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Lord Hill of Oareford  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

Ref: JS / SpecReqs

16 January 2012

Dear Sir

**Re: Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration  
General and Vocational Qualifications**

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) consists of seven qualifications providers in the United Kingdom - AQA, City & Guilds, CCEA, Edexcel, OCR, SQA and WJEC. The JCQ exists to ensure that learners of all ages and levels of ability have access to qualifications that enable life-long learning to take place. The JCQ was formed to enable its member awarding organisations to act together in providing, wherever possible, common administrative arrangements for the schools and colleges and other providers which offer their qualifications. The awarding organisations work together to create common standards, regulations and guidance. This ensures that examinations are sat under consistent regulations. To this end, JCQ publishes a booklet entitled '*Regulations and Guidance – Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration – General and Vocational qualifications*'. This is updated annually, in consultation with disability groups, for the start of each new academic year.

Late in 2011, a vocal minority of centres made complaints that JCQ had, for the academic year 2011/12, made a significant change to its policy regarding one particular access arrangement, namely the criteria for the granting of extra time (up to 25%) in examinations. These perceived changes to the regulations allowing extra time (up to 25%) in examinations appear to have arisen from our attempts to make the criteria for this particular access arrangement as clear as possible. In the appendix to this letter, the relevant sections from the Access Arrangements booklets over the past three years have been provided to show how the wording has actually changed as we have sought to make absolutely explicit what the criteria for the granting of extra time (up to 25%) are.

The initial three criteria for the granting of extra time (up to 25%) have not changed. Although there may have been slight changes in wording over time, basically they were, and still are:

- A statement of special educational needs  
or
- An assessment by a qualified psychologist or a specialist teacher  
or
- A medical report

A fourth criterion was added in **2010** which is paraphrased as:

- The candidate's normal way of working and there is evidence of need.

Because these criteria have not changed materially, they have not been highlighted in any of the booklets as having been changed. Neither has there been a statement in the current booklet, on page (vi), *'Changes for the academic year 2011/12'* to indicate there has been any intention to amend the criteria for extra time (up to 25%). The assertion of JCQ is therefore that the criteria have not changed for this academic year (2011/2012).

If anything, any change arose during the academic year **2010/2011** when it was stated that the assessments of processing, reading or writing speeds were required to have generated 'low standardised' scores and centres were also required to paint a picture of need. From September 2010, it was stipulated that a report from an educational psychologist or a specialist teacher or indeed a statement of special educational need alone was not enough. The centre had to supplement such documentation with mock examination papers and/or comments and observations from teaching staff as to why the candidate needed and how they used the extra time, thereby demonstrating the actual application of extra time during normal school activities.

Concerns had been expressed to JCQ that some centres were accepting privately commissioned educational psychologists' reports unquestioningly and consequently granting extra time to students for examinations only, and not to any other normal school activity; hence the requirement to demonstrate that the candidate does use extra time as part of his/her normal way of working.

Where there have been changes to the wording on page 5 of the current version of *'Regulations and Guidance – Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration'*, they have been made to further clarify and make explicit what had always been intended and to prevent any loose interpretation of the criteria. In the 2009/10 version of the booklet, the assessment by a qualified psychologist or a specialist teacher had to confirm a learning disability. We were asked to clarify what this meant. Therefore, in the 2010/11 version of the booklet this was amended to "The assessment must confirm that the candidate is unable to complete a timed assessment in the time allowed. Evidence is likely to include more than one of the following – low standardised scores using assessments of processing speed, reading and/or writing speed, samples of unfinished mock examinations or other timed assessments and an individual education plan (or equivalent) noting the need for extra time". We were then asked to define what was meant by a low standardised score. Hence, in the 2011/12 version of the booklet the statement was amended to state "The assessment(s) must confirm that the candidate is unable to complete an assessment in the time allowed. This will be indicated by below average standardised scores in assessments of processing speed, reading and/or writing speed or a below average free writing speed.

A candidate with dyslexia is not automatically entitled to extra time in an examination, just as it does not mean (s)he automatically qualifies for a reader or a scribe. The criterion of need must first be satisfied. This criterion applies to all students and to all access arrangements.

The reference in the 2010/11 edition of the booklet to low standardised scores was meant to have been interpreted by centres as below average or a low average speed of processing, as measured by a nationally standardised test. Evidently, in some instances, a school may have interpreted 'low standardised' scores from the perspective of the student only, in that it was considered appropriate to grant extra time (up to 25%) to a student who furnished a standardised score in one of the assessments that was lower than the others rather than a standardised score that was lower than the average range for the cohort as a whole; hence, the clarification of the requirement in terms of a nationally standardised score. Extra time should only be awarded where the candidate has slower processing than the national average, arising from a standardised test, and the candidate's learning difficulty is leading to slower processing - whether reading comprehension, reading speed, writing speed, cognitive processing or working memory.

Students with average or above average scores should not be awarded extra time. For such candidates the centre is at liberty to award the use of a word processor, coloured overlays or allow the candidate to read aloud to themselves. Additionally, the centre may apply to photocopy the question paper onto coloured paper. Any of these measures would aid a dyslexic candidate to access an assessment.

The principles with regard to extra time (up to 25%) are no different to the use of a reader, a scribe or extra time (more than 25%).

- A reader - below average reading, whether reading accuracy or reading comprehension or reading speed.
- A scribe - below average spelling or below average writing speed.
- Extra time (more than 25%) - substantially below average speed of processing.

All of the above access arrangements require standardised scores arising from nationally standardised tests and the candidate must meet the published criteria (i.e. a standardised score of less than 85 (below average) or a standardised score of less than 70 (substantially below average)).

For extra time (up to 25%), normally below average standardised scores are required. However, to cater for those candidates who may just miss meeting the criteria for a reader or a scribe or where there are residual difficulties, a case can be made for students with low average standardised scores in the range 85 to 89.

JCQ consulted with disability groups when revising the regulations and guidance for 1 September 2011 to 31 August 2012. The guidance was posted on the JCQ website ([www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk)) on 26 August 2011 and distributed to centres in hard copy during September 2011.

The JCQ regulations now make specific reference to below average speed of processing with regard to extra time (up to 25%). The rules governing the application of extra time (up to 25%) have been strengthened for the academic year 2011/2012, to embed the concept introduced last year for centres to paint a picture of need.

I trust that this letter provides you with a full and detailed rationale for the process which the JCQ goes through to maintain its advice and guidance to, and regulations for centres. JCQ is fully aware that its advice, guidance and regulations must comply with the law, as it currently stands, be as clear as possible, and as least onerous as possible to implement for schools and colleges.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Sinclair".

**James Sinclair (Dr)**  
**Director**  
**JCQ**

cc Lord Clement-Jones

## Regulations and Guidance

### Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration

#### General and Vocational qualifications

2009 version

#### Synopsis of access arrangements and eligibility and/or evidence requirements

	Access Arrangement	Eligibility and/or evidence requirement	Chapter/section
11	<b>Extra time Up to a maximum of 25%</b> <b>(N.B. for many candidates a smaller allowance, such as 10% may be appropriate)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Statement of Special Education Needs relating to secondary/further education</li> <li>▪ Psychological assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist, or specialist assessment carried out by a specialist teacher</li> <li>▪ Medical report</li> </ul>	Chapter 1, sections 1.5.1, 1.5.2, 1.5.3, 1.5.4 / Chapter 2, section 2.1
12	<b>Extra time over 25% and up to a maximum of 100%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Psychological assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist, or specialist assessment carried out by a specialist teacher confirming substantially below average speed of processing</li> <li>▪ Medical/physical/psychological requirement</li> </ul>	Chapter 1, sections 1.5.1, 1.5.2, 1.5.3, 1.5.4 / Chapter 2, section 2.2

## **2.1 Extra time of up to 25%**

2.1.1 An application must be submitted using *Access arrangements online* prior to the candidate's first examination.

2.1.2 If the candidate has learning difficulties, the centre must assess the needs of the candidate based on one of the following documents, which can be used throughout the candidate's examinations:

- a Statement of Special Educational Needs relating to secondary/further education and which has reached the stage where an assessment has been carried out by the LA educational psychologist;
- a Psychological Assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist confirming learning disability relating to secondary/further education;
- an assessment confirming learning disability relating to secondary/further education carried out by a specialist teacher;
- privately commissioned reports must give a clear indication that there is evidence of need. The head of centre must be satisfied that there is a history of need and provision.

N.B It is only for access arrangements such as extra time of more than 25%, Oral Language Modifiers, readers and scribes that an assessment must be carried out within 26 months of the start of the examination series.

**Regulations and Guidance  
Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration  
General and Vocational qualifications**

**2010 version**

**Changes for the academic year 2010/11**

Changes made to the content of this booklet since the version (1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010) are highlighted for ease of identification. However, heads of centre, specialist teachers and examination officers **must** familiarise themselves with the entire contents of this booklet.

Some changes have been made to this year's booklet in order to improve clarity or to provide additional advice to centres.

**Principal changes:**

**Deadlines for submitting applications for access arrangements and modified papers online for GCSE and GCE qualifications**

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Which candidates will be eligible for access arrangements?</b>
<b>Chapter 2, Section 2.1</b>	<b>Extra time of up to 25%</b>

## Synopsis of access arrangements and eligibility and/or evidence requirements

	Access Arrangement	Eligibility and/or evidence requirement	Chapter/section
11	<b>Extra time Up to a maximum of 25% (N.B. for many candidates a smaller allowance, such as 10% may be appropriate)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Statement of Special Education Needs <b>relating to secondary education</b></li> <li>▪ Diagnostic assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist, or specialist assessment carried out by a specialist teacher confirming that extra time is needed to complete timed activities (must have been carried out <b>no earlier than Year 7</b>) – i.e. candidate works very slowly</li> <li>▪ Medical report</li> <li>▪ Normal way of working</li> </ul>	Chapter 1, sections 1.5.1, 1.5.2, 1.5.3, 1.5.4 / Chapter 2, section 2.1
12	<b>Extra time over 25% and up to a maximum of 100%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diagnostic assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist, or specialist assessment carried out by a specialist teacher confirming <b>substantially below average speed of processing (must</b> have been carried out within 26 months prior to examination)</li> <li>▪ Medical/physical/psychological requirement</li> <li>▪ Normal way of working</li> </ul>	Chapter 1, sections 1.5.1, 1.5.2, 1.5.3, 1.5.4 / Chapter 2, section 2.2

## 2.1 Extra time of up to 25%

2.1.1 An application **must** be submitted using *Access arrangements online* prior to the candidate's first examination.

2.1.2 If the candidate has learning difficulties, the centre **must** assess the needs of the candidate based on one of the following documents, **which can be used throughout the candidate's GCSE and GCE examinations**:

- **a Statement of Special Educational Needs relating to secondary education** and which has reached the stage where an assessment has been carried out by the LA educational psychologist;
- **an assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist confirming learning disability relating to secondary/further education.** The assessment **must** confirm that the candidate is unable to complete a timed assessment in the time allowed. Evidence is likely to include more than one of the following – low standardised scores using assessments of processing speed, reading and/or writing speed, samples of unfinished mock exams or other timed assessments and an individual education plan (or equivalent) noting the need for extra time;
- **an assessment confirming learning disability relating to secondary/further education carried out by a specialist teacher.** The assessment **must** confirm that the candidate is unable to complete a timed assessment in the time allowed. Evidence is likely to include more than one of the following – low standardised scores using assessments of processing speed, reading and/or writing speed, samples of unfinished mock exams or other timed assessments and an individual education plan (or equivalent) noting the need for extra time;
- **privately commissioned reports must give a clear indication that there is evidence of need. The head of centre must be satisfied that there is a history of need and provision.**

**N.B** It is only for access arrangements such as extra time of more than 25%, Oral Language Modifiers, readers and scribes that an assessment must be carried out within 26 months of the start of the examination series.



## Regulations and Guidance

### Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration

#### General and Vocational qualifications

2011 version

#### Synopsis of access arrangements and eligibility and/or evidence requirements

	Access Arrangement	Eligibility and/or evidence requirement	Chapter/section
11	<b>Extra time Up to a maximum of 25% (N.B. for many candidates a smaller allowance, such as 10% may be appropriate)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>A Statement of Special Education Needs relating to secondary education</b></li><li>▪ An assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist or specialist teacher confirming that extra time is needed to complete timed activities (must have been carried out no earlier than Year 7) – i.e. candidate works very slowly</li><li>▪ Medical report</li><li>▪ Normal way of working</li></ul>	Chapter 1, sections 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.4 / Chapter 2, section 2.1
12	<b>Extra time over 25% and up to a maximum of 100%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ An assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist or specialist teacher confirming substantially below average speed of processing (must have been carried out within 26 months prior to the examination)</li><li>▪ Medical/physical/psychological requirement</li><li>▪ Normal way of working</li></ul>	Chapter 1, sections 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.4 / Chapter 2, section 2.2

## 2.1 Extra time of up to 25%

2.1.1 For GCSE and GCE qualifications an application **must** be submitted using *Access arrangements online* prior to the candidate's first examination. For other qualification types, please see **Chapter 6, pages 59-63**.

### *Learning difficulties*

2.1.2 **If the candidate has learning difficulties, the centre must assess the needs of the candidate based on one of the following documents, which can be used throughout the candidate's secondary and further education:**

- **a Statement of Special Educational Needs relating to secondary education;**
- **an assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist confirming a learning difficulty relating to secondary/further education.** The assessment(s) **must** confirm that the candidate is unable to complete an assessment in the time allowed. This will be indicated by **below average standardised scores** in assessments of processing speed, reading and/or writing speed or **a below average free writing speed;**
- **an assessment carried out by a specialist teacher confirming a learning difficulty relating to secondary/further education.** The assessment(s) **must** confirm that the candidate is unable to complete an assessment in the time allowed. This will be indicated by **below average standardised scores** in assessments of processing speed, reading and/or writing speed or **a below average free writing speed;**
- **privately commissioned reports must give a clear indication that there is evidence of need. The head of centre must be satisfied that there is a history of need and provision.**

**The centre is required to paint a picture of the normal way of working for the candidate, clearly demonstrating the need for extra time of up to 25%.**

**The documentation presented for inspection purposes must show a compelling case for extra time of up to 25% with a clear and detailed picture of current need supported by a substantial weight of evidence to demonstrate difficulties.**

**Evidence must also include** unfinished mock examinations **or** other timed assessments **or** an individual education plan **or** an individual learning plan **or** a compilation of observations or comments from teaching staff.

Supplementary evidence may also include significant improvement in legibility or quality of language as a consequence of applying extra time of up to 25% **or** a significant improvement in the standardised score of a timed reading test when extra time of up to 25% is granted to the candidate.

Please see **page 8** for examples of the application of extra time.

**N.B It is only for access arrangements such as extra time of more than 25%, Oral Language Modifiers, readers and scribes that an assessment must be carried out within 26 months of the start of the examination series.**