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# Statistical Bulletin

## Access Arrangements for GCSE and GCE: 2011/12 Exam Series

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## **Summary**

Awarding organisations must make reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates to enable them to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding in assessments, such as providing modified question papers for candidates with visual impairments. Awarding organisations also make access arrangements for other candidates.

During the 2011/12 academic year, 255,100 requests were received for access arrangements<sup>1</sup>, of which 93 per cent were approved by awarding organisations. This compares with 248,900 requests for the same categories of access arrangements in the previous year – a 2.5 per cent increase. This is in the context of a 9 per cent increase in GCSE candidates, with GCE A level remaining fairly consistent and GCE AS decreasing by 4 per cent. The percentage approved has remained consistent at 93 per cent (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Fifteen categories of access arrangement were available for approval in 2011/12. Arrangements for up to 25 per cent extra time, the use of a reader and the use of a scribe accounted for 90 per cent of the 237,100 approved access arrangement applications.

Awarding organisations approved almost all of the 21,200 requests for modified question papers for the June 2012 exam series, with just 15 not approved. The number of modified papers issued accounted for 0.15 per cent of the 14.4 million papers issued for GCE and GCSE exams in June 2012 (see Table 4 and Figure 4).

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<sup>1</sup> Access arrangements is a term used to describe both reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates and other forms of arrangements put in place to facilitate a candidate's access to an exam or other form of assessment.

## **Introduction**

This statistical bulletin, published on behalf of the regulators for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, presents data on the access arrangements approved for GCSE and GCE exams during the 2011/12 academic year. These qualifications are offered by six awarding organisations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

- Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (Northern Ireland) (CCEA)
- Edexcel
- International Curriculum & Assessment Agency (Examinations) ICAA(E)
- Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- WJEC.

Please note: figures within this commentary have been rounded to the nearest hundred.

## About access arrangements

The qualifications covered by this report are regulated by Ofqual, the Welsh Government and the Council for the Curriculum, Exams and Assessment (CCEA). Each regulator publishes conditions that set out the requirements that the awarding organisations it regulates have to meet. These conditions state that 'An awarding organisation must, in accordance with Equalities Law, have in place clear arrangements for making reasonable adjustments in relation to qualifications which it makes available.'

In addition, the *GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice (2011)*<sup>2</sup> promotes quality, consistency, accuracy and fairness in assessment and awarding of these qualifications. Section 7 of the code of practice requires awarding organisations to make sure that candidates with particular requirements can demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding, for example by providing modified question papers for candidates with visual impairments. The code makes it clear that arrangements must be based on the needs of individual candidates, and must not give them an unfair advantage or undermine the integrity of a qualification in any way. Ofqual and the Welsh Government have the power to limit the reasonable adjustments that may be given.<sup>3</sup>

Candidates may have particular requirements for a number of reasons, including:

- Disability
- Medical condition
- Illness, other indisposition or unforeseen incident at time of the assessment
- First language is not English, Irish or Welsh.

Schools/colleges should consider the particular requirements of individual candidates and then follow the guidelines and arrangements of the awarding organisations. The

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<sup>2</sup> [www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/93-codes-of-practice?download=680%3Agcse-gce-principal-learning-and-project-code-of-practice-2011](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/downloads/category/93-codes-of-practice?download=680%3Agcse-gce-principal-learning-and-project-code-of-practice-2011)

<sup>3</sup> [www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2011-12-15-specifications-in-relation-to-the-reasonable-adjustment-of-general-qualifications.pdf](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/2011-12-15-specifications-in-relation-to-the-reasonable-adjustment-of-general-qualifications.pdf)

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/qualificationsinwales/access/equalityact/?lang=en>

evidence required to support an application will vary depending on the reasons for the particular requirement and the type(s) of arrangement being requested. The awarding organisations set out the evidence required in support of an application.

## **Summer 2011/12 exam series**

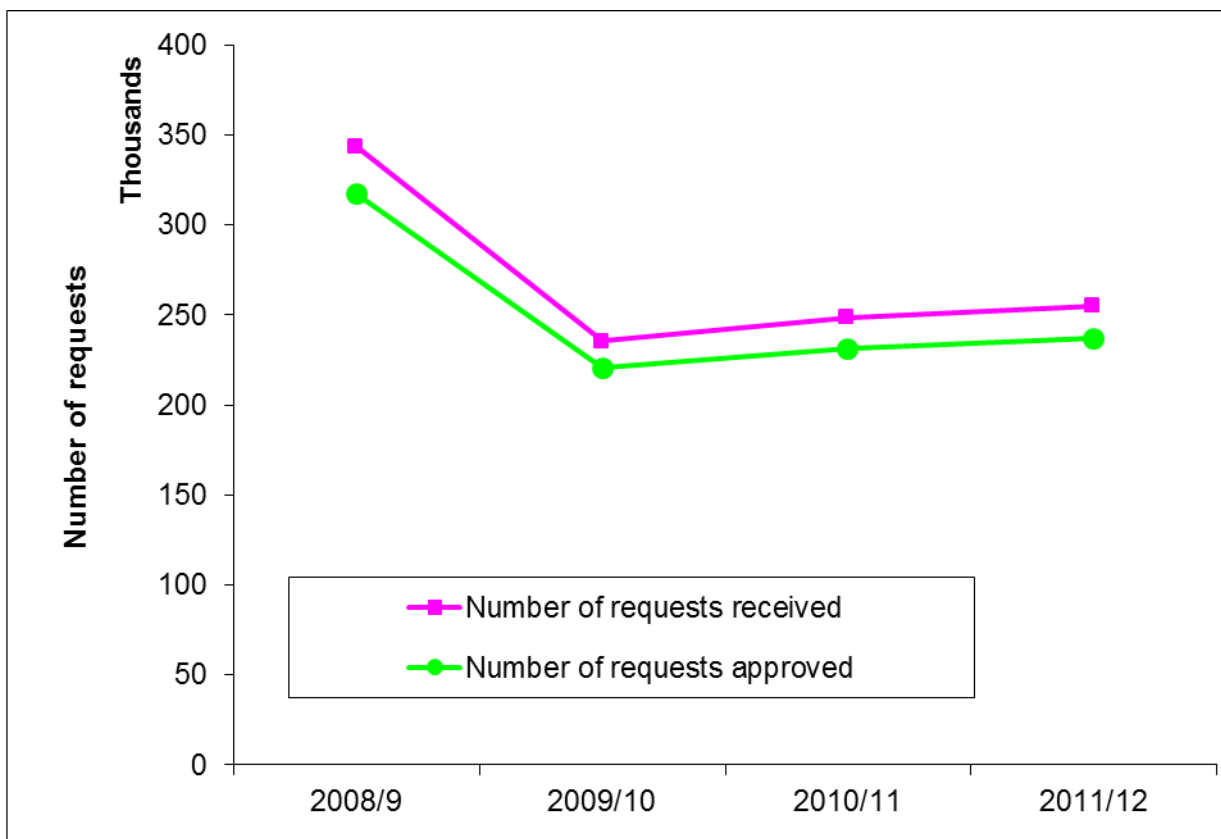
Access arrangements can be applied to any candidates taking GCSE and GCE exams who meet the eligibility criteria. Individual candidates may require more than one access arrangement. Once granted, an arrangement will normally apply for 26 months, although applications based on temporary conditions will last for one exam series only.

This report details the number of individual requests for access arrangements that were received and approved. Data on the number of individual candidates with agreed access arrangements are not available. Any candidates taking exams within the first or second year of their GCSE and GCE courses, and who meet the eligibility criteria, may have access arrangements applied. During the 2011/12 academic year, more than 1.2 million candidates took GCSE courses, approximately 500,000 on a GCE AS course and more than 300,000 taking GCE A level.

## Access arrangements in 2011/12

During the 2011/12 academic year, 255,100 requests were received for access arrangements, of which 93 per cent were approved. This compares with 248,900 requests for access arrangements in the previous academic year, of which 93 per cent were also approved (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Since 2009/10, there has been a steady increase in the number of requests and approvals, from 235,400 requests in 2009/10 to 255,100 in 2011/12, an increase of 8 per cent. For each category of access arrangements the percentage approved varies (see Table 2).

**Figure 1: Number of requests for access arrangements received and approved during each academic year, 2008/9–2011/12 (NB: Prior to 2008/9, data on requests for access arrangements were not collected.)**



A new system for making requests was introduced in September 2008, which may have affected the number of requests received, so care should be taken when comparing the figures for 2008/9 with those of other years. The introduction of the online system in 2008/9 may have led to schools/colleges submitting duplicate requests, which were already approved the previous year, in the belief that approval had to be sought again through the online system.



Access Arrangements Online will reject applications if the information submitted does not meet the relevant criteria for that arrangement. Some arrangements are not allowed in combination and will be rejected. This may lead to subsequent applications with new or revised information/evidence for the same candidate which, if appropriate, will be approved. Rejected applications and any subsequent approved applications for individual candidates are captured in the data in Figure 1 above.

The evidence required to support an application varies according to the arrangement being requested and the particular requirements of the candidate. Applications for particular categories of arrangement, such as practical assistants, are likely to be referred to the relevant awarding organisations, as a school/college would need to supply detailed information about the precise role of the practical assistant during the assessment. Most requests are approved or rejected via the Access Arrangements Online system, but during the 2011/12 academic year more than 4,700 requests were referred to awarding organisations for a decision.

The access arrangements available and those that require approval from the awarding organisation (rather than from the school/college) are regularly reviewed. Therefore the range of arrangements that schools/colleges have had to register with awarding organisations has varied over time and will account for some variations in numbers. To improve comparisons over time, the arrangements listed below are no longer represented in the data from previous years. The approval of arrangements is delegated to schools/colleges where awarding organisations judge there is no advantage to candidates in relation to the assessment objectives being tested.

In 2009, arrangements for separate invigilation no longer had to be approved by awarding organisations; the right to approve was delegated to schools/colleges. In 2010, several further categories were delegated to schools/colleges. The categories of access arrangements for which awarding organisation approval was no longer required in 2010/11 were:

- Amplification equipment
- Brailing machine
- CCTV
- Colour naming
- Coloured overlay
- Low vision aid
- Prompter
- Read aloud

- Scanner
- Word processor.

In 2009/10, there were 32,100 requests for the arrangements listed above, of which 30,500 were approved. Previous years' data for the categories listed above have been removed from this year's report, to enable like-for-like comparisons.

For 2011/12, further arrangements were removed from the online system and delegated to schools/colleges. They were:

- Bilingual dictionary
- Supervised rest break
- Extra time of up to 25 per cent with supervised rest break.

In previous years, extra time of up to 25 per cent was divided into two categories: those with supervised rest breaks and those without. There will now be just one category of extra time, which is still requested via the online system, but the supervised rest breaks have been delegated to schools/colleges.

In 2010/11, when these arrangements were still processed via Access Arrangements Online, there were 22,800 requests, of which 21,100 were approved. These categories' figures from previous years have also been removed from this year's report to enable comparisons and accurate identification of trends over the period covered.

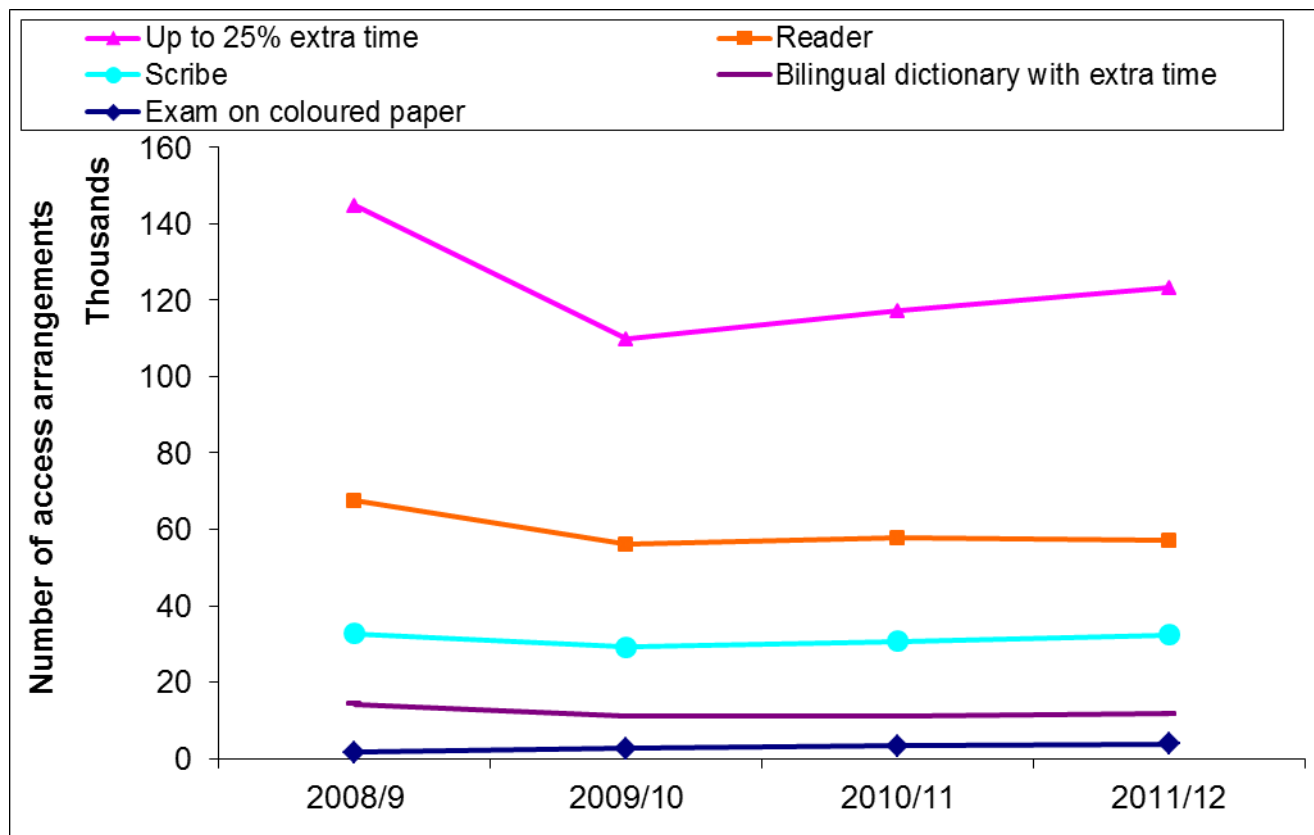
## **Types of access arrangements**

The most frequently granted arrangement during the 2011/12 academic year was the allowance of up to 25 per cent extra time for candidates taking an exam, for which 123,200 requests were approved (constituting 52 per cent of all approved access arrangements). Compared with the previous year this is a 5 per cent increase in the number of approvals for extra time. This category has shown a steady increase since 2009/10, when there were 109,800 approved requests, to 123,200 in 2011/12, an increase of 12 per cent. Extra time can be given to candidates with a learning difficulty or other applicable medical, physical or psychological requirement. Up to 25 per cent extra time may be allowed, but for many candidates a smaller allowance, such as 10 per cent extra time, is appropriate.

The second most frequently granted arrangement was the use of readers for candidates with particular visual impairments or a learning difficulty that affects their reading, for which 57,000 requests were approved (24 per cent of all approved access arrangements). This was a slight decline on last year when 57,700 requests were approved. A reader is either a person who reads the questions to the candidate or computer software that reads out a scanned paper.

The third most common arrangement was the use of a scribe, for which 32,400 requests were approved (14 per cent of all approved access arrangements), for candidates with learning difficulties, a medical condition, a physical disability, a severe visual impairment, or a temporary injury that affects a candidate's ability to write independently (see Tables 2 and 3, and Figure 2).

Figure 2: Approved access arrangements for the academic year for the five most common types of arrangement, 2008/9–2011/12



## Modified question papers

Modified question papers are applied for in advance of a specific exam series and are individually prepared for candidates for whom other access arrangements are unsuitable. Modified question papers allow those candidates who have a range of visual impairments and/or significant language comprehension disorders to demonstrate their attainment.

In 2012 the types of modified papers that could be requested were:

- Coloured/enlarged papers
- A4 Modified 18-point bold
- A3 Modified 24-point bold
- Braille papers and tactile diagrams with Braille labels
- Modified language
- Tactile diagrams with print labels

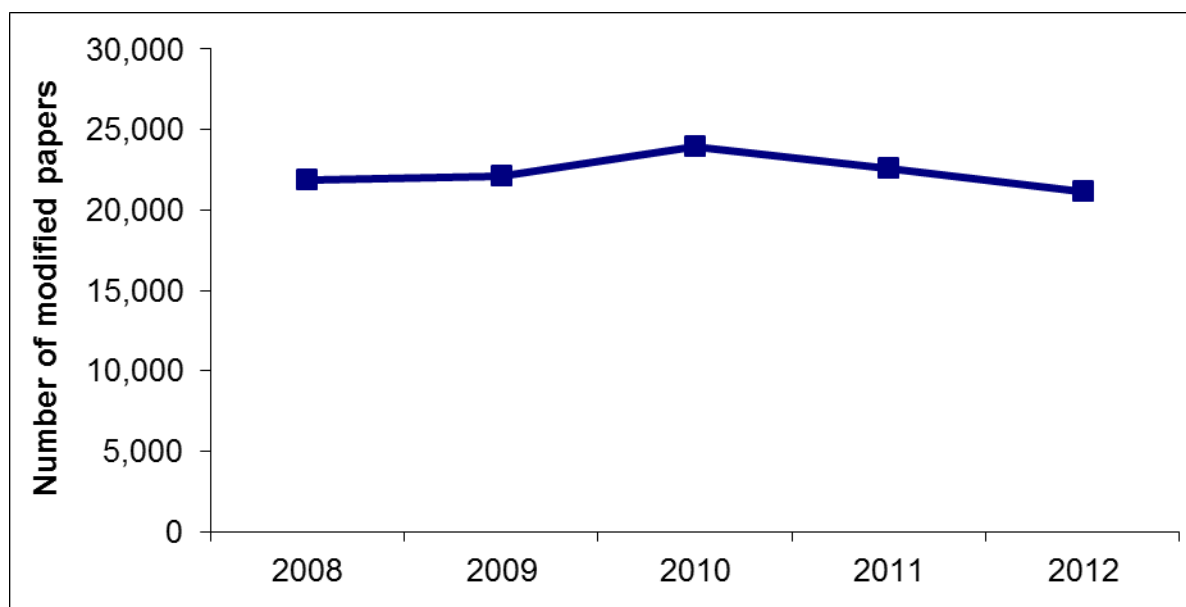
- Transcript of listening test/video

The categories used in this report have been amended from those in last year's report, so they align with the categories used by the Joint Council for Qualifications' (JCQ) guidance, in *Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration, 2011/2012*.

Requests for modified papers are processed, and the papers produced, by the individual awarding organisations. There are other categories of modified papers for example A3 unmodified enlarged papers that are no longer produced by awarding organisations. They have delegated the production of this type of modified paper to schools and colleges. They then produce A3 unmodified enlarged papers by copying and enlarging the standard paper one hour before the starting time of the exam.

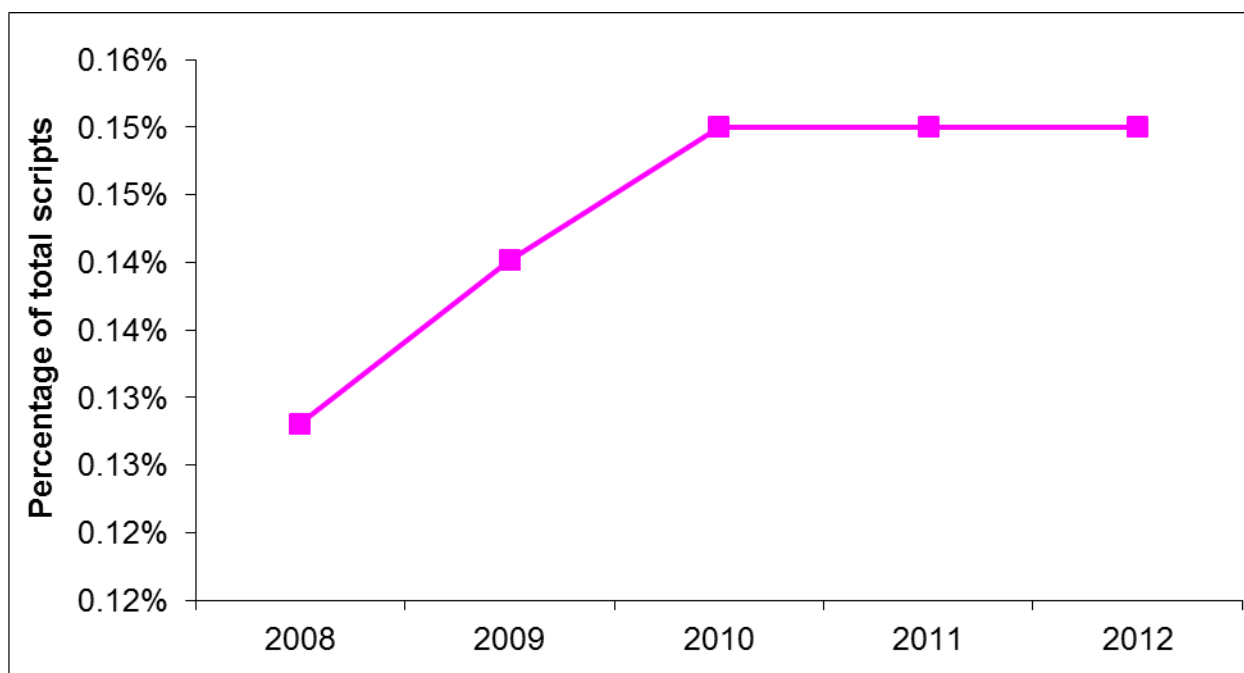
Awarding organisations approved 21,185 of the 21,200 requests received for modified question papers for the June 2012 exam series. This was a slight decrease compared with the previous year when 22,600 modified question papers were requested and all were approved, (see Table 4 and Figure 3). Although this figure is reasonably consistent with 2008 there has been a steady decline over the last three years with a 12 per cent reduction since 2010.

**Figure 3: Total number of modified papers produced for the summer exam series, 2008–12**



The number of modified papers issued accounted for 0.15 per cent of the 14.4 million papers issued for GCE and GCSE exams in June 2012 (see Figure 4). This is consistent with the previous year when the proportion was also 0.15 per cent.

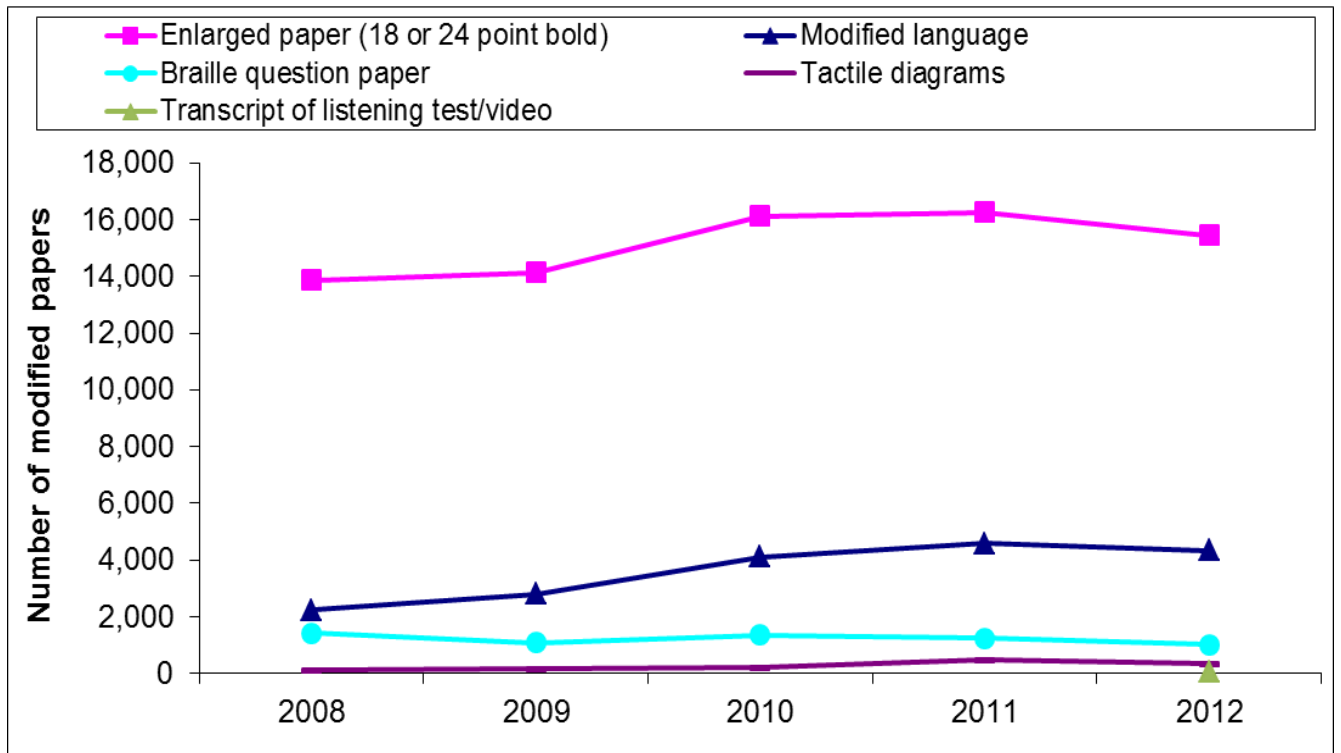
Figure 4: Modified papers as a percentage of total scripts for the summer exam series, 2008–12



The most common type of modified paper produced last year (2011) was an enlarged paper with 18- or 24-point bold print, in which 16,300 papers were produced (72 per cent of modified papers in June 2011). This year, data for enlarged papers have been separated in two categories: A4 18-point bold and A3 24-point bold. The total of both categories enables comparisons to be made with previous years (see Table 5). In 2012, there were 15,400 papers in A4 18-point bold and A3 24-point bold. This is a 5 per cent decrease compared with the previous year.

The second most common type of modified paper comprised of modified language, with 4,300 papers produced, representing 20 per cent of modified papers (see Table 5 and Figure 5).

Figure 5: Modified papers produced for the summer exam series, 2008–12



Notes:

1. In 2012, data on modified papers were collected for categories that align with JCQ guidance.
2. Enlarged paper is now separated into two categories but presented as a total in Figure 5 for ease of comparison with previous years.
3. A new category (Transcript of listening test/video) has also been added.

## Tables

**Table 1: Requests received for access arrangements for the exam series, 2008/9–2011/12**

England, Wales & Northern Ireland		
	Year	Requests for access arrangements
		<b>Total</b>
Number of requests for access arrangements	2008/09	<b>343,384</b>
	2009/10	<b>235,409</b>
	2010/11	<b>248,850</b>
	2011/12	<b>255,143</b>
Number of requests approved	2008/09	<b>317,181</b>
	2009/10	<b>220,411</b>
	2010/11	<b>231,316</b>
	2011/12	<b>237,065</b>
Percentage of requests approved <sup>1</sup>	2008/09	<b>92.4%</b>
	2009/10	<b>93.6%</b>
	2010/11	<b>93.0%</b>
	2011/12	<b>92.9%</b>

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. Figures will differ from those published in last years report, as categories removed in 2012, have been removed from previous years to aid comparisons.



**Table 2: Access arrangements for the exams series, 2010/11–2011/12**

England, Wales & Northern Ireland					
	Year	Requests for access arrangements		Approval rate	
		Number of requests made	Number of requests approved		
Alternative accommodation	2010/11	2,096	1,916	91%	
	2011/12	2,328	2,113	91%	
Bilingual dictionary with extra time of up to 25%	2010/11	11,532	11,038	96%	
	2011/12	12,306	11,754	96%	
Computer reader	2010/11	140	102	73%	
	2011/12	260	207	80%	
Exam on coloured paper	2010/11	3,457	3,233	94%	
	2011/12	4,010	3,735	93%	
Extra time greater than 25%	2010/11	3,658	2,324	64%	
	2011/12	4,169	2,667	64%	
Live speaker	2010/11	546	442	81%	
	2011/12	8	6	75%	
Oral language modifier	2010/11	1,301	1,109	85%	
	2011/12	1,713	1,530	89%	
Practical assistant for practical paper	2010/11	718	434	60%	
	2011/12	880	561	64%	
Practical assistant for written paper	2010/11	926	673	73%	
	2011/12	1,071	788	74%	
Reader	2010/11	61,584	57,736	94%	
	2011/12	60,696	56,988	94%	
Scribe	2010/11	33,930	30,673	90%	
	2011/12	35,620	32,376	91%	
Sign language interpreter	2010/11	375	333	89%	
	2011/12	387	355	92%	
Transcript	2010/11	3,964	3,630	92%	
	2011/12	179	164	92%	
Up to 25% extra time	2010/11	122,214	117,169	96%	
	2011/12	128,744	123,248	96%	
Other	2010/11	2,409	504	21%	
	2011/12	2,279	436	19%	

Source: Access Arrangements Online

**Notes:**

1. Data from ICAAE are supplied by the awarding organisation.
2. Data for the remaining organisations are supplied by schools/colleges and collated through Access Arrangements Online (AAO).

**Table 3: Five types of access arrangement with the largest number of approved requests for the exams series, 2008/9–2011/12**

England, Wales & Northern Ireland					
Approved requests for access arrangements					
Year	Up to 25% extra time	Reader	Scribe	Bilingual dictionary with extra time	Exam on coloured paper
2008/09	144,721	67,466	32,735	14,255	1,585
2009/10	109,773	56,122	29,134	11,002	2,617
2010/11	117,169	57,736	30,673	11,038	3,233
2011/12	123,248	56,988	32,376	11,754	3,735

**Notes:**

1. The processes for requests and approvals have changed over the period, with the introduction of online systems. This may have resulted in certain arrangements, in particular up to 25% extra time, being recorded more accurately. Care should be taken when comparing the figures over time.
2. Supervised rest breaks had previously been in this table, but this arrangement has now been delegated directly to schools/colleges. The next access arrangement with the largest numbers is for 'Exam on coloured paper'.
3. '-' indicates data not available

**Table 4: Modified question papers requested and approved for the summer exams series, by awarding organisation, 2008–12**

England, Wales & Northern Ireland								
		Number of requests						
	Year	AQA	Edexcel	ICAAE <sup>3</sup>	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	<b>Total</b>
Number of requests approved	2008	9,248	3,936		8,011	-	691	<b>21,886</b>
	2009	9,924	4,447		7,126	-	619	<b>22,116</b>
	2010	8,604	4,941		7,209	2,564	640	<b>23,958</b>
	2011	7,491	5,031	42	6,598	2,727	700	<b>22,589</b>
	2012	6,932	4,837	0	5,961	3,000	455	<b>21,185</b>
Percentage of total scripts that were modified	2008	0.13%	0.10%		0.19%	-	0.13%	<b>0.13%</b>
	2009	0.15%	0.12%		0.19%	-	0.13%	<b>0.14%</b>
	2010	0.13%	0.14%		0.20%	0.18%	0.12%	<b>0.15%</b>
	2011	0.12%	0.14%	0.21%	0.20%	0.17%	0.16%	<b>0.15%</b>
	2012	0.12%	0.13%	0.00%	0.20%	0.19%	0.10%	<b>0.15%</b>

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

Notes:

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. All requests for modified papers are routinely approved as this is not considered to confer an advantage on a candidate.
3. ICAAE awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011. In previous years, specifications were delivered in conjunction with CCEA.
4. '-' indicates data not available.

**Table 5: Modified question papers produced for the summer exam series, by type of paper, 2008–12**

England, Wales & Northern Ireland								
	Year	Number of modified papers produced						Total
		AQA	Edexcel	ICAAE	OCR	WJEC	CCEA	
Braille papers and tactile diagrams withaille labels	2008	647	219	-	529	-	22	<b>1,417</b>
	2009	636	174	-	289	-	0	<b>1,099</b>
	2010	635	264	-	373	92	1	<b>1,365</b>
	2011	538	235	0	318	149	1	<b>1,241</b>
	2012	451	200	0	240	125	0	<b>1,016</b>
A4 modified 18-point bold papers	2008							
	2009							
	2010							
	2011							
	2012	3,840	2,203	0	1,991	1,007	228	<b>9,269</b>
A3 modified 24-point bold papers	2008							
	2009							
	2010							
	2011							
	2012	2,574	1,514	0	1,266	724	92	<b>6,170</b>
<b>Total for both 18 and 24-point bold point papers</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>6,304</b>	<b>2,677</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,510</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>13,857</b>
	<b>2009</b>	<b>7,072</b>	<b>2,942</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,747</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>14,131</b>
	<b>2010</b>	<b>7,509</b>	<b>3,357</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>1,407</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>16,127</b>
	<b>2011</b>	<b>6,846</b>	<b>3,726</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3,489</b>	<b>1,814</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>16,250</b>
	<b>2012</b>	<b>6,414</b>	<b>3,717</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,257</b>	<b>1,731</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>15,439</b>
Modified language	2008	454	93		1,455	-	228	<b>2,230</b>
	2009	301	236		2,119	-	152	<b>2,808</b>
	2010	378	373		2,523	643	195	<b>4,112</b>
	2011	44	828	28	2,639	740	319	<b>4,598</b>
	2012	0	806	0	2323	1073	126	<b>4,328</b>
Tactile diagrams with print labels	2008	48	15		48	0	0	<b>111</b>
	2009	43	51		79	0	0	<b>173</b>
	2010	82	55		68	6	0	<b>211</b>
	2011	63	242	0	152	24	0	<b>481</b>
	2012	67	114	0	125	35	0	<b>341</b>
Transcript of listening test/video	2008							
	2009							
	2010							
	2011							
	2012	0	0	0	16	36	9	<b>61</b>

Source: EPG exams monitoring data

**Notes:**

1. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.
2. In 2012, data on modified papers was collected for categories that align with JCQ guidance. This is a change from previous years and has resulted in some gaps in the table for previous years.
3. ICAAE awarded GCSEs for the first time in 2011. In previous years, specifications were delivered in conjunction with CCEA.
4. '-' indicates data not available.
5. AQA ensure that all standard examination papers are checked for accessible language according to the guidelines published by BATOD (British Association of Teachers of the Deaf). Therefore, they do not produce separate exam papers which have language modified.

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