

Testwood School

Access Arrangements Policy

Key Responsibility area:	RM
Last Review:	May 2025
Next Review:	May 2026

Revision History

Version	Date	Amendments	Initials
V1.0	05.01.22		JB
V1.1	11.01.23	Revised Dates and AW replaces CSi (responsibility of policy)	JB
V1.2	07.02.24	Updated in line with JCQ requirements	RM
V1.3	12.02.24	Updated in line with JCQ requirements	RM
V1.4	13.02.25	Exam dates and deadlines updated	RM
V1.5	23.04.25	Exam dates and deadlines updated	RM

The policy is divided into sections:

1. What are access arrangements and reasonable adjustments?
2. Purpose of the policy
3. General principles
4. Equalities policy (exams)
5. The assessment process

The qualifications of the current assessor

Appointment of assessors of candidates with learning difficulties

Process for the assessment of a candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor painting a 'holistic picture of need', confirming normal way of working

6. Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements and adjustments requiring awarding body approval
Centre-delegated access arrangements/adjustments

7. Centre-specific criteria for particular arrangements/adjustments

Word Processor Policy (exams) **see separate policy**
Separate invigilation policy

8. Appendices

What are access arrangements and reasonable adjustments?

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow students 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'.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010* requires schools 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. Testwood will take reasonable steps to overcome any disadvantage.

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 school;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; or
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'. The centre must ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates. In most cases it will not be reasonable for adjustments to be made to assessment objectives within a qualification. There is no duty to make adjustments which the qualifications regulators have specified should not be made.

Purpose of the Policy

This policy provides guidance regarding the actions taken to ensure inclusion throughout Testwood School to allow candidates with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access assessment without any disadvantage and without affecting the integrity of the assessment.

The policy forms an integral part of our teaching which seeks to create a learning environment where every individual student may fulfil his or her full potential.

This policy is written in line with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Regulations document: "Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties – Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025".

General Principles

The principles for Testwood School to consider are detailed in the JCQ Guidance.

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 a disabled candidate.

The use of access arrangements/ reasonable adjustment is not granted where it will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question.

Candidates may not require the use of access arrangements/ reasonable adjustment in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. SENCos must consider the need for access arrangements/ reasonable adjustment on a subject-by-subject basis.

Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the start of the course, having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working during Years 7 to 9. However, in the event of a temporary injury or impairment, or a diagnosis of a disability or manifestation of an impairment relating to an existing disability arising after the start of the course.

Equalities (exams)

A large part of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process is covered in the Equalities policy (Exams) which covers staff roles and responsibilities for identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements and the conduct of exams.

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability is usually considered cumulatively in terms of:

- identifying a physical or mental impairment;
- looking into adverse effects and assessing which are **substantial**;
- considering if substantial adverse effects are **long term**;
- judging the impact of long-term adverse effects on normal day-to-day activities.

The statutory guidance outlines that disability means:

- 'limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'.
- 'Substantial' means 'more than minor or trivial'. Substantial adverse effects can be determined by looking at the effects on a person with the impairment, comparing those to a person without the impairment, to judge if the difference between the two is more than minor or trivial.
- 'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months or is likely to do so.
- 'Normal day-to-day activities' could be determined by reference to the illustrative, non-exhaustive list of factors on pages 47 to 51 of the statutory guidance relating to the Equality Act 2010. (Study and education related activities are included in the meaning of 'day-to-day' activities.)

Factors that might reasonably be expected to have a substantial adverse effect include:

- persistent and significant difficulty in reading and understanding written material where this is in the person's native language, for example because of a mental impairment, a learning difficulty or a sensory or multi-sensory impairment;
- persistent distractibility or difficulty concentrating;
- difficulty understanding or following simple verbal instructions;
- physical impairment – for example, difficulty operating a computer because of physical restrictions in using a keyboard.

Factors that might reasonably be expected not to have a substantial adverse effect include:

- minor problems with writing or spelling;
- inability to read very small or indistinct print without the aid of a magnifying glass;
- inability to converse orally in a language which is not the speaker's native spoken language;
- nervousness or low level anxiety about examinations.

Identification:

In line with JCQ regulations, Testwood School will make all decisions with regard to access arrangements based upon whether the candidate has a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on someone's ability to carry out normal day to day activities'. Appropriate evidence of need will be available for inspection.

Identifying the need for access arrangements within Testwood School, students who may qualify for formal access arrangements during KS4 are identified as early as possible in KS3. At this stage needs are identified, rather than formally assessed. Adjustments to Quality First Teaching within lessons are then made according to need to enable a student to access their learning and make progress. All staff are involved in monitoring the adjustments. Formal assessments for Access Arrangements take place in Year 9 during the second half of the summer term.

Students who have had access arrangements at KS2 are screened for exam access arrangements on entry to Testwood and again in Year 9. Although they may have received access arrangements at KS2, it does not necessarily mean that they automatically receive it at KS4 exams because their needs may have changed. For example, a student who had a reader at KS2 may not qualify for a reader at KS4 because their reading has improved to the extent it does not meet the exam board criteria.

The assessment process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor appointed by the head of centre. The assessor is appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations.

The qualifications of the current assessor

Mrs Beverly Watts, Certificate of Psychometric Testing Assessment & Access Arrangements – Level 7 (29/3/2016)

The SENCo and the exams officer hold the file for inspection purposes to demonstrate the evidence that the assessor is suitable qualified.

Appointment of assessors

The Headteacher, Mr Webber, is responsible for the quality of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process within his centre; and the appointment of assessors, checking the qualifications of those assessing candidates.

The Headteacher must be satisfied that a professional does have the required level of competence and training. The assessor must present evidence of successful completion of a postgraduate course in individual specialist assessment at or equivalent to Level 7 and hold a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, as awarded by Patoss.

All assessors must have a thorough understanding of the **current** edition of the JCQ document Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments and the principles, procedures and accountabilities involved; be familiar with the Equality Act 2010 (although it is not their role to determine what is a 'reasonable adjustment', but rather to help identify access arrangements that might assist the candidate in examinations and assessments and are thus potentially reasonable adjustments); either hold an appropriate qualification to teach and make recommendations for secondary aged or adult learners who have learning difficulties.

The assessor should be employed or contracted by the centre. Alternatively, the assessor is: employed at another centre, e.g. within an Academy chain; or employed by the Local Authority; or an external assessor who has contacted the centre, establishes a working relationship with the centre and is approved by the head of centre. Before assessing the candidate the assessor will receive as a minimum a 'skeleton' Part 1 of Form 8, working with the SENCo.

A privately commissioned assessment cannot be used to award access arrangements and cannot be used to process an application using Access arrangements online. This would be where the assessor has not contacted the centre, has not established a working relationship with the centre, has not been approved by the head of centre and has not received as a minimum a 'skeleton' Part 1 of Form 8 from the SENCo.

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.

Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor

The SENCo must arrange for the candidate to be assessed by the centre's appointed assessor. 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. The assessor is required to establish if the results of tests in literacy and/or cognitive abilities present evidence that the candidate has an impairment which substantially affects their performance.

Assessors must personally conduct the assessments. They must not sign off assessments carried out by another professional. The assessor must carry out tests which are relevant to support the application. Current editions of nationally standardised tests which produce

standardised scores must be used, where published. The candidate's chronological age must be less than the 'ceiling' of the test, unless there is no published test for the candidate's age.

Results must be given as standardised scores which use a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. (These are standard scores.) Standardised scores of 84 or less are described as 'below average'. Standardised scores of 85-89 are described as 'low average'. Test results for Part 2 of Form 8 must not be reported as percentiles, scaled scores, T-scores or age-equivalent scores. Such scores must be converted into standard scores.

The assessor will conduct assessments for arrangements in the following areas:

An overview can be seen in Appendix 1

Reading skills:

Reading comprehension: for candidates potentially requiring a Language Modifier reading comprehension must be assessed using a recognised test of text or sentence comprehension.

Reading speed: a candidate with a history of reading difficulties, whose reading accuracy (at single word level), or reading comprehension, is within normal limits for his/her age, may read slowly because he/she:

- takes longer than expected to decode the words, leading to slow reading (slow reading speed);
- needs to re-read text many times to absorb its meaning (slow reading comprehension speed).

Where a candidate reads for him/herself, a measure of text reading speed may be used as one of the two required scores for 25% extra time. The results will be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 under 'Reading Speed'. Where the candidate uses a computer reader/reader or an examination reading pen, a measure of reading speed cannot be used as evidence for 25% extra time.

Writing skills:

A scribe, a word processor with the spell check enabled, or speech recognition technology will be allowed in certain subjects when a candidate's impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect. Usually, for examination purposes, a substantial impairment will be shown by the candidate having:

- a below average standardised spelling accuracy score (a standardised score of 84 or less) with unrecognisable spelling attempts; or
- a below average standardised score for writing speed (a standardised score of 84 or less).

In some cases, the candidate's writing is illegible or grammatically incomprehensible but improves significantly when a scribe is used. If these difficulties are not evidenced by a below average standardised spelling accuracy score, or a below average standardised score for writing speed, Access arrangements online will not approve the application.

Where the candidate writes by hand, an assessment of writing speed may be used as one of the two required measures for 25% extra time.

The result will be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 under 'Writing Speed'. Where the candidate uses a scribe, speech recognition technology or a word processor, a measure of writing speed cannot be used as evidence for 25% extra time.

Where a candidate uses a word processor with the spell check enabled or predictive text, a subject-specific bank of words is not permitted.

Cognitive processing/fluency:

Where a candidate has cognitive processing difficulties which have a substantial and long term adverse impact on their speed of working 25% extra time may be awarded. These difficulties will be demonstrated by tests which result in at least:

- two below average standardised scores of 84 or less; or
- one below average standardised score of 84 or less and one low average standardised score (85-89); which relate to two different areas of speed of working.

This may include two different areas of cognitive processing. In rare and exceptional circumstances an awarding body may grant 25% extra time where a candidate has at least two low average standardised scores (85 - 89) relating to two different areas of speed of working. This may include two different areas of cognitive processing. An awarding body may grant extra time of up to 50% in very exceptional circumstances.

The following arrangements must be applied for online:

- Access to a mobile phone for medical purposes
- Bilingual dictionary with 25% extra time (for some identified qualifications)
- Computer reader/reader
- 25% extra time
- Extra time over 25%
- Practical Assistant
- Remote invigilation
- Scribe/speech recognition technology
- Timetable variation for a candidate with a disability

The following arrangements do not need to be processed online:

- Alternative rooming arrangements – sitting the examination outside of the main examination hall/room, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates (formerly known as separate invigilation)
- Amplification equipment
- Bilingual dictionary
- Braille transcript
- Braille transcribers
- 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)
- Squared paper for visual spatial difficulties
- Supervised rest breaks
- Word processor

Evidence of requirements:

Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow students 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 evidence required by the centre to award any access arrangements must meet the JCQ requirements and in all cases be the normal way of working for the candidate unless they have a temporary illness or injury.

An overview of evidence requirements can be found at:

https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/JCQ-Overview-of-evidence-requirements-24-25_FINAL.pdf

Before an assessment, at Testwood either the SENCo will identify an area of weakness at point of screening or teachers or support staff will alert the SENCo using the 'Area of Concern' form or from termly analysis of progress data the SENCo will contact both teachers and learning support assistants to gather a 'holistic picture of need'. All candidates will then be assessed using the process above in the light of this picture of need.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements and 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 arrangements approval for the qualifications covered by the tool. **This will only allow a maximum of 26 months.** This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications included.

Applications must be processed and approved before an examination or assessment, no later than the published deadline as above. Late applications on account of a temporary injury or impairment, or a diagnosis of a disability or manifestation of an impairment relating to an existing disability arising after the published deadline are permissible. Centres must process applications using Access arrangements online where required.

Exam series	Access arrangement	Final deadline
November 2024	Modified papers	20 September 2024
November 2024	All other access arrangements	1 November 2024
January 2025	Modified papers	4 October 2024
January 2025	All other access arrangements	21 October 2024
June 2025	Modified papers	31 January 2025
June 2025	All other access arrangements	21 March 2025

Modified/ Enlarged/ Coloured Papers

Where a disabled candidate requires question papers in an alternative format, the centre must discuss his/her requirements at the earliest opportunity with the relevant awarding body's Modified Papers Unit, ideally at the start of the course. The SENCo must demonstrate to the awarding body that all appropriate adjustments such as a computer reader, an examination reading pen, a magnifier and a reader, alongside the standard modified enlarged paper formats, have been considered and totally exhausted.

The application of the reasonable adjustment, i.e. question papers in an alternative format, will depend on several factors including:

- the needs of the disabled candidate; and
- the effectiveness of the adjustment and its cost.

An adjustment will not be approved if it involves unreasonable costs, time frames or affects the security or integrity of the assessment. This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'.

Coloured/enlarged paper (e.g. A3 unmodified enlarged papers)

AQA and Pearson centres

Where a candidate requires a question paper on coloured paper and/or enlarged from A4 to A3, Testwood will download a PDF copy of the standard question paper from AQA Centre Services or Pearson Edexcel Online (SDS) within 90 minutes of the awarding body's published starting time for the examination.

CCEA, OCR and WJEC centres

Where a candidate requires a question paper on coloured paper and/or enlarged from A4 to A3, Testwood will download a non-interactive electronic (PDF) The question paper is ordered via Access arrangements online. The use of a PDF copy of the question paper will ensure better print quality and reduce the possibility of human error when collating and stapling.

Alternatively, the centre may open the question paper packet in the secure room within 90 minutes of the awarding body's published starting time for the examination. Prior permission is not required.

Only the following actions are permissible:

- copying and enlarging the standard question paper from A4 to A3; and/or
- copying a question paper onto coloured paper; and/or
- producing a question paper with single sided print.

No further modification is permissible such as re-typing the question paper. Such actions may constitute malpractice.

Non-Interactive electronic (PDF) question papers

Non-interactive electronic question papers are in PDF format. They can be read on-screen but cannot be typed into. A candidate may require a non-interactive electronic question paper where he/she:

- requires a computer reader (an approved application for a computer reader being in place); or
- has a substantial and long-term vision impairment and prefers to read on- screen, rather than on paper, as part of their normal way of working.

This may additionally be in conjunction with an on-screen/virtual coloured overlay. By ordering a non-interactive electronic (PDF) question paper there is no need for the centre to scan in a question paper for computer reading purposes.

Testwood School will:

- maintain the integrity and security of non-interactive electronic (PDF) question papers;
- ensure only authorised members of centre staff have access to non-interactive electronic (PDF) question papers.

Testwood School will not:

- undertake further modification to a non-interactive (PDF) electronic question paper, for example, converting the paper from PDF to Word;
- use software to completely re-format the text and remove diagrams

Centre-specific criteria for particular arrangements/adjustments

See separate Word Processor Policy

Alternative site for the conduct of examinations

If a candidate will be sitting their examination(s) at a residential address or at a hospital which is a non-registered centre due to, for example:

- a medical condition which prevents the candidate from taking examinations in the centre; or
- social, emotional and mental health needs.

The candidate has:

- an impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties; or
- a temporary illness or injury at the time of the examination(s).

The SENCo, or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities, must:

- be satisfied that the candidate is able to take examinations;
- produce written evidence confirming the need for an alternative site arrangement to a JCQ Centre Inspector upon request.

Access to a mobile phone for medical purposes:

Formal evidence must be available to confirm the candidate's medical condition before an application can be processed.

Other arrangements for candidates with disabilities:

- Alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs (formerly known as separate invigilation)
- Amplification equipment
- Braille
- Closed circuit television (CCTV)
- Colour naming by the invigilator for candidates who are colour blind
- Coloured overlays (this would also include reading rulers, virtual overlays and virtual reading rulers)
- Examination on coloured/enlarged paper
- Fidget toys and stress balls
- Low vision aid/magnifier
- Non-electronic ear defenders/ear plugs
- Optical Character Reader (OCR) scanners
- Squared paper for visual spatial difficulties

The SENCo must make their decision 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.

Nervousness, low-level anxiety or being worried about examinations is NOT sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre'.

Appendix 1

https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/JCQ-Overview-of-evidence-requirements-24-25_FINAL.pdf