

QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook 2019 v1.2

For senior secondary schools

October 2019

6 Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA), including illness and misadventure

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) recognises that some students have disability, impairment and/or medical conditions, or experience other circumstances that may be a barrier to their performance in assessment. Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA) are designed to assist these students.

The [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) (DDA) and the [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(DSE\)](#) seek to eliminate, where possible, discrimination against people with disabilities. Compliance with these documents ensures students are provided with opportunities to realise potential through participation in education and training.

The application of AARA to student assessment is based on the functional impact of the condition for which AARA are sought. Students with the same condition may experience highly varied impacts on their education, and their ability to demonstrate their learning, knowledge and skill in assessments. To this end, this section does not include examples of every possible circumstance for AARA; it provides information for schools to make decisions to support their students' needs.

AARA minimise barriers for eligible students to demonstrate their learning, knowledge and skill in assessment. Schools use the information in this handbook to inform their decisions about appropriate adjustments and arrangements for Applied, Applied (Essential), General, General (Extension), Short Course and Senior External Examination (SEE) assessments. Candidates for the SEE are referred to as students in this handbook.

Access arrangements are action/s taken by the school so that a student with an eligible impairment that may not be covered by the definition of disability can access assessment. Reasonable adjustments are action/s taken by the school so that an eligible student with impairment as a result of disability and/or medical conditions or experiencing other circumstances creating a barrier to the completion of assessment can be assessed.

The QCAA encourages schools to develop a school-based AARA process that supports the early identification of students with existing long-term and chronic conditions so that schools and students can confidently negotiate and implement AARA according to the guidelines. Similarly, adjustments required due to temporary medical conditions or injuries should be identified and managed as soon as possible to enable access within assessment timelines.

Illness and unforeseen events may also impact on a student's ability to complete assessment, and may require access arrangements or a reasonable adjustment. For more information see Section 6.5: Illness and misadventure.

6.1 Principles

The following principles inform the decisions schools make about AARA.

- Consultation — Decisions are made in consultation with the eligible student and, when appropriate, parents/carers, relevant school staff and the QCAA. Schools ensure they maintain respect for the dignity and privacy of the student, parents/carers and associates throughout the application and implementation of AARA.
- Timeliness — AARA are planned and negotiated as early as possible so that eligible students are supported appropriately to participate in, and complete the requirements for, a course of

study and assessment. Schools identify and minimise barriers that prevent students from demonstrating their current knowledge and skills. Reasonable adjustments are made to assessment conditions to make assessment accessible for all students (see [DSE s. 3.4](#)) so that students have opportunities to demonstrate the assessed knowledge and skills.

- **Standards-based assessment** — The relevant exit or reporting standards are used to make judgments about student achievement. The school is required to maintain the intent and rigour of assessment and any other requirements or components that are inherent or essential to a course of study (see [DSE s. 3.4](#)). Assessment standards and instrument-specific marking guides (ISMGs) are used to make judgments about student work and are not modified. Actual achievement is assessed using evidence provided in student responses, rather than perceived ability or potential achievement.
- **Effects of AARA** — Schools consider the effect of AARA on the student, including the effect on the student's ability to achieve learning outcomes, participate in courses of study and the effect on their independence and demonstration of their knowledge and skills. Students should have opportunities to demonstrate a response to assessment that is their own work. AARA are applied on a case-by-case basis with both the individual student needs and the assessment technique or task taken into consideration. Schools consider the identified disability, impairment and/or medical condition and the functional impact on the student's capacity to undertake particular requirements of an assessment. A student may not need or want adjustments for some assessment techniques or instruments, or may need different adjustments in different assessments.
- **Flexibility** — Schools review the AARA provided and assess whether changes are needed over the duration of a student's schooling to allow for the changing needs of the student over time. AARA are specific to the individual needs of each student, subject and assessment instrument.

6.2 Eligibility for AARA

AARA are provided to minimise, as much as possible, barriers for a student whose disability, impairment, medical condition or other circumstances may affect their ability to read, respond to or participate in assessment.

These barriers fall into three broad categories:

- permanent
- temporary
- intermittent.

The QCAA uses broad application categories for AARA eligibility:

- cognitive
- physical
- sensory
- social/emotional.

The definition of 'disability' used in the [DDA](#) is broad. It includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and learning disabilities. It also includes physical disfigurement, and the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms.

Students may also be eligible for AARA where illness and misadventure (i.e. unforeseen circumstances) or other situations may prevent students from demonstrating their learning,

knowledge and skill in internal and/or external summative assessment. The QCAA will also consider applications for certain cultural obligations or personal circumstances (see Section 6.5: Illness and misadventure).

For more information about supporting documentation required for different eligibility categories and possible adjustments see Section 6.5.3: Supporting documentation.

6.2.1 Ineligibility

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 parent's/carer's own choosing (e.g. family holidays or sporting events)
- matters that the school could have avoided (e.g. incorrect enrolment in a subject).

For managing school-approved absences for assessment of students who are not eligible for AARA, but who may have other circumstances, see Section 8.2.7: Gathering evidence of student achievement.

6.3 Roles and responsibilities for AARA

Under the Australian Government's [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(DSE\)](#), educational authorities such as the QCAA, and education institutions such as schools, learning providers and school registered training organisations (RTOs) are obliged to make access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA), and are responsible for consulting with students and parents/carers about AARA.

6.3.1 Schools

Each school is responsible for administering assessment within the requirements of the relevant syllabus and meeting quality assurance processes for Applied, Applied (Essential), General and General (Extension), General (Senior External Examinations) subjects and Short Courses. In making decisions about AARA, schools are required to consider what access arrangements or adjustments to assessment conditions are reasonable in the context of the eligible student's disability, impairment, medical condition or circumstances.

Where an application is required for summative assessment, for each application, AARA are considered for all the student's enrolled subjects. AARA may vary by subject depending on the assessment requirements of the subject.

Schools:

- check the accuracy of information supplied in the AARA application (see Section 6.4.2: Application and notification process)
- consider whether a student's application for AARA is consistent with eligibility requirements 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 any principal-reported and QCAA-approved AARA, including providing them with any written notifications from the QCAA
- advise any other learning providers who might be affected by the AARA applied for.

The principal or principal's delegate may identify a suitable school staff member for managing applications for AARA.

For external assessment, when a student is enrolled with more than one learning provider, the main learning provider is responsible for submitting the application for AARA on behalf of the student.

Schools may contact the QCAA for more information about AARA by emailing aara@qcaa.qld.edu.au.

MLPs and LPs

The school that is the main learning provider (MLP) must submit applications for QCAA-approved AARA and/or notify principal-reported AARA to the QCAA on students' behalf, via the QCAA Portal.

The MLP must communicate the QCAA's decision, and any relevant information, to any other LPs, who then enact the access arrangement or the reasonable adjustment for assessment. LPs should work collaboratively with MLPs.

Where students do not have an MLP that is a school they should contact the QCAA for application details. For more information, see Section 6.5.3: Supporting documentation.

MLPs 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 of Applied, Applied (Essential) and General syllabuses, and for assessment in Short Courses, and in General (Extension) and General (Senior External Examination) subjects.

6.3.2 QCAA

The QCAA sets and amends the directions for assessment under its powers and functions listed in the [Education \(Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority\) Act 2014](#) and the [Education \(Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority\) Regulation 2014](#) (QCAA Regulation). The QCAA is authorised to approve AARA for summative internal assessment, external assessment, Short Courses and Senior External Examinations.

The QCAA:

- supports schools in understanding eligibility and the application process for AARA
- consults with relevant school staff about student applications for AARA
- monitors notifications of principal-reported AARA from schools
- determines QCAA-approved AARA and notifies schools of decisions via the QCAA Portal.

6.4 Reporting and approving processes for AARA

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments (AARA) for summative assessment in Applied, Applied (Essential), General, General (Extension), General (Senior External Examination) syllabuses and Short Courses may be either principal-reported or QCAA-approved.

6.4.1 Making decisions about AARA

The principal is responsible for making decisions about the type of AARA and for following guidelines about recording information and seeking QCAA approval. When making decisions for principal-reported AARA or when QCAA approval is required, they make decisions based on the particular context for an eligible individual student, for a particular assessment.

Principals consider the limitations and restrictions and functional impact of the disability, impairment, medical condition or other circumstances and the specific types of adjustments that allow each student to access the assessment and/or demonstrate what they know or can do. The decisions about adjustments may not be the same for every student or the same for each student for every assessment. Teachers and schools rely on evidence to make professional judgments about the types of adjustments provided for students. This evidence will reflect a wide range of practices of teachers and schools in meeting the educational needs of their students consistent with obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* and best teaching practice.

The adjustment/s should not prevent the student from demonstrating the objectives of the assessment.

The decisions may involve an adjustment to:

- how the instrument is presented to the student (e.g. for a student with a hearing impairment verbal instructions may be provided as written instructions)
- how the student responds to the assessment (e.g. a student with dyspraxia may complete the assessment using a computer with approved software)
- the time allowed (e.g. a student with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may have 5 minutes per half-hour extra time provided in supervised assessment)
- the scheduling (e.g. a student completes an assessment at a later time than others because of a car accident 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 as they need a reader)
- the mode of the assessment (e.g. a student with an injury may perform a different physical activity from the rest of the cohort in Physical Education in order to be able to demonstrate the unit objectives).

6.4.2 Application and notification process

The school that is the MLP submits applications for QCAA-approved AARA, and/or notifies the QCAA of any principal-reported AARA, on students' behalf, via the QCAA Portal.

The MLP must communicate the QCAA's decision, and any relevant information, to any other LPs, who then enact the access arrangement or the reasonable adjustment for assessment.

Where students do not have an MLP that is a school they should contact the QCAA for application details. For more information, see Section 6.5.3: Supporting documentation.

AARA in Units 1 and 2

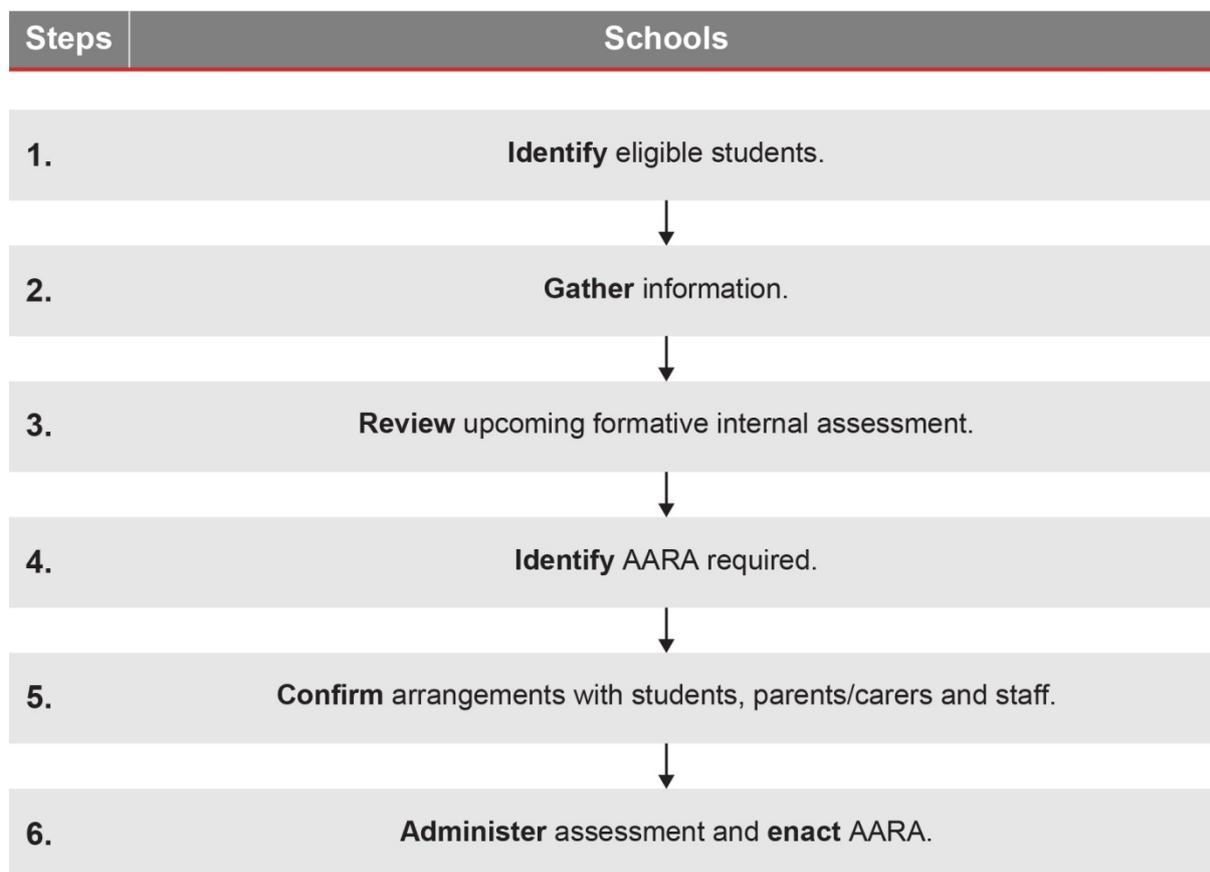
Schools make decisions about AARA for Units 1 and 2. They ensure that for Applied, Applied (Essential) and General subjects the AARA implemented for an eligible student for Unit 1 and 2 assessments are aligned to those that are available for summative assessments in Units 3 and 4. Provision of AARA by a school for Unit 1 and 2 assessments does not guarantee that students will be provided the same AARA for assessment in Units 3 and 4.

In approving AARA, a principal or principal's delegate must:

- be reasonably satisfied that the need for the AARA exists
- be able to provide evidence to justify the decision.

Evidence of AARA being enacted for a student in Unit 1 or 2 will be considered as part of an application for the same AARA in Units 3 and 4.

Schools' AARA process for formative assessment in Units 1 and 2



Principal-reported AARA in Units 3 and 4

Principal-reported AARA are specific practical arrangements and adjustments authorised by the principal or principal's delegate for an eligible student.

In approving AARA, a principal or principal's delegate must:

- be reasonably satisfied that the need for the AARA exists
- be able to provide evidence to justify the decision.

Schools must notify the QCAA, via the QCAA Portal, of principal-reported AARA for students undertaking summative internal assessment in Units 3 and 4 of Applied, Applied (Essential), General and General (Extension) subjects, and for summative external assessment in General, General (Extension) and General (Senior External Examination) subjects.

Schools retain supporting documentation for principal-reported AARA (see Section 6.4.5: Supporting documentation for QCAA-approved AARA). Schools may be required to supply a copy of supporting documentation as part of the quality assurance processes for AARA or as part of a review process (see Section 6.4.6: Reviewing a QCAA-approved AARA decision).

The QCAA publishes timelines for principal-reported AARA to enable schools to meet their reporting requirements.

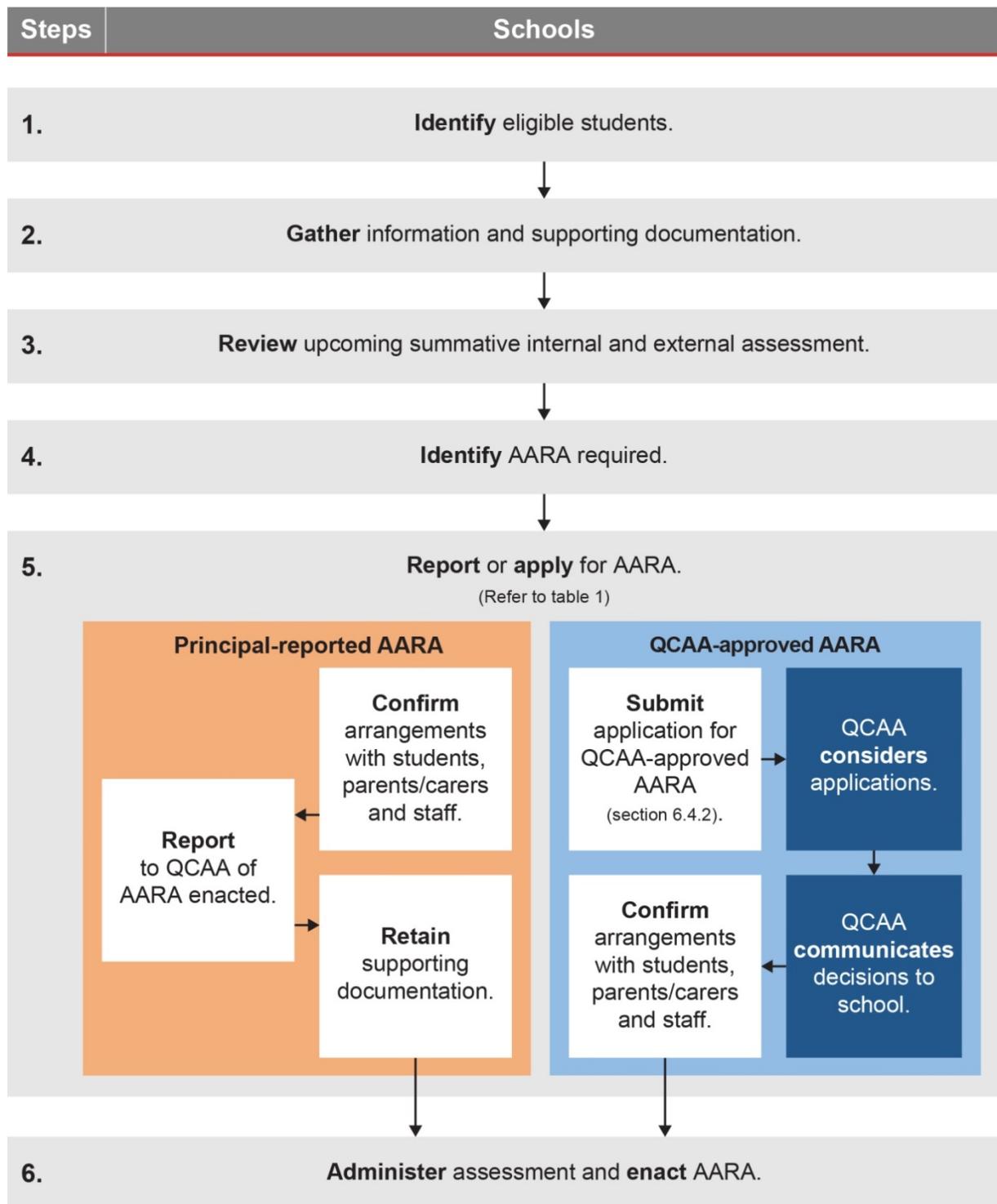
QCAA-approved AARA in Units 3 and 4

The QCAA is responsible for approving identified AARA for students undertaking summative assessment in Units 3 and 4 of Applied, Applied (Essential), General and General (Extension) subjects, summative assessment for Short Courses and for external assessment in General, General (Extension) and General (Senior External Examination) subjects, as defined in the table below.

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

Schools must submit applications for QCAA-approved and/or notify principal-reported AARA to the QCAA on students' behalf, via the QCAA Portal.

Schools' AARA application/notification process for summative assessment in Units 3 and 4



Summary of the adjustments for which schools are required to apply to the QCAA

Type of assessment	Adjustment
Summative assessment — internal examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extra time and/or rest breaks
Summative external assessment or Senior External examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extra time and/or rest breaks format of papers assistance assistive technology, including the use of a computer a reader and/or scribe variation to venue (changes to rooms should be recorded). See Section 10.4.1: Variations to venue any adjustments not identified as principal-reported in the table in Section 6.4.4: Possible AARA.

6.4.3 Timelines

It is best to apply early to ensure timely decisions and confidence for students. Applications submitted close to the due date for assessment should not be for known long-term conditions.

Submission dates for principal-reported and QCAA-approved AARA

Type of AARA	Unit 3 and 4 General subjects — internal assessments	Unit 3 and 4 General subjects external assessments <i>and</i> General (SEE) subjects
Alternative format papers, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> braille large print 	Due dates are determined by the school.	Applications are due by the end of February in the summative year. Late applications may not be considered, as significant advance notice is required for design and production.
QCAA-approved AARA (including in combination with principal-reported AARA)	For existing long-term and chronic conditions — applications are due by completion of Units 1 and 2. For all others, applications are due as soon as possible before the assessment event.	For existing long-term and chronic conditions — applications are due by the end of Term 1 in the summative year. For short-term conditions or temporary injuries that are unlikely to resolve before mid-October — applications are due by the end of Week 5 Term 3 in the summative year.
Principal-reported AARA only	Notification is due before the relevant confirmation event	Notification is due by the end of Term 3 in the summative assessment year.

6.4.4 Possible AARA

The following table summarises possible principal-reported and QCAA-approved AARA. It is not exhaustive. Each individual student's circumstances should be considered on a 'case by case' basis, while balancing the interests of the individual and other parties. Schools are encouraged to contact the QCAA for pre-application advice about students' needs for any adjustments not listed or where there are complex or extensive adjustments. Email aara@qcaa.qld.edu.au.

Examples of possible principal-reported and QCAA-approved AARA

AARA	Description of possible adjustments to assessment and/or conditions	Approval type		
		Summative internal assessment	Summative external assessment	Senior External Examination
Alternative format papers	<p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • braille • A4 to A3 enlargement • electronic format • large print papers • black-and-white materials. 	Principal-reported	QCAA-approved	
Assistance	<p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a teacher aide assisting with manipulation of equipment and other practical tasks • a supervisor using the student's name in reading assessment instructions, providing support and reassurance, and prompting the student to start or continue writing / undertaking the assessment task. 	Principal-reported	QCAA-approved	
Assistive technology	<p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amplification system • speech-to-text application • magnification application. <p>The types of assistive technology that the student may use to complete assessment will depend on variable factors, including the nature and severity of the student's disability and/or impairment and the functional impact related to the type and purpose of the assessment instrument.</p>	Principal-reported	QCAA-approved	
Bite-sized food	The student may take a sufficient quantity of bite-sized food in a clear container into the assessment room. Food must be unobtrusive in nature, i.e. not crunchy, strong-smelling or wrapped in noisy packaging.	Principal-reported	Principal-reported	
Comparable assessment	An alternative comparable assessment that has not previously been administered to students in the subject cohort may be administered on a different date. See Section 7.4: Developing a comparable assessment instrument.	Principal-reported	Not applicable	
Computer	<p>Desktop computer or laptop computer with an approved software application.</p> <p>Further information about computers and document formatting is supplied with the AARA decision letter for external assessment and is also available in the <i>Computers</i> information sheet via the QCAA Portal. Schools should provide this information sheet to eligible students.</p>	Principal-reported	QCAA-approved	