

CCEA Equality Screening Exercise

JCQ Changes to Requirements for 25% Extra Time as an Access Arrangement

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1 Background and Introduction

Access arrangements 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 all relevant legislation in jurisdictions and make 'reasonable adjustments'.

The Joint Council for Qualifications operates Access Arrangements for Assessments for all JCQ Registered Centres in the UK. JCQ Guidance on Access Arrangements complies with the following legislations:

England and Wales - Equality Act 2010

Northern Ireland -Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (SENDO 2005).

In their annual reports, the Regulators identified the disproportionate upward trajectory in the use of Access Arrangements with 65% of all approved applications relating to 25% extra time by the academic year 2019/20.

A change to criteria for eligibility to 25% extra time was introduced from 2021-22. relates only – other arrangements remain unchanged.

Prior to the change, the criteria for 25% extra time were:

- At least one below average standardised score of 84 or less which relates to an assessment of:
 - speed of reading; or
 - speed of writing; or
 - cognitive processing measures which have a substantial and long term adverse effect on speed of working).
- In exceptional circumstances at least two low average standardised scores (85-89) which relate to two different areas of speed of working.

The revised criteria introduced for 2021/22 are:

- At least two below average standardised scores of 84 or less; or
- One below average standardised score of 84 or less and one low average standardised score (85-89).

In either scenario, the two standardised scores must relate to two different areas of speed of working as below:

- speed of reading and speed of writing; or
 - speed of reading and cognitive processing; or
 - speed of writing and cognitive processing; or
 - two different areas of cognitive processing which have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on speed of working.
- In exceptional circumstances at least two low average standardised scores (85-89) which relate to two different areas of speed of working.

The change was agreed by all organisations consulted by JCQ including the expert practitioners' group and it was seen as a measure that would improve professional practice amongst assessors. Their view was that a candidate with genuine learning difficulties would meet the criteria.

JCQ outlined the rationale for the change as follows:

- The changes will improve professional practice amongst assessors and ensure more robust assessments to determine the need for 25% extra time for candidates with learning difficulties. Assessors must use a *range* of assessments to properly and fairly identify candidates who might need 25% extra time.
- JCQ regulations previously required, 'at least one below average standardised score'. There was an expectation an assessor would not use only one test to obtain one below average standardised score.
- For an assessor who is using a range of assessments, that is, assessing a candidate in more than one area, there would be no change.
- Professional practice amongst assessors will be improved ensuring more robust assessments.
- It will avoid assessors doing minimal testing and missing out whole areas of testing. There are 172 assessment measures available to enable an assessor to find at least two standardised scores where 25% extra time is genuinely needed.
- The updated criteria will not involve any change in practice for many assessors, who are already correctly using a range of measures when assessing for extra time and thereby conducting robust assessments of candidates' needs.

It should also be noted that the change does not apply to:

- a candidate with a formally diagnosed medical condition, a physical disability, a formally diagnosed psychological condition or a sensory impairment is not required to be assessed to determine below average or low average speeds of working.
- candidates in Northern Ireland with a current/valid Statement of Special Educational Needs nor does it apply to candidates with a disability or an impairment other than a learning difficulty.
- A candidate with pre-approved access arrangements for 25% extra time within a given qualification level - i.e., a candidate with 25% extra time arrangements approved in year 11 will continue to have the arrangements into year 12; and a candidate with arrangements already approved in year 13 will continue to have these arrangements into year 14. As in previous years, access arrangements must however be the subject of a further application when a candidate progresses from one qualification level to the next i.e., between GCSE and A-Level.

As a member of the Joint Council for Qualifications, CCEA along with other Awarding Organisations operating in Northern Ireland, has accepted these changes for the following reasons:

- to improve the reliability of evidence of need and to guarantee the integrity and robustness of the Access Arrangement process;
- CCEA supports the findings of the professional educational needs assessor groups consulted by JCQ;
- to maintain a level playing field for all candidates and ensure no candidate is either advantaged or disadvantaged;
- to ensure CCEA meets the terms of the three-country arrangement with England and Wales to ensure candidates from Northern Ireland are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged when applying for university places.

All panel members received a summary of the changes to JCQ Access Arrangements together with a copy of the JCQ publication 'Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments'.

2 Screening exercise

A screening exercise was carried out with the following included:

- Setting up an equality panel to represent a range of expertise
- Gathering panel views through an Equality Screening Questionnaire
- Screening panel meeting to review feedback and agree impacts
- Reporting

2.1 Equality panel screening questionnaire

The screening panel were asked to consider and comment on the likely impact, in any way, on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this new process, including an indication of the level of impact on the group, i.e., minor, major, or none. Comments were invited for each question for the nine Section 75 categories.

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this change, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? minor/major/none
2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?
3. To what extent is the change in criteria likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?
minor/major/none
4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Additional considerations

Are there any potential impacts of the process on people with multiple identities?

Other Considerations

Are there other potential equality impacts relevant to the outcomes outlined that have not been covered?

2.2 Panel questionnaire returns

9 returns were received from panel members. The summary of the findings to each question are found below.

Question 1 – What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this change, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

For Religious Belief, Political Opinion, Racial Group, Age, Marital Status, Sexual Orientation, Disability, and Dependents 8 respondents recorded no impact.

For Men and women generally, 8 respondents recorded no impact and 1 respondent recorded minor impact. Detail of the process impact recorded alongside the 1 minor was “The likelihood is that someone with one below average standardised score will probably have more than one to support their need.”

Question 2 - Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?

For Religious Belief, Political Opinion, Racial Group, Age, Marital Status, Sexual Orientation, and Dependents 8 respondents recorded no opportunities.

For Men and women generally, 8 respondents recorded no opportunities, and 1 respondent recorded an opportunity to “Ensure this message is well publicised.”

For Disability, 8 respondents recorded no opportunities, and 1 respondent recorded minor impact. Detail of the process impact recorded an opportunity to “Ensure this message is well publicised.”

Question 3 - To what extent is the process likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

All respondents recorded no extent for all categories.

Question 4 - Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

All respondents recorded no opportunities for all categories.

There were no additional considerations and no other considerations

2.3 Screening panel meeting

The panel was invited to attend a MST meeting to allow for discussion on the responses and decide on the level of impact for each of the section 75 groups.

Where there was no impact in an equality category it would be recorded as such, and discussion was mainly based around the comments in relation to minor and major impacts. The consultation was in relation to additional bias that may have been introduced into the system by the change.

Discussion at the meeting considered the impact recorded through the questionnaire and concluded that no major impact on section 75 groups would be as a result of new bias being introduced. For men and women generally, the meeting discussed the likelihood that someone with a below average score in one area would have a below average score in at least one additional area.

The meeting discussed the opportunity to better promote equality of opportunity for those with the areas of men and Women generally, and Disability and noted the change should be well-publicised to these groups.

The Chair summarised the final recommendations of the panel in relation to the change in criteria for the awarding of 25% extra time as an Access Arrangement: from the nine areas under review minor impacts were now concluded in one area and there existed the opportunity to promote equality of opportunity in two areas.

3. Outcomes

Minor impact was recorded in 1 area.
Opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity were recorded in 2 areas.

4. Approvals

	Name	Job Title	Date
Screened by	Deborah Stinson	Compliance Deputy Manager	
Approved by			

Minutes of the Equality Screening Exercise in Relation to JCQ Adjustment for Candidates to Access Arrangements.

Date: 2/2/2022

In attendance: Deborah Stinson (Chair), Liam Dempsey, Treasa Hawksford, Donna Finlay, Noeleen McGreer, Lydia Johnston, Rosemary Bryans, Edith Finlay.

Apologies:

Kelly McBride, John Trueman, Teresa Robb, David Wilson, Roger Trigg, Michael McAuley and Lorraine Neill.

The Chair opened the meeting by outlining the JCQ Adjustment for Candidates to Access Arrangements.

'Access arrangements 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.

One such access arrangement is the provision of 25% extra time in an assessment/examination.

With the number of candidates being awarded 25% extra time increasing year on year, awarding organisations needed to ensure the right candidates were being awarded the arrangement and no candidate is being either advantaged or disadvantaged.

Prior to the change, the criteria for 25% extra time were:

- *At least one below average standardised score of 84 or less which relates to an assessment of:*
 - *speed of reading; or*
 - *speed of writing; or*
 - *cognitive processing measures*

The revised criteria introduced for 2021/22 are:

- *At least two below average standardised scores of 84 or less; or*
- *One below average standardised score of 84 or less and one low average standardised score (85-89).*

The two standardised scores must relate to two different areas of speed

The decision for the change was not taken by CCEA, but by the Joint Council for Qualifications of which CCEA is a member. JCQ is not a public authority for the purposes of section 75.

The JCQ Director General has provided confirmation that the changes made to the evidence requirements for the 21-22 academic year were checked by their Lawyers to 'ensure consistency with equality legislation and the Regulators' Conditions of Recognition'.

Notwithstanding this, CCEA has a responsibility to discharge its duties under its equality scheme and should conduct an Equality Screening in relation to the change introduced by JCQ.'

The Chair then proceeded to go through the analysis of the nine questionnaires returned.

Question 1 *'What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this temporary process, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?'*

Out of the nine sections all responses but one was reported as having no impact.

The only area where one respondent felt there may be a minor impact was as follows:

Men and Women Generally

Major Impact	Minor Impact	None	Responses
	1 The likelihood is that someone with one below average standardised score will probably have more than one to support their need.	8	9

The Chair asked if the panel member would like to elaborate.

The panel member (NMcG) stated that it was probable someone with a need or low score in one area would normally have this in more than one area. She added that she felt it was worthy of mention but recognised it is only a minor impact.'

The Chair thanked the panel member for their comment and asked that the impact be recorded as minor under this one area and no impact under the other eight.

Question 2 *'Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?'*

The Chair advised that under the categories of Men & Women Generally and Disability there was a comment to ensure the message was well publicised to these two groups.

This was noted.

Summary

The Chair advised that there was nothing to report on Questions 3&4 as no comments had been made.

The Chair summarised the final recommendations of the panel: from the nine areas under review no impacts were concluded in eight areas in relation to JCQ Adjustment for Candidates to Access Arrangements and minor impact on one area. The policy is therefore screened out.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the panel for their time and contribution.

D Stinson

3/1/21