

MARICOURT CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

**ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY 2020-21**

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## Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) rules and regulations

This document outlines Maricourt’s School’s policy on access arrangements. These are arrangements put in place to ensure all students have equal access to examinations. Students should not be disadvantaged by any learning, medical, physical, sensory or psychological difficulty they may experience.

The school must comply with the rules for Access Arrangements as set out in the most recent Joint Council for Qualifications publication.

Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the **Equality Act 2010** to make ‘**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 disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. According to statutory guidance, disability means ‘**limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people**’.

A candidate with a disability or difficulty which has a **substantial and long term effect** on performance in examinations may qualify for access arrangements. Access arrangements 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. **The intention is to remove barriers that may prevent them from demonstrating their knowledge and to allow them on to a ‘level playing field’ with other candidates**

However, the school must assess each potential learner and make justifiable and professional judgements about the learner’s potential to successfully complete and achieve the qualifications. **Some types of disability may affect the candidate’s ability to demonstrate one or more of the assessment objectives**. An alternative route may be available in the specification and advice must be sought from the awarding body. In some cases, a disabled candidate may have to be exempted from a component if that is the only reasonable adjustment available to enable him/her to overcome a substantial disadvantage in accessing the specification.

Access Arrangements encompass a wide range of provisions which may include: **being allowed to sit examinations in a smaller room, supervised rest breaks, use of colour overlays, prompter, extra time, reader, scribe, use of a word processor, practical assistant, etc.**

JCQ publish deadlines by which arrangements must be processed in advance of an examination series. Arrangements should not be requested just before or at the time of a candidate’s examinations, unless they are to be temporary and due to illness or injury.

The link to JCQ’s Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments:

[https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/AA\\_regs\\_20-21\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/AA_regs_20-21_FINAL.pdf)

### Identifying who may need Access Arrangements

In all cases, there must be a **genuine need for the arrangement**. The school must be satisfied that the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties. 'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months, or is likely to do so. **Students with special educational needs are not automatically eligible for access arrangements.** For example, a student with a slight hearing impairment, a previous diagnosis of 'Dyslexia' or a physical disability that does not affect performance in an examination may not meet the criteria for access arrangements. However, when concerns are raised about a particular student, the SENCo will gather information and consider their '**normal way of working**' from all the student's teachers to see whether they have similar concerns. If the initial concerns are echoed by others, the student will be assessed for access arrangements. A candidate may require access arrangements in all his/her written examinations, or they may only need arrangements in those requiring extended answers. **The school must compile evidence that supports each candidate's particular need for arrangements.**

#### **Candidates with a history of SEND** (Candidates with medical, physical, sensory, behavioural or complex needs)

Where access arrangements are requested due to medical or physical difficulties, a letter from a GP or consultant is required. The SENCo will ask parents/carers to obtain a letter with a brief outline of the student's condition or disability and the access arrangements that are deemed to be necessary. Parents/carers may be requested to obtain letters from other professionals when a student requires arrangements due to their psychological, behavioural, sensory or communication difficulties. However, if we receive a letter from a medical specialist requesting access arrangements for student, JCQ regulations state that in order for such an access arrangement to be awarded, the school has to have evidence that the student has historically received the extra support. The access arrangement should not 'suddenly be granted to the candidate at the time of his/her examinations'. If the said student has shown no signs of requiring said support, and has successfully sat their exams independently it would be considered malpractice to award the access arrangement.

#### **Assessments for Access Arrangements**

Students with a learning difficulty must be formally assessed by a Level 7 specialist teacher or an educational psychologist. The assessment must have taken place no earlier than the start of Year 9. An approved range of standardised tests are used and Form 8 is completed. A Data Protection Notice must be signed by the student, which enables the Examinations Officer to make the online application using their information and results. Formal Access arrangements expire after 26 Months, after this period the student may be re-tested. The most recent testing is binding and determines any subsequent Access arrangements.

Where formal Access Arrangements are determined and agreed these become part of 'normal practice'. This means that appropriate Access Arrangements should be taken into consideration in Quality First teaching and formally applied in any internal or external assessments. If a student chooses continually not to use the agreed access arrangements either because their needs change or they do not feel it aids their learning or achievement then access arrangements can be removed.

JCQ specify that **normal way of working is priority** when considering awarding an Access Arrangement to a student. **They are not permitted to award AAs based on private psychology/assessment reports.** When we receive a private report, it will trigger our internal process to assess student need and whether they meet the thresholds set by JCQ. We do accept private reports, however, in line with JCQ regulations:

**7.5.3 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. The candidate must be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Section A of Form 8.**

Also, the assessor must fit into one of these categories: a specialist teacher with a **current** SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate; **or** an appropriately qualified psychologist registered with the Health & Care Professions Council. **In addition to these two categories, other educational professionals may conduct access arrangements assessments if they meet the following criteria. They must:**

- **hold a post-graduate qualification in individual specialist assessment at or equivalent to Level 7**

**AND**

**All specialist 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);
- hold an appropriate qualification to teach and make recommendations for secondary aged or adult learners who have learning difficulties.

We will also require a copy of the assessor’s qualifications.

A privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre **cannot** be used to award access arrangements and **cannot** be used to process an application using Access arrangements online

### **Access arrangements available**

- Supervised rest breaks
- extra time 25%
- Extra time of up to 50% (between 26% and 50% extra time)
- Extra time of over 50%
- Computer reader/reader
- Read aloud and/or the use of an examination reading pen
- Scribe/speech recognition technology
- Word processor
- Braille transcript Prompter
- Language Modifier
- Live speaker for pre-recorded examination components
- Communication Professional (for candidates using Sign Language)
- Practical assistant
- Alternative site for the conduct of examinations
- Bilingual translation dictionaries with 10% extra time

### Computer reader / reader

The SENCo must produce a short concise file note on centre headed paper, signed and dated, confirming the nature of the candidate's impairment and that the use of a computer reader and/or a reader reflects his/her normal and **current way of working** within the centre. **For candidates with learning difficulties assessment evidence and Form 8 is no longer required.** However, the SENCo must be satisfied that:

- the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant reading difficulties; and (The candidate is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act.)
- there is a genuine need for the arrangement. A computer reader/reader will be awarded on account of:

- cognition and learning needs;
- communication and interaction needs;
- a medical condition;
- sensory and physical needs;
- social, mental and emotional needs

Papers (or sections of papers) testing reading

5.5.6 A computer reader will be allowed in papers (or sections of papers) testing reading. (Where a candidate is using a computer reader or an examination reading pen the SENCo cannot grant up to a maximum of 50% extra time.)

Where an application for a computer reader is approved, the centre is permitted to open the question paper packet in the secure room within 90 minutes of the awarding body's published starting time for the examination. This is specifically to scan the hard copy question paper into PDF format. Any infringement has the potential to constitute malpractice. However, where an application for a computer reader is approved, it is strongly recommended that the centre orders a non-interactive electronic question paper (see Chapter 6, section 6.7).

A reader is a responsible adult who reads the instructions of the question paper and the questions to the candidate. This may involve reading the whole paper to the candidate or the candidate may request only some words to be read

5.5.7 A reader will not be allowed to read questions or text in papers (or sections of papers) testing reading. A candidate who would normally be eligible for a reader but is not permitted this arrangement in a paper (or a section of a paper) testing reading may be granted up to a maximum of 50% extra time. An approved application for a reader will allow the SENCo to grant the candidate up to a maximum of 50% extra time in a paper (or a section of a paper) testing reading. Where Reading and Writing is being assessed in the same paper, the maximum allowance of 50% extra time must only be allocated to the Reading section. Centres should calculate the total time allocated to reading based on the number of marks allocated to the Reading questions and add up to a maximum of 50% to that time. Advice from the relevant awarding body may need to be sought.

In a paper (or a section of a paper) testing reading a reader may read back, upon request, what the candidate has written without any emphasis on errors

A computer reader/reader will **not be allowed** if a candidate's literacy difficulties are primarily caused by English, Irish or Welsh not being his/ her first language.

#### Examination reading pen

5.6.4 A permitted examination reading pen will not have an in-built dictionary or thesaurus, or a data storage facility. The use of an examination reading pen, provided by the centre, might benefit those candidates who wish to work independently. It may increase the independence of candidates who needed a reader for accuracy rather than comprehension. The use of an examination reading pen might also benefit those candidates who only require occasional words or phrases to be read to them.

An examination reading pen may be used in papers (or sections of papers) testing reading. However, the candidate cannot additionally be granted up to a maximum of 50% extra time in place of the reader.

### **Word processor use in Assessments and Examinations**

Use of a word processor in examinations is a centre-delegated arrangement. This statement about the use of word processors has been prepared to be shared with stakeholders. Principally, a word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate because he/she now **wants to** type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home.

It is not a reasonable adjustment for a candidate to request use of a word processor because they can type faster than they can ~~handwrite~~. The use of a word processor will be as a result of a **well-established SEN need/illegible handwriting which has been identified and evidenced over time**.

Students and their parents are at liberty to request permission to use their own word processor/laptop/i-pad in school at their own risk. This request will be considered by the SENCO/HLM/SLT and will be granted if it is agreed it will benefit the student. A school word processor agreement must be signed before this arrangement can begin and the device has to be PAT tested before it can be used in school. Personal devices brought into school are the responsibility of the student at all times and the school cannot be held liable for any loss or damage.

**Maricourt Catholic High School fully support the use of word processors in assessments and examinations in line with JCQ regulations and recommendations.**

***5.8.1 Centres are allowed to provide a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled (switched off) to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre and is appropriate to their needs.***

For example, the quality of language significantly improves as a result of using a word processor due to problems with planning and organisation when writing by hand.

(This also extends to the use of electronic brailers and tablets.)

5.8.2 The use of word processors in controlled assessment or coursework components will be considered standard practice unless prohibited by the specification.

***5.8.3 It is permissible for a candidate using a word processor in an examination to type certain questions, i.e. those requiring extended writing, and handwrite shorter answers.***

N.B. Examinations which have a significant amount of writing, as well as those that place a greater demand on the need to organise thought and plan extended answers, are those where candidates will frequently need to type. Examinations which require more simplistic answers are often easier to handwrite within the answer booklet. The candidate avoids the difficulty of visually tracking between the question paper and screen.

The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre and be appropriate to the candidate's needs.

**Permission to use a word processor in an exam may well be granted for a candidate with:**

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly;
- a medical condition;
- a physical disability;
- a sensory impairment;
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand;
- poor handwriting.

This list is not exhaustive. Each case will be considered on its merits and a decision will be made by the SENCO in consultation with SLT.

Examination word processors must have the spelling and grammar check/predictive text disabled. Candidates must be reminded to save at regular intervals. In this way, loss of work is kept to a minimum if a complication or technical difficulty occurs.

The candidate using a word processor must be present when the script is printed off so as to verify that the work printed is complete and is his or her own.

Candidates sign each sheet.

### **Other arrangements for candidates with disabilities**

For the access arrangements detailed below, there is not a requirement to process an application using Access arrangements online. No evidence is needed to support the arrangement for inspection purposes.

Amplification equipment • Braille • Closed circuit television (CCTV) • Colour naming by the invigilator for candidates who are Colour Blind • Coloured overlays (this would also include reading rulers, virtual overlays and virtual reading rulers) • Examination on coloured/enlarged paper • Low vision aid/magnifier • Optical Character Reader (OCR) scanners • Separate invigilation within the centre

#### **Separate invigilation within the centre**

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved for separate invigilation within the centre will be made by the SENCo and SLT. 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.”

This could be due to social, mental, emotional or medical needs. The candidate’s difficulties should be well known to subject leaders, progress leaders and SENCo and is established within the centre. Separate invigilation will also be the procedure for PPE’s and other internal assessments within the centre.

AA 5.16 The SENCo will gather evidence and complete a centre assessed note for any candidate who may require separate invigilation, and then liaise with the exams officer to determine an appropriate venue within the centre. The exams officer is then responsible for ensuring that the venue is appropriately prepared for separate invigilation, in accordance with JCQ regulations on the matter.

The SENCo and the exams officer will liaise to appoint an appropriately qualified member of the SEND team or an invigilator for the separate invigilation.

The exams officer will train the invigilator both to usual invigilation standard and to the individualized needs of the candidate, with the details recorded in the invigilator training log.

#### **Read aloud**

5.6.1 It can make a significant difference to a candidate who persistently struggles to understand what they have read to read aloud. Where a candidate is reading difficult text he/she may work more effectively if they can hear themselves read.

5.6.2 The arrangement must reflect the candidate’s normal way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations. 5.6.3 A candidate who reads aloud to himself/herself must be accommodated in another room, away from the main examination room.

## **Notification of Access Arrangements**

Parents/carers are informed by letter when formal applications for access arrangements are approved. The arrangements are named and further information is available upon request.

## **Temporary arrangements**

Temporary arrangements may be required by candidates suffering from illness or injury. In general, candidates with leg injuries are accommodated in the main rooms near the doors for easy access and exit.

Candidates with an illness or injury that has a direct impact on their ability to access the examination should obtain a letter from a GP, consultant or other professional giving a brief outline of their condition and the access arrangements that are deemed to be necessary.

For example, a right-handed candidate whose right arm is broken may need a scribe and some extra time, as it is not their normal way of working and dictating to a scribe may be difficult for them. Therefore, the Examinations Officer will then apply for Special Consideration.

A candidate with a painful back condition may require supervised rest breaks in order to stand and move around. In all cases where an access arrangement or a reasonable adjustment is needed, the school is entitled to expect reasonable notice to carry out its responsibilities.

Where a need for access arrangements has been identified before an examination session, the SENCo and Examinations Officer should be provided with medical evidence in reasonable time.

For example:

- A candidate who suffers from panic attacks in test or exam situations and will have a substantial and long term effect on his/her speed of processing should obtain a letter from CAMHS, a hospital consultant or psychiatrist or a Local Authority specialist service.
- In an emergency, a scribe can be provided with 24 hours' notice. It may not be possible to provide a scribe if the request is made without notice.

## **Conduct and Procedures**

### Staffing and accommodation

The SENCo liaises with the Examinations Officer, departmental and associate staff to ensure sufficient rooms and staffing are organised for candidates with access arrangements when examinations or controlled assessments are taking place.

Candidates sitting their exams in smaller rooms are expected to comply with the general regulations issued by JCQ. For example, mobile phones and data recording devices are not permitted in examination rooms for candidates with access arrangements under any circumstances.

However, some procedures may vary slightly from those followed in the main rooms. For instance, in a room for candidates with extra time or rest breaks there may be more than one exam taking place and so the seating is arranged to accommodate their needs and to take into account the duration of each exam: wherever possible, those with the shortest exam and/or those with rest breaks are seated nearest to the door.

It must be noted that staffing and room constraints mean that candidates cannot normally be seated alone in a separate room.

It is the responsibility of the SEND team to ensure that all required information is collated and accessible to the Exams officer and wider staff body. The SENCo, in collaboration with colleagues and students, will monitor and ensure that AA are normal working practice. The SENCo and exams officer will ensure that all paperwork required by JCQ is in order.