



# **REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS POLICY**

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## **Section 1 – Overview of the policy**

### **1.1 Scope of the policy**

This policy is aimed at our customers, including candidates, who are using the products and services shown below and who submit requests for reasonable adjustments and special considerations:

- ◆ National Qualifications
- ◆ National Awards
- ◆ National Partnership Awards
- ◆ Centre-devised courses accredited under our customised award service and Investing in Quality licence.

### **1.2 Purpose of the policy**

The purpose is to set out the steps you follow when implementing reasonable adjustments and special considerations and the service we provide for some of these arrangements.

### **1.3 Location of the policy**

You can download copies of the policy from our website: [www.ncfe.org.uk](http://www.ncfe.org.uk) or request copies from our Centre Support team on 0191 239 8000 or by emailing [info@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:info@ncfe.org.uk). We've also signposted the policy in both our *Candidate Information Pack*, which is available to use for each NCFE national qualification or national award and in our *NCFE Centre Support Guide*. Both documents are available from our website or our Centre Support team.

### **1.4 Communication of the policy**

It's important that both centre personnel involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our programmes and candidates studying our programmes are fully aware of the contents of the policy. Please ensure that you've made your colleagues and candidates aware of the policy. On their centre visits, our External Moderators, External Verifiers and Quality Advisors may check that you've not only received the policy but also made your relevant colleagues and candidates aware of its contents and purpose.

### **1.5 Review of the policy**

We'll review the policy annually and may revise it as and when required in response to customer and stakeholder feedback, changes in our practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies or changes in legislation. We reserve the right to amend the policy as and when necessary. Our review of the policy will ensure that our procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied properly and fairly in arriving at judgements.

We'll consider issues raised by you with respect to reasonable adjustments and special considerations in the on-going development of this policy and our products and services.

## **Section 2 – Defining reasonable adjustments and special considerations**

### **2.1 Overview**

We seek to uphold human rights relating to race relations, disability discrimination and special educational needs of our candidates and to provide equal reasonable adjustments and special considerations for all candidates registered on our programmes. Consequently, as an approved centre, we expect you to have an anti-discriminatory access to assessment policy in operation, which reflects the following principles and guidelines.

Assessment should be a fair test of candidates' knowledge and what they're able to do, however, for some candidates the usual format of assessment may not be suitable. We recognise that reasonable adjustments or special considerations may be required at the time of assessment where:

- ◆ candidates have a permanent disability or specific learning needs
- ◆ candidates have a temporary disability, medical condition or learning needs
- ◆ candidates are indisposed at the time of the assessment.

The provision for reasonable adjustments and special consideration arrangements is made to ensure that candidates receive recognition of their achievement so long as the equity, validity and reliability of the assessments can be assured. Such arrangements are not concessions to make assessment easier for candidates, nor advantages to give candidates a head start.

There are two ways in which access to fair assessment can be maintained:

- ◆ through reasonable adjustments and
- ◆ through special considerations.

### **2.2 Reasonable adjustments**

A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the candidate at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation. Reasonable adjustments must not affect the integrity of what needs to be assessed, but may involve:

- ◆ changing standard assessment arrangements, for example allowing candidates extra time to complete the assessment activity
- ◆ adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in Braille
- ◆ providing access facilitators during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader
- ◆ re-organising the assessment room, such as removing visual stimuli for an autistic candidate.

Reasonable adjustments are approved or set in place before the assessment activity takes place; they constitute an arrangement to give the candidate access to the programme. The use of a reasonable adjustment will not be taken into consideration during the assessment of a candidate's work.

Awarding bodies and centres are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of giving access. What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances, cost implications and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment. Other factors, such as the need to maintain competence standards and health and safety, will also be taken into consideration.

## **2.3 Special considerations**

Special consideration is given following an assessment to candidates who are present for the assessment but may have been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances which arose at or near the time of assessment.

Candidates cannot enter a plea for special considerations for assessment solely on the grounds of disability or learning difficulty. Candidates must declare their needs prior to the assessment period and all necessary arrangements must have been implemented by you. If candidates leave such a declaration until after the assessment, reasonable adjustment arrangements cannot be made until the next available assessment opportunity.

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

Special consideration may result in a small post-assessment adjustment to the mark of the candidate. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances during the assessment and will reflect the difficulty faced by the candidate, but will always be a minor adjustment as to do more may jeopardise the standard.

Where an assessment requires a competence, criterion or standard 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 candidate an opportunity to retake the assessment at a later date or to extend the registration period so that the candidate has more time to complete the assessment activity.

## **2.4 Making reasonable adjustments**

Adjustments to assessments:

- ◆ should not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification
- ◆ should not give the candidates an unfair advantage
- ◆ should reflect the candidate's normal way of working
- ◆ should be based on the individual need of the candidate.

These principles should be followed when making decisions about a candidate's need for adjustments to assessment.

All awarding bodies and centres have a responsibility to ensure that the process of assessment is robust and fair and allows the candidate to show what they know and can do without circumventing the assessment criteria.

When considering whether an adjustment to assessment is appropriate, awarding bodies and centres need to bear in mind the following:

- ◆ Candidates should potentially be able to achieve the assessment requirements. Adjustments to assessment should not compensate the candidate for lack of knowledge and skills. The candidate must be able to cope with the content of the assessment and be able to work at the level required for the assessment

- ◆ Any adjustment to assessment must not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification/award or the requirements of the assessment strategy. Competence standards should not be altered. While vocational awarding bodies should take all reasonable steps to ensure that candidates with a disability or difficulty are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in terms of access to assessment, there is no duty to make any adjustment to a provision, criterion or practice which is defined as a competence standard. All candidates' performance will be assessed against set standards. These standards cannot be altered, but it may be possible to change the delivery or process of assessment so that each candidate has an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do.
- ◆ Any adjustment to assessment must neither give the candidate an unfair advantage nor should it disadvantage the candidate. The qualification of a candidate who had an adjustment to assessment must have the same credibility as that of any other candidate. 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.
- ◆ Any adjustment to assessment must be based on the individual need of the candidate. Decisions about adjustments to assessment should be taken after careful consideration of the assessment needs of each individual candidate, the assessment requirements of the qualification and the nature and extent of the support given as part of normal teaching practice. Centres should not assume that the same adjustment will be required for all assessments. Different qualifications and different methods of assessments can make different demands on the candidate. Candidates should be consulted throughout the process.
- ◆ Any adjustment to assessment should reflect the candidate's normal way of working providing this does not affect what is being assessed in any way. The candidate should have experience of and practice in the use of the adjustment.

## **Section 3 – Our centre's roles and responsibilities**

### **3.1 Internal assessment**

Arrangements for reasonable adjustments for the internal assessment must ensure that the resulting candidate's evidence:

- ◆ meets the performance criteria
- ◆ is assessable
- ◆ is capable of internal verification/moderation and external verification/moderation.

In cases where you've made arrangements for reasonable adjustments for a candidate to complete the internal assessment component, please make the details available to our External Moderators, External Verifiers or Quality Advisors during their centre visit.

### **3.2 External assessment**

For candidates completing external assessments, you'll need to record the details of these arrangements on our *Invigilator's Register* and return it to us with the external assessment papers. For further information about the return of external assessment papers, please refer to our *Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment* which is available to download from our website ([www.ncfe.org.uk](http://www.ncfe.org.uk)) or on request from our Centre Support team on 0191 239 8000 or by emailing [info@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:info@ncfe.org.uk).

### 3.3 Delegated responsibilities to our centres

The following arrangements may be implemented by you for both the internal and external assessment components **without prior application to us**. Please note that there are certain restrictions regarding arrangements for specific Key and Basic Skills qualifications - these have been referenced under each category below.

#### 3.3.1 Services for candidates who have a learning difficulty eg dyslexia

- ◆ Use of a reader
- ◆ Use of a scribe
- ◆ Use of audio-cassettes
- ◆ Use of a speech synthesiser
- ◆ Use of word-processing or transcription packages/typewriters (except where hand writing is an assessment objective)
- ◆ Use of modified print/paper colour
- ◆ Use of coloured overlays

A scribe **is** permitted for candidates completing the following qualifications:

- ◆ Level 1 Key Skills in Communication (100/0802/0)
- ◆ Level 2 Key Skills in Communication (100/0803/2)
- ◆ Level 1 Certificate in Adult Literacy (100/2029/9)
- ◆ Level 2 Certificate in Adult Literacy (100/2030/5)

#### 3.3.2 Services for candidates who have a hearing impairment

- ◆ Use of a communicator/interpreter
- ◆ Use of mechanical/electronic aids
- ◆ Use of any other suitable aids (recommended by a teacher of the hearing impaired)

The above arrangements are **not** permitted for candidates completing the following qualifications:

- ◆ Level 1 Key Skills in Communication (100/0802/0)
- ◆ Level 2 Key Skills in Communication (100/0803/2)
- ◆ Level 1 Certificate in Adult Literacy (100/2029/9)
- ◆ Level 2 Certificate in Adult Literacy (100/2030/5)

#### 3.3.3 Services for candidates who have a visual impairment

- ◆ Use of a reader
- ◆ Use of a scribe
- ◆ Use of mechanical/electronic aids (e.g. audiotape, speech synthesiser)
- ◆ Use of modified print/paper colour
- ◆ Use of coloured overlays

A scribe **is** permitted for candidates completing the following qualifications

- ◆ Level 1 Key Skills in Communication (100/0802/0)
- ◆ Level 2 Key Skills in Communication (100/0803/2)
- ◆ Level 1 Certificate in Adult Literacy (100/2029/9)
- ◆ Level 2 Certificate in Adult Literacy (100/2030/5)

### **3.3.4 Services for candidates who have a permanent physical impairment**

- ◆ Use of a reader
- ◆ Use of a scribe and/or interpreter
- ◆ Use of mechanical/electronic aids
- ◆ Use of an assistant in practical tasks

A scribe **is** permitted for candidates completing the following qualifications:

- ◆ Level 1 Key Skills in Communication (100/0802/0)
- ◆ Level 2 Key Skills in Communication (100/0803/2)
- ◆ Level 1 Certificate in Adult Literacy (100/2029/9)
- ◆ Level 2 Certificate in Adult Literacy (100/2030/5)

### **3.3.5 Services for candidates who have a medical condition or temporary injury**

- ◆ Use of a reader and/or scribe and/or interpreter
- ◆ Use of mechanical/electronic aids
- ◆ Use of an assistant in practical tasks

### **3.3.6 Service for candidates whose first language is not English, Gaelic or Welsh**

- ◆ Use of a bilingual dictionary (book form only; not electronic dictionaries or translators)

The above arrangements are **not** permitted for candidates completing the following qualifications:

- ◆ Level 1 Key Skills in Communication (100/0802/0)
- ◆ Level 2 Key Skills in Communication (100/0803/2)
- ◆ Level 1 Certificate in Adult Literacy (100/2029/9)
- ◆ Level 2 Certificate in Adult Literacy (100/2030/5)

Please note that candidates whose first language **is** English, Gaelic or Welsh are not permitted to use a bilingual dictionary for any NCFE qualification.

### **3.3.7 Change in the organisation of the assessment room**

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

- ◆ visually impaired candidates may benefit from sitting near a window so that they have good lighting
- ◆ hearing impaired candidates may benefit from being seated near the front of the room
- ◆ removing visual/noise stimuli, such as a ticking clock, from the room.

### **3.3.8 Service for candidates who require extra time and/or rest breaks**

Except where performance within a specific timescale is an assessment objective, you are empowered to grant additional time up to a maximum of 25% of external assessment time, and/or rest breaks, to candidates with particular requirements and with appropriate evidence of need.

### 3.3.9 Service for candidates who require separate invigilation

Arrangements for the separate invigilation of any candidate may be made at your discretion. Any invigilation arrangements for such candidates should not advantage or disadvantage these candidates over other candidates.

### 3.4 Reasonable adjustment arrangements applications to NCFE

- ◆ Complete our *Reasonable Adjustments Application form* for candidates who require their **external assessment paper modified or in Braille**. The form is available from our website: [www.ncfe.org.uk](http://www.ncfe.org.uk), or on request from our Centre Support team on 0191 239 8000 or by emailing [info@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:info@ncfe.org.uk). Alternatively, you can submit your own report accompanied with relevant supporting evidence.
- ◆ Each request should indicate the:
  - ◆ nature of the candidate's disability/learning need
  - ◆ special assessment arrangements requested
  - ◆ supporting evidence or confirmation that evidence is retained at the centre.

Remember that you should submit a request for a candidate who requires a modified external assessment paper or an external assessment paper in Braille **each time** that candidate is going to sit an external assessment, regardless of any previous requests they have made for the same candidate.

- ◆ Requests for modified external assessment papers must be made at least 15 working days prior to the agreed external assessment date.
- ◆ Requests for external assessment papers in Braille must be made 3 months prior to the external assessment date.
- ◆ Post, email or fax your completed form to our Centre Support team.

### 3.5 Our role and responsibilities

When we receive your application, we'll review it and let you know our decision within 48 hours of receipt. If our review is going to take longer, we'll contact you to let you know what we intend to do.

### 3.6 Evidence requirements

If your candidates require arrangements for reasonable adjustments they should provide you with evidence of their learning needs or medical condition. You must ensure that suitably qualified personnel check that the evidence is current and relevant to the candidate. Examples of evidence could be a relevant diagnostic report or statement of learning needs or medical condition from appropriately qualified personnel.

**Please retain the evidence and make it available to any of our authorised representatives who visit your centre.**

In the case of an appeal, you must ensure that evidence to support a reasonable adjustment or special consideration is retained for 3 months after you've been issued with the results of an assessment.

## **Section 4 – Special considerations for both internal and external assessment**

We'll review the circumstances surrounding each request for special consideration to ensure that the decision made maintains the equity, validity and reliability of the assessment for the candidate and does not give the candidate an unfair advantage.

Candidates need to submit evidence to you in support of special consideration. This may include medical evidence or a statement from the invigilator or any other appropriate information.

### **4.1 Internal assessment**

The only special consideration allowed is an extended time period/registration period for the completion of the assessment. Please retain evidence of this special consideration and make it available to our External Moderators, External Verifiers or Quality Advisors during their visits, as required.

### **4.2 External assessment**

All candidates regardless of their special consideration must still meet our minimum requirement for the award of a certificate. Where a candidate completes the external assessment under special considerations and sufficient supporting evidence is available, then we may make an exceptional circumstances award where candidates have achieved the internal assessment component providing at least 50% of the external assessment has been achieved.

For candidates completing external assessments, you should record the details of these arrangements on our *Invigilator's Register* and return it to us with the external assessment papers.

A candidate who's fully prepared for an external assessment may be eligible for special consideration if:

- ◆ performance in an external assessment is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the candidate, eg 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 candidate.

### **4.3 Applying for special considerations**

Please complete your application with the following information:

- ◆ centre number and name
- ◆ candidate name
- ◆ candidate number (where available)<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ programme and/or unit number/code
- ◆ programme title and level
- ◆ date of the assessment session (month and year)

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<sup>1</sup> A candidate registration number can be obtained from the centre's Examinations Officer or NCFE's Centre Support team.

- ◆ summary of adverse circumstances affecting the candidate's performance in the assessment
  - ◆ list of other units of the qualification already achieved and details of the assessor's and/or internal moderator's/verifier's records of their decisions about the candidate's achievement
  - ◆ estimated result for the candidate
  - ◆ copy of any evidence submitted to you by the candidate in support of their request.
- ◆ Please ensure that the application is signed and dated by a member of the centre staff who has formally been given delegated authority for this by the Head of Centre. The signatory must declare that the information given is accurate.
  - ◆ Please submit your application as soon as possible after the assessment and not later than 7 days after the assessment.
  - ◆ We can only accept requests for special consideration after the results of the assessment had 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 candidate's condition, which demonstrates that the candidate must have been affected by the condition at the time of the assessment, even though the problem revealed itself only after the assessment.
  - ◆ Post, email or fax your request for special considerations to our Centre Support team.

#### **4.4 Our role and responsibilities**

When we receive your application, we'll review it and inform you of our decision within 48 hours. If our review is going to take longer, we'll contact you to let you know what we intend to do. If your application for special consideration is successful, we'll review the candidate's performance in the light of available evidence. Please note that a successful application of special consideration would not necessarily change a candidate's result.

### **Section 5 – General information**

#### **5.1 Confidentiality**

We treat all records of reasonable adjustments and special consideration arrangements in confidence.

#### **5.2 Other arrangements not covered by this policy**

Circumstances for both internal and external assessment not covered in this policy should be discussed with our External Quality Assurance team before assessment takes place. Please contact our External Quality Assurance team on 0191 239 8000 or by emailing [info@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:info@ncfe.org.uk).

### **5.3 Appeals**

If you wish to appeal against our decision to decline requests for reasonable adjustments or special consideration arrangements, please refer to our *Appeals and Enquiries about Results Policy*, available to download from our website ([www.ncfe.org.uk](http://www.ncfe.org.uk)) or on request from our Centre Support team on 0191 239 8000 or by emailing [info@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:info@ncfe.org.uk).

### **5.4 Using this policy**

We want to help you in ensuring that your candidates have fair access to assessment, however, if we become aware that you are not following this policy, then we may have to review your centre's approval status with us. For further information, please refer to our *Malpractice Policy* available to download from our website ([www.ncfe.org.uk](http://www.ncfe.org.uk)) or on request from our Centre Support team on 0191 239 8000 or by emailing [info@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:info@ncfe.org.uk).

## **Section 6 – Your NCFE contact for this policy**

If you've any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact our Centre Support team:

Email: [info@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:info@ncfe.org.uk)  
Telephone: 0191 239 8000  
Fax: 0191 239 8001  
Post: NCFE  
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St James Boulevard  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
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