

2024/25 Update to:

Assessing the need for Access Arrangements in Examinations

A Practical Guide – Seventh Edition, by Lia Castiglione

Introduction

This document provides a brief commentary on the changes to the JCQ regulations “**Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**” since publication in 2023 of “Assessing the need for Access Arrangements”. It covers essential changes made within the 2024/25 JCQ regulations.

The 7th edition of the book itself, which was fully updated in 2023, provides much greater detail on the more fundamental aspects of access arrangements work including, for example, the range of skills to be investigated, tests to be used, interpretation of results, and discussion of the wider issues involved. **Please note** that this update should be read in conjunction with the book, which is available to purchase on the Patoss website: www.patoss-dyslexia.org/Books

It should also be noted that the online resources which accompany the book have been fully updated in line with the 2024/25 JCQ regulations. A link to the 7th edition’s online resource area can be found in Appendix 1 of the book.

However, it is also **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.

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA)

The JCQ publishes a revised AARA document in the late summer each year, setting out its regulations and guidance on access arrangements for the forthcoming academic year, which take effect from 1st September. The document is available to download from the [JCQ website](#) and for schools and colleges as an interactive document through the Centre Admin

Portal (CAP). CAP can be accessed through any of the awarding bodies' secure extranet sites, such as AQA Centre Services or Edexcel Online.

The AARA for 2024/25 emphasises the need to consult the JCQ documents before contacting either the JCQ or an awarding body for information. The answers to many queries will be found within the documents. It is also recommended that the 7th edition book, its online resources, and this accompanying update document are consulted to help in addressing queries that may arise.

The JCQ Forms

This information provides an update to Chapter 6.

For 2024/25 there are three JCQ forms:

- Form 8
- Form 8RF
- Form 9

Form BD25% is no longer used. Instead, the information to support an application for a bilingual dictionary with 25% extra time is recorded on AAO when the online application is made.

The JCQ forms are provided in two formats:

- PDF forms available on the JCQ website
- Online forms available through the CAP

Adobe Acrobat must be used to complete the PDF forms. [Acrobat Reader](#) is free to download and use. It allows the use of a typed or electronic signature.

Where one person in the centre (e.g. the Access Arrangements Coordinator, an assessor working with the centre) is completing the entire form, the online version of the form can be completed through the CAP.

Word versions of the JCQ Forms, in either 'locked' or 'unlocked' formats, are no longer available.

The 7th Edition online resource area provides completed examples of the forms, and guidance sheets and videos to help with completion of the JCQ forms, including a video showing the forms' features and how to sign using an electronic signature.

An updated version of the table on pages 66 and 67 can be found within the book's online resource area. The document is entitled, 'Table showing which JCQ form is used to record evidence.'

Introduction to the AARA document

This information provides an update to Chapter 2 (pages 20 and 22).

Further clarification has been provided about the use of the term, SENCo, within the AARA document. This is an overarching term referring to the person appointed by the head of centre to coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre. This could be the centre's SENCo (or equivalent staff member) but would also include a dedicated Access Arrangements Coordinator (AAC), an Assistant SENCo or a Deputy SENCo. Throughout the 7th edition, the term 'Access Arrangements Coordinator' is used to denote the person in this role.

To reinforce the importance of the regulations and the Access Arrangements Coordinator's leading role in the access arrangements process within the centre, the Introduction states that, as well as providing sufficient time for the access arrangements coordination role, the head of centre must ensure that the Access Arrangements Coordinator (SENCo) undertakes regular CPD such as attending an annual update course on the regulations. Patoss CPD in relation to access arrangements can be found [here](#).

To emphasise that the centre is responsible for the access arrangements process for its candidates, the Introduction notes that, '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.' It goes on to state that, 'Online applications must only be processed where they are supported by the centre, the candidate meeting the published criteria for the arrangement(s) with the full supporting evidence in place.'

Access Arrangements Online (AAO) applications

This information provides an update to Chapter 17 (page 193).

AAO is now used to process applications for BTEC qualifications (BTEC Firsts, Level 2 Technicals, Nationals and Tech Awards), AQA and Pearson Functional Skills and Pearson T-Levels.

Computer reader/reader

This information provides an update to Chapter 6 (page 66) and Chapter 22 (page 233).

A candidate for whom English is an additional language may use a computer reader/reader. The computer reader/reader can help to support their reading in English.

Previously, a candidate with EAL was not permitted this arrangement unless reading difficulties were present in their first language. However, this is no longer the case and the

decision to provide reading support can be based on their difficulties with reading English and their normal way of working in the centre.

Form 9 is used to record the evidence for a candidate with EAL to use a computer reader/reader. Approval must be gained through an AAO application.

Note that standardised scores are still not needed for any candidate requiring a computer reader/reader.

Timetable variation on the day of the exam for a candidate with a disability

This information provides an update to Chapter 4 (page 57).

This new arrangement has been added to the JCQ AARA document (5.22). This may be necessary for a candidate with a formally diagnosed medical or psychological condition, a physical disability, or a visual impairment who must sit the exam at a different time on the published day of the exam, either:

- sitting an exam scheduled for the morning session later that morning; or
- sitting an exam scheduled for the morning session in the afternoon; or
- sitting an exam scheduled for the afternoon session in the morning.

For this arrangement, the relevant sections of Form 9 are completed, and this is accompanied by specialist evidence to confirm the candidate's condition. An application for approval is made through AAO.

Note that this is a different arrangement to 'timetable variation requiring overnight supervision for a candidate with a disability'.

Listening to music/white noise due to a substantial impairment

This information provides an update to Chapter 4 (page 57).

This is an arrangement for a candidate with social, emotional and mental health needs or with a sensory impairment such as tinnitus or misophonia.

The centre must ensure that the candidate uses a device which is not connected to the internet and must check the music playlist to ensure that no advantage is conferred to the candidate.

The relevant sections of Form 9 are completed, and this is accompanied by specialist evidence to confirm the candidate's condition.

Previously, this arrangement would have been applied for through AAO by selecting 'Other' and an online referral made to the relevant awarding bodies. It is now applied for and approved through AAO.

Centre-delegated arrangements

This information provides an update to Chapter 4 (page 48).

Two new arrangements have been delegated to the centre:

- Non-electronic headphones
- Timer on a candidate's desk – a small countdown clock, a small analogue or digital clock, digital timer

These arrangements can be provided to candidates according to their needs and normal way of working in the centre. No formal evidence is required and an online application does not need to be made. These arrangements are not subject to inspection.

Supervised rest breaks

This information provides an update to Chapter 4 (page 43) and Chapter 6 (page 66).

Either Form 8 or Form 9 is used to provide a statement confirming the need for supervised rest breaks. This enables all the candidate's access arrangements evidence to be recorded on a single form.

Form 8 Part 1	Candidates with learning difficulties (without an EHCP, IDP or SEN Statement) who also require 25% extra time and/or a scribe.
Form 9 Part 1	Candidates with C&I, Sensory & Physical, SEMH needs, formally diagnosed medical condition. Candidates with EHCP, IDP, Statement for learning difficulties. Candidates with learning difficulties without EHCP, IDP, Statement who do not require 25% extra time and/or a scribe.

Whether Form 8 or Form 9 is used, specialist evidence (e.g. a medical report) is not needed for inspection purposes and an online application for supervised rest breaks is not required.

The AARA document provides guidance on the provision of supervised rest breaks:

- A rest break will not normally be needed within the first ten minutes of an exam and will often be shorter than this.
- A single rest break should be no more than 30 minutes in duration.
- Candidates cannot be given as many breaks as they like for as long as they like.

The Access Arrangements Coordinator must determine the duration of supervised rest breaks based on the candidate's needs and normal way of working under timed conditions.

Alternative rooming arrangements

The 2024/25 AARA provides further guidance on alternative rooming arrangements. This would usually be a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs. The use of 1:1 invigilation would apply only when a candidate cannot be accommodated in the same room as others, such as when they have a serious medical condition (e.g. frequent seizures), a tic disorder or significant behavioural difficulties which would disturb others in the same room.

Retaking and moving on

This information provides an update to Chapter 18.

Form 9

Where a candidate has a Form 9 and is **continuing to study at the same level** but:

- the AAO approval has run out (e.g. for GCSE resits in the same centre), **or**
- the candidate moves to a new centre (e.g. moves to an FE college for GCSE resits)

the existing Form 9 can continue to be used for the candidate's access arrangements.

A new AAO application must be made to gain approval for a further 26 months.

If the candidate has moved centre, the new centre must ensure the Form 9 is in order and must have the specialist evidence to confirm the candidate's condition. The candidate must sign a data consent form in the new centre before the AAO application is made.

Note that whilst an existing Form 9 can be used for resit examinations, a Form 9 cannot be rolled forward from Level 2 (GCSE) to Level 3 (A level) qualifications. Whether the candidate remains in the same centre or moves to a new centre, a new Form 9 is required. This is because the centre-based evidence of need and normal way of working must be updated.

Form 8

For candidates with an **existing Form 8** who move from Level 2 (GCSE) to Level 3 (A level), the Form 8 can be rolled forward, with Form 8RF being completed to update the centre-based evidence of need and normal way of working.

Form 8RF is used to roll forward the following arrangements:

- 25% extra time
- Scribe/speech recognition technology, word processor with spellcheck
- Computer reader/reader in addition to 25% extra time and/or scribe
- Supervised rest breaks in addition to 25% extra time and/or scribe*

*Where a candidate with learning difficulties had a file note or a Form 9 to support the use of supervised rest breaks for GCSE examinations, if they are still needed for Level 3 (A level) examinations, Form 8RF can now be used.

Updated Check Your Knowledge questions

The 7th edition provides some 'Check your knowledge' questions at the ends of chapters. The following have been updated to take account of the changes to the JCQ regulations for 2024/25:

Check your knowledge (updated questions for Chapter 6, p67)

3. For supervised rest breaks, which form is used for a candidate with learning difficulties (no EHCP) who also requires 25% extra time?
4. Is Form BD25% used for candidates who require the use of a bilingual dictionary with 25% extra time?

Answers (updated answers for Chapter 6, p67)

3. For supervised rest breaks for a candidate with learning difficulties (no EHCP) who also requires 25% extra time, the evidence for supervised rest breaks is recorded within Form 8 Part 1. This means that all the access arrangements can be recorded on a single form.
4. No, Form BD25% has been withdrawn. No JCQ forms is required as the information is provided through the AAO application.

Check your knowledge - True or False? (updated questions for Chapter 22, page 241)

5. Form BD25% is completed for all candidates using a bilingual dictionary.
6. For a candidate to have a reader, there must be underlying difficulties in the first language.

Answers (updated answers for Chapter 22, page 241)

5. False. Form BD25% has been withdrawn and is not used for any candidate.
6. False. A candidate with EAL can have a computer reader/reader based on difficulties with reading English.

Updated Frequently Asked Questions

Chapter 26 of the 7th edition provides some 'Frequently Asked Questions'. The following have been updated to take account of the changes to the JCQ regulations for 2024/25:

12. Can a learner who has English as a second language have a reader on account of his difficulties with the English language?

Prior to the 2024/25 academic year, the answer was no. However, this has now changed, it is possible to provide a computer reader or reader for a candidate with EAL on account of difficulties with reading in English.

Form 9 is used to record the evidence for a candidate with EAL to use a computer reader/reader. Approval must be gained through an AAO application.

26. A candidate has moved to our centre and his previous centre has sent his Form 9. Do we have to produce a new Form 9 or can we use the one from the previous centre?

A Form 9 produced in one centre can be used for a candidate who continues to study at the same level in a new centre (for example, a candidate moving from a school to an FE college for GCSE resits).

The new centre must ensure the Form 9 is in order and must have the specialist evidence to confirm the candidate's condition. The candidate must sign a data consent form in the new centre before the AAO application is made.

However, whilst a Form 8 can be rolled forward from Level 2 (GCSE) to Level 3 (GCE), this is not the case for Form 9. This is because the centre-based evidence of need and normal way of working must be updated.

Where a candidate moves from Level 2 (GCSE) to Level 3 (GCE), whether they remain in the same centre or move to a new centre, the access arrangements coordinator (AAC) will need to complete a new Form 9. However, one would hope that the candidate's previous centre would provide a copy of the existing Form 9 to assist the new AAC in painting a picture of need and confirming the candidate's established way of working.

Update by Lia Castiglione and Nick Lait

Note: No responsibility is taken by Patoss, or contributing authors, for any misunderstandings or failures to comply with the JCQ regulations during this or subsequent years.
