HART LEARNING GROUP

ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS POLICY 2026/27

GOVERNANCE AND CONTROL

Date approved by SMT	Keith Turner
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Accountable member of Group SMT	Deputy Principal
Responsible member of staff	Head of Additional Learning Support
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AUDIENCE

Applicable to students?	Yes
Accessible to students?	Yes
Accessible to public?	Yes

KEY STAFF

ALS lead/SENCo	Deborah McCreath
ALS lead/SENCo line manager (Senior leader)	Lara Mathie
Head of centre	Kit Davies
Assessor(s)	Danielle McDonald
Access Arrangement Facilitator(s)	Danielle McDonald NHC Exams Team

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that North Hertfordshire College (NHC) and Hart Learning Group have a written record. This clearly shows the centre is leading the access arrangements process and is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements.

This policy is maintained and held by the ALS leads / SENCo alongside the individual files/e-folders of each access arrangements candidate. Each file/e-folder contains detailed records of all the essential information that is required to be held according to the regulations.

The policy is annually reviewed 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**'.

[1]This publication is further referred to in this policy as AA

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The principles for the centre to consider are detailed in AA (section 4.2). These include:

- The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate, preventing him/her from being placed at a substantial disadvantage due to persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for disabled candidates.
- The SENCo/ Assessor must ensure that the proposed access arrangement/ reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate.
- Although access arrangements/ adjustments are intended to allow access to assessments, they cannot be granted where they will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question. For example, the use of a practical assistant will not normally be allowed when practical skills are being tested.
- Candidates may not require the same access arrangements/ reasonable adjustments in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessment may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. The SENCo/ Assessor must consider the need for access arrangements/ reasonable adjustments on a subject-by-subject basis.
- Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment.
- The arrangement(s) put in place **must** reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre. This is referred to as the students' 'Normal Way of Working'.
- The candidate **must** have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before his/her first examination.

DEFINITIONS

Access arrangements:

Access arrangements are agreed before an examination. 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 examination. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

Reasonable adjustments:

The Equality Act 2010 requires an Exam Centre 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 Exam Centre 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 visually 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 several factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- The needs of the 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 North Hertfordshire College (NHC)/ Hart Learning Group.
- Involves unreasonable timeframes; **or**
- Affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'.

OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCLOSE

NHC will consider whether previous access arrangements remain appropriate when a student has a history of difficulties that are long-term.

Usually, this will mean that the student will have had Access Arrangements in their previous educational setting. NHC will give the following opportunities for disclosure to all students joining courses:

- During open days/ evenings
- At application
- At interview
- At enrolment
- During induction
- Disclosure to ALS team and/ or tutors once studying at NHC via the QR code or meetings with staff

REFERRALS FOR ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

EAA declarations/ information and new referrals will be sent directly to the Access Arrangement Team. The Exam Access Arrangement (EAA) team will attempt to get the JCQ Form 8 and/ or any other relevant paperwork from the previous educational setting if applicable.

The existing Form 8 will be used if all of the following are true:

- NHC has a copy of the assessor qualifications, and these are suitable

qualifications for 2025/2026.
- The form is fully complete with all names, dates and signatures in place.
- The tests used, and the AAs recommended are suitable according to JCQ 2025/ 2026 guidelines.

Please note, an electronic signature on a Form 8 will be allowed. Where an existing form 8 can be used, the Access Arrangement Team will gather course-based evidence of continuing needs and confirm the arrangements are the student's normal way of working. A form 8RF will be completed once the evidence is obtained. Please note that students are not automatically eligible for the arrangements they have received in previous settings. These arrangements need to continue to reflect their normal way of working in class.

Normal way of working

JCQ booklet (page 26, 4.2.5) states that,
"*the arrangement(s) put in place **must** reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre", for example:*

- In the classroom (where appropriate)
- Working in small groups for reading and/or writing
- Support lessons
- Intervention strategies
- In internal school tests/ examinations
- Mock examinations

This is commonly referred to as the 'normal way of working' and this information is typically gathered from the curriculum and ALS staff working with the student. For candidates with learning difficulties, this is typically the background information recorded within Part 1 of Form 8 by the assessor working within the centre. For Access Arrangements to be awarded, the arrangements must reflect their normal way of working in class. For example, a student who is persistently working at a slower speed in class and is therefore given additional time to complete their work would be assessed for extra time for exams. If the student writes for themselves in class, they would not be eligible for a scribe or a PC, even if they received this in their previous setting.

If a candidate has been granted Access Arrangements and never used them, the arrangements are **NOT** a normal way of working and they should not be awarded for exams. The EAA/ Exams Team will monitor use of Access Arrangements and record what is used in each exam.

Medical Needs

The curriculum, ALS Team, the student or their parent/ carer will send any diagnostic or medical reports to the EAA team so that these can be used as evidence of the need for Access Arrangements. If suitable medical evidence exists, an assessment is not needed, and a Form 9 will be completed by the Assessor.

EHCP students

Where a student has a **current** EHCP, a Form 9 will be written to reflect the difficulties described in the EHCP. Arrangements will be put in place based on the student's normal way of working in class, reflecting their current difficulties.

ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

Assessments are carried out by an assessor(s) appointed by the Head of ALS. The assessors are appropriately qualified as required by JCQ regulations in AA, section 7.3.

Access Arrangements appointments will be set up based on the order of need and approaching exam.

All referrals will be made to the Access Arrangement Team **before 12th December 2025** to ensure there is enough time to process applications and put reasonable adjustments in place for exams. Exceptions will be made to the referral deadline for temporary injury, for students joining NHC late and missing the opportunities to disclose, for example.

NHC will consider Access Arrangements for exams, controlled assessments and class tests when there is clear evidence of a genuine need for the arrangement on account of:

- Cognition and learning needs.
- Communication and interaction needs.
- A medical condition.
- Sensory and physical needs.
- Social, mental, and emotional needs.

In addition, the difficulties will be well known within NHC by tutors, ALS team and/ or Student Services.
The following are examples of what arrangements may be considered for the purposes of facilitating access, as long as they do not impact any competence standards being tested:

- 25% Extra Time
- More than 25% Extra Time
- Reader/ Computer Reader
- Scribe
- Use of a PC with spellcheck
- Modified papers
- Practical assistant
- Use of bilingual dictionary with 25% Extra Time
- Use of mobile phone in exams for medical reasons
- Use of headphones to listen to music for medical reasons
- Use of a PC without spellcheck
- Supervised rest breaks
- Smaller/ separate room
- Assessment material on coloured paper
- Enlarged papers
- Prompter
- Use of bilingual dictionary without 25% extra time
- Use of coloured overlays, fidget toys, noise- cancelling headphones

Not all of the adjustments above will be permitted, reasonable or practical in particular situations. The student may not be allowed, or need, the same adjustment for all assessments. Please note that the arrangements listed in purple require awarding body approval prior to any examinations taking place. The remaining arrangements are delegated by the centre.

The following process will be followed once a referral for Access Arrangements has been received:

- The student will be added to the ALS database and the curriculum team will be asked for evidence of the student's normal working arrangements if this has not already been provided. It is expected that there will be clear evidence of difficulties that are long-term and substantial, which will usually be gathered on a Normal Way of Working (NWW) form.
- The EAA Assessor will meet with the student once the evidence noted above is gathered. Please note that privately commissioned assessments carried out without prior consultation with the EAA team cannot be used to award access arrangements and cannot be used to process an application using access arrangements online. A diagnostic assessment report that is handed in will be used as information to inform testing at NHC only**.**
- Part 1 of Form 8 will be completed at the start of the assessment appointment, after receiving a NWW and clarifying details with the student, making use of any other documents available (ALS paperwork, school Form 8 which cannot be used to make a Form 8RF).
- Once Part 1 is complete, the EAA assessment will take place. Once the assessment is complete, the assessor will complete the Form 8 document and inform the student of their agreed access arrangements. The student will receive an EAA card confirming their agreed exam arrangements, which they will sign to show they are aware of what is in place for their exams.

What if a student has an Exam before the EAA's are sorted?

If a student has an exam before their EAAs are in place, they should not be forced to take the exam without their EAAs. If they **want** to take the exam, they will need to sign a disclaimer stating that they wish to do the exam without AAs. In-house arrangements, which do not need awarding body approval (such as rest breaks) may be put in place as a temporary arrangement.

Declining EAAs

Students may be referred for exam arrangements from their previous setting, tutors or ALS staff, however they may feel they do not need any reasonable adjustments. In this case, the student would meet with the assessor to discuss options for support and sign a decline form if they want to sit their exams without any EAAs.

CENTRE-SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR PARTICULAR ARRANGEMENTS /ADJUSTMENTS

Exam Access Arrangement	
Extra Time (up to 25%)	For 25% Extra Time, a Form 8 with assessment evidence is needed for candidates with cognition and learning difficulties who do not have an EHCP or medical evidence. The application for 25% Extra Time must be processed with the relevant awarding body. Candidates who require assessment for 25% Extra Time must be assessed in at least two different areas of speed of working (cognitive processing speed, reading speed or writing speed) and must score in the below average range (84 or less) in at least two areas or have one below average and one low average score (85-89).

	If a candidate uses a PC as their normal way of working, they cannot be assessed with speed of writing as this will not be a fair test. Candidates must have a referral from their tutors explaining their difficulties and how they are given extra time in class as a normal way of working to be assessed for extra time in their exams.
Extra Time (over 50%)	In extremely rare and exceptional circumstances, a candidate may require more than 50% to manage a very substantial impairment. For example, a candidate with a severe visual impairment who is very slow in reading a modified enlarged or braille paper and cannot access an electronic paper may require additional time of up to 100%. The application will be automatically rejected for extra time over 50%. The centre must then make an online referral to the relevant awarding body and the application will be considered in the light of the candidate's needs. Detailed information must be provided to the relevant awarding body, including the very substantial nature of the candidate's impairment and why 50% extra time is insufficient.
Supervised Rest Breaks	The student should have medical evidence to demonstrate that rest breaks are their normal way of working. For example, students with ADHD, diabetes or epilepsy may need rest breaks. There will be a consultant report /letter as evidence saved in their E-File. For students who do not have medical evidence, there will be a clear history of difficulties in study, which is known by the curriculum/ ALS team. The NWW form from tutors at NHC will show that there is a significant difficulty which is supported in class, usually by the provision of short breaks. During exams, students are usually not permitted to take rest breaks during the first 20 minutes of the exam. Rest breaks should not exceed 10 minutes per hour of the exam. If a student asks for rest breaks, but no medical evidence can be produced, or if tutors teaching the subject in which there are exams, state in the NWW form that they are not aware of difficulties, rest breaks will usually not be possible.

Reader/ Computer Reader	An application for a reader or computer reader must be processed via the relevant awarding body. A reader is a responsible adult who reads the instructions of the question paper and the questions to the candidate. This may involve reading the whole paper or just specific words to the candidate. The reader is not allowed to provide definitions or substitute different words. Usually, the reader is not the student's teacher or Inclusion Assistant, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Readers can be placed into a shared room of up to four students. Computer software which accurately reads out text but does not decode or interpret the paper may be used as a computer reader. This access arrangement may be used for English reading exams, where a human reader is not permitted. Candidates who persistently struggle with reading, or who are so focused on decoding the words that they are unable to read with meaning and need to re-read the same sentence several times, may require a reader/computer reader. This should be their normal way of working in the classroom and reflected on their NWW form. The assessor will have written a concise statement on the Form 8 or Form 9 stating the candidate's need for a reader/computer reader and that it is their normal way of working.
Scribe/ Speech Recognition Technology	An application for a scribe or speech recognition technology must be processed via the relevant awarding body. A scribe is a responsible adult who types or writes the candidate's dictated answers to questions. The scribe cannot paraphrase the candidate's answers. Usually, the scribe is not the student's teacher or Inclusion Assistant, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where it reflects the candidate's normal way of working, the candidate may alternatively use a word processor with spelling and grammar check facilities fully enabled. Candidates will be awarded a scribe/speech recognition technology if it is their normal way of working and if, during assessment, their writing speed is below average (a score of 84 or less) or if their spelling is illegible or attempts to spell words are unrecognisable. Candidate with an EHCP who use a scribe/ speech recognition technology as their normal way of working do not need to be assessed and a Form 9 is sufficient. Candidates who are completing exams in English where marks are given for Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar may choose to have the spelling and grammar check facility disabled as marks can only be awarded if the candidate has demonstrated these skills. Please note that speech recognition technology cannot be used for maths exams.

1:1 Invigilation	Students can be placed in a room on their own for exams, with an invigilator, only if a large amount of evidence of need exists because of long-term and substantial learning needs, sensory needs, emotional or behavioural needs. It is expected that this will include **evidence of** *more than one* of the following: ▪ EHCP / High Needs Funding ▪ Significant SEMH/ medical needs ▪ Student Services/ Pastoral interventions required on a regular basis ▪ the needs are known to all staff teaching a student reflected through their Normal Way of Working ▪ a history of high levels of ALS support In addition, it is expected that there should be some evidence that a small room of up to 8 would not provide enough support.
Exam in a small room (2-8) students	Students can be placed in a small room with up to 7 other students, with invigilation, only if a large amount of evidence of need exists because of long-term and substantial learning needs, sensory needs, emotional or behavioural needs. It is expected that this will include **evidence of** *at least one* of the following: ▪ EHCP / High Needs Funding ▪ High SEMH/ medical needs ▪ Student Services/ Pastoral interventions required as needed ▪ the needs are known to all staff teaching a student reflected through their Normal Way of Working ▪ a history of high levels of ALS support In addition, it is expected that there should be some evidence that a small room of up to 20 would not provide enough support.
Exam in a medium room (up to 20 students)	Students can be placed in a small room with up to 19 other students, with invigilation, only if evidence of need exists because of learning needs, sensory needs, emotional or behavioural needs. It is expected that this will include **evidence of** *at least one* of the following: ▪ EHCP / High Needs Funding ▪ SEMH/ medical needs ▪ Student Services/ Pastoral interventions ▪ the needs are known to all staff teaching a student reflected through their Normal Way of Working ▪ a history of ALS support.
Special considerations	Where a student has extenuating circumstances leading up to an exam that requires a change to their Normal Way of Working, these will be considered on an individual basis alongside NHC's exam policy.
Sympathetic Seating	Where sufficient evidence is not available for the arrangements above, but curriculum/ ALS staff have evidenced a need, students will be seated

	in the main exam room but sympathetically invited to sit where they are comfortable such as: ■ near the window or door ■ at the front of the room facing the invigilator ■ at the back of the room ■ in a quiet corner These arrangements will be reflected in the student's Normal Way of Working.
Prompter	There is no requirement to process an application for a prompter using access arrangements online. No evidence is needed to support the arrangement for inspection purposes. A prompter may be permitted where a candidate has a substantial and long-term adverse impairment resulting in persistent distractibility or significant difficulty in concentrating.
Practical Assistant	A practical assistant carries out practical tasks at the instruction of the candidate and approval must be applied for from the relevant awarding body. For example, a candidate with severe vision impairment may need his/her hand guided to the relevant page or section of text in a paper. However, care must be taken not to direct the candidate to the answer. A candidate with very poor motor coordination may need help with holding a ruler or using mathematical equipment. A practical assistant is not a reader or a scribe, unless they have been given permission and it is part of the candidate's normal way of working. Candidates using a practical assistant may need to be accommodated in a separate room.
Bilingual Dictionaries with 25% Extra Time	This is a rare and exceptional arrangement specifically for a candidate who entered the UK less than three years before the time of the exams, with no prior knowledge of the English Language. The Exam Arrangement Manager must determine the needs of the individual candidate. Not all candidates for whom English is an additional language will need to use a bilingual translation dictionary. Very few bilingual translation dictionary users will need to have 25% additional time. There is no requirement to process an application for a bilingual translation dictionary (without 25% extra time) using access arrangements online. No evidence is needed to support the arrangement for inspection purposes. Where a bilingual dictionary with 25% extra time is to be used, an online application must be submitted to the awarding body.
Coloured Paper/ Overlays	If the candidate has significant visual stress and words appear to move on paper or blur when they are being read, then they may use coloured paper or coloured overlays. If the candidate's normal way of working is to have work printed onto coloured paper, or they tint the colour of their computer screen, then the exam papers can be ordered on coloured paper. The candidate will be

	asked to identify the appropriate colour from a selection of colours available to the exam team. If the candidate's normal way of working is to use a coloured overlay, they will be allowed to bring their own overlay into their exams.
Modified Papers	▪ **Braille Papers** ▪ **Modified Enlarged Papers** ▪ **Unmodified Enlarged Papers** ▪ **Unmodified Coloured Papers** Modified papers must be applied for using AAO not later than ten weeks before the date of the assessment. They are only given when orders are made by the deadline. The deadline for summer GCSE exams is 31st January 2026. Where it reflects the candidate's normal way of working, centres may provide an A3 enlargement of non-secure materials without requesting the permission of the awarding body. The language of non-secure materials must not be changed without prior permission of the awarding body. The candidates must ensure that they are familiar with the format of modified enlarged papers or Braille papers being requested by exams. For some subjects, a modified enlarged paper alone may not be a reasonable adjustment for a candidate with a severe vision impairment. A practical assistant and/or a reader may also be required.
Listening to music/ white noise	The Access Arrangement Manager must complete a Form 9 confirming the candidate's disability. This will be a candidate with social, emotional and mental health needs or a candidate with a sensory impairment such as tinnitus or misophonia. Formal evidence must be available to confirm the candidate's medical condition. This is an exceptionally rare arrangement and is only awarded to those with a substantial impairment, as evidenced by their NWW and medical reports. The centre must ensure that the candidate uses a device which cannot be connected to the internet, and the music playlist must be checked to ensure an advantage is not conferred to the candidate. The application for this arrangement must be processed with the relevant awarding body.
Access to a Mobile phone for medical purposes	Mobile phones are permitted in exams if a student requires access for medical purposes, e.g. to control blood sugar levels for diabetes management. The Access Arrangement Manager must complete a Form 9 confirming the candidate's medical condition and the need to access their mobile phone during an examination. Formal evidence must be available to confirm the candidate's medical condition. When this arrangement is in place, the student will be invigilated in a separate 1:1 room, to ensure the mobile phone use is monitored. The application for this arrangement must be processed with the relevant awarding body.

Other arrangements	For the requirements below, there is no requirement to process an application using AAO. No evidence is needed to support the arrangement for inspection purposes. ▪ Colour naming by the invigilator for candidates who are colour blind ▪ Fidget toys and stress balls ▪ Low vision aid/ Magnifier ▪ Enlarged graph paper to A3 for candidates with visual difficulties The Access Arrangement Manager must make their decision 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.
Word Processor (with or without spellcheck)	NHC hold a separate word processor policy, which can be found within the ALS policy SharePoint folder.