



**THE NOTTINGHAM
EMMANUEL SCHOOL**
A Church of England Academy

POLICY:

Access Arrangement Policy

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COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE:

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

7.3a Exams Access Arrangements Policy 2017-18

Purpose of the policy

This document outlines the school policy on access arrangements. These are arrangements put in place to ensure all students have equal access to examinations. Students should not be disadvantaged by any learning, medical, physical, sensory or psychological difficulty they may experience.

The school must comply with the rules for Access Arrangements as set out in the most recent Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) publication.

Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make '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 disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. According to statutory guidance, disability means 'limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'.

A candidate with a disability or difficulty which has a substantial and long term effect on performance in examinations may qualify for access arrangements.

Access arrangements should allow students with substantial long term special educational needs or short term illnesses or injuries to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding without affecting the integrity of an assessment or examination. Access arrangements are not intended to help certain candidates, or give them an advantage, but to give them a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

The intention is to remove barriers that may prevent them from demonstrating their knowledge and to allow them on to a 'level playing field' with other candidates.

However, the school must assess each potential learner and make justifiable and professional judgements about the learner's potential to successfully complete and achieve the qualifications. Some types of disability may affect the candidate's ability to demonstrate one or more of the assessment objectives. An alternative route may be available in the specification and advice must be sought from the awarding body. In some cases, a disabled candidate may have to be exempted from a component if that is the only reasonable adjustment available to enable him/her to overcome a substantial disadvantage in accessing the specification.

Access Arrangements encompass a wide range of provisions which may include: being allowed to sit examinations in a smaller room, supervised rest breaks, use of colour overlays, prompter, extra time, reader, scribe, use of a word processor, practical assistant, etc.

How students are identified for access arrangements:

1. Screener reading assessments completed in Y7 and 8. Students whose reading score falls at 84 or below.
2. Information from primary school or a student's previous school.
3. A teacher referral.
4. Diagnostic screening i.e. dyslexia assessment.
5. A parent / carer concern. Parental / carer concerns must be supported by the student's subject teachers.
6. Privately commissioned reports. School will only implement recommendations if they meet JCQ guidelines.

In all cases, there must be a genuine need for the arrangement. The school must be satisfied that the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties.

'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months, or is likely to do so.

Students with special educational needs are not automatically eligible for access arrangements. For example, a student with a slight hearing impairment, a previous diagnosis of 'mild dyslexia' or a physical disability that does not affect performance in an examination may not meet the criteria for access arrangements.

However, when concerns are raised about a particular student, the SENCo will gather information from all the student's teachers to see whether they have similar concerns. If the initial concerns are echoed by others, the student will be assessed for access arrangements.

Candidates with a history of SEN

Candidates with medical, physical, sensory, behavioural or complex needs

Where access arrangements are requested due to medical or physical difficulties, a letter from a GP or consultant is required. The SENCo will ask parents/carers to obtain a letter with a brief outline of the student's condition or disability and the access arrangements that are deemed to be necessary.

Parents/carers may be requested to obtain letters from other professionals when a student requires arrangements due to their psychological, behavioural, sensory or communication difficulties.

Candidates with learning difficulties

There would normally be a long history of learning difficulties. Late identification of learning difficulties can occur, but concerns should be raised during the early months of a course leading towards an examination. JCQ publish deadlines by which arrangements must be processed, in advance of an examination series.

Arrangements should not be requested just before or at the time of a candidate's examinations, unless they are to be temporary and due to illness or injury. A student with learning difficulties must be formally assessed by a specialist teacher or an educational psychologist. The assessment must have taken place no earlier than the start of Year 9. An approved range of standardised tests are used and Form 8 is completed.

Parents may choose to arrange an assessment out of school. However, it must be noted that private assessments do not guarantee arrangements without the 'picture of need' that is required before an application is made. If a private assessment is carried out, it should be undertaken by a suitably qualified person and accepted as such by the school as the name of the assessor must be included on the application. The parents should provide the school with a copy of the report, which should include a section laid out as Form 8.

A Data Protection Notice must be signed by the student, which enables the Examinations Officer to make the online application using their information and results.

An application is made online, and the awarding bodies approve access arrangements only if the student's scores meet the criteria issued by JCQ.

Supporting evidence must be filed and available for inspection. In all cases, access arrangements should reflect the support that is usually given to the student in the classroom, internal tests and mock examinations. This is commonly referred to as the 'normal way of working.' The decision to apply for access arrangements is based on evidence of a history of need, history of provision and reports from teachers or other professionals. Students with no previous history of SEN will require significantly more evidence of need. For instance, the evidence required for extra time must include comments and observations from teaching staff as to why the student needs extra time and how s/he uses the time awarded. Therefore it may be necessary for the student to sit tests or practice papers with extra time for a trial period. It can then be gauged whether the quality and quantity of written answers improves significantly with the allowance of extra time, and will establish having extra time as a 'normal way of working'.

A candidate may require access arrangements in all his/her written examinations, or they may only need arrangements in those requiring extended answers. The school must compile evidence that supports each candidate's particular need for arrangements.

If not already on the SEN Record, the student will be placed at 'K' SEN Support and a new support plan will be drawn up. In this way their teachers will be provided with information on their needs, and teaching strategies and access arrangements.

Notification about access arrangements

Parents / carers are informed by letter when formal applications for access arrangements are approved. Included with the letter is *A parent's guide to access arrangements*, see appendix A.

Conduct and procedures

Specialist Assessor

The Specialist Assessor employed by the centre must hold a post graduate level 7 qualification in assessment as per JCQ regulations. The specialist assessor must provide a copy of their qualifications to both the centre and SENCo to keep on file for inspection purposes.

Accommodating exam access students and staffing

The Examinations Officer and SEN department are to ensure sufficient rooms and staffing are organised for candidates with access arrangements when examinations or controlled assessments are taking place.

Records and evidence of exam access

Candidates' evidence files are kept in a secure area, but must be available for inspection. The Exams Inspector visits during each examination session and may check several Access Arrangement files at random.

The Examinations Officer monitors the need for renewal of access arrangements when necessary and liaises with the SENCo to ensure that reassessment is carried out for students with additional arrangements (reader / scribe etc.) that expire after their GCSEs. This is to ensure that candidates still meet the criteria for those additional arrangements.

Allocation of word processors in exams

Certain candidates may be allowed the use of word processors in written examinations. This should be appropriate to the candidate's needs. Word processors will only be permitted when the candidate has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to write due to:

- a learning difficulty,
- a medical condition,
- a physical disability or
- a sensory impairment

The use of a word processor must be the candidates normal way of working within the centre.

The only exception to the above is for candidates who are experiencing a temporary injury that affects their ability to write.

Examination word processors must have the spelling and grammar check/predictive text disabled.

Candidates must be reminded to save at regular intervals. In this way, loss of work is kept to a minimum if a complication or technical difficulty occurs.

The candidate using a word processor must be present when the script is printed off so as to verify that the work printed is complete and is his or her own. Candidates sign each sheet.

Candidates transferring into Year 12

When a student requests access arrangements following transfer to The Nottingham Emmanuel School in Year 12, the school is compelled to follow the rules and guidelines issued each year by JCQ.

For instance, where a candidate has been allowed extra time for GCSEs at another centre, the SENCo must have available evidence which clearly shows that extra time is still needed for GCE AS and A2 examinations, and that the candidate continues to have an impairment which has a substantial and long term effect on his/her speed of working. It is likely that some re-assessment is necessary on entry to our school, and some students may find they are no longer eligible for access arrangements if they do not meet the criteria.

Those who do meet the criteria will, if not already on the SEN Record, be identified appropriately in compliance with our SEN Policy.

Candidates with access arrangements sitting several exams on the same day

Occasionally, a candidate may have several exams scheduled on the same day. If the total time, including extra time, adds up to more than 5 ½ hours (GCSE) or 6 hours (GCE), it may be possible to carry one exam over until the following day, providing certain guarantees regarding supervision are made by parents or carers.

Sometimes a candidate with medical difficulties causing fatigue may have a clash of exams. In such a case one exam might be delayed, in order to allow the candidate to rest, before sitting the second exam. They must be supervised in isolation during the intervening period.

Candidates sitting examinations set by awarding bodies not regulated by JCQ

When a candidate is entered for an examination set by an awarding body that is not regulated by JCQ, s/he may find that the rules regarding access arrangements are different. In most cases, the candidate's evidence of need will be accepted, although a separate application must be made, but the awarding body set their own rules regarding access arrangements and their use in specific subjects, eg. a scribe may be allowed in English by JCQ but not by CIE.

Vocational Qualifications

A large number of access arrangements and reasonable adjustments can be used to facilitate access to vocational qualifications, as long as they do not impact on any competence standards being tested. They must not affect the reliability or validity of assessment outcomes nor must they give the learner an unfair advantage.

Recording the use of access arrangements

The Nottingham Emmanuel School follow the advice given by JCQ and maintain a record of the use of access arrangements. If an access arrangement is never used then it is not a candidate's normal way of working and the arrangement should not be awarded for examinations.

Staffing and training

The staff employed to provide candidates with access arrangements are drawn from The Nottingham Emmanuel School associate and teaching staff, although the latter cannot assist or invigilate or support in those examinations for which their own students are entered.

External invigilators may also be employed, but additional arrangements are only provided by school staff.

Training is provided using training resources which are updated each year to comply with new JCQ guidelines.

Temporary arrangements

Temporary arrangements may be required by candidates suffering from illness or injury. In general, candidates with leg injuries are accommodated in the main rooms near the doors for easy access and exit.

Candidates with an illness or injury that has a direct impact on their ability to access the examination should obtain a letter from a GP, consultant or other professional giving a brief outline of their condition and the access arrangements that are deemed to be necessary. For example, a right-handed candidate whose right arm is broken may need a scribe and some extra time, as it is not their normal way of working and dictating to a scribe may be difficult for them. A candidate with a painful back condition may require supervised rest breaks in order to stand and move around.

In all cases where an access arrangement or a reasonable adjustment is needed, the school is entitled to expect reasonable notice to carry out its responsibilities.

Where a need for access arrangements has been identified before an examination session, the SENCo and Examinations Officer should be provided with medical evidence in reasonable time. For example:

- a candidate who suffers from panic attacks in test or exam situations should obtain a note from their GP well before the start of formal examinations
- in an emergency, a scribe can be provided with 24 hours' notice. It may not be possible to provide a scribe if the request is made without notice.

Temporary arrangements last for one examination session. If the condition persists another letter may be required for the next session.

Alternative accommodation away from the centre

On very rare occasions, a candidate may need to sit an examination at a residential address or at a hospital due to a severe medical condition or profound psychological condition which prevents them from taking examinations within the centre.

The centre must ensure that JCQ guidelines are followed with regard to conduct, procedures and staffing. The centre must be satisfied that the candidate is well enough to take the examination and there must be appropriate evidence of need held on file.

Appendix A

A Parent's Guide to Access Arrangements

As students commence their GCSE, or equivalent courses some students may have difficulties with facing formal timed exams, extended writing tasks or reading unfamiliar text. These children may qualify for 'help' in exams, formally known as Access Arrangements.

Every year the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) produce the following document:

Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties, Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments, General and Vocational Qualifications.

This document is available online and contains the rules, regulations and guidance on what a student may, or may not receive when sitting formal examinations. If you would like to read the full version, please go to:

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>

Access Arrangements and the Equality Act 2010

The rationale behind Access Arrangements is to allow students with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to:

- Access the assessment/exam
- Show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment/exam

These are part of the 'Reasonable Adjustments' of the Equality Act 2010 which requires an examination board *to make reasonable adjustments where a student 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.*

How are students identified as needing Access Arrangements?

Students are generally identified by teachers concerns and then referred to a Specialist Assessor. The Specialist Assessor will carry out assessments in the following areas; single word reading, reading comprehension, reading speed, spelling, typing speed, writing speed, working memory and cognitive processing speed. Following the assessments if a student is identified to have substantial difficulties it will be recommended that they receive an Access Arrangement dependent upon what their difficulty is. **Please see the enclosed letter detailing what your child qualifies for.**

Additional evidence required

For all Access Arrangements the SENCo must also produce a document that, according to JCQ, 'paints a holistic picture of need'. This confirms a student's normal way of working in school and could contain the following:

- Arrangements used in SATs at the end of primary school
- Comments and observations of teaching staff
- Interventions used during years 7,8 and 9 (individual learning plans, support given, small group work)
- Screening test results
- Reasonable Adjustments used when working in the classroom

Definition of each Access Arrangement:

Scribe – for students who are unable to write their exam answers.

Students dictate their answers to a trained member of staff. The member of staff records word for word what the student says. A scribe is allowed in all subjects except Modern Foreign Language exams. In subjects where separate marks are being awarded for Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) the

student will not be credited the marks for spelling and punctuation. They will be awarded marks for grammar. These are generally 3% of the total marks. Subjects that award separate marks for SPaG are:

- GCSE English/English Language
- GCSE English Literature
- GCSE Geography
- GCSE History
- GCSE RS

One to One Reader – for students who have severe reading difficulties.

A trained member of staff will work one to one with the student and read the examination paper. Readers are not allowed to explain the meaning of words, they may only read word for word what is printed on the examination paper. A reader is allowed in all subjects except GCSE English Section A Reading and Modern Foreign Language Reading exams.

Group Reader – for students who have some reading difficulties.

A trained member of staff will be allocated to read for a small group of students. Students must put their hand up if they wish to have anything on the examination paper read to them. Readers are not allowed to explain the meaning of words, they may only read word for word what is written on the examination paper. A reader is allowed in all subjects except GCSE English Section A Reading and Modern Foreign Language Reading exams.

25% Extra Time – for students who find it impossible to complete examinations or assessments in the time allocated.

Students will receive up to 25% extra time in all timed examinations. Students may choose on the examination day if they need to use their extra time or not. If they do not wish to use their extra time they must raise their hand and tell an invigilator they do not require their extra time. The invigilator will make a note of this and allow the student to leave the exam room. For example, in a one hour exam students who qualify for extra time can have an addition 15 minutes if they require it. Extra time is allowed in all examinations. Extra time is given at the end for listening exams.

Rest Breaks – for students with a medical or psychological condition.

Students may take a break from the examination. They must raise their hand and ask an invigilator permission to take a break. The invigilator will note the time on an incident log and escort the student on a short break. Students can usually take a few minutes. The time that they are out of the examination room will be added onto the end of the exam. Rest breaks are allowed in all exams except listening exams.

Bilingual Dictionary – for students whose first language is not English.

Students will have a dictionary in their first language placed on their examination desk. Students may not use their own dictionary, they must be clean copies supplied by the Examinations Officer. Students can refer to the dictionary as little or as much as is needed. Dictionaries are not allowed and will not be supplied in the following exams:

- GCSE English/English Language/English Literature
- GCSE Geography
- GCSE History
- GCSE RS

Bilingual Dictionary and 10% Extra Time – for students whose first language is not English and have been in the UK less than three years at the time of the examination.

Students will have a dictionary in their first language placed on their examination desk. Students may not use their own dictionary, they must be clean copies supplied by the Examinations Officer. Students must refer to the dictionary so frequently they require additional time to do this. Dictionaries and extra time are not allowed and will not be given in the following exams:

- GCSE English/English Language/English Literature
- GCSE Geography

- GCSE History
- GCSE RS

Laptop – for students whose handwriting is illegible or who have a medical condition that makes it difficult to write.

Students will be provided with an examination laptop for all exams except maths. They are not allowed to use their own laptop. Access is restricted to Microsoft word only. The spell check facility will be turned off. They must report to the exams office, escorted by an invigilator, after the exam to have the work printed off. They must verify the work is correct.

Laptop with spell check – for students whose handwriting is incomprehensible due to spelling issues.

Students will be provided with an examination laptop for all exams except maths. They are not allowed to use their own laptop. Access is restricted to Microsoft word only. The spell check facility will be turned on. They must report to the exams office, escorted by an invigilator, after the exam to have their work printed off. They must verify the work is correct. In subjects where separate marks are being awarded for Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) the student will not be credited the marks for spelling. They will be awarded marks for grammar and punctuation. These are generally 3% of the total marks. Subjects that award separate marks for SPaG are:

- GCSE English/English Language/English Literature
- GCSE Geography
- GCSE History
- GCSE RS

Conclusion

Access Arrangements are reasonable adjustments that should level the playing field. They are not in place to create an unfair advantage, nor should they disadvantage a young person. Access Arrangements may only be provided to students who qualify as per JCQ regulations.