



EXAMINATIONS – EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

Exam Access Arrangements (access arrangements) are arrangements that are agreed before assessment and are put in place to ensure all pupils have equal access to examinations and are not substantially disadvantaged by any learning, medical, physical, sensory or psychological difficulty they may experience. Access arrangements must not affect the integrity of an assessment and do not change the demands of an assessment. Merchant Taylors' School is required to comply with the rules for Access Arrangements as set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications and updated each year.

Under the Equality Act (2010), awarding bodies have a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' for exam candidates that are disabled within the act, and who would otherwise be at a disadvantage. A candidate with a disability or difficulty which has a **substantial and long term effect** on performance in exams may qualify for access arrangements. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to an individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- the needs of the disabled candidate;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; **and**
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; **or**
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Merchant Taylors' School has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements process and is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements. The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties - Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.

Access arrangements are reserved for candidates to give them a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by removing barriers associated with their difficulty. Access Arrangements include a range of provision that includes, but is not limited to, use of a word processor, supervised rest breaks, extra time, use of coloured overlays and use of voice activated software.

Pupils who might need Access Arrangements may be identified following a teacher, parent or pupil expressing concern; through information received from their previous school; or from having a history of Special Educational Needs.

In order to put Access Arrangements in place, the school must be satisfied that there is genuine need for the arrangement that is consistent with the JCQ regulations which state *that the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties.*

When concerns are raised about a pupil the Learning Support Department will gather information using observations, school records and feedback from the pupil's teachers. Where appropriate, initial assessment will be arranged in school followed by an external assessment if required, which will include assessment for Access Arrangements. For an assessment report to be used by the school for an application for Access Arrangements, it **must** have been commissioned in consultation with the school, be carried out by an assessor who has an established relationship with the school and the relevant paperwork completed **prior** to the assessment.

Medical and Physical Difficulties

Where access arrangements are requested due to medical or physical difficulties, Parents will be asked to obtain a letter from a medical professional. For many arrangements, a consultant letter is required. The letter needs to include a brief outline of the student's condition or disability so that the school can link this to the access arrangements that are deemed to be necessary. Monitoring of students' needs is also required.

Where access arrangements are requested due to psychological, behavioural, sensory or communication difficulties a similar letter from a suitable professional may be requested. The Head of Learning Support is able to provide further advice where needed.

Specific Learning Difficulties

A pupil with specific learning difficulties will need to be assessed by a specialist assessor or educational psychologist. This assessment must take place no earlier than the start of year 9 (fourth form) and must be commissioned in consultation with the school, who will need to liaise with the assessor or psychologist in order to fill out the required paperwork prior to the assessment (form 8). JCQ require schools to follow this procedure and assessments that are not arranged in this manner cannot be accepted by the school for the purposes of Access Arrangements.

The school is required to maintain a history of need for the pupil. When applying for Access Arrangements, this, along with a specialist report is what makes up the Access Arrangement application documentation. Following an approved application, the school will continue to keep a file of evidence to support the ongoing need for the Access Arrangements granted. Access Arrangements should be in place from the start of the course concerned and JCQ publish strict deadlines by which arrangements must be processed.

The pupil must sign a Data Protection Notice to enable the school to make the online application using their information and assessment results.

Applications are made online, and will only be approved if the student meets the criteria issued by JCQ. Supporting evidence must be filed and available for inspection. In all cases, access arrangements should reflect the pupil's 'normal way of working'. This means that the arrangements must be part of the support that the pupil receives in the classroom and for internal, mock and external exams.

Pupils who have access arrangements are recorded on the school's Learning Support list and are required to attend monitoring meetings with a member of staff in the department.

Assessment process:

The following accountabilities are set out by JCQ

The role of the SENCo/Head of Learning Support is to:

- ensure that applications are processed on time, no later than the published deadline;
- ensure that the full supporting evidence is in place before an on-line application is processed;
- review the evidence before an on-line application is processed, ensuring that the candidate does meet the published criteria for the respective arrangement;
- hold all supporting evidence and present such evidence to a JCQ Centre Inspector upon request;
- ensure that the agreed access arrangement has been put in place before the candidate's first examination, e.g. internal school tests and mock examinations.

The assessor/psychologist must:

- record the results of any tests completed indicating that the impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on the candidate's performance;
- only work within their area of expertise and in an ethical fashion;
- use current editions of nationally standardised tests appropriate to the candidate;
- report the results of their assessment within Part 2 of Form 8
- provide the centre with evidence of their qualification(s) before assessing any candidate

As required by JCQ, an assessor will be one of the following:

- an appropriately qualified psychologist registered with the Health & Care Professions Council who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments;
- a specialist assessor with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, as awarded by BDA, the Dyslexia Guild or Patoss and listed on the SASC website, who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments;
- an access arrangements assessor who has successfully completed a postgraduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment.

All assessors must:

- have a thorough understanding of the current edition of the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments and the principles, procedures and accountabilities involved;
- be familiar with the Equality Act 2010;
- either hold an appropriate qualification to teach and make recommendations for secondary aged or adult learners who have learning difficulties or be a HCPC registered psychologist.

The school must confirm that the assessor meets the required criteria before the assessment takes place and evidence of qualifications will be kept on file e.g. details of registration from the SASC or HCPC online database.

Requirements for an assessment:

The SENCo must be involved with the arrangements for the assessment and will provide parents with a list of approved assessors who work with the school. Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCo will provide the assessor with background information/a picture of need using Part 1 of Form 8. The assessor is required to establish if the results of tests in literacy and/or cognitive abilities present evidence that the candidate has an impairment which substantially affects their performance.

Where parents would like to use an independent assessor, the reasons for this this will need to be discussed with the school. The independent assessor should contact the centre to express their interest in working with the school, and if appropriate, an established link with the school can then be formed

and evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information can be shared. This must take place before the candidate is assessed. Following the assessment, the assessor must discuss access arrangements with the SENCo.

The responsibility to request access arrangements specifically lies with the SENCo who will use the assessment alongside the picture of need and evidence from teachers to determine which access arrangements the pupil is eligible for. The need for any access arrangement will be considered on a subject by subject basis. Where the assessment objectives of an exam would be compromised by an access arrangement, the assessment objectives take precedence as an access arrangement must not affect the integrity of an assessment.

Assessors must:

- personally conduct the assessments. They must not sign off assessments carried out by another professional;
- use tests which are relevant to support the application. (Current editions of nationally standardised tests which produce standardised scores must be used, where published);
- ensure the candidate's chronological age is less than the 'ceiling' of the test, unless no test is published for the candidate's age;
- report results on form 8 as standardised scores which use a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15;
- sign and date part 2 of form 8 (an electronic, typed or handwritten signature is acceptable).

Further details of specific exam arrangements can be obtained from the exams officer, learning support department or JCQ. <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>

For all queries regarding assessments for access arrangements, please contact the learning support department.

Head of Learning Support
September 2021
To be reviewed November 2022