

# Exam Access Arrangements Policy

**Learning together for success and progression**

*Approved by Academy Trust Board: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025*

# 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:	October 2025
Next Review Date:	October 2026

## Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Godalming College complies with its obligation to identify the need for exam access arrangements, requesting and implementing these for public examinations as required in the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) General Regulations for Approved Centres. JCQ state that Access Arrangements are for students who experience 'substantial disadvantage' and 'persistent and significant difficulties' in accessing examinations.

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 AARA. The AARA is updated annually and as such requirements can sometimes change from school to college, and from lower to upper sixth. The college must adhere to these changes to ensure compliance. This means that we cannot always guarantee that a student will continue to receive the same EAAs they have had at school. It also ties in closely with the Equality Act (2010) and SEND Code of Practice (2014).

## Exam Access Arrangements

The Learning Support department, together with the Exams department, are involved with arranging exam concessions including extra time, readers and scribes; we follow and comply with all JCQ requirements. We are inspected yearly, and any breach of their rules is considered malpractice and would threaten our status as an exam centre, and disqualification of the candidate.

All such arrangements must be applied for by the JCQ deadline dates and need to be granted by the examination board. It is now incumbent upon colleges to demonstrate a student's continuing need for such an arrangement, even if that student had access arrangements approved and applied for at school. This includes proof of continued normal way of working, proof that a student has trialled and benefitted from such a proposed arrangement and possession of the relevant documentation. All data about a student and their need for access arrangements is stored and shared in line with college policy and GDPR (2018).

The Learning Support department make every effort to gather information from new students about previous exam access arrangements in the first half term. 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, and must be consistent with encouraging independence. Access arrangements are the principal way in which colleges and awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments. The candidate must have an impairment in their first language which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect. A candidate does not have a learning difficulty simply because their first language is not English

### **Reasonable Adjustments**

The Equality Act 2010 requires colleges and awarding bodies 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.

### **Person(s) Responsible for Arranging Exam Access Arrangements**

All exam access arrangement decisions are carried out by qualified assessors appointed by the Head of Centre. The assessors are appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations. Specialist Assessors hold an appropriate level 7 qualification. The Centre must ensure that evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) is obtained at the point of engagement/employment and checked against current requirements prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate. The certifications for the assessors have been verified by the HR Manager and credentials held on file in the HR Department for inspection purposes and, if requested, be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the Learning Support Manager.

The Learning Support Manager and Deputy Learning Support Manager are responsible for access arrangements for students on medical grounds (Form 9), and specialist assessors are responsible for access arrangements for candidates with a learning difficulty (Form 8/8RF).

### **Recommendations from Medical Specialists**

Students with diagnosed conditions, both learning difficulties and medical, are required to provide copies of these diagnosis reports/letters to us, if this forms part of the basis for their access arrangements. Part of the diagnostic process is for specialists to make recommendations for the candidate about reasonable adjustments and strategies for home and school, although we do accept them as supporting evidence to underpin our own assessments.

However, JCQ are very clear that these recommendations are not sufficient on their own to apply for access arrangements. As a centre, we do try to meet these, but there needs to be clear evidence from teachers that there is a need, and any arrangements are the candidate's normal way of working at college.

We do not employ Educational Psychologists or Dyslexia assessors, but we can accept reports for access arrangements from professionals with whom we have an ongoing established relationship, if they are prepared to complete Part 2 of the candidate's Form 8. This needs to be agreed in advance of the external

assessment taking place, and there needs to be a clear history of difficulties in evidence from teachers (as evidenced in Part 1 of Form 8).

### **Normal Way of Working**

The AARA 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."*

Therefore, to comply with JCQ regulations we must, as a centre, paint a picture of need and gather evidence to demonstrate the normal way of working. This applies irrespective of whether the candidate had access arrangements at their previous centre; it must specifically relate to their Level 3 examinations (GCE A Level or BTEC). A candidate can still make full use of their prior arrangements in internal tests and mocks before we have formally applied for them at college. All teaching staff at Godalming College have a responsibility to provide evidence to the Assessment team to demonstrate the candidate's normal way of working in their subject. All trials, whether new or in line with prior arrangements, must initially be put in place by the assessment team, rather than subject teachers or pastoral staff.

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 still gather evidence (such as hospital letters) regarding the temporary injury or impairment to 'paint a picture' for JCQ to approve the emergency application.

All students, teachers and parents will be fully informed of their access arrangements prior to sitting public examinations via email when the access arrangements are formally applied for.

### **Exam Access Arrangement Deadlines**

*The below deadlines take into account external, JCQ required deadlines as well as internal processing and administration time.*

- November series (GCSE resits) – 30<sup>th</sup> September**

We can only process access arrangements for students who had prior arrangements; we cannot process any new referrals and can only process the arrangements as they were at the candidate's previous centre. In order to do so, we must have a copy of a candidate's Form 8 and/or Form 9 on file. If we do not receive this by the end of September, then it may not be possible to have the access arrangement in place for these exams. The deadline for ordering modified papers is the 20<sup>th</sup> September.

- January series (BTEC) – 21<sup>st</sup> October**

We can only process access arrangements for students who had prior arrangements; we cannot process any new referrals and, in most cases, can only process the arrangements as they were at the candidate's previous centre. In order to do so, we must either: have a copy of a candidate's Form 8 on file and collect evidence from their new teachers in order to write a Form 8RF, or have a copy of a candidate's Form 9 and diagnosis report/s on file, and collect evidence from their new teachers. The deadline for ordering modified papers is the 4<sup>th</sup> October.

- Summer series (BTEC and A Level) – 13<sup>th</sup> March**

We can process access arrangements for any remaining students who had prior arrangements, and we can process new referrals. For students with prior arrangements, we must either: have a copy of a candidate's

Form 8 on file and collect evidence from their new teachers in order to write a Form 8RF, or have a copy of a candidate's Form 9 and diagnosis report/s on file, and collect evidence from their new teachers. See page 6 for procedures regarding students without prior arrangements. The deadline for ordering modified papers is the 31<sup>st</sup> January.

## Processing Access Arrangements

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

The Learning Support Manager and Specialist Assessors must keep detailed records, electronically, of all the essential information on file. This includes a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) for inspection by the JCQ Centre Inspection Service.

### Students with Prior Arrangements

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.

- Form 8

A Form 8 is used for students with learning difficulties, and it means that the candidate's speed of working and processing have been assessed by a suitably qualified assessor (either in school or as part of a dyslexia assessment), and extra time (and potentially other arrangements) is deemed appropriate based on statistical and teacher evidence.

Students need to provide the assessment team with a copy of the Form 8 for us to roll their prior arrangements forward to their Level 3 courses. The specialist assessors will then check that it meets requirements before collating evidence of the candidate's normal way of working at college and writing a Form 8RF. The assessors can then formally apply, and the Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator will apply on AAO as appropriate. Please note that if a student in this category finds that their needs and normal way of working change, then they might need to be rereferrals and reassessed and a new Form 8 written. If the existing Form 8 from the previous centre does not meet requirements, then the candidate will also need to be reassessed and a new Form 8 written.

- Form 9

This is used for students who need access arrangements due to a medical condition. Students need to provide copies of their diagnosis report(s). For most access arrangements, this report must be written by a suitable specialist service:

- CAMHS (in Surrey this is more commonly known as Mindworks)
- HCPC registered psychologist
- Psychiatrist
- Registered specialist medical consultant
- Speech and language therapist
- Local Authority Specialist Service (EG Occupational Health or Sensory Impairment Service)

A Form 9 is also used for candidates who have a current Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Students must provide copies of the EHCP and latest Annual Review. They do not need to provide individual diagnosis reports as well, as the EHCP supersedes this.

The diagnosis/EHCP alone is not sufficient to apply for access arrangements, it must be supported by evidence from teachers about the candidate's normal way of working. The Learning Support Manager or Deputy Learning Support Manager will then write a new Form 9 for the student before formally applying and instructing the Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator to apply on AAO as appropriate.

### **Students without Prior Arrangements**

Students are referred to the assessment team by subject teachers. JCQ are very clear that this must originate with subject teachers, not parents, carers or pastoral staff. Teachers make a referral which is then reviewed by the assessment team who then decide whether the referral is centred around processing difficulties (Form 8) or medical EG anxiety/concentration/focus (Form 9). The team may go back to that subject teacher for more information before putting an appropriate trial in place.

- **Form 8**

If the referral contains comments which suggest slower processing, then the student will be put on a 25% extra time trial by the assessment team. They will let the student and teacher know that this is the case. The team will then request more evidence from all teachers of that student. Once sufficient evidence is gathered, one of the specialist assessors will write Part 1 of Form 8 and then contact the student to arrange a time to conduct some processing assessments in one of their free periods.

Appropriately qualified (as required by JCQ regulations) Specialist Assessors carry out in-house assessments; they attend regular update courses to maintain their qualification. Students and parent/carers will be notified of appointment times and will be given a maximum of three opportunities to attend (barring genuine reasons EG long term sickness). If a student cannot make it, they must let the assessor know so they can offer the slot to another student. After three opportunities, if a student does not attend then the trial will be removed, and students and parent/carers will be notified that we will need another referral to restart the process - we cannot proceed without it.

These assessments are standardised and objective ways of measuring speed of working (writing, reading, or cognitive processing EG working memory, language). They have been tested on hundreds, sometimes thousands of students to determine what is statistically average for a student of that age. For 25% extra time, two scores <85 are needed, which puts them in the 16<sup>th</sup> percentile or below; for 50% two scores <70 are needed which puts them in the 2<sup>nd</sup> percentile or below. There are additional rules for using a reader and a scribe.

If a student does not qualify then the extra time trial will be removed. If a student does qualify then the specialist assessor will write Part 2 and 3 of Form 8 and notify the Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator to apply on AAO as appropriate. If the referral is regarding an increase to 50% extra time, then we will need at least one other subject teacher to confirm additional extra time may be required before we can look to add a 50% extra time trial and reassess the student.

- **Form 9**

If the referral contains comments suggesting that the student is having difficulty with concentrating (EG due to attention or anxiety difficulties) then JCQ have stated that rest breaks must be trialled and exhausted first before considering extra time, for candidates who do not have a learning difficulty. The Learning Support Manager or Deputy Learning Support Manager will arrange a trial for rest breaks (and/or other centre delegated arrangements) and request more evidence from all teachers of that student. If these arrangements are working for the student, then they will write a Form 9 and notify the Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator to apply on AAO as appropriate.

If rest breaks (and/or other centre delegated arrangements) do not appear to be sufficient reasonable adjustments as per the collated teacher evidence, then they will look to arrange an extra time trial, but this will be on a case-by-case basis and evidence from a specialist service will be required (see page 5 for accepted services). The Learning Support Manager or Deputy Learning Support Manager will then request more teacher evidence confirming that extra time is now the student's normal way of working and is a reasonable adjustment then they will then write a Form 9 and tell the Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator to apply on AAO as appropriate.

## College Procedures

The Learning Support department, together with the Exams department, are involved with arranging exam concessions. Some arrangements require JCQ approval after the Access Arrangement Coordinator applies on AAO. These arrangements are: extra time, reader (human or computer), scribe (or computer with spell check switched on), access to a device for medical purposes, modified papers, timetable variations, listening to music/white noise and a practical assistant.

### Centre-Delegated Access Arrangements

Other exam arrangements do not need to be applied for via AAO but do still require evidence from teachers that those arrangements are the candidate's normal way of working. JCQ inspectors may ask to see this evidence. This list is not exhaustive, but the more common centre delegated arrangements are:

- Rest breaks
- Alternative rooming
- Computer with spell check switched off
- Reading pen/read aloud
- Prompt
- Coloured overlays and coloured paper
- Enlarged papers
- Colour naming
- Non-electronic ear defenders or ear plugs
- Digital clock
- Fidget/stress toys

For rest breaks and alternative rooming arrangements, we will also require evidence from an accredited professional medical source (which may be from one of the services named on page 4, but it could also be from a GP or counsellor). Other students will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### Rest Breaks

A rest break is not for thinking time or processing information; the exam paper will not be on show, and the student must not engage with it during the break. Candidates cannot be given as many supervised rest breaks as they like for as long as they like. JCQ state that a break will not normally be required within the first 10 minutes of an exam, and a single break should normally be no more than 30 minutes. Usual procedures at college are 5 minutes per half hour. Any deviations to this should be discussed and agreed by the assessment team. For example, a student needs one longer break to allow them time to take emergency medication and for it to take effect before restarting.

For 2025-26 JCQ have stated that where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty (Form 9 students only) there must be evidence to show that rest breaks have been trialled and exhausted before any application for 25% extra time can be considered, for new referrals. JCQ have found that low to moderate anxiety has been shown to be best managed through rest breaks, as extra time prolongs the period in which a

student must endure their anxiety, which often intensifies the emotions and reduces productivity. It also helps students to develop self-regulation skills in the long-term, preparing them more appropriately for further education or the workplace and fosters independence and resilience. 25% extra time for anxiety reasons will only be considered if it is related to another medical diagnosis; for example, a neurodivergent student.

### **Alternative Rooming**

This refers to candidates who sit the examination outside of the main examination hall/room. JCQ state that 'nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations' are not sufficient grounds to put alternate rooming arrangements in place. Due to the size of our cohorts, a smaller room could hold up to 30 candidates. In most cases, the number is usually ~20, which closely reflects the experience students have when completing benchmark assessments in class. We understand that many of our students come from smaller centres where a smaller room may have had only a few candidates, or they may have been alone with an invigilator. However, JCQ are now very clear that:

*'the use of an alternative room with one-to-one invigilation must only 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'.*

At college we recognise that this also includes students who have a human scribe or reader and read aloud arrangements as this would also otherwise disturb other candidates. It is therefore considered a rare and exceptional arrangement. We will help students who do not meet one of these criteria to make the transition to a smaller room (rather than an individual room).

### **Use of Computer**

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 legibility or handwriting speed, it may be possible to demonstrate an initial need, 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. Students who have a Form 8, will need their Form 8 checked to see if their scores still cover extra time as well as a laptop as some will have extra time partly due to writing speed. If the scores do not cover this then the student will need to be reassessed. Please note that in most cases, this does not apply to maths exams.

The centre is able 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 and according to the JCQ regulations covering temporary access arrangements.

This policy should be read and viewed in conjunction with other relevant college policies and procedures, and external documents.

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour and Support Policy and Procedures
- Exams Policy
- Learning Support Policy
- Progression Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- [JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments \(2025\)](#)
- Equality Act (2010)
- SEND Code of Practice (2014)
- [JCQ Guidance for parents, carers and students about access arrangements \(2025\)](#)
- General Data Protection Regulations (2018)