Access Arrangements Policy
2024-25

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Approved on: 08 05 25

Review date: May 2026

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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 particular 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'. [AARA 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 a number of 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'.

The centre **must** ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates. (AARA1, Definitions)

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Harrogate Grammar 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 General Regulations for Approved Centres]

This publication is further referred to in this policy as GR

This policy is maintained and held by the SENCo (or equivalent role) alongside the individual files/e-folders of each access arrangements candidate. Each file/e-folder contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

Where the SENCo (or equivalent role) is storing documentation electronically they **must** create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder **must** hold each of the required documents for inspection. (AARA, section 4.2)

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

General principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, who will coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties and disabilities, candidates for whom English is an additional language, as well as those with a temporary illness or temporary injury. (GR 5.4)

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AARA (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 them 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 disabled candidates.
- 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.
- A centre **must** make decisions on 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.
- 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 adjustment(s) before their 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 (Exams).

This 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(s) is (are) appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in AARA , section 7.3.

Appointment of assessors

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 AARA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

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

Upon appointment the qualifications of the assessor will be checked to ensure that they meet the requirements of the post and a copy will be held on file. AARA 7.3

The assessor will not be allowed to make any assessments until their qualifications have been seen and verified.

In line with AARA 7.3 the head of centre will appoint:

- ♦ an access arrangements assessor who has successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment. An access arrangements assessor may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8; and/or
- ♦ a specialist assessor with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, as awarded by BDA, the Dyslexia Guild or Patoss and listed on the SASC website, who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments; and/or
- ♦ an appropriately qualified psychologist registered with the Health & Care Professions Council who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 and where necessary undertake a full assessment.

The head of centre/SENCo will ensure that the appointed assessor:

- ♦ has a thorough understanding of the current edition of the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments and the principles, procedures and accountabilities involved;
- ♦ is 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 holds an appropriate qualification to teach and make recommendations for secondary aged or adult learners who have learning difficulties or be a HCPC registered psychologist.

Reporting the appointment of the assessor(s)

The SENDCO will hold on file evidence that the assessor is suitably qualified to carry out this role and provide a copy to the Head of Centre and Exams Manager.

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

- ♦ The school will ensure that the requirements detailed in AARA section 7.5 are followed
- ♦ The SENCo will arrange for the candidate to be assessed by an 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 per Part 1 of Form 8. The SENCo and the assessor will work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.
- ♦ The assessor will ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This will take place before the candidate is assessed.
- ♦ The candidate will be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8.
- ♦ The assessor will discuss access arrangements with the SENCo. The responsibility to request access arrangements specifically lies with the SENCo.
- ♦ The assessor will decide if the results of tests in literacy and/or cognitive abilities present evidence that the candidate has an impairment which substantially affects their performance.
- ♦ The assessors will personally conduct the assessments. They will not sign off assessments carried out by another professional.
- ♦ The assessor will only carry out tests which are relevant to support the application using current editions of nationally standardised tests which produce standardised scores.
- ♦ 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.

♦ Once the assessment is complete the results will be provided to the SENCo who will then ensure appropriate arrangements are put in place.

♦ Any AA requirements will be logged on the schools MIS so all staff are aware of the provision required

Picture of need/ normal way of working

Part 1 of form 8 will be used to build a 'holistic picture of need' for candidates with learning difficulties. This will be completed no earlier than year 10 and will then be used for GCSE examinations and where relevant rolled forward for GCE exams.

A minimum 'skeleton' form 8 must be completed prior to any assessment by the assessor. This will detail the candidates background and history of support.

In Section A the SENCO will paint a 'holistic picture of need', confirming the candidate's normal way of working bringing together:

♦ if known, arrangements made for Key Stage 2 tests;
♦ comments and observations from teaching staff and support staff (i.e. Learning Support Assistants, Teaching Assistants and Communication Support Workers);
♦ intervention strategies (e.g. individual education/learning plans, School Action, support plans) in place for the candidate; pupil premium indicators;
♦ screening test results from Y's 7-9;
♦ use of baseline data;
♦ information about any differentiation in the classroom;
♦ normal way of working in the classroom (where appropriate);
♦ arrangements made for end of year internal school examinations/mock examinations
♦ feedback on arrangements used in internal exams

Where limited information is available, a selection from the following can be used by the SENDCo to paint a picture of need within Part 1 of Form 8, for example:

♦ screening test results;
♦ the candidate's self -reported difficulties;
♦ comments and observations from teaching staff and support staff (i.e. Learning Support Assistants, Teaching Assistants and Communication Support Workers) who have noted the candidate's difficulties;
♦ comments in school reports and/or pupil tracking data;
♦ 6th Form admission form
♦ information relayed by telephone, with notes taken, or a photocopy of Form 8, where a candidate has moved school, e.g joining the 6th form in yr 12

Processing access arrangements

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.

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) using any of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

Online applications **must** only be processed where they are supported by the centre and the candidate meets the published criteria for the arrangement(s) with the full supporting evidence in place. (AARA 8 Summary)

Once a candidate has been identified as requiring access arrangements they will be asked to complete a personal data consent form and the SENCO will complete the Data Protection Confirmation form.

The SENCO/Learning Support Administrator will make an application via AAO.

Approved applications will be kept on file along with evidence of need and signed data protection notice by the SENCo/Assessor.

The SENCO/Learning Support Administrator will enter the access arrangements into Arborand the Exams Manager will ensure that the appropriate arrangements are put in place for all the candidates' examinations.

For cases of temporary impairment or injury, applications may be submitted by the exams office with supporting medical evidence.

Where applications are not approved further assessments may be carried out and subsequent applications made if the candidate meets the published criteria.

Where an application is rejected because it is for extra time of more than 25% or the use of a practical assistant these applications will be referred on-line to the relevant awarding bodies by the SENCO

Centre-delegated access arrangements

Where arrangements can be awarded by the centre e.g use of word processors/ reading pens/prompters, the decision as to whether a candidate will be awarded this arrangement will be made by the assessor/SENCo/Exams Manager.

The SENCO/Learning Support Administrator/Exams Manager will then record this arrangement on Arbor and the Exams Manager will ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place for the candidates' exams

Centre-specific criteria for particular arrangements/adjustments

Word processor policy (exams)

An exam candidate may be 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 separate [HGS Word Processor Policy](#).

Alternative Rooming Arrangements

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs will be made by the SENCo/Exams Manager. 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 [AARA 5.16]

- whether alternative rooming arrangements reflect the candidate's normal way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations as a consequence of a long term medical condition or long term social, mental or emotional needs

- whether the candidate's difficulties are established within the centre

- whether the candidate's difficulties are known to a Form Tutor, a Head of Year, the SENDCo or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities

- whether the candidate is at a substantial disadvantage when compared with other non-disabled candidates undertaking the assessment and it would be reasonable in all the circumstances to provide the arrangement

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations is not sufficient grounds for alternative rooming arrangements within the centre.

For example:

- a candidate with depression or anxiety who is being supported by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- a candidate with an established medical condition or a formally recognised social, emotional or behavioural difficulty

Where a candidate simply panics on the day of an examination or becomes anxious, then they should not be offered alternative rooming arrangements but be seated more appropriately within a main examination room.

Alternative rooming arrangements within the centre is no different to other access arrangements, such as prompters, supervised rest breaks etc. Senior staff with pastoral responsibilities will be aware of students with established and long term difficulties and which candidates may require and be eligible for alternative rooming arrangements. Working with the SENCo, and the exams manager who may highlight issues such as room availability and the need for additional invigilators, a centre-based decision is made on the need for alternative rooming arrangements.

The only exception to this would be a temporary illness, a temporary injury or other temporary indisposition which is clearly evidenced.