

EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY - 2025/2026

This policy adheres to and should be applied with due consideration to the College's commitment to the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education.

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations.

This policy has been reviewed in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mission Statement

Our mission inspired by the Christian tradition is to be a community based on faith, hope and love; developing each individual intellectually, emotionally and spiritually to achieve their full potential.

To achieve this, we will:

- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and supportive community where everyone is valued.
- Provide a high quality, meaningful education which encourages the development of the whole person, inspired by the Notre Dame tradition.
- Promote a caring environment, rooted in the virtues of service, kindness, gratitude and respect.
- Work together for the benefit of each person as well as the wider community.
- Recognise, celebrate and treasure, without exception, the unique gifts and dignity of each person, ensuring equality and fairness for all, as found in the teaching and example of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Key staff involved in the access arrangements process

Role	Name(s)
Head of Learning Support (HOLS)	Sally Wike
HoLS line manager (Senior Leader)	Andrew Kellett
Head of centre	Justine Barlow
Assessor(s)	Christopher Cox
Examination manager	Peggy Damiani

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 particular 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.’”*

(JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg.13)

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 a number of 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”

(JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg.13)

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College has a written record which clearly shows the centre is complying with its obligation to *identify, determine and implement appropriate and practicable access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg. 8)*

This policy is updated by the Head of Learning Support (HoLS) and is reviewed annually to ensure that processes are carried out in accordance with the current edition of the JCQ publication “Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments” (updated and published annually, at the beginning of each academic year).

Access Arrangements requiring applications using Access Arrangements Online (JCQ)

Some exam access arrangements (EAA) must be applied for, and approval granted using the JCQ Access Arrangements Online portal. These include:

- extra time.
- reader (human reader or electronic reader software);
- scribe / speech recognition technology.
- access to a mobile phone for medical purposes.
- bilingual dictionary with 25% extra time.
- listening to music/white noise due to a substantial impairment.
- remote invigilation.
- timetable variation on the exam for a candidate with a disability.
- timetable variation requiring overnight supervision for a candidate with a disability.
- practical assistant.

Processing access arrangements 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 listed. This tool also provides the facility to order modified papers for qualifications.

AAO is accessed by logging in to any of the awarding body secure extranet sites.

The HoLS and Specialist Assessor both have AAO accounts and apply for the relevant EAA online, as well as establishing and maintaining individual files of each access arrangement candidate. Each file contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held for inspection purposes according to the regulations (e.g. Form 8/Form 8RF/Form 9; AAO approval notices; example scripts and teacher evidence of normal of working; medical evidence). Students' exam access arrangement files are stored securely in an electronic format.

The Assessment Process

Where exam access arrangements are to be applied for on the grounds of cognition and learning difficulties, an assessment must be undertaken by a qualified assessor using current, nationally recognised standardised assessments. As part of the process, evidence of a candidate's normal way of working must also be gathered from teaching staff prior to any application being made.

“A privately commissioned assessment, where the centre has not been involved, cannot be used to award access arrangements and cannot be used to process an application using Access arrangements online. This would be where the assessor has not contacted the centre, has not liaised with the centre, has not been approved by the head of centre and has not received a completed Part 1 of Form 8 from the SENCo.”

(JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg.103)

Where exam access arrangements are to be applied for on other grounds (i.e. a medical condition, sensory and physical needs, communication and interaction needs), the HoLS must first gather evidence of the student’s qualifying needs, usually an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) stipulating this need or medical evidence in the form of a specialist professional report or in writing from a consultant or similarly qualified medical professional (not a GP).

“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 the individual candidate’s needs and 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.”

(JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg. 8)

Appointment of assessors of candidates with learning difficulties

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed in the centre, evidence of their qualification is obtained and checked against the current JCQ requirements and this is reviewed annually. This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate. Evidence of the assessor’s qualification(s) and continuing professional development is held on file for inspection purposes and is available to be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by the HoLS.

The qualification of the current assessor

Christopher Cox – Certificate of Psychometric Testing, Assessment and Access Arrangements (CPT3A) – Certificate Number 15753

Procedure for the assessment of a candidate’s learning difficulties by an assessor: Extra time (25% and 25-50%); Reader / electronic reader software.

Scribe / word processor with spelling and grammar checkers enabled / speech recognition technology.

1. Students declare at application/interview/enrolment that they have a support need.
2. Information is gathered from schools regarding students’ support needs/normal ways of working as part of their transition to Notre Dame, wherever possible. Parents / carers are contacted prior to enrolment to complete an online questionnaire concerning the student’s learning needs and previous support, including exam access arrangements.
3. Students with identified needs have an in-depth interview with a member of the Learning Support team shortly after enrolment, during which a detailed person-centred questionnaire is completed or augmented, and support needs are discussed.
4. If a history of significant need is reported or emerges, students’ details are placed onto the ‘EAA Spread Sheet’ and relevant evidence passed to the HOLS/Specialist Assessor. Relevant

evidence could be reports from school, previous Form 8s and Form 9s, references, reports from professionals, examples of work or testimony from teachers and candidates own personal testimony (this list is not exhaustive), alongside the detailed notes from the Learning Support interview.

5. Where evidence exists of a student having previously received 25% extra time in their exams at school due to “a history of significant and persistent need” and “learning difficulties in his/her first language which have a substantial long-term adverse effect on his/her speed or working” (JCQ criteria), the intention is for their speed of working to be re-assessed at Notre Dame with a view to their previous exam access arrangements continuing on a provisional basis to enable teachers to gather evidence of need and normal way of working. Consideration can be given to “rolling forward” an assessment from a previous exam centre upon receipt of a JCQ compliant, fully-completed existing Form 8, as well as a copy of the previous assessor’s qualification certificate. The aim is for all students with previous exam access arrangements to be re-assessed during their first two terms at Notre Dame and assessments are prioritised depending on the date of the students’ first exam series (i.e. First year November examinations, examinations and controlled assessments taking place in December of year one- and first-year January examinations etc.).

In cases where difficulties first emerge after the student has joined Notre Dame, a background history of need meeting the above criteria must be established prior to assessment. This is done through liaison with the student’s subject teachers, who are asked to provide copies of unfinished tests, where speed of working difficulties have prevented the student from completing everything required of them, followed by copies of tests where extra time has been trialled in order to measure its impact in “levelling the playing field” and preventing the student from being disadvantaged in relation to their peers.

6. This evidence of picture of need and normal way of working is collated by the HoLS/Specialist Assessor and Part 1 of the Form 8 completed prior to assessment.
7. A Form 8 is not required where the need arises from a medical issue, sensory impairment or physical disability or where the student has an EHCP, nor is it usually necessary to assess a student’s speeds of working. A Form 9 will be completed by The HOLS who will collect medical information and evidence of normal way of working from teachers.
8. The student is then assessed by the Specialist Assessor using current editions of nationally standardised tests which are relevant to support the application: reading comprehension speed (Exact / SPaRCS); writing speed (DASH-2); aspects of cognitive processing (SPaRCS visual processing, TOMAL-2, RAN/RAS)
9. In line with current JCQ regulations, if the student receives two or more scores in the ‘below average’ range (84 or less) or one “below average” score (84 or less) and at least one “low average” (in the 85-89 range), the results will be recorded in Part 2 of the Form 8 and an application for 25% extra time will be processed using the JCQ Access Arrangements Online portal (AAO). Qualifying scores must be achieved from assessments measuring different areas of speed of working (i.e., reading comprehension speed and writing speed; reading comprehension speed and one area of cognitive processing; two different areas of cognitive processing). Where a student will be using a human or electronic reader in their exams, a below average reading comprehension speed score cannot be used for an application for

extra time. This is also the case for a below average speed of writing score where the student will be typing and not handwriting their exams.

10. Where a student has two or more “low average” scores (in the 85-89 range), relating to different areas of speed of working, but no below average scores, their application for extra time will be rejected by AAO. A special application can then be made to relevant exam boards with additional evidence (i.e., examples of unfinished tests and those where extra time has been allowed, subject teacher testimonies as to the necessity of this allowance in “levelling the playing field”). “The awarding body will expect to see a strong justification for 25% extra time.” adjustments (JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg. 41)
11. In exceptional cases, a student may receive more than 25% and up to 50% in their exams. Such applications will instantly be rejected by AAO and then considered by exam boards on an individual basis, upon receipt of the following evidence: two or more substantially below average scores (less than 69) from standardised assessments measuring two different areas of speed of working; evidence of “a compelling and substantial picture of need, indicating the candidate’s normal way of working”. (JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg. 47)
12. Where a student qualifies for a reader / electronic reader software, details of the nature of their impairment, as evidence of the arrangement being their normal way of working is required and recorded on their Form 8. In most cases, this will include below average scores for assessments measuring reading comprehension speed and/or reading comprehension accuracy.
13. For students requiring a scribe, a word processor with the grammar and spell checkers enabled or speech recognition technology, assessment evidence must relate to their writing. With regard to spelling, they must achieve a standardised score for spelling accuracy which is in the below average range (84 or less) with attempts unrecognisable as the target word. With regard to handwriting, their speed must be in the below average range (84 or less); grammatically incomprehensible to someone not familiar with it; largely illegible to somebody unfamiliar with it
14. Where a student is granted an EAA, their subject teachers are notified, and the information is recorded on the college’s MIS system (Cedar).
15. Subject teachers grant the relevant EAA in all class tests and assessments and the Head of Learning Support works alongside the college SLT to ensure that they are granted as appropriate in mock exam series within the centre. In this way, the EAA is established as the student’s normal way of working.

OTHER ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS REQUIRING AN APPLICATION TO JCQ

Access to a mobile phone for medical purposes

For students who have medical condition such as diabetes, who as their normal way of working use a phone app to monitor their condition- permission to have access to the phone and to take readings using their phone, will be granted by the HOLS when medical evidence such as a Care

Plan/Consultants letter is provided, the evidence and the students medical and learning needs will be recorded on a Form 9, and evidence retained in their exam access arrangements file.

Language Modifier

Where a candidate requires a language modifier for assessed tasks, this is dealt with on an individual basis in accordance with guidance from the Joint Council for Qualifications and through referral to the appropriate awarding bodies. Evidence as to why is stored in the Learning Support files for exam access arrangements

Listening to music / white noise due to a substantial impairment

“Candidates with social, emotional and mental health needs or a candidate with a sensory impairment such as tinnitus or misophonia or a candidate with ADHD or ASD may find that listening to music helps them focus.” (JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg. 89) A candidate may choose music or white noise. The music playlist must be checked by the centre to ensure that an advantage is not conferred to the candidate. The centre would provide the device which is not Bluetooth enabled (e.g. MP3 player).

Modified exam papers

Where a candidate requires modified exam papers, this is dealt with on an individual basis in accordance with guidance from the Joint Council for Qualifications and through referral to the appropriate awarding bodies. Evidence as to why is stored in their exam access arrangements file.

Remote invigilation through the use of technology

“The remote invigilation of examinations may be acceptable in **exceptional circumstances** to accommodate a candidate who would not otherwise be able to sit their examinations. The candidate will have:

- a formally diagnosed medical conditions; **or**
- a physical disability; **or**
- social, emotional or mental health needs; **or**
- a very substantial temporary illness or temporary injury.”

Formal evidence **must be** available to confirm the candidate’s impairment.”

(JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg. 86)

Timetable variation requiring overnight supervision for a candidate with a disability

“An application for a timetable variation may be processed in **exceptional circumstances** where a candidate has:

- a formally diagnosed medical conditions; **or**
- a physical disability; **or**
- social, emotional or mental health needs; **or**
- a vision impairment.

Formal evidence must be available to confirm the candidate’s impairment.”

(JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg. 87)

Timetable variation on the day of the exam for a candidate with a disability

“An application for a timetable variation may be processed in **exceptional circumstances** where a candidate has:

- a formally diagnosed medical conditions; **or**
- a physical disability; **or**
- social, emotional or mental health needs; **or**
- a vision impairment

which means they must sit an exam at an earlier or later time on the published day of the examination.

Formal evidence must be available to confirm the candidate’s impairment.”

(JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg. 88)

CENTRE DELEGATED EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

Many exam access arrangements do not require an application using AAO and can be granted at the discretion of the College’s HOLS. In all cases, current JCQ guidelines are followed, and the relevant supporting evidence is collected and stored securely in the student’s exam access arrangement file. The most commonly granted arrangements are listed below, although this list is not exhaustive.

Bilingual dictionary

A bilingual translation dictionary must only be used in examinations by a student whose first language is not English, Irish or Welsh and must reflect their normal way of working. A bilingual translation dictionary must not, however, be used in the following GCE and GCSE examinations: a) English/English Language examinations; b) Irish or Welsh Language examinations; c) Modern Foreign Language examinations testing one of the languages of the dictionary or a similar language, for example a Portuguese dictionary in a Spanish examination.

In a very small number of cases, a student may also be awarded 25% extra time to assist them with their use of a bilingual dictionary. However, they must meet strict criteria, including: be studying on Level 2 courses (or below), as this allowance is no longer permitted once a student has graduated to Level 3 courses; have entered the UK within 3 years of the examination being taken and with no prior knowledge of English; come from a home where English is not one of the languages spoken; need to refer to their bi-lingual dictionary so often that examination time is used for this purpose, delaying the answering of questions; use 25% extra time in addition to their bi-lingual dictionary as their normal way of working. This access arrangement must then be applied for using AAO

Coloured overlay(s)

If using a coloured overlay(s) is the student’s normal way of working in lessons, they are permitted to do so in exams.

Colour naming by invigilator for candidates who are colour blind

This arrangement will not be permitted where the ability to identify specific colours forms part of the assessment objectives. No other information or explanation can be given to the candidate. If the candidate has been using a colour chart, he or she will be permitted to do so in written examinations or practical examinations. Where coloured images are included in a question paper, but do not form part of the assessment objectives and are not specifically testing the candidate’s

knowledge and understanding of the paper, the question paper may be photocopied onto black and white.

Examination on coloured paper

From September 2026, students whose normal way of working is to have coloured paper will be offered either buff or grey paper for resources and examinations, as per JCQ recommendations.

(**JCQ: Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access** Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026, pg. 96) Where evidence exists of students requiring specific coloured paper as a result of a professional assessment (i.e. University of Bradford Vision and Reading Clinic) this will be continued as an exam access arrangement. However, such students will be recommended to explore the use of coloured lens glasses.

Examination on enlarged paper/ with enlarged font

Where evidence exists of students requiring enlarged exam papers / enlarged font, an appropriate visual impairment assessment will have been undertaken and evidence as to normal way of working is stored in the students' exam access arrangement folders. Students will be required to use their modified papers in internal tests as their normal way of working.

Exam reader pen

Where the use of an exam reader pen has been established as a student's normal way of working and evidence of their need is stored on file, this exam access arrangement can be granted.

Fidget items/concentration aids

Where a student uses a fidget toy/item as their normal way of working to aid concentration because they have an ADHD diagnosis or similar – this can be granted as an exam access arrangement by the HOLS.

Noise reducing headphones/earbuds.

Where a candidate has a sensory impairment or a focus and attention difficulty, they can be permitted to wear ear defenders/ear buds – they cannot however be internet enabled and can only serve the purpose to reduce sound for the candidate. This must be a candidate's normal way of working in the centre – the HOLS would grant this.

Practical assistant

Where a candidate requires practical assistance for assessed tasks, this is dealt with on an individual basis in accordance with guidance from the Joint Council for Qualifications and through referral to the appropriate awarding bodies. Evidence as to why is stored in their exam access arrangements file.

Prompt

Written evidence confirming the candidate's established persistent difficulties in being able to focus and concentrate and their normal way of working within the centre is stored in their exam access arrangements file.

Read aloud

Written evidence confirming the student's established difficulties in understanding what they have read and their normal way of working within the centre is stored in their exam access arrangements file

Alternative rooming in the centre

Students may be approved separate invigilation within the centre based on a substantial and long term impairment with an adverse impact and normal way of working. If a student declares an ongoing medical or SEMH need, or one becomes apparent or is diagnosed during their studies at Notre Dame, they will be interviewed by the HOLS to ascertain their specific needs, following which, a decision will be made as to whether alternative rooming is appropriate.

Supervised rest breaks

Supervised rest breaks are awarded for various reasons, including a medical condition, sensory and physical needs, social and emotional health needs, communication and interaction needs and cognition and learning needs. In all cases, there is a requirement for written evidence in which the need for this arrangement is overt (i.e. EHCP, a report from a qualified professional, a letter on NHS headed paper, usually written by a consultant or similar and not a GP). Evidence of need for supervised rest breaks, the candidate's established difficulties and their normal way of working within the centre is stored securely in the student's exam access arrangements file. The HOLS must confirm the need for this arrangement and that it is the student's normal way of working on a Form 9 or a Form 8 where 25% extra is also being awarded.

Word processor

Where a student uses a word processor / laptop, with the spelling and grammar checkers switched off, their reason for doing so must be compliant with the exam centres Word Processor Policy (see Word Processor Policy). Evidence of this, as well as it being their normal way of working, is stored in their exam access arrangements file.

All exam access arrangements are awarded in accordance with JCQ regulations laid out in the current edition of "Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties. Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments", which is reviewed and updated annually. Relevant staff ensure that they are entirely familiar with the contents of this document, and they access training as part of their continuing professional development on an annual basis.