



Reasonable adjustments and special considerations

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Welcome

AIM is a national and international awarding organisation. We offer a large number of regulated qualifications at different levels and in a wide range of subject areas, Access to Higher Education Diplomas and End Point Assessments. Our products are flexible enough to be delivered in a range of settings, from small providers to large colleges and in the workplace both nationally and internationally. We pride ourselves on offering the best possible customer service, and are always on hand to help if you have any questions. Our organisational structure and business processes enable us to be able to respond quickly to the needs of customers to develop new products that meet their specific needs.

Introduction

This document is intended for centre staff and provides details on everything you will need to know about applying for reasonable adjustments and special consideration. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Explain how appropriate adjustments can be made to assessments for learners who have difficulties or disabilities that effect their ability to complete the proposed assessments
- Explain how consideration can be given to learners who experience temporary events outside of their control that affect their performance in or ability to take an assessment
- Ensure that the integrity of our qualifications and the skills, knowledge, understanding or competence being measured is not compromised

The policy is also designed to explain:

- How and when a centre should apply for reasonable adjustments and special consideration for one or more of its learners and what evidence we require
- The process we will follow to make a decision on the application.

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Reasonable adjustments

These are adjustments made to an assessment for a qualification to enable a learner to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding. Learners may be eligible for reasonable adjustments if their ability to access an assessment is likely to be substantially affected by a particular impairment, for example communication and interaction, cognition and learning, physical or behavioural, emotional and social needs.

The nature of any reasonable adjustment depends on the learner's particular requirements, the qualification and assessment methods and may not be appropriate if the learner's particular difficulty directly affects performance in the attributes being assessed. Reasonable adjustments must not affect the reliability or validity of assessment outcomes, nor must they give the learner an assessment advantage over other learners undertaking the same or similar assessments.

Recruitment and initial assessment of learners

Prior to registration, a centre must ensure that learners are provided with the correct information and advice on their chosen qualification and that the qualification will meet their needs. Centre staff should assess the suitability of each potential learner and make appropriate professional judgments about the learner's potential to successfully complete the assessments and achieve the qualification at the chosen level. A centre must also ensure that a learner is able to communicate effectively in English (this includes listening, speaking, reading and writing) and understand the requirements of the qualification and the information within the qualification materials in English without assistance.

During this process it may be identified that a learner will require additional support or reasonable adjustments to be made to enable them to be assessed fairly. This should be discussed with the learner.

Learners should be able to achieve the assessment requirements and any adjustments made should not compensate the learner for lack of understanding, knowledge or skills. The learner must be able to cope with the content of the assessment and be able to work at the level required for the assessment.

It is the centres responsibility to communicate to the learner that they may not be able to demonstrate attainment because their particular difficulty directly affects performance in the attributes being assessed. The learner may however still decide to proceed with studying a particular qualification and not be entered for all or part of the assessment.

Making reasonable adjustments

Some reasonable adjustments can be agreed by the centre and notified to AIM, others will need prior agreement. A table of possible reasonable adjustments and the responsibility for agreeing them is included at appendix 1. This list is not exhaustive. Whether the centre applies the reasonable adjustment or applies to AIM, the adjustments made must:

- Not give a learner an unfair advantage
- Not compromise or invalidate the assessment requirements of a qualification
- Be based on the individual need of a learner
- Reflect the learner's normal way of working.

Any adjustment to assessment must not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification or the requirements of the assessment strategy or alter the competence standards. All learners' performance will be assessed against set standards and although they cannot be altered, it may be possible to change the delivery or process of assessment so that each learner has an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know and what they can do.

The adjustment must be based on the individual need of a learner, the assessment requirements of a qualification and the nature and extent of the support given as part of normal teaching practice.

For all reasonable adjustments centres must also ensure that the adjustments made:

- Enable the learner to meet the specified criteria at the required level
- Do not give the learner an unfair advantage
- Meet the requirements of the specifications regardless of the process or method used
- Are as rigorous as assessment methods used with other learners
- Are able to be moderated or verified
- Are appropriate for the learners and their normal way of working.

Special consideration

Special consideration can be given to a learner who has temporarily experienced an illness or injury, or some other event outside of their control which has had or is reasonably likely to have had an effect on their ability to take an assessment or on their level of attainment in an assessment.

Special consideration should not be granted solely on the grounds of disability and learners must declare their needs prior to assessment and any reasonable adjustments implemented before the assessment takes place.

Special consideration should not give a learner an unfair advantage. The learner's result must reflect their achievement in the assessment and not necessarily his or her potential ability. Special consideration, if successful, may lead to a small post-assessment adjustment to the learner's results, but not necessarily so. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances and reflect the difficulty faced by the learner.

Centres should note that:

- Where an assessment requires the learner to demonstrate practical competence or where criteria have to be met fully, or in the case of qualifications that confer a License to Practice, it may not be possible to apply special consideration.
- If there was an instance where a learner/s temporarily experienced an illness or injury, or other event outside of the learner's control and it would be more appropriate to offer the opportunity to take that type of assessment at a later date, the centre would need to contact AIM on the day of the scheduled assessment to ask for approval prior to rescheduling the assessments.

All learners regardless of special consideration must meet the minimum requirements to achieve the award of a certificate.

A list of examples of special consideration can be found at appendix 2.

Applying for reasonable adjustments or special consideration

Reasonable adjustments

To make an application for a reasonable adjustment on behalf of one or more learners a reasonable adjustment form must be completed. The form is available on our website www.aim-group.org.uk.

It asks for details of each learner's circumstances, evidence of any medical conditions and any other relevant information. Once complete the form should be emailed to enquiries@aim-group.org.uk depending on the nature of the reasonable adjustment required (see Appendix 1). Where a centre can take the decision itself, it must record details of any adjustment and all relevant documentation which must be kept in centre files and produced on request to AIM. The centres external quality assurance manager (EQAM) will review the use of reasonable adjustments during a quality review visit.

Requests for reasonable adjustments should be submitted no less than 10 working days before any assessment. AIM will acknowledge receipt within two working days and will aim to provide a decision within 10 working days. It may not be possible to respond within this timeframe if we need to call on specialist advice. In such cases, we will inform the centre of the expected response time.

Special consideration

Requests for special consideration should be submitted no more than 10 working days after the planned or actual assessment date. AIM will acknowledge receipt within two working days and will provide a decision within five working days of application or awarding meeting. The form to apply for special consideration can be found on our website. Examples of evidence that you should submit to support the application can be found in Appendix 2.

Requests for special consideration may only be accepted after the results of assessment have been released in the following circumstances:

- Application has been overlooked at the centre and the oversight is confirmed by the Head of Centre.
- Medical evidence comes to light about a learner's condition, which demonstrates that the learner must have been affected by the condition at the time of the assessment, even though the problem revealed itself only after the assessment.
- For assessments where results are immediately available.

How we will deal with requests

All requests for reasonable adjustments are reviewed by the Centre's EQAM. The EQAM will make a decision to approve or decline the request.

The EQAM will review the information using precedents, guidance published by the Federation of Awarding Bodies and specialist advice from others where appropriate.

Once a decision is made the EQAM will communicate the decision to the centre according to the timetable stated above. If this is not possible and the review will take a little longer, he or she will contact the centre.

Requests for special consideration are reviewed by either the centres EQAM or during an awarding meeting.

If an application for special consideration is successful, the learner's performance is reviewed in light of the available evidence.

Appendix 1 – Types of reasonable adjustment

The table below provides some possible reasonable adjustments that can be made and who is responsible for taking the decision. It should be noted however that if a centre is in doubt they should contact AIM for advice.

Reasonable Adjustments	Assessments NOT taken under examination conditions	Assessments taken under examination conditions
Extra time up to 25%	Centre	AIM
Extra time exceeding 25%	Centre	AIM
Supervised rest breaks	Centre	AIM
Changes in organisation of the assessment room	Centre	AIM
Separate accommodation within the centre	Centre	AIM
Taking the assessment at an alternative venue	Centre	AIM
Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles, CCTV and OCR scanners	Centre	AIM
Use of assistive technology	Centre	AIM
Use of bilingual dictionaries and bilingual translation dictionaries	AIM	AIM
Assessment material in enlarged format	Centre	AIM
Assessment material in braille	AIM	AIM
Language modified assessment material	AIM	AIM
Assessment material in BSL	AIM	AIM

Assessment material on coloured paper	Centre	AIM
Assessment material in audio format	Centre	AIM
Use of ICT to present responses	Centre	AIM
Responses using electronic recording devices	Centre	AIM
Responses in BSL	AIM	AIM
Reader	AIM	AIM
Scribe	AIM	AIM
BSL interpreter	AIM	AIM
Prompter	AIM	AIM
Practical assistant	AIM	AIM
Transcriber	AIM	AIM

Guidance on types of reasonable adjustments

Extra time

Invariably applied to examination based assessment. Extra time should not be allowed where its use will invalidate the assessment criteria. Extra time should not give the learner an unfair advantage over others. The amount of extra time must be realistic.

25% extra time for the use of a bilingual dictionary.

The use of a bilingual dictionary must reflect the learner's normal way of working. It is only to be used in assessments by learners whose first language is not English, Irish or Welsh. Extra time must not be awarded to a learner using a bilingual translation dictionary in order to compensate for difficulties in reading and writing in English. The translation of assessment materials or the learner's answers into or from the learner's first language is not allowed.

Supervised rest breaks

Centres should ensure that both the learner and his/her work is supervised during the break. The duration of the break should not be deducted from the assessment time. Rest breaks should not be allowed where their use would invalidate the assessment criteria.

Changes in organisation of the assessment room

The centre should consider the needs of each individual learner and, where possible, arrange the assessment room to suit the learner.

Separate accommodation within the centre

Centres should ensure that, where learners are accommodated separately for assessments taken under examination conditions, usual examination conditions apply and separate invigilation is arranged.

Taking the assessment at an alternative venue

For assessments taken under examination conditions, standard examination conditions should be in place at the alternative venue and the standard procedures for security of assessment material and despatch of the learner's work should be followed.

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

The learner should be familiar with how the aid works. The use of aids should not give the learner an unfair advantage over other learners or invalidate the assessment criteria.

Use of assistive technology

The learner should be familiar with how the assistive technology works. The assistive technology should not give the learner an unfair advantage over other learners or invalidate the assessment criteria.

Use of bilingual dictionaries and bilingual translation dictionaries

The use of a bilingual dictionary should not give the learner an unfair advantage over other learners or invalidate the assessment criteria. These should not be permitted if proficiency in English, Welsh or Irish (as appropriate) is required for the role supported by the qualification.

Assessment material in enlarged format

Where appropriate, the centre should meet AIM deadlines for requesting enlarged assessment material. In cases where the centre is permitted by the AIM to enlarge assessment material, the centre should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is enlarged.

Assessment material in braille

Where appropriate, the centre should meet AIM deadlines for requesting braille assessment material. In cases where the centre is permitted by AIM to braille assessment material, the centre should take responsibility for the security of the material.

Language modified assessment material

Language and stimulus materials are only appropriate if they – (a) enable learners to demonstrate their level of attainment, (b) require knowledge, skills and understanding which are required for the qualification, (c) are clear and unambiguous (unless ambiguity forms part of the assessment), and (d) are not likely to cause unnecessary offence to learners.

Assessment material in BSL

The centre should meet AIM deadlines for requesting assessment material in BSL. In cases where the centre is permitted to translate the assessment material into BSL, it should take responsibility for the security of the material and for the accuracy of the translation.

Assessment material on coloured paper

Where the centre is permitted to modify the assessment material, it should take responsibility for the security of the assessment material and for the accuracy of the modification.

Assessment material in audio format

Where the centre is permitted to produce an audio version of the assessment material, they should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is copied. The centre should ensure that sufficient playback equipment is provided in full working order.

Use of ICT to present responses

The centre should ensure that:

- The computer is used solely by the learner and not by someone acting on the learner's behalf unless the learner has permission to use a scribe.
- The computer is working correctly at the time of an assessment. It is the centre's responsibility to arrange the ICT provision for the learner.
- The learner has access only to those facilities (for example spell/grammar checker, voice activated software, speech reading software) which have been agreed in advance with AIM.
- The learner is not able to gain access to existing files or documents. Where a system operates from flash drive, CD or floppy disk, the learner must be supplied with a flash drive or disk containing only the software required for the assessment.
- The computer should be free-standing and not be connected to the Internet, unless this is required in the assessment.
- The learner is accommodated separately if the use of a computer is likely to distract other learners. In this case separate invigilation should be arranged.

- The learner's work is saved frequently and, if possible, using an auto-save facility.
- The learner is present when his/her work is printed. It is normal practice for a printed version of the learner's work to be submitted and authenticated for assessment, and not the disk.
- Where a question/answer booklet is provided, the learner might need to answer some questions in the booklet and type other answers. Answers should be clearly labelled and the printout must be attached to the question paper/answer booklet.
- The learner should be proficient in the use of the computer and its software.
- The learner's work is saved frequently and, if possible, using an auto-save facility.

Responses using electronic recording devices

Recording the learner's responses electronically should not be allowed where it will invalidate the assessment requirements. The centre should ensure that the appropriate recording equipment is provided in full working order. The learner using recording equipment should be accommodated separately, with separate invigilation, where its use will disturb other learners.

Responses in BSL

Signing of the learner's responses on video should not be allowed where it will invalidate the assessment requirements.

Reader

The centre should check that the use of a reader is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment. The centre should select a reader and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.

A separate invigilator should be present when a reader is used.

A reader should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

Scribe

The centre should check that the use of scribe is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment. The centre should select a scribe and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.

A separate invigilator should be present when a scribe is used.

BSL Interpreter

The centre should check that the use of BSL interpreter is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment. The centre should select a BSL interpreter and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.

A separate invigilator should be present when a BSL interpreter is used.

A BSL interpreter should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

Prompter

The centre should check that the use of a prompter is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment. The centre should select a prompter and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.

A separate invigilator should be present when a prompter is used. A prompter should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

Practical Assistant

The centre should check that the use of a practical assistant is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment. The centre should select a practical assistant and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.

A separate invigilator should be present when a practical assistant is used.

A practical assistant should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

Transcriber

The centre should check that the use of a transcriber is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment.

The centre should select a transcriber and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.

A transcriber should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements

Appendix 2 - Examples of required evidence for special consideration

Circumstance	Required Evidence
Illness	An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional confirming the nature of the illness and the likely impact it is having on the learner's ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.
Hospitalisation	A medical letter/certificate from the relevant hospital confirming the nature and severity of the learner's circumstances and the likely period of impact on the learner's ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.
Family	A medical certificate/letter from an independent medical professional confirming the nature and severity of the family circumstances and the likely impact it is having on the learner's ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.
Bereavement	A death certificate or a letter confirming the death from an independent person (usually not a family member) with their contact details provided and including a view on the closeness of the relationship.
Acute personal/emotional circumstances	An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional confirming the nature of the illness and/or circumstances and the likely impact it is having on the learner's ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.
Victim of crime	A written statement of events which is supported by written evidence from the Police (including a crime reference number). Where the impact of the crime has led to a medical or other professional consultation, an original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional confirming the likely impact the reported crime had/is having on the learner's ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.
Domestic disruption	Where significant and unforeseen domestic disruption has occurred very close to a timetabled examination a letter from an appropriate independent individual/authority detailing the relevant circumstances and an indication of the likely impact with their contact details provided.
Jury service (UK)	A letter from the court together with proof that a deferral has been requested and rejected or proof that a previous request for deferral has been accepted.
Court attendance (UK)	Where a learner is required to attend a tribunal or court as a witness, defendant or plaintiff the learner should provide official correspondence from the tribunal/court confirming attendance or a solicitor's letter detailing the nature and dates of the legal proceedings and the requirement for the learner to attend.
Other	The list of circumstances cannot be exhaustive, and it is possible that other circumstances will arise that should be considered as acceptable.



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