

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments/Disability and Exams

1. Positional Statement

- 1.1 STCG is committed to creating a non-discriminatory and supportive environment for all students. A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty which places the student at a severe disadvantage. The colleges will ensure that students who are eligible for exam access arrangements are identified and assessed in the required manner with the consequent recommendations being made. Following approval, whether from the relevant awarding body or centre delegated, exam access arrangements will be put in place for any exams or assessments taken by the students concerned.
- 1.2 The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the colleges not to discriminate against students with learning difficulties/disabilities in terms of either admission to courses or provision of education and support services.
- 1.3 Students are encouraged to disclose any difficulties/disabilities that may affect their learning, either pre or post admission, in order to enable the colleges to make reasonable adjustments to meet their needs and enhance their learning. This includes adjustments where appropriate to facilitate access to examinations/assessments. The information will be treated in such a way as to ensure that it meets the colleges' guidelines on confidentiality.

2. Responsibilities of STCG

- 2.1 To comply with the Equality Act 2010 the colleges are committed to making 'reasonable adjustments' to learning environments and programmes to enable all students to take advantage of the learning opportunities on offer. Staff receive relevant training and attend specialist events on subjects related to disability and learning difficulties.
- 2.2 To provide learning support wherever possible, for learners who have requirements as a result of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability - for example, physical disability, visual or hearing impairment, ill-health or a specific learning disability)
- 2.3 To enable learners to be fully integrated into FE and HE programmes at all levels according to ability by providing appropriate support.

3. Categories of Learner Needs

- 3.1 Reasons for a learner to require support include but are not limited to:

Medical:	Asthma, hay fever, eczema, diabetes, epilepsy, arthritis, illness requiring constant medical care and possibly regular periods in hospital
Sensory:	Hearing or sight impairment, colour blindness
Congenital Conditions:	Cerebral palsy, spina bifida, scoliosis
Loss of or injury to limb(s):	Whether congenital or as a result of an accident

Learning Difficulties:	Specific such as dyslexia
Social & Emotional/Behavioural:	Hyperactivity, trauma/shock, mental health issues

- 3.2 Many of these are permanent conditions. In the majority of cases, learners know what their requirements are in order to cope and be successful and have received appropriate support during previous education.

4. Confidentiality

- 4.1 Learners have the right to request that details of a disability be kept confidential and for agreed information to be passed only to those who are actively involved in providing support appropriate to the disability.
- 4.2 In every instance, the learner has the right to expect appropriate support and sensitivity, which obviously varies according to individual need.
- 4.3 Learners who require specific action in case of an emergency, and have agreed that this information may be shared, will have their individual requirements agreed and made known to appropriate staff.

5. Specialist Assessment

- 5.1 Access arrangement assessors and Inclusive Learning are responsible for the assessment of students' learning support needs. The term SENCo, used in JCQ documents and elsewhere, applies to the person appointed by the Head of Centre to coordinate the access arrangements process within the Group.
- 5.2 Assessors must have the required level of competence and training i.e. successful completion of a post-graduate course in individual specialist assessment at or equivalent to Level 7 **or** hold a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate as awarded by Patoss, the Dyslexia Action or BDA and listed on the SASC website. Checks that these qualifications have been achieved are made by HR during recruitment and specified in the job description. Assessors are given sufficient time to both manage the access arrangements process and familiarise themselves with JCQ's document 'Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments', as well as new documentation, such as Form 8RF, when required.
- 5.3 The assessors and Inclusive Learning must work with teaching staff, support staff (such as Learning Mentors) and Exams staff to ensure that approved access arrangements are put in place for internal (mocks) and external exams and assessments.
- 5.4 Working with senior management, support, teaching and Exams staff, the assessors and Inclusive Learning team ensure a whole centre approach to access arrangements. Failure to comply with JCQ regulations, i.e. putting in place access arrangements which are not approved or permitting access arrangements that are not supported by appropriate evidence, have the potential to constitute malpractice which may impact on candidates' results.

6. Access Arrangements for Examinations/Assessments

- 6.1 Some learners with support needs may be eligible for access arrangements in their examinations or assessments. Access arrangements are applicable for candidates with the required knowledge, understanding and skills but who are unable to demonstrate these in an assessment in its normal format due to a difficulty or disability. Access arrangements are not intended to give an unfair advantage. They should reflect the normal way of working for which there is evidence of need.

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- 6.2 Approval of access arrangements is either centre delegated or subject to approval from the awarding bodies. In all cases approval must be obtained within set deadlines and to comply with requirements for evidence of need and normal working practices.

The internal deadline for completion of the assessment for all access arrangements within the Group is 31 January. This is a firm deadline, and all students who may be eligible (self-declared or teacher recommended) will be invited for assessment three times before this date. If they fail to attend after the third invitation, it will be assumed they do not wish to be assessed for access arrangements. Exams teams will only accept late assessments in exceptional circumstances.

The deadline for assessment of access arrangements for the November GCSE Maths and English resits is before the end of September, and for January BTEC exams and set tasks before mid-November. These dates will be published annually. It may not always be possible to complete all assessments within such a tight timeframe; students will be advised of this at enrolment.

- 6.4 The Exams teams have responsibility during the planning of exams or assessments for checking whether candidates have approved access arrangements and for putting them in place when required. Examples of access arrangements are:

- Extra time for written, online or oral examinations
- A reader, scribe, prompter or practical assistant
- Use of a word processor
- Rest breaks
- Enlarged or modified examination papers
- Use of a communicator or sign language interpreter
- Provision of separate or small rooms for candidates who satisfy the criteria. Separate invigilation within the centre (sitting the exam outside the main hall with a smaller group of candidates) is in most cases an adequate arrangement. Separate rooms are provided in rare cases only and generally to prevent a candidate from disturbing others.

7. Learner Needs' Support Process

- 7.1 Students 'self-declare' SEND or other needs on application and during enrolment. The assessors/inclusive learning teams monitor declarations and contact students for assessment. Exams check past year against current year enrolments and that approved access arrangements are still valid.
- 7.2 Teaching and inclusive learning staff identify, observe and refer students for assessment. They also provide evidence of 'normal way of working'.
- 7.3 The assessors/inclusive learning teams carry out testing as appropriate, collect evidence of need, determine the level of support required and access arrangements if appropriate and complete a report (usually JCQ Form 8).
- 7.4 Inclusive Learning set up folders (electronic) where all documents relevant to access arrangements for each student in each academic year are stored, carrying forward year by year when necessary. These folders must be complete at all times should inclusive learning assessors be required to produce relevant documents in the event of a JCQ inspection.
- 7.5 Exams apply for access arrangement approval by published deadlines and add copies of the approval forms to the folders. Exams enter details on EBS. Applications for bi-lingual dictionaries are processed by Exams.

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- 7.6 Exams apply access arrangements as appropriate by booking scribes, readers, prompters (provided by inclusive learning staff) as needed and any special exam accommodation such as small or separate rooms. Care is taken to ensure appropriate staff are booked for 1-2-1 support who cannot normally be the candidate's own subject teacher or teaching assistant.
- 7.7 Inclusive Learning staff receive training or refresher training at least annually to qualify them to provide support during exams within the regulations.
- 7.8 All those involved in the access arrangements process are aware of and comply with internal STCG deadlines which allow time for the necessary planning for access arrangements to be put in place during all major exams series throughout the year.

8. Appeals regarding decisions relating to Access Arrangements

This may include decisions not to make/apply for a specific reasonable adjustment in circumstances where a student does not meet the criteria for, or there is no evidence/insufficient evidence, to support the implementation of an access arrangement.

Where a decision is made in relation to the access arrangement(s) that apply for a student:

- If a student who is the subject of the relevant decision (or the student's parent/carers) disagrees with the decision made and reasonably believes that STCG has not complied with its responsibilities or followed due procedures, a written request setting out the grounds for appeal should be submitted to the Head of Inclusive Learning. This should be done within 10 working days of the decision being made
- The Head of Inclusive Learning will instruct the Lecturer, Inclusive Learning to investigate and written feedback should be provided within 5 working days of receiving the appeal

To determine the outcome of the appeal, the Head of inclusive Learning will consult the current JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments document to confirm that STCG has complied with the principles and regulations governing access arrangements and followed due procedures.

The appellant will be informed of the outcome of the appeal no later than 5 working days after submission of the appeal in writing.

If the appeal is upheld, STCG will proceed to implement the necessary arrangements/submit the necessary application.

Where a learner is dissatisfied with the way in which the appeal has been dealt with, they may complain in writing to their College Principal who will review the investigation and provide a written response to the complainant within 20 working days. The response will provide a written explanation and information on how the Group will deal with the matter if the appeal is upheld.

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