



# **Guide to Reasonable Adjustments in Ofqual Accredited Units and Qualifications**

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The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DQ

Lowden, 24 Wester Shawfair, Dalkeith, Midlothian, EH22 1FD

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## History of changes

This document is the latest version and incorporates the changes summarised below.

Version number	Description	Date
1	Annual review – minor clarifications made	March 2013

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# Guide to Reasonable Adjustments in Ofqual Accredited Units and Qualifications

## Introduction

This guide outlines the reasonable adjustment procedure to be followed by centres in relation to the internal and external assessment of Ofqual accredited vocational and occupational qualifications. There is a separate section for Functional Skills.

## Applicability of reasonable adjustments in vocational and occupational qualifications

Learners are individuals with a diverse range of needs — including assessment needs. For learners who are disabled under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, a **reasonable adjustment** might be required to compensate for a substantial disadvantage, but there may be other adjustments that need to be made in order to meet their individual needs. 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.

Learners should be involved when any adjustment decisions are made. Reasonable adjustments must reflect the normal working practice of an individual working within the vocational or occupational area of the unit or qualification.

There is no duty on SQA to make any adjustment to the competences being tested in an assessment. For example, it may not be possible to make reasonable adjustments where:

- ◆ an assessment requires the demonstration of a practical competence
- ◆ the assessment criteria have to be fully met
- ◆ units or qualifications confer a licence to practise

The following adaptations may be considered in order to facilitate access, as long as they do not impact on the competence standards being tested:

- ◆ adaptation of the physical environment for access purposes
- ◆ adaptation to equipment
- ◆ changing usual assessment arrangements
- ◆ adapting assessment materials
- ◆ providing assistance during assessment
- ◆ changing or adapting the assessment method
- ◆ using assistive technology
- ◆ extra time, e.g. assignment extensions
- ◆ use of a different assessment location
- ◆ use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, CCTV
- ◆ use of assistive software

- ◆ assessment material in an enlarged format or Braille
- ◆ reader
- ◆ scribe
- ◆ practical assistant
- ◆ prompter
- ◆ transcript
- ◆ assessment material on coloured paper or in audio format
- ◆ language modified assessment material
- ◆ British Sign Language (BSL)
- ◆ Use of ICT/responses using electronic devices

Not all of the above adjustments will be reasonable, permissible or practical in particular situations. Learners may not need, nor be allowed the same adjustment for all assessments.

## **Providing advice to potential candidates / learners**

It is vital that centres recruit with integrity. Centres must ensure that learners have the correct information and advice on their selected qualifications and that the qualifications will meet their needs. Centres should also assess each potential learner and make justifiable and professional judgements about the learner's potential to successfully complete the assessment and achieve the qualification. Such an assessment must identify, where appropriate, the support that will be made available to the learner to facilitate access to the assessment.

Where the recruitment process identifies that a learner may not be able to demonstrate attainment and thus gain achievement in all parts of the assessment for the selected qualification, this must be communicated clearly to the learner. A learner may still decide to proceed with studying a particular qualification and not be entered for all or part of the assessment.

Centres are advised to ensure that learners are aware of:

- ◆ the range of options available, including any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary, to enable the demonstration of attainment across all of the required assessments; and
- ◆ any restrictions on progression routes to the learner as a result of not achieving certain outcomes

## **Applying for reasonable adjustment**

### **Internal assessments**

This section outlines the reasonable adjustment procedure to be followed by centres in relation to the internal assessment of Ofqual accredited vocational and occupational qualifications.

Guidance on reasonable adjustments in the internal assessment of Functional Skills English: Speaking, Listening and Communication component may be found in the Section *Functional Skills*.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the reliability or validity of assessment outcomes, nor must they give one learner an assessment advantage over other learners undertaking the same or similar assessments.

Centres only need to contact SQA to request a reasonable adjustment in an internal assessment if the arrangement changes the published assessment requirements in any significant way. For example, centres should contact SQA to request the use of a scribe in a Unit assessment which directly assesses written communication.

If a centre has any doubt as to whether a particular reasonable adjustment significantly changes the assessment requirements, they should contact SQA or discuss the matter with their External Verifier for the unit(s) concerned. This should be done as soon as possible, and before the learner undertakes the assessment.

All reasonable adjustments made in relation to internal assessments must be recorded using the JCQ form *Application for Reasonable Adjustments Internally Assessed Units Vocational Qualifications (VQ/IA)* and held on file within the centre, for verification purposes. The *Form VQ/IA* is available electronically at [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk).

## External assessments

This section outlines the reasonable adjustment procedure to be followed by centres in relation to external assessments of Ofqual accredited vocational and occupational qualifications.

Guidance on reasonable adjustments in the external assessment of Functional Skills English, ICT and Mathematics may be found in the section Functional Skills.

Centres must submit a request to SQA for any reasonable adjustment in an external assessment. Additionally, centres should contact SQA as soon as possible if they have any doubt as to whether a particular reasonable adjustment would be acceptable in an external assessment. Centres who wish to apply for a reasonable adjustment in any external assessment of vocational or occupational qualifications should make an application to SQA at least six weeks before the date of the series in which the examination is to be taken.

All reasonable adjustments made in relation to external assessments must be recorded using the JCQ form *Application for Reasonable Adjustments External Assessments Vocational Qualifications (VQ/EA)*. The *Form VQ/EA* is available electronically at [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk).

Completed application forms should be sent to:

Operations — HN and VQ  
SQA  
The Optima Building  
58 Robertson Street  
Glasgow  
G2 8DQ

## Functional Skills<sup>1</sup>

This section outlines the reasonable adjustment procedure to be followed by centres in relation to the external assessment of Functional Skills English, ICT, and Mathematics, and the internal assessment of Functional Skills English: Speaking, Listening and Communication component.

### Reasonable adjustments in the internal assessment of Functional Skills qualifications

The only internally assessed Functional Skills component is English: Speaking, Listening and Communication. Centres do not need to apply to SQA for reasonable adjustments in this component but it is recommended that they discuss any of the access or adjustment arrangements outlined below with SQA before implementing them.

Speaking, Listening and Communication within Functional Skills qualifications are defined as non-written communication, normally conducted face-to-face.

The term 'speaking, listening and communication', as used by these standards, is intended to be interpreted in a broadly inclusive way and is not intended to create any unnecessary barriers to candidates with speech or hearing impairment.

The needs of individual candidates will vary but, as guidance, the term should be interpreted as meaning communication, discussion and presentation that:

- ◆ can include use of sign language (eg British Sign Language, sign-supported English) provided this is made accessible to all participants in the discussion. (It is recognised that BSL is a language in its own right and not a form of English. BSL is, however, permitted as an alternative to English for the assessment of speaking, listening and communication where BSL is the candidate's normal way of communicating in the contexts described by the standards. No other languages are permitted as alternatives to English.)
- ◆ can include access to augmentative speech equipment and such software as constitutes the candidate's normal way of working
- ◆ does not depend solely on the use of written language or require the individual/s with whom the learner is communicating to be able to read (as these skills are covered by the requirements for reading and writing)

### Reasonable adjustments in the external assessment of Functional Skills qualifications

SQA uses the SOLAR online e-assessment engine in the assessment of Functional Skills. The system supports a range of accessibility features. These are used to enhance and increase the level of support which may be provided to learners with specific needs within the parameters of the inclusion sheets in the Functional Skills criteria for English, Mathematics and ICT. Ongoing support for centres in using the SOLAR e-assessment system is provided. Centres should

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<sup>1</sup> The section is based on the Functional Skills criteria for English, ICT and Mathematics published by QCDA (November 2009).

email [solar@sqa.org.uk](mailto:solar@sqa.org.uk) if they have any external assessment reasonable adjustment queries.

### **Functional Skills Information Communications Technology**

In completing assessment leading to Functional Skills ICT qualifications, candidates can have access to all forms of equipment and software that constitute their normal way of working, provided that these do not affect the reliability or validity of assessment outcomes or give a learner an assessment advantage over other learners undertaking the same or similar assessments.

The Functional Skills qualifications criteria require awarding organisations to develop assessment materials that anticipate the needs of candidates with disabilities and which minimise, as far as possible, the need to make reasonable adjustments (whilst still assessing the skills standards) or exemptions.

The following access arrangements may be used in the assessment of Functional Skills Information Communications Technology:

- ◆ Reader/screen reader
- ◆ Transcripts
- ◆ Scribes
- ◆ BSL interpreters
- ◆ Practical assistants (see note)
- ◆ Oral language modifiers
- ◆ Word processors
- ◆ Modified question papers (including Braille)
- ◆ Extra time
- ◆ External device to load personal settings (see note)

#### **Note: Practical assistants**

For assessment of the application of the skills described by the standards, a practical assistant may switch on the computer and insert a disk at the candidate's instruction but must not perform any skill for which marks are credited. (For more detail, please see commentary against individual skills standards below.) Assistants can be used in written assessments.

#### **Note: External device to load personal settings**

Permitted as a reasonable adjustment provided this does not compromise the assessment or give a learner any advantage not available to other candidates.

### **Functional Skills Mathematics**

In completing assessment leading to Functional Skills in Mathematics qualifications, candidates can have access to all forms of equipment, software and assistance (eg scribe, reader) that constitute their normal way of working. However, these must not affect the reliability or validity of assessment outcomes or give the learner an assessment advantage over other learners undertaking the same or similar assessments.

The Functional Skills qualifications criteria require awarding organisations to develop assessment materials that anticipate the needs of candidates with

disabilities and which minimise, as far as possible, the need to make reasonable adjustments or exemptions whilst still assessing the skills standards.

The following access arrangements may be used in the assessment of Functional Skills Mathematics:

- ◆ Readers
- ◆ Transcripts
- ◆ Scribes
- ◆ BSL interpreters
- ◆ Practical assistants
- ◆ Oral language modifiers
- ◆ Word processors
- ◆ Modified question papers (including Braille)
- ◆ Extra time
- ◆ Models, visual/tactile aids, speaking scales

### **Functional Skills English**

Access arrangements for Functional Skills English are outlined below under the heading of the relevant skills standard. Where barriers to access remain, awarding organisations must offer exemptions from individual components in Functional Skills English to candidates with disabilities, as a last resort.

#### **Reading-only**

Reading within Functional Skills qualifications is defined as the independent decoding and understanding of written language and text in a purposeful context.

‘Text’ is defined as materials that include the use of words that are written, printed, displayed on screen, or presented using Braille.

As a reasonable adjustment, candidates who are classed as disabled under the terms of the Equality Act 2010, and use assistive technology as their normal way of reading, can demonstrate that they are able to independently meet the requirements of the reading standards through use of screen-reader software.

A human reader cannot be used to demonstrate the requirements of the standards as this does not meet the requirement for independence. As a last resort, an exemption from the reading requirements can be requested for candidates with disabilities who cannot use assistive technology.

#### **Writing-only**

Writing within Functional Skills qualifications is defined as the independent construction of written text to communicate in a purposeful context.

‘Text’ is defined as materials that include the use of words that are written, printed, displayed on screen, or presented using Braille — and which are presented in a way that is accessible for the intended audience.

As a reasonable adjustment, candidates who are disabled under the terms of the Equality Act 2010 and who use assistive technology as their normal way of producing written texts can demonstrate that they are able to independently meet the requirements of the writing standards through use of a computer and appropriate software.

A human scribe cannot be used to demonstrate the requirements of the standards as this does not meet the requirement for independence. As a last resort, an exemption from the writing requirements can be requested for candidates with disabilities who cannot use assistive technology.

Centres wishing to request modified question papers should request the papers for Functional Skills external assessments at least ten weeks before the date of the assessment using the form *Application for Modified Papers (JCQ/Modified papers/Form 7)*. This form may be accessed at [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk). Centres must only select one choice from the modified paper listed on the form.

The completed form should be sent to:

Operations — HN and Vocational Delivery  
SQA  
The Optima Building  
58 Robertson Street  
Glasgow  
G2 8DQ

Centres must only order modified papers where they intend to enter the learner(s) for the relevant Functional Skills assessment window.

## Further reference

This guide is based on 'Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration: General and Vocational Qualifications' — with effect from 01 September 2012 to 31 August 2013, published by the Joint Council for Qualifications. It can be accessed at [www.jcq.org.uk](http://www.jcq.org.uk). The above publication contains more information on reasonable adjustments.