Apprenticeship Assessment Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy covers the delivery of NCFE Apprenticeship Assessment which are subject to internal and external Quality and Compliance. NCFE products include those which may be offered and/or delivered under an NCFE-owned brand name (for example 'CACHE').

The policy also forms part of a suite of policies for NCFE's Apprenticeship Assessment products and services, all of which are designed to:

- protect apprentices who are registered with us
- minimise the risk of an Adverse Effect occurring
- help support us and all other partners involved in risk management and risk minimisation
- help ensure we and all partners comply with all relevant legislation and guidance
- help improve and refine our products and services.

For our partners, this policy supports compliance with the Contract. It does not replace any of the requirements contained within that Contract. Non-adherence to our policies may constitute maladministration, malpractice and/or a breach of the Contract. Please ensure all policies are read and implemented carefully.

1.1. Purpose

Our policy assists us and our partners by outlining the framework for investigating and dealing with reasonable adjustments and special considerations. This is important in situations which could result in a detrimental effect on the apprentice and/or could potentially compromise the integrity of our standards, systems and/or processes.

1.2. Scope

This policy applies to all colleagues including third parties engaged in the delivery or administration of apprenticeship assessments

This document applies to all requests for reasonable adjustments made before an assessment takes place and to applications for special considerations arising from temporary illness, injury, adverse circumstances or other events that may affect an apprentice's performance during or immediately before an assessment

1.3. Responsibilities/duties

Partners must make sure that apprentices and staff, who are involved in the design, delivery, management, assessment and/or quality assurance of our Apprenticeship Assessment service, are familiar with the contents of this policy. Staff can include site, sub-site or contractual staff.

Document owner is responsible for:

- Ensuring the policy remains accurate, current and aligned with applicable regulatory and contractual and assessment plan requirements.

Responsible manager ensures:

- The document, and any requirements outlined in the document, are followed.

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The Quality and Compliance team is responsible for ensuring fairness and equality of all NCFE Apprenticeship assessments and for making our assessment materials accessible to all learners. We must ultimately ensure that no learner is given an unfair advantage or put at an unfair disadvantage when completing any of our qualifications.

This includes but is not limited to the following tasks:

- applying the requirements of this policy consistently and fairly
- ensuring reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations remain compliant with applicable regulatory and assessment requirements
- identifying and escalating risks or areas of noncompliance
- following up with any centres who have not provided/unable to provide sufficient evidence of learner need, setting action plans or sanctions wherever necessary.
- reviewing and updating policy and guidance documentation relating to Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

1.4. Definitions

Word/Acronym	Definition
AAO	Apprenticeship Assessment organisation
JCQ	Joint council of qualifications
ULN	Unique learner number

1.5. Location

This policy is available on the NCFE website.

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2. Process

2.1. Overview of reasonable adjustments and special considerations

The Equality Act 2010 requires Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations (AAOs) to make reasonable adjustments to ensure an apprentice who is disabled as defined in the Act are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to apprentices who are not disabled.

Assessment should be a fair test of an apprentice's knowledge and what they are able to do; however, for some apprentices, the usual format of assessment may not be suitable. Therefore, some apprentices may require reasonable adjustments to allow them to access assessments fairly.

A reasonable adjustment or special consideration is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability, difficulty or circumstances that places the apprentice at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation.

Reasonable adjustments and/or special considerations should **not** give the apprentice an unfair advantage. The apprentice's result must reflect his or her achievement in the assessment and not necessarily his or her potential ability. Adjustments **must not** affect the integrity of what is being assessed or compliance with the requirements of assessment.

The provisions for reasonable adjustments and/or special condition arrangements are made to ensure that apprentices 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 making assessments easier for apprentices, nor are they to give apprentices a head start.

All apprentices, regardless of their reasonable adjustment or special consideration, must still meet the minimum requirements to achieve their apprenticeship.

AAOs and partners are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of applying adjustments or considerations. What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances, cost implications and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment. Other factors, such as compliance with requirements of Assessment Plans or regulatory conditions, will also be taken into consideration.

For Reasonable Adjustments NCFE adhere to DfE Commercial, Skills England and JCQ guidelines. These regulations reflect a whole AO and centre approach to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments. It is therefore the responsibility of the head of centre, members of the senior leadership team, the SENCo/assessor(s) and where relevant the SEN Governor to familiarise themselves with the entire contents of the guidelines.

2.2 Reasonable adjustments

NCFE are required to make reasonable adjustments where a learner, who has a disability within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who does not have a disability. NCFE are required to take all reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. NCFE will take all reasonable steps to ensure no adverse effects occur because of any reasonable adjustments.

A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Reasonable Adjustments. Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- the needs of the disabled candidate

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- the effectiveness of the adjustment
- the cost of the adjustment and
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates.

An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body
- involves unreasonable timeframes or
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'.

All reasonable adjustments must be recorded on the Proficient platform before the apprentices' first assessment takes place.

Some reasonable adjustments can be implemented without prior approval from NCFE. However, where the nature of the request requires further consideration, NCFE may need to review and approve the adjustment before it is applied. The Reasonable Adjustment Guidance available on the Proficient platform outlines which adjustments require NCFE approval prior to implementation.

In all cases, centres must upload the minimum required evidence for every reasonable adjustment request, which is a centre statement. The statement must clearly demonstrate that the reasonable adjustment forms part of the apprentice's normal way of working throughout their on-programme period and explain how it will be applied during the apprenticeship assessment.

2.3. Special considerations

Can be applied to apprentices who have temporarily experienced illness, injury or some other event outside of their control at the time of assessment. It is applied when the issue or event has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a candidate's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment. Every request must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Special consideration can go some way to assist a candidate affected by a potentially wide range of difficulties, emotional or physical, which may influence performance in their examinations. It cannot remove the difficulty faced by the candidate. This means that there will be some situations where candidates should not be entered for an examination. This is because only minor adjustments can be made to Apprenticeship Assessments stipulations. To make larger adjustments would jeopardize the integrity of Apprenticeship Assessment.

2.4 When is a reasonable adjustment or special consideration applied.

Reasonable adjustment	Special Consideration
Reasonable adjustments are approved or set in place **before** the assessment activity takes place; they constitute an arrangement to give the apprentice access to the assessment activity. The reasonable adjustment will then be made to the assessment arrangements	Special consideration may be requested **after** an assessment has taken place where extenuating circumstances, or circumstances beyond the apprentice's control, have adversely affected their ability to attend, participate in, or perform during

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Only reasonable adjustments that have been recorded on NCFE Apprenticeship Assessment platforms should be applied during the Apprenticeship Assessments period.	the assessment, resulting in an impact on the assessment outcome. Examples of circumstances that may qualify for special consideration include temporary illness, injury, bereavement, or other adverse events occurring immediately before or during the assessment. Approval of a special consideration request will be based on the individual circumstances of each case. Consideration will be given to the nature and severity of the difficulty experienced by the apprentice, together with the justification provided in support of the request. All special consideration requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Please note that, where an assessment leads directly to a Licence to Practise, it may not be possible to apply special consideration arrangements due to regulatory requirements.

2.5. How to request a reasonable adjustment or special consideration

Reasonable adjustment	Special Consideration
To request a reasonable adjustment, you must complete the Reasonable Adjustment section on the apprentice's Proficient platform page and submit the Reasonable Adjustments Form, which can be found within the Support Materials section of the Proficient platform along with any evidence to support the request. A single form may be submitted to cover multiple reasonable adjustments. However, a separate reasonable adjustment record must be created for each adjustment on the apprentice's Proficient page. Further guidance can be found in the Apprenticeship Assessments Operations Manual. All requests for reasonable adjustments must be supported by valid and up-to-date evidence of the apprentice's learning need and/or medical condition, in line with NCFE guidelines. This evidence must be retained and available for review by NCFE either before (during the	To request a special consideration, you should use the Special Consideration Form found on the Apprenticeship Assessments Policy page here. All requests must be supported by appropriate evidence, such as an invigilation record or other documentation that confirms the circumstances and their impact on the assessment. Requests may not be accepted where there is insufficient evidence, or where the grounds for the request and the impact on the assessment outcome are unclear, invalid, or incomplete. Further guidance can be found in the Apprenticeship Assessments Operations Manual, available on the Proficient platform Support Materials page.

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request process), or after the assessment, depending on the nature of the request.	

2.6. Timescales for requesting a reasonable adjustment or special consideration

Reasonable adjustment	Special Consideration
To ensure that requests can be honoured before an assessment takes place, you are required to submit reasonable adjustment prior to assessment. All necessary reasonable adjustment arrangements must be in place at least 90 days prior to the apprentice's first assessment date. Any requests submitted outside of this timeframe may not be approved (if applicable), or we may not be able to meet the requirements for planned assessment dates. Once a request for a reasonable adjustment that needs NCFE approval is received, NCFE will aim to review the request and evidence provided within 10 working days. Reasonable adjustment(s) that need NCFE approval will not be approved until sufficient evidence is provided.	If you believe an assessment outcome was affected by an extenuating circumstance that occurred during the assessment, a request for special consideration can only be submitted after the assessment results have been released. Requests for special consideration relating to circumstances that occurred during an assessment must be submitted within **five working days of the grade release date**. Upon receipt of a special consideration request, NCFE will aim to review the application and any supporting evidence within 10 working days. Please note that special consideration requests will not be approved until sufficient supporting evidence has been provided. It is therefore important to ensure that all relevant documentation is submitted as part of the request.

2.6.1 Centre Approval and NCFE approval requirements

NCFE's approach to reasonable adjustments for apprenticeship assessment will enable customers to implement certain adjustments where appropriate evidence is available, without the need to seek prior approval from NCFE.

Reasonable adjustments that centres can automatically approve, these are subject to audit by NCFE.	**Reasonable adjustments that NCFE must approve**
Up to 25% extra time	26% - 100% Extra time
Supervised Rest Breaks	Access to Mobile Phone for Medical reasons
Computer reader/reader	Listening to white noise due to a substantial impairment

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Scribe	Questions in written format (as well as verbal)
Prompter	Detailed notes to be brought into assessment
Practical/personal assistant	Detailed notes to be taken during assessment
Sign language/professional Interpreter	Modified Paper Requests

For any adjustments that need to be applied and are not on the above list, please contact eparelationshipteam@ncfe.org.uk.

2.6.2. Outcomes of a reasonable adjustment that needs NCFE approval

The outcome of a reasonable adjustment could be:

- approval of requested adjustment
- rejection of your request based on insufficient or invalid evidence
- rejection of your request based on internal records of assessment
- rejection of your request based on the reasonableness of the request, such as a request for specialist equipment
- rejection based on whether the request affects the integrity of our assessments
- suggested alternative adjustment/arrangement.

3. Initial Equality Impact Assessment

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy, and no concerns were raised.

4. References to associated documents

- JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments
- Department for Education Reasonable Adjustment guidance.
- Special Considerations Request Form

5. Implementation and dissemination

This policy is available via the NCFE website

6. Monitoring arrangements

We will review this policy annually, as a minimum, and where otherwise necessary, and may revise it in response to the findings of any review.

7. Data protection

7.1. Mandatory disclosure

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It is imperative that the integrity of our assessments is maintained. We are aware that partner organisations often work with more than one End-Point Assessment Organisation (Apprenticeship Assessments), and that therefore more than one Apprenticeship Assessments AO may be at risk when things go wrong.

Our regulators have outlined some specific conditions that we must meet to protect the integrity across the sector. This includes the requirement that where certain things are identified (such as malpractice), or certain actions taken (such as when sanctions are applied) the regulators and other relevant Apprenticeship Assessments AOs who may be affected must be informed.

Depending on the seriousness of the matter, we may be required to declare to our regulators that we are no longer compliant due to an act or omission by partners which has put us in breach. In this event, we may have regulatory action directed against us, such as monetary penalties. In accordance with the Contract, where appropriate, we reserve the right to direct such financial penalties against partners, should they be because of the act or omission.

7.2. Confidentiality

We may need to access confidential information. We will ensure that such information is kept secure and only used for the purposes of the investigation and in line with relevant data protection legislation. We will not normally disclose the information to third parties unless required to do so, such as to our regulators and/or the Police or other relevant and/or Statutory Bodies.

7.3. Termination for convenience

Our actions under this Policy and any sanctions imposed will be proportionate. Where possible, we will always try to work with partners in resolving issues. However, nothing within this policy precludes us from invoking our right under the Contract to terminate our relationship with partners.

8. Data retention

NCFE will securely store information provided as part of a Special Consideration and/or Reasonable Adjustment request. Personal data will only be retained for as long as necessary and will be securely destroyed or anonymised when no longer required and in accordance with our Data Retention Policy

9. Contact information

If you have any queries relating to enquiries and appeals, please contact NCFE's EPA Quality and Compliance team in writing:

Email: epaqualityassurance@ncfe.org.uk

Post: NCFE EPA Quality and Compliance team, Q6 Quorum Park, Benton Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8BT

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