



Department
for Education



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Innovation & Skills



British Dyslexia
Association

Apprenticeships in England for young people with dyslexia: Access Arrangements in Functional Skills

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1. Summary

1.1 Who should read this factsheet?

- Dyslexic young people doing an Apprenticeship in England who are taking Functional Skills qualifications in English or maths.
- Dyslexic people who did not finish an Apprenticeship because they failed a Key Skills qualification in Communication or Application of Number some time ago.

1.2 Why?

This sheet explains:

- Which Access Arrangements may be available to you when taking Functional Skills qualifications.
- What your options are for completing your Apprenticeship if you failed a Key Skills qualification previously.

2. What are Access Arrangements? And what are they for?

- Qualifications should test how good someone is at knowing or doing particular things.
- In an assessment, all candidates should be able to show what they have learned.
- To do this, some candidates might take the assessment differently. Some might take a maths assessment on screen, for example, rather than using pen and paper. What matters is that everyone is assessed consistently on how good their maths is.
- One reason a candidate might take their assessment differently is if they have a disability that makes it difficult to take an assessment in a particular way. Awarding organisations should let them take the assessment in a different way so that they're not unfairly treated.
- Awarding organisations and exam centres (colleges, schools or other training providers) have a legal duty to make these 'reasonable adjustments'. These adjustments are often called 'Access Arrangements'.
- The aim of an Access Arrangement is to eliminate or reduce the disadvantage that a disabled candidate has compared to others. An Access Arrangement shouldn't give a disabled candidate an advantage over others.

2.1 Dyslexia and Access Arrangements

- If you have dyslexia, then you might struggle with
 - speed of processing
 - organising information
 - sequencing
 - short term memory and working memory
 - reading accuracy or reading speed
 - writing fluently
- If your dyslexia makes normal day-to-day tasks (including taking exams) significantly harder, then the law says you have a disability. That means you might be allowed to use Access Arrangements.

- To qualify for an Access Arrangement you must have an assessment of your reading, writing and other skills that shows that you have dyslexia and are at a substantial disadvantage compared to other people.
- Your exam centre should arrange for a specialist teacher or educational psychologist to assess you.
- The learning support department or designated individual at your exam centre will then help apply for your Access Arrangements.
- Your exam centre should apply to the awarding organisation in good time. Some arrangements may need up to four months' notice.

2.2 What Access Arrangements are available?

- The regulator (Ofqual) sets limits on the use of some Access Arrangements, to protect the integrity of qualifications. For example, you can't have someone else read the exam paper to you in exams testing reading.
- The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) produces regulations about Access Arrangements – see www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance/access-arrangements-and-reasonable-adjustments-2013-2014-standard-pdf-version. All the main awarding organisations¹ offering Functional Skills qualifications are covered by the JCQ regulations.
- Your exam centre will make suggestions over which Access Arrangements might suit you. The Access Arrangements you can use will depend on the problems your dyslexia causes, as well as rules set by the regulator and the JCQ.

The main access arrangements are:

- **Extra time** for candidates who work very slowly.
- **Rest breaks** for candidates who have difficulty concentrating or find exams very stressful.
- **Human readers** for candidates who struggle to read by themselves. These are not allowed in Functional Skills English reading papers.
- **Computer readers** ('text to speech') as an alternative to human readers. These can be used either with accessible PDF files containing an electronic version of the exam papers, or with e-assessments for any candidate to take an assessment on screen. These are allowed in English reading papers.

¹ AQA, Pearson/ Edexcel, OCR, CCEA, WJEC and City and Guilds.

- **Reading aloud** for those who have reading difficulties and can concentrate better if they can hear themselves read.
- **Scribes** for **very** poor or slow writers who cannot write by themselves. These are not allowed in English writing papers for Functional Skills.
- **Voice recognition software** as an alternative to scribes. Candidates can dictate and then edit responses.
- **Word processors for typing answers** can be used by any candidate. You can also use a spell checker and a dictionary.
- **Prompters** for candidates who lose concentration easily.
- **Oral Language Modifiers** for candidates who have problems with comprehension and use a Modifier as a normal way of working in class.
- **Coloured overlays** or question papers printed on **coloured paper**.
- Where an awarding organisation provides an **e-assessment** alternative to hard copy, it may have some specific accessibility features.

Other Access Arrangements may also be available, depending on the particular problems your dyslexia (or other disabilities) causes. Your exam centre should discuss all the available options with the awarding organisation.

Details on the specialist technology options are below.

2.3 Assistive technology

You might find specialist technology helpful, both in class and then when taking assessments:

- Text-to-speech: having a computer read aloud text shown on the screen.
- Voice recognition: converts your voice to text on the screen. You can correct what appears on the screen.
- Changing screen colours or fonts or focusing on certain areas of the screen.

For further information on these options, see

<http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/techdis/userneeds/dyslexia-tools>.

- Your exam centre has a legal duty to provide the assistive technology you need.
- If you use a PDF version of the assessment, or use e-assessments, there may be some accessibility options built in, such as to adjust colour and font settings. If you have particular requirements, then ask your exam centre for practice assessments to check whether the e-assessment can be changed to suit you.

- It is very important to check well beforehand that your assistive software is suited to the assessment. Ask your exam centre if you can try out your software with a practice assessment. The exam centre should contact the awarding organisation if there is a problem.

2.4 What should you do if you think you haven't received the Access Arrangements to which you are entitled?

- Speak to your exam centre.
- You can formally appeal to the exam centre if it hasn't provided a particular Access Arrangement.
- If the awarding organisation hasn't agreed an exam centre's request, you can ask the centre to appeal on your behalf.

3. What if I failed a Key Skills qualification and didn't finish my Apprenticeship?

What if I failed a Key Skills qualification and didn't finish my Apprenticeship? For example, because I didn't get the Access Arrangement I feel I should have?

- You can take a new English and maths qualification to finish your Apprenticeship.
- You need to have completed **all** the parts of your Apprenticeship other than a Key Skills qualification in Communication and/or Application of Number.
- You will need to pass English and maths Functional Skills (or GCSE equivalent – see below). This will not cost you anything.
- You don't have to give a reason why you failed your Key Skills.
- It doesn't matter how long ago you were on your Apprenticeship.

3.1 How do I apply for a Functional Skills course in English and/or maths?

- You can use any training provider registered with the Skills Funding Agency to deliver English and maths training.
- Not all of these providers will be able to offer a Functional Skills course immediately, so you should start by speaking to your previous training provider. If you aren't sure who you trained with before, speak to your local college.

3.2 What level of Functional Skills do I need to achieve in order to complete my Apprenticeship?

- To be awarded an intermediate (Level 2) Apprenticeship, you need to achieve at least Level 1 English and maths in Functional Skills (or at least an E grade at GCSE). For an advanced (Level 3) Apprenticeship, you will need to achieve at least Level 2 English and maths in Functional Skills (or at least a C grade at GCSE).
- Further information is available in the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards – see www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/137960/bis-13-686-specification-of-apprenticeship-standards-for-england-sase.pdf.
- Some Apprenticeships require higher level qualifications. You should ask your training provider to check the requirements of your Apprenticeship framework.

3.3 What happens if I fail the Functional Skills qualification?

- You have to pass an appropriate English and maths qualification to complete an Apprenticeship.
- So if you fail one of the tests, you should talk to your training provider to discuss if you need additional learning support. Your centre can also talk to you about retaking the tests. You can retake tests for Functional Skills as many times as you need to.

3.4 What happens once I have my Functional Skills certificate?

- If you are training with your original provider or employer, they should be able to apply for your Apprenticeship certificate for you.
- If not, you can apply directly via the Apprenticeship Certificates England website – see <https://acecerts.co.uk>. There is a link on how to apply on the front page of the website.

3.5 How much will the Apprenticeship certificate cost me?

The cost is usually paid by your employer (if they placed you on the Apprenticeship) or learning provider. You should speak to them first before applying directly. If they don't pay, there is a small fee.

3.6 Who can I speak to if I have any questions on getting my Apprenticeship certificate?

There is a contact phone number and email address under the "contact us" section of the Apprenticeship Certificates England website: <https://acecerts.co.uk>

This factsheet was produced by Department for Education, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the British Dyslexia Association on behalf of the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust.



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