Notre Dame High School Access Arrangements Policy

2025/26

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
M Birch	
Date of next review	January 2027

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name(s)
ALS lead/SENCo	**Michael Owczarek**
ALS lead/SENCo line manager (Senior leader)	**Deirdre Cleary**
Head of centre	**Deirdre Cleary**
Exams Officer	**Heather Slater**
Assessor(s)	**Sarah White**
Access arrangement facilitator(s)	**Sarah White**

Contents

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'. (AARA[1], 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'.

The centre **must** ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates. (AARA[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 **Notre Dame High School** 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**, 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 **must** create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder **must** hold each of the required documents for inspection. ([1]AARA 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, to 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 (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, or an equivalent member of staff within a FE college, **must** ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.

A centre **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** or during the 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 their 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 equalities policy can be found here [Exams – Notre Dame High School](#)

The Access Arrangements 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 7.3.

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

> Sarah White – Certificate of Psychometric Testing, Assessment and Access Arrangements (CPT3A) Level 7

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)

Michael Owczarek - SENCO

Bear in mind **all** relevant JCQ regulations and guidance provided in GR and AARA including:

The head of centre/senior leadership team will… have a **written** process in place to check the qualification(s) of their assessor(s) and that the correct procedures are followed, as in Chapter 7 of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments…* (GR 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 7.3)

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

Reporting the appointment of the assessor(s)

Assessor was already working within the Centre as a HLTA alongside the previous assessor who was coming up for retirement. The Centre found the appropriate level 7 training course for the HLTA, which was approved by the Head of Centre. HLTA completed all relevant training within the Centre and worked alongside the previous assessor for a period of 12 months until qualified status was gained, then took over the role as Assessor.

Assessor completes refresher courses annually to keep up-to-date with annual changes to the regulations set out by JCQ.

All certificates kept on site for inspection.

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

When there are concerns around a Candidate, a request for information is submitted to all subject teachers. This is a document called a Barriers to Learning request, which is an office 365 form and is distributed and collated electronically.

The Barriers to Learning feedback is then collated with evidence of work i.e. mock exam papers, samples of classwork, student questionnaires and any history of need i.e. evidence form Primary Schools or previous assessments. This paints a very clear up-to-date picture of an candidates learning needs.

We ensure that AARA 7.5 (Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor) and 7.6 (Completing Form 8 – JCQ/AA/LD, Profile of Learning Difficulties) and Chapter 7 of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (GR 5.4) are adhered to throughout the process.

This information is used to complete part one of the Form 8 document. Then the last part of the process is for the assessor to conduct the appropriate assessments with the candidate.

Private reports in most cases are sought from the Sheffield Dyslexia Centre, with whom we have an established working relationship.

When a candidate's family contacts the Dyslexia Centre the centre will then make initial contact with Notre Dame, with parental permission for an exchange of information. The above procedure is then followed with part 1 of the Form 8 completed and then submitted to the Dyslexia Centre, who then conduct the assessments.

Picture of need/normal way of working

We ensure that AARA 7.5 (Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor) and 7.6 (Completing Form 8 – JCQ/AA/LD, Profile of Learning Difficulties) are adhered to throughout the process.

When gathering evidence to paint a picture of need we start with historical information from Primary School. This information can include any reports carried out in the early year's education, access arrangements for SAT's, reports and investigations conducted by other medical or mental health professionals.

A request for a Barriers to Learning questionnaire is then submitted to Teaching Staff to gain a current overview of an individual's current needs in the classroom setting. This will include any adjustments Teachers are having to regularly implement in lessons in order for the candidate to access the curriculum. Teacher evidence is also collected in the form of mock test papers and samples of classwork.

Candidates latest round of monitoring feedback is then reviewed to check if they are currently on track to meet their targets and potential.

Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access arrangements online (AAO) 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).

AAO is accessed within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP) by 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)

Following assessment and completion of a Form 8 the assessor will make the required applications via AAO.

The approval document is then printed off by the assessor and put into the individual access arrangement files for each candidate.

Each file will include:

- Signed and Dated Consent document
- Completed and signed Form 8
- AAO approval document
- Supporting evidence i.e. samples of work, mock papers, Teacher evidence, medical and / or other professional reports
- File cover sheet

This information is also kept in a digital format as well as hard copies for inspection purposes. Hard copy files are kept in locked filing cabinets in the SENCO's office.

> Applications that require referral to the awarding bodies are submitted by the assessor in consultation with the SENCO.

Centre-delegated arrangements/adjustments

> Centre delegated access arrangements follow the same process as access arrangements applied for via AAO.

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.

> Word processor policy can be found here Exams – Notre Dame High School

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 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 5.16)

> Candidates requiring separate invigilation within in the centre are often known to the SENCO and Pastoral Managers.
>
> This provision is granted on the basis of normal way of working within the centre and their history of need. Candidates who require this provision will have accompanying reports from medical or mental health professionals with recommendations of support.
>
> Teacher evidence will be gathered as with other access arrangements to paint a picture of need and establish the candidate's normal way of working across the curriculum.