

Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

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Introduction

Purpose

This policy is aimed at candidates who are seeking to obtain a reasonable adjustment or special consideration for their assessment. It details the steps needed to apply for a reasonable adjustment, under what circumstances they can be applied for and the types of adjustment available. It also details the circumstances of how and when a special consideration can be applied.

Scope

This policy is applicable to BCS professional certifications, apprenticeships and higher education qualifications.

Policy statement

BCS seeks to provide equal access to assessments and qualifications, for all candidates, ensuring there are no unnecessary barriers to completion of the assessment and to accommodate the needs of the candidate in line with legal and regulatory requirements.

Key definitions

Reasonable Adjustments- The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body, i.e. BCS, to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person¹ would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment. Reasonable Adjustments can also apply in other circumstances which may disadvantage a candidate undertaking an assessment, including but not limited to pregnancy and religious needs.

Special Considerations- Special Consideration is a post examination adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade to reflect temporary injury, illness or other indisposition at the time of the examination/assessment.

Access Arrangements- pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal ways of working. All Access Arrangements should be applied for through the Reasonable Adjustment policy and process.

Please see <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/> for further definition guidance on the above definitions.

Centre- An education centre is a place or institution where candidates attain knowledge or attend classes. They can be any educational setup where teachers exchange knowledge with candidates.

Training Provider- An organisation that delivers training to candidates in support of achieving qualifications such as apprenticeships and professional certifications.

Candidates- an individual seeking to take an assessment.

BCS operates in accordance with the Equality Act 201 / DDA 1995 for NI (<https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>) and the regulatory requirements of Ofqual (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>).

¹ For fuller details please see [Who is entitled to a Reasonable Adjustment?](#)

An Overview

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments allow candidates with disabilities or other specific circumstances² to access the assessment, and show what they know, and can do, without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind a reasonable adjustment is to meet the needs of a candidate, without affecting the integrity of the assessment.

Reasonable adjustments are agreed by BCS in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (England Scotland and Wales) and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Northern Ireland) and are agreed **prior to the assessment** so that they can be implemented.

A reasonable adjustment is unique to an individual candidate. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors, which may include:

- the needs of the candidate;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; and
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the awarding organisation or training provider;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; or
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment requested is not “reasonable”. There may be other factors that make the adjustment not reasonable. In most cases it will not be reasonable for adjustments to be made to 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 candidate.

Special Consideration

Special Consideration is a request by the candidate, **post- assessment**, for a **minor** adjustment to their mark or grade.

In line with the Joint Council of Qualifications, the maximum an assessment paper can be upgraded is 5% although 1-3% is a more common adjustment.

Special consideration can be given to a candidate who has experienced temporary illness, injury or an event outside of their control that has occurred at the time of the assessment. It is applicable when it is reasonably likely that one of these situations has had a material effect on a candidate’s ability to take an assessment or demonstrate their normal level of attainment.

The candidate may also ask for special consideration if the reasonable adjustments, requested and agreed in advance of the assessment, proved inadequate. BCS is unable to consider a special consideration request in instances which are outside of BCS’ control; for example excess noise, lack of proper facilities or industrial disputes that occurred during the assessment.

² For fuller details please see [Who is entitled to a Reasonable Adjustment?](#)

Candidates may want to consider delaying when they take an assessment if they are unfortunately impacted by a temporary illness or bereavement. Candidates can reschedule their on-line remote proctored assessment free of charge at any time before they start the assessment.

Please refer to the [Examination Cancellation and Rescheduling Policy](#) for further details.

Who is entitled to a Reasonable Adjustment?

Reasonable adjustments can be given to individual candidates who have disabilities or other specific circumstances.

Disabilities are defined by the Equality Act 2010 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. They can include:

- a permanent physical impairment (e.g., cerebral palsy);
- a recurring or fluctuating effect (e.g., rheumatoid arthritis);
- a long term or progressive condition such as an HIV infection, diabetes, cancer or multiple sclerosis;
- behavioural, emotional, social needs (e.g., chronic depression or anxiety);
- a sensory impairment (e.g., hearing impairment or visual impairment);
- specific cognitive needs (e.g. dyslexia or dyspraxia);
- stammers or stutters, that may impact an oral assessment;
- Neurodiversity (e.g. autism or ADHD);
- motor difficulties (e.g., hand and or eye co-ordination, difficulty moving hands and or arms).

Some conditions aren't eligible for reasonable adjustments; these include addiction to non-prescribed drugs or alcohol.

Specific circumstances which may mean a candidate is eligible for a reasonable adjustment can include:

- pregnancy;
- religious needs/ observance;
- temporary injuries, that impact the candidate's ability to demonstrate their normal level of knowledge or skills, including but not limited to broken bones, eye injuries impacting sight
- language barriers, including for some candidates who are seeking to take an assessment in their native language.

What Reasonable Adjustments are considered acceptable?

Applications for reasonable adjustments will be individually considered. Decisions may vary according to the exact nature of the candidate's everyday needs and usual methods of working. The following adaptations are examples of Reasonable Adjustments that may be considered acceptable:

- Allocation of extra time (see Section 6.1 for further information)
- Support of a personal assistant (see Section 6.2 for further information);
- Rest or time breaks (see Section 6.3 for further information);
- Support of a Sign Language interpreter (see Section 6.4 for further information);
- Support of a scribe or amanuensis (see Section 6.5 for further information);
- Use of assistive technology (see Section 6.6 for further information);

- Support of a reader (see Section 6.7 for further information);
- Support of a prompter (see Section 6.8 for further details);
- Support of a chaperone (see Section 6.9 for further details);
- Alternative format of examination/assessment paper (see Section 6.10 for further information)
- Alternative venue (see Section 6.11 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 candidate may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all assessments.

What assistance may be available?

Extra time

Extra time can be awarded to students with needs such learning disabilities, physical impairments, or mental health challenges that affect exam performance. A candidate with a language impairment may be entitled to extra time for any oral assessment but not for other assessment components.

If a candidate is not able to take the assessment in their official or native language, they may also be eligible for 25% extra time – please note that this does not apply to End Point Assessments and cannot be awarded in addition to extra time for other reasons.

The standard time extension for assessments is **25%** but up to 100% can be awarded.

Support of a Personal Assistant

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

Rest or Time Breaks

The candidate can request rest breaks if they suffer from fatigue, physical or mental disabilities, for additional toilet breaks (e.g. if they are pregnant) or for religious obligations. The rest break will be part of the extra time request and can be taken any time during the assessment. The rest break will be supervised by an assessor or invigilator and the rest break duration will be added to the end of the assessment. It is important, for the security of assessment and all candidates undertaking it, that candidates do not discuss the assessment with any third party during any break period.

Alternative start times

A candidate can apply for a different starting time for the assessment. Such an adjustment may be appropriate for religious reasons, if they are pregnant or manage a health condition.

Candidates starting at an alternative time are not entitled to extra time unless there are other medical conditions that would make them eligible.

Alternative venue

For assessments that are held in person, the candidate can request to undertake the assessment at an alternative location to address any specific needs they have such as wheelchair access. Locations must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act, Health and Safety Regulations (or local equivalent) as well as disability access regulations.

Support of a Sign Language Interpreter

The candidate can request a sign language interpreter, if they are hard of hearing, to undertake the role of conversing with others on their behalf. The interpreter can say a phrase or word as well as re-phrasing using sign language or by writing it down. The interpreter must not give factual help or offer any suggestions or advice which could provide an unfair advantage. BCS would normally expect the candidate to source the interpreter, and the individual will be subject to training and pre-approval prior to the assessment.

Support of a scribe/amanuensis

The candidate can request a scribe if they have limitations with writing down the answers, such as a physical or visual impairment or a specific learning difficulty. The scribe's role is to write down dictated answers to the questions or tick the relevant answer box. The scribe must record the answers exactly as they are dictated. The scribe must not give factual help nor offer any suggestions or advice which could be seen as providing an unfair advantage.

Arrangements for the use of a scribe during the assessment will normally be the candidate's responsibility and the individual will be subject to training and pre-approval prior to the assessment. Family members, fellow students or any individual with a conflict of interest (that is where an individual has competing interests) will not be approved.

Use of a laptop and adaptive/assistive technology

The candidate can request the use of adaptive, assistive or access technology which enables them to access computer systems if they have particular needs. Where possible, BCS would expect the candidate to use their own laptop and software. The candidate will only be able to have access to the relevant programme or programmes and all equipment will be checked by the assessor or invigilator prior to the start of the assessment. If the candidate cannot use their own equipment, BCS will make reasonable efforts to source the same or similar equipment. If BCS is unable to source suitable equipment, then BCS will advise the candidate accordingly and the candidate will be responsible for either sourcing suitable equipment or using what can be made available 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 or mouse keys on the keyboard;
 - Mouth Stick.
- Braille Display;

- Switches (alternative input to keyboard and mouse, used by candidates 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

The candidate can request a reader if they have a visual impairment or specific learning difficulties. The reader will be able to read all or any part of the assessment or the candidate's answers to the candidate. The reader can only read the exact wording and must not give meanings of words, rephrase or interpret anything. The reader should only repeat instructions and questions on the paper when specifically requested to do so by the candidate. The reader cannot advise which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which the questions should be answered.

Arrangements for the use of a reader during the assessment will normally be the candidate's responsibility and the individual will be subject to training and pre-approval prior to the assessment. Family members, fellow students or any individual with a conflict of interest (that is where an individual has competing interests) will not be approved. However, BCS acknowledges that it may be appropriate for the reader to have had previous working experience with the candidate.

Support of a Prompter

The candidate can request the support of a prompter if they have a specific learning difficulty such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). The prompter will be able to read all or any part of the assessment or the candidate's answers to them or point the candidate to where they were before the distraction. The prompter can only read the exact wording and must not give meanings of words, rephrase or interpret anything. The prompter should only repeat instructions and questions on the paper when specifically requested to do so by the candidate. The prompter cannot advise which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which the questions should be answered.

Arrangements for the use of a prompter during the assessment will normally be the candidate's responsibility and the individual will be subject to training and pre-approval prior to the assessment. Family members, fellow students or any individual with a conflict of interest (that is where an individual has competing interests) will not be approved.

Support of a Chaperone

The candidate can request a chaperone to be present during the assessment. The chaperone must not assist with the assessment in any way, this includes technical support. The chaperone must not talk through the duration of the assessment and not be the cause of any distraction to the candidate, assessor or invigilator. If a candidate is completing an assessment that requires a web camera, such as remote proctoring or an End Point Assessment interview, the chaperone must be in view with their camera on at all times and they must not be interacting with technology during the process.

Arrangements for the presence of a chaperone during the assessment will normally be the candidate's responsibility and the individual will be subject to training and pre-approval prior to the assessment.

Alternative format of examination/assessment papers

The candidate can request an alternative format for their examination, for example if they have dyslexia or a visual impairment. Online assessments are available in a larger font and a paper version of the assessment is available for reasonable adjustments that require a font type or colour change.

Use of a paper dictionary

A candidate may be entitled to use their own **paper** dictionary if the assessment being taken is in a language that is not the candidate's native or official language. The dictionary should only be used for the purpose of translating between the assessment language and another national language during the examination. Electronic dictionaries are not permitted.

The use of a dictionary is not available for on-line assessment, Pearson Vue centres or End Point Assessment.

Additionally, if there is not an option for the candidate to take the assessment in their native language, they may be entitled to an extra 25% of time. Please note that this excludes End Point Assessments that must be taken in English.

How does a candidate apply?

For a Reasonable Adjustment:

Candidates must complete the [Application for Reasonable Adjustments Form](#) which is available on the BCS website and return it to BCS.

For extra time requests due to English not being a first language:

Please complete and return the [Extra Time Request Form](#) which is available on the BCS website and return it to BCS.

For Special Consideration:

Candidates must complete the [Special Consideration Form](#) which is available on the BCS website and return it to BCS.

Completing the forms

Please ensure that all forms have been fully completed and provide as much evidence to support the request as appropriate. The forms outline details and information needed for BCS to make a decision. If enough evidence has not been provided, BCS may reject the application

and ask the candidate to resubmit it. Candidates who have their request approved will receive confirmation and a reference number to quote for future assessments or correspondence. The adjustment will then be applied to their assessment in the appropriate way.

What evidence is required?

The candidate should provide BCS with evidence which outlines the nature and severity of their disability and / or specific circumstances. This could include evidence of additional funding for apprentices, letters from medical professionals or diagnostic reports. These should be submitted along with the request form to the address provided on the form. Types of evidence considered include:

- The centre's assessment of the learner's needs;
- History of provision for the learner within the centre / employment;
- A statement from the centre/employer supporting the application;
- Relevant Professional Assessment report, incl. Psychological or mental health experts report;
- Medical certificate, or a doctors certificate;
- Statement from the invigilator (where related to Special Consideration);
- Written request, with detailed rationale and contact details, from an appropriate religious authority (e.g. imam, minister, rabbi or priest);
- Medical documentation identifying the period of illness, injury or indisposition
- Correspondence from another Awarding Body which shows that they have reviewed and approved a 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.

When does a candidate need to apply?

The application for Reasonable Adjustments or Extra Time must **be submitted** to BCS at least

- 10 days in advance of the assessment for Professional Certifications;
- 4 weeks in advance of the assessment for Higher Education Qualifications;
- And 10 days in advance of End-Point Assessments.

Whilst BCS will aim to make arrangements for candidates who submit requests in less than the indicated timescale, this will not always be possible and may result in the request not being fulfilled.

The application for Special Consideration must be submitted no later than 5 working days after the assessment.

Do candidates need to apply more than once?

If a candidate takes another assessment with BCS at a later date and has no changes to their disability or requirements, they will not need to resubmit the evidence. The candidate needs to quote their Reasonable Adjustment or Extra Time number and BCS can authorise the extra time based on the previous application. However, if circumstances have changed, candidates will need to resubmit a new request form.

What does the candidate need to organise?

If a request is approved that involves a third party (e.g. a prompter) the candidate must source the individual. This may involve approval, in advance, of an individual who may require training and / or be from a training provider or centre. The candidate should allow time for this when making their application.

Disclosure and Confidentiality

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

The candidate's 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 assessor or invigilator of the 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.

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

If preferred, a request can be made for BCS to destroy all information once the assessment has been passed.

Appeals

The candidate has the right to appeal any decision made by BCS. If they wish to appeal against the decision to decline a request for reasonable adjustments or special consideration arrangements, they should do in accordance with 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 candidate feedback, changes in our practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies or changes in legislation.



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