

14+ Exams FAQs

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Modified papers

1. Can you order MLP papers on cream paper?

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. See statement 5.10 ['ICE' – Instructions for conducting examinations - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#).

2. Is it possible to order tactile diagrams with LP labels for use with MLP papers?

Yes, this can be done in access arrangements online. It is advisable to check with the exam board that the labels will be the same text size as the paper.

3. Do N24 MLP maths papers come with models as standard?

Not for every exam board so check genuine past papers for the relevant board.

4. Are non-interactive PDFs of MLP papers available?

Yes, however the order process currently varies between exam boards. For all, order the MLP paper on AAO initially. Then check with your exam board whether:
a separate request for a non-interactive version of the MLP paper in PDF format needs to be submitted
or

an electronic file will be available automatically for the school to download on the day of the exam as a direct result of the order on AAO.

5. Can a student have a PDF to read and then answer on a separate MLP paper by hand?

If this is their normal way of working in assessments. The PDF would need to be an electronic version of the MLP paper, not of the standard paper, to ensure the two papers are identical.

6. Can you order a braille version 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 is recommended to order an electronic version of the braille transcript, which will be in Word format, rather than a PDF, for use with a screen-reader as it is likely to be more compatible with screen-reader software.

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

Braille and MLP versions of a paper will not be the same so cannot be used together.

8. Can a braille periodic table be used with an MLP question paper?

It is not recommended to use accompanying materials for one format of paper alongside the questions for a different format of paper.

9. Are Functional Skills, Entry Level and BTEC papers available in modified formats?

Functional Skills, BTEC Firsts, BTEC Nationals, BTEC Tech Awards, and BTEC Level 2 Technicals 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.

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

Centres cannot modify papers themselves.

11. What can be done when a candidate needs papers and/or accompanying materials in a format other than those offered as standard?

In exceptional cases where a candidate cannot access any of the formats available as standard (18 pt, 24 pt, 36 pt (not guaranteed for all subjects)), even by using other access arrangements such as magnification, a reader, rest breaks etc. then contact the individual exam board(s) to work with them to find a solution. This should be done before the start of the course.

12. What is the 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.

13. Are graphs removed from GCSE Maths papers?

No, they are modified to be accessible. See past papers in modified formats for examples.

14. 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: [UKAAF-Best-Practice-Guidance-2024.docx](#).

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.

15. Would there be a written description of a source on a braille paper if it is in picture format in GCSE History?

Yes, look at past papers on exam websites for examples.

16. Is there a document or information online which has guidance on how exam papers are modified?

[UKAAF-Best-Practice-Guidance-2024.docx](#)

In addition, VIEW have a self-study course on this topic: [Prepare for Success: Online Training for Exam Modification and Production \(MLP & Braille Editions now available\) - VIEW](#)

17. Where can I get modified past papers?

If the paper has been produced for a live series in a modified format, you can download this from the exam board's website. See RNIB's page on [Access to exams and tests](#) for further details.

If you require a modified paper which has not previously been produced, you can request it from the awarding body before **31st October** to prepare for an exam being sat the following summer.

Rest breaks, extra time and timetable changes

18. 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 single rest break should be no more than 30 minutes and will often be shorter. The duration of a 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. For more details, see JCQ AARA, section 5.1: [Regulations and Guidance - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

19. Are students allowed rest breaks for eye strain?

There is no requirement to process an application for supervised rest breaks. However, for GCSE and GCE AS and A-level qualifications the SENCo must complete the statement in Part 1 of Form 9, confirming the need for supervised rest breaks.

20. Can we apply for over 100% extra time?

Yes, if the centre has evidence of the need for it and that it is the normal way of working for assessments. 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.

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

The school should 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.

22. Do braillists 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 extra time, advice should always be sought from the relevant awarding body as to how the extra time is to be applied as different awarding bodies have different arrangements: some will offer recordings with the extra time included, others will give advice on how long to pause the recordings. See JCQ AARA, section 5.2.7: [Regulations and Guidance - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

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

24. Extra time and rest breaks sometimes mean that exams don't always fit into the timetabled slots. Where can I find the regulations and guidance relating to timetable variations?

The relevant information can be found in sections 5.21 and 5.22 of [Regulations and Guidance - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#) and Section 2, chapters 7 and 8 in ['ICE' – Instructions for conducting examinations - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#).

25. What are the rules on overnight supervision when pupils have lots of additional time and need to complete an exam on a different day?

See Section 2, Chapter 8 of ['ICE' – Instructions for conducting examinations - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

Technology in exams

26. Can a student use an iPad to write answers directly onto a PDF using Notability?

It is not a standard access arrangement for a candidate to answer directly on a non-interactive PDF using software such as Notability. As with other bespoke arrangements, it would need to be agreed with the exam board before the exam.

27. Can a student write some answers on a paper copy of a paper and type answers for others on their laptop?

If this is a candidate's normal way of working, then they can. Extra care should be taken when returning the answers to ensure that the marker will be clear as to where to find the response for each question.

28. Can an iPad be used in exams as a magnifier or a scientific calculator, and how do I apply?

iPads can be used for these purposes if it is set to conform with the regulations set out in Section 2, Chapter 14 of the JCQ ICE document: [‘ICE’ – Instructions for conducting examinations - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications.](#)

An application should be submitted under the "Other" category on Access Arrangements Online.

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

[Lock iPad to one app with Guided Access – Apple Support \(UK\)](#)

30. Is it possible to disable the spellcheck, autocorrect and predictive text on an iPad for exams?

iPad settings>general> keyboard to enable/disable options as required.

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

If the candidate has approval to use a scribe, yes.

32. Can a word processor with the spellcheck, predictive text and grammar check switched on be used in an English exam if this is the normal way of working?

It can, with approval for use of a scribe. However, the candidate will not have access to marks for SPG.

33. 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.

34. What is the protocol for using a BrailleNote Touch in an exam? Does it have an 'exam mode'.

This comes under the same category as use of a word processor. The Brailnote would need to align with the regulations set out in Section 2, Chapter 14 of the JCQ ICE document: ['ICE' – Instructions for conducting examinations - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#). Contact Humanware for further information about setting a Brailnote up for exams.

35. Is there a way of changing the background colour of an electronic version of a paper being viewed on an iPad?

Explore the device settings and options provided by the software that the candidate will use to view the pdf paper. It is advisable to check that the preferred settings can be applied to genuine past papers and that they don't in any way affect access to the questions.

Reader, scribe and practical assistant

36. Can the reader, scribe and/or 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 [Regulations and Guidance - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

37. Can a screen reader be used for English papers?

Yes, a screen reader can be used for English reading exams.

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

A human reader is allowed for MFL exams, except for Reading papers. A candidate may however use a computer reader in an 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: [Regulations and Guidance - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

39. Does a blind student have to draw diagrams in maths and science independently?

Where drawing is being assessed in a mathematics/science examination, a scribe can draw under explicit instruction from the candidate. The scribe can only draw exactly what the candidate instructs; for example, drawing a line between two points that the candidate has plotted. The scribe would not be permitted to draw a line if the points had not been plotted by the candidate.

40. 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 [Regulations and Guidance - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#) point 5.14.4.

41. Can a practical assistant input information into a calculator and read the answers back?

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. The student would need to become familiar with this way of working as their normal classroom practice.

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.

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.

43. 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 depend 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 [Regulations and Guidance - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

44. 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.)

Other access arrangements

45. Some MLP diagrams in Maths can be visually tricky. With early opening are we allowed to draw over / mark in a different colour to help improve visual access to the line drawings?

This is a bespoke arrangement and would need to be agreed with the exam board before the exam.

Misc

46. 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. See statement 14.19 on the ['ICE' – Instructions for conducting examinations - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#).

Arrangements for exams in Scotland

47. 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 (SSC) and SQA usually hold an annual information session on exam access arrangements in October/November. The SSC website usually lists it: [Scottish Sensory Centre Home \(ed.ac.uk\)](#)

With thanks to attendees to RNIB's exam update training for their questions, to exam boards 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 with Education FAQs as the subject heading.