

Notes and guidance

Non-exam assessment (NEA) supervision, access arrangements and SEND guidance

This resource provides detailed and practical guidance for centres delivering our GCSE and A-level Art and Design non-exam assessment (NEA).

Introduction

This resource outlines guidance to support centres in applying access arrangements and supervised conditions in a way that is both compliant and workable within a practical classroom setting. Art and Design presents specific challenges due to its emphasis on independent creative production and this document is designed to help teachers navigate those challenges with clarity and confidence. In particular, it focuses on ensuring that learners with SEND can access the assessment fairly, while maintaining the integrity and authenticity of their work.

Key regulatory framework

Centres must ensure compliance with the following Joint Council Qualifications (JCQ) documents:

- [JCQ Access and reasonable adjustments](#)
- [JCQ Instructions for conducting Non-Examination Assessments \(NEA\)](#)
- [JCQ General regulations for approved centres](#)

These documents set out the expectations around supervision, authentication of work, malpractice and the correct use of access arrangements. Departments should ensure all staff involved in NEA delivery are familiar with these requirements.

Key principles

In line with JCQ guidance, the following principles underpin all decisions:

- access arrangements depend on the individual needs of the learner
- they must reflect the learner's normal way of working
- not all arrangements used in written exams are appropriate in practical subjects
- adjustments must not provide an unfair advantage.

In Art and Design, the key consideration is always whether a need impacts the learner's ability to produce practical work under timed conditions. All arrangements in Art and Design must balance:

- fair access for SEND learners
- maintenance of assessment integrity
- evidence-based decision making
- individual need rather than blanket application.

Extra time in Art and Design

- Extra time is not automatically applied across all subjects or learners. It is only awarded where there is clear evidence of need, as determined by the SENCo and approved through JCQ access arrangements.
- JCQ guidance confirms that in Art and Design:
 - [JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2025/26 \(p.46\), 5.2.5](#)
25% extra time may be awarded in a timed Art examination where a candidate has a formally diagnosed medical condition, physical disability, or sensory impairment which has a substantial and adverse effect on manual dexterity and/or physical coordination.
 - the candidates may be demonstrably slower when mixing paints, painting, and/or sketching
 - in rare and exceptional circumstances, candidates with significantly slower processing, weak memory skills, sequencing difficulties, or visual perceptual weaknesses may also qualify where this impacts performance under timed conditions.
- Each case must be considered individually, based on evidence and the nature of the practical task.

Learners completing the 10 to 15-hour period

- The sustained focus period can be delivered flexibly to support individual needs.
- However, in line with the specification requirements, the supervised time may be organised flexibly to suit the learner's needs, provided that the first two hours (GCSE) or three hours (A-level) are completed consecutively.
- Where a learner's needs cannot be met through this flexibility alone, an individual access arrangement application must be submitted, and decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Rest breaks

Supervised rest breaks may be permitted for learners where this is their normal way of working and has been approved as part of their access arrangements, in line with [JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2025/26 \(Section 5.4\)](#).

Braille use and accessible formats for NEA

- Teachers may adapt NEA materials, including the Component 2 starting points and assessment criteria, into braille to meet the individual needs of a learner. Learners may also produce their work in braille where this reflects their normal way of working.
- Centres must work with the SENCo to ensure appropriate access arrangements are in place. The SENCo is responsible for completing [JCQ form 9](#), confirming the candidate's disability, and uploading this to the relevant system in line with JCQ requirements.
- Where work is submitted in braille, it must be transcribed into print by a member of centre staff for moderation. A braille transcript cover sheet must be included, and details of the arrangement should be recorded on the [candidate record form](#).

Definition of technical assistance during supervised time

- The externally set assignment (10/15-hour supervised period) must be conducted under formal supervision in accordance with JCQ regulations.
- Within this context, *technical assistance* refers to the teacher being present to support the practical running of the session. This includes:
 - managing any equipment or material issues
 - ensuring health and safety requirements are met
 - addressing equipment failure or software malfunction
 - ensuring appropriate tools, materials, and resources are available.
- Technical assistance does **not** include any form of guidance that could influence the learner's work. Teachers must not provide advice, feedback, opinion, or support that could improve or develop a learner's response or give any learner an unfair advantage.

Music or white noise

- Learner with a substantial impairment may listen to music or white noise during the sustained focus period, where this forms part of their approved access arrangements.
- JCQ guidance states:
 - [JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2025/26 \(p.89\), 5.23](#)
 - applications must be processed via Access Arrangements Online.
- The SENCo must complete [form 9](#) confirming the learner's disability. This may include learners with:
 - social, emotional and mental health needs
 - sensory impairments (e.g. tinnitus or misophonia)
 - ADHD or ASD where music supports focus
 - other formally evidenced medical conditions.
- Formal evidence must always be available.
- The centre must ensure:
 - the device used cannot access the internet
 - the device is not Bluetooth enabled.
- The centre provides the equipment, for example:
 - CD player
 - centre-controlled laptop (invigilator operated)
 - MP3 player

- white noise machine.
- The learner may select their own music or white noise, but:
 - the playlist must be checked in advance
 - it must not provide any unfair advantage.

Non-electronic ear defenders/ear plugs/headphones

- Learners may use non-electronic ear defenders or ear plugs as a form of sensory support, where appropriate.
- JCQ guidance states, [JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2025/26 \(p.81\), 5.16](#) that no formal application is required for:
 - non-electronic ear defenders or ear plugs
 - non-electronic headphones
 - no evidence is required for inspection purposes.
- However, the SENCo must ensure the decision is based on:
 - whether the learner has a substantial and long-term impairment with an adverse effect
 - whether this reflects the learner's normal way of working within the centre.

Absence during the formally supervised period (ill health or hospitalisation)

- Where a learner is unable to attend the formally supervised period due to ill health, hospitalisation, or medical appointments, centres may arrange for the learner to complete the supervised time at a later date under appropriate exam conditions.
- To ensure fairness, the learner must submit their preparatory work on the same date as the rest of the cohort.
- Where it is not possible for the learner to return to the centre, an alternative arrangement may be made for the formally supervised period to take place in hospital. In such cases, centres must liaise with the exams officer to ensure that appropriate facilities and trained invigilation staff are in place, in full compliance with JCQ requirements.
- All invigilation arrangements must adhere to:
 - [JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations \(ICE\)](#)
 - [JCQ Instructions for Non-Examination Assessments.](#)

Completion of NEA work at home prior to the supervised period

- Learners may complete up to 100% of their NEA preparatory work at home prior to the formally supervised period.
- However, centres must be confident that all submitted work is the learner's own. Any work that cannot be authenticated must not be submitted.
- It is the responsibility of the centre to use professional judgement in determining the authenticity of the work. To support this judgement, centres should:
 - share [JCQ NEA guidance](#) (pp.4–5) with parents/carers to ensure expectations are understood
 - maintain regular contact with the learner (e.g. phone, video call, or email) to review and discuss progress
 - record on the [candidate record form](#) the extent to which work has been completed at home due to absence.
- Where there is any doubt that the work has not been completed independently, it must not be submitted.