

EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

Last reviewed:	September 2026
Next review due:	September 2027
Reviewed by:	Director of Academic Studies SENCo Examinations Officer

Access Arrangements in exams are largely controlled by the Joint Council for Qualifications who publish regular updates.

The school is required to have a thorough knowledge of the most recent Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA) document and for key members of staff to have completed the yearly update training.

The JCQ AARA document for 2026 states:

*“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.” 4.2.1*

The school applies the policies, procedures and regulations set out in the AARA to our school context in the sections below:

1. Students in KS3 and KS4

1.1 Students who join the school having had a cognitive assessment with an Educational Psychologist or a Specialist Assessor, who has made recommendations for access arrangements

As part of any cognitive assessment, the assessor or psychologist will make recommendations for potential access arrangements. The current AARA document states that although a specialist, eg, a medical consultant, educational psychologist or SpLD assessor may recommend specific access arrangements, it is the SENCo who must determine the arrangements for the candidate’s examinations. This will be based on the candidate’s normal way of working in timed assessments and comments, observations and evidence from teaching staff. Some arrangements may be necessary when they are younger and become less helpful as they mature; this is often the case with arrangements such as scribes and readers. We revisit access arrangements prior to test periods to check whether the arrangements continue to be appropriate.

- **Students with cognition and learning difficulties need to have an access arrangements assessment no earlier than Year 9**

It is this assessment that provides the standardised scores needed for the school to make an application to the exam boards for access arrangements such as extra time, reader, computer reader, scribe and typing with the spell check 'on'. Although historical assessments can be used as supporting evidence that there is a history of difficulties for the students, these older scores cannot be used in the access arrangements application for GCSE.

- **All access arrangements assessments must be commissioned by the school**

We have an internal assessor and may use external assessors that have an established relationship with the school. This means we have a copy of their certificates or registration numbers and have approved their qualifications. They might be employed by the school already, or work in another Nord Anglia school. There is no charge for these assessments, but it is important to note that we do not provide a written diagnostic report to parents.

Because the JCQ updates their regulations regularly, it is sometimes possible for a student that has been eligible for an arrangement in their younger years to be ineligible by the time they reach GCSE. Therefore, we aim to establish a normal way of working and apply through JCQ before the end of Year 10 at the latest to apply under the current and existing regulations.

1.2 Students who join the school with a long-term or life-long diagnosed medical condition, including diagnoses of ADHD and Autistic Spectrum Disorder

It is likely that part of the diagnostic assessment for conditions such as ADHD and ASD resulted in some recommendations for access arrangements. These are suggestions and the expectation is that the student's school will work with them to explore these options to find the student's preferred and usual way of working. Some arrangements may be necessary when they are younger and become less helpful as they mature; this is often the case with arrangements such as scribes, readers and prompts. We aim to review access arrangements prior to the Autumn and Summer test periods to determine whether the arrangements continue to be appropriate.

It is through this review and discussion process that teachers and students evaluate how they best work in different subjects, and this is essential to determine 'normal way of working' in preparation for their GCSE exams.

- A long-term or lifelong condition does not, by itself, determine an access arrangement. The SENCo must establish the candidate's current picture of need, normal way of working and the evidence required by JCQ for the specific arrangement. Where specialist evidence or formal diagnostic evidence is required by JCQ, this must be held on file.
- Students with long-term or life-long conditions that are changeable and could get better or worse may need an updated assessment or medical review for us to get advice about suitable and appropriate arrangements. This includes conditions like eating disorders, anxiety disorders and epilepsy, diabetes and migraines.

The JCQ have issued some guidance around medical conditions and the awarding of extra time in exams. There is an expectation that supervised rest breaks have been 'considered' as a suitable

option before making an application for 25% extra time, and schools are expected to be able to evidence that this has happened. This is a matter for professional judgement: the SENCo should determine the most appropriate adjustment using teacher feedback, evidence and the candidate's own views, and should record the rationale.

There are also rules around the specialist evidence that can be accepted. For an extra time application and/or scribe the evidence must be from a consultant or clinician and not from a GP. The school will need to hold copies of this professional medical evidence.

1.3 Students who are identified as requiring access arrangements during their time at our school

Many of these students are identified through school-led screening processes. The SEND staff work closely with the teachers to refer students who might have underlying difficulties that make them eligible for access arrangements. Teachers can refer students that they feel should be assessed for arrangements/reasonable adjustments.

We screen students in Year 7 and 9 using-GL Exact which gives us a measure of literacy skills including reading and writing speed and spelling accuracy. We also use tests of non-verbal reasoning and maths fluency to highlight students who may have an underlying cognitive difficulty. There is no charge for these services.

Where student seeks a diagnostic assessment for a specific learning difficulty such as Dyslexia or a life-long medical condition such as ADHD, these reports can be used as evidence of need for access arrangements applications as described above.

Full diagnostic assessments are not provided by the school, and these would need to be commissioned and funded by parents. The SEND Team provides information to clinicians/psychologists carrying out these kinds of assessments and can advise parents on the correct process should you intend to use it to support access arrangements. Please remember that the SEND Team require 10 working days during term-time (2 weeks) notice to collate information to share with clinicians / psychologists and to complete questionnaires for diagnostic assessments.

Some students will develop medical conditions during their time with us. We ask that parents make medical conditions known to Personal Tutors as soon as possible so that they can consult with the SEND Team regarding potential access arrangements. Reports should be shared with the school so that access arrangements can be fully considered.

2. Students in KS5

2.1 Students who join us from UK schools with established access arrangements from GCSE

Where a student provides complete and appropriate paperwork from their previous school, the SENCo will review the existing arrangement against the current JCQ criteria and the candidate's current normal way of working. Where JCQ permits an arrangement to roll forward, the school will complete any required updating documentation and process a new online application where required.

Exceptions to this rule are:

- if the JCQ have changed the criteria for eligibility for specific arrangements;
- if the student cannot provide suitable paperwork from their previous school, or where the previous school has not applied for the arrangements correctly;
- if the arrangements were for an illness or injury from which the student has now fully or partially recovered;
- if the student with cognition and learning difficulties had more than 25% extra time for their GCSE examinations
- if the application for extra time was approved under 'exceptional circumstances'

In these exceptions, the SEND Team will advise individuals accordingly.

2.2 Students who join us from international schools and have a diagnosis of a learning difficulty or a medical condition including ADHD or Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Students joining from other education systems will not necessarily have paperwork in place that meets JCQ regulations. Therefore, we ask that these students identify themselves as soon as possible in Year 12 and meet with the SEND Team. The SEND Team will establish whether there is a history of need and what access arrangements are required and devise a plan to secure the necessary documentation to apply to the exam boards. Any diagnostic reports will need to be translated into English if necessary and shared with school.

As part of any cognitive assessment, the assessor or psychologist will make recommendations for potential access arrangements. The current AARA document states that although a specialist, eg, a medical consultant, educational psychologist or SpLD assessor may recommend specific access arrangements, it is the SENCo who must determine the arrangements for the candidate's examinations. This will be based on the candidate's normal way of working in timed assessments and comments, observations and evidence from teaching staff. Some arrangements may be necessary when they are younger and become less helpful as they mature; this is often the case with arrangements such as scribes, readers, prompts and coloured paper/overlays. We aim to review access arrangements prior to the Autumn and Summer test periods to determine whether the arrangements continue to be appropriate.

2.3 Students who are identified as requiring access arrangements during their time at the school

There is an expectation that most students with underlying needs will have been identified during their childhood and earlier adolescence. However, some students do not experience substantial difficulties until they begin A-level study.

Many of these students are identified through school-led screening processes. The SEND staff work closely with the teachers to refer students who might have underlying difficulties that make them eligible for access arrangements. Teachers and Directors of Studies can refer students that they feel should be assessed for arrangements such as 25% extra time, use of a word processor, or smaller room invigilation.

- **All access arrangements assessments must be commissioned by the school**

We have an internal assessor and may use external assessors that have an established relationship with the school. This means we have a copy of their certificates or registration numbers and have approved their qualifications. They might be employed by the school already, or work in another Nord Anglia school. There is no charge for these assessments, but it is important to note that we do not provide a written diagnostic report to parents.

Where students seek a diagnostic assessment for a specific learning difficulty such as Dyslexia or a life-long condition such as ADHD, these reports can be used as evidence for access arrangements applications but are not always required for some types of access arrangement provision to be made.

Full diagnostic assessments are not provided by the school, and these would need to be commissioned and funded by parents. The SEND Team can provide information to clinicians/psychologists carrying out these kinds of assessments and can advise parents on the correct process should you intend to use it to support access arrangements applications. Please remember that the SEND Team require 10 working days' notice during term-time to collate information to share with clinicians / psychologists and to complete questionnaires for diagnostic assessments and reports etc.

Some students will develop medical conditions during their time with us. We ask that parents make medical conditions known to Directors of Studies as soon as possible so that they can consult with the SEND Team regarding potential access arrangements and JCQ applications can be submitted before the end of Year 12.

3. Eligibility criteria for specific access arrangements

3.1 Extra time

Eligibility criteria for 25% extra time and 26%-50% extra time are set out by the JCQ. The school must comply with these regulations and follow their processes. Extra time must be applied for before the published deadline for each exam year.

Further information can be found here:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/>

3.2 Scribe and Reader / Computer Reader

Eligibility criteria for using a Scribe (including having spell-check 'on') and for using a Reader or Computer Reader are set out by the JCQ. The school must comply with these regulations and follow their processes. These arrangements must be applied for before the published deadline for each exam year.

Further information can be found here:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/>

3.3 Word processor

The school is required to have a centre-specific word processor policy. This can be found below in **Appendix 1**.

3.4 Supervised rest breaks

The school has a policy for supervised rest breaks. This can be found below in **Appendix 2**. Supervised rest breaks do not require an access arrangements online application but the SENCo must complete a Form 8 or Form 9 where JCQ requires this.

3.5 Alternative rooming arrangements

The school has a policy for alternative rooming arrangements. This can be found below in **Appendix 3**.

3.6 Other arrangements

As some arrangements are reflective of 'normal way of working' they might be specific to individuals. Examples of arrangements that require an online application include remote invigilation, access to a mobile phone for medical purposes and listening to music/white noise in exams. The school has a policy for listening to music in exams. This can be found below in **Appendix 4**. Examples of arrangements that do not require an online application but can be considered within the centre include: non-electronic ear defenders, use of fidgets. The SENCo must make their decision 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.

Further information can be found here:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/>

WORD PROCESSING IN EXAMS POLICY

1. Introduction

This policy on 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 and Instructions for Conducting Examinations.

References to 'AA' relate to JCQ *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2026-27* and 'ICE' to JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations 2026-27*.

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations.

2. Purpose of the policy

This policy details how the centre manages and administers the use of word processors (including laptops and tablets) in examinations and assessments.

3. The use of a word processor

d'Overbroeck's complies with AA chapter 5 *AARA 2026-27, pg 70* as follows:

- A word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate because they now want to type rather than write in examinations 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.
- This policy details the criteria we use to award and allocate word processors for examinations and assessments.

4. Centre specific processes

A word processor may be granted to a candidate for examinations when:

- a candidate has a report from an educational psychologist that recommends they use a word processor in examinations;
- a candidate has been identified as being eligible for a word processor during school-led screening processes for access arrangements, and this has been approved by the SENCo;
- a candidate joins the Sixth Form with the evidence from their previous school's SENCo stating that they used a word processor for examinations;
- a candidate holds medical evidence of a physical disability or medical condition supporting the use of a word processor.

It is not enough that a student can type faster than they can write or that typing is the candidate's preferred way of working. The student must be at a **substantial disadvantage**. Their writing must be

particularly slow or very difficult to read or the candidate may have a physical impairment.

When no recommendation from an educational psychologist exists, and where a student has not been identified by our school-led screening processes but where a teacher has a concern, it is required that:

- the relevant Director of Studies or Personal Tutor makes a request to the SEND department.
- the relevant teachers complete a referral form with evidence and testimony from the relevant teacher(s) detailing how the student is **significantly disadvantaged** through slow or illegible handwriting or has organisational difficulties that inhibit composition.
- where the student finds it very difficult to plan and organise written work when writing by hand. This is clearly evidenced via internal processes and is the student's normal way of working.

The SEND department will evaluate the candidate's case using this policy to assess eligibility and conducting necessary assessments to evidence difficulty. If approved, the SEND department will inform the Examinations Officer.

5. Principles for using a word processor

d'Overbroeck's complies with AA chapter 5 (*Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties*) and regulations and guidance as follows:

(AA 5.8.1)

- Centres are allowed to provide a word processor, with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text switched off, where it is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre

(AA 5.8.3)

- A candidate may use a word processor in an examination to type questions required extended writing and may handwrite shorter answers.
- Examinations which have a significant amount of writing, as well as those that place a greater demand on the need to organise thought and plan extended answers, are those where candidates will frequently need to type. Examinations which require more simplistic answers are often easier to handwrite within the answer booklet. The candidate avoids the difficulty of visually tracking between the question paper and screen.

6. Word processors and their programmes

d'Overbroeck's complies with ICE 14.25 *Word processors* instructions by ensuring that word processors:

- must be used as a typewriter, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable;
- must have been cleared of any previously stored data, as must any portable storage medium used. An unauthorised memory stick must not be used by a candidate. When needed, the centre must provide a memory stick, which is cleared of any previously stored data, to the candidate;
- must be in good working order at the time of the examination;

- must be accommodated in such a way that other candidates are not disturbed and cannot read the screen. Where a candidate using a word processor is accommodated in another room, a separate invigilator will be required;
- must either be connected to a printer so that a script can be printed off, or have the facility to print from a portable storage medium. This must be done after the examination is over. The candidate must be present to verify that the work printed is their own. Word-processed scripts must be attached to any answer booklet which contains some of the answers;
- must be used to produce work under secure conditions, otherwise the candidate's script may not be accepted;
- must not be used to perform skills which are being assessed;
- must not give the candidate access to other applications, such as a calculator (where prohibited in the examination), email, the Internet, social media sites or spreadsheets;
- must not include graphics packages or computer aided design software unless permission has been given to use these;
- must not have any predictive text software or an automatic spelling and grammar check enabled unless the candidate has been permitted a scribe (a scribe cover sheet must be completed) or the awarding body's specification permits the use of automatic spellchecking;
- must not include computer reading (text to speech) software unless the candidate has permission to use a computer reader;
- must not include speech recognition technology unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe (a scribe cover sheet must be completed);
- must not include AI tools;
- must not be used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe (a scribe cover sheet must be completed).

7. Laptops as word processors

d'Overbroeck's further complies with ICE 14.20 -14.25 instructions by ensuring:

- the IT staff will ensure sufficient word processors are available for the examinations;
- laptops used during examinations/assessments are designed to run for a long period of time once fully charged and are 'free-standing';
- the battery capacity of all laptops is checked before the candidate's examination(s) with the battery sufficiently charged for the entire duration of the examination;
- candidates are reminded that their centre number, candidate number and the unit/component code must appear on each page as a header or footer;
- candidates using Notepad or Wordpad software (which do not allow for the insertion of a header or footer) are instructed to handwrite their details as a header or footer once they have finished

the examination and printed off their typed script; candidates are also supervised to ensure that they are solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way;

- candidates are instructed to appropriately number each page;
- candidates are instructed to use a minimum 12pt font and double spacing;
- invigilators remind candidates to save their work at regular intervals;
- where it is possible 'autosave' is set up on each laptop/tablet;
- candidates are present at the end of the examination when their script is printed off so they can verify that the work printed is their own.

8. Accommodating word processors in examinations

Candidates using word processors (including laptops or tablets) are internally accommodated in the library or smaller room.

Invigilation arrangements relating to the use of word processors meet JCQ regulations and recommendations.

9. Invigilators

Invigilators will be instructed prior to the exams as to the relevant JCQ regulations and the school requirements for supervising examinations for students using a word processor, including:

- seating arrangements;
- layout of candidate information on each typed page;
- use of answer booklets/question papers with word processors;
- printing procedures;
- word processor cover sheets;
- collation of printed sheets and question/answer papers.

10. After examinations

The Examinations Officer will check that:

- each word processor cover sheet is present to make sure the correct typed pages are attached to the correct candidate's question/answer paper;
- the correct number of typed pages have been included with the question paper/answer booklet before securely sending the work to the exam board as required.

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SUPERVISED REST BREAKS POLICY

1. General principles

- For long-term conditions, supervised rest breaks are considered and agreed where appropriate at the start of the course.

The exception to this principle is when a student's needs change during their course. Examples could be the escalation of a condition such as panic disorder or a physical impairment such as hypermobility or visual fatigue. It could also be because of a development/diagnosis of a new medical condition such as diabetes, migraines or epilepsy.

- Candidates are made aware that they will be permitted to take supervised rest breaks during examinations and non-examination assessments.
- Candidates will be involved in discussions and decisions about the purpose and particular use of their supervised rest breaks, based on their individual circumstances.
- Supervised rest breaks must be a break from the exam. Students can remain in the room but must not engage with exam material or they must take the supervised rest breaks in the corridor under supervised conditions. Students are not permitted to take supervised rest breaks outside of the school building and they must remain inside the school building at all times whilst the exam is taking place. Supervised rest breaks must only be used for going to the bathroom/toilet where there is an identified medical need.

2. Centre specific eligibility criteria

Supervised rest breaks can be considered for a candidate with persistent and significant difficulties in examinations when:

- a candidate has a report from an Educational Psychologist that recommends they are given breaks;
- a candidate has a medical diagnosis that evidences an impairment;
- a candidate joins the school in KS4 or KS5 with a Form 8 or 9 from their previous school's SENCo stating that they were entitled to supervised rest breaks in examinations;
- a candidate has been identified as being eligible for supervised rest breaks following school-led identification processes, and this has been consulted on and approved by relevant professionals such as the School Nurse and/or Pastoral Leadership and/or SENCo;
- Use of supervised rest breaks will be discussed and agreed with the SEND Team in advance. A candidate can use supervised rest breaks at any point during the exam; the exception being the first 10 minutes (unless pre agreed with SEND Team) and the last 20 minutes as we feel this causes disruption to the candidate's thinking process. Students may take up to 5 minutes every half hour.

- The combined total of supervised rest breaks must not add up to an exam over-running the exam session (i.e. 1pm for morning exams and 6pm for afternoon exams)
- If a student has multiple exams in one day or a particularly high level of need, there may be a need for longer supervised rest breaks. This will be discussed and agreed with the SEND Team in advance.

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ALTERNATIVE ROOMING ARRANGEMENT POLICY

1. Principles for small room or individual invigilation

For longer term conditions, alternative rooming eg, smaller or individual room invigilation are considered and agreed where appropriate at the start of the course.

The exception to this principle is when a student's needs change during their course. Examples could be the escalation of a condition such as anxiety or sensory overwhelm/sensory distractibility.

It could also be because of a development/diagnosis of a medical condition that needs to be managed on the school site and cannot be successfully managed at our off-site examination venue.

2. Centre specific eligibility criteria

2.1 Alternative rooming – individual room

- a candidate has arrangements that would distract other students in the room (eg, Read Aloud, Scribe, etc);
- a 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.;
- a candidate has a recommendation from a medical professional that their needs cannot be met in the usual exam environment, including a small room invigilation;
- the request is approved by a multi-professional panel in school which could include the School Nurse, SENCo, Vice Principal Pastoral, Heads/Deputy Heads of sections, school counsellor.

2.2 Alternative rooming – small room

- a candidate has a recommendation from a medical professional that their needs cannot be met in the usual exam environment of an exam hall;
- the request is approved by a multi-professional panel in school which could include the School Nurse, SENCo, Vice Principal Pastoral, Heads/Deputy Heads of sections, school counsellor.

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LISTENING TO MUSIC IN EXAMS POLICY**1. Principles for listening to music in exams**

A candidate may have sensory impairment or SEMH needs where listening to music or white noise may support regulation and/or concentration. In accordance with JCQ AARA Chapter 5.23, the centre will apply for such an arrangement using Access Arrangements Online where this is the candidate's established normal way of working in the centre.

2. Centre specific requirements

- 2.1 In accordance with JCQ AARA 5.23.3 the candidate must use a device which cannot be connected to the internet and is not Bluetooth enabled. The centre will provide a CD player with headphones (wired)
- 2.2 Where the candidate wishes to access music or white noise that is not on a CD they will need to provide their own device which cannot be connected to the internet and is not Bluetooth enabled. Headphones must be wired (not Bluetooth enabled) The Exams Office must receive these no later than six weeks before the start of the external examination season.
- 2.3 The candidate may choose the music or white noise but will need to provide CD(s) or a playlist to be checked to ensure an advantage is not conferred to the candidate. The Exams Office must receive these no later than six weeks before the start of the external examination season. The CD(s) or playlist must be no more than 2 hours in total.

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