

026 Exam Access Arrangements

Responsibility: CE
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1. What are Exam Access Arrangements?

- 1.1 An Exam Access Arrangement (EAA) is provision which allows a student with recognised SEND/Additional Educational Needs requiring adjustments in the classroom or temporary injuries to have, subject to exam board approval, appropriate access to an exam without changing the demands of the assessment. For example, through the use of supervised rest breaks, assistive technology, extra time and Braille question papers. The Awarding Bodies will comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.
- 1.2 Each EAA must be based on the candidate's individual profile and the impact their needs have on their ability to access examinations/assessments. The aim is to remove barriers to assessment without giving an unfair advantage to any particular candidate or group, ensuring all candidates have a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- 1.3 A centre must make decisions about appropriate access arrangements for their candidates. Although professionals from other organisations may give advice, they cannot make the decision for the centre. They will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments. It is the responsibility of the SENCo to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations.
- 1.4 At Holmfirth High School we will use every opportunity to identify students' needs from their first contact with the school. Liaison with primary feeder schools and contact from parents at point of entry is an important starting point of the EAA process. EAA are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. EAA falls into two distinct categories: some arrangements are delegated to centres; others require prior JCQ awarding body approval.
- 1.5 Parents must declare at the time of enrolment and when completing the school application form if their child has any medical or psychological condition, SEND, previous EAA at another educational establishment or any other issues that may require an Exam Access Arrangements. If a candidate obtains a formal diagnosis of any kind during their education at Holmfirth High School, the SEND team must be sent a copy of the report at the earliest opportunity. Failure to disclose this negates Holmfirth High School from their responsibilities, including ensuring that all applications to JCQ are made in line with their deadlines.

- 1.6 Candidates may not require the same EAA in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessment may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. The SENCo must consider the need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments on a subject-by-subject basis.

2. Areas of need that may require Exam Access Arrangements

2.1 Learning Difficulties (e.g. Dyslexia)

- 2.1.1 For candidates with a learning difficulty, the EAA's most commonly required are:

- 25% Extra time
- Computer reader/Reader/Reader pen
- Word processor with spelling and grammar check switched off

- 2.1.2 In order to make an application to JCQ the school is required to gather subject specific normal way of working for individual candidates.

- 2.1.3 Where substantial evidence has been gathered, candidates will complete a series of short assessments with the centre's external assessor in Year 10. Should the candidate receive at least 2 below average standardised scores the centre will also need to provide a sample of KS4 internal school tests/mock exam papers across relevant subjects showing the application of 25% extra time, together with comments and observations from teaching staff as to why the candidate needs 25% extra time and how they have used it.

- 2.1.4 A reader pen can be used by students to support their reading of the exam papers where reading scores may demonstrate a barrier to achievement. This piece of technology can be used to read individual words or short passages to allow candidates to focus on the content of the questions.

- 2.1.5 For further information about the use of a word processor, please see the separate Word Processor policy.

2.2 Medical Conditions (e.g. ADHD, ASD, mental health conditions)

- 2.2.1 Where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty or for candidates who experience anxiety or attention difficulties, supervised rest breaks (SRB) are often more effective. SRB may better address the needs of neurodivergent candidates, such as those with ADHD or ASD, as well as candidates with medical conditions or mental health needs. For a candidate who tires easily or struggles to concentrate over an extended period, SRB's will be more appropriate than 25% extra time.

- 2.2.2 The SENCo must have trialled and exhausted the option of SRB through timed internal tests and/ or mock examinations before considering whether an application for 25% extra time will be made. Please see the section above for the evidence required should an application for 25% extra time be needed.

2.2.3 SRB's will not usually be required within the first 10 minutes of an examination but may be used thereafter. We would normally expect a candidate to require no more than two 5-minute SRB's within a one-hour examination.

2.2.4 At the start of the SRB, the timing of the examination will be paused and then restarted at the end of the SRB. The candidate will not have access to the examination paper for the duration of the SRB.

2.3 Physical disability, sensory impairment (E.g. Deaf, Vision Impairment (VI), Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI), Physical Disability (PD))

2.3.1 Some disabled candidates and candidates with learning difficulties may have multiple overlapping needs and will require a range of adjustments. Each adjustment must be based on the candidate's individual profile and the impact their needs have on their ability to access examinations.

2.3.2 The SENCo would need to evidence the candidate has persistent and significant difficulties which substantially impact on their learning. This must be confirmed by a formal diagnosis from a registered specialist such as a clinical paediatrician or a hospital consultant (not a GP) and be supported by normal way of working evidence in school.

3. Temporary Access Arrangements and applications for special consideration

3.1 These arrangements will be processed as the need arises in certain situations, through the Exams Officer. An example could be a Year 11 candidate has fallen off their bike and broken the wrist of their writing hand. In such a case, the school would look at the most appropriate and reasonable adjustment to make to ensure that the candidate can access the exam but are not given an unfair advantage. As with all applications, the school is required to ensure that the appropriate documentation is held on file to support any arrangement made.

4. Identifying the need for access arrangements within Holmfirth High School

4.1 In line with JCQ regulations, Holmfirth High School will make all decisions regarding EAA based upon whether the candidate has a **substantial and long-term impairment** which has an adverse effect on their ability to achieve to their potential, in conjunction with the EAA being the candidate's **normal way of working** in lessons – demonstrating the involvement of the teaching staff in determining the need for the EAA.

4.2 Appropriate evidence of need must be available at Holmfirth High School for inspection by JCQ. A portfolio of 'evidence of need' must be put together by the SEND team to support any application for EAA; this will include teacher feedback and evidence of a candidate's test papers.

4.3 If a student continually chooses not to use the agreed EAA either because their needs change or they do not feel it aids their learning or achievement, then the EAA will be removed, and parents/carers informed.

- 4.4 If the SEND team in school and/or specialist assessor considers that the EAA ceases to be the student's '**normal way of working**', they reserve the right to withdraw the permission, providing written confirmation to parents/carers.

5. How do staff and parents know whether a student has access arrangements?

- 5.1 When a need for EAA has been identified, the relevant parties are informed as follows:
- Students will be made aware of their EAA in school.
 - A letter will be sent home to parents/carers to confirm these arrangements.
 - A list of all EAA will be made available to the Exams Officer.
 - A list of all candidates who have EAA will be made available to all teaching staff. This information will be placed on the school's relevant shared drives.

6. Use of externally commissioned reports

- 6.1 A parent/carer may choose to have their child assessed by a private educational psychologist or private dyslexia assessor. Where parents do commission diagnostic assessments for their child the organisation or individual performing the assessment **must have prior contact** with the school to gather background information on the candidate before going ahead with the assessment. A privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to support the EAA process.
- 6.2 Private reports cost a significant amount of money. This means that parents/carers who are unable to obtain a private report due to their financial circumstances are put at a disadvantage. As an exam centre Holmfirth High School must be consistent in its decisions and ensure that **no candidate is either given an unfair advantage or disadvantaged by any arrangements put in place**. Therefore, when parents submit such reports to Holmfirth High School, we will look for evidence of a history of need and the candidate's **normal way of working**. Such privately commissioned reports can sometimes conflict with what Holmfirth High School's external Specialist Assessor recommends. If the school's diagnostic tests contradict privately commissioned reports, then the school's tests and assessments will take precedence and will inform EAA decisions and no further negotiation regarding this matter will take place with the parent/carer.

7. Requests for smaller venues

- 7.1 Consideration for a candidate to sit their exams in a smaller venue due to mental health needs, will only be considered where medical evidence from a consultant or a formal diagnosis is in place. Written evidence should be provided at the time of making the request.
- 7.2 The 'smaller venue' provided at Holmfirth High School is Row A of the Sports Hall, which is partitioned off from the main seating area. Candidates who sit in Row A will muster in a quieter area with pastoral support.

8. Reasonable Adjustments

- 8.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment. A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements. How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate.

9. Duty to make a reasonable adjustment

- 9.1 The duty for an awarding body to make a reasonable adjustment will apply where assessment arrangements would put a disabled candidate at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a candidate who is not disabled. In such circumstances, the awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.
- 9.2 'Reasonable adjustments' are made where a candidate, who is disabled within the meaning of the Act, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. Schools and examination boards are required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. An example might be providing an enlarged paper for a visually impaired pupil. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on a range of factors, which will include:
- the individual needs of the candidate.
 - the effectiveness of the adjustment.
 - the cost of the adjustment and
 - the likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates.
- 9.3 An adjustment will not be approved if it:
- involves unreasonable costs
 - involves unreasonable timeframes or
 - affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

- 9.4 This is because the adjustment is not "reasonable".

10. Definition of disability

- 10.1 Section 6 of the Equality Act defines disability as 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.'

11. Definition of special educational needs

- 11.1 A candidate has 'special educational needs' as defined in the SEND Code of Practice 2015: 0 to 25 years.

12. JCQ Regulations

- 12.1 The Holmfirth High School Policy for Access Arrangements 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'. **Failure to comply with these regulations for Public Examinations may constitute malpractice, which could in turn affect a candidate's result(s).**
- 12.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's **SEND Policy**, which sets out the procedures for identifying SEND and making and evaluating provision for pupils with SEND.