

Examination Access Arrangements for students who are Deaf

Access Arrangements are pre-arranged adjustments to assessment and examination conditions for candidates based on evidence of need and normal ways of working.

It is anticipated that each centre conducting assessments or examinations will have a SENCo who will determine the candidate's needs, gather evidence of the candidate's normal working practices and compile requests for adjustments to access arrangements.

It is important to replicate the way that a student is working in class with the access arrangements that are going to be available when they take the examination.

The idea of access arrangements is to remove disadvantage, not to give a student an unfair advantage over other candidates. You cannot ask for arrangements that conflict with the skills or the competencies that are being assessed by a particular qualification so, for example you cannot ask for practical assistance to do things in, for example, a science exam if the students are being assessed on those specific practical skills.

Removing barriers

It is crucial that candidates with sensory impairment are able to show what they know and can do without affecting the integrity of the assessment and that any barriers to their being able to do this are removed or mitigated.

Entitlement

The concept of creating a level playing field by minimising the 'long term and substantial adverse effect' of a disability on a candidate's performance is clear. It is important to stress to colleagues that this should not be thought of as giving students 'concessions' but rather as meeting their entitlement to reasonable adjustments in the light of the effects of their disability.

Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with their duty under relevant legislation to make 'reasonable adjustments'. They are intended to remove or minimise disadvantage, whilst not giving the candidate an unfair advantage. They are not granted automatically but should be a response to the identified effects of an individual candidate's disability on their access to assessment.

Demonstrating need

Having a sensory impairment does not entitle the candidate to any specific arrangements they wish to have — it has to be shown that the candidate needs them as a consequence of their disability. This is achieved by 'painting a picture of their needs', explaining the effects of the sensory impairment on them and providing evidence to support this.

Normal Ways of Working

A key principle of access arrangements in external assessments is that any request must reflect the candidate's normal way of working in the classroom and must not just emerge at the time of the assessment. As such, candidates should be familiar, by the time of the assessment, with the access arrangements they are going to use.

Choosing courses

While the vast majority of courses will be suitable for a learner with sensory impairment who has the appropriate academic ability, it is important to understand that embarking on a course does not automatically mean that the qualification at the end of it can be made accessible. Teachers of children and young people with sensory impairment need to support these learners at all stages and not just at the time of the assessment.

This support includes ensuring that learners choose appropriate courses and that suitable forethought is given in advance to any potential barriers in the assessment process and how these might be minimised or removed.

It is important to understand what arrangements would be possible before starting the course. Not all qualifications can be made accessible to all sensory impairments. The candidate must have opportunities to practice using the access arrangement(s) prior to the first examination.

Qualification integrity

A key aspect of the provision of access arrangements is the need to preserve the integrity of the qualification. This means that some arrangements carry greater risk than others. In particular, the use of human support in particular needs to be carefully controlled to ensure that what is assessed, is the candidate's own knowledge and understanding. For example, in relation to Language Modifiers and Communication Professionals, although they have to record the interventions they have made, they are making them during the exam itself, so it is difficult at the time to be sure that the arrangement is being applied fairly. These are therefore high risk arrangements which, if not properly applied, could advantage or disadvantage the candidate, unfairly in either case.

Arrangements for candidates who are deaf/have a hearing loss

This is not an exhaustive list and any candidate is entitled to have their needs addressed on an individual basis.

- **25% or more extra time**

Many candidates with a hearing loss will need extra time to complete an examination. This is because hearing loss commonly affects an individual's speed of information processing and linguistic access, which may be unrelated to their cognitive ability. For example, it may take a candidate longer to read the text or to have it read to them.

- **Modified language papers**

Teachers of the Deaf are involved in assisting CEA in the modification of papers.

- **Readers**

Candidates who are unable to read quickly enough in an exam context as a result of linguistic delay caused by their hearing loss may need the support of a reader. For a candidate with a hearing loss it should not be necessary to provide evidence of their reading speed and comprehension when applying for this arrangement. The reader is permitted to read the text or questions, but must not explain or clarify the questions or text, or advise on timing or the choice or order of questions. This should be carried out one to one (not in a group) and in a separate room. The reader should be a familiar person to the candidate.

- **Language Modifier**

Please note: to qualify for a Language Modifier who is able to clarify carrier language and the rubric of examinations, a candidate must have a standardised score of 69 or less in

reading comprehension and/or vocabulary. A Classroom Assistant can be the Language Modifier, but they must have completed an accredited course for Language Modifiers.

Please seek further advice from the Sensory Service if it is felt that a Language Modifier is required. Note: the use of a Language Modifier should represent normal way of working.

- **Communication Professional**
The role of a Communication Professional may be undertaken by a Communication Support Worker, a Sign Language Interpreter, a Classroom Assistant or a Teacher of the Deaf. This can be requested for a candidate who uses BSL in his or her education.
- **Listening tests in Modern Foreign Languages**
Live voice can be used where the candidate has difficulty hearing a recorded conversation. If several voices are used in the stimulus material more than one person can be employed. Arrangements should be made so that this can be carried out in good acoustic conditions. This arrangement can be granted by the centre. Further information on ordering transcripts of tests which will be required can be found in the JCQ guidance document.
- **Music**
Access arrangements for music examinations are usually discussed with the Awarding Organisation and can include alternatives to a listening test, exemptions, extra time and in some cases repetition of stimulus material.
- **Read Aloud facility**
It can make a significant difference to a candidate who persistently struggles to understand what they have read, but who does not qualify for a reader, to read aloud. Where candidates are reading difficult text, they may work more effectively if they can hear themselves read. The arrangement must reflect the candidate's normal way of working in internal school tests and mock examinations. A candidate who reads aloud to himself/herself must be accommodated separately within the centre.
- **Supervised rest breaks**
Some candidates may find the amount of reading, writing and processing involved in a timed examination very tiring. In some cases, it may be appropriate to allow them supervised rest breaks. Any time taken for a rest break should be added to the end of the exam, so that candidates are not disadvantaged. A rest break is not the same as extra time because the candidate cannot use this time to answer questions. In some cases, a combination of extra time and rest breaks may be appropriate.
- **Scribes**
Scribes are not generally appropriate or widely used for candidates with hearing loss unless it arises from reasons other than their deafness.
- **Separate invigilation**
This can help to minimise background noise and distractions for candidates.
- **Priority seating**
This is essential to ensure that candidates are able to follow instructions.

For further advice please contact the Sensory Service via phone: 028 25 661 258 or email: sensoryservice@eani.org.uk