
EXAMINATION ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS GUIDANCE

Person(s) responsible:	SEnCo
Governors' committee:	Senior Leadership Team
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INTRODUCTION

This is intended as a guidance document with teachers and parents being the target audience.

The Examination Access Arrangements Guidance explains the actions taken to ensure inclusion throughout the College for all students including those with formally diagnosed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Guidance forms an integral part of our teaching and learning philosophy, which seeks to create a learning environment whereby every individual student may fulfil their potential.

At Collingwood College we are committed to providing equal opportunities for all students in line with the SEND Code of Practice 2015, the Equalities Act 2010 and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Regulations.

DEFINITIONS:

DISABILITY

Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 defines **disability** as a *'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on someone's ability to carry out normal day to day activities'*.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

A candidate has "special educational needs" as defined in the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years. Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability includes substantial and long-term sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, mental health difficulties and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer. Children and young people with such conditions do not necessarily have SEN, but there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN.

WHAT ARE ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS?

Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow students to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind access arrangements is to meet the particular needs of a candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment.

Access arrangements are the principle way in which Awarding Bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment. A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements.

How reasonable the adjustment is will depend upon a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

There is no duty on the Awarding Bodies to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested in an assessment.

Special Consideration

Special Consideration is a post examination adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time of the examination/assessment requiring authoritative support and at the discretion of the examining body.

Access Arrangements at Collingwood College

Collingwood College aims to ensure that all students have equal access to examinations and are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged over their peers by any long term, substantial SEND/or other learning needs which fall into the following four categories: -

1. *Communication and interaction.*
2. *Cognition and learning.*
3. *Social, emotional and mental health.*
4. *Sensory and/or physical needs.*

We will do this by applying the rules for Access Arrangements as set out in the most recent Joint Council for Qualifications guidelines. These are updated every year on the 1st of September and run through until 31st August. The currently released document will always be the first reference point in determining the correct access arrangement for a student. We believe it is important to abide by the JCQ regulations, so that there is parity in how access arrangements are awarded throughout a student's secondary schooling.

We will use every opportunity to identify students' needs from their first contact with the College. Professional reports are requested that demonstrate a SEND and a recommendation for a reasonable adjustment to be made to meet the student's needs and the type of access arrangements that are appropriate. Access arrangements reflect the support that is usually given to the student in the classroom (within reason), internal exams and mock examinations. This is commonly referred to as 'normal way of working'.

When might students need to be given Exam Access Arrangements?

An Exam Access Arrangement (EAA) is a provision or type of support given to a student (subject to exam board approval) in an exam, where a particular need has been identified and is provided so that the student has appropriate access to the exam.

What evidence is needed to apply for EAA?

There are a number of pieces of evidence that can be used to apply for EAA to the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ):

- Form 8 report from a Specialist Teacher or Specialist Assessor completed no earlier than the beginning of Year 9.
- Electronic Form 8 (new for the academic year 2020/21) via Access Arrangements Online (note: this version of the form cannot be used for evidence of the new Mathematical Processing measure, the downloadable paper version must be used for this).
- Previous EAA from Primary Schools/other education providers (*please note a Form 8 will still need to be completed for GCSE and A-level examinations*).
- Subject teachers – examples of work as appropriate.

- Results of baseline tests e.g. reading/comprehension age, writing tests, standardised psychometric testing.

Private Educational Psychologists' Reports

A growing number of parents have their children assessed by private educational psychologists and submit the reports to the SENCO as evidence that their child should be awarded extra time, or an additional form of EAA. These assessment reports are often very detailed but also cost a significant amount of money. This means that parents who are unable to obtain a private report through their financial circumstances are put at a disadvantage. As an exam centre we must be consistent in our decisions and ensure that no student is *'either given an unfair advantage or be disadvantaged'* by any arrangements in place. Often private educational psychologists recommend that children should receive EAA which can be in conflict with the history of need seen in school, or which would not be considered as reasonable adjustments given the nature of the child's SEND or other learning needs.

The College will accept private assessments provided that:

- a) the parents have informed us that a private assessment is taking place;
- b) the details of the private assessor, including details of their appropriate qualifications, have been passed on to the College;
- c) the private assessor makes formal verbal or written contact with the SENCO to discuss the student and the College's perspective of their potential needs.

A private assessment, even if it meets the criteria outlined above, will only be accepted as an application for an internal investigation into an access arrangement, and the existence of such an assessment does not constitute a guarantee that an access arrangement will be granted, especially if it conflicts with the stipulation for normal way of working.

If the advice of the private assessor for EAA conflicts with the centre tester (a member of staff holding a current formally recognised qualification enabling them to assess for EAA) then the recommendations of the centre tester will take precedence.

Procedures

How students would be identified for Exam Access Arrangements:

- They have had EAA at KS2 for their SATs;
- Baseline screening in the September of Year 7 using MidYIS testing;
- Subject teacher referral;
- Information from previous school/education provider;
- Parental Concern;
- Evidence from learning need screening in school.

An important principle is that just because a student has received EAA in the past, it does not necessarily follow that they will continue to receive EAA as their needs may very well have changed. For example, students for whom baseline testing at KS2 shows a reading speed score below the threshold required for EAA may not qualify for the EAA at KS4 as their reading speed may have improved to the extent that it no longer meets the exam board criteria.

Baseline Testing in Year 7

All students in Year 7 are tested using MidYIS, which provides standardised and UK-normed scores for vocab, non-verbal, skills and maths. These tests can help identify students with weakness in one or more areas. If a major concern is uncovered at this stage, the SENCO will, in discussion with the Head of Year, contact the parents and obtain permission for further testing.

Parental Concern

Parents are asked to raise concerns with subject teachers before contacting the access arrangements team.

Parents can contact the College to ask for advice about testing if they have concerns with the progress and learning of their child.

Once contact has been made with the parent, the SENCO will investigate their concerns by sending a “round robin” to the child’s teachers to gain information. Following this, a decision will be made as to whether it is appropriate to test a student.

Teacher Referral

As with Parental Referrals, teachers can refer a student to the SENCO where they have concerns about the learning and progress of a student in their class. 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 for EAA. Teachers are asked to refer students to the SENCO initially if they feel a child may be dyslexic rather than contacting the parents about their concerns. The SENCO will then contact the parents if the concerns are founded.

How do staff and parents know whether a student has EAA?

- Teaching and Support staff can access information related to access arrangement via EduKey and SIMs.
- Teaching and Support staff can also access an updated list located in the weekly staff bulletin.
- Parents will be contacted by the SENCO to discuss what they are entitled to, why and when.
- The information about results of assessments for EAA are kept confidentially in line with school policy and are shared only on a need-to-know basis.

How are Exam Access Arrangements applied for?

Access Arrangements are applied for during a student’s first examination year (Year 9 at Collingwood College).

Just because a student was entitled to EAA at KS2 does not automatically entitle them to it at KS3, KS4 or KS5 (Sixth Form).

The member of staff qualified to assess for access arrangements will use a variety of nationally recognised tests such as:

- *Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing 2nd Edition (CTOPP2)*
- *Lucid EXACT (in accordance with the guidance from JCQ governing the application of online testing)*
- Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH)
- *Test of Word Reading Efficiency 2nd Edition (TOWRE-2)*
- *Weschler Individual Achievement Test Third UK Edition for Teachers (WIAT-IIIUK-T)*

This is not an exhaustive list, and is subject to change, as the assessments are replaced/updated periodically in line with current practice. The test that the assessor uses depends very much upon the type of barrier to learning that the student may have. Should the student need further testing to assess for other learning issues or further EAA, the assessor will arrange this. Following a report

produced by the assessor an application is made to the Awarding Bodies for permission to implement the specified arrangement(s).

There are some considerations with this access arrangement application:

- The authorisation granted by the Awarding Bodies lasts 26 months, therefore it is prudent to assess and apply for EAA in the April/May of Year 9 in order that any permitted exam access arrangements are in place for the full GCSE period of both Year 10 and 11.
- A reapplication must be made in Year 12 in order to cover Year 12 and 13. Per the JCQ guidelines, it is possible to “roll forward” the application for EAA, however the student ideally should be re-assessed to provide up to date information for the SENCO, to be considered alongside history of need when considering the case for reapplication.
- There is a deadline imposed by the Awarding Bodies for when exam access arrangements can be applied for. This is normally 21st February, however in the academic year 2020/21, this deadline was 31st March 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This date can move between February and March, therefore all determinations of EAA to cover any external examinations taken in Year 10 should ideally be completed before the Christmas holiday.
- Applications for modified papers must be made the deadline imposed by the Awarding Bodies and laid out in the JCQ Regulations document. For the academic year 2020/21, this deadline is 31st January 2021.

“Normal way of working” is a very important principle, sometimes even considered the **most** important. An application for EAA made late in Year 11 or Year 13 lacks validity as there is little evidence of whatever EAA is granted being the “normal way of working”. However, within this concept, Collingwood College does recognise that the atypically high ability profile of our students, in terms of the national context, does mean that many learning difficulties can be far less apparent, and significant concerns raised in Year 11 or Year 13 will still be investigated. In these situations, greater weight will be given to in-school evidence such as Teacher Referrals and academic and EAA assessment results. While Parental Referrals are valuable, the phenomenon of issues being suddenly and unexpectedly raised in the weeks and months before external examinations is a valid concern, and it is highly likely that EAA will not be granted at such a late stage.

- Medical evidence for EAA, such as information from a specialist, will always be considered for EAA even if it is received past the deadline imposed by the examination board. The JCQ Regulations offer several examples of specialists of the types of specialist opinion that are valid. Generally, the information *must* come from a specialist rather than a General Practitioner (GP).

What are the procedures for processing an application?

Once the tests have been conducted and there is a recommendation from the tester for EAA, the SENCO or Exam Officer then applies to the Awarding Bodies. The feedback is instant at this point the EAA is added to the SEN list and the parents are informed of the EAA.

The application will require evidence of need, and the centre needs to hold evidence in its files that can be inspected at short notice. This can include:

- Recommendations by teachers
- Educational psychologists’ reports
- Letters from outside agencies such as CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services), hospitals or doctors
- Statement of Education Need or Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)
- Permission from the Awarding Bodies for the arrangement(s) requires:
- A signed copy of the Form 8 report by the designated tester

- A data protection form signed by the student.
- For Extra Time – history of evidence of need in the form of copies of work where a student has regularly used more than the allotted time.

Deadlines for submitting applications for access arrangements and modified papers on-line for GCSE and GCE qualifications

Access arrangements may cover the entire course and for GCSE and GCE qualifications **must** be processed using access arrangements online **as early as possible**.

The dates are set by the JCQ and we will endeavour to test students after the dates published but they will not receive dispensation for that period. This is due to allocation of time to test late entries.

From referral to point of access arrangements being awarded takes up to 4 weeks with Pearson (formerly Edexcel). Other Awarding Bodies tend to respond more quickly.

The deadline set by the JCQ is final, late entries may incur further inspections by the JCQ.

The decision to apply for access arrangements is based upon evidence of a history of need, history of provision and a specialist assessor access arrangements report.

The parent, carer or student requests an access arrangement not currently in place



Does the centre already have a picture of need and supporting evidence?

NO

YES

Investigate the request

Speak to the student

Consult subject teachers/support staff

Review classwork and timed tests

Conduct informal screening (if appropriate)

Proceed with normal access arrangements process



Does the investigation show the need for the arrangement?

NO

YES

Provide clear feedback to parent, carer or student

Explain JCQ regulations

Share JCQ parent guidance

Emphasise malpractice risk if unsupported arrangements are granted

Gather full evidence and process an online application if JCQ criteria are met



Does the parent, carer or student continue to challenge the decision?

NO

YES

Escalate to Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

SLT member (with knowledge of the JCQ regulations) liaises with family

Reinforce centre's legal obligation and decision



Access arrangements **cannot** be granted unless the centre supports the request and the required evidence is in place



WHAT ARE ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS?

- Access arrangements allow students with specific needs, such as special educational needs or disabilities, to access an exam.
- They allow students to show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the exam.



HOW WILL THE PROCESS START?

- Parents and carers should let the SENCo know as soon as possible if their child has additional needs. Good and open communication is important.
- Students in further education should record their additional needs on the college's enrolment form.
- The SENCo will work with teachers and the student to identify possible arrangements.
- Various access arrangements are available. For example, support for students who have difficulties with reading, writing, speed of working or concentration.
- Not all students with additional needs will require access arrangements. This depends on whether their difficulty affects their access to exams. Additional needs or a diagnosis alone do not entitle a student to access arrangements.



WHO WILL MAKE THE ASSESSMENT?

- If a student has learning difficulties, the school or college's appointed assessor must conduct the assessment to determine the need for access arrangements, such as 25% extra time.
- If an external assessor diagnoses a learning difficulty (for example, dyslexia or dyscalculia), the assessment can only be used as evidence for access arrangements if the assessor has liaised with the school or college and received the necessary access arrangements paperwork in advance of the assessment taking place.
- Specialists (for example, a medical consultant or a psychiatrist) are responsible for providing a formal diagnosis. They are **not** responsible for decisions about access arrangements.
- The school or college must decide which access arrangements a student has for their exams.
- Teachers must give evidence to show that an access arrangement is needed. The school or college will record how effective the arrangement is in the classroom, in internal tests or in mock exams.



WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- The school or college will have to apply for some arrangements.
- If a student has complex needs, a school or college can discuss their needs with the exam board.

FINALLY

Schools and colleges **must** follow the rules. They are inspected and if they are found to be breaking the rules, this will be malpractice.

**If you have any questions about access arrangements,
please speak to the school, college or SENCo.**