

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

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1 Purpose

This policy details SFJ Awards' approach to making reasonable adjustments and giving special considerations, to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged by circumstances which are outside their control and to ensure that requests are dealt with in a consistent manner.

2 Definitions

Reasonable Adjustments

The objective of a reasonable adjustment is to eliminate disadvantage and to ensure all learners are able to perform on equal terms: it must not confer any advantage on the recipient.

A reasonable adjustment is any action which helps to reduce the effect of a disability or specific learning need that places the learner at a disadvantage in an assessment.

These are adjustments made to an assessment to enable a learner to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding. The nature of any reasonable adjustment depends on the learner's specific identified needs, the qualification and assessment methods. An adjustment may not be appropriate if the learner's particular difficulty directly affects performance in the aspects being assessed.

Special Considerations

Special considerations are made after the assessment where the learner has encountered exceptional circumstances that have disadvantaged them during their assessment.

This is consideration given to a learner who has temporarily experienced an event outside of their control which has had, or is likely to have had, an effect on their ability to take an assessment or on their level of attainment in an assessment. Special consideration is not appropriate for a minor illness or a minor disturbance.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

Learners:

- Are familiar with your centre's access to assessment policy.
- Declare any special needs when registering with the centre.
- If the need is not known at the time of registration, declare the need for a reasonable adjustment to the centre prior to any assessment taking place.
- Learners who believe that they have been disadvantaged, through circumstances beyond their control during an assessment, must inform the assessor/invigilator at the earliest opportunity and in any case before the assessment takes place.
- Provide supporting evidence, e.g. in the case of an illness, a doctor's letter.

Centre Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers:

- Are familiar with this policy and the centre's own access to fair assessment policy.
- Be aware of when requests can be made.
- Submit requests to SFJ Awards for consideration within the timescales stated within this policy.
- Adhere to the outcome (and any specified conditions) of the request.
- Ensure learner evidence is made available and subjected to internal and external quality assurance activities, where reasonable adjustments have take place.

Heads of Centre:

- Ensure the centre has an access to fair assessment policy in place to meet centre approval requirements.
- Ensure staff and learners are aware of the access to fair assessment policy and the centre's access to fair assessment procedures.

SFJ Awards' External Quality Assurers (EQAs):

- Ensure that assessments where reasonable adjustments have taken place as included in external quality assurance representative sampling.

SFJ Awards' Quality and Assessment Manager:

- Consider applications for reasonable adjustments and special considerations received from centres.
- Ensure that reasonable adjustments and special considerations are applied consistently across centres and over time.
- Ensure that any reasonable adjustments and special considerations do not compromise the assessment process.

4 Reasonable Adjustments Policy

Learners must declare any special needs upon registering with the centre or if the need is not known at the time of registration, they must declare their need for a reasonable adjustment to the centre prior to the assessment taking place.

Reasonable adjustments must be approved by SFJ Awards and set in place *before* the assessment activity takes place. The centre must allow sufficient time for all necessary reasonable adjustments to be considered and made.

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

Reasonable adjustments to the assessment process must:

- not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification
- not give learners an unfair advantage
- reflect the learner's normal way of working
- be based on the individual need of the learner.

SFJ Awards and its centres are required by law to do only that which is reasonable in terms of providing access to assessment. What is deemed as being "reasonable" will depend on 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.

Examples of reasonable adjustments are (*the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only*):

- changing the assessment method, e.g. from a written assessment to a spoken assessment
- allowing extra time, e.g. assignment extensions or additional time in a timed assessment
- using a different assessment location or reorganising the assessment physical environment
- use of coloured overlays, low vision aids
- adapting assessment materials, for example, using assessment material in large format or Braille
- using readers/scribes
- providing assessment materials on coloured paper or audio format
- providing assistance during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter, a reader or a scribe
- using assistive technology, such as screen reading or voice activated software.

SFJ Awards and its centres have a responsibility to ensure that the assessment process is robust, fair and allows the learner to demonstrate his or her full potential.

The work produced by learners must at all times:

- meet the requirements of the specifications regardless of the process or method used
- be as rigorous as assessment methods used with other learners
- be accessible
- be subject to the same assessment processes as all other evidence
- be subject to the same internal and external quality assurance processes as all other evidence.

The use of any reasonable adjustment must not be taken into consideration when assessing or marking a learner's work.

Where reasonable adjustments have been agreed, centres should make the learner evidence available to their EQA to allow them to include as part of their representative sample. Where a centre has Direct Claims Status, the IQA should in the same way include learner evidence where reasonable adjustments have been agreed as part of their representative sample.

5 Special Considerations Policy

Special consideration cannot give the learner an unfair advantage. The learner's results must reflect real achievement in assessment and not anticipate or predict the learner's potential ability.

It may not be possible to apply special consideration where an assessment requires the learner to demonstrate practical competence or gives license to practice. In some circumstances it may be considered more appropriate to offer the learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date rather than apply special considerations.

Learners cannot enter a plea for special considerations for assessment solely on the grounds of disability or specific learning need. Please refer to reasonable adjustments.

Learners who believe that they have been disadvantaged through circumstances beyond their control within the bounds of the assessment must inform the assessor/invigator at the earliest opportunity and in any case before the formal marking results are released.

The following are examples of where a learner would be aware of exceptional circumstances *before* the assessment takes place that may lead to a special consideration (*the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only*):

- serious illness of the learner.
- serious illness of a parent/child.
- bereavement of an immediate family member.
- incapacitating illness of the learner.
- recent domestic crises.
- accident and/or injury to the learner.
- trauma caused by a recent event or experience.

The following are examples of where a learner could encounter exceptional circumstances *during* an assessment and may lead to a special consideration (*the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only*):

- excessive noise generated from outside.
- disruption within an examination room.
- failure of equipment.

Requests for a special consideration must be accompanied by supporting evidence, e.g. in the case of an illness, a doctor's letter or a statement of events from the centre.

A special consideration should not give the learner an unfair advantage. The learner's results must reflect his or her achievement in the assessment and not his or her potential ability.

The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances during the assessment and will reflect the difficulty faced by the learner. This will always be a *minor* adjustment, as to do more could jeopardise the qualification standards.

Where an assessment requires a competence to be met fully, it may not be possible to apply any special considerations and in some circumstances it may be more appropriate to offer the learner

an opportunity to retake the assessment at a later date or to extend the registration period so that the learner has more time to complete the assessment activity.

6 Making a Request

Reasonable Adjustments

Centre staff must assess each learner's ability to successfully complete the assessment and achieve the qualification as part of the initial advice and guidance provided at the time of enrolment. Such assessment should identify, where appropriate, the support that will be made available to the learner to enable access to the assessment.

Where the initial assessment identifies that a learner may not be able to achieve the full qualification, this should be promptly and clearly communicated to the learner.

Reasonable adjustments must not be made without approval from SFJ Awards. Staff must ensure that any reasonable adjustments have been agreed by SFJ Awards **before** any assessments takes place. The centre must allow SFJ Awards reasonable time to consider requests and respond (at least 5 working days).

Requests should be made in writing on behalf of the individual learner using Form **RASC3** and sent to info@sfjawards.com

The Head of Centre must authorise all applications for reasonable adjustments.

The form must be accompanied by any appropriate evidence available to support the application.

Requests will be considered by SFJ Awards' Quality & Assessment Manager. The decision will be confirmed in writing (along with any specified conditions) within 5 working days of receipt. The centre should retain the written confirmation.

Written records may be requested by SFJ Awards for EQA purposes or should a learner make an appeal.

Staff must ensure that any reasonable adjustments agreed by SFJ Awards are implemented in accordance with that agreement. Failure to do so may invalidate the assessment and may be considered malpractice.

Special Considerations

Centre staff should be vigilant and make all attempts to eliminate any exceptional circumstances that may occur and disadvantage a learner during an assessment.

Special considerations must not be made without approval from SFJ Awards.

Before submitting an application for a special consideration on behalf of a learner, the centre should consider whether allowing a learner to retake the assessment would be a preferable option, as this may be fairer to the learner and also provide a more reliable and valid assessment result.

Applications for special considerations must be made *as soon as possible* after the assessment (and no more than 5 working days of the end of the assessment period). Special considerations will not be considered once learner achievement results have been claimed and certificated.

Requests relating to competence based assessment must be made on a case by case basis. Please complete a separate request for each learner.

Requests relating to assessment disruptions/examination type assessments (including technical problems, building evacuations and medical emergencies) should be documented by the Invigilator and made on behalf of the learner group as a whole.

Requests should be made in writing using Form **RASC4** and sent to info@sfjawards.com

The Head of Centre must authorise all applications for special considerations.

The form must be accompanied by any appropriate evidence to support the application, such as a medical certificate.

Requests will be considered by SFJ Awards' Quality & Assessment Manager. The decision will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days of receipt. The centre should retain the written confirmation.

Written records may be requested by SFJ Awards for EQA purposes or should a learner make an appeal.

7 Failure to comply with this Policy

Failure to comply with the requirements for reasonable adjustments and/or special considerations of this policy is defined as any (or all) of the following (*the list is not exhaustive and is intended for guidance only*):

- putting in place arrangements without SFJ Awards approval
- making adjustments that are not supported by evidence
- failing to maintain records
- implementing adjustments which affect the validity and reliability of assessment, compromise the outcomes of the assessment or give the learner in question an unfair advantage over other learners undertaking the same or similar assessment.

Failure to comply with the requirements contained within this policy could lead to assessment malpractice, which will impact on the learner's result.

For further information about malpractice please refer to SFJ Awards Malpractice Policy available from the website – www.sfjawards.com/malpractice

The centre's compliance with SFJ Awards' centre approval criteria could also be affected, resulting in a sanction being applied to the centre under SFJ Awards' Sanctions Policy available from the website – www.sfjawards.com/sanctions

8 Appeals

Appeals against reasonable adjustment or special consideration decisions can be submitted to SFJ Awards. Please refer to SFJ Awards' Enquiries and Appeals Policy available from the website – www.sfjawards.com/appeals

Appeals should be made within 20 working days of the application being turned down.

9 Monitoring

Requests will be monitored by SFJ Awards' Quality and Assessment Manager.

A summary report will be submitted to SFJ Awards Quality & Standards Committee, allowing the Committee to monitor requests and outcomes over time.

10 Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Quality and Assessment Manager on a regular basis as part of SFJ Awards' self-evaluation arrangements and revised as necessary in response to lessons learnt, customer feedback, changes in legislation and guidance from the Qualifications Regulators.

Our review of the policy will ensure that SFJ Awards procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied appropriately and equitably.

Policies and formal amendments to policies are approved at the next meeting by the Quality & Standards Committee.

If you have any queries about the content of the policy or you wish to give feedback then please contact SFJ Awards Tel: 01142 841970 or email info@sfjawards.com

11 Location of the Policy

You can download copies of the policy from our website: www.sfjawards.com/RA&SC