

UCAT Access Arrangements Policy 2026

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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 Professional Assessments ('Pearson').

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 2025 2,901 (6.9%) candidates sat a non-standard version of the test (extra test time and/or rest breaks); 400 candidates had special accommodations in place (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 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.

What are Access Arrangements?

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 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 are available to UCAT candidates who have a disability and are entitled to additional support in multiple-choice computer-based exams. Such candidates will often already be entitled to additional support in other exams.

Principles of this Policy

- We welcome applications for access arrangements from candidates and promote our policy through our [website](#) in a positive manner.
- We have a clear and transparent process in place for making decisions on access arrangements that is shared with candidates. There is an opportunity for candidates to make direct contact with the UCAT Consortium Office if they require additional advice/support.
- 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.
- We require all applications for access arrangements to be supported with appropriate independent evidence which is stated clearly on our [website](#).
- This policy is informed by the [UK Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\)](#) regulations.

Candidate Data

The UCAT Consortium Office uses candidate data to assess the access arrangements they may be entitled to. Information may be shared with Pearson to assess the arrangements that can be offered and assist the booking process. Candidates consent to these data being used for this purpose. Where evidence includes the data of any third party, candidates also confirm that consent to share these data has been obtained. Data are 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.

¹ Supporting and encouraging applicants with a disability: A guide for Medical Schools April 2022

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.

What Access Arrangements are Available?

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

Arrangements *not* Requiring Approval

Screen magnification and **colour contrast features** are built into all tests and do not require prior arrangement.

The following are allowed into the testing room after visual inspection and do *not* require prior approval:

- Items on the [Pearson Comfort Aid List](#).
- **Non-electronic ear defenders** or **earplugs** (must not have Bluetooth capabilities or be able to connect to any device).
- **Coloured overlay** (supplied by the candidate). Overlays should lie flat against the screen (kept in place by static) or in a frame that sits on top of the monitor. Monitors in most UK test centres are 24" flat screen.

The following do *not* require approval but are subject to test centre availability. They should be arranged at least 5 working days in advance of testing by calling [Pearson Customer Services](#):

- **Wheelchair access**
- **Adjustable height desk**

Arrangements Requiring Approval

Extra test time and/or rest breaks

Our extended tests build in extra time and rest breaks. It is not possible to add extra test 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 Consortium 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>In line with JCQ guidance, where a candidate has an impairment other than a learning difficulty, rest breaks may be considered instead of extra test time. Rest breaks may be more effective and appropriate than extra test time for candidates who experience anxiety or attention difficulties and they may better address the needs of many neurodivergent candidates such as those with ADHD/ASD, as well as many of those with a medical condition or mental health need.</p> <p>The standard extra test time allowance is usually 25%. Applications for more than 25% extra test time must be supported by evidence which demonstrates why this amount is required to remove any disadvantage.</p> <p>Extra test time will not be approved if the candidate's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• literacy difficulties are primarily caused by English not being their first language.• usual access arrangements would not apply to multiple-choice computer-based exams (e.g. issues affecting handwriting or constant hand use).

Special Accommodations

An application for any special accommodations must be approved by the UCAT Consortium 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,
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	<p>meeting the requirement for testing in a smaller room. Separate rooms are subject to test centre availability.</p> <p>Separate rooms are not soundproofed or quieter than the main testing area. Candidates may wish to bring their own non-electronic ear defenders or earplugs, or request earplugs at the test centre to limit disruption.</p>
<p>Access to Medical Items (including food/water) at your workstation</p>	<p>Approval is 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 candidates to test in 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.</p>

Online Proctored Testing

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

Evidence must confirm the candidate's specific needs would not be met in a test centre separate room. Decisions may also take into account whether the candidate is 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 Consortium Office will assess the application and advise the candidate how to proceed.

Applying for Access Arrangements

Candidates should apply through their UCAT account 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.

Candidates need to apply for access arrangements each year they sit the test; approval is not carried forward from previous test cycles.

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 2026 candidates may apply for access arrangements from 20th May. Applications with the correct supporting evidence can be made up to 10th September (15:00 BST). 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 which 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
- written in English. If the original evidence is not written in English, a translated version signed by the original author or a legal representative must be provided.

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

Category 1: Candidates in School/College in 2026

Candidates **currently entitled** to access arrangements in their school college should provide a signed letter (dated 2026) on headed paper from their school/college which should confirm:

- their disability.
- why they need access arrangements for exams.
- the access arrangements they are entitled to in public examinations, including (where applicable):
 - the amount of extra time (e.g. 25%).
 - the amount of rest break time .
 - any other exam arrangements (e.g. 1:1 invigilation, access to medical items).
- 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 a **recent diagnosis** means access arrangements for public examinations have not yet been put in place, the candidate should provide a letter from their school/college (as

above) which confirms the access arrangements their school/college intends to put in place in the future.

If the diagnosis occurred after the candidate left school/college in 2026, evidence should meet the requirements for ‘candidates who left education before 2026’ ([category 3](#)).

Category 2: Candidates in University in 2026

Candidates currently entitled to access arrangements in their university should provide the following:

<p>Option 1:</p>	<p>A signed letter (dated 2026) on headed paper from their university which should confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their disability. • why they need access arrangements for exams. • the access arrangements they are entitled to in university examinations including (where applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the amount of extra time (e.g. 25%). ○ the amount of rest break time . ○ any other arrangements (e.g. 1:1 invigilation, access to medical items). • 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. <p>A University Learning Support Plan may also be accepted if it includes the information detailed above and is dated 2026.</p>
<p>Or Option 2:</p>	<p>A full, post-16 diagnostic assessment report of a learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia) or ADHD/ASD from a specialist teacher assessor or registered psychologist/psychiatrist. This must explicitly recommend a specific amount of extra examination time (e.g. 25%) and/or other accommodations in public examinations.</p>

If a **recent diagnosis** means access arrangements for university examinations have not yet been put in place, the candidate should provide a letter from their university (as above) which confirms the access arrangements their university intends to put in place in the future.

If the diagnosis occurred after the candidate left university in 2026, evidence should meet the requirements for ‘candidates who left education before 2026’ ([category 3](#)).

Category 3: Candidates who left education before 2026

Candidates who left education before 2026 should provide the following:

For learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia) or ADHD/ASD	A full, post-16 diagnostic assessment report of a learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia) or ADHD/ASD from a specialist teacher assessor or registered psychologist/psychiatrist. This must explicitly recommend a specific amount of extra examination time (e.g. 25%) and/or other accommodations in public examinations.
For physical disabilities, sensory impairments or other medical/mental health conditions	<p>A recent letter (dated 2026) from their usual GP Practice or a specialist (e.g. a consultant or psychiatrist) which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a clear outline of their disability.• why they need access arrangements for exams.• the access arrangements they need for a 2-hour, multiple choice test sat on computer (as opposed to a written examination). <p>The letter must specify (as appropriate) whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• rest breaks are required.• extra test time (e.g. 25%) for answering questions is required to remove any disadvantage their disability has on their speed of working.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ if more than 25% extra test time is recommended why this amount is required to remove any disadvantage.• any other accommodations are required for medical reasons. <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 the candidate's preferences or wishes is not sufficient to approve access arrangements.</p>

Processing Access Arrangements Applications

- Applications are usually processed within 5 working days.
- Candidates are advised to contact the UCAT Consortium Office, by sending a Help Request via their UCAT account, if they have not received an email within this timeframe (after checking junk/spam folders). UCAT will not normally take action if a candidate fails to follow this advice and misses a key deadline.

- 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 usual access arrangements would not apply to **multiple-choice computer-based exams** (e.g., issues affecting handwriting or constant hand use) or where a condition does not consistently affect them across the entire test window (e.g., it is **episodic, intermittent, or short-term**).

Application Outcomes

Candidates will be advised of one of the following outcomes made by the UCAT Consortium Office.

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

Applications may be rejected for these reasons:

- If (in the opinion of the UCAT Consortium Office), a candidate is not entitled to the access arrangement.
- The candidate has failed to provide sufficient evidence to support their application (in line with this policy).
- If the UCAT Consortium is unable to support some or all of the access arrangements a candidate is entitled to.

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

Candidates whose applications have been rejected are provided with a written explanation of the decision made by the UCAT Consortium Office.

If evidence is missing, unclear, or does not meet the stated requirements, the candidate will be given further opportunities to meet the evidence requirements. New evidence must meet the usual deadlines. The UCAT Consortium Office will process all applications, make a final decision, and respond in full to the candidate.

Appeals

In certain circumstances the [Appeals Policy](#) allows candidates to appeal the final decision in relation to their application. Appeals should be submitted in a timely manner, normally within 5 days of receiving a final decision from the UCAT Consortium Office. New appeals will not be considered after 31 October.

UCAT Consortium
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