



Exam Access Arrangements Policy

Gordon's School

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Centre name	Gordon's School
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Current policy approved by	Jacqueline Pierce
Current policy reviewed by	Michaela Matheson
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Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name
Head of centre	Andrew Moss
Senior leader(s)	Jacqueline Pierce
Exams officer	Lisa Clinch
SENCo (or equivalent role)	Susannah Curtis
Other staff (if applicable)	Michaela Matheson, Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator

This policy is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that access arrangements process at Gordon's School is managed in accordance with current requirements and regulations.

References in this policy to GR, ICE and AARA refer to the JCQ documents **General Regulations for Approved Centres, Instructions for conducting examinations** and **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**.

References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see AARA 1.8). The definitions and procedures in AARA relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland.

Introduction

(AARA Definitions)

Access arrangements

Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow candidates with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

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 substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. The awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. An example would be a Braille paper which would be a reasonable adjustment for a vision impaired candidate who could read Braille. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements.

Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- the needs of the disabled candidate;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; and
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; or
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'.

The centre must ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Gordon's School has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements process and:

- is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements (GR 5.4)
- has a written process in place to check the qualification(s) of its assessor(s) and that the correct procedures are followed, as in Chapter 7 of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (GR 5.4)

1. General principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, to coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties and disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language and

those with a temporary illness or temporary injury. (GR 5.4)

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. (AA 4.2)

The principles for Gordon's School to consider include:

- 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 (AARA 4.2)
- Although access arrangements/adjustments are intended to allow access to assessments, they cannot be granted where they will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question (AARA 4.2)
- 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. The need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments must be considered on a subject-by-subject basis (AARA 4.2)
- Applications for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the start of or during the first year of a two-year the course having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working (AARA 4.2)
- Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment (AARA 4.2)
- The arrangement(s) put in place **must** reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre (AARA 4.2)
- The candidate **must** have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before their first examination (AARA 4.2)

The main elements of the process detailing staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements/reasonable adjustments and the conduct of examinations are covered in:

- Equality Policy (Exam)

2. The assessment process

At Gordon's School, assessments are carried out by:

- an appropriately qualified assessor(s) appointed by the head of centre in accordance with the JCQ requirements (AARA 7.3)

Details and qualification(s) of the current assessor(s)

Mrs Michaela Matheson is the school's assessor and holds the following qualifications:

Certificate of Psychometric Testing, Assessment & Access Arrangements (CPT3A)

RTQU Membership 468801

Appointment of assessors

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed at Gordon's School:

- Evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements (AARA

7.3)

- This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate (AARA 7.3)
- Evidence of successful completion of a post-graduate course in individual specialist assessment at or equivalent to Level 7 or a printout of a screenshot of HCPC or SASC registration is held on file for inspection purposes to evidence that the assessor(s) is/are suitably qualified (AARA 7.3, 7.4)

Additional information:

- To ensure full compliance with JCQ regulations and a consistent approach, the centre's qualified assessor will normally carry out all assessments for access arrangements.
- Where parents choose to commission an independent assessor, this must be agreed in advance with the SENCo and Head of Centre. The independent assessor must contact the centre prior to assessment to obtain background information (a fully completed Part 1 of Form 8 and relevant evidence of normal way of working and must work strictly with JCQ AARA published requirements.

Reporting the appointment of assessors

- Evidence that the assessor(s) is/are suitably qualified is held on file for inspection purposes (AARA 7.4)

When requested, the evidence will be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by:

- The Exams Officer and the Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator
- In the case of appropriately qualified psychologists (registered with the Health & Care Professions Council), or specialist teacher assessors holding a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, who are directly employed within the centre, there is no need to record the names of these individuals within *Access arrangements online*. (AARA 7.4)
- The names of all other assessors, who are assessing candidates studying qualifications as covered by the *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* document must be entered into *Access arrangements online* to confirm their status (AARA 7.4)

Process for the assessment of a candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor

Gordon's School confirms:

- Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor will be followed and Form 8 (JCQ/AA/LD - Profile of Learning Difficulties) will be completed (AARA 7.5, 7.6)
- Arrangements must be made for the candidate to be assessed by the centre's appointed assessor (AARA 7.5)
- Assessors **must** personally conduct the assessments. They **must not** sign off assessments carried out by another professional (AARA 7.5)
- The assessor **must** carry out tests which are relevant to support the application (AARA 7.5)
- A privately commissioned assessment, where the centre has not been involved, **cannot** be used to award access arrangements and **cannot** be used to process an application using *Access arrangements online* (AARA 7.3)
- Relevant staff working within the centre should always carefully consider any privately commissioned assessment to see whether the process of gathering a picture of need, demonstrating normal way of working within the centre and, ultimately, assessing the candidate themselves should be instigated (AARA 7.3)

Additional information:

- Parents/carers who have concerns about a student's learning should refer these to the relevant subject teacher (for concerns regarding a single subject) or the Head of Key Stage (for concerns across multiple subjects). They will review whether sufficient evidence exists to complete the *Expression of Concern Form*.
- Concerns raised by staff must be referred via the *Expression of Concern Form* by the subject teacher and relevant Head of Department.
- The deadline for submitting *Expression of Concern Forms* is **30 September 2026** for Year 11 and Year 13 students sitting public examinations in Summer 2027. This allows sufficient time to gather evidence and process Access Arrangements Online (AAO) applications by March 2027. Please note that this deadline does not apply in cases of late diagnosis or injury.
- The SENCo, in consultation with key pastoral and academic staff, will review all *Expressions of Concern* and available evidence to determine whether to initiate the formal process of assessing for access arrangements prior to any formal assessment by a school-appointed assessor.

Picture of need/normal way of working

Gordon's School confirms:

- Before the candidate's assessment, the person appointed in the centre **must** provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted, as required in Part 1 of Form 8. The centre and the assessor **must** work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process. (AARA 7.5)

Additional information:

- Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCo must provide the assessor with background information — a fully completed Part 1 of Form 8 including teachers' feedback and evidence of the candidate's normal way of working in lessons and timed internal/mock examinations. (Comments from parents and carers cannot be recorded within Part 1 of Form 8 or Form 9)
- All candidates must be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8.
- The assessor must discuss their findings and recommendations with the SENCo. The SENCo holds responsibility for determining and awarding the appropriate and practicable access arrangements / reasonable adjustments. Any awarded access arrangements must reflect the candidate's needs and normal way of working in lessons and examinations. (JCQ AARA, section 7.5)
- Access arrangements are pre-examination adjustments based on a student's evidence of need and normal way of working. They can only be approved where there is sufficient evidence to support the award. All parties (parents, guardians, and students) must understand that the centre must operate strictly within the published JCQ Regulations. An Access Arrangements Online (AAO) application will only be processed where it meets the published criteria and is fully supported by the required evidence.
- Where access arrangements were previously available in Key Stage 3, this information may form part of the evidence of normal way of working. However, Key Stage 3 access arrangements are internal to Gordon's School and do not automatically carry forward into Key Stage 4. The formal process for awarding access arrangements is completed during Year 10, before the deadline published by JCQ.

3. Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access arrangements online (AAO) is used to apply for approval of arrangements/adjustments for the qualifications listed within the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*.

AAO is accessed through the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by using any of the awarding body secure extranet sites. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

Deadlines apply for each examination series for submitting applications for approval using AAO.

Online applications **must** only be processed where they are supported by the centre **and** the candidate meets the published criteria for the arrangement(s) with the full supporting evidence in place

Centre delegated arrangements/adjustments

Decisions relating to the approval of centre delegated arrangements/adjustments are made by:

- • SENCo
- Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator
- Exam Officer

with the approval of SLT

Appropriate evidence, where required by the arrangement, is held on file by:

- • Exam Access Arrangements Coordinator
- **The use of a word processor**

The Word Processor Policy details the criteria Gordon's School specifically uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations and assessments.

- **Alternative rooming arrangements**

The Exam Access Arrangements Policy details the criteria Gordon's School uses to award alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs or an alternative room with one-to-one invigilation.

Additional information

- Alternative rooming arrangements are understood to be a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs
- The SENCo can award the above arrangements if the students are disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act. The candidate is at a substantial disadvantage when compared with other non-disabled candidates undertaking the assessment and it would be reasonable in all the circumstances to provide the arrangement. (The only exception to this would be a temporary illness, temporary injury or other temporary indisposition which is clearly evidenced.)
- In the case of alternative rooming arrangements, the candidate's disability needs to be established within the centre (see Chapter 4, paragraph 4.1.4). It should be known to a Form Tutor, a Head of Year, the SENCo or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities. For example, a long-term medical condition which has a substantial and adverse effect.
- The use of an alternative room 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 examination room.
- Alternative rooming arrangements must reflect the candidate's normal and current way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations.

- Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations **is not** sufficient grounds for alternative rooming arrangements within the centre. (AA, section 5.16)

Modified papers

Modified papers are ordered using AAO.

- Modified papers must be ordered in advance of a specific examination series, no later than the published deadline for the series concerned (AARA 6.1)
- Modified papers are prepared for candidates for whom other adjustments are unsuitable. The modification of papers involves additional resources. Therefore centres must provide the awarding bodies with early notification that a candidate will require a modified paper. (AARA 6.1)
- Modified papers **must not** be ordered for candidates unless the centre intends to enter them for the relevant examination series (AARA 6.1)
- For the adjustment to be effective, the candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using an awarding body's past modified papers before their first examination (AARA 6.1)

Roles and responsibilities

When an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment has been processed on-line and approved, the evidence of need (where required) must be made available to a JCQ Centre Inspector upon request. An awarding body may also request evidence of need when considered necessary. This can either be in hard copy paper format or electronically. (AARA 4.2)

Where documentation is stored electronically an e-folder for each individual candidate must be created. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. (AARA 4.2)

It is the responsibility of:

- SENCO / EAA Coordinator to inform candidates that an application for access arrangements will be processed using *Access arrangements online*, complying with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018
- SENCO / EAA Coordinator to submit applications for approval using AAO
- EAA Coordinator to keep detailed records for inspection purposes, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) and evidence of the assessor's qualification (where required) (AARA 8.6)
- SENCO / EAA Coordinator to submit applications for approval directly to an awarding body for any qualification that does not fall within the scope of AAO
- EAA Coordinator / Exam Officer to order modified papers

Additional responsibilities:

n/a

Changes 2025/2026

References to AA changed to AARA

(Added/Removed) Under heading **Roles and responsibilities:**

Added new bullet point to reference the requirement to comply with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Removed reference to a signed candidate personal data consent form and Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENCo form which are no longer required.

This section will therefore need to be edited when reviewing and updating this policy for 2025/2026.

Centre-specific changes

Please note:

Gordon's EAA Policy should be read in conjunction with the most recent JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA) and JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE). These documents provide the regulatory framework for implementing access arrangements and ensuring compliance with JCQ guidelines.

Any updates to JCQ regulations will take precedence and must be reflected in the application of this policy.