

Policy Guide

Special Access Arrangements for examinations (SAAs)

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Approved/reviewed by

Koen Claeys

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Bredon School

Special Access Arrangements (SAAs)

Introduction

Special Access Arrangements for examinations (SAAs)

SAAs are arrangements that examination boards allow in order that all candidates have the opportunity to display their knowledge, regardless of their literacy skills or other difficulties they may have.

Available SAAs

The most usual SAAs are:

- 25% extra time for candidates to complete examinations
- an adult to read the questions
- an adult to write the candidate's answers.

Recently there have been changes imposed by the exam boards on the regulations surrounding the application and qualification for Special Access Arrangements. This document aims to explain and clarify current practice. This is only an outline document; it would be very lengthy if all possible situations were covered. So please don't hesitate to contact the Exams SENCO, if you need further information. (geerlingsj@bredonschool.co.uk)

The overriding principle in requesting SAAs is that:

“The arrangement put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre.” *Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)* This is known as the ‘normal way of working’. Therefore it is easier for us to justify a reader/scribe for those who take SLS as an option than for those who don't.

Assessments

All assessments are carried out by a qualified assessor following strict guidelines laid down by JCQ. The screening and assessments take place in the Summer Term of Year 9, or in Year 10. This ensures that they are in place for all external assessments and mock exams taken during Years 10 - 13. Each pupil will be assessed and then offered appropriate SAAs.

Candidates may be reassessed at the beginning of their 6th form courses (in Year 12). Sometimes they no longer need an SAA that they used in Year 11. Sometimes they need more support as they had before. The only exception to this reassessment is if a candidate is resitting an exam in November that they originally took in June of that year; their Year 11 SAAs are still recognised in November of Year 12.

A candidate can choose to accept or reject the use of an SAA. JCQ insist that it must be the candidate's choice, not the parent or guardian's choice.

The most common Special Access Arrangements

- 25% extra time
- A reader
- A scribe
- Use of a word processor
- A prompter
- Rest breaks
- Use of bilingual dictionaries

These are described in detail on the following pages.

25% Extra time

There are several reasons why extra time for completing exams is permitted, including:

- slow speed of handwriting
- slow speed of reading
- slow processing speed

This may apply for some subjects but not for others.

For example, if the reason for allowing extra time is due to a slow processing speed, it will probably apply to all subjects.

However, if the reason for allowing extra time is slow speed of handwriting or reading, it may not apply to all subjects, particularly if a reader or scribe is being used to take away that particular disadvantage. In subjects where these particular skills have much less impact, such as Maths, there may be no need for any extra time.

Don't forget that the '**normal way of working**' applies here. So if a candidate habitually does not use extra time in tests or exams in a particular subject, then they will lose their entitlement **in that subject only**.

A Reader

A reader may be allowed either because the candidate has inaccurate decoding skills, or because of weak comprehension. A candidate who just needs the occasional word read for them, needs less support than one who reads so slowly that they have lost the sense of the sentence by the time they get to the end of it.

A reader **must**:

- read only the questions or text requested by the candidate
- repeat a question as often as requested by the candidate
- read back what has been written by the candidate or scribe if requested.
- give the spelling of a word, if it appears on the exam paper, and if requested by the candidate.

A reader is **not** allowed to:

- explain the meaning or any of the words on the exam paper.
- repeat or reread anything on the paper unless the candidate asks them to.
- decode any symbols or unit abbreviations. These should just be pointed to by the reader. For example + - x < > = should all be pointed to.
- advise a candidate how long to take on a question, or when to move on.
- advise which questions a candidate should attempt.

Candidates are only entitled to a 1:1 reader, if that is their '**normal way of working**'. At Bredon it is usually considered to be their normal way of working if they have 1:1 SLS. Whenever possible, these candidates take their exams in Stable House in separate rooms. Occasionally, for exams with numerous candidates they will be accommodated in the Sports Hall.

Candidates who do **not** qualify for a 1:1 reader may take their exam in the Sports Hall or other exam venue with up to 4 candidates per reader. The candidates raise their hand when they need the assistance of a reader, in the same way that they would in class. Candidates will not be allocated to a specific reader, except in exceptional circumstances.

For English Reading exams human readers are not allowed. However, if using a computer reader or reading pen is the candidate's '**normal way of working**', then the candidate is allowed to use these exam approved electronic devices. (for further information please contact geerlingsj@bredonschool.co.uk)

Scribe

A scribe may be permitted due to:

- very weak spelling and/or
- very slow handwriting and/or
- illegible handwriting

A scribe is there only to write the answers as dictated by the candidate. The scribe can also read back what they have written, if requested.

A scribe **must**:

- record exactly what the candidate dictates.
- write at or faster than the average speed of writing for the age of the candidate.

A scribe is **not** allowed to:

- explain the meaning of any words or phrases on the exam paper.
- advise a candidate how long to take on a question, or when to move on.
- advise which questions a candidate should attempt.

Scribes are only awarded for Maths if:

- there is a significant amount of language writing required.
- an examiner would have difficulty in understanding the candidate's handwriting.

Note: a scribe is not allowed to set out a calculation for a candidate unless the candidate describes exactly where s/he wants each figure to be placed on the page.

Candidates are only entitled to a scribe, if that is their '**normal way of working**'. The SAA of a scribe is always delivered 1:1. These candidates almost always take their exams in Stable House, but very occasionally will be accommodated at the far end of the Sports Hall, where they cannot be overheard.

Candidates will not be allocated to a specific scribe.

Use of a Word Processor

Candidates, who have qualified for a scribe because their handwriting is hard to read or because they write slowly, can opt to use a word processor instead. These candidates are **entitled** to use a laptop. Depending on other assessments, these candidates don't always have extra time as well.

Candidates who use a word processor in exams (or controlled assessments) have to pass a competence test, showing that they can do the following on school netbooks:

- save onto a USB stick
- put the correct information into headers and footers
- change the font and size of text to comply with exam board criteria
- change the spacing of the lines to the required distance

This test will be administered by the ICT department.

Candidates using word processors may be accommodated either in Stable House or the Sports Hall depending on the exam.

In GCSE subjects where the answers are on a separate booklet, candidates who use word processing as their '**normal way of working**' in school can request to use a word processor. This is appropriate for English, History and Religious Education.

In GCSE subjects where the answers must be written on the question paper, the use of a laptop is not practical.

In exams with many candidates, there may not be enough laptops for all who request them. The exams department tries to maximise the availability to candidates by using multiple sessions, allowing more than one student to use each laptop. However, sometimes we are not able to provide everyone with their choice. Only candidates who are entitled to a word processor will be guaranteed the use of a laptop.

Only school laptops, which comply with exam board regulations, are permitted in exams.

Prompter

This SAA is used for candidates who find it difficult to focus on the task in hand. The prompter will agree with the candidate the type of reminder s/he would find helpful.

For example the prompter might:

- tap on the desk every 10 or 15 minutes.
- remind the candidate how long they have left either vocally or with a flash card.
- use the candidate's name to bring them back to focus if they appear to be day dreaming.

A prompter is **not** allowed to:

- explain the meaning of any words or phrases on the exam paper.
- advise a candidate how long to take on a question, or when to move on.
- advise which questions a candidate should attempt.

Candidates using prompters are usually accommodated in Stable House. However, when a candidate shows less need of a prompter, they may do an exam in the Sports Hall with a prompter as a supported step towards full independence.

Rest Breaks

Rest breaks are considered when this is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre. "The centre must be satisfied that the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties". *JCQ*

A centre must be satisfied that there is a genuine need for the arrangement on account of:

- behavioural, emotional and social difficulties;
- cognition and learning needs;
- communication and interaction needs;
- a medical condition;
- a physical disability;
- a psychological condition; or
- a sensory impairment.

This provision must be supported with a medical statement and recorded evidence from the subject teacher to confirm that this is the candidate's '**normal way of working**'.

Candidates using rest breaks may be accommodated either in Stable House or the Sports Hall depending on the exam.

Whilst taking a rest break, the candidate will have no access to the exam paper and will be accompanied at all times by a member of staff. They are not allowed to communicate in any way with anyone except the invigilator and their supervisor. To do so risks being disqualified from the exam.

A Bilingual Translation Dictionary

Only candidates whose first language is not English can use a bilingual translation dictionary in examinations by candidates.

It **must** reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.

Such dictionaries must not be used in:

- English/English Language examinations;
- Modern Foreign Language examinations testing one of the languages of the dictionary or a similar language, e.g. a Portuguese dictionary in a Spanish examination.

Exceptions to these rules are:

- **In the Writing Test of some foreign language GCSEs** the specification states that **all candidates must have access to a bilingual dictionary**.
- **Functional Skills English examinations** – where the use of a bilingual dictionary is permitted.

A bilingual translation dictionary must only have a single word correspondence translation, and must not include any definitions, phrases or context sentences.

As an example, a Chinese to English bilingual translation dictionary **must** simply be the word in Chinese and the equivalent word or words in English.

Monolingual dictionaries must not:

- define words and phrases
- be wordlists or glossaries
- contain/display pictures
- provide an explanation or clarification of words and phrases

Candidates' responsibilities

It is every **candidate's** responsibility to check the SAAs, which have been arranged for them, are correct.

Candidates can access this information by:

- looking on the schedules in the science corridor
- asking their subject teacher
- asking their tutor
- asking the exams officer

If the candidate does not agree with the provision, the schedule can be rearranged, on condition **at least 1 week's notice** is given. **Changes will not be made on the day of an exam.**

Parents' responsibilities

Parents obviously feel very involved with the decisions their children make regarding Special Access Arrangements. However, **they are not entitled to make those choices and decisions on behalf of their children**, even if they consider that their child is misguided. Their role is to discuss the choices that are available to their children to help them come to a balanced decision.

- **The exam boards insist that the agreement is between 'The Centre', Bredon School, and the candidate. The agreement is not with the parent/guardian.**
- A candidate who feels s/he has been forced to accept support that s/he doesn't want, will usually refuse to use it. They will therefore lose any entitlement to it (proving that it is not their 'normal way of working').
- Parents/guardians must remember that it is not their decision to accept or reject an SAA.

Parental Permission

Before we book SAAs for candidates, Bredon School require written permission from parents to add the cost of providing SAAs to termly bills. It typically costs between £900 - £2,000 over two years, depending on the options chosen by the candidate and the amount of support required. Giving permission for the use of an SAA does not mean a charge will automatically be made, if the service is not used.

In Year 12 and 13, the costs will be added to the termly bills as they are used.

Teachers' responsibilities

Teachers and tutors are a vital link in the communication between the exams office and the candidates.

- Teacher/tutors need to ensure that the exams office have examples of work that show the need for extra time. This can be done by means of:
 - tests done in class showing how much was completed in 'normal time' and how much in 'extra time'
 - comparisons between the amount produced when writing independently or when dictated.
 - completing form available from Access Centre
 - **deadline** last week of Autumn term (end of new pupils' first term)
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring candidates have signed a form indicating which of their SAAs the candidates wish to use for each individual subject. Candidates will sign one form per year.
- Teacher/tutors are responsible for ensuring that candidates know when and where their exams/controlled assessments are taking place.
- Teacher/tutors should check that the SAAs indicated on the exam schedules are in accordance with the candidates' entitlements. If there has been an error or misunderstanding, this must be communicated in writing to the exams office at least one week before the exam or CA.

Head of Centre – Koen Claeys

Handwritten signature of Koen Claeys in black ink, featuring a stylized 'K' and 'C'.

Examinations officer – Janet Geerlings

Handwritten signature of Janet Geerlings in black ink, featuring a stylized 'J' and 'G'.

Dated 26th March 2018