



TOP Tips on Exam Provision from LOOK mentor Abi and her Mum Alison

Abi is a large print user

Parents

- It's never too early to start!
- School viewing -ask policies, provision, question teachers-get a feel what has happened before. Have they had blind or partially sighted students before?
- Read [JCG Guidelines](#) Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments -yellow updates important!
- Instructions for conducting Examinations (ICE)
<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/>
- Equality Act 2010 also useful
- Read school policies eg rest breaks
- EHCP note only sections B and F are legally binding -so forget the others
- Use these to ensure arrangements and reviews of exams. Use the wording MUST occur. Very little can't actually be written in - but you may need to be creative. Eg Exam access arrangements in appendix 1. Use wording such as “ MUST ensure JCQ compliance is maintained.” You cannot write things that are not controlled by school eg 50% extra time but you can get around this.
- Ensure you keep all email trails. For verbal discussions provide a follow up summary with caveat- If you don't hear from professionals involved assume this is reflective of the conversation.
- Good idea to include QTVI in meetings with school regarding exam provision. QTVI was a life saver and probably wouldn't have got through exams without her.
- Know when your child needs support and when they can advocate for themselves.
- Sadly you may need to compromise with things that would not adversely affect your performance eg rest breaks and switching exams from am to pm
- School to review mocks after completion to check in on any issues
- Schedule meeting 2 weeks prior to submission of access requirements to sign off
- Post exams - contact school sooner to discuss changes etc
- If needed get a written agreement -we did this post GCSE and Pre A levels.



- Many people already disadvantaged for example my font size is 32 but had to compromise and choose 24 or 36

Students

- Always remember a copy of the original paper to check for mistakes.
- Remember whatever is going on access wise your priority is to revise for exams. Let as many people as you can- parents, teachers etc sort everything else out for you.
- Parents, it makes a huge difference when you are fighting for us in the background..
- Don't waste marks on things you can't see, move on to the next question.

Key things you would like to say about your experience of Exam Provision?

- School did not ask me what format I needed for my exams & ordered papers that were inaccessible.
- I was given the wrong size papers eg 36 vs 24, A3 vs A4 in actual exams.
- Restrictions on what readers could say, e.g Reading maths symbols was not allowed , arguments over whether saying 'decimal point' was allowed etc
- Coloured paper - I was refused am & pm exams on different coloured paper
- Shouted at in my exams/ told I was wrong when I said the modified exam font wasn't big enough - I was told it was fine.
- After the rules had been sorted for my extra time, prompts, readers etc, the person assigned to me often told me this was all wrong, hadn't been briefed properly, and a lot of time was wasted checking this before I could start, meaning my time in the exam rooms was lengthened further.
- 11 out of 23 exams had major errors inc. wrong format, e.g. pages in wrong order, upside down etc.
- Given the wrong exam paper
- Not listened to re my requirements
- Rest breaks restricted
- Geography paper loosing marks on maps etc



What needs to change for future VI young people?

- Less barriers in place when asking for access requirements. There seems to be a common assumption that something is giving us an unfair advantage, but when everything is added up, I don't think the access requirements being asked for even level the playing field let alone give us an advantage.
- Listening to the student.
- Better access to class material and exam preparation materials e.g practice exams
- Recognition that our priority should be studying, just like every other student, not self advocating to sit the exam. When preparing for GCSE and A-Level exams, this is not an appropriate time for schools to be 'teaching us how to advocate our needs'
- Recognition of the mental toll of endless fighting, especially on the student.
- Clearer JCQ guidance
- Exam boards need to be aware that what is available in guidance eg JCQ regs is NOT necessarily available to students as schools may deny this access.
- VI students may already be making a big compromise in papers eg Abi really needed size 28 modified enlarged print but this was not available & therefore had to choose next best meaning already at a disadvantage.
- QTVI and pupils to sign off on access arrangements - possible additional comments box to add extra info.

LOOK Mentor Alice's Reflections on her Exam Provision

Alice is a brailist

- I had a mixed experiences of accessibility in exams
- Particularly found maths A level and gcse challenging as someone with a visual impairment because of the lack of tactile diagrams and accessible resources
- Support of an amazing QTVI was imperative to my exam preparation as they provided me with lots of skills and techniques with adapted materials which boosted my confidence



- Course content of the exam is important, however so are your braille skills, tactile skills and the opportunity to practice with equipment such as a talking calculator.
- Despite the challenges, I achieved an A in A level Psychology and a C in A level Mathematics and have gone onto higher education studying Psychology at University.
- My story is proof that even if your visually impaired child studies fewer A levels and GCSEs they can still succeed in their education.
- My psychology lecturers made adjustments to delivering the content with one recording PowerPoints for me to listen to before the lesson.

Lessons learnt

- Ensure that all VI students are entitled to do any examinations. It should not matter what subject they want to study. I had to fight to do my A level subjects at my college and was the first VI student to do A level Mathematics
- VI students should not be limited to study less visual subjects
- Resources were not accessible and the specialist equipment was expensive to buy and obtain
- During my A level mathematics course I was not taught some of the syllabus as it was thought to be too visual for me to do. This could have been compensated for in the exam or the course content amended in some way to provide access for all.
- I needed more support away from College lessons and this was done by my Mum and later a private maths tutor but not everyone can afford this.
- My college was not the most supportive of my needs. I had to teach myself braille maths symbols as the college did not have the provision to do this.

Solutions for improvement in exam provision for future VI young people?

- More accessible resources and past papers to be made available



- Diagrams for examinations need to be made clearer and understandable for VI students
- Check examination papers for mistakes in the braille and diagrams as some of my papers did contain these
- Exam results should be made in an accessible format such as braille/large print

Top Tips For Parent /Carers and Young People

- Supporting your VI child/young person is incredibly important throughout their education. My mum's support and her giving up her own time and helping me find a private maths tutor helped me so much.
- Prepare as much as you can for your exams but don't overload yourself.
- Learning the course content is important, however learning braille skills, tactile skills and specialist equipment is equally important
- Don't compare yourself to your sighted peers, you are just as capable of achieving great things
- Communicate regularly with your teachers or the school/college to make them aware of your needs and any accessibility issues you might have
- Revise in a variety of ways such as listening to you tube videos, reading back notes and completing past examination papers
- Don't worry if you complete examinations later than your peers as I completed mine a few years later due to illness but still got good results
- You have to prepare for possible access issues in exams. When things did go wrong, for example mistakes with diagrams, I made sure that I had a



strategy to cope with this and was able to carry on

- You need to build a good relationship to work with the reader/scribe in your exam

Abi, Alison and Alice are really happy to support others and give advice. To contact them please email: parentsupport@look-uk.org and Jane will pass on your questions and requests for help.