

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

Introduction

This policy is primarily aimed at our customers (centres) and learners who are delivering/registered on, or have taken an BCS approved qualification or unit. It is also for use by our staff to ensure they deal with all reasonable adjustment and special consideration requests in a consistent manner.

This policy outlines:

- our arrangements for making reasonable adjustments and special considerations in relation to our qualifications
- how learners qualify for reasonable adjustments and special considerations
- the reasonable adjustments we will permit and those where permission is required in advance before they are applied
- what special considerations will be given to learners

Centre's responsibility

It is important that your staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our qualifications and your learners are fully aware of the contents of the policy.

On their centre visits, our BCS Consultants / reviewers may check that your relevant colleagues and learners are aware of its contents and purpose.

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.

Arrangements not covered by this policy

Circumstances for both internal and external assessment not covered in this policy should be discussed with BCS before assessment takes place. Please contact us via the details provided at the end of this policy.

Appeals

If you wish to appeal against our decision to decline requests for reasonable adjustments or special consideration arrangements, please refer to our Appeals Policy.

Policy overview

BCS is committed to complying with all current and relevant legislation in relation to the development and delivery of our qualifications and, which at the time of writing includes, but is not limited to the Equality Act 2010. We seek to uphold human rights relating to race relations, disability discrimination and special educational needs of our learners and to provide equal reasonable adjustments and special considerations for all learners registered for our qualifications.

As a recognised centre, we expect you to have a fair Access to Assessment policy in operation, which reflects the following principles and guidelines.

Assessment should be a fair test of learners' knowledge and what they are able to do, however, for some learners the usual format of assessment may not be suitable. We ensure that our qualifications and assessments do not bar learners from taking our qualifications.

We recognise that reasonable adjustments or special considerations may be required at the time of assessment where:

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

The provision for reasonable adjustments and special consideration arrangements is made to ensure that learners 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 learners, nor advantages to give learners a head start.

There are 2 ways in which access to fair assessment can be maintained:

- through reasonable adjustments and
- through special considerations.

Process for requesting reasonable adjustments and/or special considerations

If a centre is making a request on behalf of its learners it should complete a Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration request form including relevant supporting information. For example:

- learner's name and BCS registration number
- nature of, and rationale for, the request
- supporting information/evidence (eg medical evidence or a statement from the invigilator or any other appropriate information)

Learners can, in exceptional circumstances, make requests direct to BCS.

Requests for reasonable adjustments should be submitted no later than 10 days before the assessment.

Requests for special consideration should be submitted as soon as possible after the assessment and not later than 5 working days after the assessment. Requests for special consideration may only be accepted after the results of assessment have been released in the following circumstances:

- application has been overlooked at the centre and the oversight is confirmed by the centre co-coordinator
- 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 onscreen assessments where results are immediately available.

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.

How BCS will deal with requests

We will aim to respond to all requests within 2 working days of receipt. If we are unable to respond on the within 2 working days we will provide you with an estimated response date.

Definition of reasonable adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation. It is made to an assessment for a qualification to enable a disadvantaged learner to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding of the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the integrity of what needs to be assessed, but may involve:

- changing usual assessment arrangements, for example allowing a learner extra time to complete the assessment activity
- adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in Braille
- providing assistance during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader
- re-organising the assessment room, such as removing visual stimuli for an autistic learner
- changing the assessment method, for example from a written assessment to a spoken assessment
- using assistive technology, such as screen reading or voice activated software
- providing the mechanism to have different colour backgrounds to screens for onscreen assessments or asking for permission for copying to different coloured paper for paper-based assessments
- providing and allowing different coloured transparencies with which to view assessment papers

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 programme. The use of a reasonable adjustment will not be taken into consideration during the assessment of a learner's work.

BCS 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.

Definition of special considerations

Special consideration can be applied after an assessment if there was a reason the learner may have been disadvantaged during the assessment.

For example, special consideration could apply to a learner who had temporarily experienced:

- an illness or injury
- some other event outside of their control

and which has had, or is 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.

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

Special consideration, if successful, may result in a small post-assessment adjustment to the mark of the learner. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances and reflect the difficulty faced by the learner.

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 License to Practice, it may not be possible to apply special consideration.
- in some circumstances, for example for on-demand assessments, it may be more appropriate to offer the learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date.

Section 1 - Making reasonable adjustments

Principles of making reasonable adjustments

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

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

We and our centres have a responsibility to ensure that the process of assessment is robust and fair and allows the learner to show what they know and can do without compromising the assessment criteria.

When considering whether an adjustment to assessment is appropriate, BCS and our centres need to bear in mind the following (where appropriate for the related qualification):

- Adjustments to assessment should not compensate the learner for lack of knowledge and skills. The learner 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 or the requirements of the assessment strategy. Competence standards should not be altered. Whilst we will take all reasonable steps to ensure that a learner with a disability or difficulty is not placed at a substantial disadvantage, in comparison with persons who are not disabled, 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 learners' performance must 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 learner has an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do.
- Any adjustment to assessment must not give the learner an unfair advantage or disadvantage over other learners. The qualification of a learner who had an adjustment to assessment must have the same credibility as that of any other learner. 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 learner. Decisions about adjustments to assessment should be taken after careful consideration of the assessment needs of each individual learner, the assessment requirements of the qualification and the nature and extent of the support given as part of normal teaching practice. A centre 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 learner. The learner should be consulted throughout the process.
- Any adjustment to assessment should reflect the learner's normal way of working providing this does not affect what is being assessed in any way. The learner should have experience of and practice in the use of the adjustment.
- Any adjustment to assessment must be supported by evidence which is sufficient, valid and reliable.
- All adjustments to assessment must be authorised by the Head of Centre or a member of staff with delegated authority.

The process for making the adjustment

There are two routes through which a learner may be granted adjustments to assessment. These routes are to:

- use reasonable adjustments permitted at the discretion of the centre

In some cases BCS may permit the centre to implement reasonable adjustments without seeking prior permission. In these cases BCS requires centres to keep records for inspection (including any declaration that are signed and dated by a member of the centre staff who has formally been given delegated authority for this by the Head of Centre).

- apply to BCS for permission

Centres should keep records of adjustments they have permitted and those they have requested from BCS. These records should normally be kept for 3 years following the assessment to which they apply.

It is recommended that centres nominate members of staff to take responsibility for demonstrating the implementation and recording of adjustments to assessments for monitoring by BCS or the regulatory authorities.

Section 2 - Making special considerations

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

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, eg disturbances through building work, lack of proper facilities, changes in or shortages of staff, or industrial disputes.

Appendix 1

Reasonable adjustments permissions table

This table outlines some of the decisions on reasonable adjustments that can be made within centres. However, centres have a duty to seek advice from BCS in any case where they are in doubt if an adjustment is needed or how it should be applied.

- Permitted – Reasonable adjustment permitted at the discretion of the centre
- Apply – Apply to BCS for permission

Reasonable adjustment	Assessments NOT taken under examination conditions	Assessments taken under examination conditions
Extra time up to 33%	Permitted	Apply
Extra time in excess of 33%	Permitted	Apply
Supervised rest breaks	Permitted	Apply
Change in the organisation of assessment room	Permitted	Permitted
Separate accommodation within the centre	Permitted	Permitted
Taking the assessment at an alternative venue	Permitted	Permitted
Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles, CCTV and OCR scanners	Permitted	Apply
Use of assistive software	Permitted/ Apply *	Apply
Use of bilingual and bilingual translation dictionaries	Permitted	Apply
Assessment material in enlarged format	Permitted	Apply
Assessment material in Braille	Apply	Apply
Language modified assessment material	Apply	Apply
Assessment material in BSL/ISL	Apply	Apply
Assessment material on coloured paper	Permitted	Apply
Assessment material in audio format	Apply	Apply
Use of ICT	Permitted/ Apply *	Apply
Responses using electronic devices	Permitted	Apply
Responses in BSL/ISL	Permitted	Apply
Responses in Braille	Permitted	Apply
Reader	Permitted	Apply
Scribe	Permitted	Apply
BSL/ISL /English interpreter	Permitted	Apply
Prompter	Permitted	Apply
Practical assistant	Apply	Apply
Transcriber	Permitted	Apply
Other	Apply	Apply

* Permitted at the discretion of the centre unless ICT is implicitly or explicitly excluded in the Standard being assessed or in its associated Assessment Strategy or Qualification Specification