

# **Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments for internally assessed qualifications**

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# Section 1: Introduction to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments

## 1.1 Overview

The provision for access arrangements and reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that learners receive recognition of their achievement so long as the equity, validity and reliability of the assessments can be assured. Such arrangements are neither concessions to make assessments easier for learners, nor advantages to benefit the learners.

There are two ways in which access to fair assessment can be achieved, these are through:

**Access arrangements**, which allow learners with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities, or temporary injuries, to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the particular needs of an individual learner without affecting the integrity of the assessment.

**Reasonable adjustments**, which NCFE is required to make where a learner, who is disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. NCFE is required to take all reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage.

All awarding organisations and centres have a responsibility to ensure that the process of assessment is robust and fair and allows the learner to show what they know and can do without compromising the assessment criteria (AC).

## 1.2 What this guidance applies to

This guide applies to all internally assessed NCFE qualifications (including those which are externally moderated).

For internally assessed qualifications, centres do not need to notify NCFE and must make reasonable adjustments that reflect a learner's normal way of working, in line with this document.

All reasonable adjustments made in relation to internal assessments must be recorded on the [Reasonable adjustment tracking document](#) and held on file within the centre for inspection by NCFE.

## 1.3 What to consider

When considering whether an adjustment to an assessment is appropriate, awarding organisations and centres need to consider the following:

- Learners should potentially be able to achieve the assessment requirements. Any access arrangements or reasonable adjustments should not compensate the learner for lack of knowledge and skills. The learner must be able to cope with the content of the assessment and be able to work at the level required for the assessment.

- Any access arrangements or reasonable adjustments must not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification or the requirements of the assessment strategy. Competence standards should not be altered. While awarding organisations should take all reasonable steps to ensure that learners with a disability or difficulty are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in terms of access to assessment, there is no duty to make any adjustment to a provision, criteria or practice which is defined as a competence standard. All learner performance will be assessed against set standards. These standards cannot be altered, but it may be possible to change the delivery or process of assessment so that each learner has an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do.
- Any access arrangements or reasonable adjustments to assessment must not give the learner an unfair advantage nor should it disadvantage the learner. The qualification of a learner who has had an access arrangement or reasonable adjustment must have the same credibility as that of any other learner. Vocational qualifications may lead to employment. Achievement of such qualifications must give a realistic indication to potential employers of what the holder of the qualification can do.
- Any access arrangements or reasonable adjustments must be based on the individual needs of the learner. Decisions about adjustments to assessment should be taken after careful consideration of the assessment needs of each individual learner, the assessment requirements of the qualification, and the nature and extent of the support given as part of normal teaching practice. Centres should not assume that the same access arrangements or reasonable adjustments will be required for all assessments. Different qualifications and different methods of assessment can make different demands on the learner. Learners should be consulted throughout the process.
- The centre must ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates.

## 1.4 Centre responsibilities

All centre staff must work together to ensure that appropriate and / or approved access arrangements are put in place for all internal and controlled assessments.

Centres should bear in mind that they will have duties towards disabled learners, including a duty to make access arrangements to the service they provide to learners.

The term 'SENDCO' used throughout this document refers to the person appointed by the head of centre to co-ordinate the access arrangements process within the centre. This would also include an Access Arrangements Co-ordinator (AAC), an Assistant SENDCO or a Deputy SENDCO.

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCO) or suitably qualified assessor must undertake the necessary and appropriate steps to gather and present a picture of need and demonstrate normal way of working for a learner. This includes distance learners and home educated students. The centre, where required, must lead on the assessment process.

NCFE cannot make a decision on which access arrangements would be best for the learner, this decision must be made by the centre due to the working knowledge of each individual learner's needs.

NCFE staff cannot determine whether a learner has a disability or a learning difficulty. The learner must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the access arrangements before his / her first assessment. This is particularly so where a computer reader, modified enlarged papers, a scribe, speech recognition technology or a word processor will be used in assessments.

Where the candidate has been referred to The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) or a local NHS Trust by their centre or GP, is on the list to be screened and / or is likely to receive a formal diagnosis, the SENDCO may in exceptional circumstances use a CAMHS / NHS Trust referral confirmation / acceptance letter. This would be due to the length of CAMHS / NHS Trust waiting lists. However, the SENDCO must produce a compelling picture of need when submitting evidence.

## **Section 2: Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments available for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties**

### **2.1 Managing the needs of learners with disabilities and learning difficulties**

Some learners with disabilities and learning difficulties are likely to have a number of the needs set out below. They may require a range of access arrangements. The examples given are therefore not exhaustive and are illustrative only.

#### **Cognition and learning needs for example general and / or specific learning difficulties (such as Dyscalculia and Dyslexia)**

Learners with learning difficulties may require, for example:

- supervised rest breaks (controlled assessments only)
- extra time
- a computer reader or a reader
- to read aloud or an examination reading pen
- a scribe
- a word processor
- a prompter
- a practical assistant
- coloured overlays
- coloured / enlarged assessment materials
- modified language assessment materials

#### **Communication and interaction needs for example Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)**

Learners with communication and interaction difficulties may require, for example:

- supervised rest breaks (controlled assessments only)
- extra time
- a computer reader or a reader
- to read aloud or an examination reading pen
- a scribe
- a word processor
- modified language assessment materials

#### **Sensory and physical needs for example Hearing Impairment (HI), Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI), Physical Disability (PD), Vision Impairment (VI)**

Learners with sensory and physical needs may require for example:

- supervised rest breaks (controlled assessments only)
- extra time
- a computer reader or a reader
- to read aloud or an examination reading pen

- a scribe
- a word processor
- a live speaker
- a Communication Professional
- a practical assistant
- Braille papers, modified enlarged and / or modified language assessment materials

## **Social, mental and emotional needs for example Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Mental Health Conditions**

Learners with social, mental and emotional needs may require, for example:

- supervised rest breaks (controlled assessments only)
- extra time
- a computer reader or a reader
- to read aloud or an examination reading pen
- a scribe
- a word processor
- a prompter
- an alternative site arrangement

## **2.2 Centre delegated adjustments (no prior notification to NCFE required)**

### **2.2.1 Supervised rest breaks**

There is no requirement to submit a notification to NCFE for supervised rest breaks for a learner during an assessment and no supporting evidence is required for inspection purposes.

Centres are permitted to provide a supervised rest break during any NCFE internal / controlled assessment to a learner where it is their normal way of working within the centre. Supervised rest breaks must always be considered before making an application for extra time.

The timing of the assessment should be paused and re-started when the learner is ready to continue, and this must be recorded on the Assessment Tracking Document (ATD) if applicable). During the rest break the learner must not have access to the assessment paper. The supervised rest break is not included in any extra time allowance.

If the learner needs to leave the assessment room, an appropriate supervisor must accompany them. There is no maximum time set for supervised rest breaks. The decision must be made by the centre based on their knowledge of the learner's needs and normal way of working when placed under timed assessment conditions. It may be helpful to consider in advance of the assessments how many breaks a learner might require and the approximate duration of any supervised rest breaks. This will allow sufficient staff to be available to facilitate any rest breaks.

Centres must seek medical advice in cases of serious illness on whether the learner is fit to take the assessment.

### **2.2.2 Separate supervision or invigilation**

There is no requirement to submit a notification to NCFE for separate supervision or invigilation for a learner during an assessment and no supporting evidence is required for inspection purposes.

Arrangements for the separate supervision of any learner may be made at a centres discretion. Any invigilation arrangements for such learners should not advantage or disadvantage these learners over other learners.

All details of any such arrangements must be recorded by the centre.

### **2.2.3 Change in the organisation of the assessment room**

There is no requirement to submit a notification to NCFE for a change in the organisation of the assessment room and no supporting evidence is required for inspection purposes. Minor changes to the organisation of the assessment room may benefit some learners with ASD, visual or HI or with physical difficulties.

For example:

- visually impaired learners may benefit from sitting near a window so that they have good lighting
- hearing impaired learners may benefit from being seated near the front of the room or removing visual / noise stimuli, such as a ticking clock, from the room

### **2.2.4 Word processor**

There is no requirement to submit a notification to NCFE for the use of a word processor for a learner during an assessment and no supporting evidence is required for inspection purposes.

Centres are permitted to provide a word processor (for example laptop, computer) with the spelling and grammar check facility disabled where it is the learner's normal way of working within the centre and is appropriate to the learner's needs.

Where provided by a centre, a word processor:

- must have been cleared of any previously stored data, as must any portable storage medium used in the internal / controlled assessment
- must be in good working order at the time of the assessment
- must be accommodated in such a way that other learners are not disturbed and cannot read the screen
- must either be connected to a printer so that their work can be printed off or have the facility to print from a portable storage medium. This must be done after the assessment is complete. The learner must be present to verify that the work printed is his or her own. Word-processed scripts must be securely attached to any answer booklet containing some of the answers
- must not be connected to an internet / intranet or any other means of communication, unless permitted as part of the assessment, for example Digital Functional Skills
- must not give the learner access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited in the assessment) or spreadsheets
- must not be used on the learner's behalf by a third party unless the learner has permission to use a scribe.



Centres must indicate, on the return of any word-processed assessments, the number of sheets of paper constituting the total return.

The battery capacity of a laptop or a tablet must be checked before any assessment. The centre must ensure that the battery is sufficiently charged for the entire duration of the assessment. The use of a fully charged laptop or tablet will allow a centre to seat a learner within the assessment room without the need for separate invigilation and power points.

### **2.2.5 Read aloud and / or the use of an examination reading pen**

There is no requirement to submit a notification to NCFE for read aloud and / or the use of an examination reading pen for a learner during an assessment and no supporting evidence is required for inspection purposes.

Learners are permitted to read aloud during assessments, so long as this reflects their normal way of working within the centre. Centres must ensure that where this adjustment is implemented, learners are accommodated separately.

The use of an examination reading pen may benefit those learners who wish to work independently and do not qualify for a reader / computer reader. It must be established as the learner's normal way of working within the centre. Examination reading pens must not have an in-built dictionary, thesaurus or a data storage facility.

### **2.2.6 Prompter**

There is no requirement to submit a notification to NCFE for the use of a prompter for a learner during an assessment and no supporting evidence is required for inspection purposes.

Where a need is established, a prompter may assist the learner in keeping focussed on the assessment by appropriate interventions. A prompter is not a reader or scribe.

A prompter:

- may tap on the desk in order to remind the learner to focus on the assessment
- may use the learner's name as an appropriate prompt during the assessment in order to bring the learner's attention back to the question paper
- may use a written prompt such as a flashcard
- must abide by the regulations since failure to do so could lead to the disqualification of the learner
- must not advise the learner regarding which questions to do, or on the order in which questions should be answered
- must not give factual help or offer any suggestions

Any prompt to be used in an assessment must be agreed with the learner in advance of the assessment, consistent with the learner's normal way of working.

For support when administering this access arrangement and acting as a prompter, see appendix A.

### **2.2.7 Communication professional (for learners using sign language)**

There is no requirement to submit a notification to NCFE for the use of a communication professional for a learner during an assessment and no supporting evidence is required for inspection purposes.

Centres are allowed to provide a communication professional to a learner where it is their usual way of working in the centre.

The communication professional may have access to assessment papers **one hour** prior to the scheduled start time of the assessment. Upon request an additional copy of the assessment paper may be provided by NCFE for the communication professional to allow them to prepare, though the content of the assessment must not be shared with any other person.

A communication professional will work 'live' in the presence of the learner during the assessment in order to allow for the learner's regional variations in British Sign Language (BSL) or International Sign Language (ISL) signs.

Consequently, this cannot be checked by NCFE for accuracy. Great care must be taken not to disadvantage or advantage the learner.

Centres must record the signing of the communication professional to demonstrate accuracy.

For the rules associated with implementing a communication professional please refer to Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) access arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

For support when administering this access arrangement and acting as a communication professional, see appendix A.

### **2.2.7.1 Functional Skills English speaking, listening and communicating (SLC)**

Functional Skills English SLC component is a non-written communication, conducted either face-to-face or virtually using video conferencing technologies. The terms 'speaking, listening and communicating' are intended to be interpreted in a broad and inclusive way, without intending to create any barriers to candidates with speech or hearing impairments. Sign language such as BSL or ISL can be used, providing this is made accessible to all participants in the discussion. Likewise, access to augmentative speech equipment is also permitted, where it reflects the candidate's normal way of working. No other languages are permitted as alternatives to English.

### **2.2.8 Bilingual translation dictionaries with 25% extra time**

There is **not** a requirement to submit a notification to NCFE for the use of a bilingual dictionary with 25% extra time for a learner during an assessment and no supporting evidence is required for inspection purposes.

The use of a bilingual translation dictionary with up to 25% extra time must reflect the learner's normal way of working. It is only to be used in assessments by learners whose first language is not English, Irish or Welsh, who entered the UK less than 3 years ago (including holiday periods), is new to learning in English and does not have sufficient prior and current knowledge of academic English. The candidate may have been assessed on arrival as being new to English (Band A on the Department for Education (DfE) scales) or in the early acquisition stages of language development (Band B on the DfE scales).

Extra time must not be awarded to a learner using a bilingual translation dictionary who does not meet the above criteria or in order to compensate for difficulties in reading and writing in English.

The translation of assessment materials or the learner's answers into or from the learner's first language is **not** allowed.

### **2.2.9 Other arrangements for learners with disabilities**

Please see below for a list of other centre delegated access arrangements, which a learner may require, in order to access an assessment. There is no requirement to submit a notification to NCFE for any of the arrangements listed below and no supporting evidence of need is required for inspection purposes.

- Amplification equipment
- Brailers
- Closed circuit television (CCTV)
- Colour naming by the supervisor for learners who are Colour Blind
- Coloured overlays (this would also include reading rulers, virtual overlays and virtual reading rulers)
- Low vision aid / magnifier
- Optical Character Reader (OCR) scanners

### **2.2.10 Access to a mobile phone for medical purposes**

There is not a requirement to notify NCFE for learners who require a mobile phone for medical purposes. A candidate with a medical condition must be subject to 1:1 invigilation when in possession of their mobile phone to ensure the integrity of the examination.

### **2.2.11 Listening to music or white noise during an assessment**

For learners whose needs require them to listen to music or white noise through headphones during an assessment in order to focus, this will be permitted without prior notification to NCFE. In these occasions, centres must check that the device playing music or white noise cannot connect to the internet, and that the audio files to be played do not provide an advantage to the learner.

## Section 3 Non-centre delegated adjustments (prior notification to NCFE required)

### 3.1 Timescales

In order to ensure that requests for modified assessment papers are processed in a timely manner, we require centres to submit requests in line with the timescales outlined below using the paper modifications and / or access arrangements sections within the 'Edit Learner' option (if amending an existing booking) or within the 'Add or Amend Learner Details' option upon registration, available in the NCFE Portal.

For Functional Skills internal assessments centres should make size and colour modifications themselves.

<u>Type of modification required</u>	<u>Timescales</u>
❖ Enlarged papers ❖ Coloured papers	<b>15 working days' notice</b> (prior to the published date of assessment or start of assessment window)
❖ Braille papers ❖ Tactile diagrams ❖ Modified language papers	<b>30 working days' notice</b> (prior to the published date of assessment or start of assessment window)

Centres are responsible for ensuring paper-based exam bookings are scheduled prior to a modified paper request being submitted.

**Centres are encouraged to submit requests as far in advance of any scheduled assessment as possible.**

Any requests for paper modifications submitted in line with the timescales outlined above will be processed within **five working days** of receipt. Any modified papers will be dispatched to arrive **at least three working days** before the scheduled assessment date or start of the assessment window.

Any requests submitted outside of our advertised timescales may be rejected.

### 3.2 Enlarged papers

Where a learner is unable to access the standard format of our assessment materials, we can offer enlarged versions. Centres must provide specific details of the requirements as part of their request.

All requests must be submitted in line with the notification timescales detailed above.

As standard, NCFE offer the modified paper options below for learners requiring reasonable adjustments:

<b>Enlarged (Unmodified)</b>	Standard assessment paper enlarged from A4 to A3; enlarging entire paper, retaining the original layout
<b>Modified</b>	Standard assessment paper options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A4 18 pt bold</li> <li>• A4 24 pt bold</li> <li>• A3 24 pt bold</li> <li>• A3 36 pt bold</li> </ul>

If the options above do not meet the requirements of your learner, please include full details of the required modification in your request, which NCFE will review on a case-by-case basis.

**Please note:** some modifications may not be available in all qualifications / assessments. In these cases, NCFE would provide you with feedback as to why the modification could not be processed and will offer a suitable alternative where possible. Where modifications are processed, it may be necessary for NCFE to produce a page in a larger or non-modified format depending on the contents of the page.

### 3.3 Braille papers and / or tactile diagrams

On receipt of your application the standard assessment materials will be sent to a specialist Braille production company. Tactile diagrams and graphs will be provided, as appropriate. You will need to advise us of the Braille grade and type required. All requests must be submitted in line with our advertised timescales.

### 3.4 Coloured papers

We are able to provide controlled assessments on coloured paper. See appendix B for our example-coloured paper chart. Please ensure when submitting a request that you specify the required colour shade in order for us to be able to meet the learner's needs.

## Section 4 Contact information

If you've any queries about the contents of the document, please contact our Customer Support team:

Email: [customersupport@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:customersupport@ncfe.org.uk)

Telephone: 0191 239 8000

# Appendices

## Appendix A – Support for administering access arrangements

Centres must ensure that both supervisors and those acting as any of the below roles, are appropriately trained and familiar with this document.

It is essential that the learner is made aware of what the reader / scribe / communication professional / practical assistant can and can't do in advance of their assessment.

### Reader – support for acting as a reader

Do's	Don'ts
I'm here to read for you in your assessment.	I can't give you any help with answers.
You must make clear what you want to be read.	I can't tell you which questions to answer.
I can only read the instructions and the questions.	I can't tell you when to move on to the next question.
I can repeat instructions, but only if you make it clear which instructions you want me to read.	I can't tell you which questions to do first.
I can spell words if you ask me, but only words in the question paper.	
I can read back your answer, but only if you ask me.	

### Scribe – support for acting as a scribe

Do's	Don'ts
I'm here to write / type for you in your assessment.	I can't draw for you in a Design assessment.
I must write / type exactly what you say.	I can't give you any help with answers.
I can draw if required, but I can only draw exactly what you tell me.	I can't suggest when an answer is finished.
I can change what I have written / typed, but only if you ask me.	I can't tell you which questions to answer.
If we have problems communicating, I must tell the supervisor.	I can't tell you when to move onto the next question.
	I can't tell you which questions to do first.
	If you have rest breaks, I can't write / type in those breaks.

### Communication professional – support for acting as a communication professional

Do's	Don'ts
I'm here to sign the questions in British Sign Language for you in your assessment.	I can't sign words or phrases that the qualification requires you to have learnt, but I can fingerspell them.
You can fingerspell answers, or sign an answer if it is one word only and I will write it for you.	I can't explain what the question expects you to write.
I can sign the questions more than once but I can't explain the questions.	



### Practical assistant – support for acting as a practical assistant

Do's	Don'ts
I'm here to act as a practical assistant for you in your assessment.	I can't read any questions for you.
I must only assist you with any practical tasks within the assessment.	I can't write any responses for you.
	I can't give you any help with answers.

### Prompter – support for acting as a prompter

Do's	Don'ts
I'm here to act as a prompt for you in your assessment.	I can't read any questions for you.
I must only assist you with staying focussed on the assessment.	I can't write any responses for you.
I will prompt you if I think you have become distracted or are losing track.	I can't give you any help with answers.

### Appendix B – Coloured paper chart examples of coloured paper available for modified papers.

Examples of coloured paper available for modified papers.

PALE IVORY
PALE YELLOW
PALE BEIGE
NEON YELLOW
DEEP YELLOW
MID DEEP GOLD
MID ORANGE
PALE PINK
NEON PINK
PALE BLUE
PALE ICY BLUE
DEEP TURQUOISE
PALE GREEN
PASTEL GREEN
MID GREY

# Version Control

Date approved	October 2025
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Review date	September 2026

Only approved versions of this document should be documented in the below table:

Version	Date	Revision authors	Summary of changes
v1.0	October 2025	EQA team	Created to reflect change in policy from JCQ