



Melton Road, Thurmaston, Leicester LE4 8GQ
Telephone 0116 269 3896 · Fax 0116 260 0659
Email school.enquiries@roundhill.leics.sch.uk

Key staff involved with the creation of this policy

Role/Position	Names
Head of Centre	Tim Marston
SLT Member with responsibility for Exams	Rachel Wright
Examinations Manager	Tania Taylor
SENCO	Jeanette Knowles

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The Roundhill Academy

EXAMINATION ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS AND WORD PROCESSOR POLICY 2020-2021

This document outlines the school policy on access arrangements. These are arrangements put in place to ensure all students have equal access to examinations. Students should not be disadvantaged by any learning, medical, physical, sensory or psychological difficulty they may experience.

The school must comply with the rules for Access Arrangements as set out in the most recent Joint Council for Qualifications publication.

Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make '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 disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. According to statutory guidance, disability means 'limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'.

A candidate with a disability or difficulty which has a **substantial and long term effect** on performance in examinations may qualify for access arrangements.

Access arrangements should allow students with substantial long term special educational needs, disabilities or short term illnesses or injuries to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding without affecting the integrity of an assessment or examination. Access arrangements are not intended to help certain candidates, or give them an advantage, but to give them a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

The intention is to remove barriers that may prevent them from demonstrating their knowledge and to allow them on to a 'level playing field' with other candidates.

However, *the school must assess each potential learner and make justifiable and professional judgements about the learner's potential to successfully complete and achieve the qualifications. Some types of disability may affect the candidate's ability to demonstrate one or more of the assessment objectives. An alternative route may be available in the specification and advice must be sought from the awarding body. In some cases, a disabled candidate may have to be exempted from a component if that is the only reasonable adjustment available to enable him/her to overcome a substantial disadvantage in accessing the specification.*

Access Arrangements encompass a wide range of provisions which may include: being allowed to sit examinations in a smaller room, supervised rest breaks, use of colour overlays, prompter, extra time, reader, scribe, use of a word processor, practical assistant, etc.

The Identification of candidates who might need access arrangements

There are several ways in which this might occur:

1. The Roundhill Academy acts on the information provided by students' previous schools to identify those who may need access arrangements. These students normally have a history of Special Educational Needs (SEN).
2. A teacher may voice a concern about a student with difficulties that prevent them from completing tests or practice papers.
3. A parent / carer may raise concerns about their child who is attempting but unable to complete work set in class and as homework.

In all cases, there must be a genuine need for the arrangement. The school *must be satisfied that the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties. 'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months, or is likely to do so.*

Students with special educational needs are not automatically eligible for access arrangements. For example, a student with a slight hearing impairment, a previous diagnosis of 'mild dyslexia' or a physical disability that does not affect performance in an examination may not meet the criteria for access arrangements.

However, when concerns are raised about a particular student, the SENCo will gather information from all the student's teachers to see whether they have similar concerns. If the initial concerns are echoed by others, the student will be assessed for access arrangements.

Candidates with a history of SEN

Candidates with medical, physical, sensory, behavioural, mental health or complex needs

Where access arrangements are requested due to medical or physical difficulties, a letter from a mental health practitioner or consultant is required. The SENCo will ask

parents/carers to obtain a letter with a brief outline of the student's condition or disability and the access arrangements that are deemed to be necessary.

Parents/carers may be requested to obtain letters from other professionals when a student requires arrangements due to their psychological, behavioural, sensory or communication difficulties.

The supporting specialist evidence confirming the candidate's disability could include:

- a letter/report from CAMHS, a HCPC registered psychologist, a medical consultant, a psychiatrist, a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT); or
- a letter/report from the Local Authority Specialist Service, Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service or Occupational Health Service; or
- a current Statement of Special Educational Needs, or an Education, Health and Care Plan, which confirms the candidate's learning difficulty, medical condition, physical disability, sensory or multi-sensory impairment.

The specialist evidence is not required to recommend 25% extra time but to simply confirm the candidate's disability. The specialist evidence may relate to any age provided it remains current.

Candidates with learning difficulties

There would normally be a long history of learning difficulties. Late identification of learning difficulties can occur, but concerns should be raised during the early months of a course leading towards an examination. JCQ publish deadlines by which arrangements must be processed, in advance of an examination series. Arrangements should not be requested just before or at the time of a candidate's examinations, unless they are to be temporary and due to illness or injury.

A student with learning difficulties must be formally assessed by a specialist teacher or an educational psychologist. The assessment must have taken place no earlier than the start of Year 9. An approved range of standardised tests are used and Form 8 is completed.

Parents may choose to arrange an assessment out of school. However, **it must be noted that private assessments do not guarantee arrangements without the 'picture of need' that is required before an application is made.** If a private assessment is carried out, it should be undertaken by a suitably qualified person who has an established relationship with the School before the assessment has taken place. According to JCQ regulations, **'a privately commissioned report carried out without prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to award access arrangements and cannot be used to process an application using Access Arrangements Online'**

A Data Protection Notice must be signed by the student, which enables the Examinations Officer to make the online application using their information and results.

An application is made online, and the awarding bodies approve access arrangements only if the student's scores meet the criteria issued by JCQ. A paper copy of supporting evidence will be filed by the SENCO and be available for inspection by the JCQ Inspector.

In all cases, access arrangements should reflect the support that is usually given to the student in the classroom, internal tests and mock examinations. This is commonly referred to as the 'normal way of working.'

The decision to apply for access arrangements is based on evidence of a history of need, history of provision and reports from teachers or other professionals. Students with no previous history of SEN will require significantly more evidence of need. For instance, the evidence required for extra time must include comments and observations from teaching staff as to why the student needs extra time and how s/he uses the time awarded. Therefore, it may be necessary for the student to sit tests or practice papers with extra time for a trial period. It can then be gauged whether the quality and quantity of written answers improves significantly with the allowance of extra time, and will establish having extra time as a 'normal way of working'.

A candidate may require access arrangements in all his/her written examinations, or they may only need arrangements in those requiring extended answers. The school must compile evidence that supports each candidate's particular need for arrangements.

The SENCO and/or the assessor will work with teaching staff, support staff and exams office personnel to ensure that approved access arrangements are put in place for internal school tests, mock examinations and examinations.

The candidate will have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s) before his/her first examination. This is particularly so where a computer reader, modified enlarged papers, a scribe, speech recognition technology or a word processor will be used in examinations.

Notification about access arrangements

Parents/carers are informed by letter when formal applications for access arrangements are approved. The arrangements are named and an information leaflet is provided.

Conduct and procedures Staffing and accommodation

The SENCO liaises with the Examinations Manager, to ensure sufficient rooms and staffing are organised for candidates with access arrangements when examinations or controlled assessments are taking place.

Candidates sitting their exams in smaller rooms are expected to comply with the general regulations issued by JCQ. For example, mobile phones and data recording devices are not permitted in examination rooms for candidates with access arrangements under any circumstances.

However, some procedures may vary slightly from those followed in the main rooms. For instance, in a room for candidates with rest breaks there may be more than one exam taking place and so the seating is arranged to accommodate their needs and to

take into account the duration of each exam: wherever possible, those with the shortest exam and/or those with rest breaks are seated nearest to the door.

It must be noted that staffing and room constraints mean that candidates cannot normally be seated alone in a separate room.

In the event of there being a core subject examination with a large number of candidates having access arrangements, it may be necessary for some of them to sit the examination at a later time so that sufficient staffing is available for all the arrangements to be maintained. Those candidates must arrive at the scheduled time but will have to be kept in isolation until their examination can take place.

Candidates' evidence files are kept in a secure area, but must be available for inspection. The Exams Inspector visits during each examination session and may check several Access Arrangement files at random.

The use of word processors

Certain candidates may be allowed the use of **word processors** in written examinations. This should be appropriate to the candidate's needs and may only be allowed when **a substantial and long term adverse effect on the ability to write** is the result of:

- a learning difficulty
- a medical condition
- a physical disability
- a sensory impairment

Examination word processors must have the spelling and grammar check/predictive text disabled.

Candidates **must** be reminded to save at regular intervals. In this way, loss of work is kept to a minimum if a complication or technical difficulty occurs.

*The candidate using a word processor **must** be present when the script is printed off so as to verify that the work printed is complete and is his or her own.* Candidates must sign each sheet.

Candidates with access arrangements sitting several exams on the same day

Occasionally, a candidate may have several exams scheduled on the same day. If the total time, including extra time, adds up to more than 5 ½ hours (GCSE) it may be possible to carry one exam over until the following day, providing certain guarantees regarding supervision are made by parents or carers.

Sometimes a candidate with medical difficulties causing fatigue may have a clash of exams. In such a case, one exam might be delayed, in order to allow the candidate to

rest, before sitting the second exam. They must be supervised in isolation during the intervening period.

Vocational Qualifications

A large number of access arrangements and reasonable adjustments can be used to facilitate access to vocational qualifications, as long as they do not impact on any competence standards being tested. They must not affect the reliability or validity of assessment outcomes nor must they give the learner an unfair advantage.

Recording the use of access arrangements

The Roundhill Academy follow the advice given by JCQ and maintain a record of the use of access arrangements.

If an access arrangement is never used then it is not a candidate's normal way of working and *the arrangement should not be awarded for examinations*.

Staffing and training

The staff employed to provide candidates with access arrangements are drawn from a bank of trained external invigilators, however occasionally additional arrangements might be provided by school staff.

Training is provided, by the Examinations Manager which is updated each year to comply with new JCQ guidelines.

Temporary arrangements

Temporary arrangements may be required by candidates suffering from illness or injury. In general, candidates with leg injuries are accommodated in the main rooms near the doors for easy access and exit.

Candidates with an illness or injury that has a direct impact on their ability to access the examination should obtain a letter from a GP, consultant or other professional giving a brief outline of their condition and the access arrangements that are deemed to be necessary. For example, a right-handed candidate whose right arm is broken may need a scribe and some extra time, as it is not their normal way of working and dictating to a scribe may be difficult for them. A candidate with a painful back condition may require supervised rest breaks in order to stand and move around.

In all cases where an access arrangement or a reasonable adjustment is needed, the school is entitled to expect reasonable notice to carry out its responsibilities. Where a need for access arrangements has been identified before an examination session, the SENCO and Examinations Officer should be provided with medical evidence in reasonable time. For example:

- a candidate who suffers from panic attacks in test or exam situations should obtain a note from a mental health professional such as CAMHS worker, well before the start of formal examinations
- in an emergency, a scribe can be provided with 24 hours' notice. It may not be possible to provide a scribe if the request is made without notice.

Temporary arrangements last for one examination session. If the condition persists another letter may be required for the next session.

Alternative accommodation away from the centre

On very rare occasions, a candidate may need to sit an examination at a residential address or at a hospital due to a severe and evidenced medical condition or profound psychological condition, which prevents them from taking examinations within the centre.

The centre will ensure that JCQ guidelines are followed with regard to conduct, procedures and staffing. The centre must be satisfied that the candidate is well enough to take the examination and there must be appropriate evidence of need held on file.

WORD PROCESSOR POLICY

The use of a word processor in exams and assessments is an available access arrangement.

The purpose of an access arrangement 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 as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties.

The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.

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.

Candidates may not require the same access arrangements in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. SENCO should consider the need for access arrangements on a subject-by-subject basis.

Purpose of the policy

This policy details how The Roundhill Academy complies with adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties when awarding and allocating a candidate the use of word processor in his/her exams.

The term 'word processor' is used to describe for example, the use of a computer, laptop or tablet.

The use of a word processor

The centre will:

- allocate the use of a word processor to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre
- award the use of a word processor to a candidate if it is appropriate to their needs. Needs may include
 - a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her ability to write legibly
 - a medical condition
 - a physical disability
 - a sensory impairment;
 - planning and organisational problems when writing by hand
 - poor handwriting
- only permit the use of a word processor where the integrity of the assessment can be maintained
- not grant the use of a word processor where it will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question
- consider on a subject-by-subject basis if the candidate will need to use a word processor in each specification
- consider the needs of the candidate at the start of the candidate's course leading to a qualification based on evidence gathered that firmly establishes the candidates's needs and 'normal way of working' in the classroom, internal tests/exams, mock exams etc. and confirm arrangements in place before the candidate takes an exam or assessment

- provide access to word processors to candidates in non-examination assessment components as standard practice unless prohibited by the specification

The centre will not:

- simply grant the use of a word processor to a candidate because he/she prefers to type rather than write or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home

Exceptions

The only exception to the above where the use of a word processor would be considered for a candidate would be

- in the event of a temporary injury or impairment, or a diagnosis of a disability or manifestation of an impairment relating to an existing disability arising after the start of the course
- where a subject within the curriculum is delivered electronically and the centre provides word processors to all candidates

Centre specific processes

Where the requirement for a word processor has been approved The Roundhill Academy will:

- Provide a word processor to a candidate, with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled, in an exam to type certain questions, i.e. those requiring extended writing,
- Provide a word processor to a candidate, with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled, where it is their normal way of working within the centre and is appropriate to their needs.
- Acknowledge that a word processor can be used for the completion of coursework, non-examination assessment (NEA) or in a controlled assessment unless prohibited by the specification
- Ensure that a candidate with the use of a word processor in an exam is advised of the JCQ requirements regarding the presentation of their word-processed script.

Arrangements at the time of the assessment for the use of a word processor

A candidate using a word processor will be accommodated in a different exam room.

To comply with JCQ regulations The Roundhill Academy will:

- provide a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled (switched off)
- if a candidate is to be seated with the main cohort we will ensure access to a power supply
- ensure the candidate is reminded to check that his/her centre number, candidate number and the unit/component code appear on each page as a header or footer e.g. 12345/8001 – 8700/01

If a candidate is using the software application Notepad or Wordpad these do not allow for the insertion of a header or footer. In such circumstances once the candidate has completed the examination and printed off his/her typed script, he/she must handwrite their details as a header or footer. The candidate must be supervised to ensure that he/she is

solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way.

- ensure the candidate understands that each page of the typed script must be numbered, e.g. page 1 of 6
- ensure the candidate is reminded to save his/her work at regular intervals.
- instruct the candidate to use a minimum of 12pt font and double spacing in order to assist examiners when marking

The centre will ensure the word processor:

- is in good working order at the time of the exam
- is accommodated in such a way that other candidates are not disturbed and cannot read the screen
- is used as a type-writer, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable and is not connected to an intranet or any other means of communication
- is cleared of any previously stored data
- does not give the candidate access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited in the examination), spreadsheets etc.
- does not include graphic packages or computer aided design software unless permission has been given to use these
- does not have any predictive text software or an automatic spelling and grammar check enabled unless the candidate has been permitted a scribe or is using speech recognition technology (a scribe cover sheet must be completed), or the awarding body's specification permits the use of automatic spell checking
- does not include speech recognition technology unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe or relevant software
- is not be used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe.

Portable storage medium

The centre will ensure that any portable storage medium (e.g. a memory stick) used:

- is provided by the centre
- is cleared of any previously stored data

Printing the script after the exam is over

The centre will ensure:

- the word processor is either connected to a printer so that a script can be printed off, or have the facility to print from a portable storage medium
- the candidate is present to verify that the work printed is his or her own
- a word processed script is attached to any answer booklet which contains some of the answers
- a word processor cover sheet (Form 4) is completed and included with the candidate's typed script (according to the relevant awarding body's instructions)

The criteria The Roundhill Academy uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations

The 'normal way of working' for exam candidates, as directed by the head of centre, is that candidates handwrite their exams. An exception to this is where a candidate may have an approved access arrangement in place, for example the use of a scribe/speech recognition technology.

The use of word processors

There are also exceptions where a candidate may be awarded/allocated the use of a word processor in exams where he/she has a firmly established need, it reflects the candidate's normal way of working and by not being awarded a word processor would be at a substantial disadvantage to other candidates.

Needs might include where a candidate has, for example:

- 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

The only exception to the above where the use of a word processor may be considered for a candidate would be:

- on a temporary basis as a consequence of a temporary injury at the time of the assessment
- where a subject within the curriculum is delivered electronically and the centre provides word processors to all candidates

Arrangements for the use of word processors at the time of the assessment

Appropriate exam-compliant word processors will be provided by the IT department in liaison with the SENCO and the Examinations Manager. In exceptional circumstances where the number of appropriate word processors may be insufficient for the cohort of candidates approved to use them in an exam session, the cohort will be split into two groups. One group will sit the exam earlier than or later than the awarding body's published start time. The security of the exam will be maintained at all times and candidates will be supervised in line with JCQ regulations.

Policy reviewed by Rachel Wright October 2020