

UCAT Access Arrangements Policy

Overview

UCAT and its Consortium universities have a duty not to unlawfully discriminate against, harass or victimize disabled candidates/applicants contrary to The Equality Act 2010 in England, Scotland and Wales; and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005 in Northern Ireland. This includes making reasonable adjustments to avoid putting disabled candidates/applicants at a substantial disadvantage compared with those who are not disabled during selection and when taking the UCAT test.

Support for candidates with disabilities is core to what we do and part of UCAT's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. In 2022 2,612 candidates were approved to take a non-standard version of the test (extra test time and/or rest breaks). This represents 7.2 % of our candidate population. 418 candidates who applied had special accommodations approved (see below e.g. separate room, access to medication).

This document, the access arrangements UCAT offers, and the processes underpinned by this policy are reviewed on an annual basis with the intention of continuing to improve support for disabled candidates.

This document should be read in conjunction with the UCAT Fitness to Test Policy.

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements allow candidates with a disability as defined in the Equality Act 2010 who would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage compared with those candidates who are not disabled to take UCAT without any changes to the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of disabled candidates without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which we comply with our duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

Access arrangements are available to candidates who have a disability and are entitled to support for other exams. They are agreed before testing to allow disabled candidates to access the test by removing barriers that would create a substantial disadvantage. Standard arrangements include extra working time, or supervised rest breaks. Other arrangements are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires UCAT to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. UCAT is required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage save that UCAT is not required to make reasonable adjustments to the application of a competence standard (defined as an academic, medical, or other standard applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability). A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors which include but are not limited to:

- the needs of the disabled candidate;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment;
- the resources of UCAT and
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the disabled candidate and other candidates.

Principles of this Policy

- UCAT has a clear and transparent process in place for making decisions on access arrangements and reasonable adjustments that is shared with candidates through the UCAT website. There is an opportunity for candidates to make direct contact with UCAT if they require additional advice/support.
- UCAT's policy is promoted through our website in a positive manner ensuring that we welcome applications in order to consider any candidate's needs for access arrangements.
- Information from candidates applying for access arrangements is held in the strictest confidence by UCAT unless the candidate agrees for information to be shared with third parties such as Consortium Universities. UCAT will retain supporting evidence for the duration of the relevant admission cycle (usually until September of the following year).
- UCAT will consider requests from candidates on a case-by-case basis and decide what adjustments would be deemed 'reasonable' for each individual's circumstances and the specific barriers or disadvantages they are experiencing. For example, the majority of candidates with a diagnosis of dyslexia request 25% extra time; some candidates, however, will have a recommendation from an educational psychologist that they require 50% extra time.
- It is the candidate's responsibility to apply for access arrangements to be put in place in a timely manner. Testing without access arrangements in place will not be accepted as a mitigating circumstance.
- All applications for access arrangements must be supported with appropriate independent evidence, for example from the candidate's school, a medical professional or a relevant qualified specialist. The evidence required by UCAT is stated clearly on our website.
- Supporting evidence must give a clear outline of the disability and how this supports the access arrangement(s) requested.
- The supporting evidence must be legible and written in English. It must be on headed paper or with an official stamp and bearing the name, relevant qualification(s) and signature of a recognised medical practitioner or other appropriately qualified specialist assessor.
- If the original version of the supporting evidence is not written in English, UCAT will accept a translated version which must be signed by the original author or a legal representative.
- Supporting evidence must have been issued since the start of Year 9 (the school year in which pupils become 14 years old) or equivalent.

Process for Approving and Implementing Access Arrangements

Access arrangements should be arranged in advance of testing. Some arrangements require candidates to make an online application with supporting evidence before they can book a test. The UCAT website outlines the access arrangements we can provide.

Extra test time, rest breaks or special accommodations must be approved by the UCAT Office before candidates book their test. Candidates are advised to apply online at least 10 working days before they intend to book their test. Candidates who leave their applications until late in the test window may have limited testing options depending on test centre availability.

Initial decisions regarding candidate applications for access arrangements are made in the UCAT Office. On occasion external advice may be requested to support decision making.

UCAT reserves the right not to approve any access arrangements granted by a school/college/university or those recommended by the GP or specialist for the UCAT. UCAT may request additional evidence if, in our view, the initial supporting documentation is not sufficient.

Candidates whose applications for Access Arrangements have been rejected (or partially rejected) are provided with a written explanation of the decision made by the UCAT Office and, if appropriate, advised of

alternative arrangements which could be put in place. They are further advised to email the UCAT Office if they wish to have this decision reviewed.

As part of this review candidates may be invited to provide further evidence to support their claim that to test without specific Access Arrangements in place would put them at a substantial disadvantage compared with those who are not disabled, and to explain how the adjustment would avoid that disadvantage. The UCAT Office will consider any such requests for review and respond in full to the candidate.

On occasion the UCAT Office might offer to communicate with a candidate's chosen Universities in order to provide an explanation of the candidate's specific circumstances. Universities have policies in place to cover these situations (see below).

Candidates may appeal the final decision of the UCAT Office. Details of the Appeals Policy can be found on the [Appeals Policy page](#).

Arrangements not Requiring Approval

Comfort Aids

Some medicines, medical or mobility devices and other items are allowed into the test room after visual inspection and do not require prior approval. A full list of comfort aids can be found here: [Pearson VUE Comfort Aid List](#)

General Accommodations

Whilst the following test accommodations do not need supporting evidence, they should be arranged at least 5 working days in advance of testing by calling Pearson VUE Customer Services:

- Wheelchair access or adjustable height desk (subject to test centre availability)
- ZoomText
- Coloured overlay (supplied by the candidate)

Arrangements Requiring Approval

Extra test time and/or rest breaks

UCAT offers a number of extended versions of the test to meet candidate needs. Requests for extra test time and/or rest breaks in the UCAT must be approved by the UCAT Office before an extended test can be booked.

Extra test time is approved when more time is needed to process test content.

Extra test time will not be normally approved if a candidate is applying for additional time because English is not their first language. As the UCAT is computer-based, extra test time will not be approved if a candidate's request only relates to handwriting issues.

Rest breaks are approved if extra time is needed to manage a disability during testing. The extra time may be used to pause-the-clock and take a break without losing test time.

We offer the following extended versions of the UCAT:

- UCATSEN (150 minutes) for candidates eligible for 25% extra test time.
- UCATSA (140 minutes) for candidates eligible for rest breaks. The UCATSA has the standard UCAT subtest timings with 20 minutes for pause-the-clock breaks.
- UCATSENSA (175 minutes) for candidates eligible for 25% extra test time who also need rest breaks. The UCATSENSA has the UCATSEN timings with 25 minutes for pause-the-clock breaks.
- UCATSEN50 (180 minutes) for candidates eligible for 50% extra test time (see specific evidence requirements below)

There are different timings for some of the extended versions of the test for candidates testing online.

Special Accommodations

Candidates must apply for approval before booking their test to have these special accommodations in place:

- **Separate room:** To test in a separate room at a test centre, evidence must specify that the candidate needs separate invigilation. Test centre rooms usually accommodate up to 15 candidates which we consider meets the requirement for testing in a smaller room. Separate rooms are subject to test centre availability.
- **Items at a test centre workstation for medical reasons (including water).** Approval is only required for items not considered Comfort Aids. Evidence must support the need for continuous or immediate access to these items during testing. This arrangement requires a separate room (see above), which is subject to test centre availability. Items not approved must be stored in a locker or designated area at the test centre and used outside the testing room. This also applies if a separate room is not available.
- **Online Testing:** In certain circumstances, having reviewed the evidence, the best way to meet a candidate's needs might be in allowing them to test using our online proctored solution OnVUE. Access Arrangements available in OnVUE are different to those we can support at a Test Centre. This will be discussed with the individual candidate.

Evidence

Candidates Currently in Education (or out of education for less than 2 years)

We require a recent, signed letter on headed paper from their current or most recent school/college or university, which should (as appropriate):

- Explicitly state their disability.
- Explicitly state the amount of extra time they require in public exams (e.g. 25%).
- Explicitly state the amount of time for any rest breaks.
- Explicitly state they need separate invigilation.
- Explicitly state any other accommodations they require in public examinations.
- Confirm on what basis this has been agreed, for example a diagnosis from a qualified medical practitioner or an assessment by a registered psychologist or specialist teacher assessor.

In place of a letter, a copy of an approved 'JCQ Form 8 Application for Access Arrangements' (all pages) usually not completed earlier than the start of Year 9 (the school year in which pupils become 14 years old) or equivalent and signed by the Head of Centre/SENCo and Assessor would be acceptable.

Alternative evidence for candidates out of education for more than 2 years

Candidates out of education for more than 2 years with a disability constituting a **Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)** such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia or Dyscalculia must provide a full, post-16 diagnostic assessment report of that specific learning difficulty from a specialist teacher assessor or registered psychologist. It must explicitly recommend a specific amount of extra exam time (e.g. 25%) and/or other accommodations in public examinations.

Candidates out of education for more than 2 years with a **disability** must provide a recent letter (dated 2023) from a GP or specialist (e.g. a consultant or psychiatrist) which:

- includes a clear outline of their disability and the impact this would have on a multiple-choice test sat on computer.
- explicitly recommends a specific amount of extra exam time (e.g. 25%) and/or other accommodations in public examinations.
- makes it clear that any recommendations are based on the GP or specialist's clinical opinion. A letter that simply states the candidate's exam preferences or wishes would not be sufficient to approve access arrangements.

Alternative evidence for candidates not previously entitled to access arrangements in public exams

Diagnosis after leaving education: Candidates diagnosed with a disability after leaving education are required to provide evidence which meets the requirements detailed above for “candidates out of education for more than 2 years”.

Recent diagnosis: Where a candidate has a recent diagnosis and arrangements have not yet been put in place for their exams, their evidence should confirm the recommendations their school/college/university intend to make to the exam board.

Candidates Applying for 50% Extra Test Time

For the overwhelming majority of candidates who require extra time, 25% additional test time will be sufficient. If more than this is needed, there must be a strong justification as to why more than 25% extra time is required.

Candidates applying for 50% extra test time must have a disability that has a very substantial and long-term adverse effect on their speed of working. Their evidence must outline the impact their disability would have on a multiple-choice test sat on computer and make a clear recommendation that 50% extra test time is needed to remove any disadvantage.

Access Arrangements not listed Above

Candidates who require access arrangements not included above should make an application with appropriate supporting evidence. The UCAT Office will assess the application and advise the candidate how to proceed. Applications must meet the normal deadlines.

Consortium Universities

The Medical School’s Council have advised that it is likely that Consortium universities have a responsibility under the Equality Act to applicants taking the UCAT, even if they are not yet known to be an applicant to their particular course.

In order to assure Consortium universities that their applicants with disabilities are not being disadvantaged when taking the test, UCAT should:

- Make Universities aware of the active steps taken to avoid discrimination to this group of candidates;
- Undertake annual reviews of processes and provision of access arrangements to ensure affected candidates are not adversely impacted;
- Inform Universities of the processes used in making adjustments for candidates;
- Provide where required (and agreed with the candidate) clearly written reasons for decisions on adjustments to candidates.

Universities have processes in place for candidates to raise concerns about the fairness of aptitude tests.

In exceptional circumstances, UCAT may not be able to support the adjustments a candidate/applicant requires. Universities have policies in place to cover these situations.

Rachel Greatrix

March 2023