Exams Access Arrangements Policy 2026-2027

St David's Centre

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Centre name	St David's Centre
Centre number	24157
Date policy first created	07/11/2026
Current policy approved by	Beverley Blower
Current policy reviewed by	Emma Newman
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Date of next review	31/10/2027

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	**Name**
Head of centre	Beverley Blower
Senior leader(s)	Beverley Blower Nick James-Williams Jonathan Sheers Jenny Rooney Richard Brookes Alan Banks Sarah Mobbs Melissa Targett April Howard
Exams Officer	Emma Newman
SENCo (or equivalent role)	April Howard
Other staff (if applicable)	

This policy is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that access arrangements process at St David's Centre is managed in accordance with current requirements and regulations and reflects centre practice.

References in this policy to GR, ICE and AARA refer to the JCQ documents **General Regulations for Approved Centres, Instructions for conducting examinations** and **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**.

References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010. Separate legislation is in place for Northern Ireland (see AARA 1.8). The definitions and procedures in AARA relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will also apply in Northern Ireland.

Introduction

(AARA Definitions)

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 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'.

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 several 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.

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that St David's Centre has a written record which clearly shows the centre is leading on the access arrangements process and:

- is complying with its obligation to identify the need for, request and implement access arrangements (GR 5.4)
- has a written process in place to check the qualification(s) of its assessor(s) **and** that the correct procedures are followed, as in Chapter 7 of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (GR 5.4)

1. General principles

The head of centre/senior leadership team will appoint a SENCo, or an equivalent member of staff, to coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre and determine and implement appropriate arrangements for candidates with learning difficulties or disabilities, those for whom English is an additional language and those with a temporary illness or temporary injury. (GR 5.4)

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. (AA 4.2)

The principles for St David's Centre to consider 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 them 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 a disabled candidate (AARA 4.2)
- 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 (AARA 4.2)
- Candidates may not require the same access arrangements/reasonable adjustments in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. The need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments must be considered on a subject-by-subject basis (AARA 4.2)
- Applications for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the start of or during the first year of a two-year the course having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working (AARA 4.2)
- Arrangements **must** always be approved **before** an examination or assessment (AARA 4.2)
- The arrangement(s) put in place **must** reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre (AARA 4.2)
- The candidate **must** have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before their first examination (AARA 4.2)

The main elements of the process detailing staff roles and responsibilities in identifying the need for, requesting and implementing access arrangements/reasonable adjustments and the conduct of examinations are covered in:

- The Exams Equalities Policy.

2. The assessment process

At St David's Centre, assessments are carried out by:

- an appropriately qualified assessor(s) appointed by the head of centre in accordance with the JCQ requirements (AARA 7.3)

Details and qualification(s) of the current assessor(s)

Holly Bolt BA, PGCE, APC, MDG - Neurodiversity Specialist Consultant, Assessor and Trainer.

Appointment of assessors

At the point an assessor is engaged/employed at St David's Centre:

- Evidence of the assessor's qualification is obtained and checked against the current requirements (AARA 7.3)
- This process is carried out prior to the assessor undertaking any assessment of a candidate (AARA 7.3)
- Evidence that the assessor(s) is/are suitably qualified will be drawn from the appropriate source(s), for example, a copy of a current practising certificate, a copy of a Level 7 assessment qualification certificate, screenshot of relevant registration or listing showing the unique registration number/code, expiry date (where applicable) and/or certificate number (AARA 7.4)

Additional information:

Not applicable.

Reporting the appointment of assessors

- Evidence that the assessor(s) is/are suitably qualified is held on file for inspection purposes (AARA 7.4)

When requested, the evidence will be presented to the JCQ Centre Inspector by:

- the SENDCo, or the Exams Officer in their absence.
- In the case of appropriately qualified psychologists (registered with the Health & Care Professions Council), or specialist teacher 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*. (AARA 7.4)
- The names of all other assessors, who are assessing candidates studying qualifications as covered by the *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* document must be entered into *Access arrangements online* to confirm their status (AARA 7.4)

Process for the assessment of a candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor

St David's Centre confirms:

- Guidelines for the assessment of the candidate's learning difficulties by an assessor will be followed and Form 8 (JCQ/AA/LD - Profile of Learning Difficulties) will be completed (AARA 7.5, 7.6)
- Arrangements must be made for the candidate to be assessed by the centre's appointed assessor (AARA 7.5)
- Assessors **must** personally conduct the assessments. They **must not** sign off assessments carried out by another professional (AARA 7.5)
- The assessor **must** carry out tests which are relevant to support the application (AARA 7.5)
- 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* (AARA 7.3)
- Relevant staff working within the centre should always carefully consider any privately commissioned assessment to see whether the process of gathering a picture of need, demonstrating normal way of working within the centre and, ultimately, assessing the candidate themselves should be instigated (AARA 7.3)

Additional information:

Not applicable.

Picture of need/normal way of working

St David's Centre confirms:

- Before the candidate's assessment, the person appointed in the centre **must** provide the assessor with background information, i.e. a picture of need has been painted, as required in Part 1 of Form 8. The centre and the assessor **must** work together to ensure a joined-up and consistent process (AARA 7.5)

Additional information:

For HPRS, where applicable, the SENCo and appointed assessor ensure that assessments for access arrangements are completed in accordance with JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA). This includes compliance with AARA sections 7.5 and 7.6, which set out the requirements for assessing a candidate's learning difficulties and completing Form 8 (JCQ/AA/LD Profile of Learning Difficulties). Evidence to support applications for access arrangements, including 25% extra time, is gathered from a range of sources such as specialist assessor reports, normal way of working evidence, educational records, and teacher feedback. Where relevant, the centre also refers to JCQ's supplementary guidance, including the March 2026 guidance on evidencing applications for 25% extra time, to ensure that all applications are appropriately evidenced and meet current regulatory requirements. All evidence is securely retained and made available for inspection by the awarding bodies upon request.

3. Processing access arrangements and adjustments

Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval

Access arrangements online (AAO) is used to apply for approval of arrangements/adjustments for the qualifications listed within the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*.

AAO is a shared digital service that enables centres to request and manage pre-agreed adjustments, such as extra time, readers, scribes or modified papers, for students with specific needs, disabilities or temporary injuries in a consistent and efficient way across JCQ member qualifications. It sits within the JCQ Centre Admin Portal and is used by centres to submit a single application per student, rather than applying separately to each member, helping to streamline administration while supporting regulatory compliance and data protection requirements. (www.jcq.org.uk/about-us/shared-services/#aao)

Deadlines apply for each examination series for submitting applications for approval using AAO.

Online applications **must** only be processed where they are supported by the centre **and** the candidate meets the published criteria for the arrangement(s) with the full supporting evidence in place. (AARA 8.1)

Candidates **must** be informed that an application for access arrangements will be processed using Access arrangements online, complying with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. (AARA 8.6)

Centre delegated arrangements/adjustments

Decisions relating to the approval of centre delegated arrangements/adjustments are made by:

- The SENDCo.

Appropriate evidence, where required by the arrangement, is held on file by:

- The SENDCo.

- **The use of a word processor**

The Exams Word Processor Policy details the criteria St David's Centre specifically uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations and assessments.

- **Alternative rooming arrangements**

The Exams Alternative Rooming Arrangements Policy details the criteria St David's Centre uses to award alternative rooming arrangements, e.g. a room for a smaller group of candidates with similar needs or an alternative room with one-to-one invigilation.

Additional information

Not applicable.

Modified papers

Modified papers (in the standard formats available) are ordered using AAO.

- Modified papers must be ordered in advance of a specific examination series, no later than the published deadline for the series concerned (AARA 6.1)
- Modified papers are prepared for candidates for whom other adjustments are unsuitable. The modification of papers involves additional resources. Therefore centres must provide the awarding bodies with early notification that a candidate will require a modified paper (AARA 6.1)
- Modified papers **must not** be ordered for candidates unless the centre intends to enter them for the relevant examination series (AARA 6.1)
- For the adjustment to be effective, the candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using an awarding body's past modified papers before their first examination (AARA 6.1)

Roles and responsibilities

When an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment has been processed online and approved, the evidence of need (where required) must be made available to a JCQ Centre Inspector upon request. An awarding body may also request evidence of need when considered necessary. This can either be in hard copy paper format or electronically. (AARA 4.2)

Where documentation is stored electronically an e-folder for each individual candidate must be created. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection. (AARA 4.2)

It is the responsibility of:

- The SENDCo to inform candidates that an application for access arrangements will be processed using *Access arrangements online*, complying with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018
- The SENDCo to submit applications for approval using AAO
- The SENDCo to keep detailed records for inspection purposes, whether electronically or in hard copy paper format, of all the essential information on file. This includes a copy of the candidate's approved application, appropriate evidence of need (where required) and evidence of the assessor's qualification (where required) (AARA 8.6)
- The SENDCo to submit applications for approval directly to an awarding body for any qualification that does not fall within the scope of AAO
- The Exams Officer to order modified papers

Additional responsibilities:

Not applicable.

Changes effective from 1 September 2026

(Amended) Under heading **Appointment of assessors** amended wording of bullet point relating to evidence that the assessor(s) is/are suitably qualified.

(Added/amended) Under heading **Arrangements/adjustments requiring awarding body approval** added/amended information relating to AAO.

Centre-specific changes

Upon review in November 2026 more detailed information was added to the Picture of need/normal way of working statement.