

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

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1. Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 requires awarding bodies to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled learner would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment in comparison to learners who are not disabled.

This policy sets out the process for requesting reasonable adjustments and special considerations and provides VTCT centres with guidance for implementing these. The recommendations in this guide are not exhaustive and in every case, it is for the VTCT and our approved centres to determine on a case-by-case basis whether reasonable adjustments are necessary and what reasonable adjustments will be effective.

This policy covers the three following ways in which learners can be granted access to fair assessment:

- reasonable adjustment permitted at the discretion of the centre;
- reasonable adjustment agreed by VTCT;
- special consideration usually applied post assessment.

Circumstances not covered by this policy, or where further clarification is necessary, should be discussed with VTCT before assessment takes place.

2. Centre responsibilities

To meet their responsibilities to individual learners, and in terms of current equality legislation and regulatory requirements, a centre should, as far as is practicable:

- identify as early as possible, preferably before registering a learner for a qualification, any difficulties the learner may have in accessing assessment.
- select an appropriate qualification for the learner, based upon their particular circumstances.
- select an appropriate adjustment to make the assessment accessible to the learner.
- ensure that it can resource the selected adjustment to assessment.
- follow VTCT's procedures for requesting adjustments to assessment.
- follow VTCT's guidance for implementing adjustments to assessment.
- keep records of these reasonable adjustments for audit purposes.
- ensure that it has effective internal appeals procedures so that the learner can query any decision taken by the centre not to allow an adjustment to assessment.
- design centre set assessment activities or material in an inclusive way so that they are accessible to learners with access-related needs. The centre should ensure that the language of the assessment is clear, unambiguous and free from jargon.
- ensure that buildings used for assessment are accessible to all learners, as far as is practicable.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive and centres must take all possible practical steps to apply reasonable adjustments, so as to promote equality of access for learners who are placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a person without disability or difficulty.

3. Reasonable adjustments

3.1. Definition of reasonable adjustments

The following definition is given by Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition:

“Reasonable Adjustments are adjustments made to an assessment for a qualification so as to enable a disabled Learner to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding to the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification.”

A learner does not necessarily have to be disabled (as defined by the Equality Act) to be entitled to reasonable adjustments to assessment. Every learner who is disabled will also not necessarily be entitled to or need an adjustment to assessment. The learner may have developed coping mechanisms which minimise or remove the need for reasonable adjustments.

3.2. Principles for reasonable adjustments

VTCT and its centres are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of giving access, and what is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances. An adjustment to assessment should only be considered where the disability or difficulty experienced places the learner at a disadvantage, in comparison with persons who are not disabled. Where the difficulty is minor, the centre should assist the learner by offering help with study and assessment skills. Centres should also bear in mind that:

- learners may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all qualifications;
- learners may need a single adjustment or a combination of adjustments;
- adjustments to assessments will mostly be needed for assessments which are taken under constrained/examination conditions.

Reasonable adjustments are approved or set in place before the assessment activity takes place; they constitute an arrangement to give the learner access to the qualification. Where reasonable adjustments have been applied the work produced by the learner will be marked to the same standard as the work of other assessed learners.

When considering whether an adjustment to assessment is appropriate, VTCT and the centre need to bear in mind that any adjustments to assessment:

- must not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification or the requirements of the assessment strategy;
- must not give the learner an unfair advantage or disadvantage;
- must reflect the learner's normal way of working;
- must be based on the individual needs of the learner;
- must not compensate the learner for lack of knowledge and skills;
- must not alter competency standards;
- must not comprise health and safety.

Any application for an adjustment to assessment must be supported by evidence which is valid, sufficient and reliable. Where the centre can verify evidence of the disability or difficulty and where the implications are clear, such as for a learner with physical difficulties, profound hearing impairment or who are registered as blind or partially sighted, the centre does not need to provide further evidence of these physical difficulties.

3.3. Types of reasonable adjustments

Determining whether reasonable adjustments are required and the type of reasonable adjustment which may be put in place, will depend on:

- the specific assessment requirements of the qualification;
- the type of assessment;
- the particular needs and circumstances of the individual learner.

The following permissions table gives the most common reasonable adjustments and shows where the reasonable adjustment can be approved by the centre or by VTCT. Guidance for implementing these reasonable adjustments is given in section 8. Where necessary, centres should contact VTCT to discuss individual cases.

Key
A – Reasonable adjustment that can be approved by the centre, retaining evidence
B – Apply to VTCT for permission with evidence

Reasonable adjustment	Assessments which are NOT taken under examination conditions	Assessments which are taken under examination conditions
Extra time up to 25%	A	A
Extra time in excess of 25%	B	B
Reader	A	B
Computer Reader	A	B
Scribe	A	B
Use of bilingual and bilingual translation dictionaries	A	B
Supervised rest breaks	A	B
Change in the organisation of assessment room	A	A
Separate accommodation within the centre	A	B
Taking the assessment at an alternative venue	B	B
Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles, CCTV and OCR scanners	A	A
Use of assistive software	A	B

Reasonable adjustment	Assessments which are NOT taken under examination conditions	Assessments which are taken under examination conditions
Candidates who have been in the UK for less than 2 years may have additional 25%	A	A
Assessment material in enlarged format	A	B
Assessment material in Braille	B	B
Language modified assessment material	B	B
Assessment material in BSL	B	B
Assessment material on coloured paper	A	A
Assessment material in audio format	B	B
Use of ICT	A	B
Responses using electronic devices	A	B
Responses in BSL	A	B
Responses in Braille	B	B
BSL/English interpreter	A	B
Prompter	A	B
Practical assistant	B	B
Transcriber	A	B
Other	B	B

3.4. Declaring centre approved reasonable adjustments

Centres can authorise adjustments to assessments for A Category reasonable adjustments. Centres need to declare any centre approved reasonable adjustments using the Form for Reasonable Adjustments ('A' Categories – centre approved), which is available on the secure area of VTCT's website.

VTCT have also provided a process guide for centres to aid completing these forms, which is also available from the secure area of VTCT's website.

3.5. Applying for VTCT approved reasonable adjustments

Centres will need to apply for adjustments to assessments on behalf of a learner for B Category reasonable adjustments. Centres need to apply for any VTCT approved reasonable adjustments using VTCT's electronic application form <https://forms.vtct.org.uk/ReasonableAdjustments/>

A separate application will need to be completed for each learner.

VTCT have also provided a process guide for centres to aid completing these forms, called Centre instructions – Application for Reasonable Adjustments, which is also available from the secure area of VTCT's website.

4. Special considerations

4.1. Definition of special considerations

The following definition is given by Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition:

“Special Consideration is consideration to be given to a Learner who has temporarily experienced –

- a) an illness or injury, or
- b) some other event outside of the Learner's control, which has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on that Learner's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment.”

4.2. Principles of special considerations

Each request for special consideration will be unique to that learner or assessment. These guidelines offer some broad principles for the centre to follow. Further information should be sought in each case from VTCT.

Special consideration may be given following a scheduled assessment to a learner:

- who is present for the assessment but who may have been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances which arose at or near the time of assessment
- who misses part of the assessment due to circumstances beyond their control.

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 Licence to Practise, it may not be possible to apply special consideration.

In some circumstances, it may be more appropriate to offer the learner an opportunity to retake the assessment at a later date.

Special consideration should not give the learner an unfair advantage, neither should its use cause users of the certificate to be misled regarding a learner's achievements. The learner's result must reflect their achievement in the assessment and not necessarily their potential ability.

If the application for special consideration is successful, the learner's performance will be reviewed in the light of available evidence. It should be noted that a successful application of special consideration will not necessarily change a learner's result.

4.3. Eligibility criteria

A learner who is fully prepared and present for a scheduled assessment may be eligible for special consideration if:

- performance in an assessment is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the learner e.g. recent personal illness, accident, bereavement, serious disturbance during the assessment;
- alternative assessment arrangements which were agreed in advance of the assessment proved inappropriate or inadequate;
- part of an assessment has been missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the learner;
- 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.

A learner will not be eligible for special consideration if:

- no evidence is supplied by the centre that the learner has been affected at the time of the assessment by a particular condition;
- any part of the assessment is missed due to personal arrangements including holidays or unauthorised absence;
- preparation for a component is affected by difficulties during the course, e.g. disturbances through building work, lack of proper facilities, changes in or shortages of staff, or industrial disputes.

4.4. Applying for special considerations

Centres need to apply for special consideration using the Form for Special Considerations, which is available on the secure area of VTCT's website. A separate form should normally be completed for each learner for each qualification. However, in cases where a group of learners has been disadvantaged by a particular event (e.g. fire alarm), a single form should be submitted, with a list of learners affected should be attached to the form.

VTCT have also provided a process guide for centres to aid completing the Form for Special Considerations, which is available on the secure area of VTCT's website.

The application for special consideration should be submitted immediately or within 24 hours after the assessment and never later than 5 working days after the assessment. Requests for special consideration may only be accepted after the results of the assessment have been released in the following circumstances:

- the 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 on-screen assessments where results are immediately available.

5. Record retention requirements

VTCT states its record retention requirements in the Centre Handbook, which is available to view on the VTCT website.

In relation to reasonable adjustments and special considerations, centres are required to retain any requests or decisions for reasonable adjustments and special considerations, including any supporting evidence and relevant documentation received from VTCT, for 3 years. This can be retained in electronic or paper format.

6. Malpractice

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

- implementing VTCT approved reasonable arrangements without obtaining prior approval from VTCT;
- implementing centre approved reasonable adjustments that are not supported by evidence;
- failing to declare centre approved reasonable adjustments to VTCT;
- failing to retain records of reasonable adjustments and special considerations in accordance with VTCT's requirements.

Instances of malpractice will be dealt in accordance with the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, which is available on the VTCT website.

7. Appeals

If you wish to appeal against a VTCT decision regarding reasonable adjustments or special considerations, please refer to our Enquires and Appeals Policy which can be found on the VTCT website.

8. Guidance for implementing reasonable adjustments

8.1. Extra time

- a) Where assessment activities are time constrained a learner may be allowed extra time during an assessment if he/she has a condition which affects the speed of processing.
- b) The amount of extra time allowed should accurately reflect the extent to which the completion of the assessment will be affected by the learner's difficulty. 'Unlimited' extra time will not be allowed. It is the centre's responsibility to specify the amount of extra time the learner will need, using as a guide the extra time required during formative assessments in the centre.
- c) Extra time will not be allowed for computer-based assessments testing the time in which a skill is performed, such as keyboarding speed tests. Extra time may, however, be available for those computer-based assessments where the manipulation of software, and not processing speed, is the primary aim of the assessment.
- d) Extra time for online assessments may have to be customised for each learner. In these cases, the centre is advised to contact the awarding body to apply for a time extension to be set up.
- e) Before the centre allows extra time for the learner, the centre should be satisfied that the learner can cope with the content of the qualification and that the learner is medically fit to undertake the extended assessment.

- f) Extra time will not be allowed in practical activities where the timing is a crucial part of the assessment, for example, commercial service standards or in group activities where the learner's performance will be assessed in conjunction with others

8.2. Supervised rest breaks

Where assessment activities are time constrained, a learner may, if there is a demonstrated need, be allowed supervised rest breaks during an assessment.

- a) Supervised rest breaks may be taken either in or outside the assessment room. The duration of the breaks will not be deducted from the assessment time. The centre should be aware that, during the supervised rest breaks, the learner is still under assessment conditions and that the usual regulations governing the conduct of assessments will apply during this time.
- b) Rest breaks are not applicable where speed or time e.g. commercial service standards is a component of what is being assessed, although, if there is a natural break in the assessment, i.e. between tasks, supervised rest breaks can be allowed.
- c) For online assessments, the centre needs to check with VTCT whether the time for rest breaks must be built into the extra time requested for the assessment. This will be necessary if the test runs continuously on the system. The system must also be supervised during the break to ensure that no one else can interfere with the learner's test during the break.

8.3. Change in the organisation of the assessment room

Minor changes to the organisation of the assessment room may benefit some learners with autistic spectrum disorder, with visual or hearing impairment or with physical difficulties.

- a) Visually impaired learners may benefit from sitting near a window so that they have good lighting.
- b) Deaf learners may benefit from sitting near the front of the room and in good light.
- c) Some learners may benefit from using chairs with arm rests or adjustable heights.
- d) Autistic learners may benefit from having visual/noise stimuli, such as a ticking clock, removed from the room.

8.4. Separate accommodation within the centre

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

8.5. Taking the assessment at an alternative venue

In certain circumstances, the learner may be permitted to take an assessment at an alternative venue, for example at home or in a hospital.

The centre should ensure that the learner is medically fit to take the assessment.

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

- a) The centre should ensure that the learner has had sufficient practice in the use of these aids and that any electronic aids are in good working order.

- b) For assessments taken under examination conditions, the learner should be accommodated separately with separate invigilation if the use of any of these aids will disturb other learners. In these cases, the invigilator should be fully informed of the learner's support.
- c) A centre should contact VTCT if they are unclear about whether any new technology will unfairly advantage the learner or invalidate the assessment requirements.

8.7. Use of assistive technology

Examples of assistive technology include speech/screen reading software and voice activated software.

- a) Some learners may benefit from the use of software that reads the assessment material to them and records their spoken responses.
- b) Speech software should not be allowed for qualifications where reading is the competency being assessed. Elsewhere, and especially in vocational areas, such software may be used to allow learners to have access to assessments that are appropriate for them and enable them to show their proficiency.
- c) The centre should ensure that the use of assistive technology will not invalidate the assessment requirements or give the learner an unfair advantage. Due to the rapid development of such technology, the centre should seek advice from VTCT if the implications of using certain kinds of assistive technology are unclear.

It should be noted that the use of such software may introduce a hidden assessment agenda, in that the learner has to master the use of the software in addition to mastering the assessment criteria. Some learners may need extra time if they use such software.

8.8. Use of bilingual dictionaries or bilingual translation dictionaries

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

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

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

8.9. Assessment material in enlarged format

- a) For paper-based assessments

Enlargements for paper-based assessments may be used. Examples of this include:

- unmodified enlarged papers where the standard paper is photocopied from A4 to A3, thus enlarging the whole paper and retaining the original layout and visual presentation.
- modified enlarged paper where the paper is modified by simplifying the layout and where necessary reducing the content while still meeting the same objectives as those tested in the original paper.

Where VTCT provides externally set assessment material in a modified enlarged format, the centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable.

Where the centre is permitted to make the enlargements to externally set assessment material, it should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is enlarged. The learner may be penalised for any errors in their work which occur as a result of incomplete enlargement of the material.

It is the centre's responsibility to provide centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference material in a suitable format for the learner.

b) On-screen assessments

If the default font and text size used for an on-screen assessment are not suitable for the learner, screen magnification software programmes may provide an option to magnify the text to a suitable size. Advanced screen magnification software programmes provide options to change colours and fonts.

8.10. Assessment material in Braille

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

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

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

Where VTCT provides externally set assessment material in Braille, the centre should meet the deadlines for applying for this. If Braille assessment material has been ordered but is no longer required, the centre should inform VTCT immediately as any costs incurred in producing such material may be passed to the centre.

Permission may be given to the centre to Braille externally set assessment materials. VTCT will advise when this can be permitted.

Where the centre is permitted to Braille externally set assessment material, it should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is in braille. The learner may be penalised for any errors in their work which occur as a result of errors in the braille material.

Braille is not always an appropriate adjustment for the learner, not all blind people are fluent in Braille, and others methods may suit (including reader and scribe).

It is the centre's responsibility to arrange for the brailleing of centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference materials.

8.11. Language modified assessment material

The carrier language in assessment material may be modified for a deaf learner whose first language is either English or British Sign Language (BSL). In either case, the learner's English may be limited and modified assessment material may be necessary. BSL is a language in its own right and has its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary and written assessment material will have to be modified for most deaf learners for whom BSL is their first language.

- a) Technical language may not be modified. The modified version of the assessment material should contain the same questions as the standard version and the same answers will be expected from the learner.

- b) In listening tests, a transcript of the test may be provided, which can be read to the learner by a live speaker. This will enable the learner to lip-read the text.
- c) Where VTCT provides language modified externally set assessment material, the centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable
- d) Where the centre is permitted to modify externally set assessment material, they should take responsibility for the security of the material and for the accuracy of the modification. The learner may be penalised for any errors in their work which occur as a result of inaccurate modification of the material.
- e) It is the centre's responsibility to arrange for the modification of centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference materials.

8.12. Assessment material in BSL (British Sign Language)

Where the centre cannot provide a BSL/English interpreter for the assessment, and if language modified assessment material does not provide sufficient assistance, a BSL version of assessment material may be provided on videotape instead of (or in addition to) the assessment material in written English. This facility may not be permitted for assessments where reading or listening is the competency being assessed.

- a) Where VTCT provides externally set assessment material in BSL, the centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable.
- b) Where the centre is permitted to translate externally set assessment material into BSL, they should take responsibility for the security of the material and for the accuracy of the translation. The learner may be penalised for any errors in their work which occur as a result of errors in the material.
- c) It is the centre's responsibility to arrange for the translation of centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference materials into BSL.
- d) Centres should note that this adjustment will not be suitable for all assessments and that they need to contact the awarding body for further advice if they are unclear whether this adjustment is appropriate.
- e) Centres should read the guidance for BSL/English interpreters in Appendix F in conjunction with this section.

8.13. Assessment material on coloured paper

- a) Where VTCT provides externally set assessment material on coloured paper, the centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable.
- b) Where the centre is permitted to photocopy externally set assessment material onto coloured paper, it should take responsibility for the security of the assessment material and for ensuring that the entire document is copied.
- c) The learner may be penalised for any errors in their script which occur as a result of incomplete copying of the document.
- d) It is the centre's responsibility to provide centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference material on coloured paper if required
- e) Where the centre is using on-screen assessments, it may be possible to provide a screen background in a colour that is suited to the learner's needs. Centres should contact VTCT for advice.

8.14. Assessment material in audio format

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

- a) Where VTCT provides externally set assessment material in audio format, the centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable.
- b) Where the centre is permitted to produce an audio version of externally set assessment material, they should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the recording is accurate. The learner may be penalised for any errors in their work which occur as a result of errors in the recording.
- c) It is the centre's responsibility to provide centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference material in a suitable format for the learner.

8.15. Use of ICT to present responses

Learners that require a reasonable adjustment may be entitled to the use of ICT where appropriate. However, learners are not entitled to the use of ICT where they do not require a reasonable adjustment, even when this is their normal way of working.

Where e-testing is available to the centre and learners, the centre doesn't need to consider this as a reasonable adjustment.

The use of ICT in this context should be taken to include word processors, personal computers (PCs) and other microprocessor controlled devices producing output in text or other forms such as graphics and diagrams.

- a) For many learners with additional support needs, computers provide an effective means of independent communication. Consideration should be given to whether the learner can meet the assessment criteria using a computer.
- b) A computer should only be used if it is appropriate to the learner's needs and if the learner is confident in its use, can use it effectively and if it reflects their normal way of working. The learner should be consulted before a decision is taken whether the use of ICT is an appropriate adjustment.
- c) When a computer is used, other than as a basic word processor, the centre needs to consider the effect and appropriateness of facilities like spell-checkers, electronic dictionaries, thesauri, calculators, predictive software, etc that are available.
- d) The use of the computer should not create a misleading impression of the learner's attainment or confer an unfair advantage over other learners.
- e) The centre should ensure that workstations are adapted to the needs of the learner and that enabling technologies, (for example, screen reading software, coloured background, adapted keyboard, large tracker ball mouse, sticky keys) are available.
- f) Where it is apparent that assessment objectives cannot be met fully if a computer is used, the centre should suggest alternative arrangements.

8.16. Spoken responses using electronic recording devices

Electronic recording devices can include CDs, memory sticks and audio cassettes. Where there is evidence of need, the learner may be permitted to record their responses electronically.

- a) This arrangement will only be available for assessments where there is no requirement for the learner to produce visual material.
- b) Where the learner's responses are recorded electronically, the centre should provide an authenticated transcript of the learner's responses.
- c) It will be the centre's responsibility to ensure that the transcript is an accurate reflection of the learner's responses and to keep this and the original recording as a record of the assessment.

8.17. Responses in BSL

Where there is evidence of need, the learner may be allowed to sign their responses to questions.

- a) The signing of responses should not be permitted if the ability to write or speak English, Welsh or Irish is being assessed.
- b) A learner can sign full responses in BSL. Where the learner is required to show knowledge of an expression/name in their response, this must be finger spelt. This must all be videoed for quality assurance purposes. The centre will provide a translation of the responses for assessment.
- c) The centre should ensure that the person doing the translation is appropriately qualified.
- d) The centre should ensure that sufficient recording equipment is available and that it is in good working order.
- e) Where the centre provides a transcript of the learner's response, the centre should ensure that the transcript is authenticated and an accurate reflection of the learner's responses. The centre should keep this as a record of the assessment.

8.18. Responses in Braille

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

- a) In these cases, an authenticated transcript of the learner's responses should be provided by the centre.
- b) It will be the centre's responsibility to ensure that the transcript is an accurate reflection of the learner's responses and to keep the transcript for their records.

8.19. Reader/E-reader/Computer reader

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

- a) 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 and where there is evidence of need.
- b) The centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a reader will be an effective arrangement. The learner may be more comfortable with accessing the assessment material in electronic format, in Braille or through sign language.
- c) The centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a reader.
- d) The reader should not normally be the learner's own tutor or assessor, except in circumstances where it is necessary to do so. In such cases, VTCT should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a reader.
- e) The centre should select the reader on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the learner. The reader should be able to read accurately and at a reasonable rate and should have sufficient knowledge of the subject to read technical terms accurately.
- f) A learner should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the nominated reader and should have used this arrangement during the training programme leading up to the assessment.
- g) The centre should ensure that the learner and reader are clear about the limitations of the reader's role.
- h) A separate invigilator should be present when a reader is used to ensure that the guidance regarding readers is followed.
- i) The centre should give the reader clear instructions regarding what they are required to do and what they may and may not do during the assessment. These instructions should also be given to the invigilator.

- j) For a learner requiring a reader and a scribe, the same person may act as both as long as permission has been given for both arrangements.
- k) The learner using a reader should be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other learners.
- l) Where a learner is not eligible for the use of a reader, it may be helpful for the learner to read the questions aloud. In these circumstances, the learner must be accommodated in a separate room so that other learners are not disturbed. Separate invigilation should be arranged in these cases. The invigilator may not correct the reading of the learner.
- m) The reader is responsible to and should be approved by the Head of Centre or the centre staff member with delegated responsibility.
- n) The reader:
 - should read only as requested by the learner. The learner may choose to read some parts of the assessment him/herself;
 - should read accurately. If the reader is working with a deaf or hearing impaired learner, the reader should articulate clearly;
 - should only read the exact wording (instructions and questions), and not give meanings of words, rephrase or interpret anything;
 - should repeat instructions and questions on the paper only when specifically requested to do so by the learner;
 - may consult a dictionary, where this is allowed, at the learner's request and read out entries;
 - should read, as often as requested, the answers already recorded, but may not act as proof-reader;
 - should not advise the learner regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which the questions should be answered;
 - may enable a visually impaired learner to identify which piece of the visual material relates to which question, but should neither give factual help to the learner nor offer any suggestion;
 - is permitted to help a visually impaired learner using diagrams, graphs and tables to obtain the information that the print/amended print copy would give to a sighted learner;
 - should, if requested, give a visually impaired learner the spelling of a word which appears on the paper, but otherwise spellings must not be given;
 - should refer any problems during the assessment to the invigilator.

8.20. Scribe/Amanuensis

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

- a) The centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a scribe is an appropriate adjustment. As the effective use of a scribe requires high-level communication skills from the learner, the centre is advised to consider whether the learner would be more comfortable with the use of a computer. The learner is also more likely to use a word processor rather than a scribe in the workplace.
- b) For a learner requiring a scribe and a reader, the same person may act as both, provided permission has been given for both.
- c) The use of a scribe should not affect the assessment requirements for the qualification being assessed. In some cases, the writing of answers by the learner may be the skill being assessed.
- d) The centre should select a scribe on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the learner. A scribe should be able to produce an accurate record of the learner's responses, write legibly and/or word process

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

- e) The centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a scribe.
- f) A scribe is not permitted in an assessment requiring word processing, or where the writing is the competency being assessed.
- g) A scribe should not normally be the learner's own tutor or assessor, except when it is necessary to do so. In such cases, the awarding body should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a scribe.
- h) A learner should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the scribe and used this arrangement during their learning programme.
- i) The centre should ensure that the learner and scribe are clear about the limitations of the scribe's role.
- j) The centre should give the scribe clear instructions regarding what he/she is required to do/what he/she is not allowed to do during the assessment. These instructions should also be given to the invigilator.
- k) The learner using a scribe should be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other learners.
- l) A separate invigilator should be present when a scribe is used to ensure that the guidance regarding scribes is followed.
- m) The scribe is responsible to and should be approved by the Head of Centre or the centre staff member with delegated responsibility.
- n) During the assessment a scribe:
 - should check with the learner for which parts of the assessment they wish to have their responses scribed. The learner may choose to write some responses him/herself.
 - should neither give factual help to the learner nor offer any suggestions.
 - should not advise the learner regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question or the order in which the questions should be answered.
 - should write down answers exactly as they are dictated. Where spelling accuracy and punctuation is being tested, the scribe must follow explicit instructions from the learner. The scribe may not take responsibility for spelling technical words.
 - should write a correction on a typescript or Braille sheet if requested to do so by the learner.
 - should not assist the learner to produce any diagrammatical or graphical material. If assistance with this is needed, approval should be obtained from VTCT in advance of the assessment. Exceptions to this are Entry Level qualifications where the scribe is allowed to draw or add to diagrams in accordance with the learner's instructions.
 - may, at the learner's request, read back what has been written but no comment must be made about any part of the learner's response.
 - should immediately refer any problems in communication during the examination to the invigilator.

8.21. British Sign Language (BSL)/English interpreter

Although British Sign Language (BSL) is now recognised as an official language of the UK, it is not a statutory language, unlike English, Welsh and Irish.

Where BSL is the primary means of communication for a deaf learner, these learners may have the support of a BSL/English interpreter to sign the questions (or part questions) where they are undertaking written assessments.

For assessments where reading or speaking and listening are the competencies being assessed, BSL or any other sign language may only be used for the assessment material rubric and instructions.

- a) The centre should ensure that the BSL interpreter has an appropriate qualification in the sign language and a good working knowledge of the content of the assessment. Some awarding bodies may provide the centre with a specification for the person allowed to interpret the written assessment material into BSL.
- b) A learner should, wherever possible, have had previous experience of working with a BSL/English interpreter and should have used this arrangement during the learning programme leading up to the assessment.
- c) The centre should ensure that the learner and the person providing the interpretation are clear about the limitations of the latter's role in the assessment situation.
- d) The centre should ensure that the person providing the interpretation has access to the assessment material in advance of the assessment, to prepare for the signing. This arrangement should be agreed with VTCT.
- e) The interpretation should not give the learner an unfair advantage and care must be taken not to indicate the meaning of technical words, where the learner's understanding of these words is inherent in the purpose of the question. The interpretation should not explain or clarify. In some instances, it may be more appropriate to fingerspell a word.
- f) Any words or phrases interpreted for the learner because a standard sign is not available or appropriate should be underlined on the assessment material, which, if separate from the answer book, should be attached to the learner's answer book. Amended versions of questions should be shown on the assessment material.
- g) The learner using a BSL/English interpreter should be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other learners.
- h) A separate invigilator should be present when a BSL/English interpreter is used to ensure that guidance regarding BSL/English interpreters is followed.
- i) The BSL/English interpreter:
 - should have access to the assessment material in advance of the examination to prepare for the signing. Please contact VTCT in respect of recommendations of how long before the assessment the BSL/English interpreter needs access to the assessment material
 - should not interpret technical language or give additional explanations
 - may, at the learner's request, sign any labels or text connected with reference material such as maps, diagrams or graphs. The learner should, however, study the reference material independently.

8.22. Prompter

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

The centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a prompter is an appropriate arrangement.

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

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

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

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

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

The prompter should sit near enough to be able to observe the learner and draw their attention back to the task. This should, however, be organised as unobtrusively as possible. The learner's attention may be drawn back to the task using a light tap on the learner's arm or shoulder or, alternatively, on the desk (though not in a way that may be taken to indicate any part of the examination question paper nor cause disturbance of other learners).

Verbal prompting should not normally be used. The method used by the prompter to bring back the learner's attention should be agreed before the assessment between the learner and the prompter and should be acceptable to the centre. It should be noted that some learners with emotional and behavioural sensitivity/vulnerability and/or mental health conditions may not be comfortable with a 'light tap' prompt. A form of verbal prompting should be considered and agreed for these learners.

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

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

The centre should give the prompter clear instructions regarding what they are required to do and what they may and may not do during the assessment. These instructions should also be given to the invigilator.

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

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

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

During an assessment a prompter:

- should draw the learner's attention back to the task at hand;
- should use the method of prompting agreed with the learner;
- should not give factual help to the learner or offer any suggestions;
- should not advise the learner regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question or the order in which the questions should be done. For Entry Level qualifications it may be appropriate for the prompter to direct the learner to where they were last;
- should be prepared for periods of inactivity during the assessment, but should remain vigilant;
- should immediately refer any problems during the assessment to the invigilator.

8.23. Practical assistant

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

- a) The centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a practical assistant is an appropriate arrangement. A practical assistant will not normally be allowed in those qualifications where the practical skill is the focus of the assessment.
- b) The centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a practical assistant.
- c) The practical assistant should be familiar with the requirements of the assessment, but should not normally be the learner's own teacher/tutor/assessor except when it is necessary to do so. In such cases, VTCT should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a practical assistant.
- d) A practical assistant should be a person who is able to ensure the safety of the learner and carry out their instructions accurately.
- e) The centre should prepare clear written instructions for the practical assistant on the assistance they are able to give the learner. A copy of these instructions should also be given to the invigilator and learner. The centre should note that the practical assistant may not perform tasks for which the learner will receive credit.
- f) The use of a practical assistant should not modify the specification requirements. For example, where the manipulation of apparatus, use of equipment or making accurate visual observations may be the skill being assessed, the use of a practical assistant will not be permitted.
- g) A learner using a practical assistant may need to be accommodated separately from other learners. In these cases, a separate invigilator should be present to ensure that the guidance regarding practical assistants is followed. During practical assessments, the assessor should be present in addition to the practical assistant.
- h) During a practical assessment, a practical assistant:
 - should follow the instructions prepared by the centre on the level and kind of assistance that can be given to the learner;
 - should ensure the safety of the learner and those around him/her;
 - should not give factual help to the learner or offer any suggestions;
 - should not advise the learner which questions to do, when to move on to the next question or the order in which the questions should be done;
 - should carry out instructions exactly as they are given unless to do so would cause a hazard. If the practical assistant does not understand the learner's instructions, he/she may ask for clarification but must not lead the learner in any way or attempt to interpret the learner's wishes; if incorrect or inadequate instructions are given by the learner this must be reflected in the outcome of the assessment;
 - should not expect to assist the learner throughout the entire assessment (there may be parts of the assessment which the learner can do without help and thus gain credit for demonstrating the required skills);
 - should immediately refer any problems during an assessment to the invigilator/supervisor.

8.24. Transcriber

This arrangement may be used by a learner in the following circumstances:

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

The transcriber will produce a transcript to assist the examiner/assessor in the assessment of a learner's work. The examiner/assessor will assess the learner's work and will only refer to the transcript if it is impossible to decipher

any part of the learner's response(s). (For responses produced in Braille or BSL the examiner/assessor may refer solely to the transcript).

- a) The centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a transcript will be an effective arrangement.
- b) The centre should give the transcriber clear instructions regarding what they are required to do before, during, and after the assessment.
- c) the transcript should be produced by a member of the centre's staff who is familiar with the learner's handwriting, is fully competent in braille (where the transcription is for learner's responses produced in braille), or who has the required skills in BSL (where the transcription is for learner's responses produced in BSL).
- d) The transcript(s) should be securely attached to the back of the learner's work and be included with the other work from the centre for dispatch to the assessor in the normal way. The production of the transcript should not delay the dispatch of scripts to VTCT.
- e) the centre should not attach to the learner work or transcript the reason why a transcript was necessary.
- f) the transcriber:
 - should produce the transcript in a separate copy of the question paper/answer booklet or on lined or unlined white paper as appropriate.
 - May handwrite or word process the transcript. If handwritten, dark blue or black ink should be used. Pencil must never be used.
 - should, for examinations, produce the transcript immediately after the examination under secure conditions.
 - should not involve the learner in the production of the transcript.
 - should normally transcribe complete answers. In cases where only occasional words need to be transcribed, these may be written on a photocopy of the learner's script. On no account should the learner's original script be marked or annotated in any way.
 - should normally be a word-for-word transcription, i.e. an exact copy of what the learner has written. The transcriber may not insert or omit words or alter their order. In English, Welsh or Irish or modern foreign language examinations any errors, including those of spelling, punctuation and grammar, must be transcribed as given by the learner and must not be corrected. In other qualifications, the transcriber may correct the spelling of non-technical words.
 - should indicate any corrections to spelling on the verbatim transcript using a different colour ink, but not red, green or purple ink. Pencil must not be used for this purpose.
 - should not transcribe diagrammatical material. Assessment of such material will be based on the learner's own work.

Document amendment history page

Version	Document Owner	Issue Date	Changes	Role
v1	Assessment Manager	01/01/2014	First published	
v2	Assessment Manager	03/06/2016	Name changed from "VTCT Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration in VTCT Qualifications 2014". Updated to remove obsolete references and duplication. Forms removed from policy and links inserted. Published prior to Skillsfirst review.	Quality and Processing Supervisor
v3	Assessment Manager	13/04/2017	Updated with new branding	Quality and Processing Supervisor
v4	Assessment Manager	13/06/2017	Added appendix for revisions to this document	Quality and Processing Supervisor
v5	Assessment Manager	29/09/2017	Updated references to policies and forms on the website	
v6	Assessment Manager	13/02/2017	Formatted and updated to new branding	Product Designer (Qualifications)
v7	Assessment Manager	03/07/2019	Formatted and updated to new branding	Compliance Manager
v8	Head of Assessment	04/10/2021	Minor amendments. Updated job titles	Head of Assessment
v9	Head of Assessment	28/10/2021	Minor amendment.	Head of Assessment
v10	Head of Assessment	30/11/2021	Link to electronic form	Head of Assessment
v11	Head of Assessment	27/01/2023	Branding updated	Head of Assessment

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