

Guidelines for Candidates who are eligible for Access Arrangements for General Qualifications (GCSE & GCE 'A' level etc.)

This information sheet is for students who are allowed access arrangements in General Qualifications. For information about other qualifications, speak to the person who gave you this document.

Public organisations, such as schools, colleges and awarding bodies, have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with a disability under the Equality Act of 2010. Access arrangements are the main way that those adjustments are made in exams and assessments. Access arrangements may also be made available to students with temporary difficulties, but who do not have a disability – for example, because they have an injury or illness at the time of the assessment. Please see Appendix 1 for more information.

The main access arrangements are:

- **Extra time**, for candidates who work very slowly
- **Supervised Rest breaks**, concentration difficulties, extreme stress or medical needs
- **Reader/Computer Reader** for candidates who have difficulty with reading by themselves
- **Reading Aloud**, for those who can concentrate or understand better if they can hear themselves read
- **Examination Reading Pen**, for candidates who need some words read aloud
- **Scribe/Speech Recognition Technology**, for slow or illegible writers, or those with significant difficulty writing by themselves
- **Word processor**, for candidates who use a Word Processor in class
- **Prompter**, for candidates who lose concentration easily or need help to pace themselves
- **Bilingual Dictionary**, for candidates who have English as an Additional Language

Some of these arrangements can be granted by the SENCo at your school or college if you normally work that way in class and exams. For others, such as extra time or a scribe, as well as you using the arrangement in class and exams, your SENCo will need to make an application to the awarding body. The application will need to be backed up by evidence that you have a disability, or by an assessment which shows you have low scores in a particular area. This assessment will need to be carried out by a suitably qualified assessor who works in your school or college, or who has liaised with the SENCo at your school or college before the assessment takes place. Independent assessments, carried out without the knowledge of your SENCo, cannot be used as evidence.

Your teacher will be able to advise you about arrangements that may help you.

Some arrangements involve someone helping you – for example a reader, scribe, or prompter. This may be a person who often helps you in class. Remember that both you and the person who helps you have a different job in an exam – for example:

Your helper:

- can only help in certain ways
- can't give you clues like they do in lessons
- can't give you examples like they do in lessons
- can't tell you if your answers are right or wrong
- can't check your work to see if you have understood

You:

- can't walk around or go to the toilet
- can't use the computer to look things up
- have to leave your bag outside. You can only take what you need for the exam (such as a pen and pencil). No books or mobile phone
- must be quiet and put your hand up if you need help
- may need to stay in the room until everyone has finished

Here are some guidelines which will help you to use your access arrangement.

Extra time

Because you work slowly you may be allowed 25% extra time. This means that if your exam usually takes one hour, you will be allowed 1 hour 15 minutes to complete it. You may be in the main hall, or in a room away from the main hall.

It is important to decide the best way to use the extra time before you go into the exam. You need to:

- Find out how many questions need to be answered in the time
- Allow plenty of time to read:
 - i. the questions through carefully at the start (many marks are lost when students don't read and understand the questions properly)
 - ii. your answers through at the end of the paper (correcting spelling or grammatical errors)
- Work out how many minutes this leaves you for each question
- When long answers are needed (e.g. essays) take time to plan each answer. You should know what type of plan suits your learning style. If you are not sure, your teacher will help you to find out

- If you feel stressed or panicky, take a few deep breaths to help calm you down

Supervised Rest breaks

Rest breaks can help if you find it hard to concentrate, or get very tired.

There are two ways to take rest breaks.

- Stay in the room where you are taking the exam (this might be the main hall or in a separate room). You will not be able to look at the exam paper during the break
- Go for a short walk with a member of staff. You will not be able to talk about the exam during your break

You should be able to ask when you feel that you need to take a break, though if there are other students needing breaks you might have to wait for a member of staff to be available to help you.

A member of staff will tell you how your break will be taken, how many breaks you can have and how long you can take for each break. Remember that if you have another exam on the same day you need to allow enough time to take a proper break between the two exams and still fit in both exams before the end of the day.

All the time taken for your rest breaks will be added to the end of the exam. For example, if you have two breaks, one taking 5 minutes and the other 7 minutes, 12 minutes will be added to the end time. You will not be allowed any more time, but you will not lose time either.

Reader/Computer Reader

You may be allowed someone to help with reading the exam paper. Alternatively, if you usually work with a computer reader, you may be allowed to use it in the exam.

The reader might be someone who will read just to you, or you might share a reader with other students, asking for help with reading when you need it. You will be working in a room separate from the main hall.

You can ask the reader to:

- read all or part of the examination paper, as many times as you like
- read back any of your answers

The reader cannot:

- read any of the questions or passages to you in a paper (or sections of a paper) which is testing reading, for example the reading papers in English and Modern Foreign Languages. However, you can use a computer reader or exam reading pen to read the questions and passages in a paper testing reading
- explain or clarify any of the paper. They can only read word for word from the paper, and will only re-read if you ask them to
- read symbols (e.g. x or +) or unit abbreviations (e.g. cm or kg). The reader will point to these, but in most cases, they will not be able to read them out to you. Please ask the person who gave you this sheet if you need more information about this
- help you to choose which questions to do
- tell you when to move on to the next question, or in what order to do the questions

Reading aloud/Examination Reading Pen

You may be able to read the paper out loud to yourself to help you to concentrate and understand what is written. If you usually work with a reading pen you may be allowed to use an examination reading pen during your exams.

If you are reading aloud, you will take your exam in a room away from the main hall. There may be other students in the room with you, so please make sure that you do not read so loudly that you disturb them.

If you are using an examination reading pen, you may use earphones and sit in the main hall. The reading pen will read out words that you scan. It doesn't have a dictionary or thesaurus to tell you what words mean.

Scribe/Speech Recognition Technology

You may be able to dictate your answers to someone who will write or type word for word as you dictate to them.

If you are having help with reading too, the same person will read and write for you. You will be working in a room separate from the main hall. There may be other students in the room with you, so please make sure that you do not dictate so loudly that they can overhear you.

The scribe will:

- write down or type answers exactly as you dictate them
- read back any of your answers if you ask them to
- change an answer if you ask them to write down something different

- strictly follow your instructions when drawing maps, diagrams and graphs (if possible, it is best if you can draw maps diagrams and graphs yourself – ask a member of staff for advice)

The scribe cannot:

- explain or clarify any of the paper
- help you to choose which questions to do
- tell you when to move on to the next question, or in what order to do the questions
- read any of the exam paper to you unless you are also allowed a reader

You should:

- dictate punctuation in English, English Literature, Geography, History and Religious Studies papers, otherwise you may lose a few marks (you can dictate punctuation in other papers if you want to)
- dictate spellings letter by letter in Modern Foreign Language papers when answering in the foreign language
- consider whether you could write for yourself in Maths exams as it is hard to dictate most answers in Maths

Word Processor

You may be allowed to use a word processor for your exam papers.

There are a few things to remember about using a word processor:

- You will not be able to use your own laptop or tablet in a written exam. Your school or college will provide you with a laptop, tablet or computer to use in your exams
- You cannot type directly onto the exam paper but your typed script will be attached to the paper
- You must label answers clearly. You might like to note under each question on the paper where the answer can be found
- You should record your candidate number, centre number and the unit code as a header or footer on all pages
- You will not be allowed access to files on the word processor, or to spreadsheets, graphic or design packages or to the internet
- The following applications will need to be disabled: thesaurus, grammar check, calculators
- In most cases you will not have access to a spell check or predictive text software (please ask the person who gave you this sheet if you have any questions about this)
- You must not disturb other candidates

- Other candidates must not see the screen
- Your word processor will be connected to a printer or you will use a portable storage device to save your work and a member of staff will print it
- Your script will be printed after the exam; you will be able to watch it being printed so that you can confirm that it is your work

Prompter

You may be allowed an adult to prompt you if you lose concentration or need help moving on from a question.

To keep you focused on the paper an adult, possibly the invigilator, will attract your attention by:

tapping:

- the table
- your arm

saying:

- your name
- “focus on the question”
- “there are x minutes left”

showing you:

- a flashcard with the above instructions on

The prompter cannot:

- speak to you, except to say your name or one of the above instructions
- advise you on which questions to choose
- tell you in which order to do the questions

Bilingual Dictionary

If English is not your first language you may be allowed to use a Bilingual Dictionary.

It must be a dictionary that has word for word translation of the English word, with no explanation of the meaning of the word. You can only use a paper or electronic dictionary; you cannot use a translator, wordlist or glossary.

The dictionary must be left at school and staff will check to make sure there are no notes or unauthorised information in it. You will not be able to use your dictionary in an English exam or in exams that have marks allocated for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG). In most

Modern Foreign Language exams dictionaries are not allowed. Check with your MFL teacher whether you can use one in your exam.

If you came to the UK less than 3 years ago you may be allowed up to 10% extra time to use the dictionary. Please ask the member of staff who gave you this sheet if this applies to you.

Please remember that:

The teachers at your school or college must make sure that you are not given an unfair advantage over other students by being allowed an access arrangement. The rules are strict, and if you, or a member of staff, are found to be breaking the rules you may lose marks in your assessments.

If you have any questions about access arrangements, you should discuss them with the member of staff who gave you this sheet.

Appendix 1

Access arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. This includes arrangements such as readers for those who have difficulty with reading by themselves, or extra time for those who work very slowly. Access arrangements can also be provided for students who are injured or ill at the time of the assessment – for example, a scribe for students with a broken arm, or rest breaks for students who will tire because of illness.

Reasonable adjustments are the adjustments disabled candidates require to take exams to avoid substantial disadvantage. Schools and colleges are under a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to provide them. The reasonable adjustment may be found in the list of access arrangements outlined by the Joint Council for qualifications, or may be unique to the disabled person. More guidance about reasonable adjustments from the Equality and Human Rights Commission can be found at: [EHRC Reasonable Adjustments](#)

Under the Equality Act a person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. ‘Physical or mental impairment’ includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing. Further guidance on the definition of disability is available in the Appendix to the [Statutory Code of Practice](#)

Not everyone who requests ‘access arrangements’ will meet the definition of disability under the Act and therefore be entitled to reasonable adjustments. Schools and colleges need to distinguish between reasonable adjustments required under the Equality Act and discretionary access arrangements. Some difficulties may appear similar but have different causes and therefore different entitlements.

Example

A scribe could be either a reasonable adjustment or an access arrangement. So, if a student has a disability that means they cannot write independently because of their disability, then the use of a scribe is a **reasonable adjustment** to which they are entitled under the Equality Act. But if a student broke their arm the week before the exam and needed a scribe, that would be an **access arrangement**. Although both arrangements might be referred to by the centre as an access arrangement, but the former is a legal entitlement, whereas the latter is not.