EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

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1. PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to clearly define the College Group's process surrounding Exam Access Arrangements (EAA) to include referral, assessment, a breakdown of each individual access arrangement with its criteria and the appeal process.

2. SCOPE

2.1 EAA are applied for following a formal assessment with a qualified assessor. The intention behind an access arrangement is to allow candidates with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the examination and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the examination.

2.2 EAA are the principal way in which Awarding Organisations comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'. JCQ regulations state, 'The responsibility of an Awarding Organisation is principally one of making reasonable adjustments for a candidate defined as disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010'.

2.3 The Equality Act 2010 definition of a disability can be found in point 6.1.

2.4 This policy represents an overview of the rules governing EAAs. For full regulations please refer to the most current JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments guidance. The guidance covers the following exam boards AQA, OCR, Pearson, City and Guilds, CEA, WJEC and NCFE. The team at UCS College Group adhere to the JCQ guidelines for all exams, unless an appeal is made regarding a specific arrangement with a different exam board.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 This policy aims to provide a clear process for staff to follow, to ensure candidates are referred for EAAs and assessed prior to their examinations. EAAs create equal opportunities for those learners with a learning difficulty or disability, enabling them to achieve their full potential during assessments at UCS College Group.

4.0 PROCEDURE

Referral Process

4.1 Learners who are thought to need EAA must be referred directly to the EAA team. This must be done by completing an EAA Tutor referral form. This form can be found on the Additional Learning Support SharePoint.

EAA tutor referral form

4.2 An EAA tutor referral form must be completed before any EAA can be processed. This should be completed by a tutor who works with the learner and must show that the arrangement reflects their normal way of working in the classroom.

4.3 Under updated JCQ guidance, additional evidence is now required for 25% extra time. Referring staff must provide a timed classroom activity or test showing the learner's use of extra time. This applies to all students, including those with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) or medical conditions. Returning students with valid arrangements from last year do not need new evidence, but those whose arrangements.

EAA tutor referral form

4.4 The EAA tutor referral form must reflect each individual learner's normal way of working, be thorough and be specific to their needs. Please note:

- candidates are entitled to a copy of the Form 8 (The EAA report), which will contain details of evidence recorded on the EAA tutor referral form.

During an inspection, the referral form is cross-referenced against the arrangements being applied for in the assessor's report. Therefore, if these do not match, it will be raised as an area for concern.

4.5 In addition to an EAA tutor referral forman EAA Assessor may carry out observations in lessons to ensure a robust analysis of a learner's normal way of working. This will enable a triangulation of evidence, in order to apply for the most appropriate arrangements for each learner.

Candidates with Education, Health and Care plans

4.6 Candidates with an EHCP do not require a full EAA Assessment. These candidates will still need to be referred and meet an assessor for an informal discussion around their EAA Assessment needs. The arrangements applied for will be agreed with the candidate and informed by the information in their plan. An EAA tutor referral form will still be required.

Deadlines for applications

4.7 All EAA Assessment applications are subject to external deadlines set by JCQ.

4.8 An internal deadline is then set to allow for applications to be processed and arrangements to be applied for online by the exams department. The GCSE & GCE deadlines will be sent out at the beginning of the academic year.

4.9 If learners are referred after the deadline, it cannot be guaranteed that their EAA will be put in place.

Exam Access Arrangements and criteria

4.10 An EAA Assessment can only provide recommendations for candidates. These are not confirmed until they are approved by JCQ Access Arrangements Online. In–house arrangements are confirmed by the Examinations Team.

4.11 All arrangements applied for must reflect the candidate's 'normal way of working' in the classroom. Therefore, an EAA tutor referral formfrom a tutor MUST be provided for the application to be processed. The learner will not be assessed and consequently the application will not be sent to exams without a fully completed EAA referral form. A lack of the required evidence may result in a delay in the learner being awarded their arrangements.

4.12 An application made after the candidate has been at the centre for two terms or more, will not be considered their 'normal way of working' and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis before an application is made.

4.13 Learners are only assessed for EAA when taking a qualification at level 1 and above. All access arrangements must be trialled in internal assessments or mock exams to ensure they reflect the candidate's normal way of working. This includes supervised rest breaks, extra time, and use of assistive technology.

Access Arrangement - 25% extra time

- Description – 25% extra time depending on the evidence of need, along with evidence from the tutor supporting the normal way of working in the classroom.
  - Extra time between 26%-50% can be granted in the case where the candidate works independently, with a learning difficulty which has a very substantial and long term adverse effect on speed of working. This is regarded as an exceptional arrangement. Where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty, staff must trial and exhaust the use of supervised rest breaks through timed internal tests and/or mock examinations before applying for 25% extra time. This is particularly relevant for candidates with medical needs, neurodivergence, or mental health difficulties. Evidence must show that supervised rest breaks were insufficient to meet the candidate's needs.Candidate Criteria – Candidates will undertake an assessment to determine their speed of processing. Where 26%-50% extra time is applied for, candidates must have two substantially below average scores.Additional Evidence Requirements - JCQ regulations require centres to hold additional evidence before submitting applications for 25% extra time. The following must be provided prior to assessment:
    - A sample of internal timed assessments (e.g., topic tests, mock exams) showing the candidate's use of 25% extra time.
    - Returning students with previously approved extra time do not need new evidence unless they have progressed to a level 3 qualification.
    - EHCP students and those with medical conditions must also have evidence of extra time use provided before assessment.

Supervised Rest Breaks

- Description – Candidates are permitted to stop for rest breaks during the exam; the time stopped is added to the finish time to ensure candidates have the allocated time in which to complete their exam. The amount of time provided forthe exam break should reflect the learner's normal way of working.

Candidates are not permitted to access mobile phones during the breaks. If candidates need to leave the room for their rest breaks, they must be supervised at all times and are not permitted to communicate with anyone other than the invigilator.

- Candidate Criteria – Candidates can be provided with rest breaks if they have a learning difficulty, disability or medical condition that prevents them from concentrating for long periods of time. Where a medical condition is the basis for the application, medical evidence from a professionally qualified practitioner MUST be provided BEFORE the candidate can be met for assessment. The evidence must be based on current experience within the centre and must clearly state the learner's difficulty and how this difficulty prevents them from accessing their assessment without the need for supervised breaks. The length and number of rest breaks may be determined by the centre based on their knowledge of the candidate within the centre. A single supervised rest break should be no more than 30 minutes in duration. A supervised rest break will often be shorter than this. Candidates cannot be given as many supervised rest breaks as they like for as long as they like. A supervised rest break will not normally be required within the first 10 minutes of an examination but may be thereafter. Supervised rest breaks MUST be considered before making an application for extra time.

Computer Reader/Reader – CASE BY CASE BASIS ONLY

- Description – A reader is a responsible adult who reads the instructions of the question paper and the questions to the candidate. This may involve reading the whole paper to the candidate or the candidate may request only some words to be read.
- In the cases where only a small number of words are read to a candidate, a shared reader may be used.
- If an exam is testing reading and the candidate is eligible for a reader, they will not be able to use the reader but can have up to 50% extra time in replacement of the arrangement.
- A computer reader/reading pen can only be provided if a candidate uses it in the classroom as their normal way of working.
- Candidates may be awarded a shared reader, maximum four candidates to one reader, if only needing words or phrases read.

- Candidate criteria – Readers will be applied for on a case-by-case basis, based on evidence of need and decided by a panel each week. Once approved by the panel a statement will be produced on a form 9, or on the form 8 if other access arrangements are being applied for, signed and dated by the Exam Access Arrangements Assessor or person in a similar position and must confirm that the use of a computer reader/reader is the normal way of working and confirm the learner's difficulty.
- Candidates may also undertake an assessment to determine their reading accuracy, which will contribute to the decision of what size group they are placed in.
- Furthermore, it is not an option to add 25% extra time based on using a computer reader/reader.
- This must be their normal way of working in tests and mock exams and will be observed before an application is made.
- A candidate for whom English is an additional language may use a computer reader/reader

Read aloud- CASE-BY-CASE BASIS ONLY

- Description - The candidate can read aloud during the exam where they do not qualify for a reader. This may enable them to work more effectively. Candidates must be in a separate room when reading aloud. This will be on a 1:1 basis..
- This arrangement is available for those who persistently struggle to understand what they have read and must reflect their normal way of working in the classroom. This must be their normal way of working in tests and mock exams and will be observed before an application is made.

Scribe – CASE BY CASE BASIS ONLY

- Description - A scribe is a responsible adult who, in controlled assessment coursework and/or in an examination, but not in oral examinations, writes down or word processes the candidates work. Where the scribe is used in an examination assessing the quality of written communication or spelling, unless the candidate has carried out the skills being assessed for themselves, they will not be provided spelling and grammar marks. It is not recommended for candidates to dictate their spelling and/or punctuation.

- A scribe may be provided when: A candidate has an impairment that has a long-term adverse effect on the candidate's writing. The assessment for the writing speed and/or spelling have below average standard scores. Apply using Access Arrangements Online (AAO). A candidate has illegible or grammatically incomprehensible writing, but not below average scores for spelling and writing, then this must be referred directly to the Awarding Organisation.

  A candidate that qualifies for a scribe based on handwriting has the right to replace this arrangement for a word processor with spellcheck turned off.
  A candidate that qualifies for a scribe based on spelling has the right to replace this arrangement for a word processor with spellcheck turned on.

  A scribe may also be provided where a temporary injury affects the candidate's ability to write. Recent Medical evidence **MUST** be provided to support this arrangement prior to application.

  This must be their normal way of working in tests and mock exams and will be observed before an application is made.

Laptop/word processor

- A word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text turned off. If a candidate has already gained approval for a scribe, then they are entitled to change this arrangement for a laptop with spellcheck turned on. However, in certain examinations where SpAG marks are awarded, the candidate will automatically lose these. A candidate is eligible for a word processor when it is their normal way of working AND when it is appropriate to their need..
- A student is eligible for a word processor when it is theirnormal way of working and when it is appropriate to their need.

  This includes candidates with:

  1. A learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly, a medical condition, a physical disability, and/or a sensory impairment,
  2. Planning and organisational problems when writing by hand,

3. Poor handwriting, deemed illegible, very disorganised or very messy by staff working directly with the student.

A laptop cannot simply be granted to a candidate because they would prefer to type rather than write in examinations, can work faster or because they use a laptop at home. This must be their normal way of working in tests and mock exams and will be observed before an application is made.

Prompt

- Description - A prompt may assist the candidate by keeping them focused on the need to answer a question and focus on the exam.
- Candidate criteria - A prompt is possible where a candidate has a substantial and long-term adverse impairment resulting in persistent distractibility or significant difficulty in concentrating. For example, if a candidate has little or no sense of time, persistently loses concentration, or is affected by an obsessive-compulsive disorder which leads them to keep revisiting a question.
- This must be their normal way of working in tests and mock exams and will be observed before an application is made.

Practical Assistant

- Description - The practical assistant will carry out practical tasks at the instruction of the candidate, for example holding equipment or guiding someone with visual impairment.

  A practical assistant cannot carry out physical tasks where they form part of the assessment, for example art or music.

- Candidate criteria - Candidates with poor motor coordination or a visual impairment may qualify for a practical assistant.

Alternative site

- An invigilator will conduct the candidate's examination at a residential address or at a hospital which is a non-registered centre due to, for example: the candidate having a serious medical condition, social, emotional and mental health needs.

- Or, the candidate has: an impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties, or a temporary illness or injury at the time of the examination(s).

Medical evidence from a professionally qualified practitioner MUST be provided BEFORE the candidate can be met for an assessment and to support this arrangement prior to application. The evidence must be dated within two years of the date of the EAA Assessment and clearly state the learner's difficulty and how this difficulty prevents them from accessing their assessment without being at an alternative site.

Modified papers

- Description - Modified papers are individually prepared. This can include enlarged font or tactile papers.

  The EAA team must be made aware of modified papers as early as possible. The modification of papers involves additional resources; therefore, centres are required to provide the Awarding Organisations with early notification.

- Candidate criteria - Modified papers are for candidates for whom other access arrangements are unsuitable. This includes candidates who have, long term and substantial visual impairment, persistent and significant difficulties when accessing and processing information.

Exam printed on coloured paper/overlay

- Description - A candidate may have their exam printed on coloured paper and/ or will be allowed to bring their own overlay. Coloured paper options for exams are Blue, Green, Yellow and Pink. If another colour is required, this must be in the form of an overlay.
- Candidate criteria - This must be a candidate's normal way of working in the classroom The learner is expected to use the overlay as part of their normal way of working and bring this to all examinations. The College will provide the first overlay for a learner who has qualified for an overlay. If the learner loses or damages this, they will need to replace the overlay themselves.

- Only if an overlay has been considered but not found suitable,will a learner be provided with an exam paper printed on a different colour.

Separate room – CASE BY CASE BASIS ONLY

- Description - The candidate can sit their exam in a separate room where possible, within the centre.
- Candidate criteria - Separate rooms will only be awarded on a case-by-case basis and must meet the criteria below. This must be the candidate's normal way of working in class tests and exams and the candidate must provide recent evidence of a substantial and long-term impairment. Candidate's difficulties must be established within the centre and known to a SENCo or senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities.

  Written evidence of the difficulty from a professionally qualified practitioner MUST be provided BEFORE the candidate can be met for an assessment and to support this arrangement, prior to application. The evidence clearly state the learner's difficulty and how this difficulty prevents them from accessing their assessment without the need for a separate room.

Small Group

- Description - The candidate will sit their exam in a small group where possible, which consists of 20 people or less.
- Candidate criteria - This must be the candidate's normal way of in class tests and exams and the candidate must provide evidence of a substantial and long-term impairment. Additionally, candidate's difficulties must be established within the centre and known to a SENCo or senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities.

Bilingual dictionaries

- Description - Candidates can use a bilingual dictionary in GCE, AS, A2 and A-Level examinations, but not in English Language examinations, Irish or Welsh language examinations or Modern Foreign language examinations testing one of the languages of the dictionary. Additionally, due to the assessment of

spelling, punctuation and grammar, a bilingual dictionary must not be used in, GCSE English Literature, Geography, History, and Religious Studies.

- Candidate criteria - To qualify for a bilingual dictionary, a candidate's first language must not be English, Irish or Welsh and using a bilingual dictionary must be the candidate's normal way of working in the classroom.
  Standard bilingual dictionaries must be used..

  25% extra time may be available when using a bilingual dictionary, however this can only be provided by the EAL co-ordinator or the SENCo and only when the candidate meets all the following criteria:

  - The candidate's first language is not English, Irish or Welsh.
  - The candidate entered the United Kingdom within three years of the examination(s), is new to learning in English and does not have sufficient prior and current knowledge of academic English. The candidate may have been assessed on arrival as being new to English (Band A on the DfE scales) or in the early acquisition stages of language development (Band B on the DfE scales).
  - English is not one of the languages spoken in the family home.
  - Prior to their arrival in the United Kingdom the candidate was not educated in an international school where some or the entire curriculum was delivered in English.
  - Prior to their arrival in the United Kingdom the candidate was not prepared for or entered for IGCSE qualifications where the question papers were set in English.
  - Prior to their arrival in the United Kingdom the candidate was not prepared in English for other qualifications, e.g., IELTS qualifications, Preliminary English Tests.
  - The candidate must refer to the bilingual translation dictionary so often that examination time is used for this purpose, delaying the answering of questions.
  - The provision of 25% extra time reflects the candidate's usual way of working with the dictionary.

Extra time must not be provided to a candidate using a bilingual translation dictionary in order to compensate for difficulties in reading and writing in English.

Appeal Process

4.14 A candidate has the right to appeal their EAA Award for all centre delegated concessions. All appeals should be made in writing and clearly state the grounds of the appeal include any additional information or evidence to support the appeal. Appeals should be emailed to ALSEAATEAM@ucscollegegroup.ac.uk within 28 days of their award allocation email. The appeal will be heard by a college panel.

The Panel will feed back their decision within 28 days of the date of the appeal letter.

5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance, monitoring and review

5.1 The College Group will comply with the Equality Act 2010 in providing reasonable adjustments for candidates with a disability.

5.2 The College Group will adhere to the regulations set by the Joint Council for Qualifications.

5.3 EAA Policy monitoring is the responsibility of the Dean of Faculty – Inclusive Practice and Catalyst Director SEND Funding and Systems Development.

5.4 The Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and is subject to changes in the JCQ regulations.

Reporting

5.5 No additional reporting is required.

Records management

5.6 Staff must maintain all records relevant to administering this policy and procedure using the UCS College Group (ISO) recordkeeping system.

6.0 DEFINITIONS

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability

6.1 Generally, impairments must meet the statutory requirements set out in section 6 and Schedule 1 to the Equality Act 2010 and associated regulations.

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability is usually considered cumulatively in terms of:

- Identifying a physical or mental impairment.
- Looking into adverse effects and assessing which are substantial.
- Considering if substantial adverse effects are long term.
- Judging the impact of long-term adverse effects on normal day to day activities.

Statutory guidance on the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability has been produced by the Office for Disability Issues (within the Department for Work and Pensions) to help better understand and apply this definition - http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/docs/wor/new/ea-guide.pdf

The clear starting point in the statutory guidance is that disability means '**limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'**.

'Substantial' means 'more than minor or trivial'. Substantial adverse effects can be determined by looking at the effects on a person with the impairment, comparing those to a person without the impairment, to judge if the difference between the two is more than minor or trivial.

'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months or is likely to do so.

'Normal day to day activities' could be determined by reference to the illustrative, non-exhaustive list of factors in pages 47 to 51 of the statutory guidance relating to the Equality Act 2010**(study and education related activities are included in the meaning of 'day to day' activities.)**

The guidance from the Office for Disability Issues referred to above illustrates the factors which might reasonably be regarded as having a substantial adverse effect on normal day to day activities. Factors that might reasonably be expected not to have a substantial adverse effect are also provided.

Factors that might reasonably be expected to have a substantial adverse effect include:

- persistent and significant difficulty in reading and understanding written material where this is in the person's native language, for example because of a mental impairment, a learning difficulty or a sensory or multi-sensory impairment.
- persistent distractibility or difficulty concentrating.
- difficulty understanding or following simple verbal instructions.
- physical impairment – for example, difficulty operating a computer because of physical restrictions in using a keyboard.

7.0 RELATED LEGISLATION, SITES AND DOCUMENTS

7.1 JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2026-27

JCQ-AARA-2025-March-26-Sep-26.pdf.pdf

7.2 The Equality Act 2010

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

7.3 Additional Learning Support Sharepoint site

https://bridgwateracuk.sharepoint.com/sites/als

8. Appendix – Exam Concession Referrals 2025