

Exams – Access Arrangements Policy

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Directors on :	Autumn 2026
This Policy will be reviewed by the GLC Board on :	Autumn 2027

GLC Mission Statement

The GLC's mission is to develop active and thriving citizens within a diverse, truly fair and equal community.

This will be achieved through:

- High quality teaching that deliberately develops competencies of curiosity, creativity, communication and critical-thinking;
- An inspiring and meaningful curriculum;
- The development of productive relationships by instilling the values of compassion, resilience, responsibility and aspiration to prepare our young people for learning and life;
- A commitment to the wellbeing of our staff;
- A culture of professional generosity, collaboration, challenge and support throughout the GLC;
- The development of effective external partnerships for the benefit and wellbeing of our community.

The Gateway Learning Community Trust comprises the Gateway Academy, Herringham Primary Academy, Lansdowne Primary Academy, the Gateway Primary Free School and Tilbury Pioneer Academy. For the purposes of this document each will be referred to as an 'Academy'.

Equalities Statement

The GLC's commitment to equality is enshrined in our mission statement to develop 'active and thriving citizens within a diverse, truly fair and equal community'.

We are a vibrant, innovative and successful organisation: we work hard to be the place of choice to work and to learn. Across the 5 academies of the GLC, we pledge that everyone enjoys an equality of opportunity. We work tirelessly to ensure that individual characteristics including age, ethnicity, socio-economic background, academic ability, disability, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation are not discriminated against in any way. We create inclusive environments characterised by mutual respect where difference is celebrated.

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What are access arrangements and reasonable adjustments?

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. [AARA, Definitions]

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. 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 including:

- The needs of the disabled candidate;
- The effectiveness of the adjustment;
- The cost of the adjustment;
- 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.

The centre must ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates. [AARA, Definitions]

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that The Gateway Academy 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.

This policy is maintained and held by the SENDCo alongside the individual files/e-folders of each access arrangements candidate. Each file/e-folder contains detailed records of all the essential information required to be held according to the regulations.

Where the SENDCo is storing documentation electronically, an e-folder must be created for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. [AARA 4.2]

The policy is reviewed annually to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current JCQ document 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties — Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments' [AARA]. The edition currently in force is AARA 2025/26, as amended by the March 2026 JCQ supplement. This policy reflects that amended version.

This policy should be read alongside:

- The GLC SEND Secondary Policy [Summer 2026];
- The GLC Equalities Policy [Exams], which covers staff roles and responsibilities in identifying, requesting and implementing access arrangements;

General principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENDCo, 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]

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AARA [4.2]. These 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;
- The SENDCo must ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the 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 SENDCo to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations;
- Applications should be processed at the start of or during the first year of a two-year course, having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working;
- Arrangements must always be approved before an examination or assessment;
- The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre;
- The candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before their first external examination.

Technology-first principle [AARA 2025/26]

JCQ guidance requires centres to give priority to technology over human support where a candidate can use the technology competently. Before applying for a human reader or scribe, the SENDCo should consider whether computer readers, speech recognition software, reading pens or word processors may more appropriately meet the candidate's needs. Technology arrangements should be backed by classroom and mock examination evidence of normal way of working.

Equalities Policy [Exams]

A large part of the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process is covered in the Equalities Policy [Exams], which covers staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements and the conduct of exams.

The assessment process

Assessments are carried out by an assessor appointed by the head of centre. The assessor is appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in AARA 7.3.

The SENDCo must ensure that this document and the relevant section of the JCQ document 'Instructions for Conducting Examinations' [ICE] are checked before contacting the JCQ and/or an awarding body with a query about access arrangements or reasonable adjustments. The answers to many queries will be found within these documents.

The qualification(s) of the current assessor(s)

Sarah Curtis — Trust Lead for SEND and Inclusion

- Master of Science in Developmental Neuropsychology
- Exam Access Arrangements for Specialist Assessors
- Supporting Teaching and Learning [SENCo 2]

Laura Hunt — Assistant Principal for SEND and SENDCo

- Master of Education in Schools Based Leadership and Management
- Patoss AAA: Assessing for Access Arrangements

Appointment of assessors

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed in the centre, evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements in AARA. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate.

The head of centre must ensure that evidence of the assessor's qualification(s) is obtained at the point of engagement/employment and prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate. Evidence must be held on file for inspection purposes. [AARA 7.3]

Evidence of qualification(s) may include:

- A copy of a current Assessment Practising Certificate [APC] issued by Patoss, Dyslexia Guild or British Dyslexia Association;
- A copy of a Level 7 assessment qualification certificate;
- A screenshot of HCPC registration showing the Unique Registration Number;
- A screenshot of SASC listing showing the APC code number and expiry date;
- A screenshot of listing for Patoss AAA Certificate Holders, PAPAA Graduates, CPT3A Certificate Holders or ETAAC Certificate Holders showing the relevant certificate or code number.

Where the SENDCo is also the centre's appointed assessor, the online version of Form 8 may be completed using the Centre Admin Portal [CAP], accessible via any awarding body secure extranet site. [AARA 7.4]

CPD requirements for the SENCo and assessors

The JCQ AARA 2025/26 requires the SENCo and the centre's appointed assessor to undertake regular continuing professional development [CPD], including attending an annual update on JCQ regulations. This is not optional; it is a requirement under AARA that centres keep up to

date with changes to the regulations and that the knowledge and practice of those coordinating and conducting assessments remains current.

At The Gateway Academy, the SENDCo and assessor are expected to:

- Attend an annual JCQ AARA update course or equivalent CPD each academic year;
- Review the JCQ AARA document at the start of each academic year and note all changes highlighted in the document;
- Review any mid-year JCQ supplements and update practice accordingly;
- Monitor the JCQ monthly newsletter and JCQ website for any further updates.

A record of CPD attended by the SENDCo and assessor must be held on file for inspection.

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

The SENDCo must arrange for the candidate to be assessed by the centre's appointed assessor. [AARA 7.5.1]

The assessor is required to establish if the results of tests in literacy and/or cognitive abilities present evidence that the candidate has an impairment which substantially affects their performance. [AARA 7.5.3]

Assessors must personally conduct the assessments. They must not sign off assessments carried out by another professional. [AARA 7.5.4]

Current editions of nationally standardised tests which produce standardised scores must be used, where published. Results must be given as standardised scores using a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. Standardised scores of 84 or less are described as 'below average'; scores of 85–89 are described as 'low average'. Test results must not be reported as percentiles, scaled scores, T-scores or age-equivalent scores; such scores must be converted into standard scores. [AARA 7.5.6, 7.5.9]

Form 8 [JCQ/AA/LD] must be used to record information about a candidate's access arrangements/reasonable adjustments and be presented by the SENDCo for inspection. It is used for students with learning difficulties [e.g., dyslexia, dyspraxia] who do not have an Education, Health and Care Plan [EHCP]. It requires a detailed assessment by the centre's appointed specialist assessor and a body of school-based evidence. Form 9: Used for students with medical, sensory, physical, mental health conditions, or communication needs. It typically requires official medical or specialist evidence and is used if the student has an EHCP.

Important: parental comments must not be on JCQ forms [AARA 2025/26]

Comments from parents/carers must not be included on Forms 8, 8RF or Form 9. Parental views do not form part of the evidence required for access arrangements. Staff must ensure that Part 1 of Form 8 draws only on school-based evidence: teacher feedback, assessments, classroom observations and records of normal way of working.

Picture of need / normal way of working

Before the candidate's assessment, the SENDCo must provide the assessor with background information: a 'picture of need' as required in Part 1 of Form 8. The SENDCo and the assessor must work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process. [AARA 7.5.2]

Part 1 of Form 8 must be completed prior to the assessment. At a minimum, it must contain teacher feedback and evidence of the candidate's normal way of working before an assessment takes place. This requirement applies whether the assessment is carried out by a centre-based assessor or an external assessor approved by the head of centre. A 'skeleton' Part 1 that contains only minimal information is not sufficient.

Part 1 of Form 8 is a pen portrait of the candidate's needs. It allows the SENDCo to 'paint a holistic picture of need', confirming normal way of working and bringing together:

- Any previously granted access arrangements;
- Comments and observations across relevant subjects from teaching staff and support staff [e.g. LSAs, Teaching Assistants, Communication Support Workers];
- Intervention strategies [e.g. Student Support Plans, learning plans] in place for the candidate;
- Pupil premium indicators;
- Screening test results;
- Pupil baseline and tracking data;
- Information about any differentiation in the classroom;
- Normal way of working in the classroom, including any assistive technology used;
- Arrangements made for end of year internal school examinations and mock examinations.

Effective screening and monitoring systems during Years 7 to 9 enable the SENDCo to provide sufficiently robust evidence of need. School tests may identify those candidates who need to be assessed for access arrangements or reasonable adjustments.

Evidence for 25% extra time

When collating evidence to support an application for 25% extra time, the focus must be on the quality of the evidence and not the quantity. A small, representative sample is sufficient rather than a full subject portfolio. JCQ's March 2026 supplement provides the following guidance on what constitutes a representative sample:

For a candidate studying GCSEs — one marked assessment from:

- A subject requiring extended writing [such as English or History]; plus
- A numerical subject [such as Maths or Science]; plus
- One other subject [such as a short-answer MFL paper].

For a candidate studying three A levels — one marked assessment from each of the three subjects.

The assessments should reflect the candidate's current normal way of working and show the impact of their difficulty. Subject tutors must confirm that 25% extra time is an appropriate adjustment for the candidate, based on observed classroom need. This evidence must be accessible for inspection.

Supervised rest breaks vs. extra time

March 2026 AARA supplement — supervised rest breaks

JCQ has amended section 5.1 of the AARA. For candidates with impairments other than learning difficulties — in particular those with anxiety, attention difficulties or neurodivergent conditions such as ADHD or ASD — SENDCos must trial and exhaust supervised rest breaks during timed internal tests or mock examinations before applying for 25% extra time.

Supervised rest breaks often better support these candidates than extended time, because they provide structured opportunities to step away from the exam setting, reducing stress and improving focus. Extending exam time alone may prolong exposure to a stressful environment without addressing the underlying issue.

At The Gateway Academy, the following process applies:

- For any candidate with anxiety, ADHD or ASD who is being considered for extra time, the SENDCo must first establish a pattern of using supervised rest breaks in timed internal assessments and mock examinations;
- Evidence of trialling supervised rest breaks must be documented in Part 1 of Form 8;
- Only where supervised rest breaks have been trialled and found insufficient should an application for extra time be considered for these candidates;
- Supervised rest breaks are a centre-delegated arrangement — no AAO application is needed, but evidence of need and normal way of working must be held on file.

Examination-compliant reading pens

For candidates who only need occasional words or phrases read aloud, JCQ permits the use of an examination-compliant reading pen without an AAO application. This is a centre-delegated arrangement. [AARA 5.6]

To be permitted in a JCQ examination, a reading pen must:

- Be an approved, examination-compliant device that does not have dictionary, thesaurus or data storage functions;
- Have been used by the candidate as their normal way of working in the classroom and in timed internal assessments and mock examinations;
- Not be a substitute for a human reader where the candidate requires all or most of the paper to be read.

The Gateway Academy uses the C-Pen Exam Reader 2 as its approved examination reading pen. Evidence of the candidate's normal use of the device in class and in mock examinations must be held on file.

Where a candidate requires a more substantial reading arrangement [i.e. a human reader or a computer reader for all or most of the examination paper], this is not a centre-delegated arrangement. An application must be made through AAO using Form 8 or Form 9. Such applications require full NWoW evidence and Form 8 Part 1.

Word processors

The use of a word processor is a centre-delegated arrangement where the candidate uses a laptop or computer as their normal way of working in the classroom. The use of a word processor in

examinations must not be approved simply because the candidate now wants to type rather than write, or because they use a laptop at home. See the Word Processor Policy [Exams] section below for full criteria.

Other assistive technology

Other assistive technology arrangements, including computer readers and speech recognition software, are not centre-delegated and require AAO approval. Applications should be supported by evidence of normal way of working in the classroom and in mocks.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access Arrangements Online [AAO] is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for centres to apply for required access arrangement approval. It also provides the facility to order modified papers. [AARA 8]

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal [CAP] using any awarding body secure extranet site. A single application for approval is required for each candidate regardless of the awarding body used.

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. [AARA 8 Summary]

Candidate data consent — updated requirement [AARA 2025/26]

The candidate personal data consent form and the data protection confirmation form were withdrawn in 2025/26 and are no longer required. Instead, candidates must be informed that an application for access arrangements will be processed online using Access Arrangements Online [AAO], in compliance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. This notification replaces the previous consent forms.

The SENDCo must keep detailed records for inspection purposes of all essential information on file, including:

- A copy of the candidate's approved application;
- Appropriate evidence of need [where required];
- Evidence of the assessor's qualification [where required]. [AARA 8.6]

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

For centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments, evidence of need is gathered and kept on file. No AAO application is required. The following are centre-delegated arrangements available at The Gateway Academy:

Arrangement	Key criteria
Supervised rest breaks	Must reflect normal way of working. For anxiety/ADHD/ASD, must be trialled before applying for extra time. Evidence of use in mocks required.

Arrangement	Key criteria
Reading pen	Exam-compliant device only [no dictionary/thesaurus/storage]. Must be normal way of working in class. For occasional words/phrases only — not a substitute for a full reader.
Word processor	Must reflect normal way of working. Spelling and grammar check disabled. See Word Processor Policy below.
Coloured overlays / coloured paper	Must reflect normal way of working. Evidence of use in class required.
Prompter	Keeps candidate on task only. Must not assist with content. Evidence of need required.
Separate invigilation [within same-day sitting]	Where candidate's behaviour would be disruptive to others in a shared space. Not for anxiety or low-level nervousness.
Bilingual dictionary [without extra time]	For candidates whose first language is not English. No AAO required for dictionary alone.
Doodle paper [blank sheet]	NEW 2025/26. For candidates with persistent and significant concentration difficulties. Must be clearly struck through after exam so not marked.
Alternative rooming	See Alternative Rooming Policy below.

Word Processor Policy [Exams]

An exam candidate may be approved the use of a word processor where this is appropriate to the candidate's needs and reflects their normal way of working within the centre. Approval must not be given simply because:

- The candidate now wants to type rather than write in exams;
- The candidate can work faster on a keyboard;
- The candidate uses a laptop at home.

The word processor must reflect the candidate's established, normal way of working in the classroom. The following criteria apply at The Gateway Academy:

- The candidate must regularly use a word processor for written work in class, supported by evidence in their Student Support Plan or other documentation;
- Evidence of use in timed internal assessments and mock examinations must be held on file;
- Spelling and grammar check must be disabled at all times during the examination;
- Auto-correct and predictive text must also be disabled;
- The candidate must not have access to the internet or any stored data;
- The candidate's work must be printed out at the end of the examination and securely stored with the candidate's answer materials.

The decision to approve a word processor is made by the SENDCo. The arrangement is centre-delegated and does not require AAO approval, but evidence of normal way of working must be held on file.

The full Word Processor Policy [Exams] is also held in the staff shared area and on the GLC website.

Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved for alternative rooming [such as a smaller group room or individual room] is made by the SENDCo.

The decision is based on:

- Whether the candidate has a substantial and long-term impairment which has an adverse effect; and
- The candidate's normal and current way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations. [AARA 5.16]

Alternative rooming must reflect the candidate's normal and current way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations.

March 2026 clarification: 1:1 invigilation — impact on others, not just candidate's needs [AARA 5.16 as amended]

The use of an alternative room with one-to-one invigilation must only apply where the candidate has a serious medical condition — such as frequent seizures, Tourette's syndrome, or significant behavioural difficulties — which would disturb other candidates in the examination room.

The primary focus in granting 1:1 invigilation is the impact of the candidate's condition on other candidates in the exam room, not solely the needs of the candidate themselves. The arrangement must only be considered when the candidate cannot be accommodated in the same room as others due to the disruptive impact of their condition.

Monitoring and annual review

The SENDCo will review the operation of this policy at least annually, prior to the start of each academic year, to ensure compliance with the current JCQ AARA. This review will consider:

- Whether any changes to the JCQ AARA document require updates to this policy, the Word Processor Policy or the Equalities Policy [Exams];
- Whether the qualifications of the appointed assessor(s) remain current and on file;
- Whether all EAA applications in the current examination cycle are supported by adequate NWoW evidence and Form 8 Part 1 documentation;
- Whether any centre-delegated arrangements are being applied consistently across all candidates;
- The CPD completed by the SENDCo and assessor(s) during the year.

The SENDCo will report to the Head of School and to the SEND Governor on the scale and outcomes of EAA provision annually, including:

- The total number of candidates with EAA by arrangement type;
- Any inspection findings or JCQ centre visit outcomes;
- Any changes to the JCQ framework that affect The Gateway Academy's practice.