

Completing an AARA application

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA)

This information is for school staff responsible for AARA applications. It applies to students completing senior school studies.

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) recognises that some students have a disability, impairment and/or medical condition, or experience other circumstances that may be a barrier to their performance in summative assessment. Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA) are designed to enable these students to access assessment on the same basis as other students.

AARA applications may be made for summative internal and external assessment in Applied, Applied (Essential), General and General (Extension), including Alternative Sequences and General (Senior External Examination (SEE)) subjects, and Short Courses. They must include all required information as outlined in the *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook*, Section 6.4.5, including evidence to validate each AARA request.

Schools submit applications on behalf of students through the AARA application (app) in the QCAA Portal. Staff may be assigned the role of Editor and/or Submitter, and should follow the quick-step guides for creating, editing and submitting applications. These are available via the **Help** link within the AARA app.

Preparing an application for submission

AARA applications should be prepared by school staff familiar with the individual needs of students, and submitted within the timelines specified by the QCAA in the *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook*, Section 6.4.3.

Schools ensure requested AARA:

- are for summative assessment in Units 3 and 4 (there is no requirement to report or apply for AARA through the QCAA for other assessment)
- have been determined in consultation with students and parents/carers
- address the current functional impact/s of the student's disability, impairment, medical condition or circumstance in timed assessment
 - impacts may vary significantly for different students with the same diagnosis, condition or circumstance
 - decisions should be based on ongoing monitoring and review of functional impacts and the effectiveness of adjustments in addressing those impacts in timed assessment
- relate to persistent functional impact/s (rather than episodic symptoms that may or may not occur at the time of assessment)
- enable students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the same basis as other students (AARA must not confer an advantage)
- enable students to participate in assessment as independently as possible
- may be enacted while the intent and rigour of assessment is maintained (all inherent requirements and components of the course must be maintained at the same standard for all students)
- are considered on a case-by-case and subject-by-subject basis

- are substantiated in supporting documentation with enough detail to enable timely processing by the QCAA.

What does not need to be reported or applied for?

The following are examples of what should **not** be included in AARA applications:

- scaffolding — this is an intentional instructional strategy that may be provided to individuals or to a class of students (see the *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook*, Section 8, for information about scaffolding)
- use of a computer, assistive technology, reader or scribe for summative assessment that is not an examination — all students may have access to these outside of examination conditions
- pre-recording a response for General English and Essential English spoken responses — the syllabuses are clear that responses may be live or pre-recorded
- a 'reduced audience' for spoken responses — the syllabuses do not define the size of the audience
- adjustments that are encompassed within AARA arrangements — e.g. the Diabetes management arrangement encompasses various adjustments to meet the needs of students with diabetes, including varied seating, rest breaks and access to food, drink and insulin. There is no need to apply for these separately
- changes to due dates for a cohort.

Note: The AARA application includes an 'other' option. Schools should contact QCAA's AARA Unit before submitting applications for 'other' AARA.

Supporting documentation

School statement

A school statement (or documentation containing the same information) is mandatory in applications for QCAA-approved AARA. It provides:

- information about the disability, impairment, medical condition or circumstance affecting the student
- an overview of impacts on daily functioning in the classroom
- details about the persistent functional impact/s of the condition or circumstance in timed assessment, and arrangements the student has used previously in order to participate in assessment on the same basis as other students.

School statements must provide enough detail to substantiate all AARA requests. This includes

- reporting functional impacts resulting in the need for each requested AARA
- confirming arrangements and adjustments that have been required previously to address reported functional impacts. If not required previously, explain why they are now needed
- providing details about requested AARA (e.g. how much time has been required, what kind of assistance is needed, what happens in rest breaks, what assistive technology is used?).
- detailing the effectiveness of each AARA in removing barriers for the student in accessing and completing assessment.

Information included in a school statement should align with information provided in the medical report submitted in the application. Keep in mind that the school statement must provide information from the school perspective (as outlined above) and should not refer only to information and recommendations from the medical professional.

Medical documentation

The medical report must be from the student's medical practitioner, psychologist or other relevant health professional to explain the nature and extent of the student's disability, illness or medical condition. Medical practitioners must not be related to the student or employed by the school. Reports from provisionally registered professionals must be co-signed by their registered supervisors.

Details of diagnosis should be written by the practitioner who is best placed professionally to make the diagnosis.

Where diagnosis of a long-term condition has been made before Year 10, an update is required and this may be provided by a general practitioner (GP). Both reports should be submitted with the AARA application in this case — the original report confirming diagnosis, and the GP's update.

For students with short-term conditions, and mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, the medical report must be dated

- within the six months preceding the relevant internal assessment event
- no earlier than 30 April for summative external assessment and Senior External Examinations.

A medical report template is available on the QCAA website, but its use is **not** required.

EAP

While the Department of Education is transitioning all Queensland state schools to a new students with disability resourcing model that does not rely on the Education Adjustment Program (EAP), all schools can continue to submit Education Adjustment Program (EAP) documentation as an alternative to a medical report. This applies to:

- students whose EAP verification was previously approved to cover their enrolment in Units 3 and 4, with no review of criterion 1 required.
- verification in all EAP categories with the exception of Social Emotional Disorder (SED), as medical documentation for students with anxiety and/or depression must be dated within six months of assessment.

Where a student's EAP verification has expired, or a review of criterion 1 was requested by EAP verifiers, a medical report is required. This may be completed by a GP.

Assessing AARA applications

The QCAA considers each application on a case-by-case basis. AARA officers make decisions about QCAA-approved AARA with reference to the principles of AARA and on the basis of:

- the evidence provided in the supporting documentation
- the reported functional impact/s of the disability, impairment, medical condition or circumstance for the student in assessment
- AARA that have been required previously to mitigate the functional impact of the condition in assessment

- enabling access and participation for all students on the same basis
- consistency and equity across the entire Queensland cohort
- maintaining the intent and rigour of the assessment so that all inherent requirements are maintained at the same standard for all students
- balancing the interests of the individual and other parties.

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
- phone 1300 381 575 or email aara@qcaa.qld.edu.au.



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