

# ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY 2024-25

## Mission Statement

Our Maricourt family, with Christ at the centre, is a community of welcome, compassion and respect in which we are encouraged to discover our true purpose and empowered to achieve the extraordinary so as to be the change we want to see in our world.

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

This document outlines Maricourt's School 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:

[AA regs 24-25 FINAL.pdf \(jqc.org.uk\)](https://www.jcq.org.uk/examinations/access/aa-regs-24-25-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.**

Before considering extra time

The SENCo must demonstrate that a supervised rest break to a candidate has been explored first and explain why it has not been effective. Supervised rest breaks will be awarded on account of:

- Cognition and learning needs;
- Communication and interaction need;
- A medical condition;
- Sensory and physical needs;
- Social, emotional and mental health needs;
- Students with learning difficulties

In order to award 25% extra time, the SENCo must determine the needs of the candidate based on one of the following:

- confirm that 25% extra time is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre and provide evidence from teaching staff that the candidate has persistent and significant difficulties, and how these substantially impact on teaching and learning;
- a current Education, Health and Care Plan, a Statement of Special Educational Needs (Northern Ireland), or an Individual Development Plan (Wales), which confirms the candidate's disability (supplemented by the required centre- based evidence - see paragraph 5.2.3); or
- a fully completed Form 8 with an assessment (Part 2 of Form 8) carried out no earlier than the start of Year 9 by an assessor confirming a learning difficulty relating to secondary/further education (Form 8 must be supplemented by a detailed picture of need)
- Students with complex medical needs (medical, physical, sensory, behavioural).

In order to award 25% extra time, so as not to give an unfair advantage, the SENCo must address both bullet points below, on centre headed paper/template, signed and dated:

- Confirm that 25% extra time is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre and provide evidence from teaching staff that the candidate has persistent and significant difficulties, and how these substantially impact on teaching and learning;

- The SENCo's detailed information, as above, will be supported by specialist evidence confirming the candidate's disability:
  - a letter/report from CAMHS, a HCPC registered psychologist, a medical consultant, a psychiatrist, a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT); or
  - a letter/report from the Local Authority Specialist Service, Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service or Occupational Health Service†; or
  - a current EHCP or a Statement of special educational needs (Northern Ireland) which confirms the candidate's learning difficulty, medical condition, physical disability, sensory or multi- sensory impairment. †For example, an Occupational Therapist specialising in Children and Young People Services, learning disability, mental health. The specialist evidence is not required to recommend 25% extra time but to simply confirm the candidate's disability.

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:

**7.3.6 An independent assessor must contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information.**

**The SENCo must provide the assessor with at least a 'skeleton' Part 1 of Form 8 prior to the candidate being assessed (Part 2 of Form 8). This must take place before the candidate is assessed.**

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;

## Recent Changes

### ➤ Rest Breaks

Supervised rest breaks must always be considered before making a request for extra time, since they may be more appropriate for candidates with a medical condition, a physical disability or a psychological condition (see Chapter 5, section 5.1 for more detail.) The SENCo must have considered and thoroughly exhausted the option of supervised rest breaks before making an application for 25% extra time. The SENCo considers 25% extra time, and not supervised rest breaks, to be an appropriate access arrangement/reasonable adjustment.

The SENCo is allowed to provide a supervised rest break to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre.

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 difficulties (the candidate is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act); and there is a genuine need for the arrangement.

Supervised rest breaks will be awarded on account of:

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

In addition, the candidate's difficulties must be established within the centre and known to a Form Tutor, a Head of Year, the SENCo and/or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities.

5.1.2 The timing of the examination should be paused and re-started when the candidate is ready to continue. During the supervised rest break the candidate must not have access to the question paper/answer booklet. The purpose of a supervised rest break is for a break from the examination and must not be used as 'thinking time'.

If the candidate needs to leave the examination room, an invigilator must accompany the candidate. A single supervised rest break should be no more than 30 minutes in duration. A supervised rest break will often be shorter than this. Candidates cannot be given as many supervised rest breaks as they like for as long as they like. A supervised rest break will not normally be required within the first 10 minutes of an examination but may be thereafter. The duration of the supervised rest break must be determined by the SENCo based on their knowledge of the candidate's needs and the candidate's normal way of working when placed under timed conditions. It may be helpful to consider in advance of the examination(s) how many breaks a candidate might need and the approximate duration of the supervised rest break. This will allow sufficient staff to be available to facilitate the rest break.

5.1.3 There will be some constraints on timing if the candidate has more than one examination to take each day. Where a candidate requires supervised rest breaks and extra time, the supervised rest break(s) may be taken at any point during the examination.

➤ Computer reader / reader

A computer reader

5.5.2 Computer software which accurately reads out text, (including synthetic speech

software stored on a memory stick) but does not decode or interpret the paper, may be used as computer reader. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the computer used does not contain any software that the candidate can access and which might assist them with the examination. Failure to do so may constitute malpractice. A computer reader will be allowed in papers (or sections of papers) testing reading.

The SENCo must be satisfied that there is a genuine need for a computer reader/reader due to the candidate's poor reading skills. Specialist evidence is not required for inspection purposes.

A computer reader/reader will be awarded on account of:

- cognition and learning needs;
- communication and interaction needs;
- English being an additional language;
- a medical condition formally diagnosed by a registered specialist;
- sensory and physical needs;
- social, emotional and mental health needs

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.

➤ 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

- Extra time of 25%

So as not to give an unfair advantage, Part 2 of Form 8 must confirm that the candidate now must have at least:

- two below average standardised scores of 84 or less; or
- one below average standardised score of 84 or less and one low average standardised score (85-89). In either scenario, the two standardised scores must relate to two different areas of speed of working as below:
  - speed of reading and speed of writing; or
  - speed of reading and cognitive processing; or
  - speed of writing and cognitive processing; or
- two different areas of cognitive processing which have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on speed of working.
- An assessment of mathematical processing may be used as one of the two required measures for 25% extra time in Mathematics examinations only. The mathematical processing score must be below average. An assessment of mathematical processing cannot contribute to the evidence for 25% extra time in examinations other than Mathematics.

See paragraphs 7.5.10 to 7.5.13 for further information on reading skills, writing skills and cognitive processing.

#### Access to a mobile phone for medical purposes

- 5.19.1 For those qualifications listed within the Deadlines section, an application must be processed using Access arrangements online.
- 5.19.2 The SENCo must complete Form 9 confirming the candidate's medical condition and the need to access their mobile phone during an examination. Formal evidence must be available to confirm the candidate's medical condition.
- 5.19.3 Access arrangements online will approve applications where a candidate with a medical condition will be subject to 1:1 invigilation when in possession of their mobile phone to ensure the integrity of the examination.

#### Remote invigilation

- 5.20.1 For those qualifications listed within the Deadlines section, an application must be processed using Access arrangements online.
- 5.20.2 Access arrangements online will automatically reject applications for the use of remote invigilation. The centre must then make an online referral.
- 5.20.3 The remote invigilation of examinations may be acceptable in exceptional circumstances to support a candidate who would not otherwise be able to sit their examinations. The candidate has:



- a formally diagnosed medical or psychological condition; or
  - a physical disability; or
  - a very substantial temporary illness or temporary injury.
- Formal evidence must be available to confirm the candidate's impairment.
- 5.20.4 As part of the online referral process the SENCo must complete Form 9 confirming that all of the following have been exhausted:
- the candidate sitting their examinations at the centre through alternative rooming arrangements;
  - an invigilator going to the candidate's home to conduct each examination;
  - the candidate has not already completed some examinations and would therefore be able to meet the published criteria for special consideration.
- The SENCo must also confirm that the candidate would be disadvantaged by not being able to sit their examinations using remote invigilation.
- 5.20.5 The head of centre must confirm that a remotely invigilated examination can be run in accordance with the awarding body's requirements as well as the expectations set out in the JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations.
- Remote invigilation can only be used where an awarding body has given prior
- approval. Approval will not be granted on the day of an examination.

Timetable variation requiring overnight supervision for a candidate with a disability

- 5.21.1 For those qualifications listed within the Deadlines section, an application must be processed using Access arrangements online.
- 5.21.2 An application for a timetable variation may be processed where a candidate has:
- a formally diagnosed medical or psychological condition; or
  - a physical disability; or
  - a visual impairment.
- Formal evidence must be available to confirm the candidate's impairment.
- 5.21.3 The SENCo must complete Form 9 confirming the candidate's disability and the need for a timetable variation.
- 5.21.4 Access arrangements online will approve applications where only one examination in the series is being transferred from the published afternoon session to the following morning.

The centre will be required to confirm that the candidate and their parent(s)/ carer(s) will adhere to the requirements for overnight supervision. A completed overnight supervision declaration form must be completed and be available for inspection.

5.21.5 Access arrangements online will automatically reject applications where it is proposed that multiple timetable variations will be required during the examination

series. The centre must then make an online referral. Full details of all the candidate's examinations which will be subject to a timetable variation must be recorded as part of the online referral to the awarding body. The proposed date and session for each examination must be provided.

## 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 will 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
- Brailers
- 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.

## 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.

