

Access Arrangements – Roles and Responsibilities

Once the GCSE/GCE entry deadline has passed, some of the attention for exams officers (EOs) focuses upon access arrangements and meeting the 21 March deadline for applications via the Access Arrangements Online (AAO) tool.

The issue of access arrangements is one which causes some confusion in centres. Who does what? What is the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo)? What is expected of the exams officer?

JCQ regulations are quite clear that your SENCo and senior leadership team (SLT) must familiarise themselves with the entire contents of the [Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#) booklet.

The regulations also state that:

'The SENCo, fully supported by teaching staff and members of the senior leadership team, must lead on the access arrangements process within his/her centre. Teaching staff and members of the senior leadership team must support the SENCo in determining and implementing appropriate access arrangements.'

Ideally, the SENCo will also be the in-house specialist assessor and will thus assess candidates, process applications on-line and hold the evidence for inspection purposes for GCSE and/or GCE qualifications.'

So, it is clear that the SENCo has to take the lead in this process. It is the responsibility of the SENCo to ensure that Form 8 is completed ([Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#) – section 7.6) and to store documentation available for inspection ([Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#) – section 4.2.13)

JCQ regulations go further by stating that *'the specialist assessor/SENCo must work with teaching staff, support staff and exams office personnel to ensure that access arrangements are put in place for internal school tests, mock examinations and examinations.'* ([Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#) - section 4.2.7).

The message is clear from JCQ. The SENCo **must** lead on all matters relating to Access Arrangements. They may devolve some of the administrative role to the exams officer, but there are some tasks which **must** be completed by the SENCo alone.

This may be a fundamentally different way of working for many exams officers, but is one which needs to be in place in every centre.

It is the responsibility of your SENCo to lead on the access arrangements process in each centre. JCQ regulations are absolutely clear on this, and should be utilised if confirmation is needed over roles and responsibilities in your centre.