



# **Access Arrangements Policy**

May 2024

Review September 2024

## 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'. (1AA, 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'. (1AA, Definitions)

\*References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010.

### Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Exceptional Ideas Ltd 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, (section 5.4)].

This publication is further referred to in this policy as GR.

This policy is maintained and held by the Exams Team 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. An eFolder is created for each individual candidate with all of the documentation for inspection. (<sup>1</sup>AA<sub>2</sub> 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.'

<sup>1</sup>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 assessment lead and exams team **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 adjustment(s) 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.

The Equalities Policy (Exams) can be found in a separate document on the Cloud.

The head of centre/senior leadership team will recognise its duties towards disabled candidates, ensuring compliance with all aspects of the 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. Where the centre is under a duty to make a reasonable adjustment, the centre **must not** charge a disabled candidate any additional fee in relation to the adjustment or aid.

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

### **The assessment process**

All students at Exceptional Ideas Ltd are in possession of an EHCP and have undergone (in some cases multiple) Educational Psychologist's assessments. Therefore, all access arrangements are determined by normal way of working or as a result of an EHCP/EP recommendation or specific area of need. All the assessments for the EHCP are carried out by a suitably qualified assessor as required by JCQ regulations in AA, section 7.3.

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

Form 8 is not required for students in receipt of an EHCP. Assessments are undertaken by EPs or other professionals and normal way of working is the main basis for applications for access arrangements based on EHCP evidence when students begin working with us. Detailed Form 9s are completed for each candidate as required by JCQ which clearly signpost appropriate evidence of normal way of working and evidence of need from EHCP.

### **Picture of need/normal way of working**

Pictures of need are created in order to provide easy access to the evidence used to establish access arrangements.

These pictures of need generally include evidence from the EHCP or EP report relating to access arrangements, evidence of normal way of working, letter from the Head of Centre confirming need/approving the arrangements put in place and any other relevant evidence.

Because of the nature of EHCPs, the normal way of working is usually dictated by the paperwork when a student starts at our school.

### **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 into one of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

The exams team will apply for access arrangements via eAQA's route to AAO. Applications are submitted in the January of the exam year at the latest, though ideally will be processed at the beginning of the course. Due to the nature of our provision, many students do not start with us until late in their GCSE career, so this can mean that applications are not always at a consistent time.

**Detailed electronic records of all the essential information are kept on the student's e-file and their printed access arrangements 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 8.6). The Exams Officer will also confirm that 'The candidate that this application relates to has signed and dated the AAO Candidate Consent Form **prior to** the processing of the online application, and hold (and will retain), for 26 months from the date of the online application being approved, the paper or digitally signed original of the fully signed AAO Candidate Consent Form.

### **Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments**

Centre delegated access arrangements are identified during the process of mock examinations and 1:1 tuition within the centre, as well as from any assessments from EPs or other professionals at the point of starting the course. Evidence of normal way of working is provided in the student's file on the cloud.

### **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.

The Word Processor Policy can be found on the cloud, separately.

#### **Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy**

All students at Exceptional Ideas Ltd are invigilated in separate rooms, unless it is determined that it is unnecessary.