAAs have to be officially approved for all students taking GCSEs. However, it is our aim to have ‘provisional’ access arrangements in place for internal assessments for students in younger years as soon as additional needs are identified so this becomes the students’ normal way of working.

Students who are deemed eligible for access arrangements in Key Stage 4 will be tested (at the earliest in Year 9) by the School’s designated ‘specialist assessor’ to ensure the results are valid for official approval for the entire GCSE period.

Where the candidate does not have an EHCP or a Statement of Special Educational Needs a Form 8, Part 1 is completed by the SENCO prior to the candidate being assessed.

The guidelines for the assessment of the candidates learning difficulties as assessed by the assessor may include SEN needs for example:

- A learning difficulty, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly;
- A medical condition;
- A physical disability;
- A sensory impairment;
- Planning and organisational problems when writing by hand;
- Poor handwriting.

This list is not exhaustive.

As advised by the JCQ, the School will not accept privately commissioned assessments as sole evidence for exam access arrangements. Privately commissioned assessments will only be considered as background evidence additional to qualitative and quantifiable evidence gathered by the School to reflect the candidates’ significant, persistent and long-term need and their normal way of working in school.

With the exception of temporary illness or injury on the day of the examination, students who require EEA provision for medical purposes will need to provide written evidence from an appropriate medical professional in March of the year they will be sitting exams, stating their current diagnosis, treatment and details of how it might affect their performance.

Historical information will not be taken into consideration. Any EEA provision will then be put in place to comply with current JCQ regulations, which may differ from that suggested by the medical professional.

Some students may have received, prior to this a diagnostic assessment for Specific Learning Difficulties (identifying Dyslexia) if this identification has been made the diagnostic test for reading and writing will need to be repeated in Year 9.

The specialist assessor (SENDCo) will conduct the appropriate assessments to identify students requiring AA and will recommend AA as appropriate.

Care is taken not to provide support which gives them either an advantage or a disadvantage for the upcoming exams, but instead fair support is provided based on their need and abilities.

The SENCO will then process these through AA online.

Make full reference to AA, 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 in Chapter 7 of the JCQ publication *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 (AA, 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

Potential candidates for access arrangements (AA) may be identified by any member of teaching/support staff. A recommendation for assessment, including evidence and/or observations to support the request, should be submitted in writing/email to the SENCO. A

Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCO will gather background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted as required in Part 1 of Form 8.

Where relevant include any additional information relating to private candidates.

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. (AA, section 7.5)

Make full reference to AA, 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 AA, chapter 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments) and chapter 6 (Modified papers)).

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

Part 1 of JCQ Form 8 should be used and kept in candidates access arrangements file held by the SENCO, along with any other relevant evidence.

Only Form 8 is acceptable. Spreadsheets, e-mail messages, centre devised equivalents of Form 8, educational psychologists' reports and other reports are not acceptable for inspection purposes. [AA 7.6]

A privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to award access arrangements and cannot be used to process an application using Access arrangements online.

Where a privately commissioned report, or a report from an external professional, is rejected by a centre, the head of centre or a member of the senior leadership team should provide a written rationale supporting their decision to the parent/carer. [AA 7.3]

Background information to support 'normal way of working' as necessary should be included in the candidate's access arrangements file and be used to complete Form 8. These might include:

- Classroom support records
- Internal Exams records
- Teacher statements / emails

Subject teachers and TAs meet on a weekly basis to discuss individual pupils, their needs and support required to allow them to learn in lessons. Knowledge of the best way to support pupils in lessons to allow them to develop is discussed between the SENCO and classroom TAs.

The Priory School follows the advice given by JCQ and maintains a record of the provision of AA, particularly in the case of the use of word processors. If an AA is never used then it is not a candidate's normal way of working and the arrangement should not be awarded for examinations. Mock examinations allow a judgement to be made on support offered and slight alterations can be made to pupil's access arrangements if necessary. Bear in mind normal way of working (NWOW) as defined by JCQ. The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre †, for example:

- in the classroom (where appropriate);
- working in small groups for reading and/or writing;
- literacy support lessons;
- literacy intervention strategies;
- in internal school tests/examinations;
- mock examinations.

This is commonly referred to as 'normal way of working'. For candidates with learning difficulties this is typically the background information recorded within part 1 of Form 8 by the SENCO. SENCO and assessors must refer to chapter 7 section 7.6.1, page 82, for information on how to confirm 'normal way of working'. †The only exception to this is where an arrangement is put in place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment. [AA 4.2]

The SENCO is responsible for the centre's processes for using AAO and the detailed keeping of records. The SENCO submits AA Online. All evidence is collected by the SENCO prior to the AA online request.

The SENCO is responsible for the submission of the AA online. The candidate AAO file is updated and stored securely in the SEN office. This includes a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) and a signed candidate personal data consent form for inspection by the JCQ Centre Inspection Service. [AA 8.6]

Note the change to the (AAO) Candidate **Personal data consent form** and the requirement for completion of the Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENCo, prior to the processing of the online application, which must be retained for 26 months from the date of the online application being approved.

The SENCo **must** keep detailed records, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) **and** a signed candidate personal data consent form for inspection by the JCQ Centre Inspection Service. (AA, section 8.6)

Make full reference to AA, section 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments), section 6 (Modified papers) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

All arrangements are put into place by our SENCo Mrs C White and overseen by SLT

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.

All arrangements that do not require an approved AAO application should be authorised by SENCo.

- The SENCO will gather the evidence of need and file accordingly.
- The SENCO and Exams Officer discuss the appropriateness of arrangements
- The SENCO and Exams officer liaise to ensure all arrangements are in place prior to all internal and external exams.

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. (AA, section 5.8)

Separate Invigilation Policy

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved separate invigilation within the centre will be made by 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 (AA, section 5.16)

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved separate invigilation within the centre will be made by the member of SLT with oversight for exams, SENDCO and the Exams Officer.

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 [AA 5.16]
- The 'normal way of working' for exam candidates, as directed by the head of centre, is that candidates handwrite their exams. An exception to this is where a candidate may have an approved access arrangement in place, for example the use of a scribe/speech

recognition technology. In the case of separate invigilation, the candidate's difficulties are established within the centre and known to a Form Tutor, Head of House, the SENCO or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities.

- Separate invigilation reflects the candidate's normal way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations as a consequence of a long term medical condition or long term social, emotional and mental health needs." [AA 5.16]

In the case of separate invigilation, 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.

Separate invigilation 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. (AA, section 5.16)