

EDSTART SCHOOLS

Access Arrangements Policy

CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT & OUTCOMES

Policy owner	EdStart Specialist Education Ltd
Applies to	EdStart Schools – All Sites
Category	Curriculum, assessment & outcomes
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Review trigger	Annual review, or earlier following statutory, regulatory or operational change

Status: This 2026 version supersedes all previous versions.

Updated – September 2026

This policy outlines the provision and administration of access arrangements and reasonable adjustments for candidates taking the 2025 GCSE summer series at EdStart Specialist Independent School. In line with the JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) documentation and in compliance with the Equality Act 2010, this policy ensures that all candidates have equitable access to examinations.

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure fair and equal access to examinations for all candidates.
- Provide a clear framework for implementing access arrangements and reasonable adjustments.
- Comply with the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the guidelines set out in the JCQ documentation.
- Support candidates whose needs require modifications to standard exam conditions.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all candidates registered for the 2025 GCSE summer series at EdStart Specialist Independent School. It covers:

- Candidates with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Temporary adjustments required due to illness or injury.
- Any other circumstances that warrant reasonable adjustments to examination conditions.

3. Definitions

3.1 Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are modifications made to the examination environment or process that do not alter the content of the assessment. They include, but are not limited to, extended time, rest breaks, modified question papers, and separate invigilation. These arrangements are designed to level the playing field without conferring an unfair advantage.

3.2 Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes made to policies, practices, or physical environments to ensure that candidates with disabilities or special educational needs are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared with their peers. These may involve alterations to exam materials, conditions, or the examination venue.

4. Purpose of Access Arrangements & Reasonable Adjustments

The primary purpose of both access arrangements and reasonable adjustments is to:

- Promote equality by removing barriers that may prevent candidates from demonstrating their true ability.
- Ensure that assessment is a fair measure of a candidate's subject knowledge rather than their disability or specific needs.
- Comply with the 2010 Equality Act by making necessary modifications that allow full participation in examinations.

5. Eligibility Criteria

Candidates may be eligible for access arrangements and reasonable adjustments if:

- They have a documented special educational need or disability as per the 2010 Equality Act.
- There is evidence, gathered from the candidate's normal way of working and supported by professional assessments, which demonstrates a need for adjustments.
- Applications are supported by detailed evidence, including diagnostic assessments and any relevant support service reports.
- The candidate's needs are verified by internal assessments and are in accordance with JCQ guidelines.

6. Types of Access Arrangements

Access arrangements provided may include, but are not limited to:

- Extended Time: Additional time allowances beyond the standard exam duration.
- Rest Breaks: Scheduled breaks during the examination.

- Modified Question Papers: Adjustments in the layout or presentation of the exam materials.
- Separate Invigilation: Provision of a quiet environment with dedicated invigilators.
- Use of Word Processors: For candidates with specific writing difficulties, subject to the word processor policy outlined below.
- Other Adjustments: Any other reasonable modifications as determined by the candidate's assessed needs.

7. Assessment Processes

7.1 Assessment Procedures

- Initial Application: Candidates (or their guardians) submit an application for access arrangements using the approved internal assessment forms.
- Evidence Collection: Evidence is gathered regarding the candidate's normal way of working, including reports from relevant support services.
- Review Process: Each application is reviewed by a designated panel in line with JCQ guidelines, ensuring consistency and fairness.

7.2 Assessor Qualifications and SENCO Involvement

- Qualifications: Assessors must possess qualifications in special educational needs or equivalent experience in supporting candidates with disabilities.
- Role of SENCO: The School's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is responsible for overseeing the assessment process, verifying the qualifications of assessors, and ensuring that evidence of need is robust and compliant with statutory requirements.
- Verification: The SENCO will check assessor credentials and, where necessary, consult with external professionals to ensure that the assessment is comprehensive.

8. Administration of the Assessment Process

8.1 Evidence Recording and Use of Assessment Forms

- All evidence of need is recorded using standardised internal assessment forms, which are based on JCQ recommendations.
- Documents include detailed reports of the candidate's normal working practices, previous support interventions and outcomes.
- Support services such as educational psychologists, specialist tutors, or external agencies may provide supplementary evidence.

8.2 Gathering Evidence of Normal Way of Working

- Evidence of a candidate's typical performance is gathered through classroom observations, teacher reports, and historical academic records.
- This evidence assists in determining the specific access arrangements required to ensure that the examination accurately reflects the candidate's abilities.

9. Processing Applications for Access Arrangements

9.1 Temporary Arrangements

- Applications for temporary access arrangements (e.g., due to illness or short-term injury) must include supporting documentation from a qualified professional.
- Temporary arrangements are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and are valid for the duration specified by the supporting evidence.

9.2 Centre Delegated Arrangements

- Centre delegated arrangements allow the school to approve certain access adjustments without needing external verification, provided they fall within clearly defined criteria.

- The SENCO is responsible for ensuring that these arrangements meet both JCQ guidelines and the requirements of the Equality Act.

9.3 Separate Invigilation Within the Centre

- When necessary, candidates may be allocated separate invigilation to minimise distractions and reduce anxiety.
- Such arrangements are documented and approved through the school's assessment process and are in line with JCQ standards.

9.4 Word Processor Policy

- Candidates requiring the use of a word processor due to specific learning difficulties are provided with approved equipment and software.
- The word processor policy outlines:
 - Usage Conditions: Guidelines on when and how the word processor may be used during examinations.
 - Equipment Standards: Specifications for approved word processors and any necessary software.
 - Training and Support: Provision of training for candidates to ensure familiarity with the equipment before the exam.
 - Monitoring: Measures to ensure that the use of word processors does not compromise the integrity of the assessment.
- This policy is developed in accordance with JCQ guidelines and reviewed regularly to ensure consistency and fairness.

10. References and Compliance

This policy is developed with direct reference to:

- JCQ Documentation: All guidelines and recommendations concerning access arrangements for GCSE examinations.
- Equality Act 2010: Ensuring that all adjustments comply with statutory requirements to prevent discrimination.
- Internal Assessment Documents: Standardised forms and support service reports used to assess and document candidates' needs.

11. Review and Amendment

- Regular Reviews: This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to any changes in JCQ guidelines or legislative requirements.
- Amendments: Any amendments will be documented and communicated to all relevant stakeholders, including candidates, parents/guardians and staff.
- Feedback: Stakeholder feedback is encouraged and will be considered during the review process.

12. Contact Information

For further information or clarification regarding this policy, please contact:

SENCO: Email: [jayneszpunar@edstartschools.com]

Examinations Officer: Email: [marc.thomas@edstartschools.com]

This comprehensive policy ensures that EdStart Specialist Independent School provides equitable and effective access arrangements for all candidates, thereby supporting their right to a fair examination process in accordance with both JCQ documentation and the 2010 Equality Act.