

ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

2024/25

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Lauren Calver	
Date of next review	13.09.24

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name(s)
SENCo (or equivalent role)	Sheila Kennedy , Carli Willis
Senior leader(s)	Amanda Lacey
Head of centre	Sian Thomas
Exams officer	Lauren Calver
Assessor(s)	
Access arrangement facilitator(s)	

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What are access arrangements and reasonable adjustments?

Access arrangements

Access arrangements are agreed **before** an assessment. They allow candidates with **specific needs**, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010* to make 'reasonable adjustments'. (AARA¹, Definitions)

Reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act 2010* requires an awarding body to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, would be at a **substantial disadvantage** in comparison to someone who is not disabled. The awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. An example would be a Braille paper which would be a reasonable adjustment for a vision impaired candidate who could read Braille. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements.

Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- the needs of the disabled candidate;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; **and**
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; **or**
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'.

The centre **must** ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates. (AARA¹, Definitions)

*References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see [AARA 1.8](#)). The definitions and procedures in [AARA](#) relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Ancora House School has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements process and is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements.

(JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres**, 5.4)

This publication is further referred to in this policy as GR

This policy is maintained and held by SENCo alongside the individual files/e-folders of each access arrangements candidate. Each file/e-folder contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

Where the SENCo is storing documentation electronically they **must** create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder **must** hold each of the required documents for inspection. (¹AARA 4.2)

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current JCQ document 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties - **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**'.

¹This publication is further referred to in this policy as AARA

General principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, who will coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties and disabilities, candidates for whom English is an additional language, as well as those with a temporary illness or temporary injury. (GR 5.4)

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AARA (4.2). These include:

The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing them from being placed at a substantial disadvantage due to persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.

The SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, **must** ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

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. They will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments. It is the responsibility of the SENCo to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations.

Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the **start** of the course.

Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment.

The arrangement(s) put in place **must** reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre, the needs of each candidate will be assessed on an individual basis.

The candidate **must** have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before their first examination.

Equalities Policy (Exams)

A large part of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process is covered in the Equalities Policy (Exams) which covers staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements and the conduct of exams. The roles and responsibilities are also set out in the schools exam policy.

These policies further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

The assessment process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor(s) appointed by the head of centre. The assessor(s) is (are) appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in AARA 7.3.

The qualification(s) of the current assessor(s)

Sheila Kennedy and Carli Willis both have PGSE's in National Award for Special Educational Needs Co ordination

Carli has also completed the British Dyslexia Association qualification to assess learners with specific learning difficulties

Appointment of assessors

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed in the centre, evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements in AARA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Checking the qualification(s) of the assessor(s)

On appointment staff's qualifications are checked and retained in line with our recruitment and safeguarding policy, copies of qualifications of all staff are held in HR files by the business manager.

The exams officer ensures that she has copies of SENDCo qualifications held in her exams file for inspection purposes, in line with AARA 7.4.

Reporting the appointment of assessors

As stated above the qualifications of the assessors are held in the exams file by the EO , the SENDCo's will also have these retained themselves.

Process for the assessment of a candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor

We are a specialist mental health provision across two sites, one is an inpatient setting and the other is based in the community. In line with AARA Form 8's and Form 9s will be completed by the SENDCo with the input of classroom-based staff where appropriate, the SENDCo may take advice from medical professionals such as psychiatrists but the decision on putting AA'S in place is made by the SENDCo.

Picture of need/normal way of working

The SENDCo will use EHCP's when they are in place as well as consult centre staff observations in the classroom of the students normal way of working , to build up a accurate picture of need to put the appropriate AA's in place. The school will use mocks and classroom activities to build up a picture of need, these pieces of work will be retained in case they are required during the post exams period. The SENDCo will complete Form 8 and Form 9 when appropriate and process access arrangements via AAO within the deadlines.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access arrangements online (AAO) is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for centres to apply for required access arrangement approval for the qualifications covered by the tool. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications included. The SENDCo will work within the deadlines to order modified papers for students with specific learning needs via AAO, in line with regulations.

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) using any of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

Online applications **must** only be processed where they are supported by the centre and the candidate meets the published criteria for the arrangement(s) with the full supporting evidence in place. (AARA 8 Summary)

The SENDCo must process requests for AA's via AAO in line with deadlines, once this has been completed the evidence is sent to the EO who will retain on file documents such as: EHCP, Form 8, Form 9, Signed data protection notice, assessor qualifications and approval of AA application.

The EO will keep detailed records for inspection purposes, in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes:

- a signed candidate personal data consent form;
- a completed Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENDCo form;
- a copy of the candidate's approved application;
- appropriate evidence of need (where required);

- evidence of the assessor's qualification (where required). (AARA 8.6)

The SENDCo will ensure that in line with data protection legislation, a signed copy of the data consent form is completed by the candidate prior to submitting AAO requests.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

In relation to centre delegated arrangements for candidates such as rest breaks, the exams officer will retain on file for inspection all evidence, including EHCP, Form 9's and additional information surrounding normal way of working and picture of need. The SENDCo will assess centre delegated arrangements in the same way as those processed via AAO, as detailed above.

Centre-specific criteria for particular arrangements/adjustments

Word Processor Policy (Exams)

An exam candidate may be approved the use of a word processor where this is appropriate to the candidate's needs and not simply because the candidate now wants to type rather than write in exams or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre. In line with AARA 5.8, the centre has a working policy 'Word Processor Policy' that details the centres requirements and procedures for allocating these for exams.

Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs will be made by the SENDCo.

The decision will be based on:

- whether the candidate has a substantial and long term impairment which has an adverse effect **and**
- the candidate's normal way of working within the centre (AARA 5.16)
- whether the student has a medical condition that requires them to be accommodated separately, either for their dignity or to ensure no disruption to other candidates

As we are a specialist mental health provision we have a small number of entries and transferred candidates for exams, this means students are often 2/3 to a room maximum due to space and numbers. In the event an AA was disruptive to other candidates we would room students separately, for example 'read aloud' and use of a 'prompter'.

Appendices