

Gartree High School
Exam Access Arrangements Policy
February 2020

EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

This document outlines the school's policy on access arrangements. These arrangements are put in place to ensure **all** pupils have equal access to examinations. Pupils should not be disadvantaged by any learning, medical, physical, sensory or psychological difficulty they may experience.

The school must comply with the rules for Access Arrangements as set out in the most recent Joint Council for Qualifications publication.

Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make '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 disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. According to statutory guidance, disability means 'limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'.

A candidate with a disability or difficulty which has a **substantial and long term effect** on performance in examinations may qualify for access arrangements.

Access arrangements should allow pupils with substantial long term special educational needs or short term illnesses or injuries to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding without affecting the integrity of an assessment or examination. Access arrangements are not intended to help certain candidates, or give them an advantage, but to give them a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

The intention is to remove barriers that may prevent them from demonstrating their knowledge and to allow them on to a 'level playing field' with other candidates.

However, the school must assess each potential learner and make justifiable and professional judgements about the learner's potential to successfully complete and achieve the qualifications. Some types of disability may affect the candidate's ability to demonstrate one or more of the assessment objectives. **An alternative route may be available in the specification and advice must be sought from the awarding body.** In some cases, a disabled candidate may have to be exempted from a component if that is the only reasonable adjustment available to enable him/her to overcome a substantial disadvantage in accessing the specification.

Access Arrangements encompass a wide range of provisions which may include: Being allowed to sit examinations in a smaller room, supervised rest breaks, use of colour overlays, prompter, extra time, reader, scribe, use of a word processor, practical assistant etc.

The identification of candidates who might need access arrangements.

There are several ways in which this might occur:

1. Gartree High School acts on the information provided by pupils' previous schools to identify those who may need access arrangements. These pupils normally have a history of Special Educational Needs (SEN).
2. A teacher may voice a concern about a pupil with difficulties that prevent them from completing tests or practice papers.
3. A parent/carer may raise concerns about their child who is attempting but unable to complete work set in class and as homework.

In all cases, there must be a genuine need for the arrangement. The school must be satisfied that the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties. 'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months, or is likely to do so.

Pupils with special educational needs are not automatically eligible for access arrangements. For example, a student with a slight hearing impairment, a previous diagnosis of 'mild dyslexia' or a physical disability that does not affect performance in an examination may not meet the criteria for access arrangements.

However, when concerns are raised about a particular pupil, the SENCo will gather information from all the pupil's teachers to see whether they have similar concerns. If the initial concerns are echoed by others, the pupil will be assessed for access arrangements.

Candidates with a history or SEN

Candidates with a medical, physical, sensory, behavioural or complex needs

Where access arrangements are requested due to medical or physical difficulties, a letter from a consultant is required. The SENCo will ask parents/carers to obtain a letter with a brief outline of the pupil's condition or disability and the access arrangements that are deemed to be necessary.

Parents/carers may be required to obtain letters from other professionals when a student requires arrangements due to their psychological, behavioural, sensory or communication difficulties.

Pupils who have complex anxiety disorders must have a letter from CAMHS specifying their difficulty. Letters from GPs do not qualify pupils for access arrangements.

Candidates with learning difficulties

There would normally be a long history of learning difficulties. Late identification of leaning difficulties can occur, but concerns should be raised during the early months of a course leading towards an examination. JCQ publish deadlines by which arrangements must be processed in advance of an examination series. Arrangements should not be requested just before or at the time of a candidate's examinations, unless they are temporary and due to illness or injury.

A pupil with learning difficulties must be assessed by a specialist teacher or an Educational Psychologist. The assessment must have taken place no earlier than the start of Year 9. An approved range of standardised tests are used and Form 8 is completed.

Privately commissioned assessments or reports cannot be used to award access arrangements and cannot be used to process an application using Access arrangements online.

A Data Protection Notice must be signed by the pupil, which enables the SENCo and Examinations Officer to make the online application using their information and results.

An application is made online, and the awarding bodies approve access arrangements only if the pupil's scores meet the criteria issued by JCQ. Supporting evidence must be filed and available for inspection.

In all cases, access arrangements should reflect the support that is usually given to the pupil in the classroom, internal tests and mock examinations. This is commonly referred to as the 'normal way of working'.

The decision to apply for access arrangements is based on evidence of a history of need, history of provision and reports from teachers and other professionals. Pupils with no previous history of SEN will require significantly more evidence of need. For instance, the evidence required for extra time must include comments and observations from teaching staff as to why the pupil needs extra time and how she/he uses the time awarded. Therefore, it **may be necessary for the pupil to sit tests or practice papers with extra time for a trial period**. It can then be gauged whether the quality and quantity of written answers improves significantly with the allowance of extra time, and will establish having extra time as a 'normal way of working'.

A candidate may require access arrangements in all his/her written examinations, or they may only need arrangements in those requiring extended answers. The school must complete evidence that supports each candidate's particular need for arrangements.

Notification about access arrangements.

Parents/carers are informed by letter when formal applications for access arrangements are approved.

Conduct and procedures Staffing and accommodation

The SENCo liaises with the Examinations Officer, departmental and associate staff to ensure sufficient rooms and staffing are organised for candidates with access arrangements when examinations or controlled assessments are taking place.

Candidates sitting their exams in smaller rooms are expected to comply with the general regulations issued by JCQ. For example, mobile phones and data recording devices are not permitted in examination rooms for candidates with access arrangements under any circumstances.

However, some procedures may vary slightly from those followed in the main rooms. For instance, in a room for candidates with extra time or rest breaks there may be more than one exam taking place and so the seating is arranged to accommodate their needs and to take into account the duration of each exam: wherever possible, those with the shortest exam and/or those with rest breaks are seated nearest to the door.

It must be noted that staffing and room constraints mean that candidates **cannot normally be seated alone** in a separate room.

In the event of there being a core subject examination with a large number of candidates having access arrangements, it may be necessary for some of them to sit the examination at a later time so that sufficient staffing is available for all the arrangements to be maintained. Those candidates must arrive at the scheduled time but will have to be kept in isolation until their examination can take place.

Candidates' evidence files are kept in a secure area, but must be available for Inspection. The Exams Inspector visits during each examination session and may check several Access Arrangement files at random.

The Examinations Officer monitors the need for renewal of access arrangements when necessary and liaises with the SENCo to ensure that reassessment is carried out for students with additional arrangements (reader/scribe etc.) that expire after their GCSEs. This is to ensure that candidates still meet the criteria for those additional arrangements.

Notes regarding the use of word processors

Certain candidates may be allowed the use of **word processors** in written examinations. This should be appropriate to the candidate's needs and may only be allowed when a **substantial and long term adverse effect on the ability to write** is the result of

- a learning difficulty
- a medical condition
- a physical disability
- a sensory impairment

Examination word processors must have the spelling and grammar check/predictive text disabled. The use of a word processor must be evidenced as the candidate's normal way of working.

Candidates **must** be reminded to save at regular intervals. In this way, loss of work is kept to a minimum if a complication or technical difficulty occurs.

The candidate using a word processor **must** be present when the script is printed off so as to verify that the work printed is complete and is his or her own. Candidates sign each sheet.

Candidates with access arrangements sitting several exams on the same day

Occasionally, a candidate may have several exams scheduled on the same day. If the total time, including extra time, adds up to more than 5½ hours (GCSE) or 6 hours (GCE), it may be possible to carry one exam over until the following day, providing certain guarantees regarding supervision are made by parents or carers.

Sometimes a candidate with medical difficulties causing fatigue may have a clash of exams. In such a case one exam might be delayed, in order to allow the candidate to rest, before sitting the second exam. They must be supervised in isolation during the intervening period.

Candidates sitting examinations set by awarding bodies not regulated by JCQ

When a candidate is entered for an examination set by an awarding body that is not regulated by JCQ, she/he may find that the rules regarding access arrangements are different. In most cases, the candidates' evidence of need will be accepted, although a separate application must be made, but the awarding body set their own rules regarding access arrangements and their use in specific subjects, for example, a scribe may be allowed in English by JCQ but not by CIE.

Recording the use of access arrangements

Gartree High School follow the advice given by JCQ and maintain a record of the use of access arrangements.

If an access arrangement is never used, then it is not a candidate's normal way of working and the arrangement should not be awarded for examinations.

Staffing and training

The staff employed to provide candidates with access arrangements are drawn from the school's teaching and support staff.

During busy examination periods, external invigilators may also be employed.

Training is provided annually to comply with new JCQ guidelines.

Temporary arrangements

Temporary arrangements may be required by candidates suffering from illness or injury. In general, candidates with leg injuries are accommodated in the main room near the doors for easy access and exit.

Candidates with an illness or injury that has a direct impact on their ability to access the examination should obtain a letter from a GP, consultant or other professional giving a brief outline of their condition and the access arrangements that are deemed to be necessary. For example, a right-handed candidate 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 candidate with a painful back condition may require supervised rest breaks in order to stand and move around.

In all cases where an access arrangement or a reasonable adjustment is needed, the school is entitled to expect reasonable notice to carry out its responsibilities. Where a need for access arrangements has been identified before an examination session, the SENCo and Examinations Officer should be provided with medical evidence in reasonable time. For example,

- a candidate who suffers from panic attacks in test or exam situations should obtain a note from a mental health professional such as CAMHS worker, well before the start of formal examinations.
- in an emergency, a scribe can be provided with 24 hours' notice. It may not be possible to provide a scribe if the request is made without notice.

Temporary arrangements last for one examination session. If the condition persists another letter may be required for the next session.

Alternative accommodation away from the centre

On very rare occasions, a candidate may need to sit an examination at a residential address or at a hospital due to a severe medical condition or profound psychological condition which prevents them from taking examinations within the centre.

The centre must ensure that JCQ guidelines are followed with regard to conduct, procedures and staffing. The centre must be satisfied that the candidate is well enough to take the examination and there must be appropriate evidence of needed held on file.

The qualification of the current assessor

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

The current assessor is Alison Lines – SENCo. She holds the Certificate of Psychometric Testing and Access Arrangements qualification (CPT3A). Qualification certificates are held in the Exam Access Arrangements file.