

UCAT Access Arrangements Policy

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Overview

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

The UCAT Consortium has official policies which guide its work in specific areas. Each policy is reviewed on an annual basis and 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](#).

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 university selection processes 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 2024 2,370 candidates sat a non-standard version of the test (extra test time and/or rest breaks). This represents 6.2 % of our candidate population. 322 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.

What are Access Arrangements?

Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow candidates with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment.

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. 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 additional support in computer-based assessments. Such candidates will often already be entitled to additional support in other assessments. Access arrangements are agreed before testing to allow disabled candidates to access the test by removing barriers that would create a substantial disadvantage.

What are Reasonable Adjustments?

We are required under the Equality Act 2010 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. 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 not always 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 of this Policy

- We have a clear and transparent process in place for making decisions on access arrangements that is shared with candidates through our website. There is an opportunity for candidates to make direct contact with the UCAT Office if they require additional advice/support.
- We welcome applications for access arrangements from candidates and as such our policy is promoted through our website in a positive manner.

- We consider requests from candidates on a case-by-case basis and decide what adjustments are 'reasonable' for each candidate's circumstances and the specific barriers or disadvantages they are experiencing.
- 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](#).
- This policy is informed by the [UK Joint Council for Qualifications](#) (JCQ) regulations.

Candidate Data

The UCAT Office uses candidate data and evidence to assess the access arrangements candidates may be entitled to. Information may be shared with Pearson VUE to assess the arrangements that can be offered and to assist the booking process. Candidates consent to this data being used for this purpose. Where evidence includes the data of any third party, candidates also confirm consent to share these data has been obtained. Candidate data is retained for the duration of the relevant admissions cycle (usually September the following year).

Information from candidates applying for access arrangements is held in the strictest confidence unless the candidate agrees for information to be shared with third parties such as Consortium Universities.

The Role of Consortium Universities

The Medical School's Council has advised¹ that it is likely that Consortium universities have a responsibility under the Equality Act to their applicants taking the UCAT test, even if they are not yet known to be an applicant to their particular programmes.

To assure Consortium universities that their applicants with disabilities are not being disadvantaged when taking the test, UCAT 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 approving access arrangements for candidates.
- Provide where required (and agreed with the candidate) clearly written reasons for decisions regarding access arrangements made by candidates. This may apply to circumstances where UCAT is unable to fully provide the access arrangements a candidate has applied for.

Universities should have processes in place for candidates to raise concerns about the fairness of aptitude tests. In exceptional circumstances, UCAT may not be able to facilitate the adjustments an applicant requires. Medical schools should have a policy in place to cover these situations.

What Access Arrangements are Available?

UCAT can support the following access arrangements. Access arrangements should be arranged in advance of testing. Some arrangements require approval by the UCAT Office. In these cases, candidates need to make an online application with supporting evidence.

Arrangements *not* Requiring Approval

Comfort Aids	The medical items and devices on the Pearson VUE Comfort Aid List are allowed into the testing room after visual inspection and do not require prior approval.
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¹ Supporting and encouraging applicants with a disability: A guide for Medical Schools April 2022

General Accommodations	<p>The following do not require approval but should be arranged at least 5 working days in advance of testing by calling Pearson VUE Customer Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheelchair access or adjustable height desk (subject to test centre availability) • Screen magnification or colour contrast features (provided using 'ZoomText') • Coloured overlay (supplied by the candidate)
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Arrangements Requiring Approval

Extra test time and/or rest breaks

We have separate versions of the test which build in extra time and rest breaks (extended tests). It is not possible to add extra time and/or rest breaks to a standard UCAT appointment.

An application for extra test time and/or rest breaks must be approved by the UCAT Office before candidates can book an extended test.

Rest Breaks	Rest breaks are approved if the candidate is entitled to these to manage a disability during testing. 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	<p>Extra test time is approved when a candidate is entitled to more time to read or process test content due to a disability which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on speed of working.</p> <p>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.</p>

Special Accommodations

An application for any special accommodations must be approved by the UCAT Office before candidates book their test.

Separate Room	To test in a separate room at a test centre, evidence must specify the candidate is entitled to 1:1 invigilation. Test centre rooms usually accommodate up to 15 candidates, meeting the requirement for testing in a smaller room. Separate rooms are subject to test centre availability.
Access to medical items (including food/water) at your workstation	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 usually requires a separate room (see above), which is subject to test centre availability. Items not approved must be stored in a designated place at the test centre and used outside the testing room. This also applies if a separate room is not available.

Online Proctored Testing

Online proctored testing may be appropriate in certain circumstances to support candidates with disabilities/medical conditions who would not otherwise be able to sit their test at a test centre.

Evidence must confirm the candidate's access needs would not be met in test centre separate room. We will also consider whether they are currently attending school or work in-person.

Access Arrangements available for online proctored testing are different to those we can support at a Test Centre. Online proctored testing is unlikely to be approved if a candidate would be disadvantaged by testing online (e.g. if other accommodations cannot be supported for security reasons).

Access Arrangements not listed above

Candidates who are entitled to 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.

Applying for Access Arrangements

Candidates should apply online at least 10 working days before they intend to book their test. Candidates who apply for access arrangements late in the test window may have limited options depending on test centre availability.

It is the candidate's responsibility to apply for access arrangements in a timely manner and by published deadlines. If candidates test without applying for access arrangements, or do not put access arrangements in place, this will not be accepted as a mitigating circumstance.

In 2025 candidates may apply online (<https://www.ucat.ac.uk/register/access-arrangements/>) for access arrangements from 13th May. Applications with the correct supporting evidence can be made up to 16th September. Applications received after this date (or incomplete applications with incorrect evidence) will not be processed.

Evidence Required

Applications for access arrangements requiring approval must be accompanied by appropriate supporting evidence. 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.

UCAT may request additional evidence if, in our view, supporting documentation is not sufficient.

Category 1: Candidates in School/College in 2025

Candidates currently entitled to access arrangements in their school college should provide the following:	
Option 1:	A signed letter (dated 2025) on headed paper from their school/college which should (as appropriate) confirm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their disability. • the amount of extra time they are entitled to in public examinations (e.g. 25%). • the amount of time they are entitled to for rest breaks. • if they are entitled to 1:1 invigilation. • any other accommodations they are entitled to 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.
Or Option 2:	A copy of all pages of the most recent JCQ Form 8 (Profile of learning difficulties) or Form 9 (Profile of need) signed by the Head of Centre/SENCo/Assessor.
If candidates have a recent diagnosis and access arrangements have not yet been put in place by their school/college, they should provide:	
Evidence	A signed letter (dated 2025) on headed paper from their school/college which should (as appropriate) confirm:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their disability. • the arrangement the school intends to put in place in the future including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the amount of extra time in public examinations (e.g. 25%). ○ the amount of time for rest breaks. ○ 1:1 invigilation. ○ any other accommodations. • 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.
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Category 2: Candidates in University in 2025

Candidates currently entitled to access arrangements in their university should provide the following:	
Evidence	<p>A signed letter (dated 2025) on headed paper from their university which should (as appropriate) confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their disability. • the amount of extra time they are entitled to in university examinations (e.g. 25%). • the amount of time they are entitled to for rest breaks. • if they are entitled to 1:1 invigilation. • any other accommodations they are entitled to 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.
If candidates have a recent diagnosis and access arrangements have not yet been put in place by their university, they should provide:	
Evidence	<p>A signed letter (dated 2025) on headed paper from their university which should (as appropriate) confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their disability. • the arrangement the university intends to put in place in the future including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the amount of extra time in public examinations (e.g. 25%). ○ the amount of time for rest breaks. ○ 1:1 invigilation. ○ any other accommodations. • 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 assessor.

Category 3: Candidates who left education before 2025

Option 1:	<p>A signed letter (dated 2025) on headed paper from your most recent school/college/university, which should (as appropriate) confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your disability. • the amount of extra time you were entitled to in public examinations (e.g. 25%). • the amount of time you were entitled to for rest breaks. • if you were entitled to 1:1 invigilation. • any other accommodations you were entitled to in public examinations. • on what basis this had been agreed, for example a diagnosis from a qualified medical practitioner or an assessment by a registered psychologist or specialist teacher assessor.
Option 2:	A copy of all pages of the most recent JCQ Form 8 (Profile of learning difficulties) or Form 9 (Profile of need) signed by the Head of Centre/SENCo/Assessor.
Option 3:	A full, post-16 diagnostic assessment report of a specific learning difficulty from a specialist teacher assessor or registered psychologist. This must explicitly recommend a specific

	amount of extra examination time (e.g. 25%) and/or other accommodations in public examinations.
Option 4:	<p>A recent letter (dated 2025) from your usual GP Practice or a specialist (e.g. a consultant or psychiatrist) which must include a clear outline of your disability and the access arrangements you are entitled to for a 2-hour, multiple choice test sat on computer (as opposed to a written examination). The letter must specify as appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the impact your disability has on your speed of working and the amount of extra <i>test time</i> (e.g. 25%) recommended to remove any disadvantage. • if more than 25% extra test time is recommended why this amount is required to remove any disadvantage. • whether rest breaks are required. • any other accommodations you are entitled to for examinations. <p>The letter must make it clear that any recommendations are based on the GP or specialist’s clinical opinion. A letter that simply states your preferences or wishes is not sufficient to approve access arrangements.</p>

Processing Access Arrangements Applications

Applications are usually processed within 5 working days.

Where a candidate requests more than one access arrangement, each of these will be considered separately and the candidate advised of the outcome relating to each access arrangement.

On occasion, advice from the UCAT Board and/or **external advice** may be requested to support decision making. We reserve the right not to approve an access arrangement previously or currently 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.

Candidates who are currently in receipt of an **access arrangement not consistent with JCQ regulations** may be offered an access arrangement for their disability in line with those supported by JCQ.

Applications may be rejected where the candidate’s entitlement to access arrangements would not apply to **computer-based testing**.

Stage 1: Initial Application Outcome

Candidates will be advised of one of the following **Initial Application Outcomes**. These decisions are usually made by one member of the UCAT Office staff. On occasion, cases will be discussed with more than one member of staff and/or advice sought from the UCAT Board or externally.

Outcome 1: Approved

Applications for access arrangements supported by correct evidence in line with this policy will be approved. Candidates receive a confirmation email advising them how to either book a test and/or arrange any relevant accommodations before the booking deadline.

Outcome 2: Rejected - Candidate is not entitled to the requested access arrangement

If (in the opinion of the UCAT Office), a candidate is not entitled to an access arrangement, the application will be rejected. The candidate will receive a written explanation of the decision.

If the evidence provided by a candidate supports their entitlement to a *different* access arrangement (to the one they applied for), the candidate will be advised of the access arrangement that has been approved and the reason the requested access arrangement has not been approved.

They will be advised of the steps they need to take to either book a test and/or arrange any relevant accommodations before the booking deadline.

Outcome 3: Rejected - Insufficient/Incorrect Evidence

Where a candidate has failed to provide sufficient evidence to support their application (in line with this policy), their application will be rejected by a member of the UCAT Office.

Candidates receive a written explanation of the decision. They are advised to email the UCAT Office with evidence that meets our requirements if they want the decision to be reconsidered.

On receipt of additional evidence, a final decision will be made, and the candidate will be responded to in full.

Option 4: Rejected - Unable to support an access arrangement the candidate is entitled to

If UCAT is not able to support some or all of the access arrangements a candidate is entitled to, the candidate will be replied to in full and the reasons behind the decision explained.

If appropriate, the candidate will be advised of alternative arrangements which could be put in place which (in the view of the UCAT Office) may meet or partially meet the candidate's needs.

In such cases, the candidate will be advised of the access arrangement that has been approved and the reason the requested access arrangement has not been approved. They will be advised of the steps they need to take to either book a test and/or arrange any relevant accommodations before the booking deadline.

Stage 2: Review by the UCAT Office

If an application has been **rejected** the candidate will be advised to email the UCAT Office if they want the decision to be reviewed. Candidates are invited to explain how 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 access arrangement would avoid that disadvantage. They are advised to provide further evidence to support their claim.

The UCAT Office will review the original decision (made at Stage 1) in the light of additional information provided by the candidates, make a final decision, and respond in full.

More than one member of staff will be involved in the review if the Initial Application Outcome (made at Stage 1) remains unchanged.

Appeals

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

Rachel Greatrix, March 2025