

Parental Guidance regarding Access Arrangements Academic Year 2018-19

Access Arrangements

An Access Arrangement is an arrangement put in place during examinations in order to compensate for a learning difficulty or medical need.

The most common Access Arrangement is 25% Extra Time, but applications for other arrangements, such as a Reader or Scribe can be considered, if there is evidence that this is the student's *normal way of working* in the classroom.

When applying for Access Arrangements, the School is obliged to work within the framework laid down by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). These regulations are very complex, and there have been changes for this academic year. The current guidance can be viewed at www.jcq.org.uk

Please note that an Educational Psychologist report, GP's letter or Specialist Assessor report that recommends an Access Arrangement is not enough on its own to guarantee that a student will receive the Access Arrangements requested.

In all cases the School's decision will be final.

Evidence needed for the Access Arrangement of 'Extra Time'

1. Evidence from the classroom

Before submitting an application for Extra Time for a student, the School has to present a 'compelling' case that the student's learning difficulty has 'a substantial and adverse effect' on the student's performance in examinations.

This will generally require *statements from class teachers* that a student is underperforming in classroom tests, as well as evidence in the form of incomplete in-class tests, mock examinations or similar. The student must also have made use of Extra Time over a substantial period of time in both classroom tests and mock examinations before the arrangement can be considered for use in external public examinations.

Please note that students may require Extra Time in some subjects but not in others; the awarding of Extra Time is therefore subject-specific. A student may need it for English, due to the problems experienced in structuring extended writing, but cope well in Mathematics, or the sciences, where written answers are generally shorter. The decision regarding the subjects for which Extra Time can be awarded, will be based on the evidence from the class teacher in each subject area.

2. Evidence from a Specialist Assessor's report

In addition to the above, the school must also have an up-to-date assessment report for the student which shows:

- speed of reading, writing or cognitive processing falls below a standardised score of 85 (SS85)
or
- there are two speed scores falling below SS90.

Please note that this assessment must take place no earlier than the start of Year 9 - it must not be completed during the summer holidays between Year 8 & 9, as it will be deemed invalid.

Who can complete the Specialist Assessor Report?

Under JCQ guidelines, Ratcliffe College is not allowed to accept privately commissioned reports without first having established a relationship with the assessor concerned. It is imperative that we hold copies of the assessors' qualification certificates on file, for inspection by JCQ, to prove that the assessor meets the strict criteria laid down. This enables the School to have full confidence in the testing that has been undertaken and ensures that testing has been robust, is valid and fits the testing interval criteria.

Current Ratcliffe College Specialist Assessors for 2018-19 are:

- Clare Boorn HCPC registered Educational Psychologist
- Jane O'Leary SpLD Assessor with Assessment Practising Certificate

NB Under JCQ criteria, assessment reports undertaken by any other educational psychologist or SpLD Assessor cannot be accepted by the School for the purpose of establishing eligibility for Access Arrangements in public examinations.

If you believe that your child has special educational needs and may be entitled to 25% Extra Time, it is strongly recommended that you discuss this with the School SENCO *before* arranging an assessment.

Evidence needed for the Access Arrangement of Word Processor (Laptop)

Under certain circumstances a student may be allowed to use a word processor in examinations. This will normally be a laptop with Spellcheck disabled, unless the student is also entitled to a scribe, in which case they will have the choice of using a laptop with Spellcheck enabled. Note that, in the latter case, marks available for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) in certain papers will not be given if Spellcheck is used.

The principal criteria when the School is deciding whether to grant the use of a word processor is that it should be the candidate's ***normal way of working*** ie that they have been granted prior use of a laptop for use within school in accordance with the school's own laptop policy. ie it should not be introduced as an '*additional*' aid just before examinations just because the student would prefer to use a laptop.

In order to qualify for use of a laptop, the student will have a medical, learning or physical difficulty that causes one or more of the following:

- Poor legibility when handwriting
- Pain on handwriting
- Planning and organisational problems when writing by hand
- Slow speed of handwriting*

*NB Where a student has already been granted 25% extra time to compensate for slow speed of handwriting the school must be careful that they will not be giving the student an unfair advantage over other students by further compensating for slow speed of work by providing a laptop. It may be possible to grant 25% extra time **or** use of a laptop as an access arrangement: eg students can use 25% extra time for handwritten exams such as maths or science, and a laptop (without extra time) for extended pieces of writing.

On-going Monitoring of Access Arrangements

Students who have been granted Access Arrangements for their GCSE /GCE examinations will be closely monitored over the years to ensure that their eligibility remains valid. For example, during the school end-of year and mock examinations, invigilators will observe whether the concession is still being used to good effect.

In terms of Extra Time, invigilators will observe and record:

- The amount of extra-time used by students
- The increase in marks due to extra-time

If a student continually does not use their extra time, the school is within its right to withdraw this Access Arrangement.

Access Arrangements for Extra Time Students Progressing from GCSE to A Level qualifications

Whilst no additional Educational Psychologist /SpLD assessment is required for a student progressing from GCSE to A Levels, the Joint Council for Qualifications does require substantial evidence from class teachers to confirm that students who had extra time for their GCSEs *continue to need it for their A Levels*. Since most students will have chosen A Level subjects that play to their strengths, it is possible that they no longer need the extra time that they had for their GCSEs. For example, students who struggle with extended writing in English at GCSE are more likely to have chosen science or mathematical-based subjects at A Level.

In addition, as with GCSE examinations, the awarding of Extra Time for A Levels is 'subject-specific'. A student may need Extra Time in one subject, but not in others.

Before the School can allow Extra Time for A Level examinations it needs to:

- Confirm that the student continues to have persistent and significant difficulties when accessing and processing information and is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010
- Provide evidence of the student's current difficulties and how they substantially impact on teaching and learning in the classroom
- Show involvement from the subject teachers in determining the continued need for Extra Time.
- Confirm that the student would continue to be at a substantial disadvantage, when compared to his non-disabled peers, if Extra Time was not awarded.
- Confirm that Extra Time continues to be the student's normal way of working within the School.