

Academic Accreditation Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments Policy

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1 Introduction

Purpose

This policy is aimed at Higher Education Institutes (HEI's) and their students who are seeking to obtain a reasonable adjustment for their assessment. It details under what circumstances a reasonable adjustment can be applied for and the types of adjustment available.

Scope

This policy is applicable to higher education programmes accredited by BCS

Policy statement

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

Key definitions

Reasonable Adjustments- The Equality Act 2010 requires education providers 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 student undertaking an assessment, including but not limited to pregnancy and religious needs.

Access Arrangements- pre-examination adjustments for students 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.

Higher Education Institute- An education provider or institution where students attain knowledge or attend classes.

Student- an individual completing a programme of education and/or 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>).

2 An Overview

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes or accommodations made to remove or reduce disadvantages experienced by students with disabilities, long-term health conditions, specific learning differences, or other individual needs. These may include, for example, adjustments to assessment methods, additional support or assistive technologies, modified learning materials, alternative ways of demonstrating achievement, or flexibility in how activities are undertaken, provided that the required learning outcomes are still met.

Reasonable adjustments are agreed 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 student. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors, which may include:

- the needs of the student;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; and
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the student and other students.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the HEI;
- 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 student.

3 Who is entitled to a Reasonable Adjustment?

Reasonable adjustments can be given to individual students 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 student is eligible for a reasonable adjustment can include:

- pregnancy;
- religious needs/ observance;
- temporary injuries, that impact the student'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 students who are seeking to take an assessment in their native language.

4 What Reasonable Adjustments are considered acceptable?

BCS does not prescribe specific adjustments to individual accreditation criteria, such as those relating to teamwork or collaborative practice. Rather, we recognise that HEI's may need to make appropriate and proportionate adjustments to the way learning outcomes are achieved, demonstrated, or assessed in order to ensure equitable access and opportunity for students with individual needs.

The key consideration is that any adjustments continue to enable students to demonstrate achievement of the relevant learning outcomes, while allowing institutions the flexibility to meet their legal and ethical responsibilities in relation to reasonable adjustments and inclusive practice.

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

- Allocation of extra time
- Support of a personal assistant
- Rest or time breaks
- Support of a Sign Language interpreter
- Support of a scribe or amanuensis
- Use of assistive technology
- Support of a reader
- Support of a prompter
- Support of a chaperone
- Alternative format of examination/assessment paper
- Alternative venue

This is not an exhaustive list, and other adjustments should 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 student may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all assessments.

5 Approving Reasonable Adjustments

It is the responsibility of the HEI to review requests reasonable adjustment requests and to approve the most appropriate adjustment for the student and the assessment they are carrying out.

As part of their approval process HEI's should consider:

- the needs of the student;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; and
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the student and other students.

The general principle is that responsibility for determining and implementing reasonable adjustments rests with the HEI, which is best placed to understand and respond to the individual needs of its students. BCS accreditation requirements are not intended to constrain or limit institutions in making such adjustments.

What evidence is required?

To support their review of the adjustment requested, the HEI may request the student to provide evidence which outlines the nature and severity of their disability and / or specific circumstances. This could include letters from medical professionals or diagnostic reports. Types of evidence considered could include:

- An assessment of the learner's needs;
- History of provision for the learner within the HEI;
- A statement from teachers/lecturers 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 HEI or Awarding Body which shows that they have reviewed and approved a request for reasonable adjustments. This letter should state how much extra time had been approved and any other reasonable adjustments that were approved.

6 Disclosure and Confidentiality

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

The student's information must only be made available to those within the education provider on a 'need to know' basis based on the Equality Act 2010.

7 Appeals

The candidate has the right to appeal any decision made by the HEI to 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](#).

8 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 student feedback, changes in our practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies or changes in legislation.



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