



PART OF **nocn** GROUP



NOCN Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy and Procedure

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1. Scope

- 1.01 This policy and procedure outlines the requirements for the consideration and implementation of Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations for learners and apprentices completing a NOCN assessment.
- 1.02 This policy applies to all NOCN approved centres and training providers, including those who are based or work internationally. For international centres, although the specific references to UK legislation are not applicable, the required practices outlined in this document still apply.
- 1.03 The intended audience for this document is:
- a) NOCN Directors and Board of Trustees.
 - b) NOCN core, sub-contracted and associate staff, including External Quality Assurers (EQAs) and End Point Assessors (EPAs).
 - c) All staff of NOCN Delivery Partners associated with NOCN provision.
 - d) All staff in NOCN approved/partner centres and training providers.
 - e) Learners registered on NOCN products.
 - f) Apprentices completing End Point Assessments.
 - g) Qualification¹, assessment and industry Regulators.

2. Purpose

- 2.01 The purpose of this document is to:
- a) Outline NOCN's policy regarding Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations.
 - b) Provide guidance and support on the principles of Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations.
 - c) Provide information on the implementation of Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations, including when and how to request approval from NOCN.
 - d) Satisfy the Conditions of Recognition regarding the use of Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations by the various Qualification Regulators.

3. Definitions

- 3.01 A *Reasonable Adjustment* is an action taken to ensure equal access to an assessment. Under the Equality Act 2010, education and training providers (including Awarding Organisations) have a duty to make Reasonable Adjustments for learners and apprentices who have a disability or difficulty. This is to ensure that they are not at a substantial disadvantage in accessing an assessment to those who do not have a disability or difficulty. Examples of a Reasonable Adjustment include, but are not limited to:
- a) Amending usual assessment arrangements, for example allowing extra time.
 - b) Adapting the format of assessment materials, such as providing materials in Braille.
 - c) Providing assistance during an assessment, such as a sign language interpreter.
 - d) Re-organising the assessment room, such as providing a learner or apprentice with a separate room for an assessment away from other learners or apprentices.
 - e) Changing the assessment method, for example from a written to a speaking assessment.
 - f) Using assistive technology, such as screen-reading or voice activated software.

¹ Ofqual in England; Qualification Wales; CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland or successor bodies.

- 3.02 A *Special Consideration* is an access arrangement taken where a learner or apprentice's performance in completing an assessment is or would be affected by unforeseen circumstances which are out of their control. This includes where a learner or apprentice may be suffering from a temporary illness or condition. A Special Consideration can be requested, approved and applied both before and after an assessment has taken place.

4. Regulation and Responsibilities

I. Regulation

- 4.01 The Equality Act 2010 requires employers, centres, training providers and Awarding Organisations to make Reasonable Adjustments. This is to ensure that assessment arrangements are appropriate to prevent learners and apprentices who are disabled or who have physical or mental health conditions from having a disadvantage in completing their assessment in comparison to learners who do not. For this reason, staff within both NOCN and its approved centres/training providers who are responsible for the consideration, approval and application of Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations must be aware of their responsibilities under Equalities Law, as well as ensuring that they maintain up-to-date knowledge of any changes.
- 4.02 The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability includes substantial and long-term sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, mental health difficulties and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes and cancer.
- 4.03 Centres and training providers must also consider learners/apprentices with Special Educational Needs (SEN). An individual may have SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special education provision to be made for them, as defined in the 'SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years'. Individuals with a disability do not necessarily have SEN, however, there is a significant overlap between disabled people and those with SEN.
- 4.04 The Conditions of Recognition, set out by the various Qualification Regulators within the UK, state that Awarding Organisations must take all reasonable steps to remove any disadvantage to learners and apprentices in accessing an assessment which is unjustifiable, and to maintain records of any disadvantage which it believes is justifiable, alongside the reasons why.

II. NOCN Responsibilities

- 4.05 NOCN has a responsibility to ensure that the process of assessment is robust and fair and allows each individual learner and apprentice to show what they know and what they can do, without circumventing the assessment criteria or invalidating the requirements of the assessment, or the relevant assessment plan or strategy.
- 4.06 Although NOCN has a duty to ensure that the integrity of its products is maintained at all times, NOCN, its Delivery Partners and its approved centres/training providers have a duty to ensure that the rights of learners in accessing assessments are safeguarded, wherever this is possible, by allowing them to do this in a way which is most appropriate to their individual needs.
- 4.07 Although not covered by the Qualification Regulators Conditions, NOCN extends its policy and procedures regarding Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations to also include its non-regulated products, such as its Endorsed Programmes and Assured Courses.

III. Centre/Training Provider Responsibilities

- 4.08 As a requirement of using NOCN's services, centres and training providers must adhere to the relevant legislation regarding Reasonable Adjustments as well as to follow this policy and procedure and any associated documentation. Therefore, relevant staff members must ensure they have a thorough understanding of NOCN's requirements in this area.
- 4.09 Generally, centres and training providers should take all reasonable steps to promote an inclusive atmosphere that provides equality of access to learners and apprentices who may be placed at a disadvantage due to a disability or difficulty. This includes ensuring the accessibility of training and assessment venues, as far as possible, as well as facilitating engagement with the training and assessment itself. Centres and training providers must take all possible and practical steps to ensure that there is an avenue for learners and apprentices to disclose their individual learning needs, which must be reviewed, to determine whether a Reasonable Adjustment may be required.
- 4.10 As a requirement to gain Centre approval to deliver regulated qualifications, centres must have their own Access to Fair Assessment Policy. NOCN has produced guidance on what this policy should contain within the NOCN Quality Assurance Manual. Centres must ensure that all staff members who advise or guide potential learners are aware of the Centre's Access to Fair Assessment Policy. Centre staff must have had training to make them aware of the impact of a learning difficulty or disability in relation to a learner accessing an assessment and where a Reasonable Adjustment may be required. As part of its Centre monitoring policy, NOCN will review the appropriateness of Centre policies and practices to ensure that consideration and implementation of Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations are appropriate.
- 4.11 In all cases where a Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration is being considered, full records must be kept by the Centre/Training Provider of the application and supporting evidence, for audit, internal quality assurance and external quality assurance purposes. A log of all Reasonable Adjustment/Special Consideration applications must be stored for a period of at least 7 years from the learner/apprentice's induction date. The application itself, alongside all supporting evidence, must be retained for a period of at least 3 years. NOCN will adhere to the same timescales regarding storage of evidence.
- 4.12 Centres and training providers must note that they will usually be responsible for any charges/materials related to the application and implementation of a Reasonable Adjustment, especially where they are delivering the assessment themselves. Where NOCN is required or is asked to implement an adjustment on behalf of the Centre/Training Provider, the cost for this will be discussed and may be added onto the relevant registration fee where NOCN deems this to be an unreasonable cost. In line with the Equality Act 2010, payment must not be sought from a learner or apprentice for an application or implementation of a Reasonable Adjustment.

IV. Health and Safety

- 4.13 There are no circumstances where the health and safety of a learner or apprentice should be compromised for training or assessment and therefore centres and training providers must ensure that all relevant health and safety legislation is followed at all times. Appropriate risk assessments must be carried out prior to the delivery of any training or assessment to identify and mitigate any risks.
- 4.14 Where there are concerns that a learner or apprentice's disability or difficulty may have health and safety implications for themselves or others, a suitably qualified staff member must carry

out a tailored risk assessment related to the particular circumstances. The risk assessment must identify the risks associated with the particular training or assessment activity but must also take account of any Reasonable Adjustments or Special Considerations which may be able to be put in place to remove or reduce the risk. Where a risk assessment reveals that it is not safe for a learner or apprentice to fulfil the requirements of an assessment, alternative assessment arrangements must be made, where product requirements allow this.

- 4.15 Assumptions must not be made about a disability or difficulty posing a health and safety risk, but the health and safety of all learners and apprentices must always be of paramount importance. Centres and training providers must contact NOCN to discuss individual cases where further clarification is necessary.

5. Reasonable Adjustment Principles and Procedure

I. General Principles

- 5.01 The following principles must be followed when reviewing whether a Reasonable Adjustment is required and is appropriate for a learner/apprentice. A Reasonable Adjustment must, in relation to an individual learner or apprentice:

- a) Be based on their individual needs.
- b) Mirror the types of adjustments/additional support that they have received whilst receiving training.
- c) Enable them to produce evidence of equal vigour to meet the specified assessment criteria, regardless of process or method used.
- d) Not provide an unfair advantage or disadvantage in comparison to others completing the same assessment.
- e) Not cause, or create the potential of, an instance of malpractice or maladministration.
- f) Be practical in relation to implementation during an assessment.
- g) Not be prohibited by, or does not invalidate, NOCN assessment requirements.
- h) Be in place and have had the required approval (either within the Centre or by NOCN dependent on the assessment and adjustment type) in writing before the assessment takes place.
- i) Allow the evidence generated during the subsequent assessment to be successfully internally quality assured by the Centre/externally quality assured by NOCN or assessed by NOCN.

- 5.02 All Reasonable Adjustments must be considered through a formal, standardised process. Dependent on the type of assessment and the adjustment being requested will determine whether approval is required from NOCN for its implementation. NOCN has produced a permissions table which outlines which types of adjustments require NOCN approval, and which can be at the discretion of the Centre (see Appendix 1). All Reasonable Adjustments related to End Point Assessment must be approved by NOCN prior to implementation and therefore Training Providers cannot implement any adjustments without prior approval from NOCN.

- 5.03 It is important for centres and training providers to ensure that the individual learner/apprentice is involved in the process where a Reasonable Adjustment is being considered. The learner/apprentice must be aware of, and consent to, the submission of the application of the Reasonable Adjustment to NOCN, prior to it being made. This includes ensuring that the learner or apprentice is aware of the submission of any supporting evidence to NOCN to support the application and how this information will be used and stored by NOCN.

- 5.04 When considering whether an adjustment to assessment is appropriate, it is important to ensure that adjustments do not compensate for a lack of knowledge or skills. Although it may be possible to change the delivery or process of an assessment, competency standards must remain unchanged. As vocational qualifications may lead to employment, achievement of such qualifications must give a realistic indication to the potential employer of what the holder of the certificate can do.
- 5.05 Any adjustment to assessment must also not provide an unfair advantage or disadvantage to the learner/apprentice. The achievement of an assessment where an adjustment was in place must have the same credibility, not more or less, than achievement where no adjustments were in place.
- 5.06 Any adjustment to assessment must reflect the individual needs of the learner/apprentice and their normal way of working, providing this does not affect what is being assessed in any way. The learner/apprentice should have experience and practice in the use of the adjustment as they should have been exposed to this during their on programme/training stage.
- 5.07 A Centre/Training Provider should not assume that the same adjustment will be required by the learner/apprentice for all assessments. Different qualifications/assessment methods can make different demands on the learner/apprentice and therefore, it is important to consider how the specific assessment type will affect the learner's needs.
- 5.08 The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) have produced a matrix to support the consideration of appropriate adjustments in relation to the type of assessment being completed, found here: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/quality/end-point-assessment-reasonable-adjustments-guidance/>. However, it is important that centres/training providers use this matrix as a guide only. Consideration of adjustments must be completed on an individual learner/apprentice basis. In this vein, NOCN will review applications on a case-by-case basis and therefore applications for adjustments in line with the matrix will not be automatically deemed appropriate or be automatically approved.

II. Internally Set Assessments

- 5.09 The majority of NOCN assessments are internally set, such as a portfolio of evidence, a Centre-devised assessment or coursework. With these types of assessments, the Centre has flexibility in adapting assessment methodologies (as long as they still meet NOCN requirements) to allow a learner to meet the specified assessment criteria in any way that is valid.
- 5.10 Centres are advised to adopt a flexible approach in providing learners with alternative ways of accessing and completing assessment. The flexibility on internally set assessments allows a Centre to be responsive to an individual learner's needs and to choose an assessment method that will allow them to demonstrate attainment. A learner's varying needs must be identified, considered and recorded during the learner's induction and initial assessment with the Centre.
- 5.11 In designing and setting internally set assessments, the Centre's Internal Quality Assurer is responsible for carrying out the pre-verification of assessment tasks before their use. This activity should ensure that the assessment is valid and in line with NOCN requirements, as well as ensuring that the assessment activity is accessible to learners of varying needs.
- 5.12 Wherever relevant, differentiation of an assessment activity should be planned for any learner who may have differing needs to the rest of a cohort. For example, a written question and

answer task may be designed by the Centre to fulfil a knowledge-based assessment criteria, which may be adapted to a verbal question and answer assessment where a learner has low-level writing skills, where written skills are not being assessed as part of the assessment.

- 5.13 The learner must fulfil the demands of the assessment criteria consistently over a period of time, regardless of method used to obtain evidence. The assessment criteria must not be amended or omitted, although the actual assessment can pose questions to learners in a way which relates particularly to the learner's workplace, employer or circumstance, as long as the integrity of the assessment criteria is not compromised.
- 5.14 While Assessors, Internal Quality Assurers and External Quality Assurers usually prefer to see a portfolio made up of evidence which is varied, the Centre may be required to accept a more restricted variety of evidence as a means of enabling access. This must be determined on an individual learner basis through initial assessment and consideration of Reasonable Adjustment. The Centre is encouraged to discuss this with their Internal Quality Assurer and External Quality Assurer at an early stage.
- 5.15 Centres are advised to contact NOCN to discuss alternative assessment arrangements where they are unsure if they meet the above requirements.
- 5.16 In line with the NOCN Permissions Table (Appendix 1), Reasonable Adjustments for internally set assessments can be requested, approved and applied at the Centre's discretion, without the need for NOCN approval. A formal record of all Reasonable Adjustment applications must be kept for internal quality assurance and external quality assurance purposes.

III. Externally Set Assessments (Including EPA)

- 5.17 Externally set assessments can either be internally or externally assessed. Whether the assessment is internally or externally assessed will determine whether approval is required from NOCN to apply certain types of adjustments. All assessments related to EPA are externally assessed and therefore all applications in this area will require approval from NOCN.
- 5.18 Assessments which are externally set and internally assessed are devised by NOCN but are marked internally by Assessors within a Centre. Typical examples of this type of assessment are:
 - a) Entry Level Functional Skills assessments for English, ICT and Mathematics.
 - b) The Speaking, Listening and Communication component of Functional Skills English at Level 1 and Level 2.
 - c) Any qualification that has a 'benchmark' assessment activity that a Centre may be planning to use. The benchmark assessment will be created and provided by NOCN.
- 5.19 Assessments which are externally set and assessed are those that are devised and marked by NOCN. This covers both paper-based and online assessments, such as End Point Assessments, online knowledge tests and Functional Skills Mathematics, Reading and Writing assessments at Level 1 and Level 2.
- 5.20 In all cases where an assessment is externally set by NOCN, centres and training providers must ensure that, as standard, assessments are sat and assessed in line with NOCN requirements. In these assessments, the method of assessment is rigidly determined and

therefore there may be a greater need for adjustments to standard assessment arrangements to provide access to some learners/apprentices.

- 5.21 Assessments that are undertaken for Functional Skills Qualifications at Entry Level can be carried out in non-examination conditions, the assessment time however, must be adhered to and the assessment must be kept securely until such time that the assessment time has been achieved and the assessment completed before being submitted for IQA and EQA purposes. All assessment documentation must be retained and stored in line with NOCN requirements.

IV. Supporting Evidence

- 5.22 Any application for a Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration must be supported by valid and sufficient evidence. In order to ensure that any adjustment to assessment will only provide the learner/apprentice with the necessary assistance without giving them an unfair advantage over others, the Centre/Training Provider must be clear about the extent to which the learner/apprentice is affected by the disability or difficulty.

- 5.23 Where the Centre/Training Provider can verify evidence of the disability or difficulty and where the implications are clear, such as for physical difficulties, or a hearing/sight impairment, the Centre/Training Provider does not need to provide further evidence.

- 5.24 Where the implications of the difficulty are more complex or not visible, such as for learning or mental health difficulties, the Centre/Training Provider is required to provide additional evidence of the effect of the impairment on the learner/apprentice's performance in completing the assessment. Any of the following types of evidence would be acceptable. The Centre/Training Provider should decide which of these will best assist understanding of the learner/apprentice's situation:

- a) Evidence of assessment of the learner/apprentice's needs made by an appropriate and specialised individual with responsibility in this area, such as learning support staff, teaching staff, Tutor/Trainers, Assessors and other specialist staff. Information from previous educational institutions attended may also be included.
- b) History of provision within the Centre/Training Provider. This should include information about the support received during the learning or training programme and during formative assessments. Evidence of the way in which the learner/apprentice's needs are being met during the learning programme must be documented for audit purposes.
- c) Written evidence produced by independent, authoritative, specialists. This could take the form of medical, psychological or professional reports or assessments.

- 5.25 Centres/training providers may use the completion of a Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) in order to evidence the requirement for a Reasonable Adjustment. The completion of the test may be included as part of the Centre/Training Provider's initial assessment process in determining if and what adjustments to assessments are required.

- 5.26 A learner/apprentice with a Statement of Special Educational Need does not automatically qualify for a Reasonable Adjustment. It is the Centre/Training Provider's responsibility to ensure that all applications for Reasonable Adjustments are based on the individual needs of the learner/apprentice in relation to the individual assessment and that the evidence in support of the application is valid and sufficient.

5.27 It is important that full documentary evidence supporting an application for a Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration is provided. The evidence provided must show a need for an adjustment to be applied. Evidence must be reviewed and authorised as valid and sufficient for supporting an adjustment to assessment by a member of Centre/Training Provider staff with delegated authority, such as a Tutor or a staff member qualified in assessing Special Educational Needs.

V. Reasonable Adjustment Procedure

5.28 The type of Reasonable Adjustment being requested and the type of assessment in which the adjustment relates to will determine whether prior approval from NOCN is required prior to implementation. In all cases, the process for applying a Reasonable Adjustment should follow the below steps:

- a) Identify the adjustment – A member of staff with delegated authority, such as a Tutor or a staff member qualified in assessing Special Educational Needs, should identify the required adjustment for the learner/apprentice. The adjustment must meet the principles outlined in this policy.
- b) Gather evidence – Ensure that there is valid and sufficient evidence to support the adjustment.
- c) Agree adjustment – The adjustment must be agreed both with the learner/apprentice and any other relevant individuals, prior to it being requested or implemented.
- d) Complete request form – The NOCN Reasonable Adjustment Request Form must be fully completed - an individual form is required for each learner/apprentice.
- e) Check permission – Review the NOCN Permissions Table to determine whether the Reasonable Adjustment requires NOCN approval prior to its implementation, or whether it can be applied at the discretion of the Centre.

5.29 Where, according to the NOCN permissions table, a Reasonable Adjustment can be implemented *with Centre approval*:

- a) The completed form must be signed by the Head of Organisation, or Centre staff member with delegated authority to approve Reasonable Adjustments. This must be completed at least *5 working days* prior to the assessment taking place.
- b) The completed form must be stored alongside the learner's assessment evidence and be available for external quality assurance purposes. The form and supporting evidence must be provided to NOCN upon request.

5.30 Where, according to the NOCN Permissions Table, a Reasonable Adjustment *requires NOCN approval*:

- a) The completed form must be sent to epa-assurance@nocn.org.uk for applications related to End Point Assessment and assurance@nocn.org.uk (or Delivery Partner equivalent) for all other applications. In all cases, the application must be submitted at least *10 working days* prior to the date of the learner/apprentice's first assessment where the adjustment would apply.
- b) NOCN will review the application and provide its response within *5 working days* of receipt. The Centre/Training Provider must store a copy of NOCN's outcome alongside any generated internal assessment evidence.
- c) Where a learner is studying a course which is less than 10 working days in duration, the Centre must contact NOCN as soon as they establish an adjustment will be

required. NOCN will still require a completed form to be submitted and the adjustment cannot be carried out until NOCN approval has been provided.

- 5.31 In all cases, requests for Reasonable Adjustments must be thoroughly reviewed and a decision made dependent on the individual circumstances of the application. Where an adjustment is rejected, NOCN will provide a clear rationale for its decision and where appropriate, will provide alternative adjustments that may be offered.
- 5.32 An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves excessive or unreasonable costs, timescales or demands that could affect the security or integrity of an assessment. Other factors, such as the need to maintain competence standards and health and safety, will also be taken into consideration.
- 5.33 Where approved, the assessment produced by a learner/apprentice with a Reasonable Adjustment applied must be marked or assessed in the same way as work created by those without adjustments.

6. Special Consideration Principles and Procedure

I. General Principles

- 6.01 A Special Consideration is an adjustment to allow attainment to be demonstrated by a learner/apprentice who has been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury, indisposition or adverse circumstances.
- 6.02 A Special Consideration may be applicable if:
- Performance in the assessment is, or would be, affected by circumstances beyond the control of the learner/apprentice. For example, a recent illness, accident, bereavement or serious disturbance during the assessment.
 - Alternative assessment arrangements that were agreed in advance of the assessment proved to be inappropriate or inadequate.
 - Part of an assessment has been missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the learner/apprentice.
 - There is a sufficient difference between the part of the assessment to which Special Consideration is applied and other parts of the qualification that have been achieved to infer that the learner could have performed more successfully in the assessment.
- 6.03 A Special Consideration is *not* applicable where:
- The Centre/Training Provider does not supply any evidence that the learner/apprentice has been affected, or would be affected, at the time of the assessment by a particular condition.
 - Any part of the assessment is missed, or will be missed, due to personal arrangements including holidays or unauthorised absences.
 - Preparations for an assessment is affected by difficulties during the course, such as disturbances through building work, lack of proper facilities, changes or shortages in staff or industrial disputes.
- 6.04 A Special Consideration must not provide the learner/apprentice with an unfair advantage over others in accessing an assessment. A Special Consideration must also not inaccurately reflect

their ability, under usual circumstances, to complete the assessment. To ensure the validity of assessment and maintain competency standards, NOCN will only consider a Special Consideration in exceptional circumstances.

- 6.05 Dependent on the nature of the assessment or qualification in which a Special Consideration is being sought, NOCN may be able to adjust or calculate a mark for an assessment, adjust the arrangements for accessing an assessment or carry over/defer the relevant assessment fee to allow the learner/apprentice to take their assessment in the future without further charges.
- 6.06 For competency based assessments, including those in relation to EPA, NOCN will only consider alternative assessment arrangements (such as taking the assessment at a later date) or improving access to an assessment (such as allowing a scribe where a learner/apprentice is unable to write). NOCN will not consider an adjustment or calculation of a mark for these types of assessments due to the increased risks regarding these products.
- 6.07 For assessments which are not competency based, NOCN may consider an adjustment to a mark for an assessment. In these cases, the adjustment applied will be relative to the individual circumstances and severity of the Special Consideration which is required. NOCN must ensure that it only releases results which are based on evidence of attainment and therefore the level of increase will be limited. It is envisaged that in most cases, only a 10% maximum increase will be deemed appropriate. The decision to adjust a mark will be considered by NOCN on a case by case basis to ensure standards are maintained.
- 6.08 In relation to the issuing of a calculated grade, NOCN will take a principled approach in considering whether there is sufficient assessment evidence generated to support consistency in its decision making. This review will be completed on a case-by-case basis and will consider the risk rating of the qualification alongside its intended purpose. For example, qualifications which are commonly used to enter employment or further education will, by their nature, require learners to have been assessed as competent across the majority of learning outcomes and assessment criteria in order to be considered for a calculated grade.
- 6.09 NOCN will only permit the issuing of a calculated grade where there is a reasonable degree of confidence that the below principles can be met. A calculated grade will only be considered where NOCN:
- a) Determines that the learner would have likely achieved the assessment were it not for their enforced absence.
 - b) Is satisfied that there is sufficient acceptable evidence to allow a grade to be calculated that is valid, reliable and accurately reflects the learner's level of attainment in meeting the knowledge, skills and understanding being measured by the qualification.
 - c) Determines that the issuing of the calculated grade will not provide an advantage or disadvantage to the learner or their peers.
 - d) Determines that the calculated grade does not have an impact on the qualification, and those which are similar, and their assessment standards.
- 6.10 NOCN will take a balanced approach when considering the use of a calculated grade to ensure that confidence in standards are maintained, whilst ensuring that learners who have missed an assessment opportunity due to an illness, injury or event outside of their control, are not disadvantaged. It is envisaged that in the majority of cases, alternative assessment arrangements or increasing access to an assessment will satisfy these principles. This is

especially true for on demand assessments, where NOCN can facilitate alternative assessment arrangements, such as taking the assessment at a later date.

II. Special Consideration Procedure

6.11 Centres and Training Providers must ensure that any application for Special Consideration is both necessary, fair and based on valid evidence. All requests for Special Consideration *must be approved by NOCN prior to any implementation*. To apply for a Special Consideration:

- a) The completed form must be sent to epa-assurance@nocn.org.uk for applications related to End Point Assessment and assurance@nocn.org.uk (or Delivery Partner equivalent) for all other applications. The application must be submitted as soon as the need is identified, but no later than *5 working days* after the assessment took place, or was due to take place. The application must be signed and dated by a staff member who holds an appropriate level of authority, prior to its submission to NOCN.
- b) NOCN will review the application and provide its response within *5 working days* of receipt. The Centre/Training Provider must store a copy of NOCN's outcome alongside any generated learner/apprentice evidence held on file.

6.12 If the application for Special Consideration is approved by NOCN, the learner/apprentice's performance will be reviewed in the light of the available evidence. It should be noted that a successful application will not necessarily change an assessment result.

6.13 Where a Special Consideration application is rejected, NOCN will provide a clear rationale for its decision and where appropriate, will provide alternative adjustments that may be offered.

7. Malpractice

7.01 Centres/training providers must be aware that a failure to comply with this policy and procedure and any associated guidance will constitute as malpractice. This includes instances of:

- a) Implementing arrangements without seeking the required approval from NOCN.
- b) Exceeding the allowances agreed with NOCN.
- c) Agreeing delegated adjustments that are not supported by evidence.
- d) Failing to maintain records of applications and adjustments implemented for audit.

7.02 Where malpractice is suspected or identified, cases will be investigated by NOCN in line with the NOCN Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedure.

8. Reviewing Approach

8.01 Both NOCN and its approved centres/training providers must keep their arrangements for Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations under review to evaluate their effectiveness. This includes reviewing the outcomes of external quality assurance activities, the outcomes of any appeals regarding decisions and judgements, analysis of application data and volumes and responding to feedback from internal and external stakeholders.

8.02 As part of its Centre monitoring activities, centres must be able to present evidence to demonstrate how they are keeping their approach under review and how any necessary improvements or changes have been implemented and communicated to all relevant parties.

9. Appeals

- 9.01 Learners and apprentices must be aware of their right to appeal regarding decisions related to Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations. For approved centres, learners must be able to access and exhaust the Centre's own appeals policy first before submission to NOCN.
- 9.02 For further information regarding appeals, refer to the NOCN Appeals Policy and Procedure, available on the NOCN website.

10. Document Control

- 10.01 This policy will be reviewed and updated where necessary to reflect updated legislation, customer feedback, improvements of operation and changes to the regulatory environment. If you have any queries regarding the contents or the use of this policy, please contact NOCN via email at assurance@nocn.org.uk.
- 10.02 All NOCN policies and procedures are signed off by the NOCN Responsible Officer. The latest versions of which can be found on our website here: <https://www.nocn.org.uk/support/nocn-group-policies/>.

Appendix 1 – NOCN Permissions Table

The Permissions Table lists the most commonly requested adjustments to standard assessment arrangements. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list and centres/training providers have a duty to seek advice from NOCN in any case where they do not consider that they have the necessary expertise to judge whether a Reasonable Adjustment is needed, and/or how it should be applied.

Please note that many of these reasonable adjustments are dependent on the content of the Qualification Specification/Assessment Plan and the skills or knowledge being assessed and due to this not all adjustments will be possible for certain qualifications or End Point Assessments.

KEY: *Centre - Reasonable Adjustment permitted following internal Centre approval.*
NOCN - Apply to NOCN for approval for the adjustment prior to implementation.

Reasonable Adjustment Type	Assessment Model		
	Internally set and assessed	Externally set and internally assessed	Externally set and assessed (including EPA)
Modification to the Presentation of Assessment Material²			
Enlarged assessment material or use of coloured paper	Centre	Centre	NOCN
Language modified assessment material	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Assessment material in audio format	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Assessment material in Braille/BSL	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Assessment Conditions			
Extra time ³	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Supervised timed rest breaks	Centre	NOCN ⁴	NOCN
Rooms and Venues			
Changes in organisation of the assessment room	Centre	Centre	NOCN
Separate accommodation within the Centre	Centre	Centre	NOCN
Taking the assessment at an alternative venue	Centre	Centre	NOCN
Use of aids, assistive technology and IT			
Use of coloured overlays and tinted spectacles	Centre	Centre	NOCN
Use of assistive technology (including low vision aids, CCTV and OCR scanners)	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Responses using electronic recording devices	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Use of IT to present responses	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Use of bilingual dictionaries and bilingual translation ⁵	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Use of Facilitator			
Reader	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Scribe	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Sign Language Interpreter (BSL and SSE)	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Prompter	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Practical Assistant	Centre	NOCN	NOCN
Transcriber	Centre	NOCN	NOCN

² These types of adjustments will need a greater period of notice to NOCN to ensure that any requests can be fulfilled.

³ The amount of extra time allowed will vary according to length of examination.

⁴ Exception for Functional Skills Entry Level assessments, where centres can self-review and approve.

⁵ This should be carefully considered to ensure that the validity of assessment outcomes are not compromised.

Appendix 2 – Types of Reasonable Adjustments

This appendix details the most commonly requested Reasonable Adjustments to standard assessment arrangements and is not intended to be a comprehensive list. Centres/training providers have a duty to seek advice from NOCN in any case where they believe other adjustments may be required.

1. Modification to the Presentation of Assessment Material

For these types of adjustments, NOCN requires a greater period of notice to allow NOCN to review the application and therefore we encourage centres/training providers to contact NOCN as soon as the adjustment has been identified.

I. Enlarged Material and Material on Coloured Paper

Dependent on the mode of assessment, modified assessment materials may be able to be provided, such as in an enlarged format or on coloured paper. Where provided, centres/training providers are responsible for ensuring the security of modified assessment materials.

Where assessments are internally set, the Centre is responsible for providing the modified assessment material to the learner. The Centre is also responsible for ensuring any equipment such as electronic devices and resources required for the learner to access the modified assessment material (other than the material itself) is provided to the learner to facilitate assessment.

Where an assessment is paper-based and printed by the Centre, following approval, NOCN will delegate the responsibility of creating the modified assessment materials to the Centre, such as printing on A3 paper instead of A4, or using coloured paper rather than white. In these instances, the Centre takes full responsibility for the confidentiality of the assessment materials as well as the accuracy of the modification. A learner may be penalised for any errors in their work due to an inaccurate enlargement of the assessment material by the Centre. For this reason, assessment materials which contain scale diagrams cannot be enlarged.

Where an assessment is taken online, NOCN's online testing platforms can accommodate some modifications to assessment materials, dependent on the exam type. Please contact NOCN for further guidance.

II. Language Modified Assessment Material

Dependent on the assessment, language modified assessment material may be able to be provided. In all cases, technical language may not be modified. The modified version of the assessment material must contain the same questions as the standard version and the same answers will be expected than in the standard version of the assessment. This may be appropriate in a listening assessment where a transcript of the test may be provided, which can be read by a live speaker to allow the text to be lip-read.

III. Assessment Material in Audio Format

Where there is evidence of need, assessment material may be provided in audio format as long as reading is not a competency being assessed or if the material has visual material that is crucial to the completion of the assessment, such as illustrations, tables or diagrams.

IV. Assessment Material and Responses in Braille

Examination material may be provided in Braille for a blind or visually impaired learner. Where permitted, the material will be modified to remove any visual content prior to brailing, with the possibility of diagrams being produced as tactile diagrams, where possible.

Where there is evidence of need, a learner may be permitted to present their responses in Braille. In these cases, the Centre must provide an authenticated transcript of the learner's responses for assessment/marketing and for external quality assurance purposes. NOCN places the responsibility on the Centre to ensure that the transcript is an accurate reflection of the learner's responses.

2. Assessment Conditions

I. Extra Time

Where assessment activities are time constrained, a learner/apprentice may be allowed extra time to complete the assessment if they have a disability or difficulty which affects their speed of processing. The amount of extra time must reflect the extent to which the completion of the assessment will be affected by the learner's difficulty. Unlimited extra time is not permitted.

NOCN recognises that it is common where learners/apprentices do require extra time, that up to 25% extra is sufficient. Where a request above 25% extra time is submitted, the Centre/Training Provider must ensure that this need is clearly evidenced within the documentation they submit to support their application. It is the Centre/Training Provider's responsibility to specify the amount of extra time a learner/apprentice will need, using the extra time required during formative assessments as a guide.

Extra time will not be permitted where the timing of a completion of a task or practical activity is a key part of meeting the relevant assessment criteria, such as a typing speed test. This also applies to group assessments where performance is required to be assessed in conjunction with others.

Centres/training providers must ensure that the learner/apprentice is comfortable and medically fit to sit extended assessments and must consider if supervised rest breaks may also be required, which may be requested/implemented in conjunction with an extra time adjustment.

II. Supervised Rest Break

A supervised rest break may be taken either in our outside of the assessment room. The duration of the break will not be deducted from the overall assessment time and therefore centres must consider whether a supervised rest break may be more appropriate than extra time.

The Centre/Training Provider must be aware that, during a supervised rest break, the learner/apprentice is still under assessment conditions and that the NOCN Examination and Invigilation Policy and Procedure still applies at all times. Centres/Training Providers must ensure the security and confidentiality of all NOCN assessment materials and must not leave either the learner/apprentice or assessment materials unsupervised at any point. The Centre/Training Provider must also ensure that assessment materials are not removed from the assessment room until the assessment has been completed.

A supervised rest break will not be permitted where speed or time is a component of what is being assessed, although, if there is a natural break in assessment (such as in between tasks), then supervised rest breaks are allowed.

3. Rooms and Venues

I. Organisation of the Assessment Room

Centres/Training Providers are able to consider/request minor changes to the usual organisation of an assessment room where this is practicable and does not invalidate the assessment. This may allow particular learners/apprentices with both learning difficulties and disabilities in equally accessing an assessment.

Examples of minor changes to assessment facilities include, but are not limited to:

- a) A learner/apprentice with a visual impairment may benefit from sitting near a window so that they have good lighting.
- b) A learner/apprentice with a hearing impairment may benefit from sitting near the front of the assessment room.
- c) A learner/apprentice with a learning disability, such as one on the autism spectrum, may benefit from having visual/noise stimuli, such as a ticking clock, removed from the assessment room.
- d) A learner/apprentice with a physical disability may benefit from using chairs with armrests or adjustable heights.

II. Separate Accommodation and Alternative Venues

It may be necessary to accommodate the learner or apprentice separately for the assessment from others completing the assessment at the same time. This may be appropriate where a learner or apprentice has an approved reader, scribe, prompter or interpreter. Separate accommodation may enable the learner/apprentice to focus on the assessment and obtain the required support from their facilitator without distraction for others who are not requiring the adjustment.

In all instances, the Centre/Training Provider must ensure that the confidentiality of assessment materials are maintained at all times and that any separate rooms which are used for learners or apprentices who require the adjustment meet NOCN examination venue requirements, as detailed within the NOCN Examination and Invigilation Policy and Procedure.

In certain circumstances, the learner/apprentice may be permitted to take an assessment at an alternative venue, for example at home or in a hospital. The Centre/Training Provider must ensure that the learner/apprentice is medically fit to take the assessment. It is important that the regulations of the assessment regarding security, confidentiality and validity are met at all times. Therefore, centres/training providers must contact NOCN in the first instance for approval prior to making any arrangements for alternative venues.

4. Use of Mechanical, Electronic and Technological Aids

I. Aids and Assistive Technology

Dependent on the type of assessment, centres/training providers are able to request the use of aids to assist learners in accessing an assessment. This includes coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles, CCTV and OCR scanners.

Use of assistive technology, such as speech/screen reading or voice activated software, may also benefit learners/apprentices who have a disability or difficulty which affects their reading or speech,

as long as this is not a competency being assessed. In these cases, the Centre/Training Provider must ensure that the learner/apprentice has had sufficient practice in the use of the aid and that any electronics are in good working order.

The Centre/Training Provider must consider that where these adjustments are requested, whether the learner/apprentice should be separately accommodated to avoid disruption to others completing their assessment.

II. Use of Recording Devices to Present Responses

Where there is evidence of need, a learner/apprentice may be permitted to use electronic recording devices, for example a voice recorder or Dictaphone and for the assessment to be presented in CD, memory stick or cassette format. The use of recording devices is only permitted where there is no requirement for the learner/apprentice to produce visual material or for writing assessments.

Where responses are recorded electronically for regulated qualifications, the Centre must provide an authenticated transcript of the learner's responses for assessment/marketing and for external quality assurance purposes. NOCN places the responsibility on the Centre to ensure that the transcript is an accurate reflection of the learner's responses.

III. Use of IT to Present Responses

A learner/apprentice 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 IT is generally perceived to have a positive impact on helping access to assessment. The guidance given below relates to the use of IT in written assessments.

IT can normally be used for Centre-devised and portfolio work unless its use is expressly prohibited by the qualification specification. IT in this context relates to word processors, PCs, laptops and other microprocessor-controlled devices producing output in text or other forms such as graphics and diagrams.

The use of IT must not create a misleading impression of the learner/apprentice's attainment or confer an unfair advantage over others. Spelling and grammar checks must be disabled prior to the assessment taking place where this is an element being assessed. Where assessment objectives cannot be fully met through the use of IT, the Centre/Training Provider must consider alternative arrangements/adjustments.

IT must only be used if it is appropriate to the learner/apprentice's needs and if the learner/apprentice is confident in its use, can use it effectively and if it reflects their normal ways of working. This includes ensuring that electronic devices are adapted for their individual needs and that enabling technologies, such as screen reading software and coloured backgrounds, are available.

IV. Use of Dictionaries (Including Electronic and Bilingual)

The use of any type of dictionaries can be allowed in all vocational assessments unless its use is expressly forbidden by the assessment requirements. The product specification and guidance documents produced by NOCN will confirm whether the use of a dictionary is permitted or not.

If permitted, dictionaries must be checked prior to each use to ensure that they do not contain notes that would provide any future individuals who use them with an unfair advantage in completion of their assessment.

Where permission is provided to use electronic dictionaries, a check must be completed to ensure that the equipment does not contain functionality which would provide a learner/apprentice with an unfair advantage. If such functionality is present, it must be disabled prior to its use. If it cannot be disabled, it must not be used.

5. Use of Facilitators

I. Reader

A reader is an individual, who, where required, will read to the learner/apprentice all or part of the assessment material and any written responses. For certain assessments, this may not be permitted or may be limited. For example, a reader can only read the questions in a Functional Skills Reading assessment and not the reading texts, as this is the skill being assessed. Centres/training providers must therefore ensure they consult the individual product specifications/plans for further guidance.

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 competency being assessed.

The Centre/Training Provider should, in consultation with the learner/apprentice, decide whether the use of a reader will be an effective adjustment. For example, a learner/apprentice may be more comfortable and accustomed to the use of speech/screen reading software or accessing the material in electronic format, in Braille or through Sign Language.

In all cases, the Centre/Training Provider is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a reader. The Centre/Training Provider should select the reader on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the learner/apprentice. The reader must be able to read accurately and at a reasonable rate. The reader should not normally be the learner/apprentice's own Tutor or Assessor, except in circumstances where it is necessary to do so. In such cases, NOCN must be consulted with. The use of a learner/apprentice's relative, friend or peer as a reader is not permitted. For End Point Assessments, the End Point Assessor may be able to perform the role of the reader if this is appropriate and does not impede the assessment process.

Prior to their use, the reader must be provided with clear instructions regarding what they are required and what they are not permitted to do. A separate Invigilator must be present where a reader is used to ensure that the guidance regarding readers is followed.

During an assessment, the reader:

- a) Must only read as requested by the learner/apprentice. The learner/apprentice may choose to read some parts of the assessment for themselves. The reader must repeat questions and/or instructions when requested to.
- b) Must read accurately and articulate clearly.
- c) Must only read the exact wording (instructions and questions) and not provide meanings of words, rephrase or interpret any contents of the assessment.
- d) May not consult a dictionary.

- e) Must read, as often as requested, the responses by the learner/apprentice, but must not act as a proof-reader.
- f) Must not advise the learner/apprentice regarding which part of the assessment to complete, when to move onto other parts of the assessment or advise on the order in which the assessment must be completed.
- g) May enable a visually impaired learner/apprentice to identify which piece of visual material relates to which question and may provide spellings of a word which appears on the assessment, where requested. The reader must not provide factual help nor offer any suggestion.
- h) Must refer any problems or issues during the assessment to the Invigilator.

A learner/apprentice should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the reader and this should reflect their usual way of working. For a learner/apprentice who requires both a reader and a scribe, the same person may act as both, as long as permission has been provided for both arrangements.

A learner/apprentice using a reader must be accommodated separately to ensure that others taking the assessment at the same time are not disturbed.

Where a learner/apprentice is not eligible for the use of a reader, it may be helpful for them to read the questions aloud. In these circumstances the learner/apprentice must be accommodated in a separate room so that others taking the same assessment are not disturbed. Separate invigilation must be arranged in these cases. The Invigilator may not correct the reading of the learner/apprentice.

II. Scribe

A scribe is an individual who, in an assessment, writes down or word processes a learner/apprentice's dictated responses. This includes the dictation of capital letters, punctuation, paragraphing, and the spelling of uncommon or technical words. Where there is evidence of need, a scribe may be allowed in all assessments where writing or typing is not the competency being assessed.

The Centre/Training Provider should, in consultation with the learner/apprentice, decide whether the use of a scribe is an appropriate Reasonable Adjustment. As the effective use of a scribe requires a high level of communication skills from the learner/apprentice, it is advisable to consider whether the use of a computer may be preferable, especially as the learner/apprentice is more likely to use a word processor than a scribe in the workplace.

The use of a scribe must not affect the requirements of the assessment. In some cases, the writing of answers may be the skill being assessed and therefore a scribe would not be appropriate.

In all cases, the Centre/Training Provider is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a scribe. A scribe should be selected on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the learner/apprentice and must be able to produce an accurate record of responses, write legibly and/or word processes at a reasonable speed. The use of a learner/apprentice's relative, friend or peer as a scribe is not permitted. For End Point Assessments, the End Point Assessor may be able to perform the role of the reader if this is appropriate and does not impede the assessment process.

Prior to their use, the scribe must be provided with clear instructions regarding what they are required and what they are not permitted to do. A separate Invigilator must be present where a scribe is used to ensure that the guidance regarding scribes is followed.

During an assessment, the scribe:

- a) Must consult with the learner/apprentice regarding which aspects of the assessment they wish to have their responses scribed. The learner/apprentice may choose to write some responses themselves.
- b) Must write down answers exactly as they are dictated. Where spelling accuracy and punctuation are a part of the competency being assessed, the scribe must follow explicit instructions provided by the learner/apprentice. The scribe must not take the responsibility for the spelling of technical words.
- c) Must write a correction on a typescript or Braille sheet, if requested to do so by the learner/apprentice.
- d) Must not give factual help or offer any suggestions.
- e) Must not advise regarding which part of the assessment to complete, when to move onto other parts of the assessment or advise on the order in which the assessment must be completed.
- f) May, at the learner/apprentice's request, read back what has been written, but no comment must be made about any part of the learner/apprentice's response.
- g) Must refer any problems or issues during the assessment to the Invigilator.

A learner/apprentice should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the scribe and this should reflect their usual way of working. For a learner/apprentice who requires both a reader and a scribe, the same person may act as both, as long as permission has been provided for both arrangements.

A learner/apprentice using a scribe must be accommodated separately to ensure that others taking the assessment at the same time are not disturbed.

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

A Sign Language Interpreter is an individual 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 may be required for hearing-impaired learners/apprentices 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 dependent nor is it strongly related to spoken language. Any alternative language cannot be used as part of a Reasonable Adjustment, where specific skills in a language are being assessed. For example, BSL is prohibited in an assessment of the Speaking, Listening and Communication component of Functional Skills English qualifications.

Assessment material can be presented to a learner/apprentice using BSL as long as the skills being assessed are not reading or listening skills and where the assessment can still achieve the same outcomes where BSL is not being used. A BSL version of assessment material may be provided on a video recording of (or in addition to) the assessment material in written English.

Sign Supported English (SSE) is another form of Sign Language in Britain. SSE is not a language in itself, 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.

The Centre/Training Provider must also consider whether additional adjustments such as extra time, or a separate assessment room, may also be required.

Where externally set, centres/training providers can request language modified assessment material from NOCN, for learners/apprentices who have BSL as their first language. Where this is the case, the Centre/Training Provider must submit their application for Reasonable Adjustment as soon as the need is identified for timescales for the provision of assessment material to be agreed.

IV. Prompter

A learner/apprentice with a severe attention difficulty may benefit from the use of a prompter in timed assessments to draw their attention back to the assessment task. The Centre/Training Provider should, in consultation with the learner/apprentice, decide whether the use of a prompter will be an effective adjustment. Where the problem is one of concentration, consideration should be given to allowing supervised rest breaks, rather than the use of a prompter.

In all cases, the Centre/Training Provider is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a prompter. A prompter should be selected on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the learner/apprentice. The prompter should be sufficiently familiar with the learner/apprentice to recognise when their attention is no longer on the assessment task and that they are not, for example, looking away from the assessment paper whilst thinking about their response. The prompter should not normally be the learner/apprentice's own Tutor or Assessor, except in circumstances where it is necessary to do so. In such cases, NOCN must be consulted with. The use of a learner/apprentice's relative, friend or peer as a prompter is not permitted.

Prior to their use, the prompter must be provided with clear instructions regarding what they are required and what they are not permitted to do. A separate Invigilator must be present where a prompter is used to ensure that the guidance regarding prompters is followed.

During an assessment, the prompter:

- a) Must sit near enough to be able to observe the learner/apprentice and to draw their attention back to the assessment, without being obtrusive.
- b) Must use an appropriate method of prompting to suit the individual needs of the learner/apprentice. The method must be used by the prompter must be mutually agreed by the prompter and the learner/apprentice prior to the assessment, ensuring that the learner/apprentice is comfortable with the method and that it is acceptable to the Centre/Training Provider and NOCN. Methods used by the prompter may be a light tap on the learner/apprentice's arm or shoulder or a light tap on their desk (without touching the assessment material). Prompters should attempt to avoid verbal prompts if possible, however, it should be taken into consideration that some learners/apprentices (such as a learner with emotional or behavioural vulnerability or sensitivity) may not be comfortable with a 'light tap' prompt and a verbal prompt may be more appropriate in these circumstances.
- c) Must not advise regarding which part of the assessment to complete, when to move onto other parts of the assessment or advise on the order in which the assessment must be completed.
- d) Must refer any problems or issues during the assessment to the Invigilator.

A learner/apprentice should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the prompter and this should reflect the learner/apprentice's usual way of working. A learner/apprentice using a prompter may be accommodated separately to ensure that others taking the assessment at the same time are not disturbed, dependent on the nature of the prompts being used.

V. Practical Assistant

A practical assistant is a person who, during an assessment, carries out practical tasks at the instruction of a learner/apprentice. For example, turning a page of the question paper or guiding a learner using a Braille paper to the correct page they need. A practical assistant is not permitted where the completion of a task is a competency being assessed, such as during a practical assignment. The Centre/Training Provider should, in consultation with the learner/apprentice, decide whether the use of a prompter will be an effective adjustment.

In all cases, the Centre/Training Provider is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a practical assistant. A practical assistant should be selected on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the learner/apprentice. The practical assistant should be a person who is able to ensure the safety of the learner/apprentice and be able to carry out their instructions accurately. The practical assistant should not normally be the learner/apprentice's own Tutor or Assessor, except in circumstances where it is necessary to do so. In such cases, NOCN must be consulted with. The use of a learner/apprentice's relative, friend or peer as a prompter is not permitted.

Prior to their use, the practical assistant must be provided with clear instructions regarding what they are required and what they are not permitted to do. A separate Invigilator must be present where a practical assistant is used to ensure that the guidance regarding practical assistants is followed.

During an assessment, the practical assistant:

- a) Must follow the instructions provided on the level and kind of assistance that can be given.
- b) Must ensure the safety of the learner/apprentice and those surrounding them.
- c) Must carry out instruction exactly as they are given, unless to do so would be unsafe. If the practical assistant does not understand the learner/apprentice's instructions, they may ask for clarification but must not lead the learner/apprentice in any way or attempt to interpret the learner/apprentice's wishes.
- d) Must not advise the learner regarding which part of the assessment to complete, when to move onto other parts of the assessment or advise on the order in which the assessment must be completed.
- e) Must refer any problems or issues during the assessment to the Invigilator.

A learner/apprentice should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the practical assistant and this should reflect their usual way of working. A learner/apprentice using a practical assistant may require separate accommodation as not to disturb others taking their assessment at the same time.

VI. Transcriber

A transcriber is an individual who will produce a transcript to assist in an assessment of work. This adjustment may be used in the following circumstances:

- a) Where handwriting in an assessment is fairly illegible, but they are unable to use a computer or dictate responses (otherwise a scribe would be the preferred adjustment). The handwriting cannot be totally illegible as the transcriber would be unable to perform the task. It may not be allowed where writing by hand is the competency being assessed.
- b) Where responses are produced in BSL, SSE or Braille.

The transcript must be produced by an appropriately appointed staff member who is familiar with the learner/apprentice's handwriting, is fully competent in Braille (where applicable), or who has the required skills in BSL (where applicable). The Centre/Training Provider is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a transcriber.

The transcriber must:

- a) Produce the transcript in a separate copy of the assessment documentation, or on white paper, as appropriate.
- b) Either handwrite or word process the transcript. If handwritten, dark blue or black ink must be used. The use of pencil is not permitted. Any corrections to spelling on the verbatim transcript must be written in different colour ink (but not red, green or purple).
- c) For examinations, produce the transcript immediately after the examination under secure conditions.
- d) Not involve the learner/apprentice in the production of the transcript.
- e) Either transcribe complete answers, or where only occasional words require transcription, transcribe on a photocopy of work. The transcriber must not mark or annotate the original work under any circumstances.
- f) Usually complete a word-for-word transcription, i.e., an exact copy of what has been written. The transcriber must not insert or omit words or alter their order. In assessments for English, Welsh or Irish (Gaelige) qualifications, any errors, including those of spelling, punctuation and grammar, must be transcribed as given and must not be corrected. Where language is not being assessed, the transcriber may correct the spelling of non-technical words.
- g) Must not transcribe/replicate diagrammatical material. Assessment of such material must be based on the original work.

The Assessor will assess the learner/apprentice's work and will only refer to the transcript if it is impossible to decipher any part of the response(s) provided. For responses produced in BSL, SSE or Braille, the Assessor may refer solely to the transcript. The transcript must be securely attached to the back of the work and be provided to the Assessor and NOCN in the normal way. The production of the transcript must not delay the dispatch of the scripts to the Assessor/NOCN.