

Exam Access Arrangements Policy

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Approved by Academy Trust Board: 12th December 2022

Exam Access Arrangements Policy

Trustee Committee Responsible:	Curriculum and Quality Committee
Trustee Lead:	Link Trustee - Safeguarding
Nominated Lead Member of Staff:	Assistant Principal Safeguarding and Support / Learning Support Manager
Status and Review Cycle:	Annual
Current Review:	September 2022
Next Review Date:	September 2023

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Godalming College complies with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements for public examinations as required in the JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres.

This policy is maintained and held by the Learning Support Manager and is updated on a yearly basis on receipt of JCQ updates, as identified in the JCQ publication 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.' This publication is further referred to in this policy as AA.

Exam Access Arrangements

The Learning Support department, together with the Exams Department, are involved with special exam arrangements including extra time, readers and scribes; we follow and comply with all JCQ requirements.

All such arrangements for summer exams must be applied for by the College deadline date and need to be granted by the examination board. It is now incumbent upon Colleges to demonstrate a student's need for such an arrangement. This includes proof of normal way of working, proof that a student has trialled and benefitted from such a proposed arrangement and possession of the relevant documentation.

The Learning Support department make every effort to gather information from new students about previous exam access arrangements. However, if a student fails to engage with this process and does not disclose previous arrangements it should be recognised that it is unlikely to be possible to organise the arrangement at short notice.

What are 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 fully access 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 principle ways in which colleges and awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires colleges and 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. Colleges implement exam access arrangements in order to do this where students qualify.

The Assessment Process

Assessments are carried out by assessors appointed by the head of centre. The assessors are appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations.

The Qualification(s) of the Current Assessor(s)

Specialist Assessors hold an appropriate level 7 qualification

Person responsible for arranging Exam Access Arrangements on Medical Grounds

Learning Support Manager

Appointment of Assessors of Candidates with Learning Difficulties

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 AA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

Checking the Qualification(s) of the Assessor(s)

The certifications for the assessors have been verified by the HR Manager and credentials held on file in the HR Department.

The Centre must ensure that evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) is obtained at the point of engagement/employment and prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate. Evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) must be held on file for inspection purposes and, if requested, be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the Learning Support Manager.

Educational Psychologist Reports

In order to ensure fairness and equality to all students, we cannot accept externally sourced reports for access arrangements on their own but may choose to accept them as supporting evidence to underpin our own assessments.

We do not employ Educational Psychologists but may accept reports from those external assessors with whom we have an ongoing established relationship with if they are prepared to supply us with the corresponding Form 8, (the diagnostic report which can only be completed by the person who did the testing.)

Normal Way of Working

The JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (published every August) explains that the access arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the College. This practice is referred to as the normal way of working and arrangements must be supported by documentary evidence.

The publication states:

“The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre, for example:
in the classroom (where appropriate);
working in small groups for reading and/or writing;
literacy support lessons;
literacy intervention strategies;
in internal school tests/examinations;
mock examinations.”

The Assessment Process

Appropriately qualified Specialist Assessors carry out in-house assessments; they are appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations and attend regular update courses.

The assessment process starts with gathering information from the application and enrolment process. Teachers are made aware of student needs and exam requirements via individual student entries on the Learning Support page of CIS and the register.

The Learning Support department make every effort to gather information from new students about previous exam access arrangements. However, if a student fails to engage with this process and does not disclose previous arrangements, it is unlikely to be possible to organise the arrangement at short notice.

The first students to be processed for exam access arrangements are those taking exams in October or November in the Autumn term. These are almost entirely based on the access arrangements candidates had at school or at a previous college.

Students who have exams in the January of the Spring term will be the next to be processed, with any others following immediately after.

Deadlines

Some students who come to enrol will need to re-sit GCSE exams in November. Timely organisation of access arrangements for these exams is a challenge as the closing date for applying is in early October for non-medical exam support reasons, i.e. issues with processing or reading, writing speed or reading accuracy. As a result, if the College does not receive appropriate existing evidence of previous access arrangements from previous schools or colleges by the last working day at the end of September then it may not be possible to have the access arrangement in place for these exams.

For January exams it is usually on or around October 21st.

For all other exams it is usually on or around March 31st.

These dates are externally decided and must be strictly adhered to.

Gathering Evidence for an Application

In line with JCQ regulations we must, as a centre, “paint a picture of need and gather evidence to demonstrate normal way of working.” (Page 31 of JCQ Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments, 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023)

Prior to an assessment, Section A of the Form 8 (the form required by JCQ) is filled out by the Specialist Teacher. All assessment results are collated and documented on the Assessors Assessment Form to support the need. All Assessments for the JCQ application must be conducted by one of the Specialist Assessors.

All students and parents will be fully informed of their access arrangements prior to sitting public examinations via email when the access arrangements are submitted.

Gathering Evidence of Need

The responsibility falls on the Specialist Assessor to gather evidence to demonstrate each candidate’s normal way of working. The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the student at Godalming College, for example:

- in the classroom (where appropriate);
- in internal tests/examinations;
- mock examinations
- benchmarks

All teaching staff at Godalming College have a responsibility to provide evidence to the Specialist Assessors to demonstrate the normal way of working within the student’s lesson or activity.

The only exception to this is where an arrangement is put in place because of a temporary injury or impairment. The Learning Support Manager must gather information regarding the temporary injury or impairment to ‘paint a picture’.

Processing Access Arrangements

Arrangements 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 associated qualifications. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers.

At Godalming College this is the responsibility of the Exams Officer, which can be delegated to the Exam Access Arrangements Administrator.

The Learning Support Manager and Specialist Assessors 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) and a signed candidate personal data consent form for inspection by the JCQ Centre Inspection Service.

Centre-delegated Access Arrangements

Centre-delegated access arrangements include reading pens, prompts, rest breaks, a smaller room and use of a computer.

The following access arrangements must be applied for to JCQ via AAO:

Electronic reader, human reader, scribe, computer with spell check enabled, practical assistant and extra time.

Centre-specific Criteria for Particular Access Arrangements

All arrangements not needing JCQ permission will be supervised by the Learning Support Manager. Decisions will be based on a doctor's letter outlining the medical need.

Students who have a medical need (including those with mental health or psychological issues) may request a separate room to take their exams in. However, the College needs to have an up to date Doctor's letter on file which confirms the need. This need must be a diagnosed mental health issue and not simply regarding "exam nerves" a phrase which might be applicable to a vast number of students. In this way Godalming College has a documented policy which ensures that a criteria for candidates granted separate invigilation within the centre is in place and meets JCQ regulations. The deadline for these will be the last day of the Spring term.

Use of a Computer in Exams

This approach outlines the criteria the centre uses to award and allocate word processors (computers) for exams. JCQ regulations state the following:

"a word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate because he/she now wants to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre"

If a student clearly has a difficulty with producing legible handwriting or has a significantly below average handwriting speed, it may be possible to demonstrate an initial need on those grounds but the normal way of working will then have to be established and confirmed by those working with that student. This must be done in accordance with other deadlines.

If a student has an injury which prevents them handwriting then the College would agree to their use of a computer.

The centre may wish to set out the types of candidates which it considers would benefit from the use of a word processor, for example, a candidate with:

- 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.

If a student clearly has a difficulty with producing legible handwriting or has a significantly below average handwriting speed, it may be possible to demonstrate an initial need on those grounds but the normal way of working will then have to be established and confirmed by those working with that student. This must be done before half term in the February preceding that student's exams.

If a student has an injury which prevents them handwriting then the College would agree to the emergency use of a computer, or a scribe if necessary.

This policy should be read and viewed in conjunction with other relevant College policies and procedures.

- Admissions Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy and Procedures
- Exams Policy
- Learning Support Policy
- Progression Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy