

Computers and assistive technology in external assessment

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA)

The QCAA provides assessment in digital format (readable and interactive PDF) for students approved to use a computer and/or assistive technology in external assessment. This factsheet provides information for schools about downloading alternative format digital files and important processes before, during and after assessment.

Important information

Alternative format digital files **must** be opened in a **PDF reader**. Adobe Acrobat Reader is recommended. Schools must **not** open files in an internet browser as they may not save or function correctly.

Assistive technology, including screen readers and speech recognition software, must operate in the PDF environment. (Schools should contact the QCAA AARA Unit if there is a possibility that alternative arrangements may be required to enable the use of specialised accessibility software for individual students with disability).

Downloading alternative format digital files (AARA papers)

Alternative format digital files (AARA papers) are downloaded through **Assessment files** in the fileShare application (app) in the QCAA Portal.

- EA coordinators must have the role of fileShare Application Administrator to access the files.
- App roles are assigned by the school Access Management Organisation Administrator.
- Other approved staff may download assessment files if they are assigned the role of fileShare Viewer (External Assessment) and have been allocated the relevant subject/s by the EA coordinator.

The fileShare app uses Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) to encrypt sensitive data. Alternative format digital files are encrypted in zip files and password protected.

- Zip files with AES encryption can only be opened using software that supports their decryption. Extraction tools pre-installed on most devices do not support the AES-encrypted zip file. Schools must ensure they have the appropriate software installed. Examples of software that can open the files created in fileShare include:
 - Windows — 7-Zip, WinZip, WinRAR
 - Mac — The Unarchiver, Keka, iZip
 - IOS — iZip, WinZip
- Encrypted files will be available in the fileShare app in the week before the relevant external assessment. Passwords will be available from 3:00 pm the day before the assessment and will be shown next to the **Download** button for each assessment.

Detailed instructions for downloading files are in the quick step [Download assessment files](#), which you can access through the **Help** link on the top right-hand side of the screen in the fileShare app.

The quick step includes screenshots and additional information to assist EA coordinators in the following steps.

1. Click **Assessment files**.
2. Select **External assessment**.
3. Click **Download** for the required file (copy the password).
4. Locate the zipped download in the **Downloads** folder on your device and right-click it.
5. Select the decryption software you have installed on your device (Speak to your school technical support staff to ensure that the correct software is installed for rehearsal prior to the assessment period)
6. Click **Extract** files.
7. Enter the password and click **OK**.
8. Double-click the unzipped folder.
9. Double-click the file to open it.

Before assessment

Alternative format digital files (AARA papers) must be opened in a PDF reader. Adobe Acrobat Reader is recommended (right-click on the decrypted file and select **Open with Adobe Acrobat Reader**).

Files must **not** be opened in an internet browser, as they may not save or function correctly.

The EA coordinator manages the security and movement of digital files to student devices and ensures:

- all devices meet technical requirements (a PDF reader is required)
- all devices are fully charged or plugged in
- back-up devices are available, if possible
- subject-related files are removed and internet connection is disabled (unless approved by the QCAA to enable particular accessibility software for individual students)
- adequate supervision is arranged. Supervisors must actively monitor use of computers and assistive technology during assessment
- students using a computer or assistive technology are provided with the digital format *as well as* a paper version of assessment, i.e. standard response book and any approved alternative paper format
- supervisors are aware of approved AARA for individual students. Students may be approved to use alternative format digital files to type responses, use a screen reader, use speech recognition technology and/or magnify text and images.

Note: Spellcheck is enabled on alternative format digital files and does not need to be disabled. Students using accessibility software must not be allowed access to grammar, word prediction and/or dictionary tools.

During assessment

Session announcements may be modified for students who have been approved to use a computer and/or assistive technology, e.g.

Session announcement	Acceptable variation
The final version of your response must be written in the response book in front of you.	You may type the final version of your response in the digital file provided or you may write it in the response book in front of you.

When an alternative format digital file is used for student responses:

- students may respond in the digital format, the standard response book (or another approved alternative paper format) or both
- questions that require students to draw, annotate diagrams or respond in character-based languages (e.g. Chinese) must be completed in the standard response book (or other approved alternative paper format). Schools should contact the AARA Unit for advice if they have students who are physically unable to do this
- if a student requires more space than is allowed in digital text boxes (including additional pages for student responses), the student may use multiple digital files and save them for submission. The student should continue their response in the appropriate question space in the extra file
- students must number each response book clearly. If a digital format *and* paper response book are used, they should be numbered '1 of 2' and '2 of 2'. The format that contains most of their response should be numbered 1
- students approved to use a computer may type planning notes in a Word document if required as an alternative to using the blue planning paper.

After assessment

After the assessment, the EA coordinator:

- saves a copy of digital student responses. A hard copy should also be printed and stored securely (this is **not** returned to the QCAA)
- removes all files from student devices *when the accuracy of digital and hard copies is confirmed*. Students are not to take a copy of files from the assessment room
- uploads digital responses to the **External assessment returns** tab of the fileShare app
 - Responses must be named correctly. Save the file, using the student's barcode label as the filename, e.g. 81262203614012S2. If more than one digital file is uploaded, add a number to the filename, e.g. 81262203614012S2_2.
 - Detailed instructions for uploading student responses are in the quick step [External assessment returns](#), available through the **Help** link on the top right-hand side of the screen in the fileShare app.
- packs paper responses from students who have completed a combined digital and paper response in the provided envelope (do **not** include a printed copy of the digital response). This envelope is then added to the satchel/box with the cohort's response books

- records formats used by students (digital format, standard response book, alternative paper format or a combination of these) when completing the attendance roll in the EA application.

Troubleshooting guide

Access all quick steps via the **Help** link in the fileShare app.

Issue	Resolution/s
No fileShare app tile in the QCAA Portal	<p>This indicates that you do not have access to the app.</p> <p>EA coordinators must be assigned the role of fileShare Application Administrator. The principal or school Access Management Organisation Administrator can assign roles.</p> <p>If required, other relevant staff assigned the role of fileShare Viewer (External Assessment) may download files for particular subjects. Note: The fileShare Application Administrator must assign the role of fileShare Viewer (External Assessment) to the staff member, and the EA coordinator must assign them the relevant subject/s. The EA coordinator may access the quick step Allocate teachers.</p>
No AARA papers appear in the fileShare app	<p>Ensure you have been assigned the correct role within the fileShare app, i.e. fileShare Application Administrator or fileShare Viewer (External Assessment) allocated to a particular subject.</p> <p>Ensure you are in the correct location in the application. Click Assessment files > External assessment.</p> <p>Assessment files will be available in the week before the relevant external assessment. They will only be available to schools in subjects where students have been approved to use computers and/or assistive technology. See the quick step Download assessment files.</p>
Cannot find an AARA paper	<p>In the fileShare app, you can search by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessment (type the name of the assessment in the search field) AARA papers (type 'AARA papers' in the File content search field). <p>See the quick step Download assessment files.</p>
Cannot find the password	<p>Passwords display in the fileShare app alongside the file and Download button and will be available from 3:00 pm the day before the assessment. See the quick step Download assessment files.</p>
Cannot find the file after clicking Download	<p>Go to the Downloads folder on your device to locate the downloaded file. If you cannot find it, check your browser settings to see where downloads are saved. See the quick step Download assessment files.</p>
Cannot open the file	<p>Decryption software is required. Liaise with your school IT technician to identify a suitable program. Examples are listed in the Home tab in the fileShare app. Follow the steps shown in the quick step Download assessment files.</p>
File opens in an internet browser	<p>Files must not be opened in an internet browser.</p> <p>Ensure a PDF reader is installed on the device; Adobe Acrobat Reader is recommended. Right-click on the decrypted file and select Open with Adobe Acrobat Reader.</p>
Device stops functioning	<p>Plug into a power source (if the battery is flat).</p> <p>Swap with a backup device if required.</p> <p>A school IT technician may be available during assessment to provide technical support.</p>

Approved assistive technology is not working in the digital file	Students may have approval to use a screen reader, speech recognition technology or other software with the PDF. A school IT technician may be available during assessment to provide technical support. Contact the AARA Unit if technical issues cannot be resolved.
Do not know how to upload student digital responses	fileShare Application Administrators (EA coordinators) are granted access for External assessment returns . Follow the steps shown in the quick step External assessment returns to upload student digital responses.

More information

- QCAA policies and processes
 - *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook*, Section 6
www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/certificates-and-qualifications/qce-qcia-handbook/6-aara
 - AARA factsheets, all available at www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/aara
 - *Directions for administration (DFA): External assessment*, available in the QCAA Portal through the Noticeboard and External Assessment applications.
 - phone 1300 381 575 or email aara@qcaa.qld.edu.au.



© State of Queensland (QCAA) 2023

Licence: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0> | **Copyright notice:** www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/copyright — lists the full terms and conditions, which specify certain exceptions to the licence. |

Attribution: '© State of Queensland (QCAA) 2023' — please include the link to our copyright notice.