

Exam Access Arrangements Policy

1. Purpose and scope of this policy

The purpose of an exam access arrangement (EAA) is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for candidates with special educational needs and/or disabilities to prevent them from being placed at a substantial disadvantage as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties. They are to ensure a level playing field to mitigate, where possible, the disadvantage imposed by the disability. They are not to give an unfair advantage. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate. Although exam 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. The need for EAA must be considered on a subject-by-subject basis because candidates may require different arrangements for different subjects, due to the varying demands of each subject.

This Policy details how The Sixth Form College Colchester complies with JCQ Regs AARA (Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments) for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties. It provides information for how candidates are allocated exam access arrangements and how they use them in public examination. The policy supports and facilitates the Centre's aim to create a learning environment in which every student can fulfil their full potential.

2. Exam Access Arrangements

Access arrangements for external examinations are reasonable adjustments as defined by the Equality Act (2010). A reasonable adjustment is required where there is a substantial and long-term need. It is required during exams where a candidate would be put at a substantial disadvantage without it, when compared to someone without the disability. An exam access arrangement must not give an unfair advantage over other candidates and must not interfere with the assessment objective of the skills being assessed. For instance, an exam where reading is assessed as a skill, cannot provide a Reader as a concession.

The Sixth Form College, Colchester's policy for access arrangements in exams is determined by the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) which regulates the exam access arrangements available and the way these are applied to most exams which are conducted for the Awarding Bodies. Exam access arrangements must reflect a student's normal way of working.

The Equality Act (2010) defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long term' negative effect on the individual's ability to do normal day-to-day activities.

'Substantial' is defined as: more than minor or trivial

'Long-term' is defined as: 12 months or more, although there are special exceptions for recurring conditions

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

An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, unreasonable time frames, or affects the security of the assessment. The College is bound by immovable deadlines for JCQ and the organisation/administration of exams within the College.

3. Key Principles

The Sixth Form College, Colchester will endeavour to follow this policy to apply for and implement EAAs for eligible students, however these key principles will ordinarily apply:

- a) Students must declare previously awarded EAA on their application or on enrolment, or within the first half term of their programme.
- b) Although previously awarded EAAs can roll over from school or a previous educational provider not all EAAs automatically carry over and The Sixth Form College, Colchester cannot guarantee that a student will continue to receive the same EAA.
- c) Evidence of current need and normal way of working will be sought from teaching staff via both a feedback form and copies of tests/mocks/exams where appropriate.
- d) Students will be able to 'trial' the exam arrangements they were previously awarded in school whilst evidence is collected and the relevant paperwork completed. This will be shown on our college systems with a ? e.g. ? SRB.
- e) Students will be notified via email once a decision has been made regarding the awarding of exam arrangements.
- f) in some circumstances a further EAA assessment may be needed.

4. Responsibilities

Students must:

- Declare their previous EAA within the first 2 weeks half term of their programme, and where requested provide the EAA team, any relevant information and evidence. This evidence may include:

- Information about exam access arrangements from their school or previous educational provider.

AND

- Provide evidence of any medical diagnosis in support of previous EAAs e.g.
 - Physical, sensory, mental health or neurodevelopmental impairment: Learners should provide their diagnosis letter/report or evidence from a medical professional or specialist. Such as: 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†; A GP's letter or prescription evidence would not normally be sufficient for EAA's where formal application to the JCQ/ awarding bodies is required.

- EHCP: Where we have a copy of a current EHCP the EAA team will ask the school or previous educational provider to confirm which EAAs were implemented by them.
- Inform the College 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.
- Attend exam access arrangement assessment appointments where needed. In the event of students not attending or missing appointments a further assessment will only be arranged in exceptional circumstances (for example, bereavement or medical emergency) as agreed by the Head of Learning Support. Any student will only be offered a maximum of two opportunities to re-arrange an appointment.
- Make reasonable use of allocated exam access arrangements to allow them to follow through to subsequent exams and assessments.

If students with known existing support needs do not provide the evidence required within the first half term of their study programme, or if the necessary assessment appointment is missed, it may result in exam access arrangements being declined or not being in place in time for the exams.

5. The responsibilities of the College:

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 by the set college Internal Deadlines and/or JCQ/Awarding Body External Deadlines in order to allow the Exam Office to prepare for the exams.
- 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.
- Arrange an appointment as required for an assessment with an EAA assessor where needed to review EAAs. All endeavours will be made to arrange this on

a students' normal timetabled day and the student will be released from classes to attend if needed.

6. Late diagnosis of specific learning difficulty (SpLD) or medical condition such as ASD or ADHD.

In cases of a newly identified SpLD or medical condition the College can review cases on an individual basis. Whilst the College will endeavour to put suitable adjustments in place, this may not be possible if there is insufficient time or evidence to organise the EAA prior to the exam.

N.B: JCQ state a medical or dyslexia diagnosis alone is not sufficient evidence for EAA. We can only accept private reports as part of wider college evidence. A student's 'normal way of working' in college is key, and Access Arrangements will not be awarded purely based on a private report. There needs to be significant evidence of the impact any diagnosis is having on teaching and learning both in the classroom and in tests and exams. The final decision rests with the SENCo.

For students with a diagnosed neurodiversity, JCQ requirements state that supervised rest breaks must be trailed and exhausted through timed internal tests and/or mock examinations before additional time is considered.

7. Temporary Arrangements:

In very rare and exceptional circumstances a candidate may require a temporary arrangement, such as where a candidate has an accident resulting in a temporary injury. The arrangement to be considered will vary according to the circumstance and will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the SENCo. It is the responsibility of the SENCo to make the final decision over, and application for, any temporary arrangement in all cases.

8. 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, their normal way of working, 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	Extra time Reader or reader pen
Communication and interaction	Scribe (writer) Word processor

Medical condition	Supervised rest breaks either inside or supervised outside the room *
Sensory impairment	Prompter
Physical impairment	Coloured or modified examination papers/text
Social, mental and emotional	Coloured overlays
	Smaller examination rooms or in exceptional circumstances an individual room

* This will be based on an individual candidate's needs and the learner's normal way of working within the centre.

9. Word processor statement

See word processing policy appendix 1

10. Use of Alternative rooming arrangements statement (Classroom sized or individual room)

In the case of alternative rooming arrangements, the candidate's disability is established within the centre. This means known to the SENCo, Personal Tutor, Senior Tutor or teaching staff within the centre. For example, a long-term medical condition which has a substantial and adverse effect.

The use of alternative rooming with 1-1 invigilation must only apply where the candidate has a serious medical condition, such as frequent seizures, Tourette's or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the exam room.

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about exams is not sufficient grounds for an individual room.

11. 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, appropriate forms, letters from outside agencies, record of access arrangements used. All information and data, whether electronic or paper based, will be stored in accordance with the College's GDPR policy.

12. Malpractice:

Failure to comply with JCQ Regulations is deemed to be malpractice. Every endeavour will be made by the Centre to adhere to the processes outlined within the most recent edition of the JCQ Regulations to ensure a level playing field and an unfair advantage

is not given to some candidates. Malpractice can be by a member of staff or a candidate. In all instances of malpractice, the Awarding Body must be notified.

Examples of malpractice constitutes:

- Completing Form 8 Part 2 without having completed the assessments, using inappropriate assessments or not within the appropriate timescales;
- Completing Form 8 Part 2 without the qualifications to do so;
- Failure to conduct specialist assessment in a standardised way with appropriate assessments;
- Falsification of paperwork to gain access arrangements;
- Maladministration of data by putting wrong or inaccurate data onto the access arrangements online system;
- Implementing an arrangement where there is no evidence to support it.

This list of examples is not a comprehensive list. Where an individual member of staff is suspected of malpractice it is the responsibility to inform the Head of Centre immediately who may decide to conduct an internal investigation.

13. Complaints process:

The JCQ are unable to communicate with parents directly and are unable to handle complaints from parents.

Where parents are concerned about an application for EAA, they should discuss their concerns with the SENCO in the first instance.

If concerns remain following a discussion with the SENCO, parents should contact the Head of Centre via the students Senior Tutor in writing, within 10 working days of the concern arising. They should outline their concern. The Head of Centre will reply to parents within 15 working days. Depending upon the nature of the complaint the Head of Centre will take the following course of action:

1. Decide from the information provided in the letter whether to uphold the complaint
2. Make further investigations requiring up to 2 weeks to investigate before making a final decision
3. Delegate further investigation to a member of the senior team. Once the Head of Centre's final decision has been made, parents have 10 working days to appeal this decision. All appeals will be handled by the SEN Governor, or an equivalent governor.

14. Linked policies

Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Admissions Policy

Data Protection Policy

Word Processing Policy

Appendix 1

Word Processing Policy

Introduction

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

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 as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties.

The following principles are applied to access arrangements at The Sixth Form College Colchester:

The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing them 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.

A centre must make decisions on appropriate access arrangements for their candidates. Although professionals from other organisations may give advice, they cannot make the decision for the centre. They will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments. It is the responsibility of the SENCo to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations. (AARA 4.2.1)

Although access arrangements/adjustments are intended to allow access to assessments, they are not granted where they will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question. (AARA 4.2.2)

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. SENCos (or equivalent role) must consider the need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments on a subject-by-subject basis. (AARA 4.2.3)

The SENCo (or equivalent role) must ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage a candidate. (AARA 4.2.1)

The candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practice using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustments before their first examination. (AARA 4.2.7)

Purpose of the policy

This policy details how The Sixth Form College Colchester complies with AARA, chapter 4 (Managing the needs of candidates - principles for centres), section

5.8 (Word processor) and ICE, sections 14.20-27 Word processors (computers, laptops and tablets) when awarding and allocating a candidate the use of word processor in examinations.

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

The criteria The Sixth Form College Colchester uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations and assessments

The 'normal way of working' for exam candidates, as directed by the head of centre, is that candidates handwrite their exams unless there are exceptions.

Exceptions

A candidate may be awarded the use of a word processor in examinations where:

- the candidate may have an approved access arrangement in place, for example the use of a scribe/speech recognition technology
- the candidate 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

The Sixth Form College Colchester will:

- allocate the use of a word processor to a candidate with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text switched off where it is their normal way of working within the centre (AARA 5.8.1)
- award the use of a word processor to candidates where appropriate to their needs (AARA 5.8.4). For example, a candidate with 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 (This list is not exhaustive)
- only permit the use of a word processor where the integrity of the assessment can be maintained (AARA 4.2.1)
- not grant the use of a word processor where it will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question (AARA 4.2.2)
- consider on a subject-by-subject basis if the candidate will need to use a word processor in each specification (AARA 4.2.3)
- process access arrangements/reasonable adjustments at the start of the course, or as soon as practicable having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working, ensuring arrangements are always approved before an examination or assessment (AARA 4.2.4)

- provide the use of word processors to candidates in non-examination assessment components as standard practice unless prohibited by the specification (AARA 5.8.2)

The Sixth Form College Colchester will not:

- simply grant the use of a word processor to a candidate because they now want to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home (AARA 5.8.4)

Additionally the use of a word processor would be considered for a candidate:

- 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 (AARA 4.2.4)
- where the curriculum is delivered electronically and the centre provides word processors to all candidates (AARA 5.8.4)

Other centre specific information relating to the use of a word processor:

N/A

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

A candidate using a word processor is accommodated as follows:

- We do not use laptops for external examinations. Candidates with approved access to WP will be sat in a classroom sized or individual room with computer access, depending on their needs. In compliance with the regulations, The Sixth Form College Colchester:
- provides a word processor with the spelling and grammar check and predictive text switched off, unless an awarding body's specification says otherwise (ICE 14.20)
- where a candidate is to be seated with the main cohort without the use of a power point) checks the battery capacity of a laptop or tablet before the candidate's exam to ensure that the battery is sufficiently charged for the entire duration of the exam (ICE 14.21)
- ensures the candidate is reminded to ensure that the centre number, candidate number and the unit or component code appear on each page as a header or footer e.g. 12345/8001 – 6391/01 (ICE 14.22)
- if a candidate is using a software application that does not allow for the insertion of a header or footer, once the candidate has completed the examination and printed off their typed script, they are instructed to handwrite their details as a header or footer; the candidate is supervised throughout this process to ensure that they are solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way (ICE 14.22)

- ensures the candidate understands that each page of the typed script must be numbered, e.g. page 1 of 6 (ICE 14.23)
- ensures the candidate is reminded to save their work at regular intervals (or where possible, an IT technician will set up 'autosave' on each laptop or tablet to ensure that if there is a complication or technical issue, the candidate's work is not lost) (ICE 14.24)
- instructs the candidate to use a minimum of 12pt font and double spacing to make marking easier for examiners (ICE 14.24)

The Sixth Form College Colchester will ensure the word processor:

(ICE 14.25)

- is only used in a way that ensures a candidate's script is produced under secure conditions
- is not used to perform skills which are being assessed
- 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 typewriter, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable
- is cleared of any previously stored data
- does not include AI tools
- does not give the candidate access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited in the examination), e-mail, the Internet, social media sites or spreadsheets
- 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 (a scribe cover sheet must be completed), or the awarding body's specification permits the use of automatic spell checking
- does not include computer reading (text to speech) software unless the candidate has permission to use a computer reader
- does not include speech recognition technology unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe (a scribe cover sheet must be completed)
- is not used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe (a scribe cover sheet must be completed)

Portable storage medium

The Sixth Form College Colchester will ensure that any portable storage medium (e.g. a memory stick) used:

(ICE 14.25)

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

Printing the script after the exam has ended

The Sixth Form College Colchester will ensure:

(ICE 14.25)

- the candidate is present to verify that the work printed is their own
- a word-processed script is attached to any answer booklet which contains some of the answers
- 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 where an awarding body may require a word processor cover sheet, this is included with the candidate's typed script (and according to the relevant awarding body's instructions) (ICE 14.26)
- if a candidate omits to insert the required header or footer, they are instructed to handwrite the details as a header or footer; the candidate is supervised throughout this process to ensure that they are solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way (ICE 14.22)

The Sixth Form College Colchester:

- may retain electronic copies of word-processed scripts as the electronic copy of a word-processed script may be accepted by an awarding body where the printed copy has been lost. However, the centre would need to demonstrate to the awarding body that the electronic file has been kept securely. The head of centre would be required to confirm this in writing to the awarding body (ICE 14.27)

Other centre-specific information relating to arrangements at the time of the assessment:

N/A

Allocating word processors at the time of the assessment

Appropriate exam-compliant word processors will be allocated by:

- the IT department in liaison with the SENCo (or equivalent role) and the exams officer In exceptional circumstances where the number of compliant 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 ICE 7

Other centre-specific information relating to allocating the use of a word processor:

N/A

Changes 2025/2026

(Added) To reflect the change in ICE (14.25), a new bullet point (66) has been added - ensuring the word processor does not include AI tools

Centre-specific changes N/A

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