

## The role of access arrangements

Access arrangements are designed to accommodate the specific needs of students with SpLDs without compromising the integrity of the exam. These arrangements may include, but are not limited to, extra time (usually 25%), the use of a reader, the use of a scribe, supervised rest breaks, or the use of assistive technology. The primary objective is to level the playing field, allowing students with SpLDs to perform on an equal footing with their peers.

Recommendations for access arrangements are a crucial component of a SpLD diagnostic assessment report.

### Professional guidance

It is important that assessors understand their role within the access arrangements process and work within the relevant regulations and guidance.

Guidance for the national curriculum tests can be found on the DfE website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-tests-access-arrangements>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-1-tests-access-arrangements>

Guidance for GCSEs, A-levels and other Level 1, 2 and 3 qualifications (e.g. BTECs) can be found on the JCQ website here: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance/>

For 11+ examinations for grammar school entrance, independent school entrance examinations, higher education examinations, and professional examinations, each organisation sets its own criteria. The relevant organisation or awarding body should be contacted for information. Many organisations use the JCQ regulations as a basis for awarding access arrangements.

The regulations are updated annually, and assessors will need to stay informed about the latest guidelines.

### The role of the assessor within JCQ access arrangements.

For access arrangements in JCQ examinations, the assessor must work with the centre. Before the assessment takes place, the assessor must provide the centre with evidence of their qualification and receive JCQ Form 8 Part 1.

Following the assessment, the assessor must record relevant assessment results within JCQ Form 8 Part 2. The centre will then make the final decision on which access arrangements are provided, taking account of the centre evidence and the assessment evidence.

An assessment which has been conducted with no prior contact with the individual's school or college cannot be used to provide assessment evidence for access arrangements.

Including recommendations for access arrangements

When including recommendations for access arrangements in a SpLD diagnostic assessment report, the following approach should be taken:

**Link recommendations to assessment findings:**

Clearly explain how the findings from the assessment justify the recommended access arrangements. For example, if a student demonstrates slow reading speed, the report may recommend extra time, explicitly linking this to the standardised test results.

**Detail specific access arrangements:**

Specify the exact arrangements needed. For example:

Extra Time: If recommended, indicate the percentage of extra time (e.g., 25%). May be recommended if there are weaknesses in the cognitive or attainment profile that impact on working under timed conditions.

Reading support, for example, the use of a Reader, text-to-speech (TTS) or a reading pen: May be recommended if there are difficulties with reading accuracy, comprehension, speed or fluency.

Writing or spelling support, for example, use of a Scribe/speech-to-text/word processor: May be recommended if there are difficulties with spelling or writing fluency.

Assistive Technology: Consider the use of a word processor, speech-to-text or text-to-speech software, or a reading pen, as appropriate to the age and stage of the individual.

Other arrangements, for example, rest breaks, coloured paper: Arrangements may be recommended based on observations and background information.

**Provide clear justifications:**

Justify each recommendation with clear, evidence-based reasoning. For example, "Given the student's below average processing speed index, 25% extra time is recommended to allow sufficient time to process and respond to exam questions."

**Consider the exam history:**

Review the student's past performance in exams with and without previous access arrangements. If the student has used similar arrangements before with positive outcomes, this should be mentioned to reinforce the recommendation.

**Include input from the student and educators:**

Incorporate feedback from the student and, where appropriate, their teachers regarding the effectiveness of previous access arrangements. This holistic approach ensures that the recommendations are not only evidence-based but also practical and tailored to the student's needs.

**Compliance with JCQ Guidelines:**

For a student in secondary or further education, ensure that the recommendations align with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidelines. The report should reference these guidelines to demonstrate compliance.