

UCAT Access Arrangements Policy

Introduction

The UCAT Consortium is the operating name of the UKCAT Consortium. Our admission tests are delivered by our business partner Pearson VUE (PVUE).

The UCAT Consortium has a number of official policies which guide its work in specific areas. Each policy is reviewed on an annual basis and any updates reflected in operational processes, website information and other communications to candidates. Where appropriate, policies are made available on the UCAT website.

UCAT policies are underpinned by its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Any substantial amendments to policies are considered in the light of their impact on EDI.

The UCAT Access Arrangement Policy should be read in conjunction with the [UCAT Fitness to Test 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 the work of the UCAT Consortium and part of its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion which is further outlined in our [EDI Policy](#). In 2023 2,015 candidates sat a non-standard version of the test (extra test time and/or rest breaks). This represents 5.6 % of our candidate population. 264 candidates had special accommodations in place for testing (see below e.g. separate room, access to medication).

The access arrangements we offer, and the processes underpinned by this policy are reviewed on an annual basis with the intention of continuing to improve support for disabled candidates.

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 the UCAT test 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 us 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. We are required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage save that we are 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 candidate 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;
- our resources and
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the disabled candidate and other candidates.

Principles

- We have a clear and transparent process in place for making decisions on access arrangements and reasonable adjustments that is shared with candidates through our website. There is an opportunity for candidates to make direct contact if they require additional advice/support.
- Our 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 us unless the candidate agrees for information to be shared with third parties such as Consortium Universities. We will retain supporting evidence for the duration of the relevant admission cycle (usually until September of the following year).
- We will consider requests from candidates on a case-by-case basis and decide what adjustments would be deemed 'reasonable' for each candidate'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 and by published deadlines. Testing without access arrangements in place is not accepted as a mitigating circumstance.
- All applications for access arrangements must be supported with appropriate independent evidence as detailed below. The evidence we require is stated clearly on our [website](#).

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. Our 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.

We reserve 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 test. We may request additional evidence if, in our view, the initial supporting documentation is not sufficient.

This policy is informed by the [UK Joint Council for Qualifications](#) (JCQ) regulations. Where candidates are currently in receipt of access arrangements not in line with JCQ regulations they will normally be offered the equivalent UK reasonable adjustments for their disability.

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 are 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 any requested adjustment would avoid that disadvantage. The UCAT Office will consider any such requests for review, make a final decision, 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).

If a candidate is unhappy with the final decision from the UCAT Office, they may [appeal to the UCAT Board](#).

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

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

Rest breaks are approved if needed to manage a disability during testing. The rest breaks (which equate to 10 minutes per hour of testing) may be used to pause-the-clock and take a break without losing test time.

Extra test time is approved when more time is needed to read or process test content due to a disability which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on speed of working.

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 test is computer-based, extra test time will not be approved if a candidate's request only relates to handwriting issues.

Special Accommodations

Candidates must apply for approval before booking their test to have 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

Access Arrangements available for online testing are different to those we can support at a Test Centre.

In certain circumstances, the best way to meet a disabled candidates needs might be by allowing them to test using the online proctored solution OnVUE.

This may include candidates with a documented disability or medical condition where their needs cannot be met in a test centre (e.g. testing in a separate room).

We will take into account whether candidates are currently attending school or work in-person when considering a request to take the test online for reasons of disability or health.

We would be unlikely to approve candidates to sit an online proctored test if they would be disadvantaged by testing online (e.g. if other accommodations cannot be supported for security reasons).

Evidence

Supporting evidence must be on headed paper or with an official stamp and bearing the name, relevant qualification(s) and signature of an appropriately qualified specialist assessor or a recognised medical practitioner.

Candidates Currently in Education (or left education after 2021)

We require a signed letter (usually dated 2024) on headed paper from their current or most recent school/college or university, which should (as appropriate) confirm:

- the candidate's disability.
- the amount of extra time the candidate requires in public exams (e.g. 25%).
- the amount of time for any rest breaks.
- if the candidate requires separate invigilation.
- any other accommodations the candidate require in public examinations.
- 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 one of the following JCQ forms (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/Assessor would be acceptable:

- Form 8: Application for Access Arrangements – Profile of learning difficulties
- Form 9: Profile of need

Alternative evidence for candidates who left education before 2022

Candidates who left education before 2022 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 who left education before 2022 with a **disability** must provide a recent letter (dated 2024) from their usual GP Practice or a specialist (e.g. a consultant or psychiatrist) which must (as appropriate):

- include a clear outline of their disability.
- explain how their disability would have a very substantial effect on their speed of working in a 2-hour, multiple choice test sat on computer (as opposed to a written exam).
- recommend rest breaks and/or a specific amount of extra test time (e.g. 25%). If more than 25% extra test time is recommended, there must be a strong justification as to why 25% extra test time with an additional 25 minutes of rest breaks is not sufficient to remove any disadvantage.
- recommend any other accommodations required for exams.
- make 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 must provide evidence which meets the requirements detailed above for "candidates who left education before 2022".

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 more than 25% Extra Test Time

In most cases, 25% extra test time (with rest breaks if appropriate) is sufficient for candidates.

Requests for more than 25% extra test time will only be approved in exceptional circumstances where candidates have a disability that has a very substantial and long-term adverse effect on their speed of working.

Evidence must outline the impact their disability would have on a multiple-choice test sat on computer and must include a strong justification as to why 25% extra test time with an additional 25 minutes of rest breaks is not sufficient 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 has advised that it is likely that Consortium universities have a responsibility under the Equality Act to applicants taking the UCAT test, 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, we will:

- 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, we may not be able to support the adjustments a candidate/applicant requires. Universities have policies in place to cover these situations.

Rachel Greatrix

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