

Parent Guide to Exam Access Arrangements

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) states that access arrangements support individuals with special educational needs, disabilities and injuries, without affecting the integrity of the assessment. They can only be granted where the centre has evidence that the arrangement is required, there is a 'picture of need' and it is the candidate's **normal way of working**. The impairment must be substantial and have long-term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties.

We apply for access arrangements in the first term of Year 10 or 11, depending on individual needs. We look at history of need and the normal way of working for students from Year 7 to Year 10. Although we can take into consideration private reports from external professionals and use these to help evidence the need, we cannot automatically award an access arrangement based upon it. It will trigger a process to evidence the normal way of working for that student. As part of the evidence that we must provide, we show that adaptations have been tried by teachers as part of their usual inclusive practice as mandated in the teaching standards. Therefore, we cannot award an access arrangement without teachers having used reasonable adjustments in their classroom over a sustained period. It is essential therefore, that we are informed of existing circumstances that might reasonably support the possible need for access arrangements as soon as possible, preferably on joining the school. Arrangements can then be made to accommodate the needs of students in formal internal assessments and exams. This will allow us to test the effectiveness of such arrangements and will provide grounds if demonstrated for their implementation at GCSE and A level. If you have a diagnosis of need for your child and you have not passed on this evidence, please let us know by emailing sen@marling.school

Extra time is the most requested access arrangement. The JCQ has strict criteria for extra time because it could give an unfair advantage over other students. The evidence required for application for extra time has further increased this year, including: supervised rest breaks must be trialled extensively before extra time is considered (except when the student has a learning disability); there must be samples of timed tests from class/mocks from teachers showing that extra time has been used (with a change of pen colour); there needs to be evidence from multiple subject teachers. The student will need to be recommended by teachers to be assessed for extra time. The assessment will look at different areas of speed of working. The school has their own assessor; this cannot be done by a private assessor. This can be done no earlier than the start of year 9. Candidates may not need extra time for every examination, and every subject. Extra time is not permitted in examinations testing the time in which a skill is performed e.g. drama. 25% extra time can only be awarded in a timed art exam where the candidate has a formally diagnosed medical condition, physical disability or a sensory impairment that effects manual dexterity and/or physical coordination.

When applying for access arrangements we are obliged to work within the framework laid down by the JCQ whose role is to maintain the credibility of the qualifications. They define the parameters of what constitutes a 'substantial disadvantage' and the evidence requirements the school must supply for access arrangements. Non-compliance with the JCQ regulations is deemed malpractice, which has potentially severe consequences for all of our students. Sanctions can include removing the examination status of a school so that candidates are no longer allowed to sit exams at the centre. The school is inspected every year, and we have been commended for following all guidance consistently and fairly.

The JCQ document guidance for parents, carers and students about access arrangements is a useful resource: [JCQ-Parent-guidance-information-sheet-2025_26.pdf](#)].