



OAASIS INFORMATION SHEET

Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs (England, N. Ireland and Wales)

Office for
Advice
Assistance
Support
and
Information
on
Special needs

Helpline:
0800 902 0732
www.oaasis.co.uk

The Croft
Southlands School
Vicar's Hill
Boldre
Lymington
Hants
SO41 5QB

OAASIS
A part of Cambian
Education Services



If your child has a special need, you must plan early for any examinations he will be sitting. The fact that a student has a Statement of Special Educational Needs; is on School Action or School Action Plus; has attention, behaviour, emotional or social difficulties; or another disability *may or may not* qualify him for **Access Arrangements** (previously called Special Arrangements) and Special Considerations (in the event of "adverse circumstances beyond their control").

Assessment and reporting arrangements (for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3) are publications from the *Qualifications and Curriculum Authority*. They contain full details of Access Arrangements, teacher assessments etc and can be downloaded from their website at www.qca.org.uk or you can contact them at the address overleaf.

Access Arrangements and Special Consideration, Regulations and Guidance Relating to Candidates who are Eligible for Adjustments in Examinations (covering BTEC's, GCEs, VCEs, GCSEs and GNVQs) is published each September for the approaching academic year by The *Joint Council for Qualifications*, who are the overseeing body of the Awarding Bodies, and a downloadable copy is available at their website www.jcq.org.uk. The Awarding Bodies, all mentioned overleaf, have booklets applicable to themselves and also deal with general day to day personal enquiries.

Each autumn these booklets are circulated by the English Examining Bodies to all examination Centres (i.e. schools, colleges). It describes the Access Arrangements that are acceptable for students with special needs, what criteria have to be met and how to organise these Access Arrangements in examination situations. The booklets contain all the information and forms that the Awarding Bodies require schools, educational psychologists, Specialist Teachers or others to complete for each candidate.

If in the final year of **Key Stages 1, 2 and 3** your child is working *below* the required levels and will still be below at the time of the statutory key stage tests he will not be entered for them and will undergo teacher assessment. Some children who are working at the required level of the tests may, for various reasons, be unable to take their key stage tests and they too will be assessed.

In relation to **GCEs, VCEs** etc the Principle of the Centre should choose the qualification which is most appropriate to the candidate who has a known long-term or permanent disability or learning difficulty.

There is a clear requirement for continuity between the classroom and the examination room: "the candidate's *usual method of working* in the classroom will be considered ... when Access Arrangements are being made".

Establishing and agreeing the nature and extent of the student's difficulties **must** begin early enough for the student to receive support and for Access Arrangements to be made in the classroom **well before** the request for Access Arrangements in examinations and assessments is submitted to the Examining Body. Therefore assessment of your child's special needs and organising what on-going help he should receive in the classroom must begin as early as possible. The resulting documents and reports will then be available to support an application to the Examining Body when the student starts on his examination courses.

At Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 most decisions for Access Arrangements and not being entered for tests are made in November - December preceding the tests.

For Key Stage 4 and above all requests for Access Arrangements, where the decision is not delegated to the Centre, must be supported with evidence in the form of a report or an assessment from an appropriately qualified teacher (appropriate qualifications are listed on the Joint Council for Qualifications' website www.jcq.org.uk) OR from a qualified psychologist. Assessments to support decisions relating to Access Arrangements that are to be decided by the Awarding body must be carried out within two years of the start of the exams. There is a strict timetable of dates for application.

It is vital that Heads of Examining Centres submit their requests on the appropriate forms as early as possible. Unless sufficient notice is given to an Examining Body it may not be possible to provide special versions of question papers, or to agree to any other arrangements.

Centres may themselves now award: up to 25% additional time if they have a report from a qualified psychologist or appropriately qualified teacher or if pupils have a Statement that points to this type of extra requirement; supervised breaks/rest periods if a medical/psychological need has been identified; coloured overlays, amplification equipment, a prompter, reading aloud to themselves, CCTV - if it is the normal way of working; bi-lingual dictionary if criteria met; low vision aid/OCR scanner if visually impaired; transcript if handwriting problems; separate invigilation if permission for reader/scribe/WP/medical/oral-language modifiers/practical assistants/promoters/read aloud/live speaker/voice input system and sign language interpreter.

A reader or 25% extra time is allowed for students who regularly have reading support in the classroom (in most cases reading age is much lower than actual age) and who have difficulties with reading independently. This now includes those who have trouble with comprehension when decoding at the same time and slow readers who lose the sense of the text.

Access Arrangements can be applied for to cover the following: extra time above 25% and up to a maximum of 100% for candidates with communication and interaction difficulties, learning difficulties, sensory and physical needs as well as those with behavioural, emotional and social needs; 1 hour early opening of papers for copying onto coloured paper for dyslexic pupils; modified or enlarged paper/ voice activated computer/ word processor/ reader/computer reader/ tactile diagrams/ unmodified A3 question paper for candidates with a visual impairment; modified language/ communicator/ live speaker/ BSL to sign questions/ transcript of tape/ additional tapes/CD, reader/computer reader for candidates with a hearing impairment; Practical Assistant for physically disabled candidates; modified language for students with substantial comprehension difficulties (not just hearing and language impairment). There is no duty on awarding bodies to adjust competence standards for the qualification, but certain candidates can be exempted if all other avenues have been exhausted, eg: a non-speaker in an exam that has a speaking module.

See the booklets highlighted in the second and third paragraphs above for full details of all arrangements and allowances. It is crucial to make sure that your child's school, especially if it is a mainstream school, is fully aware of all these implications: early assessment of needs, on-going classroom intervention to address these needs, early requests for any Access Arrangements required during examinations backed by the appropriate forms and reports. Awarding bodies and centres may be accused of disability related discrimination (under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995) if they are unable to justify treatment given, i.e. if it is less favourable than that provided to those without a disability. Centres have a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Patoss (Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties) produces a guide for teachers *Dyslexia: Assessing the Need for Access Arrangements during Examinations* (3rd edition, completely revised and updated in line with JCQ new 2007-8 guidelines and replaces earlier edition). Cost is £7.50 + p&p. from Patoss, PO Box 10, Evesham WR11 1ZW. Tel: 01386 712650. Website: www.patoss-dyslexia.org.

The *National Autistic Society* has a booklet entitled 'Exam advice for young people with autism and Asperger Syndrome' it costs £1 and is useful to school staff, parents and students. It is available from their website www.autism.org.uk.

Skill, The National Bureau for Students with Disabilities, has several very helpful Information Sheets, which you will find on their website www.skill.org.uk/ and an Information Service line: 0800 328 5050

HINTS FOR PARENTS / CARERS/ TEACHERS

Be aware of how your child or student's particular difficulties may be affecting him at this time.

Preparation:

1. Take an interest in the exam timetable of your child/student. Offer to help with revision; liaise with teachers; find out any concerns or stress triggers and aim to reduce these.
2. Ensure revision materials taken home at weekends / half terms are with *full* instructions and schedules. Do not expect your child / student to be able to decide how much they should do, what they should do, etc. Advise. Liaise.
3. **SmartPass** produce two ranges of audio education resources for teachers and students – includes Shakespeare and classics. There is dramatic presentation, discussion & debate, 'live' essays, etc: Website: www.smartpass.co.uk, Tel: 01273 300742.
4. Where at all possible make sure exam candidates are familiar with where they will be sitting their exam. If students are on the autistic spectrum, ensure it is autism-friendly.
5. Talk them through what will happen when they arrive at the examination room. Are they able to 'line up' quietly? Do they understand all the rules of the examination room? Do they understand that someone – possibly unknown to them - will be invigilating?

The evening before:

1. Make sure any areas of likely upset (got his/her favourite breakfast cereal?) in the approach to exams are covered.
2. Don't plan anything tiring the night before. Make sure they have a relaxing time, have a good meal and plenty of water to drink, and get to bed early.
3. Get their clothes ready the night before – no panics first thing in the morning as to 'what to wear!'

The morning of the exam:

1. Make sure your child/student gets up in good time to shower, dress and eat a proper, relaxed, breakfast. Cooked one is best. Too much sugary food (i.e. cereals alone) gives quick but short 'lift', followed by a 'down' mood. If exam is in the afternoon, make sure lunch too is a favourite but nutritious one.
2. Ensure they have the correct items for the exam/s they are taking that day: maths equipment, pen or pencil, eraser, ruler, calculator, etc.

Afterwards:

1. Know what time the exam finishes and how your child/student may be feeling. Consider some sort of treat ... favourite cake? Let them 'chill out' a bit.

Other:

1. Support your child/student all the way. Care for how they are feeling. Do not leave them to prepare alone. Do not be negative.
2. Remember that with some disorders, what you see is not what you get. For example, Asperger Syndrome anxiety will magnify the effects of the disorder. They may say they're OK and have a smiling face, but this may not be correct.
3. Help with relaxation. Watch out for obsessive tendencies and rituals taking over.
4. Send a good luck card. Send a well-done card – whatever the outcome!

The following organisations are the Awarding Bodies for various examinations/courses and have informative websites and booklets covering the various exams, some have advice for parents and pupils as well as teachers.

The booklets covering Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 are available from the following.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
Tel: 020 7509 5555 (switchboard)
Tel: 020 7509 5556 (enquiry line)
Website: www.qca.org.uk

QCA Northern Ireland
Tel: 028 9033 0706
Email: infoli@qca.org.uk

The booklets covering BTECs GCSEs, VCEs, GCEs and GNVQs are available from the following Awarding Bodies:

Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
Website: www.aqa.org.uk
Guildford: 01483 506506
Harrogate: 01423 840015
Manchester: 0161 953 1180

N.I. Council for the Curric Examinations and Assessment
Tel: 028 9026 1200 Website: www.ccea.org.uk

OCR Website: www.ocr.org.uk
General qualifications (14-19): 01223 553998
Vocational qualifications (Post 19): 02476 851509

Edexcel

Tel: 0870 240 9800 Website: www.edexcel.org.uk
Six regional offices – see the website

Welsh Joint Education Committee
Tel: 029 2026 5000 Website: www.wjec.co.uk

For students in Scotland different arrangements apply:

Scottish Qualifications Authority. 'Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs' - download from www.sqa.org.uk or Tel: 0845 279 1000.

Cambian Education Services run seven residential special schools and colleges for young people with autistic spectrum disorders, Asperger Syndrome/HFA, severe learning difficulties. OAASIS can give you advice on the schools and send you their prospectuses or visit the website www.cambianeducation.com.

OAASIS produces a wide range of **free Information Sheets**, **8 publications** entitled 'First Guide to...' and **wallet sized cards** explaining 9 learning disabilities. Please contact OAASIS (see front of sheet for contact details) for the full list, or view and download them on the website at www.oaasis.co.uk. All sheets are checked annually, please ensure you have the current version.