Exams Access Arrangement Policy

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Brunel School adheres to all JCQ regulations, including 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments'.

This policy provides a summary of how the school meets these regulations and will be reviewed annually to ensure its alignment to annual JCQ regulation updates.

What are access arrangements and reasonable adjustments?

Access arrangements

Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow candidates 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'. ([1]AA, Definitions)

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 substantial disadvantage** in comparison to someone who is not disabled. The awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. An example would be a Braille paper which would be a reasonable adjustment for a vision impaired candidate who could read Braille. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. 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 awarding body;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; or
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'. ([1]AA, Definitions)

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Bunel School has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements process and is complying with its *"...obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements."*

[JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres, 5.4]

This publication is further referred to in this policy as GR

This policy is maintained and held by the SENCo alongside the individual files of each access arrangements candidate. Each file contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

> Where the SENCo is storing documentation electronically he/she **must** create an folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. ([1]AA, Section 4.2)

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments'.

This publication is further referred to in this policy as AA

General principles

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AA (section 4.2). These include:

> 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 SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff within a FE college, **must** ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.
> Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the **start** of the course. Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment. The arrangement(s) put in place **must** reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre.
> The candidate **must** have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustments before his/her first examination.

Equalities Policy (Exams)

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

> See Equalities Policy
>
> **The head of the centre/senior leadership team will**… recognise its duties towards disabled candidates, including private candidates, ensuring compliance with all aspects of Equality Act 2010, particularly Section 20 (7). This **must** include a duty to explore and provide access to suitable courses, through the access arrangements process submit applications for reasonable adjustments and make reasonable adjustments to the service the centre provides to disabled candidates.
>
> †or any legislation in a relevant jurisdiction other than England and Wales which has an equivalent purpose and effect (GR section 5.4)

The Access Arrangements policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

The assessment process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor(s) appointed by the head of centre. The assessor is appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in AA section 7.3.

The qualification(s) of the current assessor(s)

> AMBDA Teaching Certificate obtained through the British Dyslexia Association.

Appointment of assessors of candidates with learning difficulties

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed in the centre, evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements in AA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Checking the qualification(s) of the assessor(s)

Certificate is checked by the HoC on an annual basis. Copy of the certificate is kept in the Access Arrangements file.

The head of centre/senior leadership team will… have a **written** process in place to not only check the qualification(s) of their assessor(s) but that the correct procedures are followed as in Chapter 7 of the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments… (GR, section 5.4)

The head of centre must ensure that evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) is obtained at the point of engagement/employment and prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) must be held on file for inspection purposes and be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the SENCo. (AA section 7.3)

Reporting the appointment of the assessor(s)

The assessors qualifications are held in the Access Arrangements file

Make full reference to AA section 7.4 Reporting the appointment of assessors and record your process that reflects the requirements.

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

Significant effort is made to ensure that the assessment process is administered correctly. Pupils are identified as requiring Access Arrangements by the referring school, baseline assessments or by classroom teachers. This is confirmed through the gathering of evidence by the classroom teacher. Once sufficient evidence is gathered pupils are asked to sign **Data Protection statements** and the first section of the form eight is completed. The assessments are made by an individual who holds the appropriate qualification who is then able to make recommendations regarding the appropriate access arrangements. The Form eights are then completed and the online applications are made.

"… that the correct procedures are followed as per Chapter 7 of the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments…" [GR section 5.4]

Note… 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 (AA section 7.3)

Picture of need / normal way of working

All Evidence is kept by the SENDCo. The SENDCo is responsible for coordinating and applying for access arrangements and evidencing the reasons for granting arrangements.

This evidence will be available for inspection. The SENDCo will gather this evidence from Teaching leads and Tutors.

Pupils are supported in lessons through laptops, e-readers, overlays and modified tasks. The outcome of these tasks is used to produce an evidence file that is kept within the English department. This evidence can be used to demonstrate a pupil's normal way of working as defined by JCQ.

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 per Part 1 of Form 8. The SENCo and the assessor must work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.

An independent assessor must contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This must take place before the candidate is assessed. Additionally, the independent assessor must be approved by the head of centre to assess the candidate.

All candidates must be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8.

An independent assessor must discuss access arrangements/reasonable adjustments with the SENCo. The responsibility to determine and request appropriate and practicable access arrangements/reasonable adjustments specifically lies with the SENCo. (AA section 7.5)

Where a candidate has a current Education, Health and Care Plan (England), a current Statement of special educational needs (Northern Ireland), or a current Individual Development Plan (Wales), the SENCo must substantiate the documentation with a picture of need. This must be completed using Form 9. (Form 8 is not required and must not be used.

Make full reference to AA section 7.5 Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor and 7.6 Completing Form 8 – JCQ/AA/LD, Profile of Learning Difficulties and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/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 arrangement approval for the qualifications covered by the tool. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications included. (Refer to AA, chapter 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments) and chapter 6 (Modified papers).

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by logging in to one of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

All assessments and data are kept within the exam officer's office within the Access Arrangement file along with the applications and their outcomes. Data

and evidence pertaining to pupils for which access arrangements were applied for but not awarded are kept within the access arrangements file. The ALS lead/SENCo has responsibility for the information.

The SENCo must keep detailed records, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) **and** a signed candidate personal data consent form for inspection by the JCQ Centre Inspection Service. (AA section 8.6)

Make full reference to AA section 8 *Processing applications for access arrangements* and adjustments) Section 6 (Modified papers) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

All centre delegated access arrangements are provided on the basis of relevant and applicable evidence being gathered through the departments and a clear indication that the arrangement provided represents the pupils normal way of working.

Centre-specific criteria for particular arrangements/adjustments

Word Processor Policy (Exams)

An exam candidate maybe approved the use of a word processor where this is appropriate to the candidate's needs and not simply because the candidate now wants to type rather than write in exams or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

See Appendix 2 of Exams Policy

A centre must have a policy on the use of word processors… A member of the centre's senior leadership team must produce a statement for inspection purposes which details the criteria the centre uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations. (AA section 5.8)

Separate invigilation within the centre

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved for separate invigilation within the centre will be made by the ALS lead/SENCo.

The decision will be 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 [AA section 5.16]

The centre will provide invigilation for all pupils where it is evident that being within a room with other pupils will impact upon their own or others attainment. Invigilators may be in the room in a one to one situation although a second invigilator will be in the very near vicinity if required.

For example, in the case of separate invigilation, the candidate's difficulties are established within the centre (see Chapter 4, paragraph 4.1.4) and known to a Form Tutor, a Head of Year, the SENCo or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities.

Separate invigilation must reflect the candidate's normal way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations.

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations is not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre (AA section 5.16)

The Exam Officer will ensure roving invigilators are in place and correct paperwork is completed for candidates that have certain access arrangements, such as a scribe, reader and prompter.

Music or White Noise

From 2025/2026, the JCQ regulations would allow a pupil with a substantial impairment to listen to music or white noise during their examinations. Headphones must NOT be worn until the invigilator's announcement, and any erratum notice have been read out to the candidate(s). The SENDCo has discretion over which pupil(s) are granted this access arrangement. It must be based on their usual way of working.

Use of a Mobile Phone for Medical Purposes

From 2025/2026, the JCQ regulations would allow a pupil to have access to their mobile phone during an examination for a medical condition such as diabetes. Parents and Carers must request this through communication with the school's SENDCo, who will make a decision as to whether or not the request is reasonable and necessary, ensuring compliance with JCQ regulations at all times. Where this request is granted, additional invigilators will be required to ensure that the pupil is fully supervised during their examination. Pupils must not use their mobile phone for any other purpose than in relation to their medical condition. Non-compliance would constitute candidate malpractice.