



SANDWELL ACADEMY



Access Arrangements Policy

2025 - 2026

Policy Title:	Access Arrangements Policy
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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 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. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see AA 1.8). The definitions and procedures in AA relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Sandwell Academy 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 SENCo 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 is storing documentation electronically he/she **must** create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. (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 general principles of access arrangements for the centre to consider are detailed in AA (section 4.2). These include:

- The purpose of an access arrangement 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 does not 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) before his/her first examination.

Equalities Policy (Exams)

The head of centre/senior leadership team will recognise its duties towards disabled candidates, including private 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, 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...

for any legislation in a relevant jurisdiction other than England and Wales which has an equivalent purpose and effect ([GR](#), section 5.4)

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 [AA](#) 7.3.

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

Post-graduate Award in Proficiency for Assessing for Access Arrangements (PAPAA)

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.

Currently, the assessor is also the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator within the school, and evidence of appropriate qualification is stored in a centralised area allowing for scrutiny by the head of centre. The qualifications of previous assessors are stored in the same way. This evidence is available to be presented upon inspection by JCQ.

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

A student will be referred for an assessment for access arrangements at the discretion of the SENCo, and will follow a reported concern/history of need. The SENCo will gather information from class teachers to determine whether an assessment is appropriate.

The assessor will conduct relevant assessments, depending on identified needs, and complete the appropriate documentation, ensuring that the correct procedures are followed as per Chapter 7 of the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.

Painting a 'holistic picture of need', confirming normal way of working

Before conducting assessments, the SENCo will ensure a holistic picture of need is obtained, detailing the nature of needs or disabilities. In light of this, the assessor will select relevant tests to administer.

The SENCo will consult teachers when establishing the student's Normal Way of Working, drawing on evidence from across the student's academic life.

Processing access arrangements

Arrangements 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 (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.

The SENCo is responsible for the processing of applications.

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 8.6](#))

Centre-delegated access arrangements

Centre-delegated access arrangements will be considered at the SENCo's discretion, and will fully comply with the student's Normal Way of Working, as outlined in JCQ's Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (2020).

Centre-specific criteria for particular access arrangements

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 this is the candidate's preferred way of working within the centre. See, *Word Processor Policy*.

Separate Invigilation Policy

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved separate invigilation within the centre will be made by the 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 SENCo will consult teaching staff, which may include the student's personal tutor, when making the decision on whether separate invigilation is appropriate.

Note: JCQ stipulate that nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations is not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre (AA 5.16).