



Braidwood School

Access Arrangements Policy 2021/2022

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Date of next review	

Key staff involved in the access arrangements process

Role	Name(s)
SEN Team Leads:	
Cognition and Learning	Karen Saywood
Communication and Interaction	Andrea Huhle
Sensory	Rob Young
Physical	Christine Weston
Transition	Tracy Haynes
Careers	Phil Bailey
Head of centre	Karen Saywood
Assessor(s)	
Access arrangement facilitator(s)	Jo Barker

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What are access arrangements and reasonable adjustments?

Access arrangements

“Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow candidates with specific needs, such as 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. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the particular needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010* to make ‘reasonable adjustments’.

[AA Definitions, page 3]

Reasonable adjustments

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 vision impaired candidate who could read Braille. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on a number of 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.

This is because the adjustment is not ‘reasonable’.”

[AA Definitions, page 3]

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Braidwood Trust School for the Deaf 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...*”

[JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres, 5.4]

This publication is further referred to in this policy as GR

This policy is maintained and held by the Head of Centre alongside the individual files/e-folders of for each candidate requiring access arrangements. Each file/e-folder contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

Where the ASTL is storing documentation electronically he/she **must** create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. ([AA](#) 4.2)

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.

This publication is further referred to in this policy as [AA](#)

General principles

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in [AA](#) (section 4.2). These include:

The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing him/her from being placed at a substantial disadvantage due to persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.

The ASTL must ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the **start** of the course Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment.

The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre.

The candidate **must** have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before his/her first examination.

Equalities Policy (exams)

A large part of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process is covered in the Equalities Policy (exams) which covers staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements and the conduct of exams. Our policy is held on the school Google drive-team drive – Examinations. The access arrangements policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

The Head of Centre/Senior Leadership Team will... recognise its duties towards disabled candidates, including private candidates, as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010†. This **must** include a duty to explore and provide access to suitable courses, through the access arrangements process submit applications for reasonable adjustments and make reasonable adjustments to the service the centre provides to disabled candidates...

†for any legislation in a relevant jurisdiction other than England and Wales which has an equivalent purpose and effect ([GR](#) 5.4)

The assessment process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor(s) appointed by the head of centre. The assessor(s) is (are) appropriately qualified as required by 20/21

JCQ regulations in AA section 7.3.

The qualification(s) of the current assessor(s)

No assessor of candidates is currently employed by the school for academic year 2021-2022

Appointment of assessors of candidates with learning difficulties

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 (although it is not their role to determine what is a 'reasonable adjustment', but rather to help identify access arrangements that might assist the candidate);
- 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.

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed in the centre, evidence of the assessor's qualification will be obtained and checked against the current requirements in AA. This process will be carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Checking the qualification(s) of the assessor(s)

The head of centre will ensure that evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) is obtained at the point of engagement/employment and prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

The school will, when necessary, engage the services of dedicated educational psychologists, or any specialist assessors holding a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate and the Appropriate SEN Team Lead (ASTL) will hold on file, for inspection purposes, evidence that any assessor(s) used is/are suitably qualified.

Reporting the appointment of the assessor(s)

The names of all assessors, who are assessing candidates studying qualifications, will be entered into Access Arrangements Online to confirm their status. This will include all other professionals working outside the centre.

Process for the assessment of a candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor

All learners at Braidwood School are subject to current Education Health Care Plans. Where a candidate requires independent assessment, the ASTL will arrange for the candidate to be assessed by an assessor.

Before the candidate's assessment, the ASTL will provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted as per Part 1 of Form 8. The ASTL and the assessor will work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.

Any independent assessor will require evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This must take place before the candidate is assessed.

The candidate must be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8.

Any independent assessor will discuss access arrangements with the ASTL. The responsibility to request access arrangements specifically lies with the ASTL.

The assessor will be 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.

Assessors will personally conduct the assessments. They must not sign off assessments carried out by another professional.

The assessor will carry out tests which are relevant to support the application. For example, if the candidate requires a reader but does not have writing difficulties, there is no requirement to carry out tests of writing skills

Current editions of nationally standardised tests which produce standardised scores will be used, where published.

The candidate's chronological age must be less than the 'ceiling' of the test, unless no test is published for the candidate's age.

Results must be given as standardised scores which use a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. (These are standard scores.) Standardised scores of 84 or less are described as 'below average'. Standardised scores of 85-89 are described as 'low average'. Test results for Section C of Form 8 must not be reported as percentiles, scaled scores, T-scores or age-equivalent scores. Such scores must be converted into standard scores.

Reading skills

Reading accuracy: reading accuracy must be assessed using an individually administered, untimed test of single word reading.

Reading comprehension: reading comprehension must be assessed using a recognised test of text or sentence comprehension.

Reading speed: a candidate with a history of reading difficulties, whose reading accuracy (at single word level), or reading comprehension, is within normal limits for his/her age, may read slowly because he/she:

- takes longer than expected to decode the words, leading to slow reading (slow reading speed)
- needs to re-read text many times in order to absorb its meaning (slow reading comprehension speed)
- There are various ways of assessing text level reading speed:
 - a test which assesses speed at text level (known as reading rate or reading speed);
 - a test which combines text level speed and accuracy (sometimes known as reading fluency); a test that assesses the time taken to both read the text and to answer questions on what has been read. The test must provide a score for reading comprehension speed, not just for reading comprehension.

Tests which measure single word reading speed and efficiency are not appropriate in this context. However, they may contribute to cognitive processing measures for extra time, as recorded within Section C of Form 8 under cognitive processing or in 'Other relevant information'.

and/or 25% extra time for reading

Writing skills

A scribe or a word processor with the spell check enabled will be allowed in certain subjects when a candidate's impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect.

For examination purposes, a substantial impairment is interpreted as the candidate having:

- a spelling accuracy score in the below average range (a standardised score of 84 or less) where target words are unrecognisable and the writing is incomprehensible; or
- free writing which cannot be read by others; or
- free writing which is grammatically incomprehensible; or
- free writing which is produced so slowly that answers could not be fully recorded even with extra time allowed. (The candidate's writing speed as a standardised score being in the below average range for their age.)

Cognitive processing

Cognitive processing assessments would include, for example, investigations of short-term/working memory, phonological processing (e.g. phonological awareness, phonological memory and/or rapid naming) visual processing, sequencing problems, organisational problems, visual/motor coordination difficulties or other measures as determined appropriate for the candidate by an assessor.

Where a candidate has cognitive processing difficulties which have a substantial and long term adverse impact on their speed of working 25% extra time may be awarded. These difficulties will be demonstrated by tests which result in at least one below average standardised score, i.e. a score of 84 or less.

Other cognitive ability measures

In most cases there is not a requirement to carry out tests of general cognitive abilities. However, in rare and exceptional circumstances the ASTL may need to refer a candidate to an alternative professional, such as a HCPC registered psychologist or a specialist assessor with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, where further investigation is warranted which may include tests of general cognitive ability. The initial assessment may have indicated specific/global learning needs, mental health or developmental concerns.

Painting a 'holistic picture of need', confirming normal way of working

Evidence of the candidate's normal way of working throughout their time at Braidwood is collected from teaching staff. Teaching and support staff are encouraged to provide the ASTL with relevant copies of tests, classwork, or Teaching Assistant notes of support provided and to email the ASTL with any further information.

A historical picture of the use of access arrangements for each learner will be collated. The ASTL will bear in mind the "normal way of working" as defined by JCQ:

"The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre*, e.g.

- in the classroom;
- working in small groups for reading and/or writing;
- literacy support lessons;
- literacy intervention strategies;
- mock examinations.

This is commonly referred to as 'normal way of working'. For candidates with learning difficulties this is typically the background information recorded with Part 1 of Form 8.

*The only exception to this is where an arrangement is put in place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment (see section 8.3 of JCQ AA)."

ASTLs and assessors working within the centre should always carefully consider any privately commissioned assessment to see whether the process of gathering a picture of need, demonstrating the candidate's normal way of working within the centre and ultimately assessing the candidate themselves should be instigated.

An independent assessor **must** contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This **must** take place **before** the candidate is assessed. An independent assessor **must** discuss access arrangements/reasonable adjustments with the ASTL. The responsibility to determine and request appropriate and practicable access arrangements/reasonable adjustments specifically lies with the ASTL. (AA 7.5). Additionally, the independent assessor **must** be approved by the head of centre to assess the candidate.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access arrangements online (AAO) is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for centres to apply for required access arrangement approval for the qualifications listed on page 2 of AA. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications listed on page 74.

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by logging in to one of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

“For GCSE and GCE qualifications, Access arrangements online enables centres to make a single on-line application for a candidate requiring access arrangements using any of the secure awarding body extranet sites. Access arrangements online will provide an instant response and will only allow a maximum of 26 months for any arrangement.

Where the ASTL feels that a candidate is eligible to apply for access arrangements for Public Exams, she, or one of the specialist assessors, will liaise with the Exams Officer to make an online application via “Access Arrangements Online” and/or direct to CIE as appropriate.

Around 90% of online applications are approved, however it is inevitable that some individual needs will not be accommodated by a computer system, which cannot deal with every reasonable adjustment in specific case.

If an application is not approved, additional paperwork/evidence may be required to justify the request being made. In this situation the ASTL/specialist assessor will work together with the Exams Officer to ensure that the correct evidence is submitted to the relevant awarding body or bodies. The Exams Officer will be notified by the awarding body once an outcome has been decided.

The ASTL will keep detailed records, electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) and a signed candidate personal data consent form for inspection by the JCQ Centre Inspection Service. These files will be kept secure in the school office

Centre Delegated Arrangements/Adjustments

Some access arrangements can be “Centre-delegated” which means that an online application to JCQ/CIE is not required. Examples of such arrangements include supervised rest breaks, candidates who read aloud, use of a word processor, use of a prompter, use of a live speaker, coloured overlays and separate invigilation within the centre. The ASTL must be satisfied that there is a genuine need for the arrangement to be put in place. In addition the candidate’s difficulties must be established within the school and thus known to staff, the ASTL and/or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities.

Centre-specific criteria for particular arrangements/adjustments

Word Processor Policy (exams)

Approval of the use of a word processor will be granted following awarding body guidelines and where this is appropriate to the candidate’s needs and not simply because this is the candidate’s preferred way of working within the centre.

For further details and explanation please see our separate Word Processor Policy (exams)

Communication Professional (for candidates using Sign Language)

There is not a requirement to process an application using Access arrangements online or to record the use of the arrangement. No evidence is needed to support the arrangement. The ASTL is allowed to provide a Communication Professional to a candidate whose normal way of working within the centre is to use Sign Language.

A Communication Professional

The role of a Communication Professional is to present the questions in a different language without:

- changing the meaning;
- providing any additional information; or
- providing an explanation as to what the question requires of the candidate.

A Communication Professional will work ‘live’ in the presence of the candidate during the examination in order to allow for the candidate’s regional variations in BSL/ISL signs. Consequently, this cannot be checked by the awarding body for accuracy. Great care must be taken not to disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

The rules – the use of a Communication Professional

The Communication Professional must be familiar with the subject being examined and the candidate's normal way of working. This will ensure that the meaning of the question is not changed and that technical and subject specific terms are recognised and finger spelt.

(Technical and subject specific terms must not be signed.)

(The candidate's ability to recognise and understand the English version of the technical or subject specific terms within a subject is part of the assessment. If such terms are signed instead of finger spelt, then the demands of the question will have been compromised. This will constitute malpractice.)

A Communication Professional is not a reader. However, the same person may act as a Communication Professional and a reader. Permission must have been given for the use of a Communication Professional and a reader. The regulations for the use of each arrangement must be strictly adhered to. The Communication Professional can sign the instructions and questions to candidates taking written papers except in English, Irish or Welsh Language or Modern Foreign Languages examinations.

In Modern Foreign Languages or English, Irish or Welsh Language examinations the Communication Professional can only sign the instructions/rubric, and not the questions.

The Communication Professional must not sign texts/source material or literary extracts.

The Communication Professional must be proficient in the use of the candidate's sign language, being qualified to a minimum of BSL/ISL at Level 3. The Communication Professional must be at an appropriate level for the examination. The Communication Professional must be familiar to the candidate and must always work at the candidate's pace.

Separate Invigilation Policy

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved separate invigilation within the centre will be made by the ASTL.

The decision will be based on

- ▶ whether the candidate has a substantial and long term impairment which has an adverse effect; and
- ▶ the candidate's normal way of working within the centre
- ▶ separate invigilation reflects the candidate's normal way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations as a consequence of a long term medical condition or long term social, mental or emotional needs.

The Communication Professional may use repetition if requested to do so by the candidate. An alternative signing of the carrier language may be provided.

However, under no circumstances may an explanation of the question or clarification of the carrier language be given. These actions would be deemed as giving the candidate an unfair advantage and may constitute malpractice.