

Dealing with parental requests / pressure for access arrangements...in particular extra time, alternative accommodation and/or separate invigilation

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ExamsOffice

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments

The role of the SENCo

JCQ regulations

The SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff within an FE college, fully supported by teaching staff and members of the senior leadership team, must lead on the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process within their centre

Teaching staff and members of the senior leadership team must support the SENCo in identifying, determining and implementing appropriate and practicable access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

The SENCo must work with the centre's appointed assessor to ensure a consistent, joined-up process. This will also allow the SENCo to discuss individual candidate cases with the assessor before making final decisions

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 an individual candidate's needs and how 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

The key principles of negotiation

1. Be aware of the JCQ regulations relating to issue involved
2. Understand the current situation...and any history
3. Be clear over what you want to achieve
4. Listen to the other party
5. Avoid emotions
6. Look for common ground/offer alternatives
7. Try to provide some concession(s) to the other party whilst adhering to JCQ/awarding body regulations

Discussion: How would you deal with the following scenario?

25% extra time

A parent presents a letter/report from a medical consultant which states that their child should be awarded 25% extra time

Discussion - 25% extra time

Discuss the issues raised by the medical consultant with the parent

Explain the JCQ regulations

Offer to observe/test the student in class time and assessments/mock exams

Work with teaching staff and your assessor to gather evidence

Arrange a follow up meeting...where you may offer alternatives

25% extra time (Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments, Introduction & section 5.2)

Highlight/be aware of regulations including that:

- Although professionals from other organisations may give advice, but they cannot make the decision for the centre as they will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how 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, and that failure to comply with the regulations may constitute malpractice and impact the candidate's result(s)
- ...and that to award 25% extra time the SENCo must determine the needs of the candidate based on one of the following:

A current Education, Health and Care Plan (England) which confirms the candidate's disability (supplemented by the required centre-based evidence)

A fully completed Form 8, with an assessment (Part 2 of Form 8) carried out no earlier than the start of Year 9 by an assessor, confirming a learning difficulty relating to secondary/further education

Discussion: How would you deal with the following scenario?

Alternative rooming

Despite no evidence in internal tests/mock exams, a parent states that their child has been displaying signs of anxiousness/nervousness about their forthcoming mock exams and would benefit from alternative rooming

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Discussion - Alternative rooming

Speak with teaching staff/head of year to gather evidence (if any)

Ask the head of year to contact the parent/attend the meeting

Listen to the evidence offered by the parent

Explain JCQ regulations

Offer to observe/test the student in the forthcoming mock exams

Work with teaching staff to gather evidence

Arrange a follow up meeting

Suggestion: If there is insufficient evidence for alternative rooming, and if a room is available, you may consider an offer to accommodate the candidate in a room other the main exam room with a smaller group of candidates on the grounds that candidates may be disturbed by an overly anxious/nervous candidate

Alternative rooming arrangements (Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments, section 5.16)

A candidate may only take their examinations in a smaller environment away from the main examination room if they have an established difficulty (JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations, section 14.18):

The candidate's disability must be established within the centre

This means it is known to a Form Tutor, a Head of Year, the SENCo or a senior member of staff with pastoral responsibilities

It must reflect the candidate's normal and current way of working in internal school/college tests and mock examinations

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations is not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre

The use of an alternative room with one-to-one invigilation **must only** apply where the candidate has a serious medical condition such as frequent seizures, Tourette's or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the examination room

Alternative rooming arrangements policy

A decision where an exam candidate may be approved alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs will be made by the SENCo (or equivalent role).

The decision will be based on:

- whether the candidate has a substantial and long-term impairment which has an adverse effect and
- the candidate's normal way of working within the centre (AARA 5.16)

Overtype here the centre's criteria (or policy) on alternative rooming arrangements (which may include sitting the examination outside of the main examination hall/room e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs or 1:1 invigilation) or alternatively include as an appendix at the end of this document.

Alternative rooming arrangements must reflect the candidate's normal and current way of working in internal school/college tests and mock examinations.

Nervousness, low level anxiety or being worried about examinations is not sufficient grounds for separate invigilation within the centre.

The use of an alternative room with one-to-one invigilation must only apply where the candidate has a serious medical condition, such as frequent seizures, Tourette's or significant behavioural issues which would disturb other candidates in the examination room. (AARA 5.16)

Responding to parental requests

Suggested actions

- Allow parents to clarify/explain the issue and their request
- Acknowledge their perspective/viewpoint before introducing a differing opinion, using phrases such as, "I understand why you have made this request, but based on the regulations, we are required to..."
- Provide factual evidence: Instead of simply saying "you are wrong," offer concrete evidence from the regulations/centre policy to support your position
- Always quote from JCQ regulations/awarding body requirements and centre policies
- Even though their request may be unrealistic/in conflict with the regulations, remain calm and respectful. Avoid direct confrontation and base responses on the regulations/centre policy
- If possible, try and offer alternatives