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Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
an Chabháin agus Mhuineacháin
*Cavan and Monaghan
Education and Training Board*

Assessment Reference Framework

Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment

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Drafted by:

**ETBI National Assessment Procedures Handbook Working Group
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1. Principles of Assessment in relation to Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment

Assessment is underpinned by the **principles of assessment** including the *fair* principle (equal opportunity for all learners) and *consistent* principle (consistency in approach to assessment across ETBs, programmes and modules). As such, in order to ensure the fair and consistent assessment of learners, the following procedure should be followed in relation to the provision of reasonable accommodation in assessment. Additionally, the principles of assessment include the *valid* principle (assessment measures what it is required to measure therefore ensuring the standard is achieved) and the *reliable* principle (accuracy and consistency with which an assessment measures the skill or attainment it is designed to measure). CMETB's Quality Assurance System overarches these principles and ensures learner achievement is assessed in a fair and consistent way in line with the national standards for the award.

In order to ensure *fairness* and *consistency* across all assessment activities, learners can apply for reasonable accommodation in relation to their assessment while at the same time ensuring that the assessment remains *valid* and *reliable*.

Special assessment arrangements/adaptations are not intended to and should not reduce the validity and reliability of the assessment or compromise the standard. The adaptation should seek to amend the aspects of the assessment technique or instrument which prevent a learner's participation in the assessment. It should be used where the particular assessment technique(s) or instruments disadvantage the learner in assessment. In essence, reasonable accommodations are put in place to facilitate the learner in demonstrating their knowledge, skill and competence to the standard required by the award. Making/providing reasonable accommodation is NOT intended to make the assessment easier or more achievable. In implementing reasonable accommodations the learner should neither be advantaged or disadvantaged. The required standard MUST still be achieved and demonstrated, albeit in a slightly different way.

Quality assured assessment ensures that in criterion referenced assessment "learners are assessed, and the assessment judgment is made based on whether the learner has reached the required national standards of knowledge, skill and competence for the award" (QQI, 2013 p.5). Central to quality assured assessment is the assumption that learners are assessed in a fair and consistent manner in line with the award standard. Quality assured assessment ensures adherence to the principles of assessment.

The following sets forth the principles of assessment which apply to this document: these principles are based on the QQI (2013) principles for assessment.

1. Validity

Validity is a fundamental assessment principle ensuring that an assessment measures what it is designed to measure: the relevant standard of knowledge, skill or competence required for an award should be assessed.

Validity in assessment occurs when:

- Assessment is fit for purpose (i.e. a practical assessment assesses a practical skill)
- Learners can produce evidence which can be measured against the award standard
- Assessors can make accurate assessment decisions
- Assessment is accessible to all candidates who are potentially able to achieve it

2. Reliability

Reliability in assessment ensures that assessment measurement is accurate: the knowledge, skills and competence which the assessment measures should produce reliable and accurate results. Reliability in assessment ensures that results are consistent under similar conditions.

Reliability in assessment occurs when:

- The assessment is based on valid assessment techniques
- Assessment conditions are consistent
- Learner evidence is reliable
- Results are consistent across various assessors, contexts, conditions and learners over time.

3. Fair

Fairness in assessment supports the validity and reliability principles and provides equal opportunity to all learners. Fairness in assessment ensures: learners have access to appropriate resources/equipment in assessment; assessment design and implementation are fair to all learners; and policies and procedures exist to ensure fair assessment of learners.

4. Quality

Quality in assessment ensures that all assessment processes are quality assured.

5. Transparency

Transparency in assessment ensures that assessment policy and procedures provide clarity to all relevant stakeholders.

Based on QQI Principles for Assessment (QQI, 2013)

2. Definitions

2.1 Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment

The Equal Status Act 2000 requires education and training establishments to provide reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of a learner who has a disability (Section 4: Discrimination on Ground of Disability).

In the context of assessment, reasonable accommodation is the term for the adaptation of assessment as necessary to cater for the needs of learners whose personal situation means that the assessment would otherwise be unfair, e.g. learners with a disability, and/or other learners covered by equality legislation. The grounds include: learning difficulty; deaf or having a hearing impairment; blind or visually impaired; physical difficulty (including mental health and/or behavioural difficulties along with physical difficulties); and any grounds covered by current legislation.

Reasonable accommodation guidelines for other awarding bodies supersede guidelines in this document.

Any adaptation of the assessment should facilitate the learner to demonstrate their achievement of the standards without altering the standard.

Special assessment arrangements/adaptations are not intended to and should not reduce the validity and reliability of the assessment or compromise the standard.

Reasonable Accommodation in assessment will only be accommodated when a learner can demonstrate with appropriate evidence/documentation that because of a specific need he/she cannot compete on equal terms, under standard assessment conditions, with their peers.

Adaptations of assessment for a learner may be implemented by CMETB without having to request permission from QQI. Other awarding bodies may have different requirements and in such cases CMETB must adhere to the specific awarding body guidelines.

The adaptations may include the following and/or other reasonable adaptation:

- modified presentation of assignments/examination papers, e.g. enlargements
- scribes/readers
- sign language interpreter
- rest breaks
- adaptive equipment/software
- use of assistive technology
- additional time
- separate room/space

The implementation of these adaptations will ensure that all learners are assessed on an equitable basis. CMETB is responsible for their implementation and any associated costs incurred¹.

¹ Note from Working Group: Additional cost and resource implications including reading of educational psychologist reports

2.2 Relevant Evidence/Documentation for Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment

Examples of relevant evidence/documentation necessary for application for reasonable accommodation in assessment include but are not limited to:

- Medical Report
- Educational Psychologist Report
- Occupational Therapist Report

Examples of relevant evidence/documentation which **do not** qualify for application for reasonable accommodation in assessment application include:

- English is not the first language of the learner
- Literacy ability
- Injuries/disabilities that do not have an impact on the learner's ability to demonstrate the required standard of knowledge skill and competence

3. Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Programme Co-ordinator

The Programme Co-ordinator must coordinate and assess the application for Reasonable Accommodation. The Programme Co-ordinator must also inform the learner of the outcome of their application. If an application is successful, the Programme Co-ordinator must work with the Learning Practitioner (and other relevant persons if required) to accommodate the learner while **strictly adhering** to the assessment principles above and the standard of knowledge, skill and competence required for certification.

3.2 The Learning Practitioner

Once an application for Reasonable Accommodation is approved, the Learning Practitioner together with the Programme Co-ordinator (and other relevant persons if required) are required to plan and implement an alternative/adapted assessment in order to accommodate the learner while **strictly adhering** to the assessment principles above and to the standard of knowledge, skill and competence required for certification.

3.3 The Learner

Specific Needs

The learner is required to inform the Centre by identifying themselves as persons with **specific needs** and requesting the provision of alternative assessments and/or other support services that best meet their needs prior to the commencement of the course (or at least six (6) weeks prior to the assessment event/deadline). This may allow reasonable accommodation to be facilitated. This application must be in writing using the Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Application Form (see Appendix 1).

Temporary Circumstances

The learner is required to inform the Centre by identifying themselves, due to **temporary circumstances** (e.g. temporary injury), as persons requesting the provision of alternative/adapted assessments and/or other support services that best meet their needs as soon as possible. This may allow reasonable accommodation to be facilitated. This application must be in writing using the Reasonable Accommodation in *Assessment Application Form* (see Appendix 1).

The learner is required to submit relevant evidence/documentation (see 2.2).

4. Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Procedure

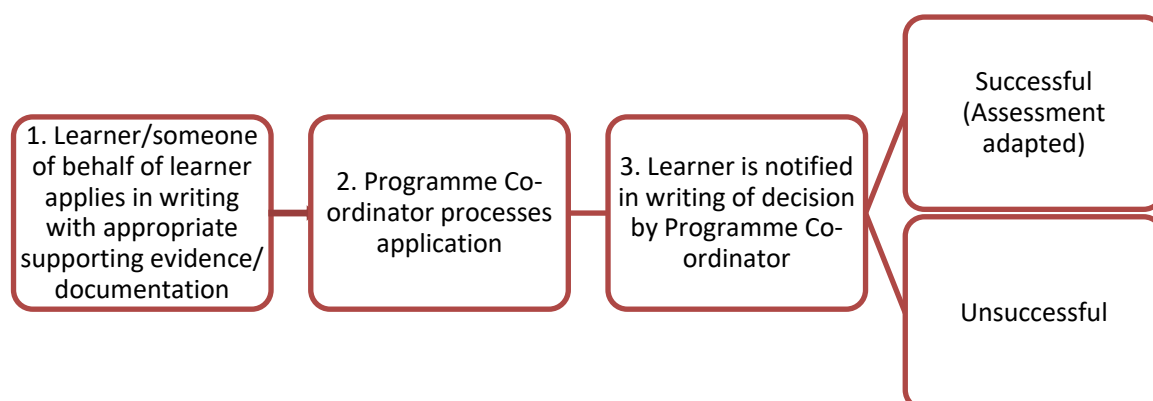


Figure 1.1 Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Procedure

1. The learner (or someone on behalf of the learner) applies in writing for reasonable accommodation in assessment to the Programme Co-ordinator, using the **Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Application Form** (see Appendix 1).

Specific Needs:	The application must be completed prior to the course commencement or at least six (6) weeks in advance of the assessment deadline
Temporary Injury:	The application must be completed as soon as possible

The application **MUST** be supported with **all** relevant evidence/documentation (see 2.2). A dialogue between the Programme Co-ordinator and learner must take place in order to determine the needs of the learner and ways to support and facilitate the learner in the assessment process while adhering to the principles of assessment.

2. The Programme Co-ordinator must decide whether there is sufficient evidence (see 2.2) to proceed with the application. Additional information may be sought through dialogue between the Programme Co-ordinator & the learner.

3. The Programme Co-ordinator informs the learner in writing of the decision.

- **Successful:**

If the application is successful (i.e. there is sufficient evidence to proceed with the application), the Programme Co-ordinator will aim to inform the learner of the outcome within six (6) weeks of receipt of all evidence/documentation and commencement on the course. The Programme Co-ordinator will work with the Learning Practitioner (and other relevant persons if required) to adapt the assessment while strictly adhering to the principles of assessment in relation to reasonable accommodation (see Appendix 2: Adaptations of Assessment).

- **Unsuccessful:**

If the application is **unsuccessful** (i.e. there is insufficient evidence to proceed with the application), the Programme Co-ordinator will inform the learner. The learner may appeal this decision.

5. Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Appeals

The learner has the right to appeal the decision in relation to reasonable accommodation in assessment application decision. Appeals must be made within **ten (10) working days** of the decision. (In exceptional circumstances, the Programme Co-ordinator may extend this). All appeals must be made in writing using the relevant Appeals Application Form (see Appendix 3). The Appeals process is processed in line with CMETB appeals procedures.

CMETB will endeavour to complete all appeals within a reasonable timeframe of **twenty (20) working days** upon receipt of appeal.

References

Government of Ireland (2000) Equal Status Act 2000. Dublin: The Stationery Office. QQI (2013)

Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers. Available at:

<https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Quality%20Assuring%20Assessment%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20Providers%2c%20Revised%202013.pdf>

**REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION IN ASSESSMENT
APPLICATION FORM**

Part C: (Office Use)

This section must be completed by the Programme Co-ordinator and returned to the learner

Learner Name:

Date of Decision:

Outcome:

Successful Unsuccessful

If granted, details of assessment adaptation:

Appendix 2: Adaptations of Assessment

Individualisation

As a general rule, an adaptation to the form of delivery, which makes learning possible, will also assist in making assessment possible. The learner is usually the best authority on what form of delivery is the most effective and the same method(s) may then be possible during any assessment. However, **it is important that the standard of work required by the assessment is not diminished. Only the method(s) by which the learner demonstrates their attainment of the standard can be adjusted.**

Rest Breaks

Supervised rest breaks either inside or outside the assessment area should be allowed as is appropriate. A rest break can be flexible according to individual needs, e.g. ten minutes every hour as opposed to one 20-minute period during a three-hour assessment. The time so used should not be deducted from the time allowed (where specified) to complete the assessment. Rest breaks should not exceed 20 minutes per examination.

Extra Time

In the case of assessments that are based on time, additional time of ten (10) minutes per hour, or part thereof, is allowed for learners with a visual impairment; for learners with specific learning difficulties or physical needs; for learners where a scribe has been sanctioned; or learners who meet the eligibility criteria for the use of a recording device or a word processor but who are unable to make use of these aids under examination condition.

Readers

A reader is a person provided to assist a learner with a disability by reading assessment questions aloud without suggesting the answer. A reader is a person who, on request, will read to the learner:

- a. The entire or any part of the assessment
- b. Any part of the learner's answers (exactly, as they are 'spoken')

Readers are typically used by people with visual impairments, people who tire easily, people who have extreme muscle weakness and people with learning difficulties.

Only one reader per learner is permissible and the assessment should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel.

Writers/Scribes

A writer is a person who will, on request, write the answers exactly as given or dictated by a learner. A writer may also act as a reader and is often used in similar circumstances to a reader. As in the case of a reader, only one writer per learner is permissible and the assessment should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel.

Sign Language Interpreters

Sign Language Interpreters must be qualified to interpret Sign or other similar types of language. Only one Sign Language Interpreter per learner should be used. The assessment for learners (usually those

who are deaf or hard of hearing) should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel.

For extra transparency it may be necessary to video-tape the assessment for translation later. Similarly, some learners may prefer to sign their answers directly to video. A signed response should be transcribed to print by someone proficient in sign language. Any words or phrases re-interpreted for the learner should be underlined and noted in the question paper.

Overwriting

Overwriting involves rewriting a question on an examination paper in such a way as to make it as explicit as possible. Overwriting should be in pen on the answer paper. This is done by assessment supervision personnel *in situ*. Where extensive modifications are necessary, a separate sheet of paper with the questions written in full should be attached by staple to the original answer paper. Technical terminology should not be overwritten. In case of doubt about technical terminology a subject matter expert can be consulted. Care must be taken to retain the original emphasis of the question.

Computers

The use of computers by learners with a disability may be necessary as their primary means of communication, e.g. for learners with physical impairments for whom writing is difficult, for learners with visual impairments or blindness and for learners with learning disabilities such as dyslexia.

The definition of a 'computer' generally refers to hardware and/or software which facilitate effective communication for people for whom this may not otherwise be possible. It may be standard equipment, e.g. the use of word-processing software by someone with motor difficulties which impede handwriting or may be specially adapted, e.g. speech synthesisers and text enlargement software/hardware for people with visual impairments.

Where voice-activated software is used, the assessment should take place in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel. It is the responsibility of the assessment/training location to supply the appropriate hardware/software.

Audio-recording

Audio-recording assessments and responses are useful in some cases, e.g. visual impairment or motor difficulties. The centre should supply the assessment tape and a blank tape to learners at the same time as other learners. However, in order to minimise disruption to learners, the person should either use headphones or complete their assessment in a separate room or area. Such provision may give rise to the need for extra assessment supervision personnel.

Braille, Braille-mate, Braille 'n speak, Braille 'n print, etc.

Braille is generally, though not extensively, used by learners who are blind or visually impaired. It is generally advised that the Braille machine is attached and adapted to a printer which will produce a printed text. The responses of the learner should not be printed until after the end of the assessment time, as the noise levels may be too high for other learners. The assessment/training location should supply the printer, braille paper and/or the computer print-out paper.

The Use of CCTV (closed circuit television)

This is a technological aid that magnifies print. It is usually used for learners with visual impairments. The learner can read the assessment paper as well as their answers from a TV screen. The learner uses the base under the screen to write and this is simultaneously magnified on the screen.

Enlarged Print to A3 size

Some learners, usually those with visual impairments, may simply require their assessment papers in enlarged print, i.e. A3 size paper.

Examination Papers in Colour

Some learners, especially those who have dyslexia, may require their assessment paper in a colour other than black and white - for example, black on yellow, or black on grey. A gloss/high-sheen coated paper may also be unsuitable. The learners themselves should be consulted.

Other Technologies

The whole area of new technologies and access to information is rapidly changing. The opportunities for learners to demonstrate their abilities are increasing with the advent of assistive devices like the 'true-type talking microphone', a device which with practice can type onto a computer screen a person's spoken word. Such technologies are also becoming more accessible in terms of general availability and price.

Separate Room

Many learners experience recognised mental health illness at the time of examinations, such as stress, insomnia, and anxiety. Learners should be able to access a separate room from the examination hall/skills demonstration room, via extra time/space/supervision, to ensure that the learner is not disadvantaged by their mental health condition. This may also apply for students experiencing illness for other reasons such as bereavement, pregnancy etc.

Appendix 3: Learner Appeals Application Form for Reasonable Accommodation

Part A: To be completed by the learner and returned to the Programme Co-ordinator by a specified deadline of 10 working days	
Centre Name:	
Learner Name:	
Learner Address:	
Learner ID/ PPS No:	
Programme Code/Title:	
Are there impending deadlines which may need to be considered with this application: CAO Applicant/Other Applicant:	Yes/No
If yes, please give details:	

Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment	
Details of appeal application (please provide full details of reasons for appeal):	

Module Code	Module Title	Module Level	Original Result	Ground for Appeal
				Total Fee €

Candidates wishing to Appeal a process must complete this form and return to the Programme Co-ordinator, [Insert name and address of centre here], on or before xx/xx/xx.

Appeals received after this date will not be processed.

There is an administrative fee of €40 per module result that you wish to appeal. This fee must be made payable to [Insert name of Centre here], Fee should be paid by EFT, cheque, postal order or bank draft. NO CASH accepted.

The outcome of the Appeal will be communicated directly to you in writing.

If successful the administrative fee of €40 per module will be refunded.

Appeals will not be processed without payment of fee.

I can confirm that I have read and understand the appeals procedure including the grounds for appeal. I can confirm that I have enclosed a total fee of € . This fee is refundable if the appeal is successful.

Learner Signature:

Date:

Programme Co-ordinator Signature:

Date:

Programme Co-ordinator Name:

Part B: To be completed by the Independent Appeals Committee		
Independent Appeals Committee Members:		
Details of evidence received:		
Date received:		
Outcome of decision:	Successful/Unsuccessful	
Date:		
Decision Details:		
Independent Appeals Committee Signatures and Date:	Signature	Date

Office Use:		
Total Fee Received: €	Date:	Programme Co-ordinator Signature:

Learner Signature:

Date:

Programme Coordinator Signature:

Date:

Programme Coordinator Name: