



Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

Version History

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Introduction

This Policy is primarily aimed at our customers (Centre's) and learners who are delivering/registered on or have taken a Focus Awards approved qualification or unit. It is also for use by our staff to ensure they deal with all reasonable adjustment and special consideration requests in a consistent manner.

This Policy outlines:

- our arrangements for making reasonable adjustments and special considerations in relation to our qualifications
- how learners qualify for reasonable adjustments and special considerations
- the reasonable adjustments we will permit and those where permission is required in advance before they are applied
- what special considerations will be given to learners

Centre's responsibility

It is important that your staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our qualifications and your learners are fully aware of the contents of the Policy.

On their Centre visits, our External Quality Assurers (EQA's) may check that your relevant colleagues and learners are aware of its contents and purpose.

Review arrangements

We will review the Policy annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary, in response to customer and learner feedback, changes in our practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies, or changes in legislation.

If you would like to feedback any views, please contact us via the details provided at the end of this Policy.

Arrangements not covered by this Policy

Circumstances for both internal and external assessment not covered in this Policy should be discussed with Focus Awards before assessment takes place. Please contact us via the details provided at the end of this Policy.

Appeals

If you wish to appeal against our decision to decline requests for reasonable adjustments or special consideration arrangements, please refer to our Appeals Policy.

Policy Overview

Focus Awards is committed to complying with all current and relevant legislation in relation to the development and delivery of our qualifications and which, at the time of writing includes, but is not limited to, the Equality Act 2010. We seek to uphold human rights relating to race relations, disability discrimination and special educational needs of our learners and to provide equal reasonable adjustments and special considerations for all learners registered on our qualifications.

As a recognised Centre, we expect you to have a Fair Access to Assessment Policy in operation, which reflects the following principles and guidelines.

Assessment should be a fair test of learners' knowledge and what they are able to do. However, for some learners the usual format of assessment may not be suitable. We ensure that our qualifications and assessments do not bar learners from taking our qualifications.

We recognise that reasonable adjustments or special considerations may be required at the time of assessment where:

- learners have a permanent disability or specific learning needs
- learners have a temporary disability, medical condition or learning needs
- learners are indisposed at the time of the assessment.

The provision for reasonable adjustments and special consideration arrangements is 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 not concessions to make assessment easier for learners, nor advantages to give learners a head start.

There are two ways in which access to fair assessment can be maintained:

- through reasonable adjustments
- through special considerations

Process for requesting reasonable adjustments and/or special considerations

If a Centre is making a request on behalf of its learners, it should complete a Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Request Form and in doing so supply relevant supporting information. For example:

- learner's name and Focus Awards registration number
- nature of, and rationale for, the request
- supporting information/evidence (e.g., medical evidence or a statement from the assessor or any other appropriate information)

Learners can, in exceptional circumstances, make requests direct to Focus Awards by contacting the Head of Quality Assurance.

Requests for reasonable adjustments should be submitted no later than 14 days before the assessment.

Requests for special consideration should be submitted as soon as possible after the assessment but not later than 5 working days thereafter. Requests for special consideration may only be accepted after the results of assessment have been released, in the following circumstances:

- application has been overlooked at the Centre and the oversight is confirmed by the Head of Centre.
- medical evidence comes to light about a learner's condition, which demonstrates that the learner must have been affected by the condition at the time of the assessment, even though the problem revealed itself only after the assessment.

If the application for special consideration is successful, the learner's performance will be reviewed in the light of available evidence. It should be noted that a successful application of special consideration will not necessarily change a learner's result.

How Focus Awards will deal with requests

We aim to respond to all requests within 48 hours of receipt. If we are unable to respond on the same day, we will provide you with an estimated response date.

Definition of reasonable adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation. They are made to an assessment for a qualification to enable a disabled learner to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding of the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the integrity of what needs to be assessed, but may involve:

- changing usual assessment arrangements, for example allowing a learner extra time to complete the assessment activity.
- adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in Braille
- providing assistance during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader.
- re-organising the assessment room, such as removing visual stimuli for an autistic learner.
- changing the assessment method, for example from a written assessment to a spoken assessment.
- using assistive technology, such as screen reading or voice activated software
- providing the mechanism to have different colour screen backgrounds for onscreen assessments or asking for permission for copying to different coloured paper for paper-based assessments.
- providing and allowing different coloured transparencies with which to view assessment papers.

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

Focus Awards 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.

Special consideration can be applied after an assessment if there was a reason the learner may have been disadvantaged during the assessment.

For example, special consideration could apply to a learner who had temporarily experienced:

- an illness or injury
- some other event outside of their control

and which has had, or is likely to have had, a material effect on that learner's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment.

Special consideration should not give the learner an unfair advantage.

Special consideration, if successful, may result in a small post-assessment adjustment to the mark of the learner. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances and reflect the difficulty faced by the learner.

Centres should note that:

- where an assessment requires the learner to demonstrate practical competence or where criteria have to be met fully, or in the case of qualifications that confer a License to Practice, it may not be possible to apply special consideration.
- in some circumstances, for example for on-demand assessments, it may be more appropriate to offer the learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date.

Section 1 – Making reasonable adjustments

Principles of making reasonable adjustments

These principles should be followed when making decisions about a learner's need for adjustments to assessment. They:

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

We and our 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.

When considering whether an adjustment to assessment is appropriate, Focus Awards and our Centres need to bear in mind the following (where appropriate for the related qualification):

- Adjustments to assessment 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 adjustment to assessment must not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification or the requirements of the assessment strategy. Competence standards should not be altered. Whilst we will take all reasonable steps to ensure that a learner with a disability or difficulty is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled, in terms of access to assessment, there is no duty to make any adjustment to a provision, criterion or practice which is defined as a competence standard. All learners' performance must 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, understand, and can do.

- Any adjustment to assessment must not give the learner an unfair advantage or disadvantage over other learners. The qualification of a learner who had an adjustment to assessment must have the same credibility as that of any other learner. As vocational qualifications may lead to employment, achievement of such qualifications must give a realistic indication to the potential employer of what the holder of the certificate can do.
- Any adjustment to assessment must be based on the individual need 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. A Centre should not assume that the same adjustment will be required for all assessments. Different qualifications and different methods of assessments can make different demands on the learner. The learner should be consulted throughout the process.
- Any adjustment to assessment should reflect the learner's normal way of working, providing this does not affect what is being assessed in any way. The learner should have experience of, and practice in, the use of the adjustment.
- Any adjustment to assessment must be supported by evidence, which is sufficient, valid and reliable.
- All adjustments to assessment must be authorised by the Head of Centre or a member of staff with delegated authority.

The process for making the adjustment

There are three routes through which a learner may be granted adjustments to assessment. These routes are to:

- Use reasonable adjustments permitted at the discretion of the Centre

In some cases, Focus Awards may permit the Centre to implement reasonable adjustments without seeking prior permission. In these cases, Focus Awards requires Centres to keep records for inspection (including any declarations signed and dated by a member of the Centre staff who has formally been given delegated authority for this by the Head of Centre).

- Apply to Focus Awards for permission
- Agree the adjustment with the Focus Awards EQA assigned to the Centre

Centres should keep records of adjustments they have permitted and those they have requested from Focus Awards. These records should normally be kept for 3 years following the assessment to which they apply.

It is recommended that Centres nominate members of staff to take responsibility for demonstrating the implementation and recording of adjustments to assessments, for monitoring by Focus Awards or the regulatory authorities.

Qualification specific information

Health and safety considerations for practical assessments

No circumstances exist in which the health and safety of a learner should be compromised in the name of assessment. In a practical activity, if there is a concern that the effects of a person's disability or difficulty may have health and safety implications for themselves and for others, a suitably qualified person in the Centre should carry out a risk assessment related to the learner's particular circumstances. The risk assessment should identify the risks associated with the particular activity but should also take account of any reasonable adjustments put in place for the learner which may remove or reduce the risk. The risk assessment may reveal that it is not possible for the learner to fulfil all the requirements of the assessment. In this case it may be appropriate to substitute another task. The Centre should contact Focus Awards to discuss individual cases where further clarification is necessary.

Assumptions should not be made about a disability posing a health and safety risk, but the health and safety of all learners and others must always be of paramount importance.

Assessments which are not taken under examination conditions

With these types of assessments, the Centre has greater flexibility to be responsive to an individual learner's needs and choose an assessment activity and method that will allow the learner to demonstrate attainment.

These types of assessments may include, for example, coursework, set assignments researched in the learner's own time, assessment activities devised by the Centre or by Focus Awards, assessments where the learner has to collect, present or describe evidence, information or opinion in order to demonstrate competence.

The assessment requirements for many vocational qualifications fall into the above.

In these types of assessments, the learner may meet the specified assessment criteria in any way that is valid. To facilitate access where there is evidence of need, the Centre may:

- allow the learner to use any mechanical, electronic or other aids in order to demonstrate achievement as long as the aids:
 - are generally commercially available
 - reflect the learner's normal way of working
 - enable the learner to meet the specified criteria
 - do not give the learner an unfair advantage
- present assessment materials or documents in a way that reflects the learner's normal way of working and enables him or her to meet the specified assessment criteria. For example, materials do not have to be in written or spoken format, unless specified by the assessment requirements.
- allow the learner to present their answers or evidence in any format as long as it enables them to demonstrate that they have met the assessment criteria. For example, answers or evidence do not have to be in written or spoken format unless specified by the assessment criteria.

The Centre is advised to adopt a flexible approach in identifying alternative ways of achieving the assessment requirements. The Centre is advised to contact Focus Awards to discuss alternative arrangements which may be appropriate for specific situations.

The outcome produced by the learner must at all times:

- meet the requirements of the specifications regardless of the process or method used.
- be assessable
- be able to be moderated or verified

In the case of long-term illness of an individual learner or when a permanent health condition/disability means a learner's completion of assessment takes additional time it may be possible to permit an extension to the deadline for the submission of work for certification. A Centre should note that it will not be possible to allow time extensions for all qualifications.

Where reasonable adjustments are put in place for these types of assessments, the Centre should check whether permission needs to be obtained from Focus Awards. The Centre should ensure they adhere to Focus Awards requirements for record keeping and supporting evidence.

Assessments for externally quality assured qualifications

Some qualifications require learners to compile a portfolio of evidence which can consist of a mixture of work products, observation reports, witness statements, knowledge tests, etc. Making appropriate access arrangements in qualifications of this type can be more flexible than in qualifications where the mode of assessment is more firmly fixed.

The benefits of being able to vary the assessment evidence and choose the most appropriate method of obtaining evidence should be considered when the learner is first accepted onto a programme.

Where there is an identified need, the learner may present their evidence in any format as long as it enables them to demonstrate they have met the specified assessment criteria. For example, a learner may present their evidence through the medium of Braille, on audio cassette or on video. Alternatively, oral questioning or witness statements may replace written responses or signed delivery.

Where evidence is produced in Braille or signed onto video, it is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that a person who is suitably qualified in Braille or sign language is available to translate the material for the internal and external verifier/assessor if this is required.

Where the learner uses alternative means of providing evidence, the method must have equal rigour to those used for other learners.

The learner must fulfil the demands of the criteria consistently over a period of time, regardless of method used to obtain the evidence. The assessment criteria may not be amended, re-worded or omitted.

The learner may use any mechanical or electronic aids available in the workplace, or which are commercially available, to demonstrate competence. For example, these may include specially adapted equipment or assistive technology. The Centre is required to ensure that a learner has the necessary and appropriate resources to enable the learner with access-related needs to produce evidence of developing the portfolio.

All adjustments should be consistent with the learner's normal way of working and must not give the learner an unfair advantage over others.

While assessors, internal and external verifiers normally prefer to see a portfolio made up of evidence which is varied, the Centre should be prepared to accept a more restrictive variety of evidence as a means of enabling access. It is sensible, however, to discuss this matter with the internal and/or external verifier at an early stage.

Where reasonable adjustments are put in place for verified types of assessments, the Centre should check whether permission needs to be obtained from Focus Awards or the EQA. The Centre should ensure that they adhere to Focus Awards requirements for record keeping and supporting evidence.

Identifying learners needs

Any adjustment to assessment should be based on the individual learner's needs to access the assessment.

The Centre has a responsibility to ensure it has effective internal procedures for identifying learners' needs and that these procedures comply with the requirements of disability and equal opportunity legislation.

A Centre may choose to use the following guide:

- Identify those learners who are having difficulties or are likely to have difficulties accessing assessment

A learner should be encouraged to make any access-related assessment needs known to the Centre at the earliest opportunity, and preferably before they are registered or entered for a qualification. To assist with the early identification of learners with access-related assessment needs, the Centre should ensure that all staff who recruit, advise or guide potential learners have had training to make them aware of access-related issues. Once the learner's need has been identified, it should be documented for audit purposes.

- Identify whether reasonable adjustments may be needed

Relevant Centre staff should decide, in conjunction with the learner, whether he or she will be able to meet the requirements of the assessment or whether adjustments will be required. It is important that the learner is involved in this discussion as he or she knows best what the effect of their particular disability or difficulty is on how they do things. Where the implications of a particular difficulty are unclear, the Centre should make use of specialist advice in order to determine how the difficulty will affect the learner's performance in the assessment. The Centre should avoid making assumptions, on the basis of previous experience, about whether adjustments may be necessary. Judgments should be made on the basis of individual need. If an adjustment is needed, it should be documented for audit purposes.

- Identify the appropriate adjustment

When identifying which adjustments the learner will need in the assessment, Centre staff should take into consideration the learner's normal way of working, history of provision during teaching and during informal assessments and the assessment requirements of the qualification. Certain simple adjustments may be all that are required, e.g., adjusting seat height or providing an arm rest, etc. The same learner may not require the same adjustment for all types of assessment. Different qualifications make different demands. For example, a dyslexic learner may need extra time to complete a written test but may not need extra time

for a purely practical activity. Once the adjustment has been identified, it should be documented for audit purposes.

- Ensure that the adjustment is in accordance with the guidelines in this Policy

The Centre must ensure that the adjustment will not impair the ability to assess the learner's performance, skill or knowledge fairly in each assessment.

Identifying and obtaining supporting evidence

Any application for an adjustment to assessment must be supported by evidence which is valid, sufficient, and reliable using the form at the back of this Policy.

In order to ensure that any adjustment to assessment will only provide the learner with the necessary assistance without giving him or her an unfair advantage over others, the Centre must be clear about the extent to which the learner is affected by the disability or difficulty.

Where the Centre can verify evidence of the disability or difficulty and where the implications are clear, such as for a learner with physical difficulties, profound hearing impairment, or who are registered as blind or partially sighted, the Centre does not need to provide further evidence of these physical difficulties.

Where the implications of the difficulty are not obvious, such as for learning difficulties, or mental health difficulties, the Centre will have to provide additional evidence of the effect of the impairment on the learner's performance in the assessment. Any of the following types of evidence would be acceptable. The Centre should decide which of these will best assist understanding of the learner's situation.

- Evidence of assessment of the learner's needs in relation to the particular assessment, made within the Centre by the relevant member of staff with competence and responsibility in this area; staff include learning support staff, teaching staff, trainers, assessors and other specialist staff.

If necessary, external experts may be called upon to assess the learner. This evidence should include an indication of how the Centre plans to meet the learner's needs and should show that the learner can cope with the level and content of the assessment. The evidence should be documented for audit purposes. Information from previous Centres attended by the learner may also be included.

- History of provision within the Centre.
This should include information about the support received by the learner during the learning or training programme and during formative assessments. Evidence of the way in which the learner's needs are being met during the learning programme should be documented for audit purposes.
- Written evidence produced by independent, authoritative, specialists.

This could take the form of medical, psychological or professional reports or assessments. These reports should state the name, title and professional credentials of the person who carried out the assessments and wrote the report. The report should set out the nature of the difficulty and extent to which the learner is affected by the difficulty, including the effects of any medication the learner may be taking. In cases where it might be expected there could be changes in the way the learner is affected by the difficulty, there will have to be recent and relevant evidence of assessments and consultations carried out by an independent expert.

A learner with a Statement of Special Educational Need does not automatically qualify for reasonable adjustments. The demands of the qualification should be taken into account. The reasons for the statement may have only limited effect on achievement in the assessment.

It is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that all applications for reasonable adjustments are based on the individual need of the learner and that the evidence in support of the application is sufficient, reliable and valid. A Centre should maintain records of all cases for audit purposes and to monitor the effectiveness of the reasonable adjustments made.

Range of reasonable adjustments

The Permissions Table (in Appendix 1) lists the most commonly requested adjustments to standard assessment arrangements. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list and Centre's and external verifiers have a duty to seek advice from Focus Awards in any case where they do not consider they have the necessary expertise to judge whether a reasonable adjustment is needed, and/or how it should be applied.

Centres should note that:

- not all the adjustments to assessments described below will be reasonable, permissible or practical in particular situations. If in doubt, the Centre is advised to contact Focus Awards for advice. In some circumstances it may be more appropriate to select an alternative assessment task for the learner.
- the learner may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all qualifications. Some learners may need a single adjustment; others may require a combination of several adjustments.

The list of reasonable adjustments is organised under the following headings:

- Changes to assessment conditions
- Use of mechanical and electronic aids
- Modifications to presentation of assessment material
- Alternative ways of presenting responses
- Use of access facilitators

Changes to assessment conditions

Extra time

- Where assessment activities are time constrained a learner may be allowed extra time during an assessment if he/she has a condition which affects the speed of processing.
- The amount of extra time allowed should accurately reflect the extent to which the completion of the assessment will be affected by the learner's difficulty. 'Unlimited' extra time will not be allowed. It is the centre's responsibility to specify the amount of extra time the learner will need, using as a guide the extra time required during formative assessments in the Centre.
- Extra time will not be allowed for computer-based assessments testing the time in which a skill is performed, such as keyboarding speed tests. Extra time may, however, be available for those computer-based assessments where the manipulation of software, and not processing speed, is the primary aim of the assessment.

- Extra time for onscreen assessments may have to be customised for each learner. In these cases, the Centre is advised to contact Focus Awards to apply for a time extension to be set up.
- Before the Centre allows extra time for the learner, the Centre should be satisfied that the learner can cope with the content of the qualification and is medically fit to undertake the extended assessment.
- Extra time will not be allowed in practical activities where the timing is a crucial part of the assessment or in group activities where the learner's performance will be assessed in conjunction with others.

Summary:

- Extra time should not be allowed where its use will invalidate the assessment criteria
- Extra time should not give the learner an unfair advantage over others

Supervised rest breaks

- Where assessment activities are time constrained, a learner may, if there is demonstrated need, be allowed supervised rest breaks during an assessment.
- Supervised rest breaks may be taken either in or outside the assessment room. The duration of the breaks will not be deducted from the assessment time. The Centre should be aware that, during the supervised rest breaks, the learner is still under assessment conditions and that the usual regulations governing conduct of assessments will apply during this time.
- Rest breaks are not applicable where speed or time is a component of what is being assessed, although, if there is a natural break in the assessment, i.e., between tasks, supervised rest breaks can be allowed.
- For onscreen assessments, the Centre needs to check with Focus Awards whether the time for rest breaks must be built into the extra time requested for the assessment. This is necessary because the test runs continuously on the system. The system must also be supervised during the break to ensure that no one else can interfere with the learner's test during the break.

Summary:

- Centres must ensure that both the learner and his/her work are supervised during the break.
- The duration of the break should not be deducted from the assessment time
- Rest breaks should not be allowed where their use would invalidate the assessment criteria.

Change in the organisation of the assessment room

- Minor changes to the organisation of the assessment room may benefit some learners with autistic spectrum disorder, with visual or hearing impairment, or with physical difficulties.
- Visually impaired learners may benefit from sitting near a window, so they have good lighting.
- Deaf learners may benefit from sitting near the front of the room and in good light
- Some learners may benefit from using chairs with arm rests or adjustable heights
- Autistic learners may benefit from having visual/noise stimuli, such as a ticking clock, removed from the room.

Summary:

- The Centre should consider the needs of the individual learner and, where possible, arrange the assessment room to suit the learner.

Separate accommodation within the Centre

- It may be necessary to accommodate the learner separately if they are using readers, scribes, BSL/English interpreters, or word processing equipment which may disturb other learners.

Taking the assessment at an alternative venue

- In certain circumstances the learner may be permitted to take an assessment at an alternative venue, for example at home or in hospital. Focus Awards' advice must be sought on this.
- The Centre should ensure that the learner is medically fit to take the assessment.

Use of mechanical, electronic and technological aids

Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles and OCR scanners

- The Centre should ensure that the learner has had sufficient practice in the use of these aids and any electronic aids are in good working order.
- A Centre should contact Focus Awards if they are unclear about whether any new technology will unfairly advantage the learner or invalidate the assessment requirements.

Summary:

- The learner should be familiar with how the aid works
- The use of aids should not give the learner an unfair advantage over other learners or invalidate the assessment criteria.

Use of assistive technology, for example speech/screen reading software and voice activated software

- Some learners may benefit from the use of software that reads the assessment material to them and records their spoken responses.
- Speech software should not be allowed for qualifications where reading is the competence being assessed. Elsewhere, and especially in vocational areas, such software may be used to allow learners to have access to assessments appropriate for them and enable them to show their proficiency.
- The Centre should ensure that the use of assistive technology will not invalidate the assessment requirements or give the learner an unfair advantage. Due to the rapid development of such technology, Centres should seek advice from Focus Awards if the implications of using certain kinds of assistive technology are unclear.
- It should be noted that the use of such software may introduce a hidden assessment agenda, in that the learner has to master the use of the software in addition to mastering the assessment criteria. Some learners may need extra time if they use such software.

Summary:

- The learner should be familiar with how the assistive technology works
- The assistive technology should not give the learner an unfair advantage over other learners or invalidate the assessment criteria.

Use of bilingual dictionaries or bilingual translation dictionaries (manual or electronic)

- The use of bilingual dictionaries and bilingual translation dictionaries (including BSL/English dictionaries/glossaries) can be allowed in all vocational assessments unless its use is expressly forbidden by the assessment requirements.
- An additional allowance of extra time may be permitted for timed assessments, if the Centre is satisfied that the learner can cope with the subject content, but the learner's knowledge and comprehension of English impairs his/her ability to complete the assessment within the normal time allocated.
- The Centre should note that the regulatory authorities state that:

A Learner taking a qualification may be assessed in any other language where it is one of the primary objectives of the qualification –

(a) for the Learner to gain knowledge of skills in, and understanding of that language, or

(b) to support a role in the workplace, providing that proficiency in English or Irish is not required for the role supported by the qualification.

- The Centre should check the dictionaries used by the learner to make sure they do not contain notes which would give the learner an unfair advantage. Where permission is given to use electronic dictionaries, the Centre must check that the equipment does not contain additional functionality that will give the learner an unfair advantage. If such functionality is present, it must be disabled or the equipment disallowed.

Summary:

- The use of a bilingual dictionary should not give the learner an unfair advantage over other learners or invalidate the assessment criteria.

Modifications to the presentation of the assessment material

Assessment material in enlarged format

- For paper-based assessments enlargements for paper-based assessments may be used. Examples of these include:
- unmodified enlarged papers where the standard paper is photocopied from A4 to A3, thus enlarging the whole paper and retaining the original layout and visual presentation.
- modified enlarged paper where the paper is modified by simplifying the layout and where necessary reducing the content while still meeting the same objectives as those tested in the original paper.

- Where Focus Awards is able to provide externally set assessment material in enlarged format, the centre must apply not later than ten weeks before the date of the assessment.
- Where the Centre is permitted to make the enlargements to externally set assessment material, it should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is enlarged. The learner may be penalised for any errors in his/her work which occur as a result of incomplete enlargement of the material.
- Centres should note that assessment material containing scale diagrams cannot be enlarged.
- It is the centre's responsibility to provide Centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference material in a suitable format for the learner.

On-screen assessments

- If the default font and text size used for an on-screen assessment is not suitable for the learner, screen magnification software programmes may provide an option to magnify the text to a suitable size. Advanced screen software programmes used by Focus Awards provide options to change screen colours and fonts.

Summary:

- Where appropriate, the Centre should meet Focus Awards deadlines for requesting enlarged assessment material, normally not later than ten weeks before the date of the assessment.
- In cases where the Centre is permitted by Focus Awards to enlarge assessment material, the Centre should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is enlarged.

Assessment material in Braille

- Assessment material may be provided in Braille for a blind or visually impaired learner.
- The material will be modified to remove any visual content prior to brailleing
- Diagrams in the assessment material can be produced as tactile diagrams.
- Where Focus Awards is able to provide externally set assessment material in Braille, the Centre must apply not later than ten weeks before the date of the assessment. If Braille assessment material has been ordered, but is no longer required, the Centre should inform Focus Awards immediately as any costs incurred in producing such material may be passed to the Centre.
- Permission may be given to the Centre to Braille externally set assessment materials. Focus Awards will advise when this can be permitted.
- Where the Centre is permitted to Braille externally set assessment material, it should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is brailled. The learner may be penalised for any errors in his/her work which occur as a result of errors in the brailled material.
- Braille is not always an appropriate adjustment for the learner; not all blind people are fluent in Braille.
- It is the Centre's responsibility to arrange for the brailleing of Centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference materials.

Summary:

- Where appropriate, the Centre should meet Focus Awards deadlines of not later than ten weeks before the date of the assessment for requesting brailled assessment material.
- In cases where the Centre is permitted by Focus Awards to braille assessment material, the Centre should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is brailled.

Language modified assessment material

- The carrier language in assessment material may be modified for a deaf learner whose first language is either English or British Sign Language (BSL). In either case, the learner's English may be limited and modified assessment material may be necessary. BSL is a language in its own right and has its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary and written assessment material will have to be modified for most deaf learners for whom BSL is their first language.
- Technical language may not be modified. The modified version of the assessment material should contain the same questions as the standard version and the same answers will be expected from the learner.
- In listening tests, a transcript of the test may be provided, which can be read to the learner by a live speaker. This will enable the learner to lip-read the text.
- Where Focus Awards is able to provide language modified externally set assessment material, the Centre will have to apply not later than ten weeks before the date of the assessment.
- Where the Centre is permitted to modify externally set assessment material, they should take responsibility for the security of the material and for the accuracy of the modification. The learner may be penalised for any errors in his/her work which occur as a result of inaccurate modification of the material.
- It is the Centre's responsibility to arrange for the modification of Centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference materials.

Summary:

- Where appropriate, the Centre should meet Focus Awards deadlines for requesting language modified assessment material, normally not later than ten weeks before the date of the assessment.
- In cases where the Centre is permitted by Focus Awards to modify assessment material, the Centre should take responsibility for the security of the material and for the accuracy of the modification.

Assessment material on coloured paper

- It is the Centre's responsibility to provide Centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference material on coloured paper, if required.

Summary:

- Where Focus Awards is able to provide externally set assessment material on coloured paper, the Centre will have to apply by the deadlines set by Focus Awards normally not later than ten weeks before the date of the assessment.
- Where the Centre is permitted to photocopy externally set assessment material onto coloured paper, it should take responsibility for the security of the assessment material and for ensuring that the entire document is copied.
- The learner may be penalised for any errors in his/her script which occur as a result of incomplete copying of the document.

On-screen assessments

- Learners may normally be able to select a screen background in a colour that is suited to their needs. It is advised that learners explore the selection available using the practice test before they take an assessment.

Summary:

- Where appropriate, the Centre should meet Focus Awards deadlines for requesting externally set assessment material on coloured paper, normally not later than ten weeks before the date of the assessment.
- Where the Centre is permitted to modify the assessment material, it should take responsibility for the security of the assessment material and for the accuracy of the modification.

Assessment material in audio format

- Where there is evidence of need, assessment material may be provided in audio format. This facility is not available if reading is the competence being assessed or if the assessment material has visual content that is crucial to the understanding of the questions, such as illustrations, tables, diagrams or sketches.
- Where Focus Awards is able to provide externally set assessment material in audio format, the Centre will have to apply not later than ten weeks before the date of the assessment.
- Where the Centre is permitted to produce an audio version of externally set assessment material, they should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the recording is accurate. The learner may be penalised for any errors in his/her work which occur as a result of errors in the recording.
- It is the Centre's responsibility to provide Centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference material in a suitable format for the learner.

Summary:

- Where appropriate, the Centre should meet Focus Awards deadlines for requesting assessment material in audio format, not later than ten weeks before the date of the assessment.
- Where the Centre is permitted to produce an audio version of the assessment material, they should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is copied.
- The Centre should ensure that sufficient playback equipment is provided in full working order.

Alternative ways of presenting learner responses

A learner should be provided with the means to present their responses by the method most appropriate and familiar to them, as long as the use of methods will not invalidate the requirements of the assessment. The use of ICT is generally perceived to have a positive impact on helping learners to access assessment.

The guidance given below relates to the use of ICT in written assessments. ICT can normally be used for Centre-devised and portfolio work unless the use of ICT is expressly prohibited by the qualification specification.

Use of ICT to present responses

- The use of ICT in this context should be taken to include word processors, personal computers (PCs) and other microprocessor-controlled devices producing output in text or other forms such as graphics and diagrams.
- For many learners with additional support needs, computers provide an effective means of independent communication. Consideration should be given to whether the learner can meet the assessment criteria using a computer.
- A computer should only be used if it is appropriate to the learner's needs and if the learner is confident in its use, can use it effectively and if it reflects his/her normal way of working. The learner should be consulted before a decision is taken whether the use of ICT is an appropriate adjustment.
- When a computer is used, other than as a basic word processor, the Centre needs to consider the effect and appropriateness of facilities like spell-checkers, electronic dictionaries, thesauri, calculators, predictive software, etc... that are available.
- The use of the computer should not create a misleading impression of the learner's attainment or confer an unfair advantage over other learners.
- The Centre should ensure that workstations are adapted for the needs of the learner, and that enabling technologies, (for example screen reading software, coloured background, adapted keyboard, large tracker ball mouse, sticky keys) are available.
- Where it is apparent that assessment objectives cannot be met fully if a computer is used, the Centre should suggest alternative arrangements.

Summary:

The Centre should ensure that:

- the computer is used solely by the learner and not by someone acting on the learner's behalf unless the learner has permission to use a scribe.
- The computer is working correctly at the time of an assessment. It is the Centre's responsibility to arrange the ICT provision for the learner.
- The learner has access only to those facilities (e.g., spell/grammar checker, voice activated software, speech reading software,) which have been agreed in advance with Focus Awards.
- The learner is not able to gain access to existing files or documents. Where a system operates from CD, the learner must be supplied with a formatted disk containing only the software required for the assessment.
- the computer should be free-standing and not be connected to the Internet, unless this is required in the assessment and if it is connected to the Internet then access to the Internet is strictly monitored by a supervisor.
- The learner is accommodated separately if the use of a computer is likely to distract other learners. In this case separate invigilation should be arranged.

- The learner is present when his/her work is printed. It is normal practice for a printed version of the learner's work to be submitted and authenticated for assessment, and not the disk.
- Where a question/answer booklet is provided, the learner might need to answer some questions in the booklet and type other answers. Answers should be clearly labelled and the printout must be attached to the question paper/answer booklet.
- The learner should be familiar with and able to use the computer and its software
- The learner's work is saved frequently and, if possible, using an auto-save facility

Spoken responses using electronic recording devices, for example CD ROMs, memory sticks, audio cassettes

- Where there is evidence of need, the learner may be permitted to record their responses electronically.
- Spoken responses will only be available for assessments where there is no requirement for the learner to produce visual material.
- Where the learner's responses are recorded electronically, the Centre should provide an authenticated transcript on paper of the learner's responses.
- It will be the Centre's responsibility to ensure that the transcript is an accurate reflection of the learner's responses and to keep this and the original recording as a record of the assessment.

Summary:

- The Centre should check whether permission should be sought from Focus Awards to record the learner's responses electronically.
- Recording the learner's responses electronically should not be allowed where it will invalidate the assessment requirements.
- The Centre should ensure that the appropriate recording equipment is provided in full working order.
- The learner using recording equipment should be accommodated separately, with separate invigilation, where its use will not disturb other learners.

Responses in BSL

- Where there is evidence of need, the learner may be allowed to sign their responses to questions.
- Signing of responses should not be permitted if the ability to write or speak English, Welsh or Irish (Gaelige) is being assessed.
- A learner can sign full responses in BSL. Where the learner is required to show knowledge of an expression/name in their response, this must be finger spelt.
- The Centre will provide a paper translation of the responses for validation purposes
- The Centre should ensure that the person doing the translation is appropriately qualified.
- Where the Centre provides a transcript of the learner's response, the Centre should ensure that the transcript is authenticated and an accurate reflection of the learner's responses. The Centre should keep this as a record of the assessment.

Summary:

- The Centre should check whether permission should be sought from Focus Awards to sign the learner's responses.

Responses in Braille

- Where there is evidence of need, a learner may be permitted to present their responses in Braille.
- In these cases, an authenticated paper transcript of the learner's responses should be provided by the Centre.
- It will be the Centre's responsibility to ensure that the transcript is an accurate reflection of the learner's responses and to keep the transcript for their records.

Summary:

- The Centre should select a transcriber with the required level of skill in Braille and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.

Use of access facilitators

Reader

- A reader is a person who, when requested, will read to the learner all or part of the assessment material and the learner's written responses.
- Where there is evidence of need a reader may be allowed in all assessments where reading is not being assessed
- The Centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a reader will be an effective arrangement. The learner may be more comfortable with:
 - the use of speech/screen reading software which reads out the material without decoding or interpreting it
 - accessing the assessment material in electronic format, in Braille or through sign language.
- The Centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a reader.
- The reader should not normally be the learner's own tutor or assessor, except in circumstances where it is necessary to do so. In such cases, Focus Awards should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a reader.
- The Centre should select the reader on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the learner. The reader should be able to read accurately and at a reasonable rate and should have sufficient knowledge of the subject to read technical terms accurately.
- A learner should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the reader and should have used this arrangement during any training programme leading up to the assessment.
- The Centre should ensure that the learner and reader are clear about the limitations of the reader's role.
- The Centre should give the reader clear instructions regarding what they are required to do and what they may and may not do during the assessment.
- For a learner requiring a reader and a scribe, the same person may act as both as long as permission has been given for both arrangements.
- The learner using a reader should be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other learners.

- Where a learner is not eligible for the use of a reader, it may be helpful for the learner to read the questions aloud. In these circumstances the learner must be accommodated in a separate room so that other learners are not disturbed. A separate assessor should be arranged in these cases. The assessor may not correct the reading of the learner.
- The reader is responsible to, and should be approved by the Head of Centre or the Centre staff member with delegated responsibility.

The reader:

- should read only as requested by the learner. The learner may choose to read some parts of the assessment him/herself.
- should read accurately. If the reader is working with a deaf or hearing-impaired learner, the reader should articulate clearly.
- should only read the exact wording (instructions and questions), and not give meanings of words, rephrase or interpret anything.
- should repeat instructions and questions on the paper only when specifically requested to do so by the learner.
- may consult a dictionary, where this is allowed, at the learner's request and read out entries
- should read, as often as requested, the answers already recorded, but may not act as proof-reader
- should not advise the learner regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which the questions should be answered
- may enable a visually impaired learner to identify which piece of visual material relates to which question, but should neither give factual help to the learner nor offer any suggestion
- is permitted to help a visually impaired learner using diagrams, graphs and tables to obtain the information that the print/amended print copy would give to a sighted learner
- should, if requested, give a visually impaired learner the spelling of a word which appears on the paper, but otherwise spellings must not be given.
- should refer any problems during the assessment to the assessor.

Summary

- The Centre should check that the use of a reader is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment.
- The Centre should select a reader and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.
- A separate assessor should be present when a reader is used
- A reader should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

Scribe (sometimes called amanuensis)

- A scribe is a person who, in an assessment, writes down or word processes a learner's dictated responses. Where there is evidence of need, a scribe may be allowed in all assessments where writing or keyboarding is not the competence being assessed. The most common need for a scribe is where a learner has injured their arm and is unable to write.

- The Centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a scribe is an appropriate adjustment. As the effective use of a scribe requires high level communication skills from the learner, the Centre is advised to consider whether the learner would be more comfortable with the use of a computer, especially where the learner is likely to use a word processor rather than a scribe in the workplace.
- For a learner requiring a scribe and a reader, the same person may act as both, provided permission has been given for both.
- The use of a scribe should not affect the assessment requirements for the qualification being assessed. In some cases, the writing of answers by the learner may be the skill being assessed. Voice recognition technology (assistive technology) may be used in the Writing component of qualification where its use reflects the learner's normal way of writing.
- The Centre should select a scribe on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the learner. A scribe should be able to produce an accurate record of the learner's responses, write legibly and/or word process at a reasonable speed, and have sufficient knowledge of the subject to be able to record technical terms correctly.
- The Centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a scribe.
- A scribe is not permitted in an assessment requiring word processing or ICT.
- A scribe should not normally be the learner's own tutor or assessor, except when it is necessary to do so. In such cases, the awarding body should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a scribe.
- A learner should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the scribe and used this arrangement during their learning programme.
- The Centre should ensure that the learner and scribe are clear about the limitations of the scribe's role.
- The Centre should give the scribe clear instructions regarding what he/she is required to do and what he/she is not allowed to do during the assessment.
- The learner using a scribe should be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other learners.
- A separate assessor should be present when a scribe is used to ensure that the guidance regarding scribes is followed.
- The scribe is responsible to and should be approved by the Head of Centre or the Centre staff member with delegated responsibility.
- During the assessment a scribe:
 - should check with the learner for which parts of the assessment they wish to have their responses scribed. The learner may choose to write some responses him/herself.
 - should neither give factual help to the learner nor offer any suggestions
 - should not advise the learner regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question or the order in which the questions should be answered.
 - should write down answers exactly as they are dictated. Where spelling accuracy and punctuation is being tested, the scribe must follow explicit instructions from the learner. The scribe may not take responsibility for spelling technical words.
 - should write a correction on a typescript or Braille sheet if requested to do so by the learner.
 - should not assist the learner to produce any diagrammatical or graphical material. If assistance with this is needed, approval should be obtained from Focus Awards in advance of the assessment. Exceptions to this are Entry Level qualifications where the scribe is allowed to draw or add to diagrams in accordance with the learner's instructions.

- may, at the learner's request, read back what has been written but no comment must be made about any part of the learner's response.

Summary:

- The Centre should check that the use of scribe is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment.
- The Centre should select a scribe and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities
- A scribe should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

British Sign Language (BSL)

- Although British Sign Language (BSL) is now recognised as an official language of the UK, it is not a statutory language, unlike English, Welsh and Irish (Gaelige).
- The regulatory criteria state: "A Learner taking a qualification may be assessed in British Sign Language or Irish Sign Language where it is permitted by an awarding organisation for the purpose of Reasonable Adjustment" (Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition 2011 – G2.2)
- Where BSL is the primary means of communication for a deaf learner, these learners may have the support of a BSL/English interpreter to sign the questions (or part questions) where they are undertaking written assessments.
- For assessments where reading or speaking and listening are the competences being assessed, BSL or any other sign language may only be used for the assessment material rubric and instructions.
- The Centre should ensure that the BSL interpreter has an appropriate qualification in the sign language and a good working knowledge of the content of the assessment.
- A learner should, wherever possible, have had previous experience of working with a BSL/English interpreter and should have used this arrangement during the learning programme leading up to the assessment.
- The Centre should ensure that the learner and the person providing the interpretation is clear about the limitations of the latter's role in the assessment situation.
- The Centre should ensure that the person providing the interpretation has access to the assessment material in advance of the assessment, to prepare for the signing. This arrangement should be agreed with Focus Awards.
- The interpretation should not give the learner an unfair advantage and care must be taken not to indicate the meaning of technical words, where the learner's understanding of these words is inherent in the purpose of the question. The interpretation should not explain or clarify. In some instances, it may be more appropriate to fingerspell a word.
- Any words or phrases interpreted for the learner because a standard sign is not available or appropriate should be underlined on the assessment material, which, if separate from the answer book, should be attached to the learner's answer book. Amended versions of questions should be shown on the assessment material.
- The learner using a BSL/English interpreter should be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other learners.
- A separate assessor should be present when a BSL/English interpreter is used to ensure that guidance regarding BSL/English interpreters is followed.

The BSL interpreter:

- should not interpret technical language or give additional explanations
- may, at the learner's request, sign any labels or text connected with reference material such as maps, diagrams or graphs. The learner should, however, study the reference material independently.

Summary:

- The Centre should check that the use of BSL interpreter is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment.
- The Centre should select a BSL/English interpreter and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.
- A separate assessor should be present when a BSL interpreter is used
- A BSL interpreter should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.
- The BSL interpreter should have an appropriate qualification in the sign language so as not to disadvantage the learner.

Prompter

- A learner with severe attention problems may benefit from the use of a prompter in timed assessment situations to draw their attention back to the assessment task.
- The Centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a prompter is an appropriate arrangement.
- The Centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a prompter.
- Where the problem is one of concentration, consideration should be given to allowing supervised rest breaks rather than a prompter.
- A prompter should not normally be the learner's own tutor or assessor, except when it may be necessary to do so. In such cases Focus Awards should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a prompter.
- Prompters should be sufficiently familiar with the learner to recognise when his/her attention is no longer on the assessment task and that he or she is not, for example, looking away from the paper whilst thinking.
- Under no circumstances may the prompter draw the attention of the learner to part of the question paper or the learner's answer paper.
- The prompter should sit near enough to be able to observe the learner and draw his/her attention back to the task. This should, however, be organised as unobtrusively as possible. The learner's attention may be drawn back to the task using a light tap on the learner's arm or shoulder or, alternatively, on the desk. Verbal prompting should not normally be used. The method used by the prompter to bring back the learner's attention should be agreed before the assessment between the learner and the prompter and should be acceptable to the Centre. It should be noted that some learners with emotional and behavioural sensitivity/vulnerability and/or mental health conditions may not be comfortable with a 'light tap' prompt. A form of verbal prompting should be considered and agreed for these learners.
- In the case of an epileptic learner where the problem is one of temporary absencing, the normal procedure to help that learner will be allowed.
- The Centre should ensure that the learner and prompter are clear about the limitations of the prompter's role.
- The Centre should give the prompter clear instructions regarding what they are required to do and what they may and may not do during the assessment.

- The Centre should ensure that the learner and the prompter have had experience of working together.
- A separate assessor should be present when a prompter is used to ensure that the guidance regarding prompters is followed. The assessor should be fully informed of the strategies used to regain the learner's attention.
- The prompter is responsible to and should be approved by the Head of Centre or the Centre staff member with delegated responsibility.

During an assessment a prompter:

- should draw the learner's attention back to the task in hand
- should use the method of prompting agreed with the learner
- should not give factual help to the learner or offer any suggestions
- should not advise the learner regarding which questions to do, when to move on to the next question or the order in which the questions should be done. For Entry Level qualifications it may be appropriate for the prompter to direct the learner to where they were last.
- should be prepared for periods of inactivity during the assessment but should remain vigilant.
- should immediately refer any problems during the assessment to the assessor

Summary

- The Centre should check that the use of a prompter is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment.
- The Centre should select a prompter and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities
- A separate assessor should be present when a prompter is used
- A prompter should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

Practical assistant

- A practical assistant is a person who, during an assessment, carries out practical tasks at the instruction of the learner. Examples of the kinds of tasks with which the practical assistant may assist are, turning the pages of the question paper or, guiding a learner using a Braille paper to the correct page they need.
- The Centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a practical assistant is an appropriate arrangement. A practical assistant will not normally be allowed in those qualifications where the practical skill is the focus of the assessment.
- The Centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a practical assistant.
- The practical assistant should be familiar with the requirements of the assessment but should not normally be the learner's own teacher/tutor/assessor except when it is necessary to do so. In such cases, Focus Awards should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a practical assistant.
- A practical assistant should be a person who is able to ensure the safety of the learner and carry out his/her instructions accurately.
- The Centre should prepare clear written instructions for the practical assistant on the assistance they are able to give the learner. A copy of these instructions should also be given to the assessor and learner. The Centre should note that the practical assistant may not perform tasks for which the learner will receive credit.

- The use of a practical assistant should not modify the specification requirements. For example, where the manipulation of apparatus or making accurate visual observations may be the skill being assessed, the use of a practical assistant will not be permitted.
- A learner using a practical assistant may need to be accommodated separately from other learners. In these cases, a separate assessor should be present to ensure that the guidance regarding practical assistants is followed. During practical assessments, the assessor should be present in addition to the practical assistant.
- During a practical assessment, a practical assistant:
 - should follow the instructions prepared by the Centre on the level and kind of assistance that can be given to the learner.
 - should ensure the safety of the learner and those around him/her
 - should not give factual help to the learner or offer any suggestions
 - should not advise the learner which questions to do, when to move on to the next question or the order in which the questions should be done.
 - should carry out instructions exactly as they are given unless to do so would cause a hazard. If the practical assistant does not understand the learner's instructions, he/she may ask for clarification but must not lead the learner in any way or attempt to interpret the learner's wishes; if incorrect or inadequate instructions are given by the learner this must be reflected in the outcome of the assessment.
 - should not expect to assist the learner throughout the entire assessment (there may be parts of the assessment which the learner can do without help and thus gain credit for demonstrating the required skills).
 - should immediately refer any problems during an assessment to the assessor/supervisor.

Summary:

- The Centre should check that the use of a practical assistant is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment.
- The Centre should select a practical assistant and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.
- A separate assessor should be present when a practical assistant is used.
- A practical assistant should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

Other languages and use of translators

- Focus Awards primarily offer its qualifications and units in the language of English. Nonetheless Focus Awards will undertake to support the delivery of our qualifications in other languages, most notably Welsh, Irish (Gaeilge) and British Sign Language where appropriate and upon request and evidence of sufficient demand. For example, a learner may be assessed in any other language where it is one of the primary objectives of the qualification:
 - for the Learner to gain knowledge of, skills in, and understanding of that language, or
 - to support a role in the workplace, providing that proficiency in English, Irish or Welsh is not required for the role supported by the qualification.
- In implementing any arrangements to support other UK-based languages, Focus Awards may engage with the relevant regulatory body to seek further advice and guidance on the most appropriate arrangements to put in place to ensure comparability of assessments, moderation and awarding.

- Assessments in other languages will only be allowed where proficiency in English, Welsh or Irish is not required in the workplace for individuals to be deemed capable of carrying out the role (associated with the qualification). At all times requests from Centres/learners for reasonable adjustments in relation to the use of other languages must be approved by Focus Awards in advance so as to ensure that final assessments would be comparable to that offered in English, Welsh and/or Irish, and ensure a consistent level of demand for learners.

Summary:

- Focus Awards may permit the user of a translator if there is a strong rationale and it is clear that the lack of English, Welsh or Irish would not prevent a learner carrying out the role to which the unit/qualification relates.
- Focus Awards will not permit the use of an interpreter.
- If the Centre were to employ the translator themselves Focus Awards reserves the right to quality assure the assessments and the Centre must be able to produce evidence of the translator's credentials.
- Focus Awards also reserve the right to employ its own translator to carry out an assessment and/or support our quality assurance of the Centre's arrangements.
- Should a translator be used at the Centre then Focus Awards field staff (i.e., EQA) will include learners that have had the support of a translator within their monitoring sample.

Transcriber

- This arrangement may be used by a learner in the following circumstances:
 - Where the learner's handwriting is illegible, but he or she is unable to use a computer or dictate responses – it may not be allowed where writing by hand is the competence being assessed.
 - Where the learner's responses are produced in Braille or in BSL.
- The transcriber will produce a transcript to assist the assessor in the assessment of a learner's work. The assessor will assess the learner's work and will only refer to the transcript if it is impossible to decipher any part of the learner's response(s). (For responses produced in Braille or BSL the assessor may refer solely to the transcript).
- The Centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a transcript will be an effective arrangement.
- The Centre should give the transcriber clear instructions regarding what he/she is required to do after the assessment.
- The transcript should be produced by a member of the Centre's staff who is familiar with the learner's handwriting, is fully competent in Braille (where the transcription is for learner's responses produced in Braille), or who has the required skills in BSL (where the transcription is for learner's responses produced in BSL).
- The transcript(s) should be securely attached to the back of the learner's work and be included with the other work from the Centre for dispatch to the assessor in the normal way. The production of the transcript should not delay the dispatch of scripts to the assessor/marker.
- The Centre should not inform the assessor/marker of the reason why a transcript was necessary.

The transcriber:

- should produce the transcript in a separate copy of the question paper/answer booklet or on lined or unlined white paper as appropriate.
- may handwrite or word process the transcript. If handwritten, dark blue or black ink should be used. Pencil must never be used.
- should not involve the learner in the production of the transcript.
- should normally transcribe complete answers. In cases where only occasional words need to be transcribed, these may be written on a photocopy of the learner's script. On no account should the learner's original script be marked or annotated in any way.
- should normally be a word-for-word transcription, i.e., an exact copy of what the learner has written. The transcriber may not insert or omit words or alter their order. In English, any errors, including those of spelling, punctuation and grammar, must be transcribed as given by the learner and must not be corrected. In other qualifications, the transcriber may correct the spelling of non-technical words.
- should indicate any corrections to spelling on the verbatim transcript using a different colour ink, but not red, green or purple. Pencil must not be used for this purpose.
- should not transcribe diagrammatical material. Assessment of such material will be based on the learner's own work.

Summary:

- The Centre should check that the use of a transcriber is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the learner to undertake the assessment.
- The Centre should select a transcriber and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities
- A transcriber should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

Section 2 – Making special considerations

We will review the circumstances and evidence surrounding each request for special consideration to ensure that the decision made maintains the equity, validity and reliability of the assessment for the learner and does not give the learner an unfair advantage.

A learner who is fully prepared and present for a scheduled assessment may be eligible for special consideration if:

- performance in an assessment is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the learner e.g., recent personal illness, accident, bereavement, serious disturbance during the assessment.
- alternative assessment arrangements which were agreed in advance of the assessment proved inappropriate or inadequate.
- part of an assessment has been missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the learner.
- there is a sufficient difference between the part of the assessment to which special consideration is applied and other parts of the qualification achieved to infer that the learner could have performed more successfully in the assessment

A learner will not be eligible for special consideration if:

- no evidence is supplied by the Centre that the learner has been affected at the time of the assessment by a particular condition.
- any part of the assessment is missed due to personal arrangements including holidays or unauthorised absence.
- preparation for a component is affected by difficulties during the course, e.g., disturbances through building work, lack of proper facilities, changes in or shortages of staff, or industrial disputes.

Appendix 1 – Reasonable adjustments permission table

This table outlines some of the decisions on reasonable adjustments that can be made. However, Centres and external quality assurers have a duty to seek advice from Focus Awards in any case where they are in doubt if an adjustment is needed or how it should be applied.

- Permitted – Reasonable adjustment permitted at the discretion of the Centre
- Apply – Apply to Focus Awards for permission

Reasonable adjustment	Assessments NOT taken under examination conditions
Extra time up to 25%	Permitted
Extra time in excess of 25%	Permitted
Supervised rest breaks	Permitted
Change in the organisation of assessment room	Permitted
Separate accommodation within the Centre	Permitted
Taking the assessment at an alternative venue	Permitted
Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles, CCTV and OCR scanners	Permitted
Use of assistive software	Permitted/Apply *
Use of bilingual and bilingual translation dictionaries	Permitted
Assessment Material in enlarged format	Permitted
Assessment material in Braille	Apply
Language modified assessment material	Apply
Assessment material in BSL	Apply
Assessment material on coloured paper	Permitted
Assessment material in audio format	Apply
Use of ICT	Permitted/Apply *
Responses using electronic devices	Permitted

Responses in BSL	Permitted
Responses in Braille	Permitted
Reader	Permitted
Scribe	Permitted
BSL/English interpreter	Permitted
Prompter	Permitted
Practical assistant	Apply
Transcriber	Permitted
Other	Apply

* Permitted at the discretion of the Centre unless ICT is implicitly or explicitly excluded in the Standard being assessed or in its associated Assessment Strategy or Qualification Manual

Appendix 2 – Glossary

Term	Definition
Access to Assessment	The removal of artificial and unnecessary barriers to the process of judging an individual's competence.
Appeal	A process through which an awarding organisation or Centre may be challenged on the outcome of a decision
Assessment	The process of making judgements about the extent to which a learner's work meets the assessment criteria for a qualification or unit, or part of a unit.
Assessment criteria	The requirements that a learner needs to meet in order to achieve success (or a given grade) in a qualification or unit, or part of a unit.
Assessment method	The means by which an individual's competence is judged.
Assessment needs	The adjustments that some individuals require to the assessment strategy and/or assessment task in order to demonstrate that they can meet the required standard.
Assessment task	An activity undertaken by an individual learner to show that he or she can meet the required standard.
Assessor	The person who assesses a learner's work.
Assistive technology	Mechanical or electronic devices which help individuals with particular needs to overcome these limitations.
BSL/English interpreter	An individual who interprets communication into and from British Sign Language
Carrier language	The language communication used by the awarding organisation to set an assessment task or test (which may not be the first/preferred language of the learner)
CCTV	Closed circuit television
Centre	An organisation or consortium accountable to an awarding body for the assessment arrangements leading to a qualification or units.
Competence	The ability to perform to the required standard
Enabling technologies	See assistive technology

Externally set	Assessment tasks or assignments which are determined by the awarding body
External verifier	Person who checks that a Centre's assessment and quality assurance procedures comply with the requirements of the awarding organisation and the regulators.
Learning programme	A course of study
Oral language modifier	Person who can modify/rephrase the carrier language of an assessment for a learner whose first/preferred language is English, but who has specific difficulties with written language
Malpractice	Actions and practices which threaten the integrity of public qualifications
Moderation	The process of checking that assessment standards have been applied correctly and consistently between assessors, between Centres and over time, and making adjustments to results required to compensate for any differences in standard that are encountered.
Portfolio	A collection of work submitted for assessment.
Prompter	Person who draws the learner's attention back to the task in hand
Practical assistant	Person who carries out practical tasks at the instruction of the learner
Reasonable adjustment	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. Arrangements are approved in advance of an assessment.
Risk assessment	An estimation of the likelihood of something unfortunate happening as a result of a course of action.
Scribe	Person who writes down or word processes a learner's dictated responses
Qualification specification	A detailed statement or document which sets out the aims, purpose, content, structure, and assessment arrangements for a qualification.
Standards	The combination of knowledge, understanding and skills required to perform a job or task to the level of competence required in the workplace.
Sector body	A body (such as a Sector Skills Council) recognised by the regulatory authorities as responsible for formulating and reviewing standards of occupational competence for an employment sector.
Special consideration	Procedures implemented at the time of an assessment to allow attainment to be demonstrated by a learner who has been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury, indisposition or adverse circumstances at the time of the assessment.
Speech software	A computer programme that reads text
Transcript	A full written or typewritten copy of information or material originally provided in writing, speech or sign language.
Voice activated software	A computer programme which responds to spoken instructions.

Focus Awards Request for Reasonable Adjustment Form

Please complete this Request for Reasonable Adjustment Form and return, using the email address/postal address below, to Focus Awards. We will acknowledge receipt within 48 hours and explain what action will be taken next

Centre Name:	
Centre Number:	
Learner Name:	
Qualification Title:	
Unit name and number:	
Reasonable adjustment required:	
Evidence to support application: e.g. - medical certificate - psychological or other medical report - assessment of the learner's condition	
Declaration:	The above application is fully supported by evidence and I am satisfied that all the information provided is correct and verifiable.
Head of Centre Name (please print):	
Signature:	
Date:	

Focus Awards Request for Special Consideration Form

Please complete this Request for Special Consideration Form and return, using the email address/postal address below, to Focus Awards. We will acknowledge receipt within 48 hours and explain what action will be taken next.

Centre Name:							
Centre Number:							
Learner Name:							
Qualification Title:							
Unit name and number:							
Date of assessment	Please tick one of the options below:						
	Did not complete assessment	Sat assessment but was disadvantaged					
Date problem began		Is it continuing?	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Yes	No		
Yes	No						
Summary of adverse circumstances affecting the assessment (Please note, stating 'see attached' will not suffice)							
Current medical/psychological evidence is attached?	Yes	No					
For incomplete assessments, please indicate the mark awarded and the percentage of work completed. A breakdown of the marks must be attached and Centres must not enhance the marks themselves.							
Please note: in the majority of cases, units taken by the learner will form the basis of the decision on the special consideration.							
Declaration:	The above application is fully supported by evidence and I am satisfied that all the information provided is correct and verifiable.						
Head of Centre Name (please print):							
Signature:							
Date:							

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact our support team

E: info@focusawards.org.uk

T: +44(0)333 3447 388