



# **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION IN ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE**

## **(FULL-TIME PROVISION)**

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## 2. Definitions

### 2.1 Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment

The Equal Status Act 2000 (Section 4) requires education and training establishments to provide reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of learners who have a disability (Government of Ireland, 2000).

In the context of assessment, reasonable accommodation is the term for the adaptation of assessment as necessary to cater for the needs of learners whose personal situation means that the assessment would otherwise be unfair, e.g. learners with a disability, and/or other learners covered by equality legislation. The grounds include; learning difficulty; deaf or having a hearing impairment; blind or visually impaired; physical difficulty (including mental health and/or behavioural difficulties along with physical difficulties); and any grounds covered by current legislation.

Reasonable accommodation guidelines for other awarding bodies supersede guidelines in this document.

Any adaptation of the assessment should facilitate the learner to demonstrate his/her achievement of the standards without altering the standard.

Special assessment arrangements/adaptations are not intended to and should not reduce the validity and reliability of the assessment or compromise the standard.

Reasonable accommodation in assessment will only be accommodated when a learner can demonstrate with appropriate evidence/documentation that, because of a specific need, s/he cannot compete on equal terms, under standard assessment conditions, with his/her peers.

Adaptations of assessment for a learner may be implemented by the Provision without having to request permission from QQI. Other awarding bodies may have different requirements, and in such cases, the Provision must adhere to the specific awarding body guidelines.

The adaptations may include the following and/or other reasonable adaptation:

- modified presentation of assignments/examination papers, e.g. enlargements
- scribes/readers
- sign language interpreter
- rest breaks
- adaptive equipment/software
- use of assistive technology
- additional time
- separate room/space

The implementation of these adaptations will ensure that all learners are assessed on an equitable basis. The Provision is responsible for their implementation and any associated costs incurred.<sup>1</sup>

While every effort is made to accommodate learner's needs, it may not always be feasible or practicable to facilitate the adaptation requested.

## **2.2 Relevant evidence/documentation for Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment**

Examples of relevant evidence/ documentation necessary for application for reasonable accommodation in assessment include but are not limited to:

- Medical Report
- Wide Range Achievement Test, fifth edition (WRAT5)
- Educational Psychologist Report
- Occupational Therapist Report
- Guidance Counsellor Report<sup>2</sup>

Examples of relevant evidence/documentation which **do not** qualify for application for reasonable accommodation in assessment application include:

- English is not the first language of the learner
- Literacy ability which is not as a result of a specific learning difficulty
- Injuries/disabilities that do not have an impact on the learner's ability to demonstrate the required standard of knowledge, skill and competence

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<sup>1</sup> Note from Working Group: Additional cost and resource implications including reading of educational psychologist reports

<sup>2</sup> Note from Working Group: The cost of an educational psychologist's report can be prohibitive for many learners. Further investigation into other options needs to be investigated and added to this list at a later date, e.g. online testing.

### **3. Principles of Assessment in Relation to Reasonable Accommodation**

Quality assured assessment ensures that, in criterion referenced assessment, “learners are assessed and the assessment judgment is made based on whether the learner has reached the required national standards of knowledge, skill and competence for the award” (QQI, Revised 2018, p.5). Central to quality assured assessment is the assumption that learners are assessed in a fair and consistent manner in line with the award standard. Quality assured assessment ensures adherence to the principles of assessment.

The following sets forth the principles of assessment which apply to this document: these principles are based on the QQI (Revised 2018) principles of assessment.

#### **3.1 Principles of Assessment**

##### **3.1.1 Validity**

Validity is a fundamental assessment principle ensuring that an assessment measures what it is designed to measure: the relevant standard of knowledge, skill or competence required for an award should be assessed.

Validity in assessment occurs when:

- Assessment is fit for purpose (i.e. a practical assessment assesses a practical skill)
- Learners can produce evidence which can be measured against the award standard
- Assessors can make accurate assessment decisions
- Assessment is accessible to all candidates who are potentially able to achieve it

##### **3.1.2 Reliability**

Reliability in assessment ensures that assessment measurement is accurate: the knowledge, skills and competence which the assessment measures should produce reliable and accurate results. Reliability in assessment ensures that results are consistent under similar conditions.

Reliability in assessment occurs when:

- The assessment is based on valid assessment techniques
- Assessment conditions are consistent
- Learner evidence is reliable
- Results are consistent over time across various assessors, contexts, conditions and learners

##### **3.1.3 Fair**

Fairness in assessment supports the validity and reliability principles and provides equal opportunity to all learners. Fairness in assessment ensures: learners have access to appropriate resources/equipment in assessment; assessment design and implementation are fair to all learners; and policies and procedures exist to ensure fair assessment of learners.

### **3.1.4 Quality**

Quality in assessment ensures that all assessment processes are quality assured.

### **3.1.5 Transparency**

Transparency in assessment ensures that assessment policy and procedures provide clarity to all relevant stakeholders.

In order to ensure the fair and consistent assessment of learners, the following process should be followed in relation to the provision of reasonable accommodation in assessment. The Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's Quality Assurance System overarches these principles and ensures learner achievement is assessed in a fair and consistent way in line with the national standards for the award.

In order to ensure fairness and consistency across all assessment activities, learners can apply for reasonable accommodation in relation to their assessment while at the same time ensuring that the assessment remains valid and reliable.

Special assessment arrangements/adaptations are not intended to and should not reduce the validity and reliability of the assessment or compromise the standard. The adaptation should seek to amend the aspects of the assessment technique or instrument which prevent a learner's participation in the assessment. It should be used where the particular assessment technique(s) or instruments disadvantage the learner in assessment. In essence, reasonable accommodations are put in place to facilitate the learner in demonstrating their knowledge, skill and competence to the standard required by the award. Providing reasonable accommodation is not intended to make the assessment easier or more achievable. In implementing reasonable accommodations, the learner should neither be advantaged or disadvantaged. The required standard must still be achieved and demonstrated, albeit in a slightly different way.

## 4. Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Roles and Responsibilities

### 4.1 The Provision Co-ordinator

The Provision Co-ordinator must co-ordinate and assess the application for Reasonable Accommodation. The Provision Co-ordinator must also inform the learner and Assessor(s) of the outcome of his/her application. If an application is successful, the Provision Co-ordinator must work with the Assessor (and other relevant persons if required) to accommodate the learner while **strictly adhering** to the assessment principles above and the standard of knowledge, skill and competence required for certification.

### 4.2 The Assessor

Once an application for Reasonable Accommodation is approved, the Assessor together with the Provision Co-ordinator (and other relevant persons if required) are required to plan and implement an alternative/adapted assessment in order to accommodate the learner while **strictly adhering** to the assessment principles above and to the standard of knowledge, skill and competence required for certification.

### 4.3 The Learner

#### 4.3.1 Specific Needs

The learner is required to inform the Provision by identifying themselves as persons with **specific needs** and requesting an alternative assessments and/or other support services that best meet their needs prior to the commencement of the course (within **four (4) weeks** prior to the assessment event). This may allow reasonable accommodation to be facilitated. This application must be in writing using the [Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Application Form](#).

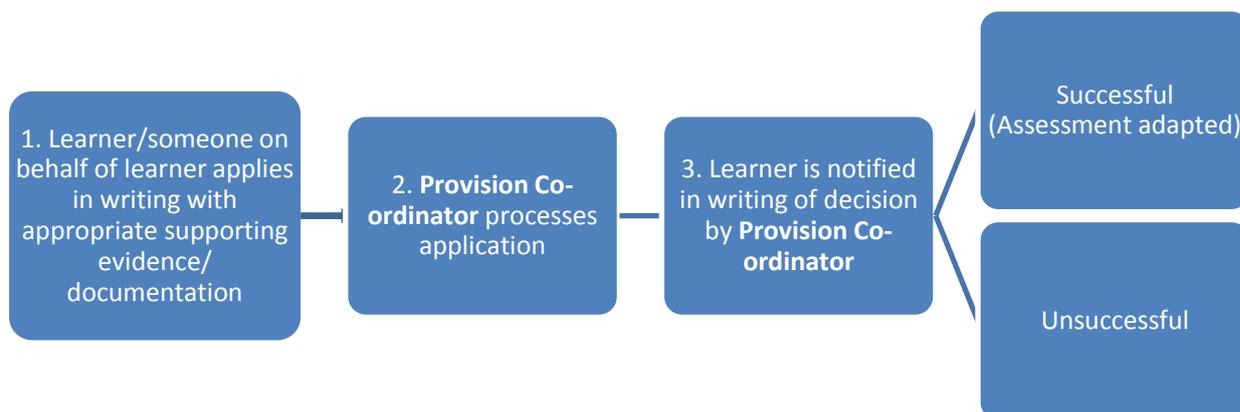
#### 4.3.2 Temporary Circumstances

The learner is required to inform the Provision by identifying themselves, due to **temporary circumstances** (e.g. temporary injury), as persons requesting an alternative/adapted assessments and/or other support services that best meet their needs as soon as possible. This may allow reasonable accommodation to be facilitated. This application must be in writing using the [Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Application Form](#).

The learner is required to submit relevant evidence/documentation (see 2.2).

## 5. Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Procedure

Figure 1 Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Procedure



1. The learner (or someone on behalf of the learner) applies in writing for reasonable accommodation in assessment to the Provision Co-ordinator, using the [Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Application Form](#).
  - **Specific Needs:** The application must be complete prior to the course commencement or within a **defined timeframe (four (4) weeks)** prior to the assessment event.
  - **Temporary Injury:** The application must be complete as soon as possible.
2. The application **MUST** be supported with **all** relevant evidence/documentation (see 2.2). A dialogue between the Provision Co-ordinator and learner must take place in order to determine the needs of the learner and ways to support and facilitate the learner in the assessment process, while adhering to the principles of assessment.
3. The Provision Co-ordinator must decide whether there is sufficient evidence (see 2.2) to proceed with the application. Additional information may be sought through dialogue between the Provision Co-ordinator and the learner.
4. The Provision Co-ordinator informs the learner in writing of the decision.
  - **Successful:**  
If the application is **successful** (i.e. there is sufficient evidence to proceed with the application), the Provision Co-ordinator will inform the learner of the outcome within **two (2) weeks** from receipt of all evidence/documentation. The Provision Co-ordinator will work with the Assessor (and other relevant persons if required) to adapt the

assessment while strictly adhering to the principles of assessment in relation to reasonable accommodation (see [Appendix 1: Adaptations of Assessment](#)).

- **Unsuccessful:**

If the application is unsuccessful (i.e. there is insufficient evidence to proceed with the application), the Provision Co-ordinator will inform the learner. The learner may appeal this decision (see Section 6)

## 6. Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Appeals

The learner has the right to appeal the reasonable accommodation in assessment application decision. Appeals must be made within a defined timeframe (**one (1) working day**) of the decision. (In exceptional circumstances, the Provision Co-ordinator may extend this). All appeals must be made in writing using the [Reasonable Accommodation Appeals Application Form](#).

All Appeals will be processed by the External Appeals Office located in the Quality Assurance Support Service Office.

**Decisions on appeals are final.**

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## References

Government of Ireland (2000) *Equal Status Act 2000*. Office of the Attorney General. Available from <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/section/4/enacted/en/html#sec4>. [accessed 30<sup>th</sup> May 2019]

QQI (2018 Revised) *Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers*. Ireland: QQI. Available from: <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Quality%20Assuring%20Assessment%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20Providers%20Revised%202013.pdf> [accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019].

State Examinations Commission (2019) *Reasonable Accommodations at the 2019 Certificate Examinations*. Ireland: State Examinations Commission. Available from: <https://www.examinations.ie/schools/BI-1013-9280184.pdf> [accessed 28th June 2019].

## Appendix 1: Adaptations of Assessment

As a general rule, an adaptation to the form of delivery, which makes learning possible, will also assist in making assessment possible. The learner is usually the best authority on what form of delivery is the most effective and the same method(s) may then be possible during any assessment. However, **it is important that the standard of work required by the assessment is not compromised. Only the method(s) by which the learner demonstrates his/her attainment of the standard can be adjusted.**

This list is not exhaustive.

### Rest breaks

Supervised rest breaks either inside or outside the assessment area should be allowed as is appropriate. A rest break can be flexible according to individual needs, e.g. ten minutes every hour as opposed to one twenty minute period during a three-hour assessment. The time so used should not be deducted from the time allowed (where specified) to complete the assessment. Rest breaks should not exceed 20 minutes per examination.

### Split Sessions

Splitting the assessment into two or more sessions may be an appropriate alternative for some learners.

### Extra time

In the case of assessments that are based on an time, additional time of **ten (10) minutes** per hour of the examination, or part thereof, is allowed, for learners with a visual impairment; for learners where a scribe has been sanctioned; or for learners who meet the eligibility criteria for the use of a recording device or a word processor but who are unable to make use of these aids under examination conditions.

### Readers

A reader is a person provided to assist a learner with a disability by reading assessment questions aloud without suggesting the answer. A reader is a person who, on request, will read to the learner:

- The entire or any part of the assessment
- Any part of the learner's answers (exactly, as they are 'spoken')

Readers are typically used by people with visual impairments, people who tire easily, people who have extreme muscle weakness, and people with learning difficulties.

Only one reader per learner is permissible and the assessment should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel.

### Writers/Scribes

A writer is a person who will, on request, write the answers exactly as given or dictated by a learner. A writer may also act as a reader and is often used in similar circumstances to a reader. As in the case of a reader, only one writer per learner is permissible and the assessment should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel.

### Sign Language Interpreters

Sign Language interpreters must be qualified to interpret Sign or other similar types of language. Only one Sign Language interpreter per learner should be used. The assessment for learners (usually those who are deaf or hard of hearing) should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel

For extra transparency, it may be necessary to video-tape the assessment for translation later. Similarly, some learners may prefer to sign their answers directly to video. A signed response should be transcribed to print by someone proficient in sign language. Any words or phrases re-interpreted for the learner should be underlined and noted in the question paper.

### **Overwriting**

Overwriting involves rewriting a question on an examination paper in such a way as to make it as explicit as possible. Overwriting should be in pen on the answer paper. This is done by assessment supervision personnel *in situ*. Where extensive modifications are necessary, a separate sheet of paper with the questions written in full should be attached by staple to the original answer paper. Technical terminology should not be overwritten. In case of doubt about technical terminology a subject matter expert can be consulted. Care must be taken to retain the original emphasis of the question.

### **Computers**

The use of computers by learners with a disability may be necessary as their primary means of communication, e.g. for learners with physical impairments for whom writing is difficult, for learners with visual impairments or blindness, and for learners with learning disabilities such as dyslexia. The definition of a 'computer' generally refers to hardware and/or software which facilitate/s effective communication for people for whom this may not otherwise be possible. It may be standard equipment e.g. the use of word processing software by someone with motor difficulties which impede handwriting, or may be specially adapted e.g. speech synthesisers and text enlargement software/hardware for people with visual impairments.

Where voice-activated software is used, the assessment should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel. It is the responsibility of the Provision to supply the appropriate hardware/software.

### **Audio-recording**

Audio-recording assessments and responses are useful in some cases, e.g. visual impairment or motor difficulties. The Provision should supply the assessment recording and a blank recording device/tape to learners at the same time as other learners. However, in order to minimise disruption to learners, the person should either use headphones or complete their assessment in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel.

### **Braille, braille-mate, braille 'n speak, braille 'n print, etc.**

Braille is generally, though not exclusively, used by learners who are blind or visually impaired. It is generally advised that the Braille machine is attached and adapted to a printer which will produce a printed text. The responses of the learner should not be printed until after the end of the assessment time, as the noise levels may be too high for other learners. The assessment/training location should supply the printer, braille paper and/or the computer printout paper.

### **The use of CCTV (closed circuit television)**

This is a technological aid that magnifies print. It is usually used for learners with visual impairments. The learner can read the assessment paper as well as his/her answers from a TV screen. The learner uses the base under the screen to write and this is simultaneously magnified on the screen.

### **Enlarge print i.e. A3 size**

Some learners, usually those with visual impairments, may simply require their assessment papers in enlarged print, i.e. A3 size paper. It still contains all the diagrams and other images. It still may contain tasks that require learners to draw charts or other diagrams.

### **Examination papers in colour**

Some learners, especially those who have dyslexia, may require their assessment paper in a colour other than black and white e.g. black on yellow, or black on grey. A gloss/high-sheen coated paper may also be unsuitable. The learners themselves should be consulted.

### **Other technologies**

The whole area of new technologies and access to information is rapidly changing. The opportunities for learners to demonstrate their abilities are increasing with the advent of assistive devices like the 'true-type talking microphone', a device which, with practice, can type onto a computer screen a person's spoken word. Such technologies are also becoming more accessible in terms of general availability and price. Applications for use of assistive technology will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

For example, an exam reading pen is a small hand held device which you can use to scan words, phrases or sections of the examination paper and have the text converted to speech which the learner listens to using ear-phones. Unlike ordinary reading pens, an exam reading pen does not have the functionality to explain the meaning of words or to translate words as this functionality would undermine the integrity of the exam. If using an exam reading pen, the learner may also be allowed to have a Reader or Reading Assistant for any module in which the pen cannot be used.

### **Separate Room**

Many learners experience recognised mental health illness at the time of examinations such as stress, insomnia, and anxiety. Learners should be able to access a separate room from the examination hall/skills demonstration room, with extra time/space/supervision, to ensure that the learner is not disadvantaged. Sometimes, learners with a hearing impairment may want to be seated in a preferred location within the room, perhaps to lip-read instructions or ask for them to be repeated or written down.

### **Accessing Sound - Personal sound device in main examination centre**

For the aural (listening comprehension) part of a language examination, a learner may be allowed to use a personal sound device (CD player) with individual headphones, while remaining in the main examination centre.

### **Accessing Sound - Modified aural examination – language subjects**

Instead of listening to a recording for the aural (listening comprehension) part of a language examination, a learner can have a face-to-face session with an examiner. The examiner reads out a script and this allows the learner to lip-read if you need to. The examination paper with written questions and spaces to write the answers is provided.

**Accessing Sound - Oral for hearing-impaired candidates.**

For the oral component of an examination, the examiner is told of the learners hearing impairment and can arrange for the lighting and positioning needed to help lip-read. The learner is not penalised if the oral examiner is asked to repeat something because it wasn't heard properly the first time.

**Drawing aids**

If an injury or other condition means that a learner has difficulty using a tee-square or other drawing tools normally used in technological modules, s/he may be allowed to use drawing aids such as parallel-motion boards and smaller drawing sheets in such subject related areas.

**Special desk or chair**

If the learner has a medical condition that requires the use of a special desk or chair, this can be facilitated. S/he can still be in the main examination centre, or the Provision may make arrangements to be in a special centre with other learners.

**Movement within the examination centre**

If the learner has a medical condition that requires regular movement (such as to stand up and walk around) this can be arranged.

**Medicine, food or drink**

Food or drink is not normally allowed in an examination centre (other than water). However, if the learner needs to take medicine, food, or drink because of a medical condition, this will be allowed. Also, the Provision can make arrangements to ensure privacy if needed (such as for insulin injections).

**Practical helper**

If the learner has an injury or physical disability, this person can help you in a practical examination. The helper can bring equipment and materials. They can only do exactly what the learner asks, and they are not allowed to do anything that is part of what is being tested.