



# ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

2025/26

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
John Rothwell	
Date of next review	January 2026

## Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name(s)
SENCo (or equivalent role)	<b>Sarah Cole, Emily Stevens</b>

Senior leader(s)	<b>Emma Gundry, Claire Greatbanks</b>
Head of centre	<b>John Rothwell</b>
Exams officer	<b>Chris Coffey</b>
Assessor(s)	<b>Altus Teaching Staff</b>
Access arrangement facilitator(s)	

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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 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'. (AARA<sup>1</sup>, Definitions)

### 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 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.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'.

The centre **must** ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates. (AARA<sup>1</sup>, Definitions)

\*References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see AARA 1.8). The definitions and procedures in AARA relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland.

### Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that The Altus 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.

(JCQ's **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 SENCo (or equivalent role) alongside the individual files/e-folders of each access arrangements candidate. Each file/e-folder contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

Where the SENCo (or equivalent role) is storing documentation electronically they **must** create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder **must** hold each of the required documents for inspection. (AARA 4.2)

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current JCQ document 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties - **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**'.

<sup>1</sup>This publication is further referred to in this policy as AARA

## General principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, 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. (GR 5.4)

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AARA (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 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, or an equivalent member of staff, **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. Although 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 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.

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

This policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

## 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 JCQ regulations in AARA 7.3.

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

At the time of producing this policy, the Altus School does not have an appointed assessor

### Appointment of assessors

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed in the centre, evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements in AARA. This process is 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 appoint:

- an access arrangements assessor who has successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment<sup>†</sup>. An

access arrangements assessor may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8; and/or

- a specialist teacher assessor with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, as awarded by BDA, the Dyslexia Guild or Patoss and listed on the SASC website. A specialist teacher assessor may conduct assessments to be recorded within Part 2 of Form 8 and, where necessary, undertake full diagnostic assessments; and/or
- 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 a full diagnostic assessment.

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. Evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) will be held on file for inspection purposes and be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the SENCo

### **Reporting the appointment of assessors**

The Head of Centre will appoint an assessor as outlined in AARA 7.3.3 and one whom has completed a qualification as required in AARA 7.3.3 and understands the relevant publications as detailed in AARA 7.3.4

The SENCo will work closely with and receive support from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with responsibility for SEND, the SLT with responsibility for Exams, the Access Arrangements Facilitator and the Exams Officer to ensure that the correct procedures are in place. The procedures are open to Quality Assurance by the Head of Centre.

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

- Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor will be followed and Form 8 (JCQ/AA/LD - Profile of Learning Difficulties) will be completed (AARA 7.5, 7.6)
- Assessors must personally conduct the assessments. They must not sign off assessments carried out by another professional (AARA 7.5.4)
- The assessor must carry out tests which are relevant to support the application (AARA 7.5.5)
- Where a computer-based assessment tool is used to gather assessment evidence for Part 2 of Form 8, a suitable qualified assessor must be present to oversee the test's computerised administration, actively observe the candidate and monitor the candidate's engagement with the assessment (AARA 7.5.7)
- A privately commissioned assessment carried out with prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to award access arrangements and cannot be used to process an application using Access Arrangements Online (AARA 7.3.6)
- 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 where these difficulties are demonstrated by below average standardised of 84 or less in two tests or one low average score (85-80) in tests that relate to two different areas. (AARA 7.5.12)

## Picture of need/normal way of working

Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCo **must** provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted, as required in Part 1 of Form 8. The SENCo and the assessor **must** work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process... (AARA 7.5)

Altus School reference AARA 7.5 (Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor) and 7.6 (Completing Form 8 – JCQ/AA/LD, Profile of Learning Difficulties).

## 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 covered by the tool. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications included. (Refer to AARA 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments) and 6 (Modified papers)).

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) using any of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

Online applications **must** only be processed where they are supported by the centre and the candidate meets the published criteria for the arrangement(s) with the full supporting evidence in place. (AARA 8 Summary)

- Candidates **must** be informed that an application for access arrangements will be processed using *Access arrangements online*, complying with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- The SENCo **must** keep detailed records for inspection purposes, whether 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)
  - evidence of the assessor's qualification (where required). (AARA 8.6)
    - Access arrangements online (AAO) is used to apply for approval of arrangements for the qualifications listed with the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.
  - AAO is accessed through the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by logging in to one of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application for approvals is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.
  - Applications are made with regards to the deadlines which apply for each examination series for the submission of applications for approval using AAO
  - Vocational qualification AAs are applied for using the appropriate Exam Board Portal if different to the above

## Centre-specific criteria for particular arrangements/adjustments

### Word Processor Policy (Exams)

An exam candidate may be approved the use of a word processor where this is appropriate to the candidate's needs and not simply because the candidate now wants to type rather than write in exams or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

## **Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy**

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs will be made by the Exams Officer/Assistant Exams office in liaison with the SENCo (or equivalent role).

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 (AARA 5.16)

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 19 - Word Processor Policy