

The Bicester School



Exam Access Arrangements Policy (EAA)

Policy Review Date: September 2023



Exam Access Arrangements Policy (EAA)

These are arrangements put in place to ensure all students have equal access to examinations. They are there to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by any learning, medical, physical, sensory or psychological difficulty they may experience.

As a school we follow the most recent guidelines published by the Joint Council for Qualifications.

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>

“These 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” (JCQ 2019).

The Equality Act (2010) requires any awarding body to make adjustments to ensure that any candidate who is deemed disabled within the meaning of the Act is not at any substantial disadvantage when compared to someone who is not disabled.

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;
- Effectiveness of the adjustment;
- cost of the adjustment;
- 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'.

(JCQ 2019)

EAA should allow students with substantial long term special educational needs or short term illnesses or injuries to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding without affecting the integrity of an assessment or examination. Access Arrangements are not intended to help certain candidates, or give them an advantage, but to give them a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Access Arrangements encompass a wide range of provisions which include:

- Being allowed to sit examinations in a smaller room
- Supervised rest breaks
- Use of colour overlays or coloured papers
- Prompter
- Extra time
- Reader or e-reader pen
- Scribe
- Use of a word processor
- Practical assistant

Identifying those whom may require exam access arrangements

Students with special educational needs are not automatically eligible for EAA in public exams. For example, a student with a slight hearing impairment, a previous diagnosis of 'mild dyslexia' or a physical disability that does not affect performance in an examination may not meet the criteria for EAA.

Each student will be assessed, using approved tests, in the summer term of year 9 as far as is possible to give an indication of need. Reading and comprehension is assessed via one test and spelling in a second. Students who fall below the required standard will be assessed further.

This will enable a complete list of eligibility to be determined ideally by the start of year 10. Parents and students will be informed by letter at this time stating what exam concessions they may be eligible for.

These proposed concessions are trialled during internal assessments in year 10. It is important that students, parents and staff understand only concessions which are considered a student's usual way of working will be formally applied for. This will take place prior to any external exams taking place.

Evidence of need:

In order to apply for EAA evidence of their need is necessary. Accepted evidence can be:

- Form 8 report from a teacher with the relevant qualification* to complete it
- Examples of work from subject teachers demonstrating a need
- Results of baseline tests.
- Previous EAA from primary schools (a Form 8 will need to be completed for BTec, GCSE and A-level examinations by staff at TBS).

*These assessments are overseen by the assistant SENCO KS4 following the procedures in chapter 7 of the JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments document, who has to provide the centre with evidence of their qualification(s) before formally assessing any candidate.

Private Educational Psychologist reports: Such reports will only be accepted as **part** of an application for EAA. They are not considered valid evidence of need by the JCQ. If the advice in the report conflicts with the centre's beliefs then the recommendations of TBS will take precedence.

Types of EAA:

All students are individual and therefore the EAA in place will differ from student to student. The EAA most commonly used at TBS include:

- Supervised rest breaks
- Use of a word processor (grammar and spelling check disabled)
- 25% extra time
- Bilingual translation dictionary
- Use of a smaller room with fewer candidates

Supervised rest breaks: This is considered prior to making an application for extra time. Students are able to have a break from the paper for a short time. This is often to compensate for physical issues (e.g. recent recovery from a broken arm, sprained wrist where the arm is weaker than usual), to enable calming down

(e.g. extreme anxiety, ADHD, ASD etc.), the student is supervised during this time and has no access to the exam paper.

Word processor: this is considered if

- The student's handwriting speed is significantly below average and extra time would not benefit them
- The student's handwriting is illegible and extra focus on handwriting has not improved it significantly.
- There is a physical difficulty
- Medical condition supported by evidence from a medical professional

The spelling and grammar check on any device used must be switched off. It is permitted by the JCQ that a student may type some answers and handwrite others e.g. simplistic one word answers are written and longer ones typed.

Scribe: This requires a degree of familiarity between student and scribe and a degree of training for the scribe. Therefore this needs to be in place as early as possible to ensure that this happens. As with any concession the use of a scribe should be the student's usual way of working. This proves costly financially as the scribe should be working with the student during every lesson. The school will need to consider the implications of this cost against the benefits to the student. There is an implication that marks normally awarded for "quality of written communication" e.g. spelling, punctuation may be lost if a scribe is used.

It is recommended by the JCQ that:

"A scribe will only be allowed where:

An impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on the candidates writing: or

A candidate cannot write, type or Braille independently, or at sufficient speed to record their answers even with extra time allowed, as a result of a substantial and long term impairment.

(JCQ 2019)

It is recommended that a laptop be used in preference to a scribe.

In a medical emergency a scribe may be appointed at short notice. However, this will only occur IF the student is unable to use a laptop efficiently.

25% extra time: This should **not** be confused with supervised rest breaks.

This is awarded if the student is assessed as having a below average processing, reading and/or comprehension speed. This is determined by appropriate standardised testing and evidenced by the gathering of work to demonstrate a student's normal way of working.

Further extra time: This is given in exceptional cases and requires further evidence.

Bilingual dictionary: The use of a dictionary is permitted where the student's first language is not English so long as this reflects their usual practice. It is not permitted to use these dictionaries in some exams e.g. English language. The dictionary must not contain pictures. Any dictionary used in exams will be provided by the school.

Separate or smaller room: Where a student shows extreme anxiety or requires a concession which would disturb other students e.g. reader, scribe etc. they may sit examinations in a smaller room away from the main bulk of the cohort. This may be a last resort and in the vast majority of cases the student will have been sitting assessments etc. with their classmates and therefore this is not a "usual way of working".

Reader/reader pen: The school have invested in "Claro Read" an assistive technology which will read questions to the candidate. Students are required to wear headphones, provided by the centre, for this purpose. The aim is that students will be using this as early as possible so that this becomes their usual way of working.

Alternatively a reader may be used – This, like the scribe, requires a degree of familiarity between student and scribe and therefore claro read would be the preferred option. A reader may also be required for maths and science exams.