

Introduction to AARA

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA)

This information is for students, parents/carers and school staff. It applies to students undertaking summative assessment in Applied, Applied (Essential), General and General (Extension), including Alternative Sequences and General (Senior External Examination (SEE)) subjects, and Short Courses.

Every year, there are students undertaking senior school studies in Queensland who have a disability, impairment, medical condition or who experience other circumstances that may be a barrier to their performance in assessment. AARA are designed to assist these students.

Student eligibility for AARA

Eligibility for AARA falls within the following categories:

- long-term and chronic conditions (e.g. intellectual disability, hearing or vision impairment, physical impairment, specific learning disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, diabetes)
- mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression
- short-term conditions, which may improve or deteriorate over time depending on a range of factors, and temporary injuries (e.g. broken limb)
- illness (e.g. flu-like symptoms, gastroenteritis) and misadventure (e.g. flooding, death of a close family member).

For episodic conditions that *may* occur during timed assessment (e.g. migraines), QCAA-approved AARA will *not* be approved on a 'just in-case' basis. If symptoms occur at the time of a scheduled internal assessment, a comparable assessment may be administered when the student is well. If symptoms occur at the time of an external assessment, an illness and misadventure application may be submitted or a late AARA request may be made.

AARA are applicable for students who have completed required learning as outlined in the relevant syllabus or course.

Students are *not* eligible for AARA on the following grounds:

- unfamiliarity with the English language
- teacher absence or other teacher-related difficulties
- matters that the student could have avoided, e.g. misreading an examination timetable, misreading instructions in examinations
- timetable clashes
- matters of the student's or parents'/carers' own choosing, e.g. family holidays or sporting events
- matters that the school could have avoided, e.g. incorrect enrolment in a subject.

AARA cannot be used to compensate for learning that has not occurred, or to exempt a student from the learning or knowledge and skill requirements of a subject or course.

Principles of AARA

In making decisions about AARA, schools:

- consult with students and parents/carers
- confirm the current functional impact/s of the disability, impairment, medical condition or circumstance for individual students in timed assessment. (Impacts may vary significantly for different students with the same diagnosis, condition or circumstance)
- consider adjustments that address functional impacts to enable students to access and complete assessment on the same basis as other students. (AARA cannot confer an advantage)
- consider adjustments that will allow students to participate in assessment as independently as possible
- monitor and regularly review the effectiveness of adjustments in addressing current functional impacts and enabling access and participation on the same basis for all students
- balance the interests of all parties affected, including other students, staff and the school itself
- consider alternative reasonable adjustments that are less disruptive and intrusive but no less beneficial for the students, as needed
- maintain the academic requirements of subjects and ensure the integrity of assessment requirements and processes. (All inherent requirements and components of the course must be maintained at the same standard for all students.)

When providing students with adjustments prior to summative assessment, schools are encouraged to take these principles into account, to ensure that enacted adjustments are consistent with AARA for Units 3 and 4.

Adjustments may be made to:

- how assessment is presented to a student, e.g. a student who cannot hear or process verbal instructions may be provided with written instructions
- how the student responds to the assessment, e.g. a student with physical impairment impacting handwriting, may need to complete some assessment using a computer
- the time allowed, e.g. a student with disability may require five minutes per half-hour extra time to complete timed assessment on the same basis as other students without disability
- the scheduling, e.g. a student may complete an internal assessment at a later time than others, because of a car accident or illness on the day of the assessment
- the environment in which the assessment is undertaken, e.g. a student may sit in a different room to the other students because they need a reader or scribe
- the mode of the assessment, e.g. a student with an injury may perform a different physical activity from the rest of the Physical Education class, so they can demonstrate the unit objectives.

Reporting and approving processes for AARA

AARA for summative assessment in Units 3 and 4 are either principal-reported or QCAA-approved.

Principal-reported AARA

Principal-reported AARA are specific practical arrangements and adjustments authorised by the principal or principal's delegate for an eligible student. In approving principal-reported AARA, a principal/delegate must be reasonably satisfied that the need for the AARA exists and be able to provide evidence to justify the decision. The QCAA does *not* specify evidence requirements, and evidence is *not* submitted to the QCAA.

Schools must notify the QCAA, via the QCAA Portal, of principal-reported AARA for students undertaking summative internal and external assessment in Units 3 and 4.

Principal-reported AARA may include:

- for summative internal examinations: alternative format papers*, assistance, assistive technology*, comparable assessment, computer*, reader, scribe, variation to venue
- for summative internal and external examinations: bite-sized food, individual instructions, medication, diabetes management, varied seating, vision aids, physical equipment
- for summative non-examinations: extensions, comparable assessment.

*QCAA approval is required for alternative format papers, assistive technology and computer for the common internal assessment (CIA) in Essential English and Essential Mathematics.

QCAA-approved AARA

QCAA-approved AARA are specific practical arrangements and adjustments that can only be approved by the QCAA following consideration of supporting documentation submitted with an AARA application via the QCAA Portal.

Each application is assessed both on the reported functional impacts of the disability, impairment, medical condition or circumstance for the individual student; and on the suitability of the proposed adjustments to address functional impacts and enable the student to complete assessment on the same basis as other students. Applications are also assessed to ensure consistency and equity across the entire Queensland cohort.

QCAA-approved AARA include:

- for summative internal examinations: extra time, rest breaks
- for the common internal assessment (CIA) in Essential English and Essential Mathematics: extra time, rest breaks, alternative format papers, assistive technology, computer
- for summative external assessment and Senior External Examination (SEE): extra time, rest breaks, alternative format papers, assistance, assistive technology, computer, reader, scribe, variation to venue.

Other AARA may be required, based on the functional impact of a student's condition. Schools should contact the QCAA's AARA Unit before creating an entry for 'Other' in the AARA application.

Schools:

- check the accuracy of information supplied in the AARA application
- consider whether a student's application for AARA is consistent with eligibility requirements and principles for AARA, and clarify with QCAA officers as required
- complete the online application and submit supporting documentation by the due date via the QCAA Portal

- advise the student, parents/carers and assessment supervisor of approved AARA, including providing them with any written notifications from the QCAA
- consult the student prior to assessment. (Students are not required to use all of the approved arrangements — they may use all, some or none of them. The student is the person to make the decision).

See the *School process checklist* for a more detailed guide to school AARA processes www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/assessment/aara/resources.

Application due dates for QCAA-approved AARA

Schools submit applications to the QCAA via the QCAA Portal. Where possible, it is best to submit applications early, to ensure timely decisions and confidence for students.

Conditions	Due date
Long-term and chronic conditions	By completion of Units 1 and 2*
Mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, and short-term conditions	As soon as possible before the assessment event (up to six months prior)

*AARA applications for General (Senior External Examination) subjects close on the dates published in the SEP calendar, for Year 12 students and adult students.

Alternative format papers	Due date
CIA Phase 1	By October in the year prior to assessment
CIA Phase 2	By the end of February in the assessment year
External assessment	By the end of February in the assessment year
Senior External Examination (SEE)	As soon as possible after registration. Contact QCAA's AARA Unit. Late application may not be possible, as significant advance notice is required for design and production.

More information

- National requirements
 - *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)*: www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00763
 - *Disability Standards for Education 2005 (DSE)*: www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005
 - Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD): www.nccd.edu.au
- 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
 - phone 1300 381 575 or email aara@qcaa.qld.edu.au.

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