Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

V24.1

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

Policy Ref	O.P.9 v24.1
Date of Issue	01/04/2025
Next Scheduled Review	01/04/2026
Policy/Document Owner	Operations Manager
Contact Email	operations@tquk.org
Contact Phone Number	03333583344
Approved By	Leadership Team
Policy/Document Relates to	Awarding Provision, End-Point Assessment Provision
Policy/Document is for the use of	Learners, Apprentices, Recognised Centres, VQA Employees, Third Parties, Training Providers
Should be read in conjunction with	Appeals Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy

Contents

Introduction 4
VQA Internal Responsibility 4
Review arrangements 4
Training Provider/Recognised Centre Responsibility 4
Definition 5
1) Reasonable Adjustment Definition 5
2) Special Consideration Definition 5
Eligibility Criteria 6
Health and Safety 6
Types of Assessment 7
1) Regulated Qualifications which are not End-Point Assessments 7
1) End-Point Assessments 7
Permissions Table 7
Key 8
Functional Skills examinations 9
Exemptions 9
Requesting Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations 10
Supporting Evidence 10
Appeals 11
Glossary 11

Introduction

VQA is committed to ensuring that all learners and apprentices are granted equal opportunity, in line with the Equality Act 2010, to receive recognition of their achievement, while maintaining the equity, validity and reliability of assessments through the application of reasonable adjustments and special considerations where appropriate.

As such, VQA offers the below Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations policy in order to provide external parties with the process of requesting a Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration and to offer Recognised Centres clear guidance for implementing these.

VQA Internal Responsibility

The Operations Team is responsible for the maintenance and compliance of this policy. If the Operations Manager is absent, the Responsible Officer will appoint the Head of Operational Services or another member of the Leadership team to ensure all of VQA's actions and activities are in line with the content of this policy.

The Managing Director has overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy complies with our ethical and legal commitments and that all VQA actions and activities are in line with the contents of this policy.

Review arrangements

We will review the policy as part of our annual self-evaluation process and revise it as and when necessary, from the following sources; changes in our practices, actions by external agencies, or changes in legislation. The Company reserves the right to make additions or alterations to this policy from time to time. Any amendments or updates to this policy will be approved by VQA's Leadership Team.

Where the regulators notify VQA of failures that have been discovered in the Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration processes of another awarding organisation, VQA will review whether or not a similar failure could affect our Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations processes and arrangements and take action to amend this policy where necessary.

If you would like to raise any points or offer feedback regarding this policy, please contact us via the details provided at the start of this document.

Training Provider/Recognised Centre Responsibility

VQA suggests that all Training Provider or Recognised Centre staff involved in the delivery, management, assessment and quality assurance of VQA regulated qualifications, including End-Point Assessments, and their Learners or Apprentices, are fully aware of the contents of this policy.

A Recognised Centre or Training Provider should identify as early as possible any difficulties a Learner or Apprentice may have in accessing the assessment, select an appropriate adjustment to make the assessment accessible and follow VQA's process for requesting adjustments. Recognised Centres should follow VQA's guidance for implementing adjustments to assessments while maintaining records of these adjustments and ensuring a quality appeals procedure is in place for Learners wishing to query any decisions made regarding adjustments by the Recognised Centre.

Definition

1) Reasonable Adjustment Definition

The following definition is given by Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition:

"Reasonable Adjustments are adjustments made to an assessment for a qualification so as to enable a disabled Learner to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding to the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification."

While the applicable definition of 'disabled' has been taken from the Equality Act 2010, a Learner or Apprentice seeking a Reasonable Adjustment does not necessarily have to fit within this definition of disabled to be entitled to one. A Reasonable Adjustment is any action that aids with reducing the effect of Ref Document Title 4 a long-term disability or difficulty which places the Learner or Apprentice at a disadvantage in an assessment situation.

VQA and Recognised Centres are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of allowing an adjustment, and what is considered reasonable will depend on the individual needs of the Learner or Apprentice, cost implications and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment. A Reasonable Adjustment is not a concession to make an assessment easier for a Learner or Apprentice, or to give a Learner or Apprentice an advantage over others.

2) Special Consideration Definition

The following definition is given by Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition:

"Special Consideration is consideration to be given to a Learner who has temporarily experienced – a) an illness or injury, or b) some other event outside of the Learner's control, which has had, or is reasonably 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 Considerations can be a pre-assessment or post-assessment adjustment to cover a 'temporary' condition that may disadvantage, or may have disadvantaged, the Learner or Apprentice in an assessment situation (including, for example; a temporary illness, injury or some other event outside of their control including) social, emotional or mental health incident.

VQA understands that examination and test anxiety and/or stress is prevalent, however, this would not be classified as a social, emotional, or mental health incident. For support in relation to examination and test anxiety and/or stress please refer to the following blog published by Ofqual, what can schools do about examination and test anxiety.

If approved, a pre-assessment Special Consideration may result in an access adjustment being made to the assessment, and post-assessment special consideration may result in either a small adjustment of a 1%-5% uplift made to the mark of the Learner or Apprentice, or another appropriate adjustment. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances and reflect the level of difficulty faced.

A Special Consideration should not give the Learner or Apprentice an unfair advantage. The result must reflect their achievement in the assessment and not necessarily their potential ability. It should be noted that a successful application of special consideration will not necessarily change a Learner or Apprentice's result.

Training Providers and Recognised Centres should note that:

- where an assessment requires the Apprentice or Learner to demonstrate practical competence 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 Apprentice or Learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date.
- VQA will review a request for special consideration on a case by case basis and will take the particular need of each individual Apprentice or Learner into consideration when making a decision to grant the request.

Eligibility Criteria

A Reasonable Adjustment to an assessment will only be considered where the permanent disability, difficulty, or individual learning need experienced by the Learner or Apprentice would place them at a disadvantage, in comparison with persons who are not disabled.

A Special Consideration to an assessment will only be considered where the 'temporary' condition would place the Learner or Apprentice at, or has placed them at, a disadvantage in an assessment situation. A Learner or Apprentice who is fully prepared and present for a scheduled assessment may also be eligible for special considerations if:

- performance in an assessment is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the Learner or Apprentice (e.g. recent personal illness, accident, bereavement, serious disturbance during the assessment, or temporary or short-term social, emotional and/or emotional incident);
- 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 or Apprentice or;
- 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 or Apprentice could have performed more successfully in the assessment.

A Learner or Apprentice will not be eligible for special considerations if:

- no evidence is supplied by the Recognised Centre or Training Provider that the Learner or Apprentice 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; e.g. disturbances through building work, lack of proper facilities, changes in or shortages of staff, or industrial disputes;
- the disadvantage is caused by disregard for the Recognised Centre, Training Provider or VQA requirements, recreational drugs or misreading of exam instructions or;
- disruption in a controlled assessment environment is minor and momentary (e.g. a mobile phone ringing) and dealt with immediately by the assessment invigilator.

Health and Safety

There are no circumstances when the health and safety of a Learner or an Apprentice should be compromised during assessment. Where there is a concern that the effect of a person's disability or additional learning needs may have health and safety implications for them or others, a suitably qualified person should carry out a risk assessment, related to the Learner or Apprentice's particular circumstances.

The risk assessment should identify the risks associated with the particular activity, but should also take account of any Reasonable Adjustments put in place for the Learner or Apprentice which may remove or reduce the risk. For Learners undertaking a regulated qualification that is not an End-Point Assessment, the risk assessment may reveal that it is not possible for the

Learner to fulfil all the requirements of the assessment. In this case, it may be appropriate to substitute another task. Recognised Centres or Training Providers should contact VQA to discuss cases where further clarification is necessary.

Assumptions should not be made about a Learner or Apprentice's disability or additional learning needs, posing a health and safety risk. The health and safety of all Learners, Apprentices and others must always be of paramount importance.

Types of Assessment

1) Regulated Qualifications which are not End-Point Assessments

Regulated qualifications which are not End-Point Assessments predominantly consist of two types of assessments; assessments taken under examination conditions (including, for example; externally-set and externally-assessed exams) and assessments not taken under examination conditions (including, for example; coursework, portfolios and set assignments). Where Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations are required for assessments in regulated qualifications which are not End-Point Assessments, Recognised Centres must check whether permission needs to be obtained from VQA using the Permissions Table below. Recognised Centres should ensure that they adhere to VQA's requirements for record keeping and supporting evidence.

1) End-Point Assessments

End-Point Assessment activities cover a range of assessment types, including, for example; Multiple Choice Question examinations, Professional Discussions, Interviews, Portfolios of Evidence, Practical Observations and Synoptic or Written Projects. As all of these assessment components are externally set and assessed by VQA, any reasonable adjustment and special consideration requests must be submitted to VQA for approval and cannot be applied by Training Providers themselves.

Many End-Point Assessments are also subject to assessment windows in which the entire End-Point Assessment must be completed within a certain timeframe. This timeframe is specific to each Apprenticeship Standard and is detailed within the respective Assessment Plan. Should an Apprentice have experienced an event outside their control which may cause this timeframe to be breached, a Training Provider may seek an extension with VQA via the special considerations process.

Permissions Table

Note: The below information only applies to Recognised Centres seeking Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations with relation to regulated qualifications that are not End-Point Assessments. All Reasonable Adjustment and Special Considerations with relation to End-Point Assessments must be requested via an application to VQA for permission.

The Permissions Table lists the most commonly requested adjustments (as a Reasonable Adjustment or a Special Consideration) to standard assessment arrangements; however, it is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Recognised Centres and External Quality Assurers have a duty to seek advice from VQA in any case where they are in doubt if an adjustment is needed or how it should be applied.

Please note that many of these adjustments are dependent on the content of the Qualification Specification and the knowledge and skills being assessed.

Key

Permitted Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration permitted at the discretion of the Recognised Centre.

Apply Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration for which an application to VQA must be submitted for permission.

Type of Assessment

Adjustment	Assessments taken under examination conditions	Assessments not taken under examination conditions
Assessment Conditions		
Extra time up to 25%	Apply	Permitted
Extra time in excess of 25%	Apply*	Permitted
Supervised rest breaks	Apply	Permitted
Separate accommodation within the Recognised Centre	Permitted	Permitted
Conduct assessment at an alternative venue	Permitted	Permitted
Assistive Aids and Technology		
Use of ICT	Apply	Permitted
Reader	Apply	Permitted
Computer Reader	Apply	Permitted
Prompter	Apply	Permitted
Scribe	Apply	Permitted
Transcriber	Apply	Permitted
Use of reading pen	Apply	Permitted
Bilingual translation dictionary	Apply	Permitted
Listening to white noise	Apply	Permitted
Communication professional	Permitted	Permitted
Modified Assessment Materials The following require a greater period of notice to VQA.		
Assessment material on coloured paper	Apply	Permitted
Assessment material in enlarged format	Apply	Permitted

Adjustment	Assessments taken under examination conditions	Assessments not taken under examination conditions
Assessment material in audio format	Apply	Permitted

* The amount of extra time allowed will vary according to the length of the examination and must be given in percentages.

Definitions of the above terms can be found in the Glossary at the end of this policy. For any adjustments not specified in the Permissions Table above, Recognised Centres should contact VQA for further clarification on 03333 583344 or operations@tquk.org.

It is important to note that not all of the above adjustments will be reasonable, permissible or practical in particular situations. The Learner may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all assessments.

It is the responsibility of the Recognised Centre to maintain records of all adjustments made to internal assessments, and to hold these on file within the Recognised Centre for Internal Quality Assurer and External Quality Assurer audit purposes.

Functional Skills examinations

For all Functional Skills exams, Recognised Centres can make the decision to allow for up to 25% extra time. VQA must be notified of this decision via the relevant form to ensure this is applied to the exam booking.

In the Reading component of English Functional Skills, a human reader will not be allowed, however a computer reader is an acceptable arrangement, at VQA the online and remote assessment platform does not support the use of a computer reader. Therefore, any English Functional Skills Reading assessments requiring a reader must be completed paper-based, using a C-Pen/Exam Reading Pen as the approved access arrangement.

In the Writing component, if a word processor with the spelling and grammar check switched on or a scribe is approved, the candidate will not have access to marks awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

All learners are permitted to use English dictionaries within the Reading component of English Functional Skills and no formal application is required.

Exemptions

In certain cases where candidates have no accessible means to demonstrate the knowledge and skills of an assessment, an exemption may be applied for. An exemption can only be submitted for a whole component to ensure fairness and consistency of approach.

An exemption must not be used as a reasonable adjustment, except where no other reasonable adjustment would avoid the substantial disadvantage faced by a learner in demonstrating the criteria being assessed. An exemption will not be granted if an alternative and accessible route through a qualification is available to the candidate.

An indication will be placed on candidate's certificate to show that not all assessments were completed.

To apply for an exemption to a component, an Exemptions form must be submitted stating the exemption required, the reason for the exemption and any supporting evidence.

Requesting Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

Once the need for a Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration has been identified and the assessment type requires permission to be sought from VQA, the Recognised Centre or Training Provider must complete and submit the appropriate form on behalf of the Learner or Apprentice.

The Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Forms are available using the following links:

- Reasonable Adjustment Form
- 25% Extra Time for Functional Skills Form
- Special Consideration Form
- Exemptions Form

Separate forms must be completed for each Learner or Apprentice. However, in the event that a particular disturbance or situation has affected a cohort of Learners or Apprentices then a single form may be submitted, with a list of all the affected individuals attached. The forms will require the Learner or Apprentice's name, VQA registration number (Recognised Centres only), the affected assessment(s), the nature of and rationale for the request, and additional supporting evidence.

For both recognised qualifications and end-point assessment, requests for Reasonable Adjustments on behalf of learners and apprentices must be submitted prior to any assessment bookings. For end-point assessment, the requests must be submitted and an outcome communicated prior to gateway submission.

Requests for Special Considerations pre-assessment must be submitted at least 15 working days before the scheduled assessment. Requests for Special Considerations post-assessment may be submitted up to 5 working days from the date of the assessment. Should a Recognised Centre or Training Provider be made aware of the need for a Special Consideration within the 15 working days prior to an assessment after the due date for requests has passed, VQA advises that the assessment be delayed to a later date.

Requests for Special Consideration may only be accepted after the results of assessment have been released in the following circumstances:

- The application has been overlooked by the Recognised Centre or Training Provider and the oversight is confirmed by the Recognised Centre or Training Provider;
- Medical evidence has come to light about a Learner or Apprentice's condition, which demonstrates that the Learner or Apprentice must have been affected by the condition at the time of the assessment, even though the problem revealed itself only after the assessment.

VQA will confirm receipt of the request within 1 working day. The request review stage will typically take 5 working days from the date all requested evidence was received. With more complex cases, VQA may be unable to respond in this timescale and an estimated extended response date will be communicated. We cannot guarantee a request will be approved or denied until it is fully reviewed.

Therefore, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations should not be applied pre-emptively before an outcome is communicated by VQA. The review of the Reasonable Adjustment or special consideration request will be conducted by a suitably competent VQA staff member.

Supporting Evidence

All Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration requests must be supported by evidence that is sufficient, valid and reliable alongside the relevant form. Requests may not be accepted without

appropriate supporting evidence. It is the Recognised Centre or Training Provider's responsibility to provide this evidence and to ensure that all applications for Reasonable Adjustments are based on the individual needs of the Learner or Apprentice.

The Recognised Centre or Training Provider should decide which of the following types of additional supporting evidence will best assist understanding of the Learner or Apprentice's situation:

- An assessment of the Learner or Apprentice's needs in relation to the relevant assessment, made within the Recognised Centre or Training Provider by the relevant member of staff with competence and responsibility in this area; staff include learning support staff, teaching staff, trainers, assessors and other specialist staff;
- History of provision within the Recognised Centre or Training Provider;
- Written evidence produced by independent, authoritative specialists.

All requests for adjustments must be supported by evidence of the needs of the learner, alongside evidence of the usual way of working within the setting. Evidence for special consideration requests will be dependent on the specific case.

Appeals

If a Recognised Centre, Training Provider, Learner or Apprentice wishes to appeal against a VQA decision regarding Reasonable Adjustments or Special Considerations, please refer to VQA's Appeals Policy.

If necessary, please also refer to VQA's Appeals Policy for information on further avenues beyond the appeals process.

Glossary

Please see below a list of definitions for the reasonable adjustments mentioned within this policy.

Adjustment	Definition
Extra time up to 25%	Where an assessment is time-constrained, a candidate may be permitted up to 25% extra of the time allowed to complete the assessment.
Extra time in excess of 25%	Where an assessment is time-constrained, a candidate may be permitted over 25% extra of the time allowed to complete the assessment. The percentage amount must be specified by the centre.
Supervised rest breaks	Supervised rest breaks, taken under assessment conditions, may be taken either in or outside the assessment room and the duration of the breaks will not be deducted from the overall assessment time.
Separate accommodation within the centre	There may be a need to accommodate a candidate separately from others during an assessment, often to enable the candidate to utilise another approved adjustment while reducing distraction for others who are not requiring this adjustment.
Conduct assessment at an alternative venue	In certain circumstances, the candidate may be permitted to take an assessment at an alternative venue suited to the candidate's requirements. Assessment conditions must still be met and the security of the assessment material maintained.
Use of ICT	The use of ICT in this context is taken to include electronic word processor devices producing output in text during an assessment. Spelling and grammar checks must be disabled prior to the assessment taking place, unless approved otherwise.

Adjustment	Definition
Reader	A reader is a responsible adult who reads the instructions of the question paper and the questions directly to the candidate. This may involve reading the whole paper to the candidate or the candidate may request only some words to be read.
Computer reader	A computer reader is computer software which accurately reads out text but does not decode or interpret the paper.
Prompter	A prompter is a responsible adult who can refocus a candidate with severe attention problems. A candidate may benefit from the use of a prompter in timed assessment situations to draw their attention back to the assessment task.
Scribe	A scribe is a responsible adult who may write, type or word process a candidate's dictated answers to the questions during an assessment. Where there is evidence of need, a scribe may be allowed in all assessments where writing is not the competency being assessed, unless otherwise approved.
Transcriber	A transcriber is a responsible adult who will produce a transcript to assist the examiner/assessor in the assessment of a candidate's work. The examiner/assessor will assess the work and will only refer to the transcript if it is impossible to decipher any part of the candidate's response. In some instances the examiner/assessor may refer solely to the transcript.
Use of reading pen	A reading pen is a form of assistive technology that scans wording and reads this back to the user.
Bilingual translation dictionary	A bilingual translation dictionary provides translations of words between two different languages without definitions.
Listening to white noise	White noise can be used as tool to improve focus and concentration for learners with a substantial impairment.
Communication professional	The role of a Communication Professional is to present the questions in a different language without changing the meaning, providing any additional information, or providing an explanation as to what the question requires of the candidate.
Assessment material on coloured paper	Subject to the supporting evidence, candidates with a visual impairment or learning difficulties may benefit from having assessment material printed on coloured paper.
Assessment material in enlarged format	Subject to the supporting evidence, candidates with a visual impairment or learning difficulties may apply for assessment material to be enlarged to a format suitable.
Assessment material in audio format	Subject to the supporting evidence, VQA may be able to provide Learners with assessment material in audio format.

www.vqa.org

Copyright © 2026 VQA. All rights reserved.
Company number 07827508.
Registered address: Crossgate House, Cross Street, Sale, England, M33 7FT.