

A Parents/Carers Guide to Exam Access Arrangements (EAs) at Bilborough College

All exam arrangements MUST meet the strict criteria of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and the college is subject to annual inspections from JCQ to ensure we are correctly following their current guidance.

Definitions as per JCQ:

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'.

How this works at college:

Exam Access Arrangements (EAAs) DO NOT automatically transfer from the student's previous school. NO STUDENT HAS ANY ARRANGEMENTS IN PLACE AS THEY JOIN BILBOROUGH COLLEGE. The previous school will not tell us EAAs were in place; we will only know about them if the student and/or parent or carer tells us. There was opportunity to do that on the application form and again at enrolment. Alternatively students and/or parent or carer can email learning.support@bilborough.ac.uk to share that detail with us.

The JCQ publish in August each year their guidance for implementing EAAs and this takes affect from September 1st each academic year. This is important to us at college as it can mean that due to a change in the regulations a student coming to college from school may no longer fulfil the criteria of previously held EAAs. Just because a student had an arrangement previously does not automatically mean they will this academic year.

What arrangements might be considered?

EAAs cover a wide range of 'reasonable adjustments' and are based on the need of that individual student and the demands of the subject they are being assessed for. They may include arrangements such as extra time, being allowed to word process instead of handwrite for example, they may be different based on the subject. For example, a student may have word processing for A level English and History but require extra time and not word processing for A level Maths.

All EAAs are individual to the student, they represent the adjustment required to the need presenting. Others in a class will have different arrangements to your young person; that is due to the individual needs of that student.

All EAAs require evidence of a need; they cannot and must not be based on a student preferring a particular way of working. Word processing is a good example here; JCQ make it very clear:

“A word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate because he/she now wants to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre. For example, where the curriculum is delivered electronically and the centre provides word processors to all candidates. The centre may wish to set out the types of candidates which it considers would benefit from the use of a word processor.

For example, a candidate with:

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly;
- a medical condition;
- a physical disability;

- a sensory impairment;
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand;
- poor handwriting.

This list is not exhaustive."

Some EAAs require more detailed evidence than others, for all we must evidence that it is the student's normal way of working AND is supported by the student's teachers. In addition some require a great deal more evidence. A good example for this is 25% extra time.

For a student to qualify for 25% extra time they must meet the JCQ requirements exactly. For those with learning disabilities (dyslexic type profiles for example) require our specialist teacher assessors to complete specific testing to provide speed of working scores to the exam boards. Students requiring the extra time due to a medical condition must provide evidence of the diagnosis by a CONSULTANT level practitioner (GP evidence is NOT permitted). Students with ASD/ADHD diagnosis must produce evidence of the diagnosis by a suitably qualified specialist (again NOT GP).

Time scales

Timing and cut off dates for EAAs are crucial. JCQ set their deadline each year for each of the EAAs and we as a college must plan to meet those external deadlines. Our internal deadlines obviously must be earlier than these JCQ deadlines in order for us to see all the students to establish the relevant evidence and be able to apply for the EAA. These deadlines and reminders will be sent to our teaching staff, students, parent/carers to ensure that all are aware that after that cut off date we cannot and will not be in a position to accommodate arranging EAAs. The ONLY exception to this will be new/emergency conditions e.g. broken arm in the run up to the exam.

Frequently asked questions:

My young person has 25% extra time, will they be moved from the main exam hall?

No they won't. JCQ guidance and associated training states that they expect that the centre will preserve the integrity of the exam hall as students leave at different times (this happens all the time as multiple subjects have their exams in the exam rooms at the same time and naturally have different end times). Extra time WILL NOT change where the student is seated.

My young person feels anxious in exams, can they sit their exams somewhere else?

No, JCQ guidance is that exam anxiety is to be expected/normal reaction and is not covered by the Equality Act. Bilborough College recognises that some of our students do feel very anxious about the exam process and our Wellbeing Team offer support in order to help the student best prepare for that, including some fabulous

workshops on stress and anxiety with specific sessions on exam stress. The college also has a rigorous and supportive assessment cycle so students have the opportunity to really develop excellent skills for exam performance.

Students with recognised generalised/social anxiety can be considered for an alternative to the large exam hall with the provision of 'class room sized invigilation' and this means an alternative room with no more than 30 other students. Our Wellbeing Team would discuss this with student and be looking for evidence that there is an **impactful anxiety condition that is substantial and persistent**, and teachers would need to be able to reflect that this is what they are seeing in their classrooms.

Separate invigilation is our most extreme rooming arrangement and is only in place when the student's needs have an impact on others. A good example of this would be verbal Tourette's; it would not be appropriate for the student to be in a room with other students due to the impact they would have on others completing the exam.

My child was identified as possible needing EAAs but did not come to the appointments with Learning Support/Wellbeing to arrange exam arrangements. The deadline has passed can they still have the arrangements?

No, they cannot. We take great care to communicate effectively with students the need to attend their appointment, we send emails with the details of the appointment, and this is later supported by a text message reminder of the appointment. If they do not attend but were in college that day, they get a further email stating they missed the appointment and to follow this up at a drop in session (run daily) and it states they currently DO NOT have the EAAs in place. The non attendance is also added to the student's log. If the student still does not come and see us before the JCQ cut off date there is nothing we can do.