



Evidence for access arrangement applications

A guide for Associate Exams Officers

Access arrangements are pre-exam arrangements that minimise access barriers for candidates with special educational needs, disabilities, or temporary injuries/illnesses. Used appropriately, access arrangements can enable candidates with specific needs to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding, without changing the demands of the assessment.

There are two groups of arrangement:

Group 1: Access arrangements

Group 2: Modified question papers

Please refer to Section 1.3 of the Cambridge Handbook.

From the June 2023 exam series on, we have changed the way we review evidence of need for access arrangements.

We may ask to see evidence of candidate need. This is to make sure you have the correct evidence on file to support your access arrangement application. We call this process an Evidence Review. You must save securely all evidence that supports your access arrangement applications, so it is available if we ask to see it.

Access arrangements for private candidates

Our access arrangement regulations apply to all candidates, including private candidates. When accepting entries from private candidates, you should find out if they have barriers to assessment.

You do this by asking them if they wish to declare any special educational needs and/or disabilities that require you to apply for access arrangements.

If a private candidate needs an access arrangement, they must provide evidence of need for you to complete the application form. You are responsible for checking that the evidence of need complies with our access arrangement regulations and for quality assuring the validity of evidence they provide, before you send the application to us. You must also keep the evidence file securely as we may need to see it as part of our Evidence Review process (we introduced this process from the June 2023 exam series on).

Quality assuring evidence of need for access arrangements for all candidates

We base our decisions on granting access arrangements on the following:

- the evidence the school provides of the candidate's barrier(s) to assessment
- their need for the arrangement(s) being requested
- the assessment objectives being tested within the syllabus.

The evidence we require will vary depending on the reason the candidate needs an access arrangement and the arrangement(s) the centre is applying for.

Your Associate Centres must send you the evidence of need when they send you their completed application forms. You need to check that the evidence of need supplied supports the application and complies with our criteria for applying for access arrangements.

You must also ensure the evidence provided by the centre/candidate is genuine.

There are four main things for you to check:

1. The evidence must be dated within four years of the exam series applied for. Although this date does not need to be exactly within a 48-month period. For example, if the exam is in June 2024, we will accept evidence dated from March 2020.
2. There is an exception to this four-year rule for long term conditions such as physical or visual difficulties, where the candidates' condition will not, or is unlikely, to change.

For students with learning difficulties and/or candidates developing coping strategies, evidence must be dated within four years. This is because their symptoms may change.

3. You must confirm that the evidence is signed by an authorised, qualified person such as a doctor, medical professional, or educational psychologist. The person who signs the evidence must also include the details of their relevant qualifications.
4. You must check that the access arrangement the centre is applying for is allowed for that syllabus. Some access arrangements can affect the syllabus assessment objectives and so are not allowed.

Check the access arrangement against the syllabus assessment objectives. For example, if the assessment objectives include testing 'reading' then we do not permit a human reader. If you are not sure whether we permit an arrangement for a syllabus, you should contact us for clarification.

If a centre or candidate applies for an access arrangement we do not allow, return the application to them. You can suggest alternative access arrangements that might be suitable for their need that we do allow for the syllabus, for example instead of a human reader they could consider a computer reader, 25% extra time, or a reading pen.

From 2025 syllabuses will list any access arrangement restrictions in the 'other information' section of the syllabus document.

5. The evidence you send us must be in English. If the original evidence is not in English, then you must provide us with a translation. If evidence is translated into English two authorised staff (ideally the Head of Centre and the Exams Officer) must sign the translation to confirm that it is a true and accurate copy.

If the evidence does not pass all four checks, send the application back to your Associate Centre telling them which part of the evidence does not meet our regulations, and what they need to do to correct it before they resubmit it to you.

After you have completed the first four validity checks you also need to check that the evidence:

- detail the candidate's barrier to assessment and their corresponding need for the access arrangements they have requested, and
- contains a diagnosis and/or
- has a description of the symptoms or difficulties the candidate experiences.

Understanding psychometric scores

In some cases, the evidence should show that the candidate falls into the 'below average range' on relevant psychometric assessments, such as reading speed and/or comprehension, writing speed, or processing speed. 'Below average' is a **standardised score** of 84 or below, a **percentile score** of 15 or below (not the percentile rank), or a **scaled score** of 6 or below.

We can only accept these scores not any other types of scores from psychometric assessments. Some classifications refer to 'low average'. We do not accept low average scores because they are higher than 'below average'.

Psychometric test scores help us decide if the access arrangements applied for are appropriate.

Scaled score	Standardised score	Percentile	Descriptor
17 or more	131 or more	98 or more	Well above average
14 - 16	116 - 130	92 - 97	Above average
13	111 - 115	77 - 91	High average
8 - 12	90 - 110	25 - 76	Average
7	85 - 89	16 - 24	Low average
1 - 6	71 - 84	9 - 15	Below average
	70 or less	8 or less	Well below average

An example of using psychometric test scores

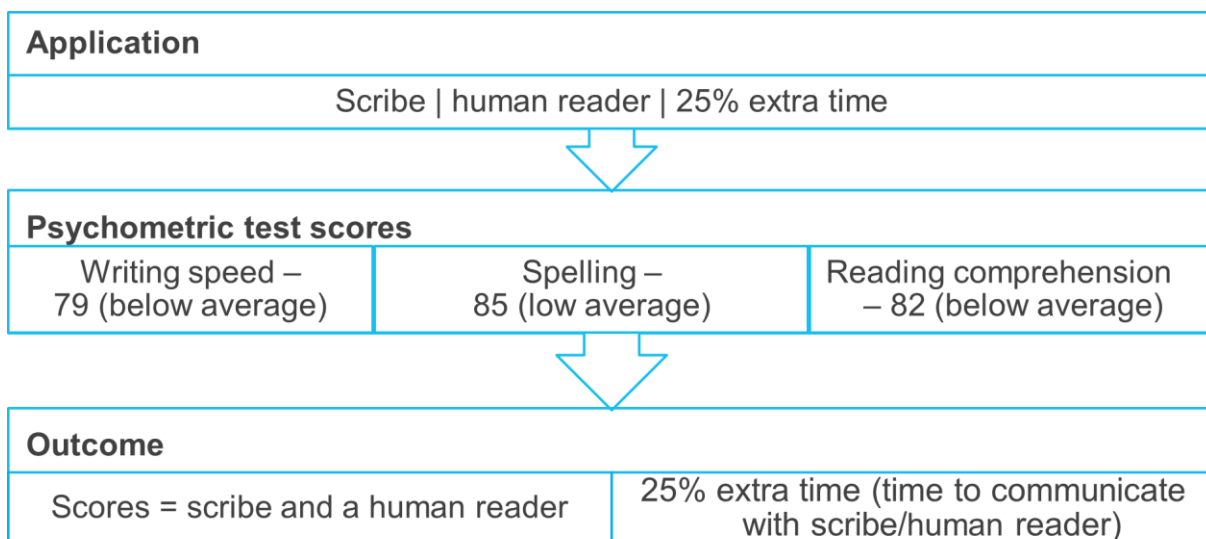
A candidate has been assessed by an educational psychologist and given the centre their report. The report shows they have some below average standard scores. Their standardised scores are

79 in writing speed, 85 in spelling, and 82 in reading comprehension. They want to apply for a scribe, a human reader and 25% extra time.

Their spelling score of 85 is in the low average range. This does not meet our requirements for approving access arrangements because we require a score of 84 or below (the below average range).

Their scores for writing speed and reading comprehension are below average, so they can apply for the following access arrangements:

- their below average writing speed means they can have a scribe
- their below average reading comprehension score means they can have a human reader
- they can also have the 25 per cent extra time to communicate with their scribe and/or human reader.



Reviewing evidence examples

Example 1

Your Associate Centre has a candidate with long-term nerve damage to their writing hand that causes numbness and tremors in that hand. The centre submits an access arrangement application for 100% extra time including a letter from a doctor as evidence.

The doctor's letter states the candidate has nerve damage in their right hand due to an injury, but it does not give any other information. This letter does not give us enough evidence to approve an application for 100% extra time.

You should discuss with the Associate Centre what, if any, access arrangements the evidence supports and how they can change their application if necessary. In this example, they could apply for an alternative arrangement such as a word processor, 25% or 50% extra time, a scribe, or rest breaks. If the centre chooses any of these options, they must also change the candidate's normal way of working to these arrangements.

Alternatively, they can obtain further evidence to support the original application and resubmit it. The centre should discuss these options with the candidate to decide which is the most appropriate.

Example 2

Your Associate Centre has a candidate who is diagnosed with dyslexia. The candidate has difficulties with reading and writing and the centre wants to apply for a human reader and word processor.

The evidence you submit must support the use of each access arrangement they want to apply for.

The centre submits a report written by a psychologist with the candidate's psychometric test scores. This shows they have a below average reading speed score and supports the candidate's use of a human reader.

The report also shows that the candidate's writing scores are within the average range. This evidence does not support the use of a word processor.

However, the report also states that the candidate has illegible handwriting and we can accept this as evidence for use of a word processor. In this scenario it would be best practice for the Associate Centre to include samples of the candidate's handwritten classwork as evidence of their illegible handwriting

Understanding our Evidence Review process

The Evidence Review process for access arrangements we introduced from June 2023 means we may ask to see the evidence of candidates' needs to make sure you have the correct evidence on file to support your access arrangement applications. So, you must save securely the supporting evidence for all access arrangement applications.

We will send you a list of candidates whose evidence we want to review when we respond to your applications. If we do not include a candidate in our request, you do not need to send us evidence and their application is approved. Do not send us any evidence that we have not requested.

After you provide us with the evidence we ask for we will email you to tell you the outcome of your applications. We only provide outcomes for certain access arrangements. If we do not email you with an outcome for an arrangement you have applied for, you may presume you can use the arrangement(s) in exams during the series. For example, if you apply for 75% extra time and supervised rest breaks, and we only give you an outcome for the 75% extra time request, you can also use the supervised rest breaks.

How to submit the evidence we ask for

If we ask you to send us evidence you must create a separate file for each candidate whose evidence we request. Label each file with the **candidate number** and **'Evidence'**. You must send us a separate document for each candidate.

You can either upload evidence documents to the Secure File Transfer section accessed via the home page of Direct, or email it to us as an attachment. You may need to zip or compress your files before you upload or email them.

Check your local data protection laws before deciding which is the best method for sending us evidence as there may be restrictions on sending personal information by email.

It is important that access arrangements reflect the candidates 'normal way of working'. This means they should be using these arrangements for their classwork and homework, as well as class tests and mock exams. This does not need to be demonstrated in the evidence of need, but it is useful to share this information with your Associate Centres.