

October 2025

Changes to the JCQ Evidence Criteria for Extra Time – Exam Access Arrangements 2025/26

Dear Students, Parents and Carers,

We are writing to inform you of important updates to the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations regarding the assessment and approval of 25% extra time as an exam access arrangement.

Key Change: Supervised Rest Breaks Must Be Trialled First

- Under the updated JCQ regulations, SENDCos are now required to trial and exhaust the use of supervised rest breaks before applying for 25% extra.
- The changes apply to all Year 12 students who have previously been awarded extra time due to medical needs, neurodivergence, or mental health difficulties.

The JCQ guidance states:

- *Where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty, the SENCo must have trialled and exhausted the option of supervised rest breaks through timed internal tests and/or mock examinations before making an application for 25% extra time.*
- *Supervised rest breaks are often more effective and appropriate than 25% extra time for candidates who experience anxiety or attention difficulties. They may better address the needs of neurodivergent candidates, such as those with ADHD or ASD, as well as candidates with medical conditions or mental health needs.*
- *For a candidate who tires easily or struggles to concentrate over an extended period, supervised rest breaks will be more appropriate than 25% extra time.*

Please be assured that students will continue to be supported by their teachers who will monitor access arrangements closely and collect evidence to ensure the most appropriate support is in place. If supervised rest breaks are trialled and shown not to meet a student's needs, and there is clear evidence to show that 25% extra time is necessary and reflects their normal way of working, an application for extra time can still be considered.

For students who have previously been granted extra time due to reading, writing, or processing needs, JCQ has introduced enhanced evidence-gathering requirements. To support this, we will be trialling the use of extra time during the evidence-gathering period. Once the necessary evidence has been collected and JCQ criteria have been met, we will formally confirm that extra time is in place for the student.

We are committed to working with students to determine the most appropriate access arrangements based on evidence of need and the JCQ guidelines.

If you would like to discuss this further, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Kind regards,



Laura Carlin
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