

Reasonable Adjustment and Special Considerations – Additional Guidance

1. Changes to Assessment Facilities

Reasonable Adjustment: to change the assessment room or venue for the assessment to meet an individual need.

1.1 Minor changes to the organisation of the assessment room

This may benefit some learners with autistic spectrum disorder, with visual or hearing impairment or with physical difficulties, for example:

- Visually impaired learners may benefit from sitting near a window so that they have good lighting.
- Hearing impaired learners may benefit from sitting near the front of the room and in good light.
- Some learners may benefit from using chairs with armrests or adjustable heights.
- Learners on the autism spectrum may benefit from having visual/noise stimuli, such as a ticking clock, removed from the room.

1.2 Separate accommodation within the Centre

It may be necessary to accommodate the learner separately if they are using readers, scribes, BSL/English interpreters, etc. This will enable them to focus on the assessment and support from their facilitator. It will also reduce distraction for others who are not requiring this adjustment.

1.3 Alternative venues

In certain circumstances, the learner may be permitted to take an assessment at an alternative venue, for example at home or in hospital. The Centre should ensure that the learner is medically fit to take the assessment. It is important that the compliance of assessment conditions is met and security of the assessment material is maintained at all times.

1.4 Will this work for your learner?

- Is your learner medically fit and able to take the assessment?
- Will the change of room or venue enable them to participate in the assessment?
- Can your centre accommodate this change, including having separate invigilators, etc. where required?

If the above answers are 'Yes' then this is likely to be an acceptable reasonable adjustment.

1.5 Case Study

Morven attends a specialist provision for learners on the autism spectrum. She has sensory overload issues and her coping strategy is to wear earphones playing her favourite music and this enables her to focus on the task in hand. She uses this for work in the classroom and in life in general to manage her environment. The reasonable adjustment that the Centre is requesting is two-fold:

- Can Morven wear the earphones and play her music during the assessment?
- Can this take place in a separate room as a quiet, but still audible, sound emits from the earphones which may disrupt others who are working within the same room.

Response: Usually earphones are not allowed to be worn during an examination or externally set assessment, however, as this is clearly part of the learners coping strategy it can be allowed on this occasion. Please note the equipment and the material would need to be checked by the Centre to ensure that the material being played is suitable and non-informative. A separate room within the Centre can be used for this purpose. Please note that invigilation will still be required to maintain compliance with the assessment guidelines.

Things to consider:

- The security of any assessment papers must be maintained at all times.
- Invigilation will be required for groups and individuals working in different rooms/venues
- The room being used should be in a quiet area with no disturbances.
- Any assessment carried out with the use of a facilitator will still need to have an invigilator present.

2. Scribe and Transcriber

2.1 Scribe

A scribe is a person who, in an assessment, writes down or word processes a learner's dictated responses. Where there is evidence of need, a scribe may be allowed in all assessments where writing or keyboarding is not the competence being assessed.

The Centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a scribe is an appropriate adjustment. As the effective use of a scribe requires high level communication skills from the learner, the Centre is advised to consider whether the learner would be more comfortable with the use of a computer. The learner is also more likely to use a word processor rather than a scribe in the workplace.

For a learner requiring a scribe and a reader, the same person may act as both, provided permission has been given for both.

The use of a scribe should not affect the assessment requirements for the qualification being assessed. In some cases the writing of answers by the learner may be the skill being assessed.

The Centre should select a scribe on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the learner. A scribe should be able to produce an accurate record of the learner's responses, write legibly and/or word process at a reasonable speed.

2.2 Will this work for your learner?

- Is the assessment of writing skills **NOT** part of the examination or controlled assessment?
- Would the learner **NOT** be able to use a computer, where keyboarding skills are not being assessed?
- Does the learner have the communication skills required to use a scribe effectively?

If the above answers are 'Yes' then this is likely to be an acceptable reasonable adjustment.

2.3 Case Study

Abu has broken his arm the day before his examination. He now cannot write or word process his responses to the examination questions. This examination is not an assessment of writing skills. The centre now put in place a Special Consideration for Abu to have a scribe record his answers. The centre follow the guidance for Special Consideration and forward the form to NOCN, or their delivery partners, within 2 days of the examination taking place.

Response: As all process have been adhered to and the centre have supporting evidence, then this is an acceptable intervention enabling Abu to complete his examination.

2.4 Transcriber

A transcriber is a person who will produce a transcript to assist the examiner/assessor in the assessment of a learner's work. The examiner/assessor will assess the learner's work and will only refer to the transcript if it is impossible to decipher any part of the learner's response(s). For responses produced in Braille or BSL the examiner/assessor may refer solely to the transcript. This arrangement may be used by a learner in the following circumstances:

- Where the learner's handwriting is illegible, but he or she is unable to use a computer or dictate responses - it may not be allowed where writing by hand is the competence being assessed.
- Where the learner's responses are produced in BSL, SSE or Braille.

The Centre should give the transcriber clear instructions regarding what they are required to do after the assessment.

The transcript should be produced by a member of the centre's staff who is familiar with the learner's handwriting, is fully competent in Braille (where the transcription is for learner's responses produced

in Braille), or who has the required skills in BSL (where the transcription is for learner's responses produced in BSL).

The transcript(s) must be securely attached to the back of the learner's work and be included with the other work from the Centre for dispatch to the assessor in the normal way. The production of the transcript should not delay the dispatch of scripts to the assessor.

The transcriber:

- Must produce the transcript in a separate copy of the question paper/answer booklet or on lined or unlined white paper as appropriate.
- May handwrite or word process the transcript. If handwritten, dark blue or black ink should be used. Pencil must never be used.
- Must, for examinations, produce the transcript immediately after the examination under secure conditions.
- Must not involve the learner in the production of the transcript.
- Should normally transcribe complete answers. In cases where only occasional words need to be transcribed, these may be written on a photocopy of the learner's script. On no account must the learner's original script be marked or annotated in any way.
- Must normally be a word-for-word transcription, i.e. an exact copy of what the learner has written. The transcriber may not insert or omit words or alter their order. In English, Welsh or Irish (Gaelige) or modern foreign language examinations any errors, including those of spelling, punctuation and grammar, must be transcribed as given by the learner and must not be corrected. In other qualifications, the transcriber may correct the spelling of non-technical words.
- Should indicate any corrections to spelling on the verbatim transcript using a different colour ink, but not red, green or purple ink. Pencil must not be used for this purpose.
- Must not transcribe diagrammatical material. Assessment of such material will be based on the learner's own work.

2.5 Will this work for your learner?

- Is this assessment the skill of writing by hand being the competence being assessed? (*The answer should be no*)
- Is your learner unable to use a computer and have illegible handwriting? (*The answer should be yes*)
- Does your learner give their responses in Braille, BSL or SSE? (*The answer should be no*)

Things to consider:

- The Centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a scribe or transcriber.
- The scribe or transcriber must be a suitably skilled or qualified member of staff and under no circumstances should be a family member or personal friend of the learner.
- Complex preparation of assessment material, such as providing the assessment in Braille, will need to be requested to NOCN at the time of the individual's registration. This allows adequate time to produce the required materials.

3. Use of ICT to Present Responses – Written Assessments

The use of ICT is generally perceived to have a positive impact on helping learners to access assessment. This guidance relates to the use of ICT in written assessments.

ICT can normally be used for centre-devised and portfolio work unless the use of ICT is expressly prohibited by the qualification specification.

The use of ICT should not create a misleading impression of the learner's attainment or confer an unfair advantage over other learners. Spelling and grammar checks must be disabled prior to the assessment taking place.

3.1 Will this work for your learner?

- Does the qualification specification or skills standards prohibit the use of ICT?
- Does the specification assess handwriting skills, as opposed to writing skills in general?
- Will this adjustment give the learner an unfair advantage compared to other learners?

If the answers to the above questions are 'No', it is likely to be an acceptable Reasonable Adjustment.

- Is this the learner's normal way of working?

The answer here should always be 'Yes' for this to be an acceptable reasonable adjustment.

3.2 Case Studies

3.2.1 Case Study One

Joe has Cerebral Palsy and he finds handwriting difficult and tiring and often it is illegible. He is working towards Functional Skills English at level one and would like to use his laptop with word processing software. This is his normal way of working.

Response: A reasonable adjustment request must be submitted to NOCN and is likely to be approved. Spelling and grammar check must be disabled, a dictionary can be provided if a learner requests this.

3.2.2 Case Study Two

Paulina is working towards an entry level 3 qualification that is assessed using a portfolio based approach. One of the units chosen by her teacher is: Handwriting and Spelling Skills

Paulina has reduced fine motor skills as the result of an accident and these are unlikely to improve. She finds handwriting challenging as holding a pen is difficult as she has a poor grip. Her assessor is requesting that she be able to use a PC to generate evidence of achievement for this unit.

Response: This unit, as indicated in the title is all about handwriting skills, so use of the computer would give Pauline an unfair advantage over other learners. Neither can she be allocated a scribe for these tasks for the same reasons. Essentially the recommendation here would be to choose an alternative unit from this qualification suite of units to demonstrate the writing skills she has got when she uses her usual medium of word processing to produce text. Alternative unit suggested: Writing Composition Skills.

Things to consider:

- The use of ICT in this context should be taken to include word processors, personal computers (PCs) and other microprocessor controlled devices producing output in text or other forms such as graphics and diagrams.
- A computer should only be used if it is appropriate to the learner's needs and if the learner is confident in its use, can use it effectively and if it reflects his / her normal way of working. The learner should be consulted before a decision is taken whether the use of ICT is an appropriate adjustment.
- The use of the computer should not create a misleading impression of the learner's attainment or confer an unfair advantage over other learners.
- The Centre should ensure that workstations are adapted for the needs of the learner, and that enabling technologies, (for example screen reading software, coloured background, adapted keyboard, large tracker ball mouse, sticky keys) are available.
- Where it is apparent that assessment objectives cannot be met fully if a computer is used, the Centre should suggest alternative arrangements.

4. Dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries

The use of any of the above type of dictionaries can be useful for checking the spelling of words or finding the meaning of words and phrases.

The use of bilingual dictionaries and bilingual translation dictionaries (including BSL/English dictionaries/glossaries) can be allowed in all vocational assessments unless its use is expressly forbidden by the assessment requirements.

For timed assessments, if the Centre is satisfied that the learner can cope with the subject content, but the learner's knowledge and comprehension of English, Welsh or Irish (Gaelige) impairs their ability to complete the assessment within the normal time allocated, an additional allowance of extra time may be permitted.

Please note that most examinations and externally set assessments will state quite clearly on the assessment paper that an English dictionary is allowed, if this is the case for that particular qualification.

However, it is often less obvious if a bi-lingual or translation dictionary is allowed. Centres are advised to read the Qualification Specification to see if this is allowed. However, when English is not a first language, it is likely that extra time could be given, depending on the Qualification Specification and knowledge/skills being assessed.

4.1 Will this work for your learner?

- Does the qualification specification or skills standards prohibit the use of a dictionary or bi-lingual dictionary?
- Will the use of a dictionary give the learner an unfair advantage compared to other learners?

If the answers to the above questions are 'No', it is likely to be an acceptable Reasonable Adjustment.

- Is this the learner's normal way of working?

The answer here should always be 'Yes' for this to be an acceptable reasonable adjustment.

4.2 Case Studies

4.2.1 Case Study One

Jane is working towards level one Functional Skills English skills and her spelling is weak. The centre staff would like for her to use a dictionary to aid her spelling skills. They would like to know if a reasonable adjustment can be made.

Response: all Functional Skills English assessments at all levels state that dictionaries can be used.

Therefore, no reasonable adjustment is required. Using a dictionary to check spellings is a functional way of working and therefore acceptable within a functional skills assessment.

Follow on question: can dictionaries also be used in functional skills ICT and mathematics?

Response: Yes, they can be used and this is indicated on the assessments papers.

4.2.2 Case Study Two

Chen is working towards functional skills English at level one and his first language is Chinese. Although his English comprehension is good, he has often found that some typically English phrases have proved a challenge when completing sample assessment papers. Words and phrases such as 'trinkets', 'going rate' and 'dry pitch' from a car boot themed paper really challenged his understanding of the text. His centre has requested the use of a bilingual dictionary for the externally set assessment.

Response: A Reasonable Adjustment request will need to be submitted to NOCN for the use of a bilingual dictionary for an assessment of English language skills. Dependent on how much the learner may need to utilise the dictionary and whether the need for the dictionary indicates that the learner is working above their current abilities. After further discussion with the centre, it was decided that Chen could use a bilingual dictionary as it was only for the odd word or phrase. The Centre submitted

their request to NOCN as well as a request for additional time to allow Chen time to look up words or phrases.

Things to consider:

- The Centre should check the dictionaries used by the learner to make sure they do not contain notes that would give the learner an unfair advantage.
- Where permission is given to use electronic dictionaries, the Centre must check that the equipment does not contain additional functionality that will give the learner an unfair advantage. If such functionality is present, it must be disabled or the equipment disallowed.

5. Extra Time and Rest Breaks

5.1 Extra Time

Where assessment activities are time constrained, a learner may be allowed extra time during an assessment if they have a condition which affects the speed of processing. The amount of extra time allowed should accurately reflect the extent to which the completion of the assessment will be affected by the learner's difficulty. 'Unlimited' extra time will not be allowed. It is the Centre's responsibility to specify the amount of extra time the learner will need, using the extra time required during formative assessments in the Centre as a guide.

5.2 Supervised Rest Breaks

Supervised rest breaks may be taken either in or outside the assessment room. The duration of the breaks will not be deducted from the overall assessment time. The Centre must be aware that, during the supervised rest breaks, the learner is still under assessment conditions and that the usual regulations governing conduct of assessments will apply during this time.

Rest breaks are not applicable where speed or time is a component of what is being assessed, although, if there is a natural break in the assessment, i.e. between tasks, supervised rest breaks can be allowed.

5.3 Will this work for your learner?

- Does the qualification specification or skills standards prohibit the use of extra time?
- Will this adjustment give the learner an unfair advantage compared to other learners?

If the answers to the above questions are 'No', it is likely to be an acceptable Reasonable Adjustment.

- Is this the learner's normal way of working?

The answer here should always be 'Yes' for this to be an acceptable reasonable adjustment.

5.2 Case Studies

5.2.1 Case Study One

Kayleigh has dyslexia and this has always impacted on her processing time and she regularly needs extra time to complete written work or work requiring lots of reading. Although she does not have formal diagnosis from an Educational Psychologist, she has completed a dyslexia screening with a dyslexia specialist teacher and found to require extra time to complete work.

The staff working with Kayleigh have found that she has been able to gain good marks when working on sample papers when she has 25% extra time. She does not need a reader to support her to achieve this.

Response: This extra time is likely to be allowed after submitting a Request for Reasonable Adjustment to NOCN as the centre have evidence of Kayleigh's dyslexia and history of how this impacts on her learning and assessment.

5.2.2 Case Study Two

Karl has a diagnosis of Dystonia. One of the effects of this is cramping of the hands which makes writing difficult. The centre is requesting a 100% increase in time for Karl to complete his assessment.

Response: As the request for extra time seems excessive, further dialogue with the centre indicates that supervised rest breaks would really help this learner. The outcome is: 50% extra time is given to complete the assessment and supervised rest breaks allowed when Karl requests them.

The supervised rest breaks are not deducted from the overall assessment time. This allows the learner to have breaks that are suitable for his needs and reduce the added pressure of completing in the time frame.

Things to consider:

- The amount of extra time allowed should accurately reflect the extent to which the completion of the assessment will be affected by the learner's difficulty. 'Unlimited' extra time will not be allowed.
- It is the Centre's responsibility to specify the amount of extra time the learner will need, using the extra time required during formative assessments in the Centre as a guide.
- Extra time will not be allowed for computer based assessments testing the time in which a skill is performed, such as keyboarding speed tests.
- Extra time for online assessments will have to be customised on the system for each learner. In these cases the Centre is advised to contact NOCN for further assistance, where necessary.
- The Centre should be satisfied that the learner can cope with the content of the qualification and that the learner is medically fit to undertake the extended assessment.
- Extra time will not be allowed in practical activities where the timing is a crucial part of the assessment or in group activities where the learner's performance will be assessed in conjunction with others.

- During supervised rest breaks the learner is still under assessment conditions and that the usual regulations governing conduct of assessments will apply.

6. Use of a Sign Language Interpreter (BSL or SSE)

A Sign Language Interpreter is a person who presents the questions in an assessment in sign language, without changing the meaning, adding additional information or explaining what the question requires. A Sign Language Interpreter can be used for hearing-impaired learners for whom this is their normal way of working.

British Sign Language (BSL) has its own grammatical structure and syntax, and, as a language, it is not dependant nor is it strongly related to spoken English.

Any alternative language cannot be used as a reasonable adjustment, where specific skills in a language are being assessed. This means that British Sign Language (BSL) and other languages such as Irish Sign Language are prohibited in an assessment of, for example, English or French, or Speaking, Listening and Communication in functional skills English.

Assessment material can be presented to the learner using BSL as long as the skills being assessed are not reading or listening skills. A BSL version of assessment material may be provided on videotape instead of (or in addition to) the assessment material in written English

Sign Supported English (SSE) is another form of sign language used in Britain. SSE is not a language in itself as it uses the same signs as BSL but they are used in the same order as spoken English. SSE is used to support spoken English, especially by hearing impaired people who mix mainly with hearing people.

6.1 Will British Sign Language (BSL) or Sign Supported English (SSE) work for your learner?

- Does the qualification specification or skills standards prohibit the use of an alternative language?
- Does the specification assess language skills?

If the answers to the above questions are 'No', it is likely to be an acceptable Reasonable Adjustment.

- Will this adjustment give the learner an unfair advantage compared to other learners?

The answer here should be 'No'

- Is this the learner's normal way of working?

The answer here should always be 'Yes' for this to be an acceptable reasonable adjustment.

6.1 Case Studies

6.1.1 Case Study One

Sam has an apprenticeship in Animal Care. Sam is profoundly deaf and has been since birth and she uses a range of methods to communicate with others. However, she uses British Sign Language (BSL) as her main form of communication. This has impacted on her reading skills and she has very little verbal communication skill. The centre is requesting the following reasonable adjustments:

That BSL be used to translate the written assignments given to the learners on this course so that Sam can understand more clearly the requirements of each unit. She can write in a comparatively simplistic way and so may need to have some of her answers translated from BSL to be transcribed for her assessor to mark. This is not a time constrained assessment and most of this assessment will take place in the work place for practical units and in class for the knowledge based assessments. Which qualification is Sam taking?

Response: this reasonable adjustment is likely to be agreed as the assessment is not for language based skills, nor is it assessing her reading skills. It is also her usual way of working and there is history of her working in this way since the beginning of her course and in previous educational settings.

Follow up question:

As the above is now agreed, can Sam use BSL for her unit for Communication Skills?

Response: No, a reasonable adjustment is not only learner specific, but it is specific to the type of assessment too. Please see notes at the top of this appendix as to why BSL is not a permitted reasonable adjustment for communication skills assessment. Advice should be sought from NOCN or their delivery partners for this assessment and reasonable adjustments to be made. It may be that in exceptional circumstances an exemption can be made.

6.2.2 Case Study Two

Ali is a learner working towards an English language qualification. He has already achieved the writing and reading components of this qualification. Ali is hearing impaired and this impacts on his ability to speak and listen. He usually works with a sign language interpreter in college and on work placement. A Sign Supported English method is used and Ali works well in this way alongside his peers. The centre is requesting that a reasonable adjustment be agreed to enable Ali to achieve his communication skills qualification.

Response: this is likely to be agreed as this follows closely with the Ofqual guidelines on reasonable adjustment and the use of SSE as a method of enabling communication.

Things to consider:

- It is the centre's responsibility to arrange for a sign language interpreter.
- Extra time may also be requested in some circumstances to accommodate the time taking for interpretation within time constrained assessments.
- Assessment may need to happen separately from others in the group if BSL or SSE interpretation is taking place.

- Language modified assessment material can be requested for learners who have BSL as their first language.
- If assessment material requires 'modified language' adaptation, then NOCN or the regional delivery partners must be informed as soon as this need is recognised for timescales to be agreed.