



Access Arrangements Policy

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Rationale and Foundation

- 1 Alderbrook's Policy for Access Arrangements supports and facilitates the school's aim to create a learning environment in which every student can fulfil his or her full potential and demonstrate this in examinations. It also confirms that Alderbrook School follows all exam regulations, and guidance, as set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). This is the body in charge of GCSEs and other formal qualifications. The regulations are updated each year.

A copy of [the 2024-25 regulations](#) can be found at:

https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/JCQ-AARA-24-25_FINAL_accessible.pdf

Thus, this policy is based on the aforementioned document, as these are the principles which Alderbrook must comply with. It is reviewed annually to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with current edition of the JCQ publication.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Alderbrook's Exam Specific Supplement to Alderbrook Accessibility Plan, which outlines the implementation of Access Arrangements at Alderbrook, and focuses on roles and responsibilities of all those involved with Access Arrangements.

What are Exam Access Arrangements?

- 2 Access Arrangements are agreed before an assessment and must reflect a student's 'normal way of working' within the school. 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 p13). Access Arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies 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 p13, p17)
- 3 The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability means '**limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people**'. Therefore, a candidate with a disability or difficulty, which has a substantial and long-term effect on performance in examinations, may qualify for access arrangements. (JCQ 2024-25 p15)
- 4 Thus, Access Arrangements are reasonable adjustments that are put in place to 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 they may experience, without creating any unfair advantage, or compromising the integrity of an assessment.
- 5 Access Arrangements may vary between subjects because different subjects and methods of assessments may have different demands. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it affects the integrity of the assessment, or involves unreasonable costs or timeframes.

Examples of Access Arrangements

(which MUST be students' 'Normal Way of Working'):

Access Arrangement	Description
Reader / Computer Reader /Reading Pen for candidates with poor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading accuracy, • comprehension, • fluency • reading comprehension speed. 	<p>A trained adult reads the question and any relevant text for the student (but not where the skill of reading is being assessed e.g. the reading section of the English papers) and their work, if asked.</p> <p>Computer Reader or Exam Reading Pen may also be allowed.</p>
Supervised Rest Breaks	<p>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' and that exam stress is to be expected.</p> <p>Students are permitted to stop for short break/s of 5 minutes, (unless pre-arranged by the school SENCO), during the exam and the time taken is added to the finish time.</p> <p>Students are not permitted to have exam materials with them during rest breaks.</p>
Modified papers	Specially prepared papers, e.g. enlarged to a specific font size.
Word processor /Laptop	<p>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. Spelling and grammar checks are disabled, so that Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPAG) marks are not lost.</p>
Prompter	<p>A trained adult can prompt the student with a few permitted phrases to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refocus • Indicate how much time is left
Extra time	<p>Students may be entitled to an allowance of 25% extra time, depending upon area of need. This can include some students with Educational Health Care Plans; ASD / ADHD diagnosis; SLCN; SEMH needs (e.g. seeing CAMHS). However, not all of the aforementioned diagnoses require extra time.</p> <p>It also includes students who have slow processing. This can include students with moderate learning difficulties; dyslexia; dyslexic traits, dyspraxia. However, a diagnosis of dyslexia does not guarantee extra time.</p> <p>Between 26 and 50% may be granted in extraordinary circumstances. This is for students who have complex needs which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their speed of working</p>

Scribe	<p>This is for students who struggle to write legibly and cannot use a laptop. A trained adult writes for the student. The student dictates their answers. The scribe writes exactly as the student dictates.</p> <p>The student forfeits any SPAG marks, unless the student dictates the spelling of every word and signals all punctuation. In part of their English assessment, SPAG marks are 25%, so other possibilities are explored, and, if possible, a laptop is recommended, so SPAG marks are not lost.</p>
Bilingual translation dictionaries	<p>For students who have English, Irish or Welsh as an additional language. The bilingual dictionary must be held in the centre to ensure no unauthorised information e.g. notes/revision is enclosed or written inside.</p> <p>In some cases, 25% extra time, (ET) will also be allowed, where extensive use of the dictionary occurs. However, JCQ have very strict criteria to warrant 25% ET.</p>
Use of colour overlays / paper	Easier for some students to track what they are reading.
Practical Assistant	Help with practical tasks, for a student with a physical difficulty, such as turning the pages in music or holding a ruler in maths.
Language modifier	An adult who has successfully completed accredited training may clarify the carrier language used in the examination paper when requested to do so by a student. The Language Modifier must not explain technical or subject specific terms.
Alternative site for exams Or very rare occasions	<p>The student will be sitting his/her examination(s) at a residential address or at a hospital which is a non-registered centre due to, a severe medical condition or profound psychological condition which prevents them from taking examinations within the centre.</p> <p>In this situation, Alderbrook will ensure that JCQ guidelines are followed with regard to conduct, procedures and staffing. JCQ must be satisfied that the candidate is well enough to take the examination and there must be appropriate evidence of need held on file.</p>

- 6 A reasonable adjustment may not be included in the list of available access arrangements because it may be unique to an individual.

Temporary Arrangements

- 7 Temporary Access Arrangements may be required for a student suffering from unforeseen injury, e.g. a broken arm. In these cases, Alderbrook must be informed at the earliest possible opportunity, and a letter from a GP, consultant, or other professional detailing the problem and any arrangement deemed necessary will be arranged. For example, a right-handed student whose right arm is broken may need a scribe and some extra time, as it is not their normal way of working and dictating to a scribe may be difficult for them. A student with acute back pain may require supervised rest breaks in order to stand and move around.

Evidence needed for Access Arrangements and Data Protection

- 8 Various pieces of evidence are required to apply for an Exam Access Arrangement, depending on the arrangement required, as determined by Joint Council for Qualifications.
- 9 Once the Access Arrangement is granted, all supporting evidence will be held on file and available for inspection, by Joint Council for Qualifications Access Arrangement Inspectors.
- 10 A data protection notice is signed by the student, as required by JCQ. It notes that all supporting evidence is held securely and can only be accessed by JCQ Inspectors or the SEN team.

Identifying the need for Access Arrangements

Stage 1: Early Screening –Y7-Y9

- 11 Students who may qualify for formal Access Arrangements during KS4 are preferably identified early in KS3 (Y7) and added to a 'provisional' list. This is predominantly by referral from the Special Educational Needs department through needs identified by specialists, e.g. within: Educational Health Care Plans; ASD / ADHD diagnosis; SLCN; SEMH needs (e.g. CAMHS); Visual Impairment and dyslexic reports. (However, not all of the aforementioned diagnoses require AAs).
- 12 The other main method of identification is from any Alderbrook teacher, based on observations of need in the classroom.
- 13 Information from baseline testing in Year 7, parents and information from primary schools about Access Arrangements implemented in KS2 examinations, is also used. AAs had at KS2 may be included on students' class charts, to alert teachers to previous history of need; however, what a student needed in KS2, can change in KS3 and KS4. At this stage needs are identified, rather than formally assessed.
- 14 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.

Stage 2: Formal Testing and application – Y9-Y12

- 15 Throughout year 9 / 12, or during year 10, all students on the 'provisional' AA list meet with the AA assessor, during registration, to ask if they want to the AA process to begin. This also provides the opportunity to explain the AA process and for students to ask any questions, e.g. about the process, timeframe, data, diagnosis, etc.
- 16 Following the student's decision to remain on the AA provisional list, all subject teachers will be asked to complete the necessary JCQ forms, to be used as supporting teacher evidence, fulfilling JCQ's requirement of 'evidence of need.'
- 17 From 2024 onwards, completion of the JCQ teacher evidence forms, for pupils on the provisional Y9 AA list, will be the same deadline as the Y9 report data. Teachers will be made aware of this in the staff briefing, in October 2024, and reminded in the staff bulletin, two weeks before the deadline. The link to JCQ forms will be sent by the AA team through emails, or the staff bulletin.

- 18 Similarly, completion of the JCQ teacher evidence forms, for pupils on the provisional Y12 AA list, will be the same deadline as the Y12 report data. However, for Y12 students sitting AS levels, or exams at the end of Y12, teachers will be contacted in November, with a deadline of December.
- 19 Collection of Teacher Evidence - Teachers will be asked to complete JCQ forms, by the aforementioned dates. Subsequent reminders will be sent by members of the SEN / SLT team.
- 20 Students with: an Educational Health Care Plan; ASD / ADHD diagnosis; SLCN; SEMH (e.g. seeing CAMHS); Visual Impairment; or medical reports from hospital consultants, (not reports from G.P.s), do not need testing. However, teacher evidence / normal way of working remains key, not the diagnosis.
- 21 Other students, e.g. students who have slow processing /moderate learning difficulties /are dyslexic / have dyslexic traits, need to be tested by a Specialist Access Arrangement Tester. Any dyslexia reports will be used as supporting evidence, as a diagnosis of dyslexia by itself, does not mean that the student will automatically get AAs.
- 22 Testing happens internally by Alderbrook's own Specialist Access Arrangement Tester, either at the end of year 9 / throughout year 10, or year 12. The assessor's certificates are stored for reference and inspection. These can be found in the AA file, entitled 'Inspection' and is stored in the SEN office.
- 23 Applications are made and parents notified by letter, where AAs have been approved by the Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ). This will normally be towards the end of April of Y11, Y13, or Y12 if sitting exams in Y12.
- 24 The exception to this, regarding deadlines, is if students are entered for early examinations, as noted in the next section - Deadlines for Access Arrangement Applications.

Private Educational Psychologists Reports

- 25 In line with JCQ guidelines, Access Arrangements cannot be applied for on the basis of a privately commissioned assessment.
- 26 External Assessors are required to contact the SENCo before carrying out the assessment. The SENCo will then provide the Assessor with any existing information about previous support and current difficulties. The assessment can only be used as evidence for access arrangements if the assessor has liaised with Alderbrook in advance and received the necessary access arrangements paperwork.
- 27 A student's 'normal way of working', in school, is key, and Access Arrangements will not be awarded purely on the basis of a private report.
- 28 Medical letters will prompt an investigation, but not override the evidence seen at Alderbrook. Specialists (for example, a medical consultant, a psychiatrist) are responsible for providing a formal diagnosis. They are not responsible for decisions about access arrangements.

Stage 3: Ensuring Access Arrangements are the student's 'normal way of working'

- 29 JCQ state that AAs should be part of students 'normal way of working'. This means, that this 'need' has been there throughout the duration 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.

- 30 JCQ guidelines 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 and that schools must keep records of the use of access arrangements.
- 31 The SENCO, Exams Officer & AA coordinator, will meet after the Y10 exams and discuss any student who is not using their AAs and what, if any, action should be taken, in order to comply with JCQ's guidelines.

Internal Deadlines for Access Arrangement Applications

- 32 Joint Council for Qualification note that:
- Access Arrangements should be processed at the start of the course. Schools, for example, should be able to process applications at the start of or during the first year of a two-year GCSE course having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working during years 7 to 9. (JCQ 2024-25 4.2.5 p35)
 - The arrangement **is not** suddenly been granted to the candidate at the time of his / her examinations.
- 33 Thus, in order to comply with JCQ timelines, and secondly, to allow the AA team sufficient time to process approximately 70 AA applications each year, internal deadlines are in place to ensure that the AA team can plan accordingly, so that there is sufficient time to test candidates, ask teachers for supporting evidence, complete JCQ forms, and make online applications, to the relevant boards, by their deadlines.
- 34 AAs cannot be applied part way through the last year of an exam year, although, occasionally students can slip through the net and require AAs after the deadlines. These are very much the exception, and each student will be considered on a case by case basis, by the SENCO.

Year 11

- 35 The Year 10 examinations should provide a final opportunity to identify any difficulties a student may have. Thus, the final deadline to request Access Arrangements for a student in Year 11 is two weeks before the first set of Y11 mocks, (so approximately early October), as this allows the SENCO/Access Arrangements Coordinator and the Examinations Officer time to plan the Year 11 mock examinations which are the last opportunity to trial any Access Arrangements, so is the candidate's normal way of working (JCQ 2024-25 4.2.5 p26). This ensures that the candidate has had appropriate opportunities to practise using the AA before their first exam. (JCQ 2024-25 4.2.7 p26)
- 36 If Year 10s are sitting early exams, so in November or January, (e.g. GCSE/vocational qualifications e.g. Btec PE, Btec Music, OCR Nationals, Health and Social, Design and Technology), then the deadline to submit evidence and request Access Arrangements is the end of June, whilst they are in year 9 (as JCQ's deadline is the first week in October).
- 37 If year 10 are sitting exams in June of Y10, then the deadline is the end of November, whilst in Y10. This is to ensure that there is sufficient time to make all the AA arrangements for all years, including the additional Y10s. This also ensures that the arrangement put in place is the candidate's normal way of working (JCQ 2024-25 4.2.5 p26) and that the candidate has had appropriate opportunities to practise using the AA before their first exam. (JCQ 2024-25 4.2.7 p26)

Sixth Form

- 38 Teachers monitor students closely in the autumn term of Year 12, gather evidence from initial assessments and then feedback concerns to the SENCo/Access Arrangements Coordinator during the autumn and spring terms. Trial Access Arrangements are put in place for the mock examinations in January of Year 12. Teachers give feedback from the mocks to the SENCo/Access Arrangements Coordinator. (Did students use them? Were they effective?) The mock examinations also provide a final chance to recognise any other students who have not been identified or who haven't declared a difficulty with examinations.
- 39 Occasionally students can slip through the net, be undiagnosed or struggle with the transition to A level. However, Year 12 exams provide an excellent opportunity to identify any difficulties a student may have.
- 40 The deadline for sixth form Access Arrangements requests is October of Year 13, in order to ensure that there is sufficient time to make all the AA arrangements for all years, including the additional Y13s. This is also to ensure that the arrangement put in place is the candidate's normal way of working (JCQ 2024-25 4.2.5 p26) and that the candidate has had appropriate opportunities to practise using the AA before their first exam. (JCQ 2024-25 4.2.7 p26)

AS Levels.

- 41 If students are sitting AS levels, then the deadline to request Access Arrangements is November of Y12. The deadline to submit supporting teacher evidence is the December of Y12.

Evidence Held and Malpractice

- 42 Schools are regularly inspected to ensure they have followed JCQ regulations – usually during the summer examination season. The consequences of malpractice can be severe. These may include disqualification of the student from one or more examinations. (JCQ 2024-25 4.2.11 p36). There would also be consequences for Alderbrook.
- 43 Examples of malpractice include:
- Students being granted Access Arrangements which are not their 'normal way of working'
 - Access Arrangements being granted without sufficient supporting teacher evidence.

Further Information

- 44 Further information can be found on the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) website: www.jcq.org.uk
- 45 If you have questions about Access Arrangements, please contact the SENCo/Access Arrangements Coordinator, using office@alderbrook.solihull.sch.uk