



Appointment of Assessors of Candidates with Learning Difficulties

2024/25

SGS

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

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Key staff involved in the conduct of non-examination assessments

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SENCo	Miss Jade O'Connell
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1. The Head of Centre will appoint:

- An Access Arrangements assessor who has successfully completed a post- graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment. The reference to at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment would include lecture, seminar and tutorial time, study time, assessment time and time spent completing assignments. Courses which are accredited at AMBDA or APC Level would meet this requirement, as would post-graduate courses at or equivalent to Level 7 which provide a qualification in access arrangements assessment.

- An Access Arrangements assessor may conduct assessments to be recorded within Section C of Form 8.
- A specialist assessor with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, as awarded by BDA, the Dyslexia Guild or Patoss and listed on the SASC website, who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Section C of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments.
- An appropriately qualified psychologist registered with the Health & Care Professions Council who may conduct assessments to be recorded within Section C of Form 8 and where necessary undertake full diagnostic assessments.

2. An access arrangements assessor must have successfully completed a post-graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment, which must include training in all of the following:

- the theoretical basis underlying psychometric tests, such as the concepts of validity and reliability; standard deviations and the normal curve; raw scores, standard scores, quotients, percentiles and age equivalent scores; the concept of statistically significant discrepancies between scores; standard error of measurement and confidence intervals.
- the appropriate use of nationally standardised tests for the age group being tested.
- the objective administration of attainment tests which can be administered individually. This must include tests of reading accuracy, reading speed, reading comprehension and spelling. Appropriate methods of assessing writing skills, including speed, must also be covered.
- the appropriate selection and objective use of tests of cognitive skills, see paragraph 7.5.12, page 86.
- the ethical administration of testing including the ability to understand the limitation of their own skills and experience, and to define when it is necessary to refer the candidate to an alternative professional.

3. All assessors must:

- have a thorough understanding of the current edition of the JCQ publication *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* and the principles, procedures and accountabilities involved.
- be familiar with the Equality Act 2010 (although it is not their role to determine what is a 'reasonable adjustment', but rather to help identify access arrangements that might assist the candidate).
- either hold an appropriate qualification to teach and make recommendations for secondary aged or adult learners who have learning difficulties or be a HCPC registered psychologist.

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.

- A privately commissioned assessment carried out without prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to award access arrangements and cannot be used to process an application using *Access arrangements online*.
- The SENCo must provide the assessor with at least a 'skeleton' Section A of Form 8 prior to the candidate being assessed (Section C of Form 8).

- (Where a learning difficulty specifically arises as a result of a medical condition please see pages 26, 34, 36 and/or 47-48; 25% extra time, a computer reader/reader and/or a scribe.)
- Where a privately commissioned report, or a report from an external professional, is rejected by a centre, the head of centre or a member of the senior leadership team should provide a written rationale supporting their decision to the parent/carer.

4. Reporting the appointment of assessors

- SENCoS must hold on file for inspection purposes evidence that the assessor(s) is/are suitably qualified as per pages 82 and 83.
- 1. In the case of appropriately qualified psychologists (registered with the Health & Care Professions Council), or specialist assessors holding a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, who are directly employed within the centre, there is no need to record the names of these individuals within Access arrangements online.
- 2. The names of all other assessors, who are assessing candidates studying qualifications as listed on page 2, must be entered into Access arrangements online to confirm their status. This will include all other professionals working outside the centre.

5. Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor

- The SENCo must arrange for the candidate to be assessed by an assessor.
- 1. Before the candidate's assessment, the SENCo must provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted as per Section A of Form 8. The SENCo and the assessor must work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process.
- An independent assessor must contact the centre and ask for evidence of the candidate's normal way of working and relevant background information. This must take place before the candidate is assessed.
- The candidate must be assessed in light of the picture of need and the background information as detailed within Section A of Form 8.
- An independent assessor must discuss Access Arrangements with the SenCo. The responsibility to request Access Arrangements specifically lies with the SenCo.
- The assessor is required to establish if the results of tests in literacy and/or cognitive abilities present evidence that the candidate has an impairment which substantially affects their performance.
- Assessors must personally conduct the assessments. They must not sign off assessments carried

out by another professional.

- The assessor must carry out tests which are relevant to support the application. For example, if the candidate requires a reader but does not have writing difficulties, there is no requirement to carry out tests of writing skills.
- Current editions of nationally standardised tests which produce standardised scores must be used, where published.
- The candidate's chronological age must be less than the 'ceiling' of the test, unless no test is published for the candidate's age.
- Results must be given as standardised scores which use a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. (These are standard scores.) Standardised scores of 84 or less are described as 'below average'. Standardised scores of 85-89 are described as 'low average'. Test results for Section C of Form 8 must not be reported as percentiles, scaled scores, T-scores or age-equivalent scores. Such scores must be converted into standard scores.

6. Reading skills

- Reading accuracy: reading accuracy must be assessed using an individually administered, untimed test of single word reading.
- Reading comprehension: reading comprehension must be assessed using a recognised test of text or sentence comprehension.
- Reading speed: a candidate with a history of reading difficulties, whose reading accuracy (at single word level), or reading comprehension, is within normal limits for his/her age, may read slowly because he/she takes longer than expected to decode the words, leading to slow reading (slow reading speed) or needs to re-read text many times in order to absorb its meaning (slow reading comprehension speed).
- There are various ways of assessing text level reading speed.
- a test which assesses speed at text level (known as reading rate or reading speed).
- A test which combines text level speed and accuracy (sometimes known as reading fluency).
- A test that assesses the time taken to both read the text and to answer questions on what has been read. The test must provide a score for reading comprehension speed, not just reading comprehension.
- These text level assessments of reading speed may be used as evidence for a computer reader/reader and/or 25% extra time. The results will be recorded within Section C of Form 8 under 'Reading Speed'.

Tests which measure single word reading speed and efficiency are not appropriate in this context. However, they may contribute to cognitive processing measures for extra time, as recorded within Section C of Form 8 under cognitive processing or in 'Other relevant information'.

The provision of a computer reader/reader and/or 25% extra time for reading difficulties will depend on whether the candidate's impairment in reading accuracy or reading comprehension or reading speed has a substantial and long term adverse effect. For examination purposes, a substantial impairment is interpreted as a standardised score in tests of reading accuracy or reading comprehension or reading speed which falls in the below average range, i.e. a standardised score of 84 or less.

A below average Standardised Score for reading accuracy can be used to award a computer reader/reader but not 25% extra time. A below average Standardised Score for reading comprehension can be used to award a computer reader/reader but not 25% extra time. A below average Standardised Score for reading speed at text level can be used to award a computer reader/reader and/or 25% extra time as are all measures of speed.

7. Writing skills

A scribe, a word processor with the spell check enabled, or speech recognition technology will be allowed in certain subjects when a candidate's impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect.

For examination purposes, a substantial impairment is interpreted as the candidate having:

8. a spelling accuracy score in the below average range (a standardised score of 84 or less) where target words are unrecognisable and the writing is incomprehensible or
9. Free writing which cannot be read by others or
 - a. free writing which is grammatically incomprehensible; or
 - b. free writing which is produced so slowly that answers could not be fully recorded even with extra time allowed. (The candidate's writing speed as a standardised score being in the below average range for their age).

8. Cognitive Processing

Cognitive processing assessments would include, for example, investigations of short-term/ working memory, phonological processing (e.g. phonological awareness, phonological memory and/or rapid naming) visual processing, sequencing problems, organisational problems, visual/motor co-ordination difficulties or other measures as determined appropriate for the candidate by an assessor.

Where a candidate has cognitive processing difficulties which have a substantial and long term adverse impact on their speed of working 25% extra time may be awarded. (See Chapter 5, paragraph 5.2.2, page 22). These difficulties will be demonstrated by tests which result in at least one below average standardised score, i.e. a score of 84 or less.

In rare and exceptional circumstances an awarding body may grant 25% extra time where a candidate has at least two low average standardised scores (85-89)

relating to two different areas of speed of working. This may include two different areas of cognitive processing.

An awarding body may grant extra time of up to 50% in very exceptional circumstances - see Chapter 5, paragraph 5.3.2, page 28.

9. Other Cognitive Ability Measures

In most cases there is not a requirement to carry out tests of general cognitive abilities. However, in rare and exceptional circumstances the SENCo may need to refer a candidate to an alternative professional, such as a HCPC registered psychologist or a specialist assessor with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, where further investigation is warranted which may include tests of general cognitive ability. The initial assessment may have indicated specific/global learning needs, mental health or developmental concerns.

Access arrangements online will not be able to process applications for a computer reader/reader, 25% extra time, extra time of up to 50% and/or a scribe for candidates with learning difficulties unless a standardised score has been recorded within Section C of Form 8. Where required, the score(s) must be processed on-line.

