

# 14+ Exams FAQs

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## **iPads in exams**

### **1. Can an iPad be used as a magnifier?**

Yes, but the iPad must be locked to this app using guided access and have no access to any files or the internet. You should apply for this using 'other' on access arrangements online.

### **2. Can you use a Scientific calculator app on the iPad in exams?**

Yes, but the iPad must be locked to the calculator app using guided access and have no access to any files or the internet.

### **3. How can you lock out other apps, so you just have the calculator for exams?**

Before the exam go to iPad settings, accessibility, select guided access and turn this on. Open the app which you would like to lock the iPad on, to start guided access triple click the top button (home button for older iPads) click start, then type a 6-digit pass code. The same pass code will need to be typed to unlock the iPad from guided access.

### **4. Is it possible to disable the spelling and predictive text on an iPad for exams?**

Go to iPad settings, keyboard settings, then turn off predictive. Make sure the iPad is locked to the app to be used with guided access and internet is disabled.

### **5. Which accessibility tools can the student use in an exam?**

Subject to agreement with the awarding body, any that they use as their normal way of working.

### **6. Where the spelling element of an exam is not marked, can a student have spell checker on the iPad?**

If the candidate meets the criteria to have a scribe, yes.

### **7. Can I confirm how you apply for an iPad to be used as a scientific calculator.**

You should apply for this using 'other' on access arrangements online.

## Technology in exams

**8. Is there an exam mode on a BrailleNote Touch or can a device be borrowed from Humanware for exams period so pupil can use their own for revision?**

Contact Humanware to discuss exams settings for the Brailnote Touch. It is also worth noting that some devices without an explicit exam mode can be made to align with the regulations set out in section 14 of the JCQ ICE document: [JCQ-Instructions-for-conducting-examinations-2024\\_FINAL.pdf](#).

You would need to contact Humanware to enquire whether they operate loan schemes.

**9. Students who use Apple Pencil with an iPad Pro in class can convert locked past GCSE papers using apps such as GoodNotes/Notability making it fully accessible to write on (epen and typed), would this be allowed in a real exam for written parts and not technical questions?**

This is a bespoke arrangement and should be directed to the modification team at the exam board concerned.

**10. Is there a way of changing the background colour for someone needing an electronic copy of GCSE exams on an iPad? can you change a non-interactive pdf?**

Coloured overlays can be provided to a candidate at the time of his/her examinations without prior approval. This is covered in the JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations document, statements 14.1: [JCQ-Instructions-for-conducting-examinations-2024\\_FINAL.pdf](#).

The background colour can be changed when viewing a pdf on an iPad - check the settings on the device as well as the settings for the app being used to view the pdf. Also check that this process works with non-interactive PDF past papers from the exam board.

**11. If a candidate writes answers on an iPad and reads non-interactive papers on the computer, would this be permitted?**

Yes, you would need to request non-interactive PDF papers on Access Arrangements online.

The iPad must be locked to the word processor app using guided access and have no access to any files or the internet and with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text switched off. This is covered in the JCQ Access Arrangements and reasonable Adjustments document, statement 5.8: [JCQ-AARA-24-25\\_FINAL\\_2024.pdf](#).

## **Reader, scribe and practical assistant questions**

### **12. Can the practical assistant be the same person the candidate works with normally, such as their teacher or TA?**

A familiar practical assistant is allowed as long as there is a separate invigilator present. JCQ guidance recognises that it is important that the person acting as reader, scribe, or practical assistant for a blind or partially sighted candidate is familiar with their normal way of working. See JCQ AARA statement 4.2.10

### **13. Can a practical assistant pass a diagram to the candidate?**

The practical assistant can pass a diagram to the candidate if it is referred to in the question or the candidate has asked for it. This is explained in [JCQ-AARA-24-25 FINAL 2024.pdf](#) point 5.14.4.

### **14. Can a scribe input information into a calculator and read back the answers if the student tells them what to input?**

This would fall under the role of a practical assistant and reader rather than a scribe. The application for a practical assistant should include details of the tasks they propose to carry out, in this case inputting information into a calculator as directed by the student.

### **15. Is there a guide to what a practical assistant is permitted to do in an exam?**

The tasks which a practical assistant may perform in exams depends on the specific needs of the candidate. For this reason, schools need to specify the tasks they are proposing the practical assistant carry out in their application for this access arrangement.

The basic principle is that practical assistants can only carry out tasks under instruction from the candidate and they can't carry out tasks that form part of the assessment. JCQ guidance section 5.14.3 gives more details.

### **16. Modern foreign languages: Can the pupil's teacher act as reader in the exam?**

A familiar reader is allowed as long as there is a separate invigilator present. JCQ guidance recognises that it is important that the person acting as reader, scribe, or practical assistant for a blind or partially sighted candidate is familiar with their normal way of working.

See JCQ AARA statement 4.2.10 [JCQ-AARA-24-25 FINAL 2024.pdf](#).

### **17. Is there any restriction on use of a human reader in a MFL exam? Or must it be a Computer Reader?**

A reader is allowed for MFL exams, except for Reading papers. A candidate may however use a computer reader in a MFL Reading paper. A computer reader allows the candidate to independently meet the requirements of the reading standards. See

JCQ AARA, The rules – the use of a reader, section 5.5: [JCQ-AARA-24-25 FINAL 2024.pdf](#).

**18. Can a practical assistant press the buttons on the calculator for a brailist? If the brailist doesn't know the sequence of buttons required, can they state the calculation and the practical assistant input this in the calculator?**

The application for a practical assistant should include details of the tasks they propose to carry out, in this case inputting information into a calculator as directed by the student.

However, the student would need to talk the practical assistant through the specific buttons they should press, in the order they should press them, otherwise they could be at an advantage to sighted students who have had to learn how to use a calculator to input these equations. Correct use of a calculator (whatever form the calculator takes), is a key skill being assessed throughout the calculator papers so the student needs to demonstrate their mastery. The student will need to familiarise themselves with the sequence of buttons and build this into their normal classroom practice.

When applying for a practical assistant on access arrangements online you will be referred directly to the exam board to write an explanation of the specific tasks that the practical assistant will complete in the exam. This will be an opportunity to explain that the practical assistant would be inputting calculations under instruction from the candidate.

**19. If a student has a reader. Can it be argued that they need a separate room?**

Statement 13.3 in the JCQ ICE document says 'The centre is responsible for ensuring that the candidate and reader cannot be overheard by or distract other candidates. (This will also apply if the candidate uses a computer reader.)

**20. Would a brailist be allowed to read a paper in braille but say their answers out loud for a scribe to record rather than braille the answers? If so, would they still be allowed 100% additional time?**

Reading braille papers and using a scribe to write answers are fairly standard access arrangements. The SENCO/Exams Officer can apply for a scribe and order the braille papers.

The extra time application would need to be referred to the exam board via Access Arrangements Online, as this is above 25%. This will allow you to discuss the amount of extra time required with the board.

See JCQ AARA, section 5.3.2: [JCQ-AARA-24-25 FINAL 2024.pdf](#).

## Ordering papers

### **21. Are functional skills papers and Entry Level papers available in modified or braille versions?**

Functional Skills papers are available to order in modified formats as they are secure papers. Availability of past papers however varies between boards.

Provision of Entry Level papers in modified formats varies between boards. Where a board doesn't provide, the centre can create the paper in the format their student requires.

### **22. Do exam boards provide pdfs of modified papers?**

They do, on request.

### **23. Can you order a braille copy of a paper and a non-interactive pdf to be used with a screen-reader? Will they match up?**

If the student is using a braille paper, it would be better to download the electronic braille transcript rather than use a PDF paper. The braille transcript will match up with the hard copy of the braille paper. This also applies to candidates wanting to use tactile diagrams alongside an electronic paper they're accessing with their screen-reader.

### **24. Can you order both braille and MLP copies for use in the same exam?**

Both can be ordered but they won't match up so shouldn't be used alongside each other.

### **25. Do N24 modified large print maths papers come with models as standard?**

Any required 3D models should be sent for modified large print papers for questions requiring 3D perception although this may be exam board specific.

### **26. Does a braille paper have to be transcribed at the centre?**

Any answers written on a Perkins braille need to be transcribed at the centre immediately after the exam.

### **27. Is it possible to order tactile diagrams with LP labels for use alongside MLP papers?**

Yes, this can be done in access arrangements online.

### **28. Can you order MLP papers on cream paper to reduce glare?**

You can't order papers printed on coloured papers (unless using SQA) but can order a PDF to print onto coloured paper in the centre, using early opening.

### **29. Can non-interactive PDFs of past papers be requested?**

These are available to download from the exam board websites. See this page for further details and links to download past papers from each exam board: [Access to exams and tests | RNIB](#).

**30. If electronic format ordered on PDF, can the student use an iPad to write answers directly on the PDF. Can it be part handwritten part printed then print out and can they hand write some sections and use the iPad for others in sats and GCSE**

Non-interactive pdfs cannot be written on. Only Pearson provide interactive pdfs.

If a candidate's normal way of working is to answer partly on the pdf and partly on the hard copy then it would probably be better for a transcriber to transfer all the answers onto one format of the paper or the other before they are returned for marking. This would minimise the risk of any confusion during marking.

Note that the pdf and the hard copy both need to be the same version of the paper e.g. a pdf and a hard copy of the MLP paper in 18 pt.

**31. Some MLP diagrams in Maths can be visually tricky (especially when drawn against a black grid or using varying thickness of black lines) - with early opening are we allow to draw over / mark in a different colour to help improve visual access to the line drawings?**

You would need to contact the exam board to discuss this, as this would require prior approval from the exam board.

**32. Can papers be ordered in 30pt or is it a case of early opening and modification in the centre?**

Papers are available in 24 pt or 36 pt and centres cannot modify papers themselves.

In exceptional cases where a candidate cannot access any of the formats available as standard, even by using other access arrangements such as magnifiers, a reader, rest breaks etc. then contact the individual exam boards to work with them to find a solution.

You can also order modified large print exam papers and request that these are provided as a non-interactive PDF. This would enable the user to zoom in or out of the MLP paper.

You would need to order non interactive PDF papers on access arrangements online before the deadline date of 31st January for summer exams. You would then need to make a separate application to each exam board requesting that the PDF papers are provided in Modified Large Print rather than standard non-interactive PDF exams. This is very important, otherwise the standard papers will be provided in PDF format.

**33. Can you order a paper in comic sans bold size 52 font?**

No, the MLP papers available are: 18 pt bold on A4 paper, 24 pt bold (A4 or A3), 36 pt bold (A3). The font is Arial.



**34. What is the standardised line spacing for all the enlarged and modified papers?**

According to the UKAAF Best Practice Guidance the line spacing is as follows: 18 pt bold on 22 pt (i.e. with 4 pt leading – the line spacing), 24 pt bold on 30 pt, and 36 pt bold on 44 pt. Candidates should be made familiar with the format of modified papers in preparation for their exams through use of genuine past papers or practice papers produced in school following the Best Practice Guidance.

**35. Can centres order both a MLP N36 paper and a non-interactive PDF? e.g. for pupil needing tactile graphs.**

If a candidate needs a pdf and tactile diagrams, a pdf of the 36 pt paper should be ordered (as well as a hard copy if required) and, in addition, an order should be placed for tactile print diagrams.

## Supporting statements from QTVI

**36. How to evidence regular exam access arrangements when a pupil is referred to VI Service at beginning of Y11 and is likely to need 25% extra time and possibly modified papers.**

Gather evidence from as soon as possible after they were referred. State in the history of provision section that this student was referred to the service in year 11.

**37. Does a supporting statement need to be from a QTVI for legal reasons or can it be from a SENCo or can a teaching assistant write it?**

The supporting statement needs to be a letter or report from the QTVI; an EHCP/statement/IDP with appropriate information from the QTVI can also be used.

The JCQ AA&RA document states that: Form 9 will be supported by **specialist** evidence confirming the candidate's disability:

- a letter/report from CAMHS, a HCPC registered psychologist, a medical consultant, a psychiatrist, a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT); or
- a letter/report from the Local Authority Specialist Service, Local Authority Sensory Impairment Service or Occupational Health Service; or
- a current EHCP (England), or a current Statement of special educational needs (Northern Ireland), or a current Individual Development Plan (Wales) which confirms the candidate's learning difficulty, medical condition, physical disability, sensory or multi-sensory impairment.

**38. Supporting statement - we worry the colleges won't buy us in but need this exam statement and needs to be up to date.**

This should be discussed with the college concerned.

**39. Would the centre still need to complete a Form 9 for some arrangements even with a letter/file note from the QTVI?**

Yes, so a candidate is not given an unfair advantage, the SENCo must complete Form 9 which will be supported by specialist evidence from the QTVI confirming the candidate's disability.

## Practical assessments

**40. Regarding passing practical elements, how do you know what the underlying requirements are and do colleges have to adapt. e.g. for an art course, would a school have to incorporate 3D projects if it met the course underlying requirements if they didn't usually put this on the course.**

The centre should recruit with integrity, this means checking that assessment tasks can be adapted so the candidate can demonstrate their ability before they start the course. This may involve adapting the projects for a particular student, but this should be discussed with the subject teacher before starting the course.

**41. Would the following be permitted under the role of a practical assistant:**

**i) The candidate identifies that the major gridlines are in increments of 10. The candidate asks the practical assistant to count the number of minor gridlines between 0 and 10 so the candidate can identify what each minor gridline is worth.**

**ii) The candidate needs to mark a cross at 68. The student knows that the major increments are 10 and the minor gridlines are 2. The student asks the practical assistant to start at 60 and count up 4 minor gridlines and place a mark at that point.**

No. Being able to navigate a grid is the skill being assessed so a practical assistant couldn't do this. The candidate could point to a location on the grid and ask the practical assistant to put a pin in, for example, though.

**42. Is a blind student expected to do all practical elements of science exams or can they give full explanation to practical assistant and ask specific questions for the results e.g. colour changes etc.**

Candidates need to carry out all aspects of an exam that are assessed. A practical assistant can assist with tasks that are not part of the assessment e.g. holding a ruler straight while the candidate takes a measurement. The science teacher and QTVI will need to work together closely to develop strategies for making practical elements of the course accessible and consideration should be given to this before the start of the course (recruiting with integrity). If individual tasks can't be made accessible, then it would be advisable to discuss options with the exam board.

## Extra time, rest breaks and Timetable changes

### **43. Do braille students get extra time for listening elements of the exam music or MFL?**

Yes, for recorded examinations the centre must request an extra recording from the awarding body. Where a candidate has an approved application for 25% extra time, advice should always be sought from the relevant awarding body as to how the extra time is to be applied in a Listening examination. See JCQ AARA, section 5.2.7: [JCQ-AARA-24-25 FINAL 2024.pdf](#).

### **44. If an A' level art course is 3 x 5 hour exams would they be allowed to spread this time over e.g. 5 x 3 hours?**

Any access arrangements needed to meet the needs of an individual should be discussed with the exam board.

### **45. If a VI pupil has 2 exams in one day but they have rest breaks and 100% extra time, how does this affect the exam?**

If candidates are taking two or more examinations timetabled for the same session and the total time is more than three hours including approved extra time allowances and/or supervised rest breaks, the centre may conduct one examination in a later or earlier session within the same day. There is no need to complete any paperwork for this. Prior permission from an awarding body is not required. The centre may determine the examination which is to be conducted in a later or earlier session within the same day. This is covered in the JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations document, statement 7.4: [JCQ-Instructions-for-conducting-examinations-2024 FINAL.pdf](#).

There is also a new statement in JCQ AA&RA regarding timetable variations requiring overnight supervision for a candidate with vision impairment.

An application for a timetable variation may be processed where a candidate has:

- a formally diagnosed medical or psychological condition; or
- a physical disability; or
- a visual impairment

See JCQ AARA, section 5.21.2: [JCQ-AARA-24-25 FINAL 2024.pdf](#).

### **46. Can we apply for over 100% extra time?**

Yes, but it's worth noting that over 100% can be very tiring and sometimes counterproductive; it can impact on the timings of other exams and can potentially make the exam period stressful for candidates.

### **47. Is it right that QTVIs cannot make recommendations for specific amounts of extra time, this must be decided by school?**

The school will assess the specific amount of extra time required and hold evidence that this is the normal way of working for internal tests and mock examinations. The degree of involvement of the QTVI in this process will depend largely on how much involvement they have with the student.

The process of determining the amount of extra time should start as early as possible, preferably in year 7.

**48. Is there a limit on the number of rest breaks a candidate can have?**

Candidates can't be given as many supervised rest breaks as they like for as long as they like. A supervised rest break will not normally be required within the first 10 minutes of an exam but may be thereafter.

The duration of the supervised rest break must be determined by the SENCo based on their knowledge of the candidate's needs and the candidate's normal way of working when placed under timed conditions.

**49. Is it possible to apply for tapes with 100% extra time built in for MFL and Music exams.**

Different awarding bodies have different arrangements. For example, some will offer recordings with the additional time included, some will give advice on how long to pause the recordings for, so contact your awarding body to ask.

## **Measurements in exams**

**50. What is the margin of error for maths and science exams for braille and MLP? especially for graphs.**

The degree of accuracy expected of candidates with vision impairment is covered in the UKAAF Best Practice Guidance Document section 3.16 (Braille Papers) and 4.2.3 (Large Print Papers) Drawing and Measuring sections: [Best-Practice-Guidance-Document-October-2020.pdf \(ukaaf.org\)](https://www.ukaaf.org/Best-Practice-Guidance-Document-October-2020.pdf).

The statement says:

*Where the degree of accuracy expected of sighted candidates is plus or minus 0.1 cm (or 2 degrees) then the degree of accuracy expected of candidates with a visual impairment should normally not be greater than plus or minus 0.5 cm (or 5 degrees) as long as this is consistent with the assessment objectives of the exam concerned. Modifiers should adapt questions accordingly.*

# Arrangements for exams in Scotland

## 51. Are the exam arrangements for VI the same in Scotland?

SQA access arrangements can be found here for 14+: [About assessment arrangements - Guidance and support - SQA](#).

The Scottish Sensory Centre and SQA usually hold an annual information session on exam access arrangements. Keep checking the SSC website for upcoming events: [Scottish Sensory Centre Home \(ed.ac.uk\)](#)

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With thanks to attendees to RNIB's exam update training for their questions, to OCR for checking responses, and to the RNIB education team for collating.

Any comments, updates or suggested improvements are welcome. Please email [cypf@rnib.org.uk](mailto:cypf@rnib.org.uk) with Education FAQs as the subject heading.