



Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Exams Access Working Group

Exams Access Guidance for Young People
Who Rely Upon AAC

November 2022

For the academic year 2022/23



Foreword

This document has been created to support the Exam Access of students using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

The document will be reviewed annually.

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Introduction

This document is aimed at parents, guardians and professionals as well as classroom teachers, SENCos (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) and Exams Officers in schools.

This guidance has been developed by the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Exams Access Working Group and **must** be used in conjunction with individual exam board guidance documents.

The aim of the document is to provide an overview on how best to support a person who uses Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) to appropriately access testing and exams.

The setting must put forward evidence of the normal ways of working for the exam boards and the access arrangements for the examinations must be agreed with the exam board in advance of the examination and in line with the timescales outlined in the exam board 's criteria.

What is the Exams Access Working Group?

A group of professionals, parents/carers and suppliers of AAC equipment from across the UK, who have experience of AAC exams access arrangements for a range of key-stages.

The group meets 2-3 times annually to discuss best practice and to develop guidance for parents/carers and educational settings on requesting exams access arrangements for those young people using any form of AAC for communication and to access the curriculum.

Why is the Working Group Needed?

Every young person should have the right to demonstrate their academic ability using the most suitable access method.

Students using AAC may require independent access to tests and exams using a variety of access adaptations. The adaptations required will be unique to each individual student and must reflect their normal way of working in the classroom.

This working group has begun to look at how these needs should inform exams access provision under the JCQ access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

The group is considering all other national testing guidelines and the impact they have on the young person on the access to all exams and testing from key stage 1 (KS1) onwards for students who rely on AAC.

What is AAC?

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) supplements or replaces speech or writing for communication. AAC can take the form of paper-based communication systems such as pen and paper, objects, signing and books with pictures or symbols.

High-tech communication systems include systems that need some sort of power to work, for example, single or multiple message devices that you can record on to as well as other devices such as computers and tablets that can convert symbols, text or pictures to a voice output.

AAC is the tool to support communication and access to the curriculum. An AAC user may have other needs or disabilities such as;

- A physical impairment
- A learning difficulty
- Autism
- A sensory impairment (e.g. a hearing or visual impairment).

An AAC user may have all or none of the above.

Some examples of conditions that may require AAC may include but are not exhaustive: Cerebral Palsy, Motor Neurone Disease, Autism Spectrum Condition or an acquired brain injury.

What should be considered when supporting a person using AAC to access exams?

- A robust and accurate Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) from as early on in the person's academic career as possible
- Established and documented 'normal ways of working' for that individual throughout their education, and starting as early as possible. For more information on normal ways of working please refer to that section within this document.
- Normal ways of working and adaptations need to ensure that the integrity and security of the examinations are not affected.
- Training and up-skilling of support staff in modifying approaches to enable the person to access the curriculum. This may also include training those staff to invigilate examinations that the person will be taking. This will apply to all ages right from Early Years onwards to ensure that normal ways of working are established for the young person. Transitions from setting to setting are particularly important to ensure any new staff are upskilled as quickly as possible in providing the adaptations needed for the young person.

- Education Health and Care Plan to be reviewed often in light of the training staff have taken, taking into consideration the preferences of the student around their normal ways of working.
- Relevant therapists and professionals working with the person to review the physical environment that the exams will be taking place in. This will ensure things like the table height, light, acoustics and positioning of any equipment is thought out and planned for in advance. This must include practical accommodations such as a room with sockets to plug in communication aids, or enough light for a device to pick up the eye movements of a student using eye gaze technology. Although not exhaustive, some examples of therapists that may be involved with supporting adaptations to the environment may include condition-specific specialists (such as professionals in autism), Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Speech and Language Therapists, AAC professionals, professionals in physical impairments.
- Consideration needs to be taken around having spare communication aids and other IT equipment on standby for the timing of the examination. This would mean there would be a 'back up' device available for that student should something go wrong with the equipment they are using during the examination.
- Request for the exams access arrangements are part of the 'normal working practice' for the person and that all timelines to submit the access arrangements are followed in accordance with individual examination board's defined timescales.
- Evidence gathering around normal ways of working and adaptations that may need to be requested by the setting. Gathering evidence may require timing the young person during mock tests, measuring their energy levels and gaining evidence from professionals around accommodations. Please see the appendix of the document where you can find an 'Exam Observation Form' that will guide your evidence collection.
- Reasoning given for why a reasonable adjustment is not being made in reference to the Equality Act.

It's never too early to begin thinking about and planning for
access to examinations!

Normal Ways of Working

“The arrangement(s) put in place must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre, for example:

- in the classroom (where appropriate);
- working in small groups for reading and/or writing;
- literacy support lessons;
- literacy intervention strategies;
- in internal school tests/examinations;
- mock examinations.

This is commonly referred to as ‘normal way of working’.”

Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ) Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties, Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (2022) page 25

Normal ways of working as detailed above apply to all key-stages and may change over time due to changes in needs of the person as well as changes in access to technology. Normal ways of working include reasonable adjustments as required by the Equality Act (2010).

Normal ways of working must be established as early in advance of the examinations as possible. The centre must put forward evidence of the normal ways of working for the exam boards and the access arrangements for the examinations must be agreed with the exam board in advance, and be in line with the individual exam board criteria.

Evidence will include:

- An introduction or summary of the person’s needs. This may include pictures, videos and transcripts
- Summary of mock examinations including;
 - What adaptations were used
 - What extra time was needed for the person to complete the paper at their own pace
 - What breaks were needed such as food or comfort breaks
 - Where the examinations were conducted/what physical considerations were needed for accommodation
- Reports from professionals detailing any special considerations needed for the person (e.g. reports from occupational therapist on positioning, doctors’ advice on medical needs etc.)
- Results from standardised tests (if relevant) such as reading speed of the person, that will inform exam access arrangements

The person’s EHCP must be up-to-date and relevant and include normal ways of working, reasonable adjustments and exams access arrangements. Each reasonable adjustment and normal way of working is individual to that student and needs to be reflected in the ECHP accurately.

Care needs to be taken on who will support the person in their examinations in order to access their normal ways of working. A familiar and qualified person must be

identified well in advance and given chance to learn the person's normal ways of working. This may include supporting the young person with their communication, becoming a scribe, or being a practical assistant (such as turning the page of the paper copy of the paper). They must be extremely confident with any technology the person is using in case of problems with the technology during the examination.

Where possible the person should be supported to complete the exams as independently as possible, and so the staff supporting the person in the examination must be confident with and trained in exams regulations as well as using this approach as normal ways of working before the examinations. The person should also have good subject knowledge, where appropriate, so that they understand the student's work. It is a useful suggestion that the adult supporting the young person in everyday lessons is not the scribe in exams but rather a second familiar person takes up this role in exam conditions. This is to ensure that the familiar adult does not unknowingly give non-verbal prompts to the young person, which could jeopardize the examination.

Quality and consistency of the team around the person is needed. This is to ensure that more than one person is trained up to support during examinations in case of illness or unforeseen circumstances.

Exam Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments for Students Who Rely on AAC (GCSE and equivalent)

The full guidance for access arrangements can be found on the JCQ website at www.jcq.org.uk for examinations of GCSE and equivalent. The guidance is updated annually, usually in August for the following academic year. It is important to look at the correct academic year guidance as changes are made each year.

In respect of GCSE exams and equivalent, the following is relevant to the needs of students who rely on AAC, all taken from the Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (2022)

The Equality Act and Examinations

The exam boards have a duty under the 2010 equality act to ensure that no person with a disability is disadvantaged.

'The duty for an awarding body to make a reasonable adjustment will apply where assessment arrangements would put a disabled candidate at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a candidate who is not disabled. In such circumstances, the awarding body is required to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage. Awarding bodies are not required to make adjustments to the academic or other standard being applied when conducting an examination/assessment.' (Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*, 2022)

Substantial Needs 1.7

It is likely that students who rely on AAC will fall into JCQ's category of substantial needs. It is important to note that a student's needs may not be addressed in the guidance and there is provision for this as follows:

'There may be disabled candidates who require other adjustments which are not listed in this document. Accordingly, the list of access arrangements is not exhaustive.'

'Each application will be considered individually in light of the candidate's needs. The response will relate primarily to the effect the requested adjustment may have on the assessment objective being tested in the qualification' (Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*, 2022) page 21

Professional Judgements in Sitting Examinations

“The centre must assess each potential learner and make justifiable and professional judgements about the learner’s potential to successfully complete and achieve the qualifications. Such an assessment must identify, where appropriate, the support that will be made available to the learner to facilitate access to the qualifications.”

(Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*, 2022) page 19

Recording Normal Ways of Working

As detailed in this document and in the Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (2022) document, ‘Normal ways of working’ must be fully embedded in the young person’s routine.

4.2.4 ‘Access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the **start** of the course. Schools, for example, should be able to process applications at the start of or during the first year of a two-year GCSE course having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working during Years 7 to 9.’ Page 24

We recommend that access arrangements are recorded and refined as early on as possible in the young person’s academic career. This is to ensure the young person is confident with the access arrangement and to ensure there is sufficient evidence to submit when the access arrangements are required to have been reported to the exam board.

4.2.5 The arrangement(s) put in place **must** reflect the support given to the candidate in the centred for example:

- in the classroom (where appropriate);
- working in small groups for reading and/or writing;
- support lessons;
- intervention strategies;
- in internal school tests/examinations;
- mock examinations.

(Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*, 2022) page 25

Extra Time

Page 37 of the document Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (2022) refers to a speed of writing assessment 5.3.2 which will be crucial in establishing the extra time a student who relies on AAC requires. If a pupil is required to have extra time during an examination, evidence must be submitted to prove this is the case during normal practice.

Extra time over 50% will be considered only in 'very exceptional circumstances' (Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*, 2022). Many students who rely on AAC will have very exceptional circumstances and may need up to 600% extra time as it takes much longer to use AAC as it would do with verbal or written methods. This will need justifying and schools/assessment centres will need to demonstrate that fatigue will not be a detrimental factor if a student is given substantial extra time. Frequent rest breaks are allowed, and the time taken in rest breaks will not be counted in the extra time provided. All tests and mock exams should be timed with a note made on the paper of the point which the student had reached at the normal time allowed for the paper. This demonstrates the extent to which the time allowed disadvantages the student.

Computer Readers 5.5

Many centres believe that computer readers cannot be used. This is a myth. Page 42 (of the document Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (2022)) specifies that a computer reader (not a reader in the form of a person reading) can be used for all of the English and the reading sections of modern foreign languages papers.

The table on page 42 of the document clearly outlines when a computer reader and a human reader can be used.

Please be aware that not all PDF documents and computer readers are compatible, and this will need to be checked well in advance of the examination.

Scribe, Word Prediction and Speech Recognition 5.7.2

It is often misunderstood around the use of word prediction and examinations. Word prediction can be used in most examinations, if it is used in normal ways of working. Pages 50/51 of the document Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (2022) covers the facility to use word prediction and spell checking in all but modern foreign languages. The student will lose marks for spelling examinations when using word prediction, but this will often be preferable to the marks likely to be lost without this facility.

Where the centre has approval for the use of a scribe and where it reflects the candidate's normal way of working within the centre, as appropriate to his/her needs, the candidate may alternatively use:

- a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility enabled; (NB This arrangement will not be permitted in ELC, GCSE and GCE Modern Foreign Language specifications. See paragraph 5.7.6.)
- a word processor with predictive text/spelling and grammar check facility enabled; (NB This arrangement will not be permitted in ELC, GCSE and GCE Modern Foreign Language specifications. See paragraph 5.7.6.) A scribe or speech recognition technology software will not be allowed if a candidate's literacy difficulties are primarily caused by English, Irish or Welsh not being his/her first language. 51
- speech recognition technology with predictive text when the candidate dictates into a word processor. Software (a screen reader) may be used to read back and correct the candidate's dictated answers; (NB This arrangement will not be permitted in ELC, GCSE and GCE Modern Foreign Language specifications. See paragraph 5.7.6.)
- computer software, producing speech, which is used to dictate to a scribe. However, the candidate will not have access to marks awarded for spelling, punctuation and/or grammar unless he/she has independently dictated spelling, punctuation and/or grammar, and this has been recorded on the scribe cover sheet.

It is advisable for students to have back-up systems available, such as an additional device pre-loaded with the examination, in case of technology failure at the time of the examination.

Students chosen means of communication needs to be available at all times during the teaching time and during the examination.

Prompting 5.10

A candidate may be assisted by a prompter who can keep him/her focused on the need to answer a question and then move on to answering the next question. (Page 59) of Joint Council of Qualifications, *Instructions for conducting examinations, 2022*)

It is common for students who rely on AAC to have difficulty with sense of time, loss of concentration and/or be affected by obsessive behaviours leading to them continuing to revise a question rather than moving on. A prompter would be able to support the student with focus and time management.

Language Modification

Page 67 of the Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (2022-23)* describes the role of a language modifier who is able to modify the language of the exam paper but NOT explain technical terms nor subject specific terms. Their role is to provide support to students who have 'persistent and significant difficulties in accessing and processing information'. An oral language modifier must have completed the relevant qualification, and there are strict instructions on what they can or cannot say in an examination. The instructions around what a language modifier is able to do is set out in section 5.11 with an additional appendix in the same document which can be used as a memory aid.

It is to be noted that when language modification is needed in examinations, there also needs to be an invigilator present. Before the examination series, the language modifier for the candidate needs to be familiar with the candidate and a trial of the examination with the language modifier present needs to be completed. Language modifiers need to provide a cover sheet which describes, in detail, any changes that they have made to wordings in exams.

Practical Assistant

Section 5.14 of Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (2022)* outlines the role of a practical assistant who is able to take instructions from the learner and carry out physical tasks as instructed by the learner, provided the exam component is NOT testing a physical skill.

A student may qualify for a practical assistant in addition to other adult-supported access arrangements such as a reader or a scribe. This may be the same person in the exam but each individual regulation for each role must be adhered to.

A practical assistant is an arrangement that needs to be negotiated with the exam board. A practical assistant is not usually permitted in some examinations that have an examined practical element to them such as a music examination or a design technology examination.

A practical assistant:

- must perform practical tasks as specifically approved by the awarding body and according to the candidate's instructions, unless the skill to be performed is the focus of the assessment, (in which case the practical assistant will not be permitted) or the procedure would be unsafe.
- must immediately refer any problems in communication during the assessment to the invigilator or examinations officer.
- must abide by the regulations since failure to do so could lead to the disqualification of the candidate.
- must ensure the safety of the candidate and those around him/her;
- must not give factual help to the candidate or indicate when the task is complete.
- must not advise the candidate on which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which questions should be answered.
- may ask the candidate to repeat instructions where these are not clear.

(Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*, 2022 page 67)

The JCQ in their document *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*, 2022 give some examples of students and the allowance of practical assistants.

SENCOs and subject teachers need to be aware that practical assistant cannot be used in examinations that are testing a student's practical skills, and therefore thought needs to be taken around which examinations in that subject will be taken by the student.

The exam board will reject an application for a practical assistant when the examination is testing a practical skill that the student needs practical help with.

Alternative Sites for Examinations

Section 5.15 of Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (2022-23) outlines alternative sites for examinations. Examinations can be taken at an alternative site such as a residential address or a hospital for reasons such as a long-term or short-term illness or severe difficulties in accessing the examination centre.

The SENCo must liaise with the examinations officer who will need to refer to the JCQ publication *Instructions for conducting examinations*:

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>

Other arrangements

Section 5.16 provides examples of arrangements that can be made to accommodate students with specific disabilities. It is not required for the SENCO to report or evidence these arrangements which include:

- Amplification equipment
- Brailers
- Closed circuit television (CCTV)
- Colour naming by the invigilator for candidates who are colour blind
- Coloured overlays (this would also include reading rulers, virtual overlays and virtual reading rulers)
- Examination on coloured/enlarged paper
- Fidget toys and stress balls
- Low vision aid/magnifier
- Non-electronic ear defenders/ear plugs
- Optical Character Reader (OCR) scanners
- Separate invigilation within the centre (sitting the examination outside of the main examination hall/room, e.g., a room for a smaller group of candidates.
- Squared paper for visual spatial difficulties.

Exemptions

5.17 provides for disabled candidates to miss a component or components of the exam. An indication placed on the candidate's certificate to show that not all assessment objectives were accessible.

An exemption must:

- not undermine the integrity of the qualification.

- only be granted as a last resort when no other arrangement is available.
- only apply to whole components where the candidate cannot demonstrate any of the skills.
- make up no more than 40% of a linear or unitised GCSE or GCE qualification. For unitised GCE A-level qualifications at least one A2 unit must be completed.
- only apply in general qualifications (see Chapter 1, sections 1.6 and 1.8 for the list of general qualifications covered by equality legislation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

An exemption will not be granted if an alternative and accessible route through a qualification is available to the candidate.

Modified Papers

Chapter 6 of Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* (2023-23) outlines the arrangements that can be made for modified papers. Exam boards can provide modified papers except in circumstances where substantial modification is required. Modifications that may be needed for a young person using AAC may include a non-interactive PDF version of the paper, so that the pupil can view the paper electronically. This section also explains for other considerations that AAC pupils may need in addition to their AAC needs such as a paper in another language or enlarged print.

There is a significant lengthy timeframe to follow, to allow for the exam boards to modify upcoming papers. For example, in the summer of 2019, an exam board provided a pdf version of an 'online only' exam, this took 8 weeks to prepare.

The SENCo and Exams Officer need to be mindful that the deadline for an application for modified papers is much earlier than other access arrangements.

If a student is unable to access exam in the original formats, it may be added to the student's specialist software if negotiated with the exam board and the right evidence has been submitted. This needs to be part of their normal way of working and is deemed as an exceptional circumstance.

Please refer to the latest Joint Council for Qualifications *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments* for timings on submitting requests for modifying papers.

Additional Access Arrangements

To the AAC Exams Access Working Group's knowledge, there have been a number of access arrangements agreed across England for candidates who rely on AAC that fall outside the scope of what is described in the JCQ document; *Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*.

These included:

- Exam papers being written into vocabulary software to facilitate access and recording of answers
- Up to 600% extra time
- The use of symbol-based vocabularies
- The inclusion of quotes for English Literacy on the student's AAC device (although randomised so that the student still has to identify the appropriate quote)
- The use of sentence starters and key words (provided that they do not provide an unfair advantage)
- The provision of reduced time demand through special consideration. This means that the exam board agrees to a shorter paper being provided which still tests the required skills to pass the examination without loss of marks.

New accommodations are being requested and developed each year for individuals and so this list of accommodations for exam access will grow over time.

A student who relies on AAC will need to use all of the language on their device in order to not be at a substantial disadvantage.

Roles and Responsibilities of People Involved

Various professionals should be involved in ensuring the young person can access examinations, and at various points in the young person's academic career.

Figure 1. Shows a list of professionals that could be involved in supporting the young person's access arrangements.

Figure 1.

Access to Exams for Students Who Rely on AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication)

The People Involved.

Home	Day to day in School	School Management	External	Supporting Exams
Student	Student	Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)	Educational Psychologist (EP)	Practical assistants
Parents	Peers	Exams Officer	Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)	Invigilators
Extended family	Teaching assistants (TA)	AAC teacher coordinator	Occupational Therapist (OT)	Reader
Professionals supporting in the home	Subject teachers	Specialist advisory teacher/AAC coordinator	Suppliers of AT (Assistive Technology) and AAC devices	Scribe
Personal assistants in the home (PA)	AAC teacher coordinator		Exam Board representative	Prompter
Private tutor			Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)	Communication professional
			Assistive Technology (AT) specialist	
			Relevant professionals from the Local Authority (LA)	

Figure 2 shows the roles and responsibilities of those professionals involved with AAC exams access and considerations that may need to be made from an early stage.

Figure 2.

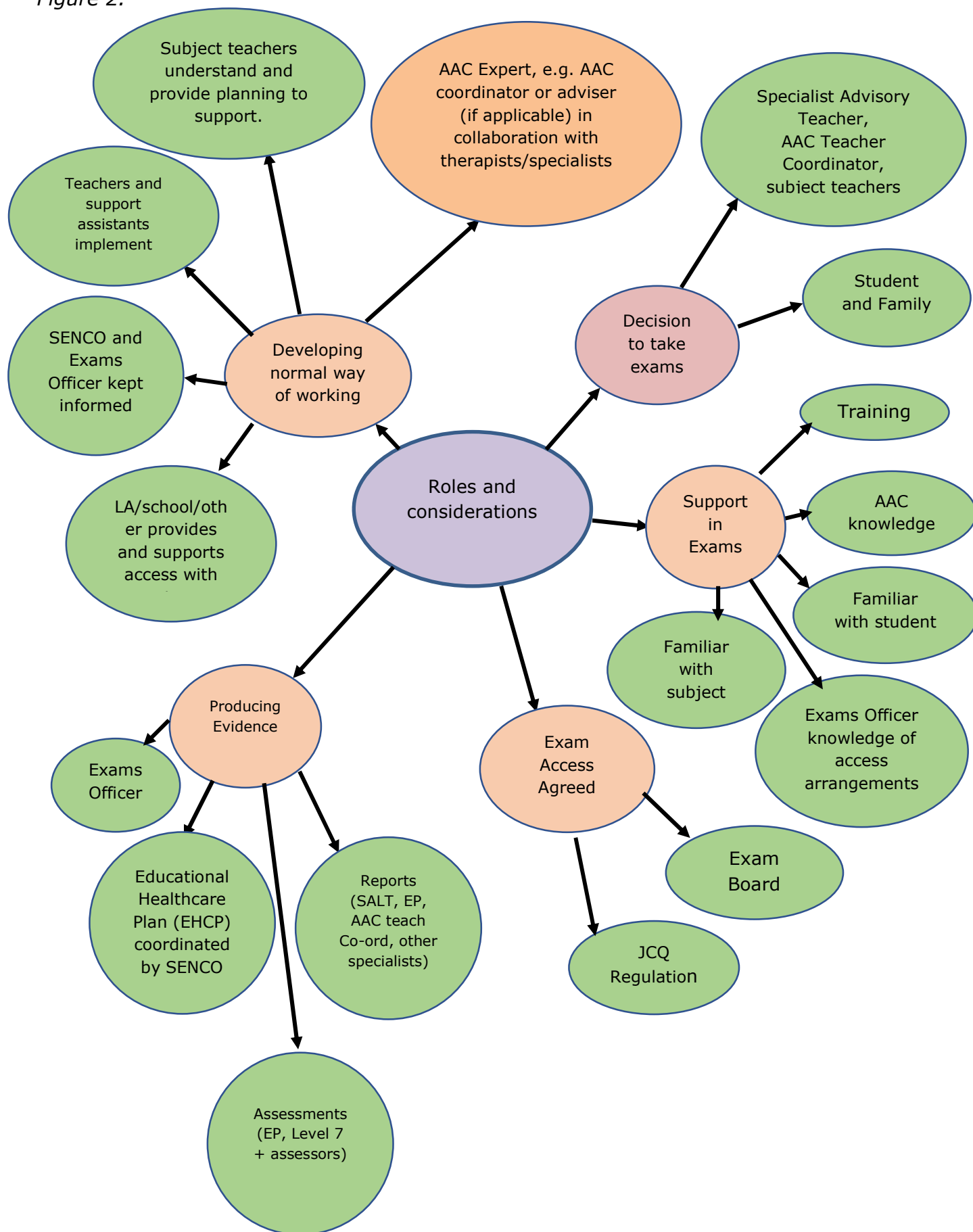
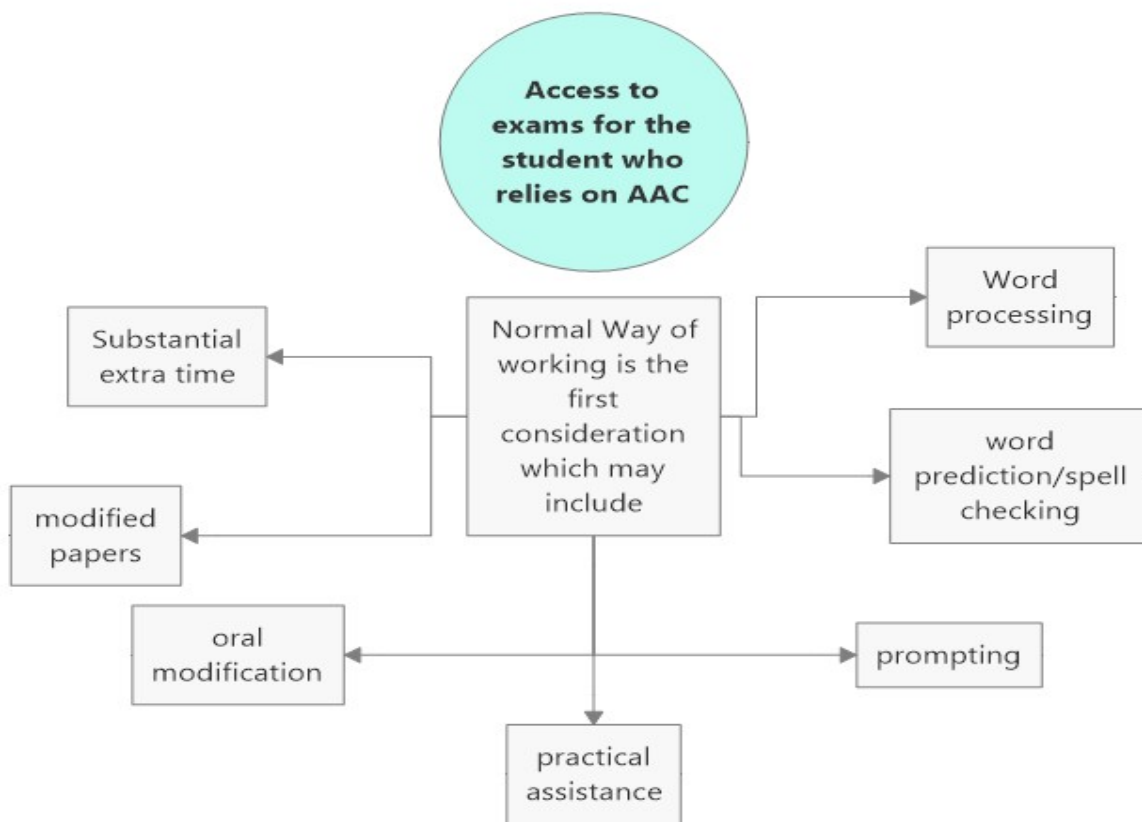


Figure 3 shows some of the access arrangements that can be requested for young people who rely on AAC.

Figure 3.



References

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties, (2022) Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ)

Joint Council of Qualifications, *Instructions for conducting examinations, 2022*

Further Information and Guidance

Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils: Guidance for Schools in England, Equality and Human Rights Commission (2015)
www.equalityhumanrights.com

Instructions for Conducting Examinations, Joint Council for Qualifications, (updated annually) www.jcq.org.uk

AAC Exams Access Working Group, contacted via aacexamaccess@gmail.com and meet several times a year to review this guidance document.

Communication Matters, www.communicationmatters.org.uk

Appendix 1 Monitoring and evidence collection form

This form can be used by the student's teachers to record the support the student needs in their lessons. There is a space for observations made. This document would be useful for evidence collection when used across multiple subject lessons.

Monitoring Form – Teacher Feedback

Date returned by:

Student Name			
Subject		Teacher	

Please use **X** to indicate answer.

Additional Needs

		No concerns	Requires occasional support	Requires continuous support	Not applicable
Concentration: Staying on task, ignoring distractions, focusing on the teacher, remembering instructions etc.					
Organisational Skills: Physical organisation of self and equipment, planning ahead with work, thinking about consequences before actions etc.					
Speech and Language: Understanding their first spoken language, acquiring new vocabulary, ability to express themselves clearly in sentences etc.					
English / Literacy	Reading: Ability to read a paragraph or more with ease and fluency.				
	Spelling: Ability to consistently spell common words and make a good attempt at unfamiliar words.				
	Extended Writing: Ability to write a correctly punctuated paragraph or more with ease and fluency.				
	Handwriting: Ability to write legibly, with ease and at a pace equivalent to peers.(If needs support, complete the Handwriting Legibility Scale (HLS) form and speak to class OT)				
Word Processor: Does the pupil need/use a computer for typing during regular lessons?					
Numeracy/Maths: Demonstrating a basic grasp of number, algebra, data, shape / space and measure etc.					
Physical/Hearing/Visual: Ability to access all activities despite physical, hearing or visual difficulty etc.					
Social: Forming and maintaining positive relationships, conforming to social norms etc.					
Emotional: Showing awareness of own feelings and that of others, managing feelings, confidence etc.					
Homework/Coursework: Ability to study independently, to produce work to deadlines etc.					
Exams: Ability to prepare for and sit an exam without close adult support.					

Overall, how well is this student progressing in your lesson/s? (please include Functional skills/ GCSE targets & current attainment where possible)

If you wish to recommend this pupil for a specific access arrangement, please complete the 3 observations on 3 different dates/ times of day (if possible):

Observation 1:	Date: _____ Time: _____
Observation 2:	Date: _____ Time: _____
Observation 3:	Date: _____ Time: _____

Case Study 1 – Adam

The Road to University

Adam is studying Maths at Newcastle University but the road there involved a lot of curriculum adaptation and negotiation with exam boards so that he could access the examinations.

The Right Support

As well as the school team having the right expertise, we needed plenty of support from outside agencies such as

- The local specialist teaching services,
- The local speech and language therapy services and, of course,
- ACE (Regional AAC service) who have assessed and supported Adam's access to communication aids for many years.
- His parents being tech savvy also helped.

Within the educational setting, there was a need for joined-up working between the SENCO, the exams officer, the subject teachers and the AAC educational team.

The AAC educational team comprises of an AAC teacher coordinator, who is a qualified teacher who is experienced in the use of AAC. They coordinate the work of Teaching Assistants and ensure that they know how to adapt and set up Adam's equipment. These roles are within school rather than external advisory roles and make a huge difference to the success of the process.

Accessing the curriculum through the communication software

- The communication software was easily adapted to accommodate access arrangement in line with Adam's educational and examination access needs.
- Adam benefitted from having more than one communication aid/device available at any one time. For some young people one device may be used for communication whilst a second device can be used for educational purposes and recording the young person's learning.
- Planning from teachers in advance was crucial to our ability to deliver the adapted curriculum and equipment access.

Negotiating with exam boards

There needed to be much negotiation and clear priorities for what access arrangements Adam needed for his examinations. The professionals working at the exam boards may never have come across a student using AAC before, so access needs need explaining clearly and simply.

- We timed every test and mock test that Adam completed so that we had a clear picture of the work and break requirements
- We worked from year 7 to establish his normal way of working.

- We negotiated with the exam boards to give Adam 400%-600% extra time, an electronic reader, drawing software and word prediction due to his normal ways of working.
- The extra time meant the exams each went over 2 or even 3 consecutive days. This was tiring for Adam and substantial extra time needs to be considered carefully for those students against their fatigue.
- Adam had access to a back-up device and a third device during the times of the examinations, all pre-loaded with the examination questions. We did need to use the third device more than once!

By the time Adam was in 6th form we were more confident with the process and his subject teachers began to offer specific subject tutoring on a 1:1 basis. This was a fantastic help.

Adam is now in his second year at University where he continues to do well with his studies.

Case Study 2 - Student M

Accessing GCSEs

Student M attended mainstream primary part-time, moving to full-time mainstream secondary.

They received input from CandLE (a organisation supporting students with high-tech AAC) from year 4. The student uses Grid 3 on a device to access all recording of learning in addition to their communication access.

Records were kept of exam concessions needed/given from year 8. There were no time limits, but by year 9 teaching staff and other professionals knew that student M would need at least 500% extra time.

An Educational Psychologist's assessment was performed in year 10 to determine the student's additional needs, as well as Speech and Language Therapy assessments.

The Senco applied for the concessions in March of Year 10.

The school was insisting that, to be able to sit English Language, Student M would have to sit English Literature. They had not been attending English Literature lessons up to this point in time and this would mean student M would have to attend the exams, write their name, sitting for the allotted amount of time just to ensure student M could be entered for the English Language exams.

It was agreed that Student M could have 500% + time, but that exams would need to be sat on consecutive days, with any missed exams being sat at the soonest opportunity. This meant that where there were more than 2 exams in a week Student M would need to attend school on a weekend. Then if there were four exams in one week the student would need to sit exams for the whole of eight consecutive days.

Student M would also have language modification, a scribe, prompts and rest breaks when needed, as this was their normal way of working.

At the beginning of May Year 11, the school finally agreed with the exam boards that Student M could sit a single English Language exam and was exempt from sitting the Literature examination.

CandLE were given access to the exam paper in a secure environment, two hours prior to the exam starting, with permission from the exam board to move the exam paper into Grid 3 to enable independent access to the examination.

Case Study 3 -Student P

Accessing BTEC Exams and GCSEs

Brief description of needs / abilities

Student P has congenital muscular dystrophy and is a full-time wheelchair user. She is fully dependent on carers for all aspects of her daily life. She has very limited independent movement and often requires carers to re-position her as her muscle strength is so compromised. She has very little functional hand movement but is able to use the thumb on her left hand well enough to be able to access alternative technology (AT).

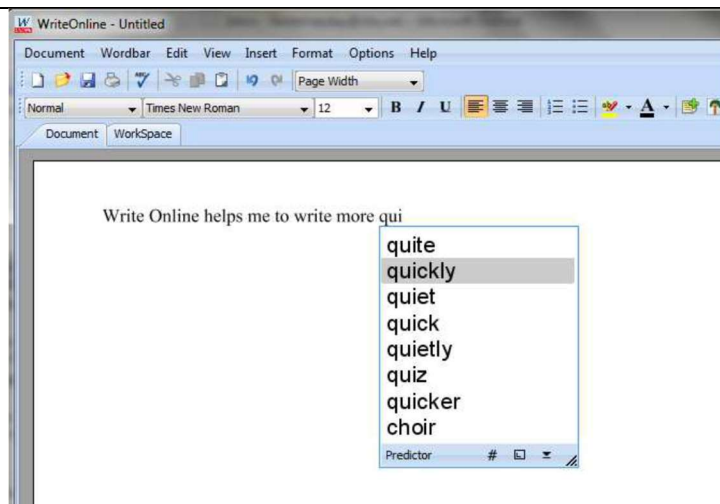
Due to her restricted movement the student has been unable to use a standard keyboard or mouse for written recording. Using a scribe has been trialled but speaking at length is incredibly effortful and this has proven to prevent her from meeting her full potential. She attends mainstream secondary school with full time TA support; she is working at age appropriate level for a Year 11 student.

Access arrangements put in place (Assistive Technology)



Student P uses an HP Envy X360 for all written recording which is mounted onto her wheelchair.


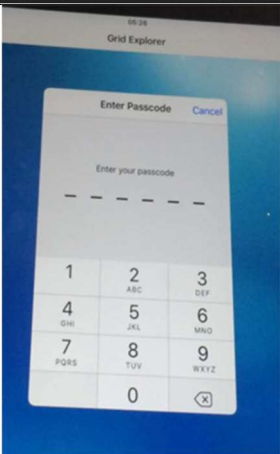
Her laptop needs to have internet access to link with her iPhone which is her only viable access method due to her complex physical needs.



Student P uses 'Write Online' (now DocsPlus) software on her laptop with word prediction enabled. This reduces effort and increases her word per minute as she does not have to type words in full.

Student P uses her iPhone which is linked via the 'Remote Mouse' app to the laptop so it can be used as an external mouse and keyboard.

The size of the keyboard on the phone works for Student P as it is small enough for her to type with the use of her thumb. This enables her to type words directly onto screen so she can write independently.

	<p>Student P uses a 'Swift Key' keyboard app which enables her to swipe in patterns across the keyboard to type words rather than to press individual keys on a keyboard. This reduces the amount of effort needed to build a word.</p>
	<p>Student P uses 'Guided Access' in the accessibility settings on the iPhone to lock her phone into the 'Remote Mouse' app so she can only use it as a keyboard and mouse for accessing her laptop.</p> <p>The adults working with her have access to the code to remove guided access when necessary.</p>

Time management strategies

- Additional time – this was awarded at 100%
- Rest Breaks – as indicated by the student using low tech strategies
- Stop the clock

Room requirements

Student required her exam to be near a care suite, accessible in her wheelchair which is essential as she has a tilting chair to support her needs. Bluetooth was needed and internet access in order for her phone and laptop to link to one another.

Outcome of assessments

Student was working towards English GCSE, which needed resits to achieved desired grade and a BTEC in Health and Social Care. She went on to work towards an A-level in Criminology, then a BTEC in finance at another school. She believes that she would be good at data inputting and is working on her CV and sending out applications.

Key lessons learnt

- iPhones can be accepted by exam boards with correct lock in place
- Made use of stop the clock and rest breaks more so than needing extra time (100% was awarded)
- Prediction supports fatigue management and worth thinking about the SPAG points vs ability to record demonstrated knowledge of the subject matter

Case Study 4 – Student S

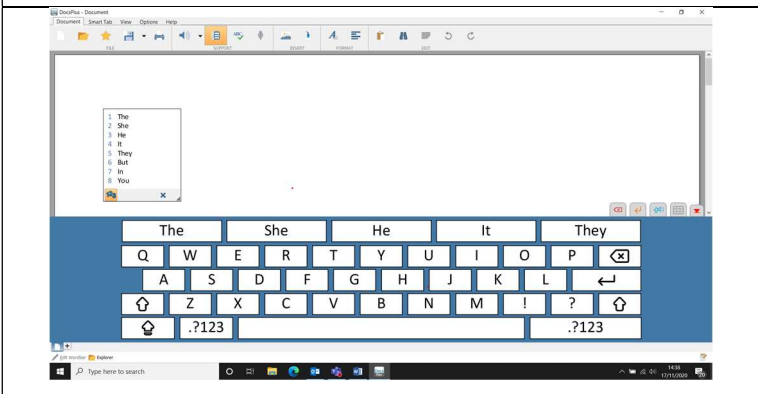
Accessing GCSE Examinations

Brief description of needs / abilities

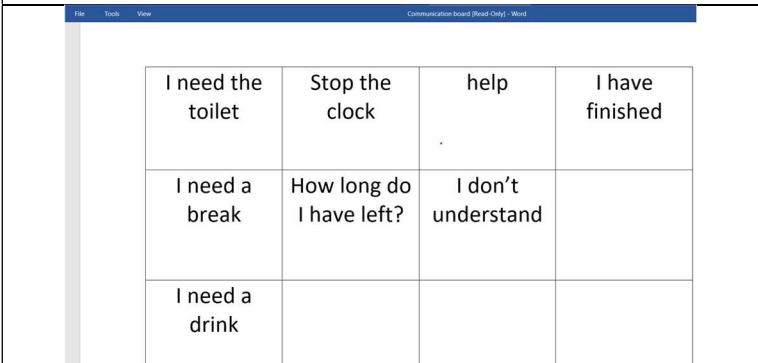
Student S has cerebral palsy, they are ambulant, so move around the school fairly independently. They are in secondary mainstream, working at age appropriate levels, with teaching assistant 1 to 1 support. They have a Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA), a Surface Go 2 in a Targus Rugged case to augment spoken communication. They are using Grid 3 software to run Alpha Core communication package and a laptop with DocsPlus as an alternative pen for written recording.

This student also uses a scribe with her voice, or her VOCA, specifically when she is tired as her right sided tremor makes using the laptop too tiring to access, and she needs to stabilise herself with her arm on the table.

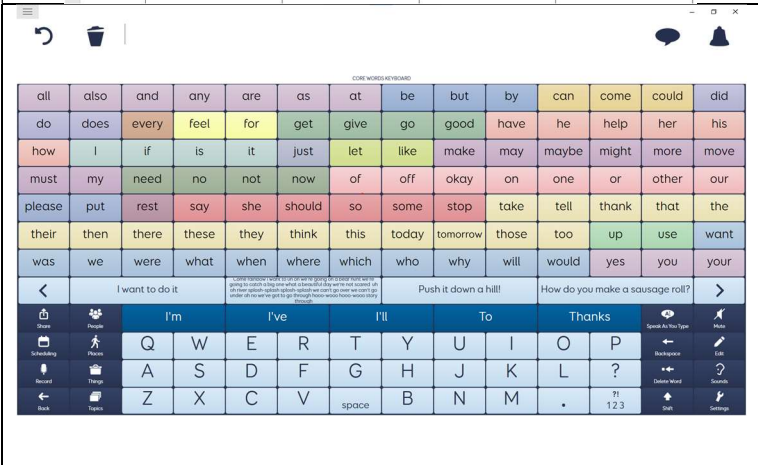
Access arrangements put in place (Assistive Technology)



Use of a school laptop, with integrated glide pad and DocsPlus. This is set in Exam mode, with only the exams officer and SENCO with the lock code. Exam mode has DocsReader, spell check and auto-capitalisation, prediction, Word Bar and Speech enabled as these are part of 'normal ways of working'.



Low-tech boards also used to indicate to staff the need for stop the clock, rest or comfort breaks. Student is able to speak a few words, however breath control prevents longer utterances and speech can be difficult to understand (dysarthric).



Student S uses Grid 3 software with AlphaCore communication package on her Surface Go (VOCA). This has a QWERTY keyboard with prediction, which augments her spoken communication. Evidence gathered for normal way of working, used with a scribe to answer exam questions. Student prefers to turn the volume right down in an exam situation and

	encourages the communication partner to read this.
Time management strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional time – this has been applied for and awarded at 50% • Rest Breaks • Stop the clock 	
Room requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near accessible toilet • Student needs their own space so as to not disturb others when using scribe/VOCA 	
Outcome of assessments	
<p>This student has not yet finished their GCSE's, however all of the equipment has been agreed with the relevant exam boards, in part due to their evidence of it being her normal way of working. She has practiced exam conditions and is taking mock exams in case any of the arrangements need to be modified.</p>	
Key lessons learnt	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather evidence from Year 7 of normal ways of working, in both end of term, end of year and formal assessments. • Allow students to practice exam conditions including the room/space to be used • Ensure updates have been run in advance on laptops or disable these • Encourage breaks before fatigue becomes too much 	