

Access Arrangements: Frequently Asked Questions!

- **What is an 'access arrangement'?**

'Access arrangement' is the term used by the awarding bodies to describe an exam arrangement. These arrangements are put in place to allow students with significant and persistent learning needs to access their assessments and exams at college.

- **How do I let the college know that I need Access Arrangements for Examinations?**

Please declare your access arrangements on your application form. If you have not declared on your application form we will not know that you require arrangements and will not be able to put these in place: we will not know unless you tell us! If you are already at college, you should contact the Additional Support department as soon as possible.

- **Why do I need to be assessed at college?**

The awarding bodies require that the college apply or reapply for access arrangements based on up to date evidence of a learning need, including in some cases scores from standardised test administered by a qualified Access Arrangements Assessor. If this is the case for the access arrangements you require, you will need to be assessed in college so we can provide this evidence.

- **What is an 'Access Arrangements Assessor'?**

An Access Arrangements Assessor is a specially trained teacher who is able to assess students for access arrangements. They may conduct a particular standardised test, discuss the student's needs and normal way of working, or request medical evidence. The Access Arrangements Assessor will recommend and approve appropriate access arrangements for the student.

- **What is a 'standardised test'?**

A standardised test is a test that measures your ability in a particular skill, e.g. spelling, in comparison to other people in your age group. It provides a 'standardised score' which shows where you are in relation to the average. For some access arrangements, the JCQ require the college to provide standard scores as evidence of need.

- **Is this a dyslexia assessment?**

No. Varndean College cannot conduct assessments for dyslexia or other learning difficulties, or make diagnoses. These assessments are **only** to establish the need for access arrangements in exams.

- **What is the JCQ?**

The JCQ is the 'Joint Council of Qualifications'. This is a group of awarding bodies (exam boards) who decide on the regulations for access arrangements every year. The Access Arrangements Assessors in college are fully trained in the JCQ regulations and follow the guidance therein to determine which access arrangements are appropriate. Access Arrangements Assessors need to apply to the JCQ to approve some access arrangements, e.g. extra time.

- **I have an Educational Psychologist's report, do I still need to be assessed?**

Yes. The JCQ **do not** allow Educational Psychologist's reports as evidence for exam arrangements. A student **must** be assessed by a qualified Access Arrangements Assessor who can provide an up to date report of the student's needs within college, even if they have a recent Educational Psychologist's report.

- **I had exam arrangements at school, do I still need to be assessed?**

If you had access arrangements in school, it may be possible to 'roll over' your arrangements to your college exams. In this case, we will still need to meet you to discuss your needs, but you will not need to complete a full assessment. Please note, due to the JCQ regulations, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to 'roll over' your arrangements.

- **I have an EHC plan, do I still need to be assessed?**

If you have an Education, Health and Care plan, we will discuss your access arrangements with you. You may not need to complete a full assessment, but an Access Arrangements Assessor will need to approve any arrangements you require and apply to the JCQ if necessary.

- **When is the deadline for assessment?**

There are deadlines for access arrangement assessments throughout the year, depending on what arrangements you require and when your exams are. You will be contacted by the Additional Support team to arrange an assessment in good time. The final deadline for assessment for JCQ approved arrangements is in the February of the examination year. We will not conduct any assessments after February for exams taking place that year, excepting exceptional or emergency circumstances.

- **I am an Adult Education student, can I have access arrangements?**

Yes. Please disclose your learning needs on your application form, to your teacher or to the Adult Education Office. You will then be contacted by a member of the Additional Support team to arrange an assessment.

- **I am an external candidate, can I have access arrangements?**

Yes. Please disclose your learning needs or your application form. You will then be contacted by a member of the Additional Support team to arrange an assessment.

- **I am an International Baccalaureate student, can I have access arrangements?**

Yes. The IB have different regulations to the JCQ, so you will need to discuss your needs with an Access Arrangements Assessor and they will assess you accordingly. The Access Arrangements Assessor will liaise with the head of IB to ensure your arrangements are in place.

- **English is not my first language, can I have access arrangements?**

If English is not your first language, there are a number of factors which influence which arrangements you can have in your exams. You will need to discuss this with an Access Arrangements Assessor, as it will depend on your individual circumstances.

- **Why do you need evidence from my teachers?**

The JCQ requires college to provide evidence of a student's **current** difficulties in college from a range of sources, so we will ask your teachers to provide evidence of your learning needs to support your access arrangements.

- **What does 'normal way of working' mean?**

The JCQ require us to show evidence that access arrangements are in line with the student's 'normal way of working'. This means that the candidate normally uses these arrangements to complete, for example, homework or coursework, work in class, pre-public exams or in class tests, and external exams. 'Normal

way of working' will vary depending on the student's needs and the arrangements required.

- **Can I sit my exams in a separate room?**

Separate invigilation (not sitting your exam in the main hall) is allowed in some circumstances, e.g. if a student has medical or mental health needs. Some students will be in a smaller room with other candidates. In exceptional circumstances, a candidate may be in a room on their own. Please refer to our Separate Invigilation Policy (on the college webpage) for more information about this arrangement.

- **Can I type my exams instead of handwriting?**

In some cases it is permissible for a student to type their exam answers. Please refer to our Word Processing Policy (on the college webpage) for more information about this arrangement.

- **Do I need to provide medical evidence?**

We will require medical evidence for some access arrangements. The evidence required will vary depending on the student's circumstances and the arrangements required. If we require you to provide medical evidence for your Access Arrangements, a member of the Additional Support team will contact you to discuss this.

- **How will my arrangements be confirmed?**

When your arrangements have been approved, an email will be sent to your college email address to confirm these. We will also usually send a copy of this email to the student's parents/guardians.

- **Can I choose my invigilator?**

College cannot guarantee a named invigilator for internal or external examinations.

- **Can I use my arrangements in all my exams?**

Students are not allowed to use arrangements in exams where the skill being assessed is performed by the arrangement. For example, you are not allowed to use a reader in the reading section of an English GCSE exam, because your reading is the skill being assessed. You will be notified of any restrictions in advance of your exams to enable you to prepare. If you have any concerns about not being able to use your arrangements in your exams, please contact Additional Support.

Access arrangements are usually not relevant to practical subjects e.g. visual arts exams. If you have any questions about using your arrangements in a practical subject, please discuss this with Additional Support or your teachers.

- **Can I use assistive technology in my exams?**

In some cases, assistive technology is available to students to use in their exams. For example, students who are eligible for a reader can use read aloud software (Read and Write Gold). Please contact Additional Support if you would like to explore these options.

- **I want my access arrangements at university, what should I do?**

Different universities have different requirements regarding access arrangements. Contact your university's support team to find out what they need. We can provide evidence of the arrangements you received at college if it is required. **Please note:**

the evidence college can provide is not usually sufficient for applications for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).

- What do I do if my exam arrangements do not seem to be in place at the beginning of my exam?

Immediately raise your hand and let an invigilator know. The invigilator will check with the Additional Support department.

If you have any other questions or queries regarding exam arrangements, please contact Claire, Sheila or Becky in the Additional Support department: we will be happy to help.