

## 2013-14 Update to:

# Dyslexia: Assessing the need for Access Arrangements during Examinations

A Practical Guide – Fourth Edition, edited by Anwen Jones

## Introduction

This document provides a brief commentary on the changes to the JCQ regulations “**Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**” since publication of the Patoss Practical Guide in 2011. This replaces all previous updates.

“Dyslexia, Assessing the need for Access Arrangements” provides much greater detail on the range of skills to be investigated, tests to be used, interpretation of results, the required paperwork and discussion of the wider issues involved.

However, it is **imperative** that all professionals familiarise themselves with the JCQ regulations directly and in full as the Guide and these notes are intended to *support*, but in no way replace, the regulations.

## Substantial Adverse Effect

As you read the regulations you will note repeated reference to demonstrating difficulties which have a “substantial adverse effect” or result in a “substantial impairment”. This reflects language in the Equality Act 2010.

Note, this does not mean a candidate must have a formal “disability” to have an access arrangement, nor that a candidate who does have a formal “disability” is *automatically* entitled to a particular arrangement. An individual with dyslexia is not *automatically* entitled to extra time – the need must be shown.

### When to Assess for Extra Time up to 25%, Readers and Scribes?

A key change has been made in that all evidence for these arrangements must now be drawn from assessments conducted **no earlier than year 9**, rather than from any time within secondary education.

When candidates begin an A level course, they do not need to be formally re-assessed, but the Centre must establish that there is a continuing need for these arrangements, and paint the picture of need. This might be achieved through gathering commentary from teaching staff, mock examinations etc and preparing a brief summary note to attach to Form 8.

## New Chapter 7: Learning Difficulties

This chapter details the process for assessing learning difficulties and has been updated and re-structured. **Heads of Centres and all assessors are advised to read it in full.**

### Specialist Assessors

The regulations now refer to specialist assessors, which encompasses all professionals who conduct testing for access arrangements. There are no longer different rules for teachers and psychologists. All professionals must:

- provide evidence of their qualifications
- use up-to-date tests
- only sign off their own assessments
- report results in line with Centre policy.

The JCQ provides a structure for choosing assessors and outlines the skills and/or qualifications they must have – noting a preference for assessors to be employed within the Centre. The JCQ prefers all centres and all professionals to use Form 8, although Centres are at liberty to design their own forms which provide the same key information.

When centres record details of their assessors the following guide now applies:

For GCSE / GCE Arrangements*	
Working within the Centre	Not working within the Centre
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriately qualified psychologists</li><li>• Specialist Teachers holding a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate</li></ul>	All educational professionals working outside the centre who are assessing GCSE and GCE candidates.
No need to record on AAO	Record on AAO

\* For non GCSE/GCE qualifications – the same principle applies to the completion of Form 8A

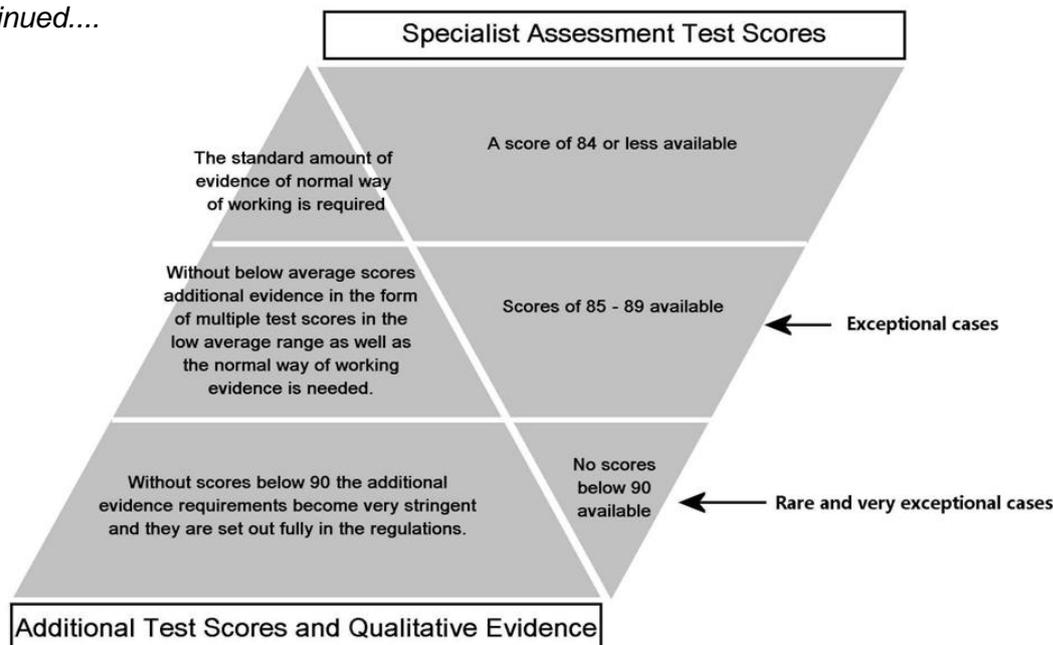
### Extra Time up to 25%

While this is the mostly frequently awarded arrangement it remains the one which often requires the most detailed investigation and joint work by the Centre and specialist assessor to paint the picture of need. The regulations provide some extensions and additional clarity, however, most of the text given in our 4th edition publication on page 88 still applies.

The JCQ has in recent years issued clear guidelines on quantitative (score) evidence and these remain their key measures. In the vast majority of cases those awarded extra time will have reading or writing speeds, or measures of cognitive processing abilities which impact upon speed of working, in the below average range (standardised scores of 84 or less).

Some limited flexibility now allows specialist assessors to build a case for the award of extra time in exceptional cases, if the below average score criteria are not met. Essentially, the spirit of the regulation change is about **balance**. As scores move away from the core criteria of below average scores the degree and weight of evidence required increases. The diagram on page 3 exemplifies how, in the end, each candidate demonstrates an equivalent amount of evidence but the type of evidence might vary.

Extra time up to 25%  
continued....



## Normal Way of Working

As the diagram shows, further evidence is always needed to demonstrate that using extra time is the candidate's normal way of working, not only in formal examinations but also in day-to-day study activities.

- *For those with below average scores*, this can be described within Form 8. The history of need, details of the support currently being provided alongside confirmation that extra time is regularly used when working under timed conditions will suffice.
- *For the exceptional and rare cases* the supplementary evidence will include actual documentation to be attached to Form 8. There is no definitive list of evidence, although the regulations give guidance; the Centre must take a practical approach and present a solid case.

## Speed of Working?

The extra time guidance refers to measures of cognitive processing which have an impact on speed of working. Specialist assessors can select those measures that they see as appropriate to evidence the candidates' difficulties but while still paying close attention to ethical and statistical demands to ensure over-testing is not undertaken. Some examples of the type of measures are provided in chapter 7. They include abilities in:

- Phonological awareness
- Working memory (Digit span tests)
- Rapid naming
- Visual processing
- Visual/motor integration abilities

The key question for assessors is does the cognitive difficulty have a substantial adverse effect on the individual's ability to work efficiently – the impact must not be minor or trivial.

## Reading Support

A significant change has been made in regard to the use of **computer readers**. Reading software is now allowed – even in papers testing reading. The rationale here is that although the candidate is making use of a support tool they are doing so independently. Note a **human** reader is still not allowed in papers testing reading.

A further new introduction is an “examination reading pen”. This is a specialist tool, rather than a standard reading pen, which does not have an in-built dictionary or any data storage facility. This might benefit those who wish to work independently who do not qualify for a reader.

### *Summary of reading support options and evidence requirements*

Increasing severity of need 			
Read aloud or use of coloured overlays	Specialist examination reading pen	Computer Reader	Human Reader
No evidence required		Standardised score of 84 or less	

## Writing Support

To allow candidates to access specific marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar in certain GCSE subjects, assessors might consider a word processor with the spell check disabled, rather than a scribe, if this will meet the candidate’s needs. Where a transcript is used, spelling cannot be corrected. It is recommended transcripts are only used in exceptional circumstances.

### *Summary of writing support options and evidence requirements*

Increasing severity of need 		
Word processor with spelling and grammar check switched off	Transcript	Human scribe, voice activated software, word processor with spelling and grammar check switched on.
No evidence required		Standardised score of 84 or less and/or additional evidence as per regulations

## Using extra time of up to 25% with a reader and scribe

If a student meets the criteria for a reader or a scribe they can be offered up to 25% extra time without the assessor having to provide additional separate test evidence of formal speed of working difficulties. However, the Centre still has to describe within Form 8 why the extra time is needed as well as the reader/scribe arrangement, by drawing additional evidence from normal way of working. The extra time is not automatic.

Update by Anwen Jones and Nick Lait

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