

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments Policy

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V1.3	03-2024	Final review and approval	Philip Le Feuvre	Executive Committee
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Essential Reading for:	This policy applies to any staff (including centre, satellite centres, sub-contract centres, or contractual staff) who are involved in the design, delivery, management, assessment and/or quality assurance of our products
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1. Policy Principles

This policy covers the delivery of NCFE qualifications which are subject to scrutiny and enforcement by our qualifications regulators (regulated qualifications) and unregulated products which are owned and/or accredited by NCFE.

All NCFE products include those that may be offered and/or delivered under an NCFE owned brand name, for example, 'CACHE'.

2. Introduction

This policy is aimed at our customers, including learners, who use NCFE products and services and submit requests for Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.

This policy document must be used in conjunction with the Guidance on Applying Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments. (link available section 6)

2.1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- support centres with applying Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments for their learners.
- provide centres with details on NCFE processes and timescales for access arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.

2.2. Scope

This policy applies to any staff (including centre, satellite centres, sub-contract centres, or contractual staff) who are involved in the design, delivery, management, assessment and/or quality assurance of our products. Learners should also be aware of, and familiar with, the contents of the policy.

2.3. Responsibilities/Duties

The Assessment Delivery Manager is responsible for ensuring that this policy is up to date and followed by the assessment delivery team.

The Assessment Delivery Officers are responsible for ensuring that decisions made in relation to reasonable adjustments and access arrangements are in line with this policy.

2.4. Definitions

Word/Acronym	Definition
JCQ	Joint Council for Qualifications
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulty

Assessment Window	An assessment which can be taken over multiple sessions or an assessment with multiple tasks which can be taken in a specified timeframe.
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2.5. Location

Available on the NCFE website and QMS SharePoint

3. Process

3.1. Overview of Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 requires Awarding Organisations to make Reasonable Adjustments to ensure a learner who has a disability as defined in the Act are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to learners with no disabilities.

Assessment should be a fair test of a learners' knowledge and what they are able to do, however, for some learners, the usual format of assessment may not be suitable.

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:

- Access Arrangements – 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 needs of an individual learner without affecting the integrity of the assessment.
- 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. For further information please see [Adverse Effects SOP v2.2.pdf](#)

3.1.1. Definition of Access Arrangements

An Access Arrangement is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation.

Awarding Organisations and centres are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of giving access. What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances, cost implications, and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment. Other factors, such as the need to maintain competence standards and health and safety, will also be taken into consideration.

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Access Arrangements must not affect the integrity of what is being assessed.

Access Arrangements are approved or set in place before the assessment activity takes place; they constitute an arrangement to give the learner access to the assessment activity. The use of an Access Arrangement will not be taken into consideration during the assessment of a learner's work.

3.2. Assessing for Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments

The range of learning difficulties is extensive and must therefore be assessed by an appropriately qualified assessor, to ensure that the Access Arrangements approved allow the learner to access the assessment, without gaining an unfair advantage.

3.2.1. Assessor requirements

The Head of Centre must ensure that the professional assessing a learners' needs has the required level of competence and training.

Upon request a Centre must be able to provide NCFE with details of the qualified assessor who assessed their learner, including details of the specialist qualification held and evidence of attainment.

When assessing a learner's special educational needs, the Centre must ensure this is completed by one of the following.

- an appropriately qualified psychologist registered with the Health & Care Professional Council.
- a specialist assessor with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate.
- an Access Arrangements assessor approved by the Head of Centre who has successfully completed a post graduate course at or equivalent to Level 7, including at least 100 hours relating to individual specialist assessment.

Please note NCFE is not able to approve an assessor's qualification(s) and does not maintain a list of appropriate qualifications for assessors.

Please refer to chapter 7 of the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments for more information about who can be an assessor.

3.3. Processes and timescales

3.3.1. Requesting an Access Arrangement or Reasonable Adjustment

This document provides a non-exhaustive list of Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments, along with practical advice and guidance on how each should be applied. Please refer to the permissions tables within the guidance document, section 3.6 when applying for Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.

3.3.2. Centre delegated adjustments

Some Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments may be implemented by centres for both internal and external assessment components without prior notification to NCFE. Please refer to the centre delegated adjustments section of the Guidance on Applying Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments document for further information (section 2.2). Please also refer to permissions table (section 4.1) within the same document for details on whether prior notification to NCFE is required and/or supporting evidence of need is required within centre for inspection purposes. Please note any arrangements put in place must reflect a learner's normal way of working.

3.3.3. Evidence requirements

If your learner(s) require any Access Arrangements or Reasonable Adjustments, they should provide you with evidence of their individual learning needs or medical condition(s). You must ensure that suitably qualified personnel check that the evidence is current* and reflects a learner's normal way of working.

*Learner(s) special educational needs to be assessed within 26 months of the external assessment being completed.

All supporting evidence of learner need must be retained by the centre. This must be made available to NCFE upon request for inspection purposes. Inspections may be completed remotely either by the NCFE Quality Assurance team, during a pre-arranged external quality assurance visit or unannounced assessment audit visit. Where a centre is storing access arrangements documentation electronically, they must create an e-folder for each individual candidate. The candidate's e-folder must hold each of the required documents for inspection.

On site inspection visits will be completed by any of the following: External Quality Assurers, Assessment Audit Advisors or Customer Quality Advisors.

In the case of an appeal, you must ensure that evidence to support an Access Arrangement or Reasonable Adjustment is securely kept and produced upon request.

3.4. Learner personal data consent

Prior to notifying NCFE of a learner's required Access Arrangements or Reasonable Adjustments, centres must ensure the learner in question has provided their written and signed consent to their personal data being processed. This must be retained by a centre (for not less than 2 years) and must be available to NCFE upon request for inspection purposes. Please refer to the JCQ publication Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments for further details on capturing and recording learner personal data consent.

3.5. Notifying NCFE of learner Access Arrangements or Reasonable Adjustments

To notify NCFE of an Access Arrangement or Reasonable Adjustment that is not a centre delegated adjustment*, a centre must complete 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 (Note that there has been an update in the Portal Handbook to support centres with this revised process).

To request a modified paper a centre must complete 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 more information regarding non-centre delegated adjustments, including how to apply and evidence these, see section 2.3 of the Guidance on Applying Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments document (section 6 of this document)

3.6. Timescales for notifying NCFE

Centres are required to notify NCFE of any Access Arrangement or Reasonable Adjustment requirements within the following timescales:

Access Arrangement / Reasonable Adjustment	Timescales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader • Scribe • Enlarged papers • Coloured papers • Non-interactive electronic (PDF) question papers for use with computer reading/speech recognition software. 	<p style="text-align: center;">15 working days' notice <i>(prior to the published date of assessment or start of assessment window)</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braille papers • Tactile diagrams • Modified language papers 	<p style="text-align: center;">30 working days' notice <i>(prior to the published date of assessment or start of assessment window)</i></p>

3.6.1. NCFE timescales for processing an Access Arrangement or Reasonable Adjustment request.

Upon submitting an Access Arrangement or Reasonable Adjustment notification, a centre will be able to view these through the 'edit my learner' screen on the portal'.

Any requests for paper modifications submitted in line with the timescales outlined above will be processed within 5 working days of receipt. Any modified papers will be dispatched to arrive at least 3 working days before the scheduled external assessment date or start of

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

NCFE will keep a record of all Access Arrangement and Reasonable Adjustment requests received and will contact centres to inspect learner evidence on an ongoing basis to ensure any Access Arrangements or Reasonable Adjustments applied are valid.

NCFE will decide when inspections will be completed and, in some cases, this may be after an external assessment has been completed by a learner requiring Access Arrangements or Reasonable Adjustments.

Supporting evidence of learner need must be made available to NCFE upon request for inspection purposes. Inspections may be completed remotely by the NCFE Quality Assurance team, during a pre-arranged external quality assurance visit or unannounced assessment audit visit.

Following the inspection of learner evidence NCFE hold the right to disqualify a learner from a previously completed assessment or cancel a learner certificate if it is proven that Access Arrangements or Reasonable Adjustments were applied without valid supporting evidence of learner need.

3.7. Appeals

If you or your learners do not believe we have applied this policy correctly in a fair and consistent way, you may submit an appeal in line with our Appeals Policy, which is available on <https://www.ncfe.org.uk/qualifications/centre-assessment-support/appeals/>

For further information, please contact our Customer Support Team on 0191 239 8000 or at customersupport@ncfe.org.uk

3.8. Contact Information

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact the Customer Support Team.

Email: customersupport@ncfe.org.uk

Telephone*: 0191 239 8000

NCFE
Q6, Quorum Business Park
Benton Lane
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE12 8BT

*To continue to improve our levels of customer service, telephone calls may be recorded.

4. Initial Equality Impact Assessment

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

5. Training

Although there are no specific training needs in relation to this policy. This policy is a mandatory read for Delivery Directorate colleagues

6. References to Associated Documents

- [Guidance on Applying Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#)
- [Adverse Effects SOP v2.2.pdf](#)

7. Implementation and Dissemination

This document will be uploaded to the NCFE website and disseminated to NCFE centres via the NCFE newsletter.

8. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Assessment Delivery team on an annual basis.

9. Data Retention

9.1. Data Protection and GDPR

We may need access to confidential information and where this is necessary, we will ensure that such information is kept secure, only used for the purposes of the relevant request, and always handled in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.

We do not disclose confidential information to third parties unless we are required to do so, for example by our regulators, law enforcement or statutory bodies.

When requesting copies of valid supporting evidence of learner need for inspection purposes, we will do this via a secure file transferring platform. Any learner evidence provided for inspection will be reviewed only for inspection purposes and will be retained for no longer than 30 working days.

We aim to access and retain original evidence or information; if original records cannot be retained, we will photocopy the original and record the copy as authentic. We require that you retain any relevant documentation securely in line with your archiving and retention procedures. For further information please see [Data Retention Policy V1.2.pdf](#)

10. Appendices

Appendix A – Initial Equality Impact Assessment

When completing the Initial Equality Impact Assessment, you must assess each of the 9 following areas separately and consider how your policy may affect people’s rights.

You need to ask yourself:

- Will the policy create any **problems** or **barriers** to any community of group?
- Will any group be **excluded** because of the policy?
- Will the policy have a negative impact on **community relations**?

Possible Equality Adverse Impacts Assessment				
	Could the policy have a significant negative impact on equality in relation to each area?	Response		If yes, please state why and the evidence used in your assessment
		Yes	No	
1	Age?		X	
2	Sex (Male and Female)?		X	
3	Disability (Learning Difficulties/Physical or Sensory Disability)?		X	
4	Race or Ethnicity?		X	
5	Religious Beliefs and practice?		X	
6	Sexual Orientation		X	
7	Pregnancy and Maternity?		X	
8	Gender Reassignment (The process of transitioning from one gender to another)?		X	
9	Marriage and Civil Partnership?		X	
10	Ex-Offenders (where appropriate)?		X	
11	Carers?		X	
12	Social Class?		x	

Positive Equality Impact Assessment				
	Does the policy have a significant positive impact on equality by reducing inequalities that already exist? <i>Explain how it will meet our duty to:</i>	Response		If yes, please state why and the evidence used in your assessment
		Yes	No	
1	Promote equal opportunities		X	
2	Mitigate discrimination		X	
3	Mitigate harassment		X	
4	Promote good community relations		X	
5	Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people		X	
6	Encourage participation by disabled people	X		This policy makes people with a disability aware of the reasonable adjustments available to them.
7	Consider more favourable treatment of disabled people		X	
8	Promote and protect human rights		X	

Initial Equality Impact Assessment Summary	
Date of Assessment: 23/10/23	Assessment Completed By: QA Leader
Does the policy have a positive impact on equality?	Y
Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? <i>(If answered "Yes" to any area of Possible Equality Adverse Impacts Assessment, then full assessment is required. See Development and Management of Documents Policy for full assessment form.)</i>	N

Appendix B: Qualifications Regulators

England:	Ofqual Spring Place Herald Avenue Coventry CV5 6UB Email: public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk Telephone: 0300 303 3344
Wales:	Qualifications Wales Q2 Building Pencarn Lane Imperial Park Coedkernew Newport NP10 8AR Email: enquiries@qualificationswales.org Telephone: 01633 373 222
Northern Ireland:	CCEA The Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) 29 Clarendon Road Clarendon Dock Belfast BT1 3BG Email: info@ccea.org.uk Telephone: 02890 261 200