

# **SQA Functional Skills**

## **Guide to Reasonable Adjustments in SQA's Functional Skills Qualifications**

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# Introduction

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

# Reasonable adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires a qualifications body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment.

A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the lists of available access arrangements included in this document.

How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

There is no duty on qualifications bodies to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested in an assessment.

Centres must ensure that candidates have the correct information and advice on their selected qualifications and that the qualifications will meet their needs. Centres should also assess each potential candidate and make justifiable and professional judgements about the candidate'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 candidate to facilitate access to the assessment.

Where the recruitment selection identifies that a candidate 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 candidate. A candidate may still decide to proceed with studying a particular qualification and not be entered for all or part of the assessment.

Candidates should be involved in any discussions regarding the need for reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments must reflect the normal working practice of an individual working within the learning stage. The candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangement(s) before his/her first assessment.

Centres are advised to ensure that candidates 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 candidate as a result of not achieving certain outcomes

Centres must also obtain consent from candidates for their disability/difficulty to be disclosed to SQA. All this information can be on one form signed by the candidate.

## **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 is 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. Therefore, for some disabled candidates, the term can be interpreted as meaning communication, discussion and presentation. This means that the following would be acceptable:

- ◆ the use of sign language — eg British Sign Language (BSL), 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.)

- ◆ augmentative speech equipment and such software as constitutes the candidate's normal way of working

It also means that the assessment does not depend solely on the use of written language or require the individual/s with whom the candidate 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

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).

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 candidates with specific needs within the parameters of the inclusion sheets in the Functional Skills criteria for English, Mathematics and ICT. Ongoing support is provided for centres in the use of the SOLAR e-assessment system. Centres should e-mail [solar@sqa.org.uk](mailto:solar@sqa.org.uk) if they have any external assessment queries.

Please note that some reasonable adjustments can be granted by the centre whilst others will require prior approval from SQA. A detailed list can be found in Appendix 2.

### 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 candidate an assessment advantage over other candidates undertaking the same or similar assessments.

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)
- ◆ Adapted 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.)

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

An external device to load personal settings is permitted as a reasonable adjustment provided this does not compromise the assessment or give a candidate 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 candidate an assessment advantage over other candidates undertaking the same or similar assessments.

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

- ◆ Readers
- ◆ Scribes
- ◆ BSL interpreters
- ◆ Practical assistants
- ◆ Adapted 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, as a last resort, awarding organisations must offer exemptions from individual components in Functional Skills English to candidates with disabilities.

**Reading**

'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 reasonable adjustment of last resort, an exemption from the reading requirements can be requested for a disabled candidate who cannot use assistive technology.

Dictionaries and bilingual dictionaries are allowed in the Reading component.

## **Writing**

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 reasonable adjustment of last resort, an exemption from the writing requirements can be requested for a disabled candidate who cannot use assistive technology.

Dictionaries and bilingual dictionaries are allowed in the Writing component. Centres wishing to request adapted 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).

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 adapted papers where they intend to enter the candidate(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.

# Appendix 1

## SQA Functional Skills qualifications — summary of access arrangements

The information applies to all levels of Functional Skills English, ICT and Mathematics qualifications.

### Functional Skills English (Reading)

Access arrangement	Yes/No	Type of assessment
Extra time	Yes	
Dictionaries and bilingual dictionaries	Yes	The use of a dictionary or a bilingual dictionary is permitted for all candidates.
Reader	No	
Oral language modifier	Yes	
Sign language interpreter	Yes	
Scribe	Yes	
Voice recognition technology (assistive technology)	Yes	
Transcript	Yes	
Practical assistant	Yes	
Adapted question papers (including Braille)	Yes	
Models, visual/tactile aids, speaking scales	Yes	
External device to load personal settings	Yes	Permitted as a reasonable adjustment provided that this does not compromise the assessment or give the candidate any advantage not available to other candidates.

## Functional Skills English (Writing)

Access arrangement	Yes/No	Type of assessment
Extra time	Yes	
Dictionaries and bilingual dictionaries	Yes	The use of a dictionary or a bilingual dictionary is permitted for all candidates.
Reader	Yes	
Oral language modifier	Yes	
Sign language interpreter	Yes	
Scribe	No	
Voice recognition technology (assistive technology)	Yes	
Transcript	Yes	
Practical assistant	Yes	
Adapted question papers (including Braille)	Yes	
Models, visual/tactile aids, speaking scales	Yes	
External device to load personal settings	Yes	Permitted as a reasonable adjustment provided that this does not compromise the assessment or give the candidate any advantage not available to other candidates.

## Functional Skills Mathematics

<b>Access arrangement</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Type of assessment</b>
Extra time	Yes	
Reader	Yes	
Oral language modifier	Yes	
Sign language interpreter	Yes	
Scribe	Yes	
Word processor	Yes	
Transcript	Yes	
Practical assistant	Yes	
Adapted question papers (including Braille)	Yes	
Models, visual/tactile aids, speaking scales	Yes	

## Functional Skills ICT

Access arrangement	Yes/No	Type of assessment
Extra time	Yes	
Reader/screen reader	Yes	
Oral language modifier	Yes	
Sign language interpreter	Yes	
Scribe	Yes	
Transcript	Yes	
Practical assistant	Yes	<p>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 will be credited.</p> <p>A practical assistant may be used in written examinations.</p>
Adapted question papers (including Braille)	Yes	
External device to load personal settings	Yes	Permitted as a reasonable adjustment provided that this does not compromise the assessment or give the candidate any advantage not available to other candidates.

# Appendix 2

## Authorisation requirements for candidates sitting Level 1 and Level 2 Functional Skills qualifications

Where permitted by the specification, the following arrangements may be granted by the centre and do not need to be recorded. Evidence of need is not required to be held on file.

- ◆ Amplification equipment
- ◆ Bilingual dictionary
- ◆ Braille
- ◆ Colour naming by the invigilator for candidates who are colour blind
- ◆ Optical character reader (OCR) scanners
- ◆ Prompter
- ◆ Read aloud
- ◆ Separate invigilation (within the centre)
- ◆ Supervised rest breaks
- ◆ Transcript
- ◆ Word processor

The following arrangements may be granted by the centre without prior approval from SQA.

Form 9 – JCQ/CA must be completed and kept on the centre's files, (with appropriate evidence of need) for inspection purposes listing the names and numbers of candidates who were granted these arrangements.

- ◆ Bilingual dictionary with extra time of up to 25% (for the use of the dictionary)
- ◆ Extra time of up to 25%

For all other access arrangements (as detailed below) centres must apply to SQA at least six weeks before the date of the series in which the examination is to be taken.

Form 1 – JCQ/AA or Form 8 – JCQ/AA/LD, as appropriate, must be sent to SQA.

- ◆ Alternative accommodation (away from centre)
- ◆ Examination on coloured/enlarged paper
- ◆ Exemptions
- ◆ Extra time over 25%
- ◆ Oral language modifier
- ◆ Practical assistant for practical assessments
- ◆ Reader
- ◆ Scribe/voice activated computer system/voice input system
- ◆ Sign language interpreter

Where a candidate whose disability puts her/him at a disadvantage other adjustments, which are not listed, may be required. The centre should, in the first instance, contact SQA at the earliest opportunity to discuss the candidate's particular needs.