



Joint Council for
Qualifications^{CIC}

Access arrangements online Frequently Asked Questions

Produced on behalf of:



©JCQ^{CIC} 2025

Who can be given permission to use *Access arrangements online* (AAO) and how is it managed within a centre?

The system can be accessed through any of the awarding bodies' secure extranet sites (as below). A centre can create more than one account which means several staff can use *Access arrangements online*. Each user will have full access and will be able to see all the applications processed by their centre.

Ideally, the SENCo or an equivalent member of staff will process the applications.

How is the system accessed?

The system can be accessed through any of the awarding bodies' secure extranet sites:

- AQA Centre Services
 - CCEA
 - OCR Interchange
 - Pearson Edexcel Online
 - WJEC Services
-

What qualifications can be applied for using *Access arrangements online*?

By combining access arrangements and orders for modified papers, the administrative burden for centres is reduced.

Access arrangements online covers the following qualifications:

- AQA Applied General Qualifications
 - AQA Level 2 Certificate in Further Maths
 - AQA Level 3 Certificate in Mathematical Studies
 - BTEC Firsts
 - BTEC Level 2 Technicals
 - BTEC Nationals
 - BTEC Tech Awards
 - Cambridge Advanced Nationals
 - Cambridge Nationals
 - Cambridge Technicals
 - Essential Skills (Pearson and WJEC specifications)
 - FSMQ
 - Functional Skills (Pearson specifications)
 - GCE (AS and A level)
 - GCSE
 - OCR Level 3 Certificates
 - T Levels (Pearson and WJEC specifications)
 - Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ)
 - WJEC Level 1 and Level 2 General Qualifications
 - WJEC Level 1 and Level 2 Vocational Awards
-

- WJEC Level 1 and Level 2 Vocational Awards (Technical Awards)
 - WJEC Level 3 Applied Certificates, Diplomas and Extended Diplomas (including Alternative Academic Qualifications)
 - WJEC Level 3 Applied Certificates and Diplomas
-

Is paperwork needed when processing applications?

Yes: the JCQ document

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

provides full details of the paperwork required to support an access arrangement (where required).

SENcos and/or assessors working within the centre must produce appropriate evidence, as per the JCQ regulations, before an application is processed.

Is candidate consent necessary?

No: but candidates **must** be informed that an application for access arrangements will be processed using *Access arrangements online*, complying with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

Will *Access arrangements online* provide an instant decision?

The responses will, in around 90% of cases, be instantaneous and the decision will be consistent across the awarding bodies. The more complex cases, which are always referred to awarding bodies, can be tracked and the decision viewed online.

Applications for:

- an exemption;
- more than 25% extra time;
- a practical assistant;
- remote invigilation; and
- multiple timetable variations requiring overnight supervision for a candidate with a disability;

will not be approved through AAO and must be forwarded to the relevant awarding body or bodies for a decision.

Can an application be amended or deleted once it has been submitted?

Where applications are approved by the system, but not rejected applications or awarding body referrals, the centre can edit the following fields on the approval sheet:

Candidate Name, Candidate Number and Date of Birth.

The user must give a reason for the amendment and re-tick the malpractice statement.

An application may be deleted. A reason **must** be given for the deletion. The SENCO will need to print off the deletion sheet showing the reason for inspection purposes.

Deleted applications will show in the 'Search' function, i.e. Approved, Deleted, Not Approved.

If a further access arrangement subsequently becomes necessary a new application for that arrangement must be processed.

An application has been submitted in error and it has been approved.

What procedure should be followed?

The application should be deleted. A reason **must** be given for the deletion. The SENCo will need to print off the deletion sheet showing the reason for inspection purposes.

Deleted applications will show in the 'Search' function, i.e. Approved, Deleted, Not Approved.

There is no need to contact the JCQ or an awarding body to inform them of the deletion.

Any access arrangement knowingly used when a candidate is not entitled to it constitutes malpractice and may lead to the candidate's result(s) being withheld.

An application has not been approved. What are the options?

If an application is not approved the reason will always be stated in the outcome screen. The JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* **must** be referred to. Does the candidate meet the published criteria for the arrangement(s)?

Further testing may be necessary or alternative access arrangements may be more appropriate for the candidate. **An awarding body referral must only be pursued where the SENCo believes that there are genuine extenuating circumstances.** This will initiate a manual process where the relevant awarding body will be supplied with more detailed information.

The awarding body will review the application and will notify the centre by email within ten working days. The outcome of the referral will be available on the system.

The decision whether to allow an access arrangement may be affected by the specific component. In some circumstances awarding body decisions may differ from component to component, even within the same subject. This is usually due to the requested access arrangement conflicting with the assessment criteria for that component.

Where a centre disagrees with the awarding body's decision following an online referral, this must be pursued outside of the AAO system. An appeal would be submitted to the relevant awarding body.

When an application is submitted online the error message 'an unexpected error has occurred, please contact your system administrator' appears. What action should be taken?

This error usually occurs when a centre has not set up any awarding body relationships.

To set up awarding body relationships go to the homepage of *Access arrangements online* and click on 'Manage list of awarding bodies'.

What safeguards are put in place to ensure the integrity of applications processed using *Access arrangements online*?

The system is based on the JCQ regulations. Users must confirm that they understand the regulations and the consequences of malpractice. Evidence **must** be held on file in the centre to support applications (where required). This evidence will be presented by the SENCo to a JCQ Centre Inspector.

Does the name of the access arrangements assessor need to be recorded on *Access arrangements online*?

Yes: centres **must** record the name of their access arrangements assessor(s) on *Access arrangements online*. Those recorded are deemed to be appropriately qualified by the head of centre. **Evidence that the access arrangements assessor meets the published criteria must be available in the centre and presented to a JCQ Centre Inspector by the SENCo.** The SENCo **must** demonstrate that the access arrangements assessor holds a post-graduate qualification in individual specialist assessment at or equivalent to Level 7.

Are JCQ Centre Inspectors familiar with the use of *Access arrangements online*?

Yes: JCQ Centre Inspectors are trained in the purpose and operation of the online system and will inspect the evidence upon which applications have been made and approved.

How will *Access arrangements online* manage large volumes of applications immediately prior to deadlines?

The system has been designed to cope with volumes well beyond those expected, even at peak times around deadlines. However, centres should always make applications early.

What evidence are centres expected to keep for a temporary illness or injury?

The nature of the evidence to support an application based on a temporary condition will vary. There could be a note from a doctor or a hospital. **However, as a minimum, a file note **must** be produced which explains the candidate's temporary illness or injury and the need for the access arrangement(s).**

How can a centre get the most out of the *Access arrangements online* system?

The system allows more sophisticated centre management of the access arrangements process, allowing centres to plan for examination series.

Where candidates have practical assistants or scribes the cover sheets can be printed from the system, pre-populated with centre and candidate details.

The search and export functions can be used to find applications or assist with resource planning. For example, determining the number of readers or scribes required.
