Access Arrangements: A guide for teaching staff

Purpose of this document

This guide sets out the role of teaching staff in identifying, supporting and evidencing students who may require access arrangements for formal exams. Teaching staff play a vital part in the access arrangements process and are essential in ensuring students receive fair and appropriate support.

A whole-centre approach

A successful access arrangements process depends on joined-up, centre-wide collaboration. The role of a class teacher or subject specialist is particularly valuable in:

- observing and identifying difficulties in the classroom and in internal assessments

- supporting students in developing strategies

- evidencing how adjustments are routinely used

- contributing to decisions based on subject knowledge and ongoing experience with the student.

Access arrangements **are not** decided by a diagnosis. They require evidence from within the centre to show that the support is both necessary and used regularly.

What are access arrangements?

Access arrangements allow students with specific and long-term difficulties to demonstrate their attainment without being unfairly disadvantaged. These arrangements **must:**

- reflect the student's normal way of working in the centre

- be based on evidence of need, not simply preference

- be compliant with JCQ regulations and agreed deadlines.

Access arrangements **are not** a substitute for revision, exam technique, or classroom support. They should be part of a broader support strategy and not be seen as a 'quick fix'.

Examples of access arrangements

Arrangement	Purpose
25% extra time	Supports students who need more time to read, process information or write.
Computer reader/reader	Supports access to text for students with reading difficulties.
Scribe/speech recognition	For those with physical or processing difficulties that affect writing.
Word processor	For students who work more effectively by typing.
Prompt, Individual timer, earplugs, ear defenders	Arrangements to support with attention, organisation or time management issues.
Supervised rest breaks	Allow students to pause during exams due to medical, mental health or fatigue-related needs.
Alternative rooming	For students who have a substantial impairment who need to work in a smaller room with other students who have similar needs.

The arrangements listed above are examples of commonly used adjustments. A wider range of access arrangements is available and outlined in full in the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*.

Why is your role important?

Teaching staff are often the first to notice patterns of difficulty in class and assessments. Your input helps the SENCo/Access Arrangements Coordinator to:

- understand a student's persistent barriers to assessments

- decide whether a formal arrangement is appropriate

- avoid inappropriate or unnecessary arrangements

- gather evidence that arrangements reflect the student's normal way of working.

How exam arrangements link to classroom support

Some arrangements used in formal exams may look different to classroom strategies. For example:

- a student who needs 25% extra time in exams may benefit from flexible deadlines, 'scaffolding', or extra thinking time in class

- a student using a reader or computer reader in exams may rely more on teacher or peer support in lessons

- a student needing rest breaks may cope without them in shorter lessons but struggle in longer assessments.

While consistency matters, if the underlying need and support strategy are clearly established, the exact method of support may differ slightly between the classroom and exam setting.

What should you look out for?

Alert the SENCo/Access Arrangements Coordinator **as early as possible** if you observe any of the following:

- the student struggles to complete tasks in time

- the student suffers from fatigue or loss of focus during tasks

- the student regularly uses assistive technology or alternative working methods

- the student needs prompts or adult support to stay on task

- the student has difficulties with handwriting, spelling, or processing that significantly affects their work

- the student needs support with reading and/or writing.

What you need to provide

1. Teacher Feedback (required for all arrangements)

- A description of the difficulty and how it affects performance in timed tasks.

- The difficulties noticed in the classroom.

- Analysis of the student's workbooks for signs of unfinished work, any issues with writing, spelling.

- The strategies and support already in place.

- Whether this support is effective and used consistently.

- Any differences in support between the classroom and internal assessments.

2. Evidence for 25% extra time

- A copy of a completed internal test/mock exam paper.

- Clear change in pen colour (or font if the student uses a word processor) when extra time begins.

- A comment on whether the extra time made a difference to the quantity or quality of work.

Important: If extra time made no impact, it may not be appropriate.

Points to consider

- Is it a revision, exam technique, or engagement issue?

- Is it a lack of understanding of the subject matter?

- Is classroom support in place?

- While 25% extra time is commonly requested, it's not always the most effective or appropriate support. Many students do better with alternatives that are more targeted to their specific needs.

Don't promise arrangements to students or parents. All decisions **must** be made by the SENCo or Access Arrangements Coordinator based on appropriate evidence and JCQ rules.

Beyond school: long-term view

- Help to prepare students for future life.

- Promote independence, not dependency.

- Consider assistive technology first – a computer reader, speech recognition software.

- Remember that access arrangements **are not** a 'sticking plaster'. They are not a substitute for lack of subject knowledge or preparation.

Deadlines and documentation

Access arrangements applications must be processed well in advance of exams. If arrangements are not established and regularly used by the student, they will not be approved. Ensure you:

- respond promptly to requests about students' needs and their normal way of working

- keep the SENCo/Access Arrangements Coordinator informed of any changes, improvements, or new concerns

- meet internal deadlines for feedback and evidence

- keep relevant work or records.

Summary: Your role in 5 key actions

1. **Observe:** Identify ongoing challenges and consider causes and solutions.

2. **Support:** Ensure appropriate arrangements are in place in the classroom and for exams.

3. **Refer:** Share concerns with the SENCo early.

4. **Provide:** Give feedback and examples when needed and in a timely manner.

5. **Collaborate:** Be part of a consistent, centre-wide approach.

Questions or concerns?

Contact the SENCo / Access Arrangements Coordinator for help interpreting student needs or for templates/guidance.

Teaching staff are in a unique position to help identify needs and provide practical evidence. Your professional input is essential to the process.

Remember: The goal is to promote independence and provide enough support to remove barriers without giving an advantage.