



Methodist College Belfast

Examination Access Arrangements Policy

THIS POLICY IS WRITTEN IN LINE WITH THE JOINT COUNCIL FOR QUALIFICATION (JCQ) GUIDANCE.

The JCQ is a membership organisation comprising the seven largest providers of qualifications in the UK. The JCQ provides a single voice on issues of examination administration and, when appropriate, qualification and wider education policy. These regulations for schools can be accessed on the JCQ website.

What are Access Arrangements?

An Access Arrangement is a provision or type of support given to a student (subject to JCQ¹ guidelines) in an examination, based on evidence of need and their normal way of working in school.

Access Arrangements allow candidates with **special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries** to show what they know and can do without changing the demands of, or affecting the security or integrity of, the assessment.

These include:

- **Extra time:** students may be entitled to an allowance of 25% (or more in exceptional circumstances) depending on the history of evidence of need and the recommendation of the designated Specialist Teacher.
- **A Reader:** a trained adult who would read the question and any relevant text (with the exception of the 'Reading Section' of an English GCSE Examination) for the student. The student would write the answers themselves but can ask for them to be read back to them.
- **A Scribe:** a trained adult who writes for the student. The student would dictate their answers.
- **Word Processor:** a student may be given access to a computer for an examination so they can word process their answers (without the spell and grammar check facility). This **cannot** be because a student types faster than they write or because they prefer it, but must be to account for significant disadvantage.
- **Rest Breaks:** where students are permitted to stop for short break/s during the examination and the time stopped is added to the finish time, with the effect of elongating the examination but not actually using any extra time.
- **Prompter:** where a student has little sense of time or loses concentration easily, a trained adult can prompt them with a few permitted phrases to refocus, move the student on to the next question or indicate how much time is left.

What evidence is needed to apply for Access Arrangements?

There are a number of pieces of evidence that are needed to apply for Access Arrangements to JCQ:

- Report from the Specialist Assessor*, as appointed by the Principal, which notes
 - Evidence of persistent and significant difficulties, which would usually have been identified in Primary school and during Key Stage 3

¹“Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties – Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments” Joint Council for Qualifications (updated annually)

- Evidence from teachers that this difficulty impacts on teaching and learning in the classroom
- Evidence that the access arrangement is the student's normal way of working in school. For example, this may be that they routinely take more time to complete work, or that they always use a scribe to complete written work

And supporting evidence in the form of

- Educational assessments and tests e.g. reading speed, reading comprehension, writing tests. These are conducted by the school's Specialist Assessor. JCQ states that candidates experiencing '*significant difficulties*' are those who have a standardised score of 84 or lower, this would place the candidate in the bottom 14% of the population relative to their peers. It **should be noted that it is not necessary to have a diagnosis, nor does a diagnosis guarantee Access Arrangements if the student scores above this criterion.**

or

- If Medical issues are the difficulty (including ADHD, ASD) then a letter from a **Consultant** stating the need for extra time is required.

*The Principal will ensure that the Specialist Assessor is appropriately qualified as defined in the JCQ "Access Arrangements" document. Evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) are held on file. Qualification certificates are available for inspection purposes and will be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the SENCo when necessary.

Private Educational Psychologists' Reports

JCQ regulations state that '*a privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to award Access Arrangements and cannot be used to process an application*' (p.83)

A growing number of parents are having their children assessed by private educational psychologists and submitting the reports to Learning Support as evidence that their child should be awarded Access Arrangements.

Private educational psychologists may recommend that children should receive Access Arrangements which are in conflict with what the centre tester (Specialist Assessor) recommends.

Where a private educational psychologist's report is presented without prior consultation and supporting evidence of normal way of working from the school, the school cannot accept the recommendations of the report, but will instead follow the recommendations of the Specialist Assessor as required by JCQ regulations.

Private reports should only be requested in consultation with the school SENCO. They can be helpful in the case of concerns which cannot be identified by school testing, or if a diagnosis is required. If this is the case, the SENCO will speak to the Educational Psychologist before the consultation in order to appraise them of the student's normal way of working in school and to provide the necessary teacher evidence.

How are students identified for Examination Access Arrangements?

Information from Primary schools

Reports and IEPs / PLPs from Primary school are very useful to give evidence of the persistent nature of a difficulty, however, it should be noted that even if a student received Access Arrangements for the AQE tests, this does not guarantee that they will receive it at KS3, GCSE or GCE because their needs may have changed. For example, a student who was awarded extra time in the AQE tests may not qualify for extra time at GCSE as their speed of working may have improved to the extent it does not meet the JCQ regulations.

Evidence of need gathered during internal examinations and assessments

JCQ states that “***if a candidate can complete a paper in the normal length of time, and never uses the extra time which has been made available, then it is not an effective arrangement. It would not be appropriate to process an application for extra time***” (p.81). We pay close attention to the use of Extra Time during internal examinations and to comply with JCQ regulations, will not process applications where there is no evidence of need in past examinations.

Parental Referral

Parents can contact the Form Tutor, Deputy Head of Year, Head of Year, SENCO to ask for advice if they have concerns with the progress and learning of their child. Once contact has been made with the parent, the member of staff will investigate their concerns by contacting the student’s teachers to gain information. Following this, a decision will be made as to whether it is appropriate to test a student.

Teacher Referral

Subject teachers can refer a student to Learning Support (by completing a Referral Form) where they have concerns about the learning and progress of a student in their class. Pieces of work can also be included with this referral as evidence. All of the student’s current teachers will be asked to give feedback to gain information, and following this a decision will be made as to whether to test a student.

Individual educational tests conducted at staff or parental request

Once the decision to test has been made, the student will attend Learning Support to meet with the Specialist Assessor. They usually complete a self-evaluation form and the appropriate Psychometric tests are selected. If the nature of the difficulty is proven ‘*significant*’ and meets the strict criteria, and if the Specialist Assessor can confirm the persistent nature of the problem, the student’s normal way of working and the evidence from teachers, then an application to JCQ can be made. The student must sign a Data Protection Notice to give consent for some of their personal data to be shared with JCQ and the Examination Awarding bodies.

How do staff and parents know whether a student has Examination Access Arrangements?

- All students who have been approved for Access Arrangements will be on Stage 2 or higher of the SEN Code of Practice, as they are now getting an accommodation which is additional to that given to other students. They are identified to subject teachers through the College's combined SEN and Access Arrangements Register. This Register is updated on a monthly basis whenever students become entitled to an arrangement.
- An Individual Education Plan (IEP) / Personal Learning Plan (PLP) is written and appropriate targets set. This is given to each of the student's subject teachers and a copy is sent home to parents. Teachers give feedback on targets twice a year and the IEP/PLP is reviewed annually.
- The information about results of assessments for Access Arrangements are kept confidentially in line with School Policy and are shared on a 'need to know' basis.
- Parents will be informed of any Access Arrangements by a phone call from the SENCO or Specialist Assessor.

What support is given to students with Access Arrangements?

Students with Access Arrangements are encouraged to use their Access Arrangements during internal assessments and examinations so that they gain practice at using them effectively.

Students with extra time are given guidance by the SENCO or their Learning Support Mentor on how to use the additional time allowance effectively. They then need to apply the techniques and strategies given to them in examinations and assessments.

Students who have access to a reader, scribe or prompter as their normal way of working, are shown how to use them appropriately in examination situations. It is explained to them what they can and cannot do with the reader/scribe/prompter during the examination, and how much support the adult is allowed to give.

All subject teachers have access to the list of students with Access Arrangements (via the combined SEN and Access Arrangements Register), and they are asked to give the Learning Support Department notice before they do tests or controlled assessments so that support can be provided for students who require it during the tests/assessments. Students who have a reader can be supported by the teacher supervising the test or may have individual support if necessary. The Learning Support Department can, if necessary, provide a separate room, reader, prompter, access to ICT and a scribe with the required amount of notice.

Students with Access Arrangements are monitored regularly through the use of data from internal reports, test and examination results, as well as IEP reviews.

PURPOSE and REVIEW OF POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Methodist College fulfils "its obligations in respect of identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements."

[JCQ 'General regulations for approved centres']

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure that arrangements are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication.

AVAILABILITY OF POLICY

This policy is published on the College website. A hard-copy can be collected from the College by request.