

## **Candle Position Statement – Exam Access Support**

We know how much parents and settings want to support their children, especially if they think a young person might need help during exams. However, when it comes to formal exam access arrangements, the rules set out by JCQ are very clear: **adjustments must be tailored to each student**, grounded in evidence from their everyday school experience — and **must be decided by the school or exam centre**, not by external organisations or well-meaning individuals.

According to the 2025 JCQ guidance:

- “Access arrangements must reflect the student’s normal way of working in the centre” and “be based on evidence of need, not simply preference.”
- For students changing school/centre: “Access arrangements must always be based on current need and reflect the candidate’s normal way of working in their new centre.”
- The adjustments (or “reasonable adjustments”) provided may be unique to an individual and may **not** even appear on the standard list of arrangements.

What this means in practice:

- **Responsibility must lie with the centre, not an external organisation** — under JCQ’s 2025 guidance, the decision to approve access arrangements rests with the student’s centre (school/college) and its designated staff (e.g. SENCo, exam officer), who are familiar with the candidate’s “normal way of working” in class and assessments. [JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications+2JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications+2](#) Candle can advise on the student’s Normal Ways of Working and Exam Access Arrangements but we must have assessed the student first, and worked with the setting and family to determine need.
- **Access arrangements must be evidence-based, reflecting regular in-centre practice** — JCQ requires evidence of need drawn from the student’s day-to-day performance, internal assessments or mock exams in addition to external professional reports. Candle can provide an external report following a specific assessment with the student. [JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications+2JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications+2](#)
- **Risk to assessment integrity and compliance** — access arrangements or reasonable adjustments must not compromise the security, fairness, or standard of the examination. Only approved centres, following formal procedures and paperwork (e.g.

JCQ Forms, internal evidence files) can validly apply for or implement adjustments. [JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications+2colchester.ac.uk+2](https://www.jcq.org.uk/joint-council-for-qualifications+2colchester.ac.uk+2)

- **Potential for unfair or inconsistent advice / legal risk** — offering general exam-access guidance without detailed information on the student could expose the organisation and candidates to risk — for instance, of misinterpretation of regulations, unapproved adjustments, or challenges to the validity of exam results.

For those reasons, we believe it would — despite our best intentions — be **inappropriate and risky** for an external not-for-profit organisation like ours to offer “free general exam-access guidance” to individual students or parents. Without a full, ongoing understanding of a child’s day-to-day classroom experiences and without the ability to gather the required evidence, any advice given would be speculative at best.

### **Instead, here’s what we *can* offer you:**

- Annual training sessions to explain to parents, carers and settings **what kinds of adjustments the regulations allow** (extra time, readers, scribes, rest breaks, use of a word-processor, AAC device, etc.). The training also will help you understand **the principles behind JCQ rules** — that adjustments must help overcome a substantial disadvantage, without altering the demands of the exams.
- A **bespoke Exam Access Arrangements Assessment** where we can determine the student’s Normal Ways of Working and provide a report detailing these and recommending what exam arrangements are needed for the individual. There is a cost to the service and it requires in-person work. Clients have funded this through the EHCP process, settings themselves or privately.
- **Ongoing exam access arrangements support to the setting.** This has to be following an assessment outlined above so we can fully understand the student needs and identify what support the setting requires in making the case for exam access arrangements with the exam board. Sometimes our ongoing support is in developing the student’s Normal Ways of Working further to remove barriers that currently exist for the student.

### **Our Promise to Parents**

We will always:

- put fairness first
- share clear and honest information
- avoid anything that could unintentionally risk a student’s exam eligibility or results

- encourage you to work directly with your child's school, who hold the official role in access decisions under JCQ 2025 regulations

We hope this gives clarity about why, even with only the best intentions, we cannot independently provide general exam access guidance.