Access Arrangements Policy (Exams)

Date reviewed	September 2025
Frequency	Annually
Next review date	October 2026
Reviewed by	Academic Standards, SEND and Educational Trips Committee

Signed: _____ Dated: 16.10.2025

Chair of Governors

Signed: _____ Dated: 16.10.2025

Principal

Contents

Key staff involved in the access arrangements process

Role	Name(s)
SENDCo	**Claire Johnstone**
SENDCo line manager (Senior Leader)	**Sarah Thomas**
Head of centre	**Francis Galbraith**
Assessor(s)	**Marisa Sedgewick**
Exams Manager	**Jodi Henderson**

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 particular 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'.   [[1]AARA, 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 a number of 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'."   [[1]AARA, Definitions]

The centre **must** ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates. (AARA[1], Definitions)

*References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010 (see AARA 1.8).

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Goldington Academy 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 the SENDCo alongside the individual files of each access arrangements candidate. Each file contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

Where the SENDCo (or equivalent role) 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. ([1]AARA 4.2)

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

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

General principles

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

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AARA (section 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 SENDCo, 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 SENDCo to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations.
- Applications should be processed at the start of or during the first year of a two-year course having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working
- 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 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.

Goldington Academy's Equalities Policy (Exams) is available on the school website.

The access arrangements policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail, directly quoting from the above-mentioned handbooks and policies to indicate where Goldington Academy is adhering correctly to procedures.

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)

> Goldington Academy have secured the services of Marisa Sedgwick
> SpLD Assessment Award Practicing Certificate (PATOSS) 500001490-IF5753
> Post Graduate Diploma in Adult Dyslexia, Diagnosis and Support, MA, BA, PGCE

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 and reporting the qualification(s) of the assessor(s)

> The SENDCo is responsible for ensuring that the qualifications of assessors meet JCQ requirements. The SENDCo will take copies of all relevant qualifications assigned to the assessor at the time of interview for their position or alternatively when they have passed the relevant course and gained certification. The checking of the assessor's qualification(s) must take place before any assessment of candidates take place. Copies of certificates are held by the SENDCo and the Exams Manager. After the appointment of the external assessor, their details are entered onto the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP)

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

> Potential candidates for access arrangements (AA) may be identified by any member of teaching/support staff. A recommendation for assessment, including evidence and/or observations to support the request, should be submitted in writing/email to the SENDCo. Evidence of 'normal way of working' (NWOW) must be submitted e.g., internal assessment or classroom assessments annotated, dated and signed by the teacher indicating what AA have been used previously.
>
> Some students may have received, prior to this a diagnostic assessment for Specific Learning Difficulties (identifying Dyslexia). If this identification has been made the diagnostic test for reading and writing will need to be repeated in Year 9.
>
> The SENDCo is responsible for authorising an assessment, obtaining necessary permissions and instructing assessors. Where a candidate has learning difficulties and is not subject to a current Education, Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs, the SENDCo will paint a picture of need and demonstrate the candidate's NWOW and completing Part 1 of Form 8 prior to the candidate being assessed.
>
> The specialist assessor will conduct the appropriate assessments to identify students requiring AA. The specialist assessor will pass the results of the testing to the SENDCo and will recommend AA as appropriate.

Care is taken not to provide support which gives them either an advantage or a disadvantage for the upcoming exams, but instead fair support is provided based on their need and abilities.

The SENDCo will then process these through AA online.

Following meetings with teachers and LSAs, pupils are given appropriate support based on their need for the examinations.

Picture of need / normal way of working

Before the candidate's assessment, the SENDCo must provide the assessor with background information, i.e., a picture of need has been painted as required in Part 1 of Form 8. The SENDCo and the assessor must work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.

An independent assessor must contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This must take place before the candidate is assessed. Additionally, the independent assessor must be approved by the head of centre to assess the candidate.

All candidates must be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8.

An independent assessor must discuss access arrangements/reasonable adjustments with the SENDCo. The responsibility to determine and request appropriate and practicable access arrangements/reasonable adjustments specifically lies with the SENDCo. (AARA, section 7.5)

Background information to support 'normal way of working' as necessary should be included in the candidate's access arrangements file and be used to complete Form 8. This includes:

- a sample of internal school tests/mock exam papers across relevant subjects showing the application of 25% extra time;
- comments and observations from teaching staff in relevant subjects as to why the candidate needs 25% extra time and how they use the 25% extra time awarded.

Supervised rest breaks must always be considered before processing an online application for 25% extra time, since they may be more appropriate for candidates with an impairment other than a learning difficulty. The SENDCo must have trialled and exhausted the option of supervised rest breaks through timed internal tests and/or mock examinations before making an application for 25% extra time.

Subject teachers and LSAs communicate on a regular basis to discuss individual pupils, their needs and support required to allow them to learn in lessons. Knowledge of the best way to support pupils in lessons to allow them to develop is discussed between the SENDCo and classroom LSAs.

Goldington Academy follows the advice given by JCQ and maintains a record of the use of AA, particularly in the case of the use of word processors. If an AA is never used, then it is not a candidate's normal way of working and the arrangement should not be awarded for examinations. Mock examinations allow a judgement to be made on support offered and slight alterations can be made to pupil's access arrangements if necessary.

Part 1 of Form 8 is a pen portrait of the candidate's needs. It allows the SENDCo to 'paint a holistic picture of need', confirming normal way of working bringing together:

- if known, arrangements made for Key Stage 2 tests
- comments and observations from teaching staff and support staff (i.e. Learning Support Assistants, Teaching Assistants and Communication Support Workers)
- intervention strategies (e.g. individual education/learning plans) in place for the candidate
- pupil premium indicators
- screening test results
- use of pupil baseline and tracking data
- information about any differentiation in the classroom
- normal way of working in the classroom (where appropriate)
- arrangements made for end of year internal school examinations/mock examinations

SENDCo's and assessors must refer to chapter 7 section 7.6.1, for information on how to confirm 'normal way of working'. The only exception to this is where an arrangement is put in place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment.

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. Refer to AARA, chapter 8 (Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments) and chapter 6 (Modified papers)

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) using any of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application 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)

Candidates must be informed that an application for access arrangements will be processed using Access arrangements online, complying with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

All evidence is collected by the SENDCo prior to the AA online request.

Form 8 is completed prior to AA online request by the SENDCo and external assessor.

The SENDCo is responsible for the submission of the AA online.

The candidate AAO file is updated and stored securely in the SEN office.

The SENDCo must keep detailed records, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes; a copy of the candidate's approved application; appropriate evidence of need (where required); evidence of the assessor's qualification (where required). (AARA, section 8.6)

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

All arrangements that do not require an approved AAO application should be authorised by SENDCo.

The SENDCo will gather the evidence of need and file accordingly.

The SENDCo and Exams Manager discuss the appropriateness of arrangements

The SENDCo and Exams Manager liaise to ensure all arrangements are in place prior to all internal and external exams.

Centre-specific criteria for particular access arrangements

Word Processor Policy (Exams)

The SENDCo will decide if an exam candidate may be approved the use of a word processor where it is appropriate to the candidate's needs and not simply because this is the candidate's preferred way of working within the centre. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

Goldington Academy's Word Processing policy is available on the school website.

The 'normal way of working' for exam candidates, as directed by the head of centre, is that candidates handwrite their exams. An exception to this is where a candidate may have an approved access arrangement in place, for example the use of a scribe/speech recognition technology or an injury sustained by the candidate whereby writing is restricted (as part of emergency access arrangements)

Awarding word processors

There are also exceptions where a candidate may be awarded the use of a word processor in exams where he/she has a firmly established need, it reflects the candidate's normal way of working and by not being awarded a word processor would be at a substantial disadvantage to other candidates.

Exceptions might include where a candidate has, for example:

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly
- a medical condition
- a physical disability
- a sensory impairment
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand
- poor handwriting of a standard that would impair marking
- a mental health condition

Allocating word processors

Appropriate exam-compliant word processors will be allocated by the IT department in liaison with the SENDCo and the Exams Manager. In exceptional circumstances where the number of appropriate word processors may be insufficient for the cohort of candidates approved to use them in an exam session, the cohort will be split into two groups. One group

will sit the exam earlier than or later than the published start time. The security of the exam will be maintained at all times and candidates will be supervised in line with section 2.11 of ICE.

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 within the centre 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]

In the case of alternative rooming arrangements, the candidate's disability is established within the centre (see Chapter 4, paragraph 4.1.4). This means it is known to a Form Tutor, a Head of Year, the SENDCo or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities. For example, a long-term medical condition which has a substantial and adverse effect.

Alternative rooming arrangements must reflect the candidate's normal way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations.

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations is not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre.

The use of an alternative room with 1:1 invigilation would apply where the candidate has a serious medical condition such as frequent seizures, Tourette's or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the examination room.