



Access Arrangements Policy

1st September 2021- 31st August 2022

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Accessibility Statement: If you have any learning difficulty, disability or health problem, that means you are unable to use the admissions policy and procedure in the way laid out in this document, or you may require additional support to help you with the process, please contact the college to discuss how the process can be adjusted to support your needs. Should you require this guide in an alternative format please contact the college.

Access Arrangements Policy

Introduction

Hereford College of Arts Policy for Access Arrangements is written in line with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Regulations document: 'Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments' document, applicable from 1st September 2020 to 31st August 2021. These are the regulations with which the College must comply, and this policy will outline how this will be achieved.

All formal assessments undertaken at Hereford College of Arts are completed by Specialist Assessors who hold the relevant qualifications as set out by the Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ) Regulations.

Rationale for Access Arrangements written in accordance with JCQ Regulations

1. Access Arrangements are intended to facilitate students with the required knowledge, understanding, and skills, who are unable to demonstrate these in an assessment due to a difficulty or disability, to access the exam without changing the demands of the assessment
2. The Equality Act 2010 requires an awarding body to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate who is disabled (within the definition of the Equality Act 2010) would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled
3. Access Arrangements are intended to increase access to assessments and examinations, in particular English and Maths formal examinations, alongside curriculum area assessments at Hereford College of Arts, but cannot be put in place where they will directly affect performance in the skills that are the focus of the assessment
4. Access Arrangements do not enable an unfair advantage
5. Access Arrangements may vary between subjects because different subjects and methods of assessments may have different demands
6. Access Arrangements should reflect a student's normal way of working unless such arrangements would compromise the integrity of the assessment.

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 coloured paper or overlays, prompter, extra time, reader, speech recognition software or scribe, use of a word processor, practical assistant, etc.

Note:

An Access Arrangement may be unique to an individual and therefore not appear in a standard list. Some examples from previous years include noise cancelling ear defenders or music played through an MP3 player to enable the candidate to ignore background noise and manage anxiety effectively.

Identifying the need for Access Arrangements

Stage 1: Early identification

Students who may qualify for formal Access Arrangements are identified early, and where possible, from information disclosed on the application form, at interview, information received from previous institution, at enrolment, or via documentation such as an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

All staff are informed about these interim reasonable adjustments at the start of the academic year. Information about recommendations are updated on ProMonitor as the Specialist Assessor completes individual assessments. It is the responsibility of all teaching staff to access this information and implement adjustments in their teaching.

Stage 2: Formal Testing

Formal assessments begin in the autumn term. The process for each student is outlined below:

- Initial interview to discuss background information.

Core assessments:

- Visual stress (coloured paper requirements)
- CTOPP2: processing speed (rapid symbolic naming and memory for digits evidence for extra time)
- DASH17+: handwriting speed (evidence for extra time/ word processor or scribe)
- Access Reading Test: reading comprehension (evidence for reader/ computer reader)



If necessary, the following assessments are also completed:

- DASH17+ word-processed and/ or Dragon (evidence for use of word processor or Dragon)
- SDMT: processing speed (extra time)
- TOMAL: processing speed (extra time)
- WRAT5 spelling (evidence for word processor or scribe)

These assessments are delivered in accordance with the JCQ and Pearson guidelines. Permission to allow Access Arrangements expires after 26 months, after which the student may need to be re-assessed, depending on the arrangement(s) they have in place. Access Arrangements are always determined by the most recent assessments.

Further information:

Access Arrangements cannot be applied for based on a privately commissioned assessment, unless the assessor has received information about the student's

current difficulties and support offered in College **before** the assessment is carried out.

Medical letters will prompt an investigation, but not override the evidence seen in College.

Stage 3: Formal Application for Access Arrangements

Following assessment, the outcomes [for students who have learning difficulties] are recorded and summarised on JCQ Form 8 Part 2 by the Specialist Assessor. Completed forms are passed to the Student Services Manager for review, monitoring, and a signature; these form part of the evidence for online submission.

Entry Level Functional Skills Process

Access Arrangements for Entry Level Functional Skills assessments are centre delegated and are outlined on Centre Delegated Access Arrangement forms following the completion of a Form 8.

Level 1 Functional Skills Process

Following completion of the Form 8, online application is carried out via Pearson Access Arrangements Online by the Specialist Assessor. In most cases, feedback is instant and permission for the Access Arrangement will be recorded and held by the College. In cases where extra time above 25% is applied for, feedback is reliant on awarding body approval and based on additional assessments and evidence provided by the Specialist Assessor.

GCSE qualifications process

Following completion of the Form 8, online application is carried out via Access Arrangements Online by the Specialist Assessor. In most cases, feedback is instant and permission for the Access Arrangement will be recorded and held by the College. In cases where extra time above 25% is applied for, feedback is reliant on awarding body approval and based on additional assessments and evidence provided by the Specialist Assessor.

Candidates with an EHCP

Where candidates have an EHCP in place, a detailed file note for students with a substantial impairment is completed in place of a Form 8. This is supported by evidence from the candidate's EHCP or documents such as letters from an appropriately qualified professional confirming that the candidate has persistent/significant difficulties and is disabled within the definition of the Equality Act 2010, e.g. a letter from: CAMHS; a Health and Care Professions Council registered psychologist; a hospital consultant; a psychiatrist; a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT); or Local Authority Specialist Service (e.g. Sensory Impairment Service or Occupational Health). Following completion of this evidence,

an online application is carried out by the Specialist Assessor. In most cases, feedback is instant and permission for the Access Arrangement will be recorded and held by the College. In cases where extra time above 25% is applied for, feedback is reliant on awarding body approval and based on additional assessments and evidence provided by the Specialist Assessor.

All qualifications

Following discussion of assessment outcomes with students, written confirmation of their entitlement will be sent via email and Teams and followed up in hard copy by the Specialist Assessor. Confirmation of arrangements is also sent to course leaders, English and Maths teachers. This information is also added to ProMonitor under Additional Learning Support and Specialist Assessment Information to ensure that all necessary staff can access information.

Stage 4: Ensuring Access Arrangements are the student's 'normal way of working'

Where Access Arrangements are awarded, it is the responsibility of all teaching staff to monitor and ensure that they continue to be normal working practice for the student. **This means that Access Arrangements need to be taken into consideration in everyday teaching and assessments. These must be formally applied in any internal or external assessments, providing they do not compromise the integrity of the assessment.**

If a student chooses continually not to use the agreed access arrangements, either because their needs change, or they do not feel it aids their learning or achievement, then access arrangements will be removed, and the student will be required to sign to evidence their decision.

It is the responsibility of the Student Services Manager and the Specialist Assessor to ensure all required information is collated and accessible to the Exams Officer, and relevant wider staff. It is also their responsibility to ensure all paperwork required by JCQ, including data protection notices signed by the students, is accessible to JCQ inspectors for unannounced site visits.

Staff roles and responsibilities relating to Access Arrangements

Examinations Officer:

1. To provide candidate numbers to the Specialist Assessor
2. To ensure that the agreed Access Arrangement provisions are in place for exams and are communicated to the invigilators
3. To deal with any emergencies, such as accidents or medical conditions, on the day of the exam (in conjunction with appropriate staff)
4. To ensure students are roomed suitably for their Access Arrangement and to minimise disruption for other students also sitting exams.

5. To ensure that applications for special consideration, temporary arrangements and alternative accommodation are processed.

Student Services Manager:

1. To encourage a 'whole centre' approach to Access Arrangements and to lead on the process within the centre
2. To ensure that they, together with the Head of Centre, members of the senior leadership team and the Specialist Assessors are familiar with the entire contents of the latest JCQ guidelines and regulations. Document can be found at: [AA regs 20-21 FINAL.pdf \(jcq.org.uk\)](#)
3. To support the Specialist Assessors to determine, and apply for, appropriate Access Arrangements.

Specialist Assessors:

1. To identify students who require diagnostic assessments from initial information gathered at interview and enrolment
2. To provide English and Maths Manager with a list of students who have been identified for assessment
3. To build a picture of need and provision for each student with support of teaching staff
4. To administer all formal standardised assessment in line with JCQ guidelines whilst adhering to assessment standardisation processes to ensure validity of scoring, after gathering evidence from tutors and student interviews
5. To mark the formal assessments and, based on all information gathered, complete all the necessary reports and associated paperwork required to apply for access arrangements
6. To coordinate the training of students using assistive technology in exams, in advance of the exam series
7. To determine, with the assistance of the Student Services Manager, appropriate access arrangements for individual students
8. To share information regarding access arrangements with students, relevant teaching staff and exams officers
9. To support the Exams Officers with any on the day questions and queries regarding Access Arrangement provision
10. To complete an Access Arrangements Requirement Request form for each student and arrange meetings with Exams Officer and Student Services Manager as well as Head of English and Maths to confirm access arrangements prior to exam planning
11. To inform students of their access arrangements by face-to-face meetings and in writing
12. To provide English and Maths Manager with a list of students who have been identified for assessment
13. To liaise with IT to ensure that the latest version of exam software is installed on computers to be used for exams
14. To manage any on the day questions and queries regarding Access Arrangement provision.

English and Maths Teaching staff:

1. Provide a list of students who will be sitting English and Maths exams to Specialist Assessor in accordance with key dates agreed at the beginning of the academic year
2. To provide information/evidence of candidate's persistent and significant difficulties on the Tutor Evidence Form provided by the Specialist Assessor
3. To refer students for assessment who have not initially been identified by Specialist Assessor, either through interview documentation or enrolment, using the 'Tutor Referral for Access Arrangements Form (for those who have not already been identified by Specialist Assessor)' document
4. To clarify how the candidate's disability/difficulty is impacting on learning in the classroom
5. To provide evidence of this impact directly to the Student Services Manager and Specialist Assessor by way of completed tutor evidence forms in a timely manner, and in line with agreed College deadlines, to ensure that timescales set out by JCQ and Pearson can be met
6. To ensure that a progression plan to outline proposed dates of assessments for each student is provided to Specialist Assessor in accordance with key dates agreed at the beginning of the academic year
7. To ensure that the correct Access Arrangements are in place for controlled assessments and in class.

All teaching staff:

1. To ensure 'normal way of working' is continually facilitated in class in line with JCQ guidance and training provided by Specialist Assessor.

IT Staff:

1. To ensure that technology is available in preparation for exams such as preparing student laptops and IT suites
2. To ensure that software is running appropriately alongside electronic exam papers on the morning of exams
3. To be available to support with any IT issues arising during exams

Schedule for assessment and processing applications

1. Students will complete assessments with the Specialist Assessor. Assessments will take place as soon as practicably possible. The timescale for these will depend on the volume of students to be assessed.
2. Students will receive verbal feedback after completing assessments and this will be confirmed in writing to them, their course leader, and English and Maths tutors once the application has been completed.

Students sitting only Functional Skills or Functional Skills and GCSE

1. For students sitting **only Functional Skills OR Functional Skills AND GCSE** all tutor evidence from English and Maths tutors must be completed and submitted to the Specialist Assessor by the date agreed at the beginning of the academic year.
2. Supporting paperwork (Form 8, File Notes) and online applications for these students will be completed by Specialist Assessor.
3. A meeting will be held between the Specialist Assessor, the Student Services Manager and the Exams Officer following confirmation of use of assistive technology with students 4 weeks prior to exams. This meeting will confirm final access arrangements and plan for Functional Skills exam windows in March and May.

Students sitting only GCSEs

1. All tutor evidence for students sitting only GCSEs to be completed and submitted to Specialist Assessor by the date agreed at the beginning of the academic year.
2. Supporting paperwork (Form 8, File notes) and online applications for these students to be completed by Specialist Assessor by the JCQ deadline.
3. A meeting will be held between Specialist Assessor and Exams Officer following confirmation of use of assistive technology with students 4 weeks prior to exams. This meeting will confirm final access arrangements and plan for June exam window.

Students requiring modified and electronic papers for Functional Skills

To order papers, confirmation should be sent from the English and Maths Manager to the Specialist Assessor, adhering to the date agreed at the beginning of the academic year.

January will no longer be an available exam window for those needing electronic or modified papers due to the time needed to process applications.

Students requiring modified and electronic papers for GCSE exams

For GCSE exams, electronic papers do not need to be ordered ahead of the exam as the Exams Officer is able to download a copy of papers on the morning of exams for use with electronic reader software.

Modified papers (as outlined above) must be ordered by the **31st January** for the June exam series. Modified papers will only be applied for once all the student's

assessments have been completed and the Form 8 has been written by the Specialist Assessor and reviewed by the Student Services Manager. Completing the Form 8 and online application process will be prioritised for those candidates requiring modified papers for GCSE exams to ensure that the deadline is met.

Access arrangements application deadlines

The deadlines for submitting evidence to awarding bodies to apply for access arrangements are set by JCQ and must be adhered to. **Late applications on account of a temporary injury or impairment, or diagnosis of a disability or manifestation of an impairment relating to an existing disability arising after the published deadline are permissible.**

Note:

Any requests for assessments will only be processed in very exceptional circumstances and with prior approval from the Student Services Manager and Head of FE.

Types of Access Arrangements

Provisions may include:

- Use of coloured paper from the agreed list. Any colours outside of this selection will need to be already in stock and approved by Exams Officer
- Use of prompter
- Extra time: 25% up to 50%
- Computer reader software or reader (please see Use of Reader Strategy)
- Word processor (Please see Word Processor Statement)
- Speech recognition software or scribe (please see Use of Dragon Strategy)
- Being allowed to sit examinations in a smaller room (numbers will be limited based on student needs)
- Supervised rest breaks. Break lengths and frequency will be determined by individual student's needs and will be taken halfway through exams. In cases where the student has 50% extra time, these may be taken more frequently throughout the exam.

This list is not exhaustive, and arrangements put in place will reflect the needs and normal way of working for the individual.

Support offered to students with Access Arrangements

1. Students with Access Arrangements in place receive guidance on how best to use these arrangements in exams in their feedback and alongside written confirmation.
2. Students who have access to a reader or scribe are shown how to use them appropriately in exam situations following assessment, and it is explained to

them what they can and cannot ask a reader or scribe to do during the exam, and how much support the adult is allowed to give.

3. Students with extra time are offered sessions with an Study Skills tutor on how to use the additional time allowance effectively, following assessment. They are then encouraged to apply the techniques and strategies given to them in lessons, exams, and assessments.
4. Students who qualify for assistive technology, such as Dragon Naturally Speaking and ClaroRead, will be required to attend sessions to develop the skills necessary to effectively use them in exams.
5. Students using any assistive technology in exams will sign an attendance form to record their attendance at tutorials. They will also be asked to reconfirm that they would like to use this in their exam 4 weeks before the exam window by signing confirmation form.
6. Students who qualify for word processing as a result of slow handwriting speed or fatigue, must meet the criteria outlined in the word processing policy as having an average accuracy rate of 92% and a typing speed of 37 words per minute. Students are enrolled on a 'Typing Tutor' course to develop these skills in preparation for exams (please refer to the Word Processor Statement for further clarification)
7. Relevant course tutors are given access to information regarding Access Arrangements via course leaders who will forward information on as appropriate. Information will also be available on ProMonitor under Additional Learning Support and Specialist Assessment Information. English and Maths teachers will also receive notification via email.
8. In the event that a student does not wish to make use of their Access Arrangement in any given exam, they will be required to sign a form to indicate that they were aware that the Access Arrangement was available to them, however, they have chosen not to use it.

Exceptional Circumstances

Temporary Arrangements

Temporary Access Arrangements may be required for a student suffering from unforeseen illness or injury. In these cases, the College must be informed at the earliest possible opportunity, and a letter from a GP, consultant, or other professional, detailing the problem and any arrangement deemed necessary should be obtained as soon as possible. The College will make every effort to accommodate these arrangements.

Alternative Accommodation

On very rare occasions, a candidate may need to sit an examination at a residential address or hospital due to a severe medical condition or profound psychological condition, which prevents them from taking examinations within the centre. In this situation, and where possible, the Exams Officer will ensure that JCQ guidelines are followed with regard to conduct, procedures, and staffing.

The College must be satisfied that the candidate is well enough to take the examination, and appropriate evidence of need must be held on file.

Special Consideration

Special Consideration is a post examination adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time of the examination or assessment. The candidate will have been fully prepared for the exams, but due to some unforeseen circumstance could not demonstrate what they knew. In this situation it is the responsibility of the Exams Officer, with the support of the teacher and specialist assessors, to apply for a special consideration adjustment.

Access Arrangements **must** be applied for in line with JCQ guidance and timescales. Last minute arrangements **cannot** be accommodated and will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where a candidate meets the criteria outlined.

Accountability

The responsibility for decisions about the access arrangements a candidate is eligible for lies with the Specialist Assessor and Student Services Manager. Any decision to enter students for exams before the assessment process is complete disadvantages students and undermines the regulations set out by JCQ which are underpinned by the Equality Act 2010. These guidelines state:

“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 definition of disability from The Equality Act is included below.

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability

Generally, impairments have to meet the statutory requirements set out in section 6 and Schedule 1 to the Equality Act 2010 and associated regulations.

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability is usually considered cumulatively in terms of:

- identifying a physical or mental impairment;
- looking into adverse effects and assessing which are substantial;
- considering if substantial adverse effects are long term;
- judging the impact of long-term adverse effects on normal day-to-day activities.

Statutory guidance on the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability has been produced by the Office for Disability Issues (within the Department for Work and Pensions) to help better understand and apply this definition:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570382/Equality_Act_2010-disability_definition.pdf

The clear starting point in the statutory guidance is that disability means 'limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'.

'Substantial' means 'more than minor or trivial'. Substantial adverse effects can be determined by looking at the effects on a person with the impairment, comparing those to a person without the impairment, to judge if the difference between the two is more than minor or trivial.

'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months or is likely to do so.

'Normal day-to-day activities' could be determined by reference to the illustrative, non-exhaustive list of factors on pages 47 to 51 of the statutory guidance relating to the Equality Act 2010. (Study and education related activities are included in the meaning of 'day-to-day' activities.)

The guidance from the Office for Disability Issues referred to above illustrates the factors which might reasonably be regarded as having a substantial adverse effect on normal day-to-day activities. Factors that might reasonably be expected not to have a substantial adverse effect are also provided.

Factors that might reasonably be expected to have a substantial adverse effect include:

- persistent and significant difficulty in reading and understanding written material where this is in the person's native language, for example because of a mental impairment, a learning difficulty or a sensory or multi-sensory impairment;
- persistent distractibility or difficulty concentrating;
- difficulty understanding or following simple verbal instructions;
- physical impairment – for example, difficulty operating a computer because of physical restrictions in using a keyboard.

Factors that might reasonably be expected **not** to have a substantial adverse effect include:

- minor problems with writing or spelling;
- inability to read very small or indistinct print without the aid of a magnifying glass;
- inability to converse orally in a language which is not the speaker's native spoken language.

As such, any decisions to enter students for examinations before the assessment process has been completed and appropriate access arrangements have been applied for will not be endorsed by the Specialist Assessor or the Student Services Manager.