



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM
SCHOOL

University of Birmingham School

Access Arrangements & Reasonable Adjustment Policy

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University of Birmingham School

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments Policy

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At University of Birmingham School, we refer to Pupils (who are in Years 7-11 and aged 11-16) and Students (who are in Years 12/13 and aged 17-18)	

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy has been written in accordance with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Regulations document: 'Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2025/26' 'Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties – Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments' - with effect from 1st September 2025 to 31st August 2026.

1.2 Full details can be found following the link below:

https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JCQ-AARA-2025_FINAL.pdf

2. Access arrangements explained

2.1 Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow candidates/ learners with 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.

2.2 The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual without affecting the integrity of the assessment.

2.3 Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with their duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

3. Reasonable adjustments explained

3.1 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 visually impaired person who could read Braille.

3.2 University of Birmingham School acknowledges that 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.

3.3 Whether an adjustment will be considered will depend on several factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- The needs of the disabled candidate/learner.
- The effectiveness of the adjustment.
- The cost of the adjustment.
- The likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate.
- The available evidence that this adjustment is the candidates 'normal way of working'.

- 3.4 The responsibility of an awarding body is principally one of making reasonable adjustments for a candidate defined as disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010. The duty for an awarding body to make a reasonable adjustment will apply where assessment arrangements would put a disabled candidate at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a candidate who is not disabled. In such circumstances, the awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.

4. The approach undertaken by University of Birmingham School

- 4.1 University of Birmingham School adheres to the definitions in relation to access arrangements, reasonable adjustments, disability, special educational needs and learning difficulties as agreed by the JCQ awarding bodies and the Federation of Awarding Bodies.
- 4.2 Reference should be further made to the School's SEND and Inclusion Policy published online, and the Exams Policy.
- 4.3 In line with JCQ regulations, University of Birmingham School will make all decisions regarding access arrangements in consideration of the following:

Definition of Disability as stated in the Equality Act 2010

Disability: "a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities."

Definition of Special Educational Needs as defined in the Education Act 1996

A candidate is deemed to have Special Educational Needs (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty that calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

A candidate has a 'learning difficulty' if:

- They have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than most children of their age.
Or
- They have a disability that either prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of their age in Schools within the area of the Local Authority.

- 4.4 The existence of a medical diagnosis or physical disability does not imply that the candidate in question has special educational needs.
- 4.5 Both above must be considered in conjunction with any given access arrangement being the candidate's normal way of working at University of Birmingham School, demonstrating the involvement of the teaching staff in determining the need for the access arrangement.

- 4.6 The process of implementing access arrangements at University of Birmingham School ensures a “level playing field” for all examination candidates and most importantly, ensures that the integrity of assessments is not compromised. As far as possible, any access arrangement granted to a candidate will support independent working to enable the candidate to demonstrate their knowledge in a manageable way. JCQ guidance also notes that access arrangements considered for a candidate should be appropriate to help the candidate to prepare for the world of work.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 The role of the SENDCo and Assistant SENDCo

- Will know and identify pupils who display potential needs for access arrangements from their point of entry to School.
- Will, in conjunction with the examinations officer, monitor and collate supportive evidence from teaching staff, teaching support assistants and exam invigilators over the course of a pupil’s School career to identify areas of normal ways of working.
- Will work with pupils who require access arrangements to advise on accessibility of courses when the time comes for option subject selection to take place.
- Will liaise with the SEND Governor and senior leaders to make all stakeholders aware of current processes and procedures.
- Will liaise with an external Specialist Assessor to determine specific needs and make a final decision on access arrangements requirements.
- Will, in conjunction with the examinations officer, monitor candidates’ usage of access arrangements and determine whether the normal way of working is being followed.
- Will complete online access arrangement applications with the assistance of the examinations officer as required.
- Will complete Form 8, or Form 8RF, where required.
- Where Form 8 is not required, such as for pupils with a specific diagnosed medical need, who require access arrangements to be put in place, Form 9 (profile of need) will be completed. They will be filed in the School’s access arrangements file (which will be held by the Examinations Officer).
- Will correspond with parents and carers and candidates with regards to access arrangement decisions.
- Will liaise with examinations officer regarding ordering modified papers.
- Will have the final say on all access arrangement decisions.

5.2 Examinations Officer

- Will provide advice and consultation on processes and procedures.
- Will, when necessary, support the SENDCo or Assistant SENDCo in processing online access arrangement applications.

- Will arrange the logistics of access arrangements– accommodation, supervision, equipment etc.
- Will ensure that candidates are made aware that their data will be shared with examining bodies to apply for access arrangements.
- Will train examination invigilators and specialist invigilators in access arrangements.
- Will make emergency access arrangement applications relating to temporary conditions such as broken bones, or temporary illness on the day of an exam.
- Will make post-exam special consideration applications for candidates who have been disadvantaged in any way during a particular exam or exams. Reasons for disadvantage can include but are not limited to very recent bereavement, temporary illness of the candidate, serious illness of a member of the candidate’s immediate family, personal crisis on the day of the exam, etc.

5.3 Both will report in the first instance to the appropriate senior link who will oversee these duties.

6. Notifying Parents/Carers

- 6.1 Parents/carers should be aware that the regulations state that access arrangements cannot be put in place purely on the advice of a doctor or other medical professional. A medical letter will trigger an internal investigation but there is no guarantee that internal evidence would be found to support such applications. University of Birmingham School reserves the right to refuse applications.
- 6.2 A refusal is likely if there is no history of need or normal way of working documented within School or prior education.
- 6.3 External Educational Psychologists or other external agencies should contact the School’s SENDCo prior to carrying out any form of testing on any candidate, to identify a specific area of need for assessment. If an Educational Psychologist report is requested and funded by parents/ carers and initial contact with the SENDCo prior to testing has not been made, when the report is received by the School, the request for access arrangement to be put in place will be automatically rejected. This is in line with JCQ guidelines for access arrangement testing.
- 6.4 The normal way of working takes priority over any medical diagnoses, medical notes, external Educational Psychologist Assessments, parental requests, staff observations or any other form of evidence.
- 6.5 University of Birmingham School operates a “use it or lose it” principle. This is described in section 7 and is in line with normal way of working guidance.

7. “Use it or lose it” principle

- 7.1 For pupils to have access arrangements in place, we operate a “use it or lose it” principle. This is a way of ensuring that the normal way of working is established for pupils.

- 7.2 Subject staff will be asked on a regular basis, and at least annually, for evidence of how pupils work normally in lessons. This will include:
- Whether the pupil takes extra time to process information.
 - Whether the pupil takes extra time to complete work.
 - Whether pupil struggles to comprehend information unless it has been read out to them
 - Whether the pupil usually uses a laptop in lessons.
 - Whether the pupil's handwriting is especially difficult to read.
 - Whether the pupil communicates ideas, more fluently orally than in writing.
 - Whether the pupil requires regular use of tools to support a learning need, such as for example c- pens for Dyslexia or speech recognition software.

This list is not exhaustive, and consideration will be made for other provisions as necessary. The normal way of working principle is the primary form of evidence University of Birmingham School will use to make recommendations for access arrangements.

- 7.3 University of Birmingham School acknowledges that pupils may require access arrangements in some subjects, but not necessarily all. The requirements of different subjects vary – an English assessment would require a greater amount of prose writing than a mathematics assessment, for example.

Therefore, it is often the case that a candidate's difficulties mean that they only require support in one or two subjects. Equally, another candidate may need support in all their subjects. The key principle is that the SENDCo can show a history of relevant support and provision. The arrangements given therefore in the final assessments will reflect normal ways of practice within each subject.

- 7.4 Formal assessment weeks and in-lesson assessments will cater, as far as is possible, for the access needs of those pupils identified. However, if pupils do not use the access entitlement, they are likely to "lose" that arrangement.

- 7.5 All final decisions regarding access arrangements will be made by the SENDCo.

- 7.6 See the appendix on page 8 for some applied examples of how this policy may work.

8. Record keeping

- 8.1 Appropriate evidence of need will be available at University of Birmingham School for inspection by JCQ and examining bodies. This will be held by the Examinations Officer.

- 8.2 Evidence will take the form of one or more of the following and should be documented from entry onwards.

- Identification of potential candidates requiring access arrangements at the point of entry to School based upon information from primaries, initial staff observations, KS2 data, baseline testing results, and CAT tests.
- History of need.
- History of relevant provision.
- Intervention strategies.
- Assessment results.

- Staff observations of the normal way of working - to include teaching staff, teaching assistants and examination invigilators.

8.3 The School will:

- Provide relevant evidence of the nature and extent of the disability or difficulty/ impairment, which has a substantial and long-term effect on the candidate's ability to carry out day-to-day activities.
- Provide evidence that the difficulties are persistent and significant.
- Show evidence of how the disability, difficulty or impairment has impacted teaching and learning in the classroom.
- Confirm that the candidate would be at a substantial disadvantage when compared with other non-disabled candidates undertaking the assessment.
- Confirm that the access arrangement is the candidate's normal way of working within the School as a direct consequence of their disability.
- Ensure that the arrangements put in place reflect the support given to the candidate in School and therefore reflect the normal way of working within each subject area.

8.4 As per JCQ regulations, certain applications may need to be supported with, for example:

- A letter from CAMHS/FTB or a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist.
- A letter from a hospital consultant.
- A letter from the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service.
- A letter from the Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service.
- A letter from a Speech and Language Therapist (SALT).

8.5 All the above will be at the request of the SENDCo and no other individual.

9. External Assessment

9.1 For those pupils potentially requiring access arrangements, formal assessment and application to JCQ is carried out usually in Year 10 and usually no later than the beginning of Year 11.

9.2 For all assessments carried out in all subjects from Year 9 onwards, pupils should be allowed to use the access arrangement– this enables them to become familiar with what is required and get used to the procedures before they start their KS4 courses. Where an additional access arrangement need becomes apparent as a pupil progresses through key stage 4, these will be trialed and their impact reviewed in the next available assessment window.

9.3 When granted, access arrangements are valid to the end of the GCSE examinations and may be carried forward to further education if required. A copy of a pupil's Form 8 / Form 9 is provided to them with their exam results and it is their responsibility to provide this to their next educational setting.

- 9.4 Students joining the Sixth Form externally will be assessed, if a need is identified, by the end of Year 12 and usually no later than the beginning of Year 13.
- 9.5 Any pupil with standard assessment scores which indicate a substantial impairment will be considered for access arrangements from the point of entry to School, in line with JCQ parameters.
- 9.6 Specialist assessments for access arrangements will be carried out at University of Birmingham School by an appropriately qualified external assessor who attends regular update training.

A scanned copy of their certificate will be held by the Examinations Officer ready for inspection if required.

- 9.7 University of Birmingham School acknowledges that the misuse of access arrangements constitutes malpractice in examinations and can have serious consequences for the School, the candidate concerned, and indeed any other candidates. The School's access arrangement records can be inspected at any time by a JCQ inspector and must be thorough, well maintained, and easily accessible on request. We will work thoroughly with JCQ and other bodies to ensure we are fully compliant with all regulations and inspections.

Appendix 1 – examples of the “use it or lose it” principle in action:

Doctor’s notes and a quiet room:

For example, a pupil presents the Examinations Officer with a doctor’s note a fortnight before the start of the summer GCSE examinations, stating that they are suffering with exam stress and require a quiet room environment for their exams. This pupil displayed no signs of difficulties in the PPE (trial) exams or in any Controlled Assessments, has had no pastoral concerns throughout Year 11, and is simply suffering with the same anxiety as their peers – exam stress is to be expected. The “quiet room” is for candidates who have had substantial and long-term difficulties during Key Stage 4, which can be evidenced through pastoral involvement. Therefore, this request would not be granted.

Extra time:

For example, a candidate has been awarded 25% extra time in their examinations and assessments. A potential need was identified in Year 7, and evidence has been gathered from staff, which suggests the candidate has struggled to complete assessments in the allotted time, resulting in the SENDCo making the application for extra time. However, in Year 10, the candidate has completed Controlled Assessment tasks and PPEs (trial examinations) in several subjects and refused to use the extra time, finishing before the allotted time is over – in this instance, the 25% extra time allocation does not reflect the normal way of working, and the extra time would be removed.

Use of a reader:

Another example would be a candidate who was granted the use of a reader in their assessments as this was the normal way of working whilst in class. If the candidate refuses to make proper use of the reader during examinations or assessments, this is breaking regulations, and the candidate should not be allowed the access arrangement at all for future examinations or assessments.