



Joint Council for  
Qualifications<sup>CIC</sup>

# Case studies of disabled candidates with significant difficulties to assist SENCOs and senior leaders

For the attention of heads of centres,  
senior leaders and SENCOs.

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## Introduction

Every year large numbers of applications for access arrangements are processed by schools and colleges. It is important that heads of centre, senior leaders and SENCos continue to ensure that the needs of candidates with learning difficulties and disabilities are being identified and they are given the necessary support to successfully access their examinations and assessments.

The needs of candidates will vary and will require careful consideration, ensuring the most appropriate and reasonable adjustments are put in place. Schools and colleges **must** meet their responsibilities under the terms of the Equality Act 2010.

The JCQ Member awarding bodies have produced additional examples of disabled candidates with significant difficulties being awarded a range of adjustments which will help SENCos with more exceptional cases.

Where a candidate has complex and substantial needs, the SENCo should discuss the case with the awarding body's Special Requirements Team as soon as possible. This is particularly needed where there are practical components within the specification(s).

## Example 1

An A-level candidate has significant mental health issues which can lead to periodic psychotic episodes. The candidate is receiving treatment at an out-patients clinic.

His school wants him to complete his A-level examinations next summer. The SENCo has studied the JCQ publication *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*:

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

and identified the following arrangements:

- supervised rest breaks
- 50% extra time
- a reader and
- a scribe.

As supervised rest breaks are a centre delegated access arrangement, the SENCo will produce a short concise file note. This will confirm the nature of the candidate's impairment (a significant mental health issue), the consequential need for supervised rest breaks and that supervised rest breaks reflect his current and normal way of working in timed assessments. The SENCo's file note will be available for inspection by a JCQ Centre Inspector.

The SENCo can produce a substantial and compelling picture of need to justify 50% extra time. The candidate's mental health condition very substantially hinders his cognitive processing. The centre based evidence can be supplemented by a formal diagnosis of a mental health condition.

The school is supporting the candidate at home with his A-level studies. He has a dedicated Teaching Assistant who acts as a reader and a scribe in timed internal assessments. As his A-level examinations approach, he will be introduced to a dedicated invigilator who will invigilate his A-level examinations at home, with his Teaching Assistant continuing to act as his reader and scribe.

The SENCo can produce a short concise statement which confirms his mental health condition, the consequential need for a reader and that a reader reflects his current and normal way of working. She can also produce the centre based evidence to justify the need for a scribe.

The SENCo processes an online application for 50% extra time, a reader and a scribe. The application is automatically rejected by the online system. The SENCo refers the application online to the relevant awarding bodies.

The awarding bodies will consider the application in light of the candidate's substantial needs.

## Example 2

A GCSE candidate is receiving cancer treatment with frequent visits to hospital. Due to her treatment she suffers bouts of significant mental and physical fatigue. She is being taught online by her school through 'Zoom'.

The candidate wishes to work independently. Her normal way of working is supervised rest breaks, 50% extra time and the use of a word processor with the spelling and grammar check switched off.

However, her Form Tutor and Head of Year are very concerned about an invigilator going to her house and conducting her GCSE examinations. The candidate's cancer treatment has led to a weakened immune system and a reduced ability to fight infections. Having spoken with the SENCo and Deputy Head (Curriculum) they feel that remote invigilation would be an appropriate and reasonable adjustment.

Having studied **section 5.3, pages 36-38**, of the JCQ regulations, the SENCo can produce a substantial and compelling picture of need to justify the requirement for 50% extra time. The candidate's oncologist has also written a supporting letter.

The SENCo processes an online application for 50% extra time and 'Other'. The application is automatically rejected by the online system. The SENCo refers the application online to the relevant awarding bodies.

The online application for 'Other' is a request for remote invigilation which sets out how the candidate's GCSE examinations will be conducted remotely, the technology to be used and how the centre will ensure the integrity and security of the examinations.

The awarding bodies will consider the application in light of the candidate's substantial needs.

## Example 3

A candidate has a deteriorating congenital disease which is having a significant and adverse effect on his ability to read and write. The SENCo is aware that his needs are changing and that he may require additional access arrangements to successfully complete his examinations.

He has a dedicated Teaching Assistant who is preparing him for his A-levels and also acts as his reader and scribe.

The candidate will sit his A-level examinations at home. The examinations officer will use the Centre Admin Portal (CAP) to process an online form to notify the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement no later than six weeks before his first A-level examination. Before doing so she will read the guidance notes:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms/>

An experienced invigilator will conduct the candidate's A-level examinations in his home with his Teaching Assistant acting as his reader and scribe.

As the candidate has persistent and significant reading and writing difficulties, the SENCo processes an online application for a reader and a scribe using *Access arrangements online* which is approved.

Although a reader and a scribe have proved to be effective arrangements to date, the SENCo is mindful of the candidate's deteriorating condition. The invigilator will be advised to implement a supervised rest break if the candidate is seen to be struggling during an examination. He will note this on the Exam Room Incident Log and the SENCo will produce a short concise file note explaining the need for supervised rest breaks as a temporary access arrangement.

## Example 4

A GCSE candidate is currently in hospital with anorexia. The hospital is a registered examination centre and it is likely that the candidate will sit her GCSE examinations there. The examinations officer will process an online application for a transferred candidate arrangement using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by 21 March. Before doing so she will read the guidance notes:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms/>

The hospital's Education Team has worked closely with the SENCo. Given the candidate is extremely physically and mentally fatigued, they do not feel extra time would be an appropriate and reasonable adjustment. Supervised rest breaks have proved effective to date and have allowed the candidate to complete her first set of GCSE mock examinations.

Having studied **section 5.1, page 29** of the JCQ regulations, the SENCo can produce a short concise file note on centre headed paper to justify the need for supervised rest breaks.

The candidate will also require a reader and a scribe. The SENCo can produce the evidence required in paragraph **5.5.5, page 43** (a reader) and **pages 52 to 53** (a scribe) of the JCQ regulations. The candidate's consultant has produced a letter outlining the seriousness of her condition.

An online application for a reader and a scribe is processed. The application is approved by *Access arrangements online*.

## Example 5

A BTEC Level 3 candidate has a condition which causes rapid degeneration of eyesight and mobility. He uses a computer reader for examinations, as well as 25% extra time, and a reader and a scribe for internal assessment tasks.

The SENCo processes an online application for 25% extra time, a computer reader/reader and a scribe. The application is approved by PAAO – *Pearson Access Arrangements Online*.

The centre will support the candidate by seating him appropriately within the main examination room. This will enable him to sit more comfortably and move around during his supervised rest breaks to prevent pain and discomfort.

The BTEC Level 3 qualification includes one unit which has pre-release material with a text source. The candidate is required to make notes which will then be taken into the examination. This activity requires the candidate to communicate with the reader and scribe about specific details in their notes.

The candidate's condition has been deteriorating in recent months and the SENCo decides that 25% extra time is now insufficient.

The SENCo processes a new online application for 50% extra time with a compelling and substantial picture of need. The application is automatically rejected by PAAO. The SENCo refers the application online to Pearson.

## Example 6

A GCSE candidate has a significant visual impairment. Their eyesight is gradually deteriorating.

A3 36 point bold modified enlarged papers were ordered for the candidate's GCSE examinations.

Additionally, the SENCo processed an online application for 100% extra time which was supported by a compelling and substantial picture of need as required by **section 5.4, pages 38 to 39** of the JCQ regulations. Following an automatic rejection of the application by the online system, the awarding bodies approved 100% extra time for the candidate's GCSE examinations.

However, the SENCo is becoming increasingly concerned that the candidate will be unable to sit two GCSE examinations in one day.

A computer reader is not the candidate's current and normal way of working. Supervised rest breaks are no longer proving to be effective.

Working with the examinations officer, the SENCo looks at the candidate's GCSE examination timetable. It is proposed that the candidate will only sit one GCSE examination a day, being a reasonable adjustment due to the candidate's disability which is having a significant and adverse effect.

A series of timetable variations will be requested, with the examinations being moved from the published session to the following morning. The examinations officer will contact the awarding bodies to seek their advice on how she should request the timetable variations.