

COTHAM SCHOOL EXAMINATION ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY STATEMENT

Access arrangements are defined by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) as:

“Pre-examination adjustments primarily based on history of need and provision”

“Access arrangements are not there to give candidates an unfair advantage but to give all candidates a level playing field in which to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding. In order to ensure this the JCQ awarding bodies require that evidence of need must always be obtained by centres to support an access arrangement. Where an arrangement has been processed online and approval granted the evidence of need must be made available for inspection by the JCQ centre inspection service.”(JCQ exam regulations 2012)

The JCQ make it clear that students who may receive extra time will be performing in the below average band in standardized tests administered in school. The JCQ also require a history of provision that has been made by the school to meet the student’s needs

“The specialist teacher is required to establish that the results of tests in reading and writing present evidence that the candidate has a learning difficulty because it is clear that he or she is performing in the below average band.”
(JCQ regulations for assessment by a Specialist Teacher)

The clear message from the JCQ is that the only learning difficulties meriting significant adjustments to the normal examination conditions are those whose effects can be described as substantial, not minor or trivial. Students are tested to establish a ‘deficit’ in a particular skill, not a ‘discrepancy’ where different skills are compared, as for dyslexia.

Regulations have changed in the last few years, and a diagnosis of dyslexia is no longer sufficient to allow a candidate extra time. The Awarding Bodies (Examination Boards) now require ‘evidence of need in the normal working arrangements’, ie. the candidate has been given extra time in class and for tests and internal exams and has been identified by the school as having specific learning difficulties; referred to as the “history of need.” This is in addition to a report from an Educational Psychologist or Specialist Teacher. Any privately commissioned report that is carried out by a Specialist Teacher or Educational Psychologist does not necessarily mean that there is evidence of need for extra time in exams. The exam board regulations state *“privately commissioned reports must give a clear indication that there is evidence of need. The Head of Centre must be satisfied that there is a history of need and provision.”*

The regulations state that if a student has a medical condition that could affect their exams, a report from a doctor or specialist can be submitted. *“In circumstances such as a medical, physical or psychological requirement, appropriate evidence of need must be available at the centre for inspection.”*

At Cotham School, all students who are new to the school are tested so that we can ensure that we have a ‘history of need’ for those students who require Examination Access Arrangements. This means that appropriate provision can be made during their school career and that the school has the correct evidence of need for JCQ should it be required.

The main types of access arrangements are as follows:

- Extra time, for candidates who work very slowly and have leaning difficulties
- Rest breaks, for poor concentration or extreme stress
- Readers, for very poor readers with decoding or comprehension difficulties, who cannot read by themselves
- Reading aloud, for those who have reading difficulties and can concentrate better if they can hear themselves read
- Scribes, for very poor or slow writers who are not used to typing**
- Word processors, for very poor or slow writers who are used to typing
- Transcripts of scripts which may be hard for the examiner to read*
- Prompters, for candidates who lose concentration easily.

**Please note that there is no specific access arrangement for poor spelling, unless it is so poor that it is likely to impair the examiner’s ability to read the candidate’s answers. In this case a transcript or in extreme cases a scribe may be appropriate. If spellings are incorrect, but still decipherable, no access arrangement can be offered.*

***Students can only use word processors if they are already using this method of recording written work in their normal lessons due to their learning difficulties.*