

Exam Access Arrangements Policy

Introduction

Exam 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 access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments.

Reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires an 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. An example would be a Braille paper which would be a reasonable adjustment for a vision impaired candidate who could read Braille. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- the needs of the disabled candidate.
- the effectiveness of the adjustment.
- the cost of the adjustment; and
- the impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body.
- involves unreasonable timeframes; or
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable.'

Purpose and scope of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity to students, staff, and parents/carers in relation to the College's provision of exam access arrangements informed and guided by the legislation. The scope of this policy relates specifically to Further Education learners (including Access to Higher Education) and Apprentices, at the college. A separate policy applies to Higher Education, at University Centre Reaseheath.

This policy confirms that Reaseheath College has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements process and:

- is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements (GR 5.4).
- has a written process in place to not only check the qualification(s) of its assessor(s) but that the correct procedures are followed as per Chapter 7 of the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (GR 5.4).

Reaseheath College's policy for access arrangements in examinations is determined by the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) which dictates the exam access arrangements available and the way these are applied to examinations which are conducted for the Awarding Bodies. Exam access arrangements must reflect your normal way of working. If learners do not make use of their exam access arrangements during assessments and examinations, the College may withdraw the provision of them.

Exam access arrangements allow learners with special educational needs, medical conditions, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment. In this way, the Centre acts as an agent of the Awarding Bodies to comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

A reasonable adjustment may be unique to an individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements included here below.

An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, unreasonable time frames, or affects the security of the assessment. The College adheres to guidelines set by JCQ and the organisation/administration of examinations within the College.

The Examination Access Arrangements (EAA) Team works holistically with all departments in the College to ensure a whole college approach, embracing equality and diversity to provide an equal opportunity for all our learners.

Examples of specific needs and available access arrangements

This list is not exhaustive. All exam access arrangements are assessed based on the needs of the individual learner, supporting evidence and what is considered reasonable by the College.

Examples of specific need	Examples of available access arrangements (not exhaustive as dependent on the specific need)
Cognition and learning Communication and interaction Medical condition Sensory impairment Physical impairment Social, mental, and emotional	Extra time Reader or computer reader Scribe (writer) or scribe typist/speech to text software Word processor (laptop) Read aloud Supervised rest breaks either inside or supervised outside the Room

Other specific requests for exam access arrangements, such as assistance animals or sensory stimulus items, would require approval from the individual Awarding Body on a case-by-case basis. Requests would be required to meet the JCQ expectations in relation to history of need and provision evidence, as detailed below.

1. General principles

The principles for Reaseheath College to consider include:

- The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing him/her from being placed at a substantial disadvantage due to persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate (AA 4.2).
- Modified papers must be ordered in advance of a specific examination series, no later than the published deadline for the series concerned (AA 6.1).
- Although access arrangements are intended to allow access to assessments, they cannot be granted where they will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question (AA 4.2).
- Candidates may not require the same access arrangements/reasonable adjustments in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. The need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments must be considered on a subject-by-subject basis (AA 4.2).
- Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the start of the course (AA 4.2).
- Arrangements must always be approved before an examination or assessment (AA 4.2).
- The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre (AA 4.2).
- The candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustments before their first examination (AA 4.2).

2. The Exam Access Arrangements Assessment Process

The College is required to review the exam access arrangements requested by learners when considering whether exam access arrangements continue to be required at college. The Team will review learner requests for exam access arrangements based on the JCQ guidance, medical evidence, the history of need evidence and history of provision evidence when provided by the SENCo/SENDCo at their previous educational setting. The College SENCo (EAA team) will have sufficient time to manage and be familiar with JCQ policies on access arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

Your Responsibilities

Learners will:

- Provide the EAA team with any relevant information and evidence of their specific need to enable them to make the appropriate recommendations for the learner at enrolment or within the first 6 weeks of the start of the programme of learning. This evidence may include:
 - ☐ Information about exam access arrangements from their school or previous educational provider.
 - ☐ Evidence of the specific need – this will look different for different types of specific need:
 - Learning difficulties: Learners should ask their school or previous educational provider for their Form 8 and details of their exam access arrangements.
 - Physical, sensory, mental health or neurodevelopmental impairment: Learners should provide their diagnosis letter/report or evidence from a medical professional or specialist.
 - EHCP: We will have a copy of the plan; learners should ask their school or previous educational provider for details of their exam access arrangements.
- Inform the EAA team via their course manager if anything changes (e.g., new diagnosis of specific need or deterioration of condition) – this may have an impact on the recommended exam access arrangements.
- Learners will be collected from class by a Specialist Assessor to be assessed for access arrangements and sign the required data protection consent forms, so it is important they attend all classes on their timetable and sign the required data protection consent forms.

If learners do not provide the evidence prior to their exam deadline dates, it will result in exam access arrangements being declined or not being in place in time for the exams.

The responsibilities of the College:

At Reaseheath College, assessments are conducted by:

- Appropriately qualified assessors with the required level of competence and training. Assessors. The Head of Centre must be provided with evidence by all assessors of their successful completion of a post-graduate course in individual specialist assessment at or equivalent to Level 7.

At the point, an assessor is engaged/employed at Reaseheath College will ensure:

- Evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements, ensure they are suitably qualified, and evidence held on file for inspection purposes (AA 7.3, 7.4).
- This process is conducted prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate (AA 7.3).
- A photocopy of the assessor's certificate(s) (or a printout of screenshot of HCPC or SASC registration, or screenshot of other relevant qualification listing) is kept on file (AA 7.3, 7.4).

When requested, the evidence will be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by Head of inclusive learning or EAA team leader.

Process for the assessment of a candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor

The EAA Team will:

- Comply with the current regulations as set out by JCQ Regulations, Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration, or other Awarding Bodies as required.
- Coordinate the exam access arrangements process within the College (see assessment process below).
- Complete and submit relevant documentation required by JCQ Regulations and appropriate Examination Boards.
- Explain and agree exam access arrangement recommendations with the learner and inform staff via appropriate College systems.
- Comply with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) to ensure protection of learners' personal data.
- Respond to queries regarding exam access arrangements within ten working days. Queries can be sent to EAA@reaseheath.ac.uk.
- Ensure the College exams team have access to current and up to date EAA information.

Curriculum staff responsibilities:

- Your course manager and/or English and Maths tutors (as required) will document your normal way of working (the differentiations in place to support your learning).

Assessment process

Students are asked to declare their SEND and access arrangements when applying to the College/Reaseheath Training to ensure support is arranged in time for your start date.

On application/interview, information will be requested about your specific needs, including learning difficulties, medical conditions, wellbeing, or disabilities. You will also be asked to confirm if exam access arrangements had been provided at your school or previous education provider and be asked to provide the relevant evidence e.g., Form 8, File Note, Medical evidence of diagnosis, EHCP.

In the summer term prior to the programme start date, the EAA Team will contact prospective learners who have requested exam access arrangements and who have not yet provided evidence in support of your request.

- If a learning difficulty is declared, for example dyslexia, you will be asked to provide evidence from your school or previous education provider (see Your Responsibilities section); this should be forwarded to the EAA Team at the earliest opportunity or brought to the Learning Skills Centre, located in Centre Point (Main Reception) addressed to the EAA Team. Information can be sent electronically to EAA@reaseheath.ac.uk.
- If a medical condition or disability is declared, appropriate evidence will be requested (see Your Responsibilities); this should be forwarded to the EAA Team at the earliest opportunity or brought to the Learning Skills Centre, located in Centre Point (Main Reception) addressed to the EAA Team. Information can be sent electronically to EAA@reaseheath.ac.uk.
- If you are supported by an EHCP you will be asked to provide evidence from your school or previous education provider confirming the exam access arrangements, you had in place.

Only once the appropriate evidence has been received, will the learners be assessed for exam access arrangements. The College will endeavour to process the exam access arrangement requests at the earliest opportunity.

Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor at Reaseheath College.

Only assessors appointed by Reaseheath College with the relevant qualifications will conduct assessments.

Assessors must personally conduct the assessments. They must not sign off assessments carried out by another professional.

Before the assessment, the assessor will check the candidates background information and history of need to paint a picture as required in Part 1 of the Form 8.

The assessor will carry out tests which are relevant to support the application and only use current editions of nationally standardised tests which produce standardised scores.

The candidate's chronological age must be less than the test ceiling unless there is no published test for the candidate's age.

All results must be given as standardised scores which use a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15.

Form 8 or Form 9 must be used to record information about a candidate's access arrangements/ reasonable adjustments and be available to be presented for inspection.

JCQ regulations for the completion of forms must be adhered to at all times.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access arrangements online (AAO) is used to apply for approval of arrangements/adjustments for the qualifications listed within the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.

AAO is accessed through the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by logging in to one of the awarding bodies secure extranet sites. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

Deadlines apply for each examination series for submitting applications for approval using AAO.

When an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment has been processed on-line and approved, the evidence of need (where required) must be made available to a JCQ Centre Inspector upon request. An awarding body may also request evidence of need when considered necessary. This can either be in hard copy paper format or electronically. (AA 4.2).

Where documentation is stored electronically an e-folder for each individual candidate must be created. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. (AA 4.2) It is the responsibility of:

- EAA team to collect a candidate's consent (a completed candidate Personal data consent form) to record their personal data on-line through AAO.
- EAA team to complete the Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENCo, prior to the processing of the online application.
- EAA team to submit applications for approval using AAO.
- EAA team to keep detailed records for inspection purposes, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes a signed candidate personal data consent form; a completed Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENCo form; a copy of the candidate's approved application; appropriate evidence of need (where required); evidence of the assessor's qualification (where required) (AA 8.6).
- EAA team to submit applications for approval directly to an awarding body for any qualification that does not fall within the scope of AAO.
- EAA team to order modified papers.

Once an arrangement has been approved online, the college must put it into effect in accordance with the JCQ Regulations (AA 8.2)

Centre delegated arrangements/adjustments

Decisions relating to the approval of centre delegated arrangements/adjustments are made by the EAA team. Appropriate evidence, where required by the arrangement, is held on file by the Head of inclusive learning.

Word Processor Policy (Exams)

The Word Processor Policy (Exams) details the criteria Reaseheath College specifically uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations and assessments.

A learner wishing to use a word processor in examinations can do so if it is their normal way of working within the centre.

Candidates who may benefit from using a word processor may have:

- A learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect in their ability to write legibly
- A medical condition
- A physical disability
- A sensory impairment
- Planning and organisational problems when writing by hand
- Slow or illegible handwriting

The use of a word processor will not be recommended if it involves unreasonable costs, unreasonable time frames or affects the security or integrity of the examination. The use of a word processor should reflect a learner's specific need and be their normal way of working in the centre.

Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy (Exams)

The Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy details the criteria Reaseheath College uses to award alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs (formerly known as separate invigilation).

Separate rooms

A separate room (learner and invigilator in a room entirely separate from other learners) can be recommended by the LSC for students in the following circumstances:

- Learners needing exam access arrangements which would disturb other candidates e.g., read

aloud.

- Learners needing an assistance dog or other aid device, which would disturb other candidates.
- Medical condition needing privacy – with supporting evidence from a consultant or Specialist.
- Mental health condition – with supporting evidence from a consultant or Specialist.
- Physical condition – either temporary or permanent needing privacy.

A separate room may also be recommended 'at the discretion of the Assessor.'

To provide a separate room, evidence is required from the learner that a small group provision would put them at a 'substantial disadvantage' to other candidates.

Evidence can be in the form of:

- History of provision at a previous Examination Centre e.g., school.
- Medical recommendation from a consultant or Specialist.
- Mental health recommendation from a consultant or Specialist.
- EHCP recommendation.

A small group – in a classroom accommodating up to thirty learners:

- Learners needing exam access arrangements, which would NOT disturb other candidates.
- Learners needing or using strategies, which would NOT disturb other candidates.
- Medical condition NOT needing privacy.
- Mental health condition – without supporting evidence from a consultant or Specialist.
- Physical condition – either temporary or permanent NOT needing privacy.

To provide a small group setting for your exam, the EAA assessors will require evidence that to sit your exam in the main exam room would place you at significant disadvantage to your peers and that this is your normal way of working from your curriculum staff or based on recommendations from the Wellbeing team, mental health, or medical specialists.

Modified papers

Modified papers are ordered using AAO.

- Modified papers must be ordered in advance of a specific examination series, no later than the published deadline for the exam series concerned (AA 6.1).
- Modified papers are individually prepared for candidates for whom other adjustments are unsuitable. The modification of papers involves additional resources. Therefore, centres are required to provide the awarding bodies with early notification that a candidate will require a modified paper. (AA 6.1).
- Modified papers must not be ordered for candidates unless the centre intends to enter them for the relevant examination series (AA 6.1).
- For the adjustment to be effective, the candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using an awarding body past modified papers before his/her first examination (AA 6.1).

Temporary arrangements

It may happen that a learner has a temporary illness or injury at the time of the examination. In this situation, the learner must supply medical evidence of their condition.

The EAA team can use this evidence to put in place temporary arrangements, for example, a learner with a broken arm may require a scribe.

Retention of evidence

Colleges are regularly inspected to ensure they have followed JCQ Regulations; the College is required to hold evidence in its files that can be inspected at short notice.

For this reason, the College will keep copies of evidence of need, Form 8, file note, letters from outside agencies, record of access arrangements used, together with a data protection form signed by the learner. All information and data, whether electronic or paper based, will be stored in accordance with the College's GDPR policy.

Exam Access Arrangements Policy

Centre Name	Reaseheath College
Centre Number	40633
Date policy first created	18/01/2024
Current policy approved by	Tracey Duffy/Joanne Kavanagh
Current policy reviewed by	Sam Koring/Alison Taylor
Date of next review	31/10/2024

Key staff involved in the Policy

Role	Name
Head of Centre	Marcus Clinton
Senior leader(s)	Tracey Duffy
Exams officer	Sam Koring
ALS Lead/SENCo	Joanne Kavanagh, Head of Inclusive Learning
Other staff (if applicable)	Alison Taylor, EAA Team Leader

This policy is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that access arrangements process at Reaseheath College is managed in accordance with current requirements and regulations.

References in this policy to GR, ICE and AA refer to the JCQ publications **General Regulations for Approved Centres, Instructions for conducting examinations** and **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**.

References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see AA 1.8). The definitions and procedures in AA relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland.