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Autism and Learning Team

Advice for Access Arrangements 2018/19

There is a statutory requirement for all schools to make reasonable adjustments through their best endeavours to support the learning of children and young people with a SEN.
Code Of Practice (COP) 2015

“Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make ‘reasonable adjustments’.”
Pg 3 JCQ (2018)

Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties – Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments. - With effect from 1 September 2018 to 31 August 2019.

Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) 2018 – pdf available:

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

“Heads of centre, members of the senior leadership team, SENCOs and assessors must familiarise themselves with the entire contents of this document.”

Pg 1 JCQ (2018)

The purpose of Access Arrangements (AA) is to level the playing field so that, as far as reasonably possible, all children and young people have an equal chance to pass tests/exams - without affecting the integrity of the assessment (GCSE etc).

Many schools have an exams officer who is trained to assess for AAs. Among other responsibilities, the Head of Centre is responsible for:

- the quality of the access arrangement process
- the appointment of assessors

An assessor is defined in Chapter 7, paragraph 7.3.3, page 82.

Assessments for AA should not be carried out before the beginning of year nine.

Ideally, assessment takes place at the end of year nine or beginning of year ten so that the arrangement(s) that will be in place for the exam is/are also in place during the GCSE course

work/ end of unit tests/GCSE mocks, and so can be easily evidenced as the students 'normal way of working'.

The 'normal way of working' needs to be evidenced alongside standard scores that back up the normal way of working. It would be expected in most cases that standard scores would fall below 85 – so at least below average.

There are 18 AAs available, and/or modified papers may be also be requested. Some AA do not need to be applied for.

The school applies for AAs by completing Form 8. The process is then completed online in most instances. Form 8 available: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/forms/form-8-application-for-access-arrangements-profile-of-learning-difficulties>

Form 8 details the student's needs. Section A paints a picture of need which relates to 'normal way of working'. Evidence from the student and relevant subject teachers should be collated. Section A needs to be completed – with at least a skeleton of information, before any assessment takes place. This is so the assessor can bespoke the assessment for the AA(s) suitable for each student.

Assessments that might be undertaken and the application for AAs they may support include:

Reading accuracy – computer reader /reader

Reading comprehension – computer reader / reader

Reading speed of a continuous text – computer reader / reader / extra time

Spelling – scribe

Handwriting – scribe/extra time

Cognitive processing – extra time

Most AAs applications are for extra time – usually 25%, but up to 50%.

As indicated above, the school and assessor should consider the following areas to establish if extra time should be applied for:

- reading speed
- writing speed
- cognitive processing – for example: short term memory, working memory, phonological processing, visual processing

Section A may have evidenced the need for an AA for extra time for writing at length and reading comprehension, but not for practical examinations; or evidence may indicate the need for extra time for the processing of all information in which case it would seem appropriate to complete cognitive processing assessment(s) for instance.

Assessors should be aware that a student may not meet the criteria for extra time using the reading and writing speed assessments, but may do so when assessed against cognitive processing skills. The message is that, if the student benefits from extra time as a normal way of working, all avenues should be explored to enable that AA for exams at the least.

This information should not be read in isolation from the JCQ document.

The JCQ (2018) document details all AAs available, it also gives exemplars where a student may fall just outside the criteria, but there are other factors to consider – and so a SENCO may still be successful in applying for extra time / or look for another AA to be made.

Guidance for AA for students on the Autism Spectrum is available via this link: <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/shop/aet-exam-accommodations/>



Much of the guidance is relevant to all those who are applying for/require AAs.

The following is contained in the initial Statement in the JCQ document:

'Failure to comply with the regulations contained in this document (JCQ regulations 2018-2019) has the potential to constitute malpractice which may impact on the candidate's result(s). Failure to comply is defined as putting in place access arrangements that are not approved, or permitting access arrangements within the centre which are not supported by appropriate evidence.'