



BCS Group

Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

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CONTENTS

Introduction	3
An Overview	3
Access Arrangements	3
Reasonable Adjustments	3
Special Consideration	4
Am I entitled to a Reasonable Adjustment?.....	4
What is not a disability	5
What Reasonable Adjustments are considered acceptable?	5
How much extra time is allowed?	6
What assistance may I be entitled to?	6
How do I apply for extra time due to a disability?	10
How do I apply for extra time because of my language?	10
How do I apply for Special Consideration?	10
What documentary evidence is required?	11
Disclosure and Confidentiality	11
Examples of Reasonable Adjustments	12
Appeals	12
Review Arrangements	12

Introduction

BCS recognises that some learners require special arrangements when it comes to our examinations, and this policy aims to explain what you are entitled to request in line with the relevant legislation. We seek to provide equal access to examinations for all learners, ensuring there are no unnecessary barriers, and to accommodate the needs of learners according to individual requirements but within the confines of the law.

We have a duty to make a reasonable adjustment where the examination / assessment arrangements would put a disabled learner at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a learner who is not disabled. In these circumstances, we are required to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.

It is important to note that reasonable adjustments must not affect the reliability or validity of assessment outcomes, nor must they give the learner an unfair assessment advantage over other learners undertaking the same or similar assessments. Any reasonable adjustment must reflect the usual learning or working practice of a learner in a centre or working within the occupational area.

An Overview

Access Arrangements

Access Arrangements are agreed **before the examination / assessment upon registration**. They allow learners with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment, and show what they know, and can do, without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual learner, without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty, under the Equality Act 2010, to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

Reasonable Adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is unique to you and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements outlined in Section 4. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors, which may include:

- the needs of the disabled candidate;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; and
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the learner and other learners.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the Awarding Body;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; or
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not “reasonable”. In most cases it will not be reasonable for adjustments to be made to examination/assessment objectives within a qualification. To do so would likely undermine the effectiveness of the qualification in providing a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of the learner.

Special Consideration

Special Consideration is a request by the learner, **post examination/assessment**, to adjust the mark or grade to reflect temporary injury, illness or an event outside of your control (such as a family emergency or bereavement), that occurred just before, or at the time of the examination/assessment. You may also ask for special consideration if the reasonable adjustments requested, and agreed in advance of the examination, proved inadequate. We will not review your mark or grades if there are instances of noises, lack of proper facilities or industrial disputes that occurred during the examination, as these are outside of BCS’ control.

Please note that, in most circumstances, we would expect you to delay your examination in the event of a temporary illness or bereavement. However, if this is not possible then BCS will review your application for special consideration.

Am I entitled to a Reasonable Adjustment?

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long term adverse effect on a person’s ability to perform normal day to day activities. The following individuals will be considered for reasonable adjustments:

- a permanent physical impairment, e.g. cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis
- a recurring or fluctuating effect, e.g. rheumatoid arthritis
- a progressive condition such as an HIV infection, cancer or multiple sclerosis
- behavioural, emotional, social needs, e.g. chronic depression or autism
- a sensory impairment, e.g. hearing impairment or visual impairment
- specific cognitive difficulties, e.g. dyslexia or memory loss
- motor difficulties, e.g. hand and or eye co-ordination, difficulty moving hands and or arms

If there is not an option for you to take the examination/assessment in your native language you will be entitled to an extra 25% of time.

What is not a disability

Some conditions aren't covered by the disability definition. These include addiction to non-prescribed drugs or alcohol. If you need more information, then please refer to the 'Equality Act Guidance'.

What Reasonable Adjustments are considered acceptable?

Applications for reasonable adjustments will be individually considered and decisions may vary according to the exact nature of your everyday needs and usual method of working. The following adaptations are examples of what may be considered:

- Allocation of extra time
- Bilingual paper dictionary whose purpose is translation between the examination or assessment language and another national language (not available for on-line examination or assessment)
- Adapting assessment materials e.g. large format, different font, coloured paper or offered in Braille
- Support of a personal assistant, see Section 6.1 for further information
- Rest or Time Breaks, See Section 6.2 for further information
- Support of a Sign Language interpreter, see Section 6.3 for further information
- Support of a scribe or amanuensis, see Section 6.4 for further information
- Use of assistive technology, see Section 6.5 for further information
- Support of a reader, see Section 6.6 for further information
- Use of appropriate examination or assessment locations, See Section 6.7 for further information
- Re-sits, in the case of temporary illness or injury, see Section 6.9 for further information

This is not an exhaustive list and other adjustments will be considered on a case by case basis. It is important to note that not all the adjustments (as listed above) will be reasonable, permissible or practical in particular situations. The learner may not need, nor be allowed the same adjustment for all assessments.

How much extra time is allowed?

Extra time will be permitted, as appropriate to you, in line with this document ensuring you are not disadvantaged in relation to other learners.

The standard time extension for our examination/assessments is **25%** if you have a **disability** or are **not able to take the exam in your official or native language**.

Up to 100% extra time may be allocated dependent on your particular needs. Your health professional must make a recommendation for how much time is required if more than 25% extra time is requested.

You can request no more than 25% extra time if you are taking the examination in a language that is not your official or native language. However, some BCS examinations (as stated on the website) will only be offered in English and in these instances, no extra time will be allowed. See Section 6.11 for additional allowances.

What assistance may I be entitled to?

Arrangements for the use of third parties (such as an interpreter or scribe during the examination/assessment) will normally be your responsibility however BCS will take reasonable steps to source suitable persons if you are not able to do so.

Support of a Personal Assistant

You can request the support of a personal assistant if you need someone to help with personal care / assistance during the examination/assessment. This help will be designed to maintain the effectiveness of the examination/assessment. Personal assistants cannot give factual help or offer any suggestions or advice which could be seen as giving you an unfair advantage.

Rest Breaks

You can request rest breaks if you suffer from fatigue, physical or mental disabilities or for religious obligations. The rest break will be part of your extra time request and you can take it any time during the examination/assessment. Women who are pregnant are also allowed to use the toilet although no extra time is awarded for pregnant women. It is important that you do not discuss the examination/assessment with any third party during any break period.

Support of a Sign Language Interpreter

You can request a sign language interpreter if you are hard of hearing to undertake the role of conversing with others on your behalf. The interpreter can say a phrase or word as well as re-phrasing using sign language or by writing it down for you. They must not give factual help, offer any suggestions or advice which could give you an unfair advantage. We would normally expect the learner to source the interpreter although if this is not possible, BCS will make reasonable efforts to locate a suitable person.

Support of a scribe / amanuensis

You can request a scribe if you have limitations with writing down the answers such as a physical or visual impairment or a specific learning difficulty. The scribe's role will be someone who will write down your dictated answers to the questions. They must write down the answers exactly as they are dictated. They must not give factual help nor offer any suggestions or advice which could be seen as giving you an unfair advantage.

Use of laptop and adaptive/assistive technology

You can request the use of adaptive, assistive or access technology which enables you to access computer systems if you have particular needs. Where possible, we would expect you to use your own laptop and software. You will only be able to have access to the relevant programme or programmes and all equipment will be checked by the invigilator prior to the start of the examination/assessment. If you cannot use your own equipment BCS will make reasonable efforts to source the same or similar equipment. If BCS is unable to source suitable equipment, then we will advise you accordingly and you will be responsible for either sourcing suitable equipment or using what can be made available to us by BCS. The list below is indicative of the most common assistive technologies available but should be used as a guideline only.

Hardware

- Alternative keyboards and mice including:
 - Braille labelled keyboards or home-row key indicators; Joysticks / trackerballs / mouse keys on the keyboard; Mouth Stick
- Braille Display
- Switches (alternative input to keyboard and mouse, used by learners with physical disabilities)
- Large monitors
- Headphones and volume adjustment for use with voice output/input software packages

Software

- Operating System Accessibility features such as sticky keys, filter keys, mouse speed adjustments
- Screen magnification software e.g. [Dragon Software](#)
- Screen reading software (supporting both users with visual impairment and dyslexic users) e.g. [browsealoud.com](#), [JAWS software](#) or [NVDA](#)
- Input devices – eye/head operated pointing devices or on-screen keyboards

Support of a Reader

You can request a reader if you have a visual impairment or specific learning difficulties which would benefit from the support of a reader. They will be able to read all or any part of the examination/assessment or your answers to you. They can only read the exact wording and must not give meanings of words, rephrase or interpret anything. They should only repeat instructions and questions on the paper when specifically requested to do so by you. They cannot advise you which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which the questions should be answered. We would expect the reader to not have a conflict of interest in undertaking this task, however, we acknowledge that it is appropriate to have had previous working experience with you.

Use of alternative examination/assessment locations

You can request the use of alternative premises to take the examination/assessment if this benefits you due to a physical disability. Locations must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act, Health and Safety Regulations (or local equivalent) as well as disability access regulations and Centres are also required to meet these standards when hosting an examination/assessment.

Alternative format of examination/assessment papers

You can request changes to the font and/or font colour within reason for paper-based examination/assessments. We can also offer different coloured paper; blue, green, yellow or pink for dyslexic learners.

Please note that these options are not available for learners taking on-line examination/assessments.

Temporary Illness / Injury

Although a temporary illness or injury or indisposition would not be covered by the Equality Act (or local equivalent), we may still be able to accommodate learners affected in such a way. You need to complete the Reasonable Adjustments Form and provide supporting evidence of the circumstances and we will try to accommodate your request.

Pregnancy

You are entitled to go to the toilet if you are pregnant, but you are not entitled to extra time unless there are other medical conditions that would allow you to request extra time.

Taking an exam/assessment not in your official or native language

If the examination/assessment is taken in a language that is not your native / official language, then you are entitled to use your own **paper** dictionary (whose purpose is translation between the examination/assessment language and another national language) during the examination/assessment. Please advise your Centre at the time of course booking if you require extra time. You will not be able to use a dictionary if you sit through an on-line Test Centre such as Pearson.

Electronic dictionaries will **not** be allowed into the examination/assessment room.

Stammer / Stutter (Oral Examination/assessments Only)

You can request extra time for an oral examination/assessment if you have a stammer or stutter (not for a written examination/assessment). We will also try to allocate you the final interview slot of the day so that there are fewer time restrictions on you and the interviewers. Please let us know as early as possible so that the best time slot can be allocated to you. In exceptional circumstances, we may consider written responses to the interviewer questions.

Religious Obligations

You can request a break or different time to start the examination/assessment if you need to do so for religious reasons. We will require a written request for this and the contact details for the appropriate religious authority (e.g. imam, minister, rabbi or priest).

Candidates with substantial needs

There may be candidates who suffer from particular disabilities who may require other adjustments which are not listed in this document. Accordingly, the list of access arrangements is not exhaustive.

Where a candidate has substantial needs then BCS may allow further adjustments such as up to 100% of the examination time. We would require a clinical practitioner to provide compelling evidence for the extra time so that we do not unfairly advantage the candidate. Each application will be considered individually in light of your needs. The response will relate primarily to the effect the requested adjustment may have on the assessment objective being tested in the qualification

How do I apply for extra time due to a disability?

The Centre marks the paper

If you are taking a qualification which is marked by the Centre, then they will apply on your behalf.

BCS marks the paper

If the qualification is marked by BCS, then you must complete the Application for Reasonable Adjustments Form which is available on the BCS website and return it to BCS.

Please ensure that you complete the form fully and provide as much evidence to support your request as appropriate. The form outlines what we need, if you don't provide enough evidence then we have the right to reject the application and ask you to resubmit it.

Please note that BCS invigilators can review and approve requests for 25% extra time on the day of examination. However, if you require other reasonable adjustments you must do so by submitting the application to BCS at least 10 days in advance of the examination, 4 weeks for Higher Education Qualifications. Whilst BCS will aim to make arrangements for learners who submit requests in less than the 10-working day timescale this will not always be possible and may result in the request not being fulfilled.

How do I apply for extra time because of my language?

The Centre marks the paper

If you are taking a qualification which is marked by the Centre, then they will apply on your behalf.

BCS marks the paper or you take the examination on-line

If the qualification is marked by BCS, then you must complete the Extra Time Request Form which is available on the BCS website and return it to BCS.

How do I apply for Special Consideration?

The Centre owns the paper

Where taking a qualification which is owned and provided by the Centre, then please submit the request to them directly.

BCS marks the paper or you take the examination on-line

Where taking a qualification that marked and/or owned is by BCS, then you must complete the Special Consideration Form which is available on the BCS website and return it to BCS.

What documentary evidence is required?

You should provide BCS with documentary evidence which outlines the nature and severity of your disability. It should be from an appropriate independent professional.

BCS will accept correspondence from another Awarding Body which shows that they have reviewed and approved your request for reasonable adjustments. This letter would need to state how much extra time had been approved and any other reasonable adjustments that were approved.

Disclosure and Confidentiality

Information about your disability is deemed 'sensitive personal data' and will be processed in line with the General Data Protection Regulations.

Your information will only be made available to those on a 'need to know' basis based on the Equality Act 2010. This will include BCS administrative staff and the invigilator of your examination/assessment as well as people who may be required to assist you during the examination/assessment such as a scribe or sign language interpreter.

If you take another examination/assessment with us at a later date and have no changes to your disability, you will not need to resubmit the evidence, all you need do is quote your Reasonable Adjustments number and we will be able to authorise the extra time based on your previous application. However, if circumstances have changed, then you will need to resubmit a new request form. If you prefer, you can request that we destroy all information once you have passed the examination/assessment.

BCS is required to provide details of the total number of requests for extra time due to disability and the breakdown of requests to the Regulators. This report will not contain any personally identifiable information.

As an example, we will report, 5 extra time requests in January 2018 - 2 of these were for dyslexia and 3 were for hearing impairments. We will not pass on, in written form, any sensitive information without your written consent.

BCS will keep on record all Reasonable Adjustment Request forms and evidence for a period of 30 days after the release of the examination/assessment results to allow for potential appeals or investigations to take place.

Examples of Reasonable Adjustments

Dyslexia

You can request different coloured paper; font adjustments, the use of your laptop and get 25% extra time.

Attention Deficit Disorder

You can have a rest break and the use of a prompter, who can show you on a page where you had been working.

Autism Spectrum

You can use a laptop and get 25% extra time.

Visual Impairment

You can use your own laptop, enlarged text and paper, a reader and 50% extra time if you have a statement from an appropriate professional or a certificate of registration as partially sighted or blind.

Hearing Impairment

You can use a BSL signer and an additional 25% extra time.

Speech Impediment

You can have up to 50% extra time

Appeals

You have the right to appeal any decision made by BCS. If you wish to appeal against the decision to decline a request for reasonable adjustments or special consideration arrangements, please refer to the Learner Appeals Policy.

Review Arrangements

We will review the policy annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer and learner feedback, changes in our practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies or changes in legislation.