

Exam Access Arrangements Policy

Policy responsibility	SENCO
Last reviewed	26 June 2026
Next review due	June 2027
Summary of key changes	No changes required
Approved by LGB	8 July 2026

INTRODUCTION

The Examination Access Arrangements Policy explains the actions taken to ensure inclusion throughout the school for all students with additional learning needs, including those with formally-diagnosed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The policy forms an integral part of our teaching and learning philosophy, which seeks to create a learning environment whereby every individual student may fulfil his or her potential.

WHAT ARE ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS?

Access arrangements are the principal way in which Awarding Bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'. The intention behind access arrangements is to meet the specific needs of a candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. A reasonable adjustment for a particular candidate may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

There is no duty on the Awarding Bodies to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested in an examination.

ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS AT UP HOLLAND HIGH SCHOOL

We aim to ensure that all students have equal access to examinations and are not disadvantaged by any special or additional need. Special needs fall into the following four categories: -

1. Communication and interaction.
2. Cognition and learning.
3. Social, emotional and mental health.
4. Sensory and/or physical needs.

The most recent Joint Council for Qualifications guidelines document will always be the first reference point in determining the correct access arrangement for a student. Further guidance can be sought from the Special Requirements section at AQA.

Access arrangements reflect the support that is usually given to the student in the classroom (within reason), internal exams and mock examinations. This is referred to as the student's 'normal way of working'.

HOW ARE EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS APPLIED FOR?

Subject teachers are asked to refer to the SENCo any students they believe need EAA, along with the reason for this. Identification of students for Exam Access Arrangements may also result from the SENCo's knowledge of the students and their needs, the fact that they had EAA at KS2 for their SATs or information from a setting previously attended.

NB - the fact that a student has previously had exam concessions does not mean he or she will automatically qualify for them on all future occasions, as needs can change over time.

Following this, and after pre-testing within the SEN department where appropriate, a decision will be made as to whether to test a student for EAA.

The SENCo arranges for a qualified assessor to visit school to administer the tests. The assessor assesses the student's needs using a variety of nationally-recognised tests. If there is a recommendation from the assessor for EAA, the SENCo then applies online for permission to implement the specified arrangement(s). The decision is immediate. However, where the SENCo believes additional arrangements are necessary, (e.g. where a student with a physical disability requires extra time beyond 25%), an online application is made in the knowledge that it will be declined, but the SENCo can then make a direct application to the awarding bodies to request a particular concession.

There are some considerations with this access arrangement application:

The authorisation granted by the Awarding Bodies has a shelf-life of 26 months; however, in many cases testing is not done until after the Year 10 examinations in order for the most appropriate arrangements for the GCSEs to be applied for.

The deadline for online applications for EAA is set by the JCQ and is normally in March of Year 11. Only exceptionally would applications be processed after this date.

Each application will require evidence of need, and the centre needs to hold evidence of this in its files so that it can be inspected at short notice. This evidence is provided on a Form 8 or Form 9 for each candidate and may include or be supplemented by:

- Recommendations by teachers
- Educational psychologists' reports
- Evidence from subject teachers of previous performance in tests and assessments, with examples of work as appropriate
- Results of baseline tests and prior performance e.g. reading/spelling age, writing tests, CATs, SATs

- Specialist Teachers' reports, Educational Psychologists' reports, CAMHS reports, relevant diagnoses by a paediatrician, OT, Speech and Language Therapist or other health professional
- An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or an Learning Support Plan

Each Form 8/9 is completed and signed by the SENCo and endorsed by the designated assessor. In certain cases, a covering letter from the SENCo is also required.

Candidates must be informed that an application for access arrangements will be processed using Access Arrangements Online, complying with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

HOW DO STAFF, STUDENTS AND PARENTS KNOW THAT EAA ARE IN PLACE?

All staff are aware of exam access arrangements and any arrangements are communicated in advance of mock exams/GCSES. This information is also shared with the Exams officer. Students will then be informed by subject staff or a member of the SEN team. The SENCo / Assistant SENCo will practise using C Pen Readers and voice recognition technology with qualifying students. They can then be used in appropriate lessons in order that students become more confident in using them.

Parents are informed by letter.

APPENDIX 1 - Common access arrangements

- Seating, e.g. at the front / back of the exam hall. No evidence needed but parental request required. School will always try to accommodate these requests.
- 25% Extra Time – usually granted to compensate for a below average processing, reading or comprehension speed (two scores of 84 or less in appropriate standardised testing). This is evidenced by Form 8 and work gathered in school to demonstrate the normal way of working. This arrangement can also be granted by medical evidence or other evidence from appropriate third parties, such as CAMHS. In these cases, the student does not require a Form 8, but does require a signed, authorised letter (i.e. on headed paper) from the agency making the request.
- Up to 50% Extra Time – the student is granted an additional 50% extra time, to compensate for very low standardised scores (69 or less) in two or more assessed areas, or a physical difficulty. This is evidenced in the same manner as 25% extra time. It cannot be awarded via AAO but permission must be sought from the awarding bodies by the SENCo.

- Rest breaks – these are non-evidenced – SENCo decision. The student is allowed to “pause” the exam for brief periods of time (e.g. if the student is prone to panic attacks or suffers from ADHD and needs to re-focus). The candidate may need to walk around during the rest break. Time limits are usually issued in communication with the SENCO.
- Seating in a smaller or individual room – the student is invigilated separately from the rest of the students. Evidence from a GP, paediatrician, CAMHS or other health professional will be needed in the form of an authorised letter (i.e. on headed paper) from the agency making the request. In some cases, the SENCo will act to put this arrangement in place without this form of evidence, if it is deemed as necessary.
- Prompter. Those candidates who cannot maintain their focus can be allowed an invigilator who can ‘prompt’ to keep the candidate on task. No evidence needed – SENCo decision.
- Laptop – if a student uses a laptop in lessons then it is the normal way of working and may be allowed in an examination. (See laptop policy for further details – appendix 2). Candidates using a laptop may still be seated in the main exam room.
- Scribe – candidates who are not capable or physically able to use a laptop may be allowed the use of a scribe. Qualification is via testing and online application and may be awarded on the basis of illegible handwriting or slow speed of writing.
- Use of assistive technologies. We have begun to prepare a small number of students to use voice recognition technology as it is a more flexible option than a scribe and allows the candidate increased control.
- C Pen Readers- these are now used in preference to a human reader. Students using these plug in headphones so that the pen “reads” the words to them without disturbing others. As such, they are allowed to use them in the main exam hall. School policy is to allow those candidates qualifying for a reader to use one. Qualification is via testing by the exams assessor.
- Reader – a human reader can be used in rare cases. A scribe can also act as a reader if the candidate qualifies for this.
- Bilingual dictionary – examination suitable editions only for EAL students. No form 8 is necessary. Some candidates will also qualify for 25% extra time, dependent on their circumstances and time of entry into the UK. This arrangement requires an application via AAO.
- Additional arrangements for specific circumstances are available but their use is infrequent.

The use of a word processor must reflect the student's normal way of working at school and must be appropriate for their needs. The use of a word processor will not be granted to a student because he/she prefers to type rather than write or because he/she can work faster on a keyboard or because he/she uses a word processor at home.

Reasons why the use of a word processor might be granted:

- The student has a Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. dyspraxia) which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to write legibly or fluently.
- Formal assessment has shown the student to have a below average speed of handwriting.
- Formal assessment has indicated that a student has illegible handwriting (i.e. 10% or more words are illegible in context) and teachers judge this to be significantly impacting on his or her performance in assessed work.
- A student has a medical condition or physical disability which impacts on his/her ability to write by hand. [Here evidence will be required from a relevant medical professional]
- A student may be allowed to use a word processor at short notice due to an injury which prevents them writing in their normal way.

*NB the above list is not exhaustive.

When a word processor is used in any internal/public examination in accordance with this policy, the grammar and spell check facility and any predictive text facility must be disabled unless the student has also been granted the use of a scribe/spell check in accordance with JCQ regulations. Every effort is made to ensure that candidates cannot access spell check, their own drive or the internet during exams. If any student is found trying to access these, this will be interpreted by the school as malpractice and will be reported to the Awarding Body. The use of word processors in controlled assessment or coursework components, will be considered standard practice unless prohibited by the specification.

Laptops cannot be used for Maths exams, nor can they be used in MFL Listening or Reading exams. They can only be used in MFL Writing exams if this is agreed by the SENCo and the Head of MFL.

APPENDIX 3 - Information for scribes, readers and prompters

Readers

- Unless there have been special instructions the reader will not, at any time, be allowed to prompt the candidate in any way by gesture, hesitation, speech or the written word.
- The role of a reader is to read under the direction of the candidate. If there are specific needs, these will be discussed with you in advance of the exam.
- The reader must read exactly what he or she is asked to read. The reader is allowed to read sections or pages more than once as requested by the candidate.
- The reader must read accurately.
- Readers may read numbers printed in figures as words (e.g. 356 would be read as three hundred and fifty six, but when reading the number it should also be pointed to on the question paper). An exception would be when the question is asking for a number to be written in words (e.g. write the number 356 in words).
- A reader may read back, when requested, what the candidate has written without any emphasis on any errors.
- Readers may, if requested, give the spelling of a word which appears on the paper but otherwise spellings must not be given.
- Readers must only read the instructions of the question paper and questions, and must not explain or clarify.
- Readers must only repeat the instructions of the question paper or questions when a candidate indicates a specific need for help.
- Readers must not advise the candidate regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, nor the order in which questions should be answered.
- Readers must not decode any symbols (e.g. mathematical, musical, scientific) and unit abbreviations, e.g. 22 should not be read as two squared, but the function simply pointed to by the reader. Part of the assessment is recognising what the superscript 2 means. Similarly, if the symbol $>$ is printed, it should not be read as 'greater than' but simply pointed to by the reader.
- Readers must abide by the regulations since failure to do so could lead to the disqualification of the candidate.

Scribes

- Unless there have been special instructions the scribe will not, at any time, be allowed to prompt the candidate in any way by gesture, hesitation, speech or the written word.

- The scribe should write exactly what he or she is asked to write and is not allowed to rephrase answers or use a better word than the one chosen.
- The scribe can only read for the candidate if this has been specified in advance.
- Candidates may choose to write some of their answers; this is quite acceptable.
- The scribe can read back what the candidate has written but only if requested to do so.
- In certain circumstances the scribe may draw graphs, charts or diagrams to the exact specification of the candidate. Some candidates may be able to or prefer to draw these themselves. In either case, the candidate may ask the scribe to label these.

The scribe must also:

- Ensure after checking with the candidate, that all details (candidate number, title of paper, year of study, course code, date, number of answer books submitted etc.) are correct.
- Check that all questions are clearly numbered.
- Ensure that corrections are unambiguous, eg insertions are asterisked and related to the point of insertion and deletions have been clearly crossed through.

The scribe may

- Ask the candidate to slow the pace of dictation because he or she is unable to keep up.
- Ask for the repetition of a phrase he or she has forgotten.
- Ask for a repetition because he or she did not hear clearly.

The scribe is not permitted to:

- Give factual help or offer suggestions.
- Advise on which questions to do, the order in which questions should be done, or when to move on to the next question.
- Assist with arithmetical/mathematical problems, including statistical tables, or advise on the operation of any permitted exam aid such as a calculator.

Some candidates using a scribe will also be granted to extra time; scribes will be informed about this prior to the exams.

If the scribe is asked to read back completed answer(s) and/or make corrections, this must be done within the time allocated for the exam; it must not be done after the examination has finished.

After each exam, scribes are requested to complete the cover sheet indicating that they have scribed and providing all other information requested.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG)

In English Language exams, marks are available for spelling, grammar and punctuation (SPaG). For some candidates, the scribe will be responsible for spelling and punctuation (although if asked to alter either of these the scribe must comply). Most candidates, however, will be able to specify punctuation and capital letters. This will give them access to marks for punctuation. Scribes will be told in advance which is the case for their candidate.

In English Literature, History, Geography, Religious Education and Science exams, and certain others, there will be questions in which SPaG marks can be awarded. These questions are clearly indicated on the exam papers. Candidates may choose to spell out every word of their answers to these questions and if they do this, they can be awarded the marks for spelling.

Prompters

A prompter can be granted by the SENCo to support students who need help with staying focused or have little or no sense of time. They can also assist students who find it difficult to move on through the questions, tending to go over the same questions repeatedly.

The prompter can tap the desk, call out the candidate's name, remind the candidate of the time remaining or otherwise support a candidate who cannot stay on task.

APPENDIX 4 – When a reader can be used

Permissions table for the use of readers and computer readers in GCSE and GCE qualifications

Qualification	Current position		Rationale for current position
	Candidate must read for him/herself	Reader allowed	
GCSE English Language	Yes, in the section of a paper that assesses reading	Yes, except in the section of a paper that assesses reading	GCSE English Language assessment objectives show that learners must actually 'read' and demonstrate understanding of the written language. This requires taking meaning off the page from text or Braille. A reader would not be permitted for components that assess reading. NB A candidate may however use a computer reader in the section of the paper that assesses reading. A computer reader allows the candidate to independently meet the requirements of the reading standards.
GCSE English Literature	No	Yes	Reading is not being assessed in GCSE English Literature. A reader or a computer reader would be permitted.
GCSE Welsh first language	Yes, in components that assess reading	Yes, except in components that assess reading	GCSE Welsh requires learners to read and demonstrate understanding of the written language; taking meaning off the page from text or Braille. A reader would not be permitted for components that assess reading. NB A candidate may however use a computer reader in components that assess reading. A computer reader allows the candidate to independently meet the requirements of the reading standards.
GCSE Welsh Literature	No	Yes	In GCSE Welsh Literature candidates are required to extract literary meaning. A reader or a computer reader would be permitted.
GCSE Welsh second language	Yes, in components that assess reading	Yes, except in components that assess reading	GCSE Welsh second language assessment objectives show that learners must actually 'read' and demonstrate understanding of the written language. This requires taking meaning off the page from text or Braille. A reader would not be permitted for components that assess reading. NB A candidate may however use a computer reader in components that assess reading. A computer reader allows the candidate to independently meet the requirements of the reading standards.
GCSE MFL specifications	Yes, in MFL Reading papers	Yes, except in MFL Reading papers	As for A level Modern Foreign Languages, the assessment objectives require that learners must actually 'understand written language'. This requires taking meaning off the page from text or Braille. Using a reader would not be permitted as it would turn this task into a listening task.

