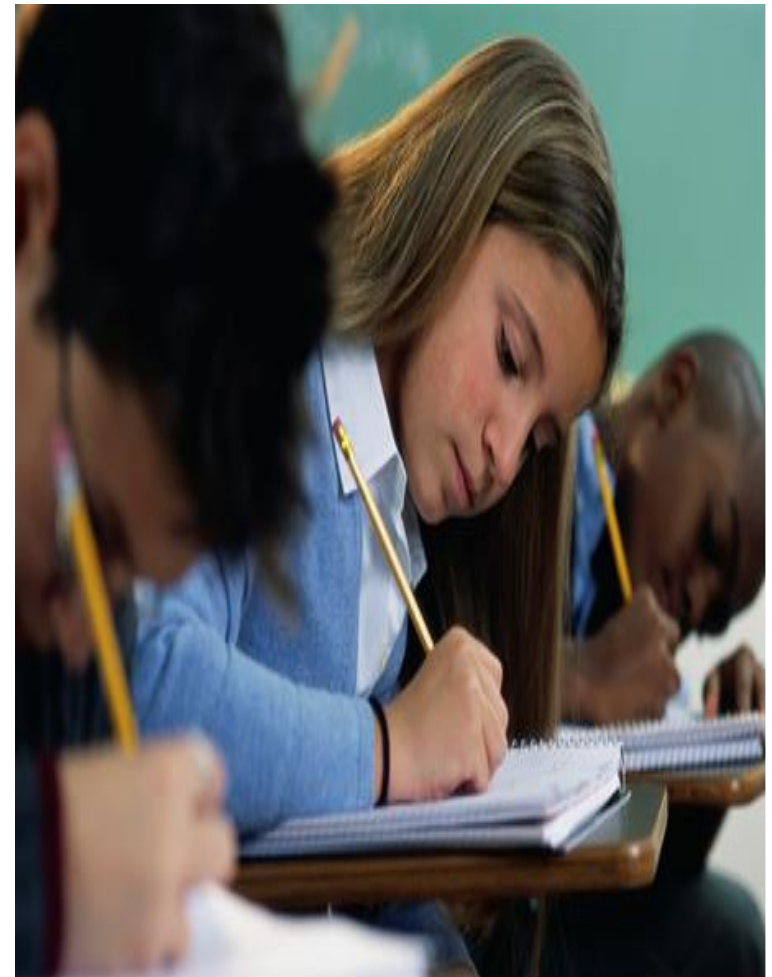


Information for Teachers, Parents & Students Regarding Access Arrangements at Alderbrook

Overview: This document:

1. Defines and explains Access Arrangements (AA), based on:
The Joint Council for Qualifications Regulations. (p2-3).
2. Outlines the Main Types of Access Arrangements (AA)
relevant to Alderbrook students. (p4-5).
3. Explains how students are identified and related key terms:
 - ‘Provisional’ AA List. (6).
 - ‘Evidence of Need’ and ‘Normal Way of Working’. (p6).
4. Explains the criteria for Access Arrangements,
the process involved, and points to note. (p7-9).
5. Dyslexia Diagnoses and other diagnosis (p10)
6. Explains Temporary Access Arrangements and Special
Consideration (p11).
7. Explains Access Arrangement Malpractice. (p12)
8. Contact details. (p12)



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What are the Joint Council for Qualifications Regulations?

Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) is the organisation who regulate most of the exam boards examinations, including GCSEs, A levels and other formal qualifications. Thus, Alderbrook School follows all JCQ exam regulations and guidance. JCQ Inspectors inspect each centre, annually, to ensure compliance, and sometimes twice. The JCQ Regulations provide information regarding the evidence needed for each access arrangement. These are updated every year, including eligibility, so the criteria can change. _2024-25 regulations are located at:

https://www.jcq.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2023/09/AA_regs_Revision_One_Sep23_FINAL.pdf

What are Access Arrangements (AA)?

Access Arrangements are reasonable adjustments, agreed before an assessment. They allow learners with specific needs, e.g.: special educational needs, disabilities and injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. (JCQ 2024-25 p7). They are based on ‘**evidence of need**’, (explained in section 4), and ‘**normal way of working**’, (explained in section 3).

Access Arrangements are only available to students with **substantial, long-term difficulties** that are known to have an **adverse effect on normal day-to-day activities in school**. They ensure that all students are given a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in examinations, without being disadvantaged by any learning, physical, sensory or psychological difficulty. Access Arrangements are not meant to create an unfair advantage, or compromise the integrity of an assessment.

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They are the principal way in which awarding examination boards comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make **'reasonable adjustments'** for any candidate who would be at **substantial disadvantage** in comparison to someone who is not disabled. (JCQ 2024-25 p7). The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability means **'limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'**.

Access Arrangements may vary between subjects because different methods of assessments may have different demands. For example, a human reader is not allowed in the section of the English paper testing 'reading'. However, a reading pen is allowed.

They must not provide an unfair advantage and hence applications are based upon a rigorous evaluation of need and are heavily regulated by the JCQ and the Exam Boards themselves.

2. What are the main AAs Applicable to Alderbrook?

a. **A reader / computer reader / reading pen:**

This is for students who struggle with reading accuracy, comprehension, fluency or reading comprehension speed. Reasons for this could include: speech learning communication needs (SpLCN); a moderate learning difficulty (MLD); a specific learning difficulties (SpLD), e.g. dyslexia, or, for students who struggle to read words accurately (decoding).

Having a reader removes this barrier, so they can access the exam paper and then demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of a subject. When requested by the student, a trained adult (human reader), can read either a word, sentence, question, paragraph or whole paper, as many times as the student wishes. However, 'human readers' are not allowed to explain the text.

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Where the skill of reading is being assessed, (e.g. in the reading section of the English papers), human readers are not allowed. A student may use a reading pen, computer reader, or, if they choose to read independently, have up to 25% extra time, for the reading section of the paper. Reading pens and computer readers will generally be introduced to these students, during their English lessons, in year 10. Some students may be given a reading pen in KS3.

b. Extra time (25%):

This is for students who have **complex needs** which has a **substantial and long-term adverse effect on their speed of working**; e.g. some students with Educational Health Care Plans; ASD / ADHD diagnosis; SLCN; SEMH needs (e.g. seeing CAMHS). It also includes students who have slow processing. This can include some students with moderate learning difficulties; dyslexia; dyslexic traits, dyspraxia, or students who write very slowly.

c. Scribes:

This is for students who struggle to **write** legibly and can not use a laptop. A trained adult writes for the student. The student dictates their answers. The scribe writes exactly as the student dictates. The student forfeits any Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPAG) marks, unless the student dictates the spelling of every word and signals all punctuation. In part of their English assessment SPAG is 25%, so other possibilities are explored, and, if possible, a laptop is recommended, so SPAG marks are not lost.

d. Laptops / Word Processors:

For students who have Special Educational Needs, e.g. a physical need, due to their dyspraxia; or a learning difficulty, e.g. a moderate learning difficulty (MLD); or a specific learning difficulties (SpLD), e.g. dyslexia, or have writing that is difficult to read. Spelling and grammar checks are disabled, to enable Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPAG) marks

e. Supervised Rest breaks:

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For students who have medical conditions e.g. diabetes or IBS, (G.P. letters are accepted), or poor concentration, or because of '**extreme stress**'. JCQ note that this is different to 'exam stress', which JCQ define as normal.

Students are permitted to stop for short break/s during the exam and the time taken is added to the finish time.

f. **Prompters:**

For students who lose concentration easily. A trained adult can prompt the student with a few permitted phrases to help them refocus and indicate how much time is left.

g. **Other AAs include:**

Modified papers, (for students with visual impairment), use of coloured overlays or paper.

- If you recognise any of the attributes/traits listed above, or have a learning difficulty (e.g. Autism, ADHD, Asperger's, Dyslexia), which **impacts your learning**, the student **may be** entitled to one or more of the AAs.
- JCQ start with the '**evidence of need in the classroom**', **not the diagnosis**, hence not all diagnoses require AAs.

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3. How are students identified? What is the process?

In order for each student to reach their potential, Alderbrook strives to ensure that all students who are entitled to AAs are given them. Students are identified based on:

- Recommendations from any Alderbrook teacher based on observations of need in the classroom.
- Needs identified by specialists, e.g. within: EHCPs; ASD / ADHD diagnosis; SLCN; SEMH needs (e.g. seeing CAMHS); Visual Impairment, dyslexic reports. (However, not all diagnoses require AAs).
- Year 7's screening / baseline tests. Attending reading interventions (so a need for a reader).

'Provisional' AA list.

Using all the information above, the SENDCo and Access Arrangement assessor will add the student's name, to the 'provisional', Key stage 3, AA lists. Provisional means that it is conditional on meeting future JCQ requirements. Students are 'formally' assessed for AAs, during the end of Y9 / 10 / 12 and once JCQ approves their AA application, the provisional status is removed. (The process and requirements are explained in the next section).

All teachers use the provisional AA lists. This enables all students who require AAs, to get the support they need, both in classroom assessments, (as much as is possible, within a working classroom environment), and for any hall assessments.

'Evidence of Need' and 'Normal Way of Working'.

JCQ start with the '**evidence of need in the classroom**'. Once a need has been identified by a teacher, which can be met by an AA, then the use of the AA, both in the classroom, and in any assessments, becomes part of the student's '**normal way of working**' (NWOW). NWOW is mentioned 62 times in JCQ's regulations, underlining that NWOW is the starting point, not the diagnosis, or recommendations made in the diagnosis. Teachers evidence NWOW on JCQ forms (teacher questionnaires).



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4. AA Criteria: Do I qualify? What is the process involved?

Process involved (as specified by JCQ current regulations):

Towards the end of year 9, or during year 10 or 12, all students on the 'provisional' AA list meet with a member of the AA team, to ask if they want to the AA process to begin. This also provides the opportunity to explain the AA process and allows any questions to be answered. All students are told then, that as long as they continue to use their AAs in Y10 and Y11 / Y12 and Y13, and teachers can support this, then it is highly likely that they will get their AA provision. Nevertheless, it is only provisional, until the application is made, as JCQ AA procedures, including eligibility, are updated annually, so the criteria can change, annually. However, if this is the case, both the student and parent will be alerted immediately.

Following the students' decision to remain on the AA provisional list, all subject teachers will be asked for student feedback onto JCQ approved paperwork, regarding their perceived needs and normal way of working, within the classroom, fulfilling JCQ's requirement of '**evidence of need.**' For example, evidence from teachers, for a reader may be that the teacher reads the text to the whole class, there is paired reading, or / and a support assistant is in the class and available to read. Evidence for extra time, in classrooms, may include that the students rarely finishes their classwork in the lesson and, as a result, regularly finishes their work at home. Teachers also comment on and evidence students' use of AAs in assessments. This can include exams papers evidencing use of extra time in green pen.

For students that have a **complex need** which has a '**substantial and long-term adverse effect on them**': e.g. students with: an Educational Health Care Plan; ASD / ADHD diagnosis; SLCN; SEMH (e.g. seeing CAMHS); Visual Impairment; or something of equivalent needs, this document / diagnosis needs to be referenced to. Only medical reports from hospital consultants are accepted, not reports from G.P.s.

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Can a candidate have an access arrangement without a diagnosis?

The short answer is yes. A candidate does not necessarily have to have a diagnosed learning difficulty to be allowed an access arrangement. This may include students that **do NOT have complex needs**: e.g. students who have slow processing or moderate learning difficulties.

However, there must be evidence of need and 'normal way of working', in addition to other criteria, such as below average performance (below standard score of 85) in certain skills. Thus, these students need to be tested by a Specialist Access Arrangement Tester. This will happen, internally, by Alderbrook's own Specialist Access Arrangement Tester, either at the end of year 9, throughout year 10, or year 12. (Any dyslexia reports will be used as supporting evidence). Students are told, within 48 hours of been tested, if they meet the 'test' criteria and as long as teachers can support this with evidence, and they continue to use their AAs throughout Y10 and Y11, then they should get their current AAs.

Once all the evidence is compiled, an application will be made to the JCQ. As outlined, above, various pieces of evidence are required, depending on the arrangement required.

JCQ require a signed data protection form in order to process the AA application. Thus, all students sign JCQ's data protection form, giving permission for Alderbrook to share their details and any supporting paperwork. It notes that the AA application and all supporting evidence can only be accessed by JCQ, JCQ Inspectors, or the SEN team. (A copy of the data protection form, is sent to parents in the letter, noted above).

Parents will be informed, by letter, where AAs / additional allowances have been approved by the Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ). This will normally be by letter, in April of Y11, or before by phone if there is an issue.

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Points to note:

- JCQ state that AAs should be part of students' '**normal way of working**' (NWOW). This means, that this '**need**' has been there **from the start of their GCSEs / Cambridge Nationals/ B-Tech / A level course**, and probably also evident in years 7-8, and **the relevant AA used and can be evidenced**. Indeed, NWOW is mentioned 62 times in JCQ's regulations, underlining that NWOW is the starting point, not the diagnosis, or recommendations made in any diagnosis. JCQ stress AAs should not be granted in the last year of their exams, hence Y10 and Y12 mocks are the deadline, for identification.

JCQ guidelines are very precise, and require schools to monitor the use of access arrangements in the run-up to formal examinations, through end of term or year examinations, or mock examinations in Years 10 and 11. **Schools must keep records of the use of access arrangements**. Thus, students are encouraged by all their teachers, to use their AAs, at all times, through the supportive term, 'Use it or lose it!', in order to evidence their 'normal way of working', and have sufficient supporting evidence for JCQ applications and Inspectors.

Alderbrook monitors how students are using their extra allowances (e.g. extra time). For example, in mock examinations, students use a green pen to indicate extra work completed during extra time. Without this evidence of extra time being used in previous examinations, the student could lose such privileges, (in subjects where no evidence has been gained), for the actual GCSE and GCE examinations.

JCQ state that AAs cannot be applied part way through the last year of an exam year. Occasionally, there is an exceptional case, when a need becomes more evident. These students will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

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5. Dyslexia Diagnoses.

A diagnosis of dyslexia is not necessary for AAs. Moreover, a dyslexia diagnoses does not guarantee that a student will get AAs, although in most cases a dyslexic student will meet the criteria for AAs. The decision to apply for AAs will always be made by the centre, guided by the centre's own knowledge of the candidate's needs and 'normal way of working', and the assessment results obtained by a suitably qualified assessor.

- Private diagnosis of dyslexia

If a parent wishes to pursue a diagnosis of dyslexia, then, if there is a joined-up approach, where the external assessor obtains information from the school, regarding the candidate and their normal way of working, then, the scores from a dyslexia test may be used, but the final decision regarding AA is made by the school.

The question is not "Does the candidate have dyslexia? But - "What are the effects of his / her difficulties, with reading the questions and responding in writing? Are there any AA that will minimise these?" Thus, evidence of need and normal way of working (NWOW) is the key issue. NWOW is the starting point, not the diagnosis, or recommendations made in any diagnosis

- Other diagnosis, including EHCPs, ASD, ADHD, etc.

There is no automatic entitlement to access arrangements for a student who is disabled or experiencing special educational needs. Each application has to be made on its own merit. There is still a requirement to provide evidence of need and normal way of working (NWOW). NWOW is the starting point, not the diagnosis, or recommendations made in any diagnosis.

- No diagnoses - It is not necessary to have a specific diagnosis in order to make an application for access arrangements, provided there is a substantial difficulty or disability, which prevents a candidate from demonstrating their true potential. Evidence of need and normal way of working is the starting point.

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6. Temporary Arrangements and Special Consideration

- Temporary Arrangements may be required for a student suffering from an unforeseen injury, e.g. a broken arm. The exams officer will make this arrangement.
- Special consideration is an adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade to reflect temporary illness, injury or other indisposition at the time of the assessment. The exams officer will make this arrangement.

7. Malpractice

Alderbrook is committed to providing equal opportunities for all students. This means ensuring that students are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged in examinations. Alderbrook strives to ensure that all students that are entitled to AAs are given them, in order that each student reaches their potential. However, Alderbrook must abide by the strict regulations set out by the JCQ. JCQ make annual inspections. The consequences of malpractice can be severe. These may include disqualification of the student from one or more examination.

Examples of malpractice include:

- Student being granted AA which are not their 'normal way of working'.
- AAs being granted without sufficient supporting teacher evidence.
- If Alderbrook fails to provide sufficient evidence, in line with JCQ regulations, then the student in question could have marks deducted due to their unfair advantage and Alderbrook's status as an approved examination centre could be jeopardised.

8. Who can I contact for the further information?

For further details, contact the Access Arrangements Co-ordinator, (Mrs. Brown), through the Alderbrook website, or phone: 0121 704 2146 ext. 7389. (Please be aware that the Access Arrangement role is part-time).

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