Access Arrangements Policy 2025/26

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Reviewed by	
R Pieterse	
Date of next review	Autumn 2026

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name(s)
Executive Head	Mr D Nearney
Chair Management Committee	Mr D Hughes
Date Ratified	02/10/2025
Head of centre	Mr J Anderson (SESC) & Mrs S Hughes (NHESC)
Exams officer line manager (Senior leader)	Mrs H Nash (SESC) & Mrs R Pieterse (NHESC)
Exams officer/ admin	Mrs L Swain (SESC) & Mrs L Brown (NHESC)
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Other Senior leader(s)	Mr S Fuller (SESC) Mrs K Robinson (NHESC) Mr D Lewis (NHESC)

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Document Control/ Review Sheet

The information in the table below details earlier versions of this document with a brief description of each review
and how to distinguish amendments made from the previous version date (if any).

Version Number	Version Description	Date of Revision
001	NEW Nexus policy	02/09/2024
002	P5 – General Principles to consider: Par 4 - Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments replaced by: **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**. P7, Par6: Added in: Candidates **must** be informed that an application for access arrangements will be processed using Access arrangements online, complying with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. P7, P7: deleted: - a signed candidate personal data consent form; - a completed Data protection confirmation by the examinations officer or SENCo form; P8, P2: added: 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 or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the examination room. (AARA 5.16)	22/09/2025
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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'. ([1]AARARA, 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. 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'. ([1]AARA, Definitions)

Both centres **must** ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates. (AARARA[1], Definitions)

*References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see AARA 1.8). The definitions and procedures in AARA relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that the Stevenage & North Herts Education Support Centre 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.

(JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres, section 5.4)

This publication is further referred to in this policy as GR

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

> Where the SENCo is storing documentation electronically they **mus**t create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. ([1]AARA, section 4.2)

The policy is annually reviewed to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ document 'Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties - **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**'.

[1]This publication is further referred to in this policy as AARA

General principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, who will 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 (section 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 SENCo, **must** ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

Both Centres **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 SENCo 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 his/her first examination.

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 head of centre/senior leadership team will recognise its duties towards disabled candidates, including private candidates, ensuring compliance with all aspects of the Equality Act 2010†, particularly Section 20 (7).

This **must** include a duty to explore and provide access to suitable courses, through the access arrangements process submit applications for reasonable adjustments and make reasonable adjustments to the service the centre provides to disabled candidates. Where the centre is under a duty to make a reasonable adjustment, the centre **must no**t charge a disabled candidate any additional fee in relation to the adjustment or aid...

†or any legislation in a relevant jurisdiction other than England and Wales which has an equivalent purpose and effect (GR section 5.4)

This Policy further covers the assessment process and related issues in more detail.

The assessment process

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

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

Kim Rayner (Certified Psychometric Testing, Assessment and Access Arrangements) is the Assessor for the North Herts Education Support Centre

Kim Rayner (Certified Psychometric Testing, Assessment and Access Arrangements) is the Assessor for the Stevenage Education Support Centre

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.

Checking the qualification(s) of the assessor(s)

The head of centre/senior leadership team will have a process in place to not only check the qualification(s) of their assessor(s) and that the correct procedures are followed, as in Chapter 7 of the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments… (GR, section 5.4)

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 of the assessor's qualification(s) **must** be held on file for inspection purposes and be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the SENCo. (AARA, section 7.3)

Make full reference to AARA, section 7.3 (Appointment of assessors) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Reporting the appointment of assessors

Signpost to the location of the evidence that the assessor(s) is/are suitably qualified held by the SENCo.

Make full reference to AARA, section 7.4 (Reporting the appointment of assessors) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

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

The Stevenage & North Herts ESCs follow the procedures as per AARA, section 7.5 (Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor) and 7.6 (Completing Form 8 – JCQ/AARA/LD, Profile of Learning Difficulties) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

The SENCo and assessor working with the centre always carefully consider any privately commissioned assessment to see whether the process of gathering a picture of need, demonstrating normal way of working within the centre and, ultimately, assessing the candidate themselves should be instigated (AARA, section 7.3)

Picture of need/normal way of working

Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCo **must** provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted, as required in Part 1 of Form 8. The SENCo and the assessor **must** work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.

An independent assessor **must** contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This **must** take place **before** the candidate is assessed. Additionally, the independent assessor **must** be approved by the head of centre to assess the candidate.

All candidates **must** be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Part 1 of Form 8.

An independent assessor **must** discuss access arrangements/reasonable adjustments with the SENCo. The responsibility to determine and request appropriate and practicable access arrangements/reasonable adjustments specifically lies with the SENCo**.** (AARA 7.5)

The Centre follow the procedure as per AARA 7.5 (Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor) and 7.6 (Completing Form 8 – JCQ/AARA/LD, Profile of Learning Difficulties) and record your process that reflects the requirements.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access arrangements online (AARAO) is a tool provided by JCQ member awarding bodies for centres to apply for required access arrangement approval for the qualifications covered by the tool. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for those qualifications included.(Refer to AARA 8)

(Processing applications for access arrangements and adjustments) and chapter 6 (Modified papers).

AARAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) using any of the awarding body secure extranet sites. 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)

The SENCo works with the Exams Officer to ensure applications are submitted by the set deadline. Applications are printed, kept on file by the SENCo, dealing with cases that do not gain approval, awarding body referrals, etc.

Candidates must be informed that an application for access arrangements will be processed using Access arrangements online, complying with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

The SENCo **must** keep detailed records for inspection purposes, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes:

- a copy of the candidate's approved application;
- appropriate evidence of need (where required);
- evidence of the assessor's qualification (where required). (AARA, section 8.6)

The SENCo works with the Exams Officer to ensure that Modified Papers (AARA section 8) are applied for by the deadline set by the Exam Boards. Evidence for need to be kept and recorded to reflect the requirements.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

Candidates are assessed and agreed arrangements, granted by the centre are put in place. Appropriate evidence are held on file or those arrangements that do not need to be recorded, by the SENCO.

Centre-specific criteria for particular arrangements/adjustments

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 not simply because the candidate now wants to type rather than write in exams or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

The Word Processor Policy is part of the Exams Policy.

Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs (formerly known as separate invigilation) will be made by the SENCo.

The decision will be based on:

- whether the candidate has a substantial and long term impairment which has an adverse effect **and**
- the candidate's normal way of working within the centre (AARA, section 5.16)

In the case of alternative rooming arrangements, the candidate's disability is **established within the centre** (see Chapter 4, paragraph 4.1.4). It is known to a Form Tutor, the SENCo or a senior member of staff with

pastoral responsibilities. **For** example, a long-term medical condition which has a substantial and adverse effect.

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

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations is not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre. (AARA, section 5.16)

1:1 invigilation and 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 or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the examination room. (AARA 5.16)