

Regulations Regarding the Use of Reasonable Adjustments ESOL International

Here are some examples of learner needs that may be eligible for adjustments to assessments.

This list is not exhaustive and it should be noted that some learner needs will fall within more than one of the categories set out in this document.

Communication and Interaction Needs

A learner with communication and interaction difficulties may have problems with reading or writing, the effects of which could be reduced through the use of a reader, word processor, scribe, BSL/English interpreter, screen reading software or voice activated software. They may also benefit from extra time during assessments that are time-constrained to allow them to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

Cognition and Learning Needs

A learner with learning difficulties and difficulties with comprehension may benefit from extra time in time-constrained examinations. They may also need assistance with reading and writing.

Sensory and Physical Needs

A learner may need to have assessment material modified for hearing impairment and visual impairment. They may also need to use a BSL/English interpreter, practical assistant, reader and scribe. In addition they may benefit from the use of assistive technology and extra time to complete assessments.

Behavioural, Emotional and Social Needs

The learner may benefit from supervised rest breaks and separate accommodation, either within the Centre or at an alternative venue. A learner with attention difficulties may need the use of a prompter.

Learners for Whom English is an Additional Language

This does not apply in English Language qualifications such as ESOL International.

Particular Impairment

The learner will be eligible for Reasonable Adjustments if their performance during an assessment is likely to be substantially affected by a particular impairment. Many of these learners will be defined as being disabled under the Equality Act.

An adjustment to assessment should only be considered where the difficulty experienced places the learner at a disadvantage, in comparison with persons who are not disabled.

Implementing Reasonable Adjustments

The following sections provide guidance for Centres on how various types of Reasonable Adjustments should be implemented. Centres should note that:

- Not all the adjustments to assessments described below will be reasonable, permissible or practical in particular situations.
- The learner may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all qualifications. Some learners may need a single adjustment; others may require a combination of several adjustments;
- Adjustments to assessments will mostly be needed for assessments which are taken under constrained/examination conditions.

The list of Reasonable Adjustments is organised under the following headings:

1. Changes to assessment conditions.
2. Use of mechanical, electronic and technological aids.
3. Modifications to presentation of assessment material.
4. Alternative ways of presenting responses.
5. Use of access facilitators.

1 Changes to Assessment Conditions

1a Extra time

Where assessment activities are time constrained, a learner may be allowed extra time during an assessment if he/she has a condition which affects the speed of processing. In the case of externally set and externally marked assessments or qualifications the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

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 as a guide the extra time required during formative assessments in the Centre.

1b Supervised rest breaks

Where assessment activities are time constrained, a learner may, if there is a demonstrated need, be allowed supervised rest breaks during an examination. In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

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

1c Change in the organisation of the examination room

Minor changes to the organisation of the examination room may benefit some learners with autistic spectrum disorder, with visual or hearing impairment or with physical difficulties. In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

Visually impaired learners may benefit from sitting near a window so that they have good lighting.

Deaf learners may benefit from sitting near the front of the room and in good light.

Some learners may benefit from using chairs with arm rests or adjustable heights.

Autistic learners may benefit from having visual/noise stimuli, such as a ticking clock, removed from the room.

1d Separate accommodation within the Centre

It may be necessary to accommodate the learner separately if they are using readers, scribes, or word processing equipment that may disturb other learners.

1e Taking the examination at an alternative venue

In certain circumstances the learner may be permitted to take an examination at an alternative venue, for example at home or in hospital. In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance. The Centre should ensure that the learner is medically fit to take the examination.

2 Use of Mechanical, Electronic and Technological Aids

Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles, CCTV and OCR scanners:

- The Centre should ensure that the learner has had sufficient practice in the use of these aids and that any electronic aids are in good working order.
- For assessments taken under examination conditions, the learner should be accommodated separately with separate invigilation if the use of any of these aids will disturb other learners. In these cases the invigilator must be fully informed of the learner's support.

A Centre should contact NOCN if they are unclear about whether any new technology will unfairly advantage the learner or invalidate the examination requirements. In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

2a Use of assistive technology, for example speech/screen reading software and voice activated software

Some learners may benefit from the use of software that reads the examination material to them and records their spoken responses.

- Speech software is not allowed for qualifications where reading is the competence being assessed. Centres should check the qualification guide or contact NOCN for further guidance.
- The Centre must ensure that the use of assistive technology will not invalidate the examination requirements or give the learner an unfair advantage. Due to the rapid development of such technology, the Centre should seek advice from NOCN if the implications of using certain kinds of assistive technology are unclear.

In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

2b Use of bilingual dictionaries or bilingual translation dictionaries (manual or electronic)

The use of bilingual dictionaries and bilingual translation dictionaries (including BSL/English dictionaries/glossaries) is not allowed in ESOL International qualifications.

3 Modifications to the Presentation of the Assessment Material

3a Assessment material in enlarged format

For paper-based examinations

Enlargements for paper-based examinations may be used. This includes:

- Unmodified enlarged papers where the standard paper is photocopied from A4 to A3, thus enlarging the whole paper and retaining the original layout and visual presentation.

In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

Where the Centre is permitted to make the enlargements to externally set examination material, it must take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is enlarged. The learner may be penalised for any errors in his/her work that occur as a result of incomplete enlargement of the material.

Centres should note that examination material containing scale diagrams cannot be enlarged.

3b Examination material in Braille

Examination material may be provided in Braille for a blind or visually impaired learner.

The material will be modified to remove any visual content prior to brailleing.

Diagrams in the examination material can be produced as tactile diagrams.

In the case of externally set examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

If Braille examination material has been ordered, but is no longer required, the Centre should inform NOCN immediately as any costs incurred in producing such material may be passed to the Centre.

Braille is not always an appropriate adjustment for the learner, not all blind people are fluent in Braille.

3c Language modified assessment material

Technical language may not be modified. The modified version of the examination material must contain the same questions as the standard version and the same answers will be expected from the learner.

In listening tests, a transcript of the test may be provided, which can be read to the learner by a live speaker. This will enable the learner to lip-read the text.

In the case of externally set examinations, the Centre will normally have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance

3d Assessment material on coloured paper

Where the Centre is permitted to photocopy externally set examination material onto coloured paper, it should take responsibility for the security of the assessment material and for ensuring that the entire document is copied.

The learner may be penalised for any errors in his / her script which occur as a result of incomplete copying of the document.

3e Assessment material in audio format

Where there is evidence of need, assessment material may be provided in audio format. This facility is not available if reading is the competence being assessed or if the assessment material has visual content that is crucial to the understanding of the questions, such as illustrations, tables, diagrams or sketches.

In the case of externally set examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

4 Alternative Ways of Presenting Learner Responses

A learner should be provided with the means to present their responses by the method most appropriate and familiar to them, as long as the use of methods will not invalidate the requirements of the assessment. The use of ICT is generally perceived to have a positive impact on helping learners to access assessment. The guidance given below relates to the use of ICT in written assessments.

4a Use of ICT to present responses

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.

For many learners with additional support needs, computers provide an effective means of independent communication. Consideration should be given to whether the learner can meet the assessment criteria using a computer.

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. In the case of externally set examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

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.

4b Spoken responses using electronic recording devices, for example CD Roms, memory sticks, audio cassettes

Where there is evidence of need, the learner may be permitted to record their responses electronically.

In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

This arrangement will only be available for assessments where there is no requirement for the learner to produce visual material or for Writing examinations.

Where the learner's responses are recorded electronically, the Centre should provide an authenticated transcript of the learner's responses.

It will be the Centre's responsibility to ensure that the transcript is an accurate reflection of the learner's responses and to keep this and the original recording as a record of the assessment.

4c Responses in Braille

Where there is evidence of need, a learner may be permitted to present their responses in Braille.

In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

In these cases the Centre should provide an authenticated transcript of the learner's responses.

It will be the Centre's responsibility to ensure that the transcript is an accurate reflection of the learner's responses and to keep the transcript for their records.

5 Use of Access Facilitators

5a Reader

A reader is a person who, when requested, will read to the learner all or part of the assessment material and the learner's written responses.

Where there is evidence of need a reader may be allowed in all assessments where reading or understanding of the written word is not an assessment requirement or the competence being assessed.

The Centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a reader will be an effective arrangement. The learner may be more comfortable with:

- The use of speech/screen reading software that reads out the material without decoding or interpreting it.
- Accessing the assessment material in electronic format, in Braille or through sign language.

The Centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a reader.

In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

The reader should not normally be the learner's own tutor or assessor, except in circumstances where it is necessary to do so. In such cases, NOCN should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a reader.

The Centre should select the reader on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the learner. The reader should be able to read accurately and at a reasonable rate and should have sufficient knowledge of the subject to read technical terms accurately.

A learner should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the reader and should have used this arrangement during the training programme leading up to the assessment.

The Centre must ensure that the learner and reader are clear about the limitations of the reader's role.

A separate invigilator must be present when a reader is used to ensure that the guidance regarding readers is followed.

The Centre must give the reader clear instructions regarding what they are required to do and what they may and may not do during the assessment. These instructions must also be given to the invigilator.

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

The learner using a reader must be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other learners.

Where a learner is not eligible for the use of a reader, it may be helpful for the learner to read the questions aloud. In these circumstances the learner must be accommodated in a separate room so that other learners are not disturbed. Separate invigilation must be arranged in these cases. The invigilator may not correct the reading of the learner.

The reader is responsible to, and should be approved by the Head of Centre or the centre staff member with delegated responsibility.

The reader:

- Should read only as requested by the learner. The learner may choose to read some parts of the assessment him/herself.
- Should read accurately. If the reader is working with a deaf or hearing impaired learner, the reader should articulate clearly.
- Must only read the exact wording (instructions and questions), and not give meanings of words, rephrase or interpret anything.
- Should repeat instructions and questions on the paper only when specifically requested to do so by the learner.
- May not consult a dictionary, as this is not allowed in ESOL International Qualifications.
- Should read, as often as requested, the answers already recorded, but may not act as proof-reader.
- Must not advise the learner regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which the questions should be answered.

- May enable a visually impaired learner to identify which piece of visual material relates to which question, but must neither give factual help to the learner nor offer any suggestion
- Is permitted to help a visually impaired learner using diagrams, graphs and tables to obtain the information that the print/amended print copy would give to a sighted learner
- Should, if requested, give a visually impaired learner the spelling of a word which appears on the paper, but otherwise spellings must not be given.
- Should refer any problems during the assessment to the invigilator.

5b Scribe (sometimes called amanuensis)

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 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.

In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

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.

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, and have sufficient knowledge of the subject to be able to record technical terms correctly.

The Centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a scribe.

A scribe should not normally be the learner's own tutor or assessor, except when it is necessary to do so. In such cases, NOCN should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a scribe.

A learner should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the scribe and used this arrangement during their learning programme.

The Centre must ensure that the learner and scribe are clear about the limitations of the scribe's role.

The Centre must give the scribe clear instructions regarding what he/she is required to do/what he/she is not allowed to do during the assessment. These instructions must also be given to the invigilator.

The learner using a scribe must be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other learners.

A separate invigilator must be present when a scribe is used to ensure that the guidance regarding scribes is followed.

The scribe is responsible to and should be approved by the Head of Centre or the centre staff member with delegated responsibility.

During the assessment a scribe:

- Should check with the learner for which parts of the examination they wish to have their responses scribed. The learner may choose to write some responses him/herself.
- Must neither give factual help to the learner nor offer any suggestions.
- Must not advise the learner regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question or the order in which the questions should be answered.
- Must write down answers exactly as they are dictated. Where spelling accuracy and punctuation is being tested, the scribe must follow explicit instructions from the learner. The scribe may not take responsibility for spelling technical words.
- Must write a correction on a typescript or Braille sheet if requested to do so by the learner.
- May, at the learner's request, read back what has been written but no comment must be made about any part of the learner's response.
- Should immediately refer any problems in communication during the examination to the invigilator.

5c Prompter

A learner with severe attention problems may benefit from the use of a prompter in timed assessment situations to draw their attention back to the assessment task.

The Centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a prompter is an appropriate arrangement. In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

The Centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a prompter.

Where the problem is one of concentration, consideration should be given to allowing supervised rest breaks rather than a prompter.

A prompter should not normally be the learner's own tutor or assessor, except when it may be necessary to do so. In such cases the awarding body should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a prompter.

Prompters should be sufficiently familiar with the learner to recognise when his / her attention is no longer on the assessment task and that he or she is not, for example, looking away from the paper whilst thinking.

Under no circumstances may the prompter draw the attention of the learner to part of the question paper or the learner's answer paper.

The prompter should sit near enough to be able to observe the learner and draw his / her attention back to the task. This should, however, be organised as unobtrusively as possible. The learner's attention may be drawn back to the task using a light tap on the learner's arm or shoulder or, alternatively, on the desk (though not in a way that may be taken to indicate any part of the examination question paper). Verbal prompting should not normally be used. The method used by the prompter to bring back the learner's attention should be agreed before the assessment between the learner and the prompter and should be acceptable to the Centre. It should be noted that some learners with emotional and behavioural sensitivity/vulnerability and/or mental health conditions may not be comfortable with a 'light tap' prompt. A form of verbal prompting should be considered and agreed for these learners.

In the case of an epileptic learner where the problem is one of temporary absencing, the normal procedure to help that learner will be allowed.

The Centre must ensure that the learner and prompter are clear about the limitations of the prompter's role.

The Centre must give the prompter clear instructions regarding what they are required to do and what they may and may not do during the examination. These instructions must also be given to the invigilator.

The Centre should ensure that the learner and the prompter have had experience of working together.

A separate invigilator must be present when a prompter is used to ensure that the guidance regarding prompters is followed. The invigilator must be fully informed of the strategies used to regain the learner's attention.

The prompter is responsible to and should be approved by the Head of Centre or the centre staff member with delegated responsibility.

During an examination a prompter:

- Should draw the learner's attention back to the task in hand.
- Should use the method of prompting agreed with the learner.
- Must not give factual help to the learner or offer any suggestions.
- Must not advise the learner regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question or the order in which the questions should be done.
- Should be prepared for periods of inactivity during the examination, but must remain vigilant.
- Should immediately refer any problems during the examination to the invigilator.

5d Practical assistant

A practical assistant is a person who, during an examination, carries out practical tasks at the instruction of the learner. Examples of the kinds of tasks with which the practical assistant may assist are, turning the pages of the question paper or, guiding a learner using a Braille paper to the correct page they need.

The Centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a practical assistant is an appropriate arrangement.

In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

The Centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a practical assistant.

The practical assistant should be familiar with the requirements of the examination, but should not normally be the learner's own teacher/tutor/assessor except when it is necessary to do so. In such cases, the awarding body should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a practical assistant.

A practical assistant should be a person who is able to ensure the safety of the learner and carry out his/her instructions accurately.

The Centre must prepare clear written instructions for the practical assistant on the assistance they are able to give the learner. A copy of these instructions must also be given to the invigilator and learner. The Centre should note that the practical assistant may not perform tasks for which the learner will receive credit.

A learner using a practical assistant may need to be accommodated separately from other learners. In these cases a separate invigilator must be present to ensure that the guidance regarding practical assistants is followed.

A practical assistant:

- Must follow the instructions prepared by the Centre on the level and kind of assistance that can be given to the learner.
- Must ensure the safety of the learner and those around him / her.
- Must not give factual help to the learner or offer any suggestions.
- Must not advise the learner which questions to do, when to move on to the next question or the order in which the questions should be done.
- Must carry out instructions exactly as they are given unless to do so would cause a hazard. If the practical assistant does not understand the learner's instructions, he/she may ask for clarification but must not lead the learner in any way or attempt to interpret the learner's wishes; if incorrect or inadequate instructions are given by the learner this must be reflected in the outcome of the assessment.
- Should not expect to assist the learner throughout the entire examination (there may be parts of the assessment which the learner can do without help).
- Should immediately refer any problems during an examination to the invigilator/supervisor.

5e Transcriber

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 Braille or in BSL.

The transcriber 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).

The Centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a transcript will be an effective arrangement. In the case of externally set and externally marked examinations, the Centre will have to apply to NOCN 45 working days in advance.

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

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 Centre should not inform the assessor of the reason why a transcript was necessary.

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 language examinations any errors, including those of spelling, punctuation and grammar, must be transcribed as given by the learner and must not be corrected.
- 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.

MALPRACTICE

A Centre should note that failure to comply with the guidance regarding adjustments to examinations set out by NOCN has the potential to constitute malpractice and may lead NOCN to withhold the learner's result. Failure to comply is defined as any or all of the following:

- Putting in place arrangements without seeking prior approval from NOCN, where this is required.
- Exceeding the allowances agreed with NOCN.
- Agreeing delegated adjustments that are not supported by evidence;
- Failing to maintain records of Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations for audit
- Failing to report delegated adjustments to NOCN, where this is required.