
Strathearn School

Examination Access Arrangements Policy 2023/24



Rationale

An Access Arrangement is a provision or type of support given to a student (subject to JCQ¹ guidelines) in an examination, based on evidence of need and their normal way of working in school. The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Strathearn School fulfils its obligations in respect of identifying the need for, requesting and implementing examination access arrangements which address the needs of all candidates. The role of the Specialist Assessor is central to the implementation of this policy; in Strathearn School, the Specialist Assessor is the Assistant Learning Support Co-ordinator.

The JCQ is a membership organisation comprising the eight largest providers of qualifications in the UK. The JCQ provides a single voice on issues of examination administration and, when appropriate, qualification and wider education policy. These regulations for schools can be accessed on the JCQ website.

THIS POLICY IS WRITTEN IN LINE WITH THE JOINT COUNCIL FOR QUALIFICATION (JCQ) GUIDANCE.

What are Access Arrangements?

Access Arrangements allow candidates with **special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries** to show what they know and can do without changing the demands of or affecting the security or integrity of the assessment. These include:

- **Extra time:** students may be entitled to an allowance of 25% (or more in exceptional circumstances) depending on the history of evidence of need and the recommendation of the designated Specialist Assessor.
- **A reader:** a trained adult who reads the question and any relevant text (with the exception of the 'Reading Section' of an English GCSE Examination) for the student. The student writes the answers themselves but may ask for answers to be read back to them.
- **A scribe:** a trained adult who writes for the student. The student dictates their answers or may type on a computer themselves. Under JCQ regulations on the use of a scribe/word processor with the spell and grammar check facility enabled, the student "will not have access to marks awarded for spelling, punctuation and/or grammar unless he/she has independently dictated spelling, punctuation and or grammar, and this has been recorded on the scribe cover sheet" (Page 51).
- **Word processor:** for exceptional reasons, a student may be given access to a computer for an examination so they can word process their answers (with the spell and grammar check facility disabled). This access **cannot** be given because a student types faster than they write or because they prefer it; it must be to account for a special educational need, disability or

¹ 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties – Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments' Joint Council for Qualifications (updated annually) available at <https://www.jcq.org.uk/>

temporary injury. See Appendix 2 for details on the use of word processors in School and in Public Examinations.

- **Rest breaks:** where students are permitted to stop for short break(s) during the examination and the time when stopped is added to the finish time; the effect is elongating the examination but not actually using any extra answering time.
- **Prompter:** where a student has little sense of time or loses concentration easily, a trained adult can prompt them with a few permitted phrases to refocus, move the student on to the next question or indicate how much time is left.

Access Arrangements are subject specific and if a student is granted an access arrangement it does not necessarily guarantee that this arrangement will be available in all subjects. Each subject is assessed on a case by case basis.

The above list is not exhaustive. These and other Access Arrangements, and the restrictions applying to them, may be viewed in full on the JCQ website.

What evidence is needed to apply for Access Arrangements?

There are a number of pieces of evidence that are needed to apply for Access Arrangements to JCQ:

- Report from the Specialist Assessor, as appointed by the Principal, which notes :
 - Evidence of persistent and significant difficulties, which would usually have been identified in Primary school and during Key Stage 3
 - Evidence from teachers that this difficulty impacts on teaching and learning in the classroom
 - Evidence that the access arrangement is the student's normal way of working in school. For example, this may be that they routinely take more time to complete work, or that they always use a scribe to complete written work

Together with supporting evidence in the form of:

- Educational assessments and tests e.g. reading speed, reading comprehension, writing tests. These are conducted by the school's Specialist Assessor. JCQ states that candidates experiencing '*significant difficulties*' are those who have a standardised score of 84 or lower; this would place the candidate in the bottom 14% of the population relative to their peers. **It should be noted that it is not necessary to have a diagnosis, nor does a diagnosis guarantee Access Arrangements if the student scores above this criterion.**

or

- A letter from a Consultant stating the need for an access arrangement, if Medical issues are the difficulty (including ADHD, ASD).

*The Principal will ensure that the Specialist Assessor is appropriately qualified as defined in the JCQ "Access Arrangements" document. Evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) are held on file. Qualification certificates are available for inspection purposes and will be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the Learning Support Co-Ordinator when necessary.

ACCESS Arrangements and Private Educational Psychologists' Reports

JCQ regulations state that *'a privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to award Access Arrangements and cannot be used to process an application.' (Page 83)*

A growing number of parents are having their children assessed by private educational psychologists and submitting the reports to Learning Support as evidence that their child should be awarded Access Arrangements.

Often private educational psychologists recommend that children should receive Access Arrangements which can be in conflict with what the Specialist Assessor recommends.

Where a private educational psychologist's report is presented without prior consultation and supporting evidence of normal way of working from the school, the school cannot accept the recommendations of the report, but must instead follow the recommendations of the Specialist Assessor as required by JCQ regulations.

Private reports *intended for use as evidence for ACCESS arrangements*, should only be requested in consultation with Strathearn Specialist Assessor. Such reports can be helpful in the case of concerns which cannot be identified by school testing, or if a diagnosis is required {e.g. for tertiary education}. If this is the case, the Specialist Assessor will speak to the Educational Psychologist before the consultation in order to provide the necessary teacher evidence and appraise the psychologist of the student's normal way of working in school.

How are students identified for Examination Access Arrangements?

Information from Primary schools

Reports and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) / Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) from Primary school are very useful to give evidence of the persistent nature of a difficulty, however, it should be noted that even if a student received Access Arrangements for the Transfer test, this does not guarantee that they will receive it at GCSE or GCE because their needs may have changed. For example, a student who was awarded extra time in a Transfer test may not qualify for extra time at GCSE as their speed of working may have improved to the extent it does not meet the JCQ criteria.

Evidence of need gathered during internal examinations and assessments

JCQ states that *"if a candidate can complete a paper in the normal length of time, and never uses the extra time which has been made available, then it is not an effective adjustment. It would not be appropriate to process an application for extra time."* (Page 81) Close attention is given to the use of Extra Time during internal examinations; to comply with JCQ regulations, School will not process applications where there is no evidence of need in past examinations or assessments.

Parental Referral

Parents can contact the Form Tutor, class teacher or Head of Year to ask for advice if they have concerns with the progress and learning of their child. The Head of Year will then liaise with the Form Tutor to conduct a trawl of subject teachers for any supportive evidence of need. Following

this, a decision will be made as to whether it is appropriate to refer the student to the Specialist Assessor for testing. [See Appendix 1 'SENI Referral Process'](#).

Teacher Referral

Subject teachers can complete a 'Record of Concern' slip which they pass to the Head of Year where they have concerns about the learning and progress of a student in their class. Pieces of work can also be included with the referral as evidence. The Head of Year will then liaise with the Form Tutor to conduct a trawl of subject teachers for any supportive evidence of need. Following this, a decision will be made as to whether it is appropriate to refer the student to the Specialist Assessor for testing.

Head of Year Referral

The Head of Year may initiate a review of a pupil's learning and progress following their analysis of school examination performance. Evidence is gathered from subject teachers before a decision is taken as to whether or not to refer the student to the Specialist Assessor for testing.

Individual educational tests conducted at staff or parental request

Once the decision to test has been taken, the student will attend Learning Support to meet with the Specialist Assessor. They usually complete a [self-evaluation consultation](#) with the Specialist Assessor and the appropriate Psychometric tests are selected.

If the nature of the difficulty is confirmed to be 'significant' and meets the strict criteria, and if the Specialist Assessor can confirm the persistent nature of the problem and the student's normal way of working based on evidence from teachers, then an application to JCQ can be made. The student must sign a Data Protection Notice to give consent for some of their personal data to be shared with JCQ and the Examination Awarding bodies.

How do staff and parents know whether a student has Examination Access Arrangements?

- Teaching and support staff can view an 'Access Arrangements List' on the school network. The information about results of assessments for Access Arrangements are kept confidentially in line with school policy, and are shared on a 'need to know' basis.
- Parents are informed of any Access Arrangement by the School via the FT / HoY / Specialist Assessor / Learning Support Co-Ordinator or through the PLP where applicable.

What support is given to students with Access Arrangements?

Students with Access Arrangements are encouraged to make use of them during internal assessments and examinations so that they gain practice at using them effectively.

Students with extra time are guided on how to use the additional time allowance and rest breaks effectively. Then they need to apply the techniques and strategies given to them in exams and assessments.

Students who have access to a reader, scribe or prompter as their normal way of working, are shown how to use them appropriately in examination situations. It is explained to them what they can and

can't do with the reader/scribe/prompter during the examination, and how much support the adult is allowed to give.

All subject teachers are given access to the list of students with Access Arrangements, and they are asked to give Learning Support notice before they do tests or controlled assessments so that support can be provided if required. Students who have a reader can be supported by the teacher supervising the test or may have individual support if necessary. The Learning Support Department where necessary, can provide a separate room, a reader, a prompter, access to ICT and a scribe provided that adequate notice is given.

Students with Access Arrangements are monitored regularly through the use of data from internal progress reports, class tests and examination results, as well as PLP reviews where applicable.

Appeals to centre decisions relating to Access Arrangements

If parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of their request for Access Arrangements, they should contact the Principal who will request the evidence gathered by the Learning Support Coordinator (LSC). This evidence will be reviewed against current JCQ regulations and parents will be advised of the final decision within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal.

Review of the Policy

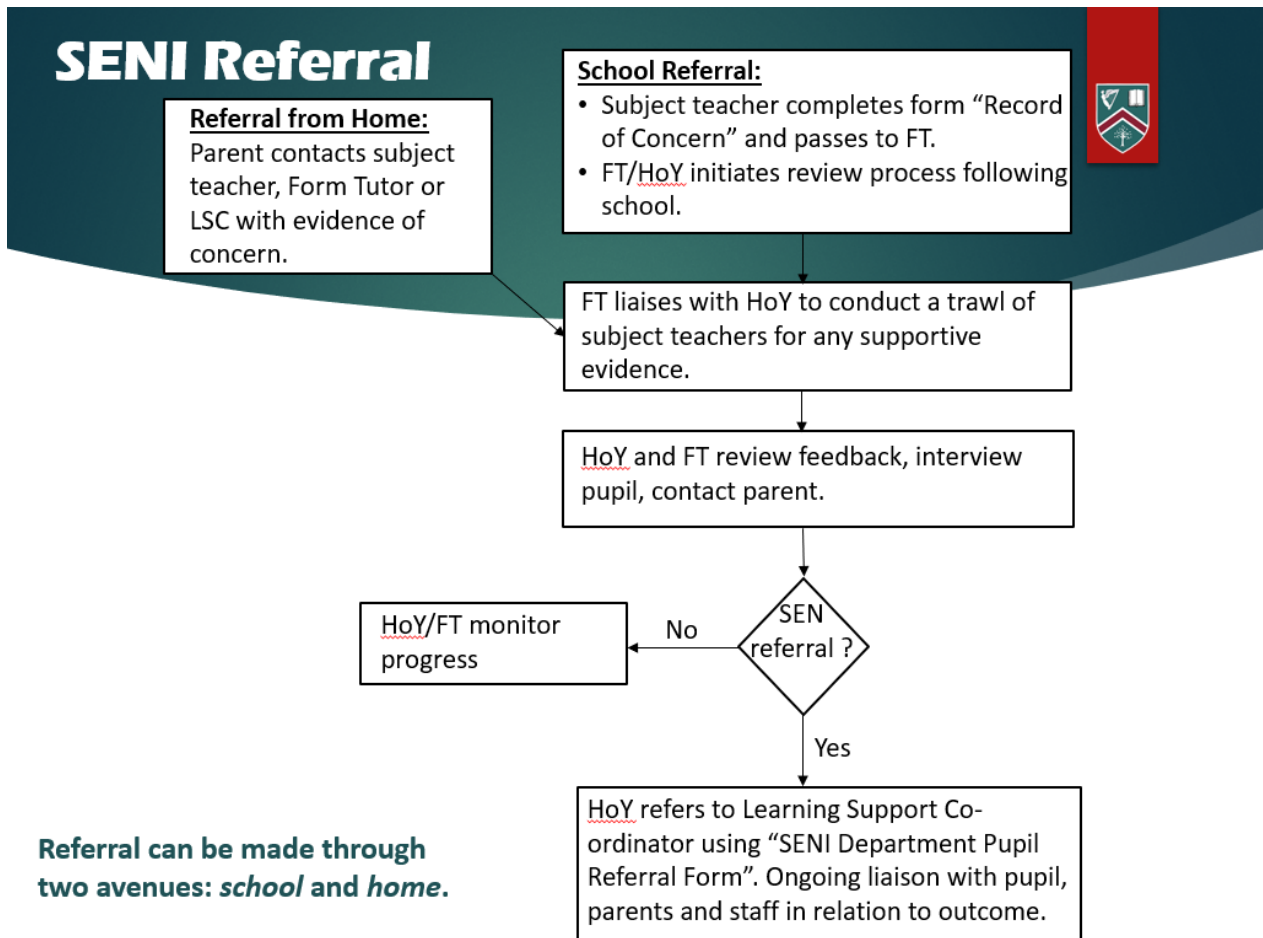
This policy is reviewed annually to ensure that arrangements are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication.

Availability of Policy

This policy is published on Strathearn School website **as part of the SEN policy**; a hard-copy version can be collected from the school reception by request.

Next Review: October 2023

Appendix 1



Appendix 2

Guidance on the use of Word Processors in School and in Public Examinations 2023/24

Strathearn school values good handwriting and expects high standards on presentation of work. Most students will handwrite in examinations, however, there are exceptional circumstances, as identified by the School, where students may benefit from using a word processor. In these cases, Strathearn will allow use of a word processor for note-making in class, homework, and in internal and public examinations.

Reasons why the use of a word processor might be granted:

- The pupil has a Specific Learning Difficulty which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly or fluently.
- Formal assessment has shown the pupil to have a below average speed of handwriting.
- Formal assessment has indicated that a pupil has illegible handwriting (i.e. 10% or more words are illegible in context) and teachers judge this to be significantly impacting on their performance in assessed work.
- A pupil has a medical condition or physical disability which impacts on their ability to write by hand. [Here evidence will be required from a relevant medical professional].

The only exception to this is where an arrangement may need to be put in place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment at the time of an exam or assessment which impacts on a pupil's ability to write by hand.

The use of a word processor **will not** be granted to a pupil because they prefer to type rather than write or because they can work faster on a keyboard or because they use a laptop at home (JCQ Access Arrangements Page 57).

Pupils who have permission to use a word processor in class may need to bring in their own laptop for use in School. They will be required to sign the appropriate paperwork granting permission for use [as per Strathearn School's Use of Personal Devices policy]. The School will provide word processors for use in internal exams and public exams.

Principles for using a word processor in Public Examinations

The use of word processors in examinations and assessments is reviewed and updated annually, on the publication of updated JCQ regulations and guidance contained in the publications Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AA) and Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE).

Strathearn School complies with AA regulations and guidance as follows:

- Candidates with access to word processors are allowed to do so in order to remove barriers for disabled candidates which prevent them from being placed at a substantial disadvantage as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties.
- The use of word processors is only permitted whilst ensuring that the integrity of the assessment is maintained, at the same time as providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.
- The use of a word processor is not granted where it will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question.
- Candidates may not require the use of a word processor in each specification. As subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of our candidates, the need for the use of a word processor is considered on a subject-by-subject basis.
- The use of a word processor is considered and agreed where appropriate at the start of the course.
- The use of a word processor in public examinations must reflect the pupil's normal way of working at school and must be appropriate for their needs.
- When a word processor is used in any internal/public examination in accordance with this policy, the grammar and spell check facility and any predictive text facility must be disabled unless the student has also been granted the use of a scribe/spell check in accordance with JCQ regulations.

Under JCQ regulations on the use of a scribe/word processor with the spell and grammar check facility enabled, the student "will not have access to marks awarded for spelling, punctuation and/or grammar unless he/she has independently dictated spelling, punctuation and or grammar, and this has been recorded on the scribe cover sheet" (Page 51).

In all cases, a word processor cover sheet (JCQ Form 4) is completed and included with each candidate's typed script.