

Passport to Access: the silver bullet

Andrew Owen shares his recommended access arrangement requisites

There are two main requisites for obtaining Access Arrangements (AA). One has to do with the documented needs of the learner. For instance, documentation must be collected such as Audiogram or hospital letter, within a certain date. In addition, to gain the AA 'Language Modifier' (LM), learners must take an English assessment. If the learner falls below a certain score, the LM can be applied for. All these documents are required and must be held on file.

The other requisite, common for all AAs is evidence of 'Normal way of working'. This has become a mantra in recent years, but it must be clear that the regular class environment where teaching and learning takes place is not where 'normal way of working' is done for examinations. This can be done only when class tests and mock exams are done. This means that the learner must experience the exam environment, such as separate room, extra time, rest breaks, and whatever else they are entitled to as an approved AA. However, this has always been difficult to administer. This is because for example, mainstream teachers have timetable restrictions and find it difficult to implement extra time for mock exams. Asking for a separate room also, is sometimes a step too far. Teachers of the deaf have always needed to campaign early for these and other provisions, with often just an emerging working relationship to charm with. At times this relationship runs thin, so requires hard careful work. Qualified Teachers of the Deaf, CSWs, LSAs etc. need to achieve this quickly and efficiently at the start of the academic year because certain arrangements must urgently be put in place, that impact far ahead on examinations much later in the academic year. Enter the 'Passport to Access'.

Passport to Access.

In the Royal Borough of Greenwich Sensory Service, a document was devised, called 'Passport to Access' which had the sole aim of recording 'normal way of working'. This document travelled around with the CSW and was pulled out whenever the opportunity arose, such as for a mock test. The Passport showed the subject teacher what AAs had been applied for and offered a box for the class teacher's signature to confirm this had taken place in the mock test.

The Passport ticks many boxes:

1. There is clear evidence for 'Normal way of working', and the exams officer is happy because details can be simply copied from the Passport to the online Form 8.
2. Teachers of the deaf and CSWs are happy because they



can now show the teacher an 'official' document, backed up by the exams officer. No longer do the team of deaf education professionals need to campaign for extra time, separate room etc. in mock tests, because we, the exams officer and teacher are all working together.

3. Deaf learners are better supported because they can experience and pace themselves in mocks just as in real exams. They can learn how the CSW changes into an LM (for example) in the real exam.
4. Deaf learners can be assessed with parity by the mainstream teachers through the course.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich piloted this document back in the 2013/14 academic year, and the Passport to Access delivered on all the points mentioned above, with the added benefit of strengthening good working relationships between teachers and CSWs. It became an ever-present tool in the CSW kit bag.

Form 8

The 'Passport to Access' links in with Form 8. The JCQ regulations explain the rationale of Form 8, which has been around for many years. Centres are able to complete it online. Entering data on this form is administered typically by the exams officer and/or SENCO who holds the centre log-in details and obtains data from specialists. Alternatively, a paper copy can be downloaded from the JCQ website which is 8 pages long, containing space for results of screening tests, learning and support plans, school reports and tracking data. Specialist assessors use Form 8 to record reading accuracy, comprehension and speed. Also writing accuracy, legibility and spelling. Cognitive processing is also documented. Form 8 must be signed by an educational psychologist, specialist teacher or assessor. It is clearly not the sort of paperwork to carry around for anyone's eyes. The question on Form 8 that addresses 'Normal way of working' is here:

'What support and adjustments are in place for the candidate in the classroom, tests and examinations?'

Just how much evidence is required is addressed in the regulations, which state that the arrangement must reflect the support given to the candidate in the classroom, for reading/writing, literacy support, intervention strategies, internal school tests and mock examinations etc.

Inspection

The JCQ regularly sends out inspectors who want to see the paperwork supporting the AAs that have been applied for. The 'Passport to Access' is a potent document that provides clear evidence of 'Normal way of working', so it is recommended for consideration by others. Readers are welcome to download a blank copy of the 'Passport to Access' from the former adept website.

https://www.batod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/adept_Passport_to_Access.pdf

Centres can add their own branding, but please make sure the relevant sections of text quoted from the JCQ documentation is brought up to date.

The academic year is well under way, but there is still time to implement this 'silver bullet'.

Joint Council for Qualifications: www.jcq.org.uk

Association of Deaf Education Professionals and Trainees: www.adeptuk.co.uk



Andrew Owen is a retired senior communication support worker.



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