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EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS POLICY

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Introduction

Ensuring that our most vulnerable students are not disadvantaged when it comes to their education is at the core of our FSM school philosophy and desire to be an effective, truly inclusive school.

All FSM staff understand their roles and professional responsibilities in minimising disadvantage. They do this through careful planning and teaching, as well as by establishing strong systems that enable the school to identify needs and make reasonable adjustments to our provision, in order to meet those needs effectively. Ensuring that students have appropriate provision in their assessments and examinations is a key part of this.

What is the JCQ?

The JCQ - Joint Council of Qualifications - are the Regulatory body who regulate most of the exam boards in external examinations. They issue Regulations regarding access Arrangements and JCQ Inspectors will inspect the Centre twice a year to ensure compliance with Regulations.

JCQ Regulations are updated annually in September and the criteria that must be met for an access arrangement changes frequently. Therefore, it is important to note that the arrangements experienced in a previous year may have changed for subsequent cohorts.

[JCQ-AARA-2025_FINAL.pdf](#) - This publication is further referred to in this policy as the AARA.

Note: It is important to note that Exam Access Arrangements can be given for some practical subjects but not those where the assessment criteria is time-based.

What are Exam Access Arrangements (EAA)? And Reasonable Adjustments?

If a student has an identified learning need or disability that means that he or she is disadvantaged in comparison to other students of similar ability, he or she may qualify for access arrangements for public examinations. These 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 without changing the demands of the assessment.

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body (Exam Board) to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a **substantial disadvantage** in undertaking an assessment.

How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the candidate/learner, 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 may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body, unreasonable timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment. (AARA Ch.1))

As a Centre FSM ensures that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates. (AARA Ch.1)

There are a number of different types of access arrangement and these are determined by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). The main ones are listed here:

- reader and computer reader
- extra time 25% (or up to 50%)
- use of a scribe or speech to text facilities
- modified papers
- separate invigilation within the centre
- rest breaks
- use of a word-processor
- the candidate reading aloud (in separate room)
- prompter
- coloured paper and coloured reading overlays
- fidget toys, ear defenders (non electronic headphones)

Please note there are other arrangements that can be put in place depending on the level of disability / educational need. For full details please see the JCQ Exam Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments: (AARA Ch.5)

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of the policy is to confirm that FSM has a clear, written record that demonstrates it is leading on the access arrangements process and is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements (AARA Ch.4.2):

- The centre has a clear and well-publicised policy on access arrangements that is maintained by the SENCO Kim Purkis
- The SENCO holds files / e-folders detailing essential information that is required.
- The SENCO ensures parents understand the evidence requirements
- The Exams Office ensures arrangements are carried out as per SENCO requests for the GCSE Series.
- The Centre makes sure that procedures are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) publication: 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning differences: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments. The policy is renewed annually in line with the current edition of the AARA.

General principles

The head of centre will appoint a SENCO to coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties and disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language and those with a temporary illness or temporary injury. The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in (AARA 4.2).

The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate, preventing them 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 SENCO must ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate. A centre must make decisions on appropriate access arrangements for their candidates. Professionals from other organisations may give advice, they cannot make the decision for the centre. They will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments. It is the responsibility of the SENCO to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations.

Applications should be processed at the start of the course or during the first year of a two-year course, having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working.

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 and their normal way of working.

The candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before their first examination in a public examination series.

Picture of Need / Normal Way of Working

The arrangements put in place for EAA must reflect the support agreed by the SENCO and given to the candidate in the following areas:

In the Classroom (where appropriate)
Learning Centre Lessons
In internal assessments / exams
Mock Examinations
Literacy support lessons
Maths support lessons

These adjustments are regularly reviewed by the SENCO and information disseminated to staff. All adjustments are noted on a student's EHCP, Passport and on the SEND Register. All staff are aware of, and apply the appropriate provision in the areas above, to establish a normal way of working and provide evidence of the effectiveness of the strategies put in place. These arrangements are collated by the SEND Department and disseminated, discussed and updated prior to all internal examinations across KS3 and KS4, at Academic Leads meetings and at INSET meetings.

It is worth noting that students may not need the same access arrangements in each subject. This will be decided on a subject by subject basis based on need. If an access arrangement has never been used, the final EAA application for GCSE exams can be deemed as malpractice. Centres must have evidence of 'normal way of working' alongside formal diagnoses.

When will we assess a student?

We will assess identified students **at the start of Year 10** in order to ascertain whether students meet the EAA criteria. Parents will be notified at this point as to whether thresholds have been met and the exact picture of what access arrangements will be put in place. Evidence will still continue to be collated by subject teachers and subsequently we will apply for exam access arrangements to be granted in the exam series itself by January of Year 11 latest. **Any application is only valid for 26 months** and it is for this reason that we do not apply earlier.

Assessment Administration

Assessments for access arrangements for pupils with cognitive and learning differences are carried out by assessors appointed by the head of centre. The assessors are appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in AARA 7.3.

The current SENCO Department member Mr David Calais is trained to assess for access arrangements as a Level 7 Assessor. This qualification has been checked against current requirements in AARA - electronic copies are available in the SENCO folder and hard copies are

filed in the SENCO office.

Qualifications of the current assessor:

Mr David Calais: CPT3A (Certificate in Psychometric Testing, Assessment and Access Arrangements): N02544

Process:

Kim Purkis identifies the need to test from subject teachers (teachers are guided by the AARA 'The Role of the Teacher in the access arrangement process' [The role of the teacher in the access arrangements process 1 4 2 7 5 3 8 6](#)). Staff are updated each September and January inset with information and updates regarding this process. A guide is also available in the SENCO folder online titled Exam Access Arrangements Policy: A guide for staff.

Kim Purkis will complete the applicable Form 8 Part 1 documentation prior to the test based on the applicants evidence of need. The results of the test will then be analysed and results shared with parents and staff.

Not all access arrangements require a Level 7 assessment and in these cases the SENCO may recommend that a full diagnostic report from an Educational Psychologist (EP) or other applicable medical professional be prepared, detailing the pupil's cognitive strengths and weaknesses and containing useful information for school and parents. This is also helpful to assess whether needs have changed since transition to secondary school.

An assessment that takes place without any prior consultation with the school's SENCO cannot be used as assessment evidence for access arrangements. As stated in AARA Ch. 7.3.6 "A privately commissioned assessment, where the centre has not been involved, cannot be used to process an application using Access Arrangements online. This would be where the assessor has not been contracted by the centre, has not liaised with the centre, has not been approved by the head of centre and has not received a completed Part 1 Form 8 from the SENCO."

It is also important that parents, carers and students are aware that requests for an access arrangement cannot be granted on preference or diagnostic tests alone. All requests will need to be reviewed and analysed alongside the student's classwork, timed assessments and 'Normal Way of Working' in lessons. If parents are concerned about their child's progress, or about an undiagnosed specific need, they should consult the school's SENCO at the earliest opportunity so that the school has adequate time to establish evidence of need and Normal Way of Working.

Frequently Asked Questions from students and parents / carers.

What is the difference between an access arrangement and special consideration?

Special consideration is an adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade to reflect temporary illness, injury or other indisposition at the time of the assessment. It may be applied for a candidate if the Centre has failed to put permitted access arrangements into place during the exam series. It can only be provided when all the correct procedures have been followed and it is clear that the candidate was eligible for arrangements at the time of the exam.

In summary: Access arrangements are alterations or adjustments to the delivery of the external exams themselves, based upon evidence of need over time.

Is there a variety of Exam Room Provision?

- The access arrangement provision is necessarily a process that builds over time to enable us to accurately identify need and demonstrate a normal way of working.
- At FSM we build this picture of needs from the beginning of Year 7 but it becomes much more specific regarding examinations from the end of Year 9.
- The rules relating to public examinations are rightfully very stringent to ensure fairness within the examination system.
- Due to the nature of these rules, ***it is expected that all students will take their examinations in the DHH.***

***Separate Invigilation:** (students sit with others in a smaller room rather than in the Sports Hall) for examinations and controlled assessments.

- There is an exceptionally high demand for separate invigilation and we require medical evidence of need from a consultant or specialist.
- We cannot accept a letter from GPs. This must be dated within one year of the exam to be taken.
- Unless it is for a serious, acute and/or chronic medical or psychological condition, we cannot provide Separate Invigilation.
- General anxiety, low mood, stress indicators or other common conditions or factors will generally not provide adequate evidence for separate invigilation.
- We encourage all students requesting separate invigilation to make use of the school's pastoral team and school counsellor to help with student welfare, wellbeing and exam stress.

***Individual Invigilation**

- Individual Invigilation can only be accommodated in highly exceptional circumstances.
- We require evidence of need from a consultant or specialist which provides details of the student's condition and states exactly why Individual Invigilation is necessary.
- Following submission of this evidence, the SENCo and Examinations Officer will make a final decision and communicate this back to the applicant and parents/carers.

The criteria for the allocation of space may alter each year depending on the needs of the cohort in relation to JCQ regulations and school capacity.

What are the most common types of access arrangements?

Supervised rest breaks

- These must always be considered before applying for extra time.
- These will be allowed where it is the candidate's normal way of working.
- Medical conditions – rest breaks can be agreed if you have a serious medical condition, examples of this are type 1 diabetes or a sensory need. Medical evidence is required.
- AD(H)D - if you have a diagnosis we will look at the recommendations and consider whether rest breaks will be helpful in exams. Evidence of your diagnosis is required.
- Evidence from CAMHs of current treatment for a condition that requires rest breaks can be used. However, we do not accept evidence from this service if you have been discharged from treatment.

Please Note:

- ***We are not able or allowed to provide rest breaks in advance for anxiety/worry/ stress caused by taking exams. It is normal to feel stressed and worried about exams.***
- ***Our exam invigilators are experienced and trained to deal with students who are upset and worried on the day.***

What information/evidence is needed to make an application?

The information needed depends upon the access arrangement being applied for. Some arrangements require a specialist assessment by a level 7 qualified specialist assessor (see exam board delegated above), whereas others require an assessment by other professionals, such as an occupational therapist or Clinical Psychologist.

The JCQ Regulations are updated every year at the beginning of each academic year and provide information regarding the evidence needed for each access arrangement.

It is essential that the application reflects the candidate's normal way of working: i.e. if a candidate requires a reasonable adjustment within the classroom to access the learning environment, they will also need this adjustment to access an external exam. This is evidenced through the support provided within the classroom. A teacher questionnaire (round robin) can capture the evidence provided within the classroom.

The application must also reflect the candidate's needs. For instance: If a candidate needs longer to complete a task due to their slow processing ability as a result of cerebral palsy, and would not perform to their full potential if not provided with extra time, an application for extra time would be made. Evidence of need can be obtained by obtaining evidence of performance during internal exams.

Can a candidate have an exam concession without a diagnosis?

The short answer is yes. A candidate does not necessarily have to have a diagnosed learning difficulty to be allowed an access arrangement. However, there must be evidence of need and normal way of working, in addition to other criteria, such as below average performance (below standard score of 85) in certain skills.

Access arrangements are intended to increase access to exams but cannot be granted

where they will directly affect performance in the skills that are the focus of the test.

Does having a diagnosis help with being allocated access arrangements?

It is not necessary to have a specific diagnosis in order to make an application for access arrangements, provided there is a substantial difficulty or disability, as defined by the Equality Act (2010) which prevents a candidate from demonstrating their true potential.

If a candidate has a specific diagnosis, there is still a requirement to provide evidence of need and normal way of working before an application can be made. If a candidate doesn't need the arrangement, then there is no need to apply for it.

There is no automatic entitlement to access arrangements for a student who is experiencing special educational needs and/or disability. Each application has to be made on its own merit. For some students a reasonable adjustment may not remove their barrier to achievement, whereas for another student it may.

Does an EHCP Plan qualify a candidate for access arrangements?

No. Although an application can be made in the normal way and the Statement of SEN or EHCP can be used as evidence for the requirement to implement access arrangements. However, the application must be based upon evidence of need, which would be determined by the specialists involved in the care of the candidates.