

Access Arrangements Policy

Reviewer: L Peaston
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Temporary addendum: Due to COVID-19 and the changing nature of Department for Education advice/direction, the collection of the evidence may currently take longer. Updated JCQ guidelines will be taken into account and will inform all practice.

Thornden Access Arrangements Policy

Thornden School is committed to providing equal opportunities for all students. Where a particular need has been identified, Exam Access Arrangements (EAA) can be made available. These arrangements are provisions/support given to a student (subject to exam board policies and procedures) such as a reader, a scribe, rest breaks etc. These allow identified students to access assessments appropriately.

Candidates for EAA

Access Arrangements may be appropriate for students with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties and/or disabilities, thus complying with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments. In such cases, robust evidence is also required of substantial and sustained need being demonstrated in the classroom and in tests/assessments.

In all cases, even where external reports exist, teacher evidence of need is required and **MUST** be in place ahead of any testing used for an application.

Temporary EAA can be granted to a student if an injury is suffered which affects their ability to appropriately complete examinations. Timely identification of such students is essential.

In all cases, arrangements should allow students to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding. However, they *must not* provide an unfair advantage or change the demands of the assessment or its integrity.

A formal diagnosis of a special educational need or disability is not a requirement for a student to be considered for EAA. Thornden School aims to ensure that all students have equal access to examinations and are not disadvantaged by any learning, medical or psychological difficulty. We will do this by applying the rules for EAA as set out in the most up to date Joint Council for Qualification (JCQ) guidelines and the procedures of examination boards. We are required to abide by the JCQ regulations so that there is parity in how access arrangements are awarded throughout a student's secondary schooling, and our compliance is monitored by inspection.

EAA reflect the support that is usually given to the student in the classroom, internal exams and mock examinations. This is commonly referred to as, '*normal way of working*'. For example, the use of a word processor can be granted if this truly represents a student's regular method of working. The provision is put in place to address an underlying difficulty such as: speed of handwriting, medical condition, physical disability, sensory impairment, planning and organisational difficulties or poor legibility.

Formal testing

Decisions on EAA are made using formal tests acceptable to the examination boards. The only exceptions to this testing protocol are when students are granted arrangements as part of their Education Health and Care Plan or medical professionals make recommendations on their behalf. However, evidence of their sustained and substantial need being demonstrated in lessons is still required. Even in these cases, permission must still be sought from the JCQ to grant these EAA.

In the majority of cases, therefore, these formal tests will determine what, if any, arrangements are appropriate for examinations. Permission will only be granted where arrangements:

- meet the conditions set out by the most up to date JCQ regulations
- are the student's normal way of working
- are backed by evidence which shows that the arrangements make a significant difference to performance levels
- comply with individual examination board criteria

Usually, by the end of Year 9, those students who require assessment for EAA have been identified. However, it is also quite usual for some needs to become apparent in upper school as the demand and pace of lessons intensifies. Therefore, some students will be identified later into Key Stage 4. Teaching staff are able to provide evidence at any stage during the school year and are prompted to do so in a timely way. School records are carefully maintained and monitored appropriately, and staff are trained/updated to ensure their knowledge of these systems is up to date.

Out of hall

Students whose concession is the use of a word processor, reader or scribe will sit their exams outside of the main hall in an appropriate space. Where a request is made for a student to sit exams outside of the hall and there is no aforementioned existing concession in place, permission must be granted by Mr S Hicks (Head of School). Permission will be granted only in cases where the JCQ evidence criteria are met. It should be noted that the concession is not available to students who simply prefer this way of working; there has to be medical evidence of substantial existing need.