

Merchant Taylors' School



ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This Exam Access Arrangements Policy outlines the provision and processes concerning access arrangements and reasonable adjustments at MTS. This provision helps to support pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including those who have been identified as having a specific learning difficulty (SpLD). This policy supports the school's work in creating an inclusive learning environment.

At MTS, the provision of access arrangements for exams and tests strictly adheres to the regulations set out by the relevant awarding body. In most cases, this is the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). JCQ regulations can be found in *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments: Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties (JCQ)*^[1]. This document is updated annually with updates coming into effect from 1st September each year.

EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

Access Arrangements allow exam candidates with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access an assessment without changing the demands of the assessment and are the way that exam boards comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'. Access arrangements aim to remove the disadvantages a pupil may have when accessing assessment due to difficulties resulting from physical, cognitive/learning, sensory or psychological differences. Access arrangements are designed to level the playing field and must not create any unfair advantage or compromise the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements must be agreed upon before an assessment/exam and must reflect the pupil's normal way of working in the school. Access arrangements are put in place on a subject-by-subject basis. This means a candidate may have different access arrangements in different subjects depending on need and eligibility.

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.

^[1] Available from <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration>

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.

An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, time frames or affects the security or integrity of the assessment. A student with a disability or difficulty which has a substantial and long-term effect on performance in examinations may qualify for access arrangements.

THE IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL PROCESS

Some pupils join the school with SEND that has already been identified and they may already have experience using access arrangements. Once at MTS, the provision of access arrangements for exams and tests strictly adheres to the JCQ regulations.

Other pupils may be recognised to have a support need while at MTS. Information on referral processes and the identification of support needs and SEND can be found in the School's Learning Support Policy.

The provision of access arrangements requires several stages:

Stage 1: Picture of need

Awarding bodies require the school to document a picture of need for a pupil. Initially, this is usually generated during referral, where teacher feedback may highlight a difficulty with work in class, a mismatch in performance in class compared to work under time pressure or other signs of difficulty. The picture of need is further developed through investigation, which may include observation in class and review of work samples. Where a picture of need is established, the next step is an assessment.

Stage 2: Assessment

There are two types of assessment. Which assessment is most appropriate depends on the individual pupil and their circumstances (e.g. the nature of the concerns and whether they have been assessed previously)

Route A – Access arrangements assessment

This type of assessment seeks to generate results that can be used as evidence for access arrangements. While brief feedback can be provided from this assessment, it does not result in a full written report and does not draw any diagnostic conclusions. This route is best suited to a pupil who already has a full diagnostic assessment report and where no new concerns have arisen.

Route B – Full diagnostic assessment

This type of assessment (usually by an educational psychologist) gives a much more detailed picture of a pupil's strengths and difficulties and if applicable, can formally identify specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dysgraphia. It explores underlying ability, educational attainment and cognitive processing (e.g. memory and information processing). As a result of the

greater depth of this type of assessment, it can give personalised guidance which can be used in school to help support a pupil. This type of assessment can also be used in the future to secure exam arrangements and support at university. The school can offer guidance and support for arranging this assessment, including recommendations for assessors and the assessment can take place in school if parents wish. The financial arrangements for this assessment are made directly between parents and the assessor.

Please note that whilst assessment reports that have been commissioned privately may provide useful information to help with the support of your child, these cannot be used for access arrangements.

Only reports from assessments where the school has been involved and where the assessment has been arranged with an approved assessor who has an established relationship with the school can be used to support access arrangements. We are bound by the JCQ regulations which stipulate that any specialist assessor / educational psychologist must have an established working relationship with the school. Likewise, medical reports will prompt an investigation of a pupil's needs, but there must be adequate evidence in school for an arrangement to take place and the nature of that arrangement is determined by the JCQ guidelines, rather than a specific suggestion by a medical professional. Assessments for a diagnosis should always be discussed with the Learning Support Department prior to being completed, so that the school is able to demonstrate its involvement and evidence any difficulties in this setting.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Some exam access arrangements must be applied for through the Access Arrangements Online (AAO) system. These include:

- 25% extra time.
- Reader / Computer Reader.
- Scribe (or voice-activated software, or word processor with spellcheck enabled).

To be eligible for these access arrangements, the JCQ requires an assessment to be carried out during or after Year 9 (4th form). There are strict rules regarding qualifying scores and the school must be able to 'paint a picture of need', meaning that there must be evidence from teachers that demonstrate the need for the arrangement across the curriculum. This means the school must maintain a file of evidence, on a subject-by-subject basis, to demonstrate need and that the arrangement is the pupil's normal way of working.

The SENCo is required to be completely satisfied that there is suitable evidence to support an access arrangement and that relevant processes have been followed correctly before it can be put into place

The application process is as follows:

For candidates with a learning difficulty:

- Initial referral or receipt of background history from the previous school.
- Receipt of teacher evidence.
- Form 8 Part 1 completed prior to assessment.
- Form 8 Part 2 Assessment completed and signed by the assessor.
- Form 8 Part 3 completed and signed by the SENCo, and a stapled paper copy placed in the candidate's file.
- Data protection notice signed by the student (in file).
- Application documents checked by the SENCo and processed via *Access Arrangements Online*.
- Application approved (copy of Approval Notice in file).

For candidates with a substantial impairment (medical need):

- Initial receipt of diagnosis from a hospital consultant.
- Review of needs in school and supporting evidence gathered from staff.
- Supervised Rest Breaks* put in place to be thoroughly trialled by the candidate.
- Evidence of the effectiveness of rest breaks gathered.
- Where rest breaks do not meet need, 25% extra time may then be trialled.
- Form 9 completed and signed by the SENCo, and a stapled paper copy placed in file.
- Data protection notice signed by the student (in file).
- Application documents checked by the SENCo and processed via *Access Arrangements Online*.
- Application approved (copy of Approval Notice in file).

**It is a requirement that where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty, the SENCo should have explored and trialled the option of supervised rest breaks through timed internal tests and/or mock examinations before making an application for 25% extra time (AA 5.1)*

All files will be maintained and stored in the school admin office by the Examinations Administrator.

CENTRE DELEGATED ARRANGEMENTS

Some access arrangements are 'Centre Delegated' and do not need to be applied for using AAO. Evidence of need and normal way of working are still required and a file similar to that described above will need to be maintained. Where required, JCQ Form 9 will need to be completed. In every case, the school must be able to demonstrate that the arrangement reflects the student's normal way of working within the centre and continues to be appropriate to the student's needs.

Centre delegated arrangements include the following:

- Word processor/laptop.
- Supervised rest breaks.
- Alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs (formerly known as separate invigilation)
- Read aloud.
- Prompter.

TIMELINE

It is expected that referrals to the learning support department will have been made in good time such that arrangements can be put in place for any mocks sat in preparation for the public exams.

Based on initial review (which may include informal feedback, samples of work or mock exam papers/tests, classroom observation and routine screening) a decision will be made as to whether a picture of need should be sought.

Where it is decided that a picture of need should be sought, the Learning Support Department will gather relevant information for part 1 of Form 8.

Once part 1 of Form 8 is completed, an appropriate assessment will be carried out.

Qualifying scores from the assessment will be added to part 2 of Form 8 by the assessor, after which the SENCo will complete part 3 of Form 8 to confirm access arrangements. On completion, the form 8 will be passed to the Examinations Administrator who will add it to the pupil's file and record the access arrangement/s granted.

A data protection notice signed by the pupil will be added to the file.

Once within the appropriate time frame, the SENCo will complete the data consent confirmation form and with the Examinations Administrator will then check and process the application via access arrangements online and on filing the approval notice, the access arrangement will be formally recorded on the learning support register as an external exam arrangement.

Where a pupil is granted an access arrangement prior to year 10/before a formal application can be made, the arrangement will be recorded with a status of 'school approach' on the learning support register so that teaching staff are aware and can support the arrangement as the pupil's normal way of working.

Where the reason for the access arrangement is not a learning difficulty and/or where Form 8 does not apply (e.g. in the case of substantial impairment or where the arrangement is centre delegated), the relevant paperwork, such as Form 9 will be used to record the equivalent information.

As access arrangements are applied on a subject-by-subject basis and pupils may have access arrangements for several years, it is expected that some pupils' arrangements will need to change over time. The Learning Support Department is responsible for monitoring this and will confirm the access arrangements that the exams department is required for an exam series three weeks before the exam series commences. In weeks 4 -5 ahead of the exam series, pupils will be contacted to confirm what access arrangements they can expect in each subject. This information will be passed to the SENCo for approval before being passed to the Examinations Officer for implementation.

KEY ROLES

SENCO (Head of Learning Support)

- JCQ state that it is the role of the SENCo to lead on the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process within their centre.
- The SENCo must keep and make available on inspection, files of evidence in support of access arrangements.
- The SENCo is responsible for determining centre delegated access arrangements following the requirements set out in JCQ documentation.
- The SENCo is responsible for applications for access arrangements being made through Access Arrangements Online, including those referred for consideration to awarding bodies.
- The SENCo must have full knowledge and understanding of the contents and refers to direct relevant centre staff to the annually updated JCQ publication on access arrangements and reasonable adjustments
- The SENCo is responsible for ensuring that the access arrangements approved allow the candidate to access the assessment but do not result in the candidate gaining an unfair advantage
- A policy on the use of word processors in exams and assessments is provided (and kept updated) by the SENCo
- The SENCo ensures that all assessments carried out and arrangements put in place comply with JCQ and awarding body regulations and guidance
- The SENCo ensures arrangements put in place for exams/assessments reflect a candidate's *normal way of working* within the centre
- The SENCo ensures the need for access arrangements for a candidate is considered on a subject-by-subject basis
- The SENCo works with teaching staff, relevant support staff and the exams officer to ensure centre-delegated and awarding body approved access arrangements are put in place for candidates taking internal and external exams/assessments

HEAD OF CENTRE (The Head Master)

- The Head of Centre is responsible for the quality of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process within the centre

- The Head of Centre is responsible for appointing assessors who have successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment, or who have an SpLD assessment practising certificate listed on the SASC website or who are registered with the HCPC.
- The Head of Centre must ensure that evidence of an assessor's qualification(s) is obtained at the point of engagement and prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate
- The Head of Centre must familiarise themselves with the entire contents of the Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments document (updated annually)

EXAMS OFFICER (Head of Exams)

- It is the Exams Officer's role to implement access arrangements during exams.
- Where a person is appointed to facilitate an exam (e.g. a reader or a scribe) that person is responsible to the Exams Officer.

EXAMINATIONS ADMINISTRATOR

- The Examinations Administrator supports the SENCo in making applications for access arrangements using access arrangements online
- The Examinations Administrator supports the SENCo in maintaining a database of student access arrangements and in maintaining appropriate files of evidence in support of access arrangements

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

- In the event the SENCo is not available during an access arrangements inspection, as required by JCQ, the senior leadership team will make available files of evidence in support of access arrangements and with the assistance of the specialist teacher, answer any queries from the inspector.
- The Senior Leadership Team must familiarise themselves with the entire contents of the Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments document (updated annually)

Head of Learning Support
November 2024
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