

Covid-19:

Centre or Service guidelines regarding Covid-19 precautions must be considered when planning Reasonable Accommodation, especially if provision is being made for Scribes or Readers, or where learners may be in close contact with other individuals.

LOETB REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION POLICY FOR QQI AWARDS

Quality Assurance Support Service (QASS)

Changes in this Policy:

- Change to 'Purpose' and 'Scope' sections – p.1
- Change to entry for Computers when used for Reasonable Accommodation – p.11

New information included:

- Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines for Online Exams – p.7
- LOETB Guidelines for Readers for QQI assessments – p.8
- LOETB Guidelines for Scribes for QQI assessments - p.9

Reasonable Accommodation Policy: QQI Awards

Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board Further Education and Training Services

Context: As part of its Quality Assurance Agreement with QQI, LOETB is committed to the fair and consistent assessment of all learners within its Further Education and Training Centres and Services. Additionally, the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015 (which makes amendments to the Equal Status Act 2000 and Equality Act 2004, among others), requires education and training bodies to provide Reasonable Accommodation to meet the needs of a learner who has a disability or other persons covered by the grounds of equality legislation.

In order to meet these commitments, LOETB has developed this policy to provide direction on providing appropriate Reasonable Accommodation supports to learners in Further Education and Training courses. The overall policy consists of this document as well as the documents Reasonable Accommodation: Information for Learners and the Reasonable Accommodation Application Form.

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework and guidelines for the provision of Reasonable Accommodation supports for assessment to learners participating on QQI programmes within Further Education and Training Centres and Services in LOETB.

Scope: This Reasonable Accommodation policy relates to assessment of QQI awards only. Providers of such awards within LOETB can provide Reasonable Accommodation for a learner without having to request permission from QQI. Any learner taking part in QQI courses in LOETB Further Education and Training Services can apply for Reasonable Accommodation under this policy. **Other awarding bodies may have different requirements and in such cases the provider must follow the specific awarding body guidelines.**

DEFINITIONS

1. Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment

Reasonable Accommodation means adapting an assessment for learners who would otherwise be at a disadvantage due to an impairment or disability.

Reasonable Accommodation allows the learner to demonstrate their achievement of the award standards without altering the standard of the assessment.

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 should only be granted when a learner can demonstrate with appropriate evidence or documentation that, because of a specific need, they cannot compete on equal terms, under standard assessment conditions, with their peers.

A description of a range of Reasonable Accommodation measures are included in Appendices 2, 3 and 4.

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

2. Relevant Evidence or Documentation to Support an application for Reasonable Accommodation*

When applying for Reasonable Accommodation, a learner **must** provide evidence to support the application. Examples of supporting documentation include but are not limited to:

- Medical Report
- Educational Psychologist Report
- Occupational Therapist Report
- Guidance Counsellor Report
- LOETB Dyslexia screening test
- Rehabilitation Psychologist or Rehabilitation Office report and support documentation
- Proof of approval for RA for other programmes e.g. letter from State Exams Commission approving RA for Leaving Cert.

The following are not considered grounds for Reasonable Accommodation:

- Where English is not the first language of the learner
- Literacy ability. Providers of Reasonable Accommodation must be clear about the difference between a learner's need for Reasonable Accommodation and a literacy requirement.
- Injuries/disabilities that do not have an impact on the learner's ability to demonstrate the required standard of knowledge, skill and competence

*Programme Providers should contact the Quality Assurance Support Service (QASS) for clarification on acceptable forms of supporting documentation if required.

PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT IN RELATION TO REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION IN ASSESSMENT

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). A key part of 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 the principles of assessment are followed.

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

Principles of 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 learners 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 over time across various assessors, contexts, conditions and learners

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.

In order to ensure the fair and consistent assessment of learners, the following process should be followed in relation to the provision of Reasonable Accommodation in assessment. The provider'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 aim 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 Accommodation, the learner should neither be advantaged or disadvantaged. The required standard must still be achieved and demonstrated, albeit in a slightly different way.

CENTRE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles

1. **Programme Coordinator:** In FET centres this is the Centre Manager or Principal / Deputy Principal. (For Local Training Initiatives (LTIs), and Contract Training courses the Programme Coordinator is the relevant QASS Training Standards Officer.)
2. **Learning Practitioner:** For most programmes this is the course Teacher or Tutor

Each centre and service must provide learners and the QASS with the names of the staff members in the Programme Coordinator and Learning Practitioner roles.

Responsibilities:

1. **Programme Coordinator:** The Programme Coordinator must:
 - Ensure learners are aware of the process to apply for Reasonable Accommodation and have access to the document Reasonable Accommodation: Information for Learners and the Reasonable Accommodation Application form. (For LTIs and Contract training courses communication with learners may be done through the relevant Training Officer /local programme manager / course contractor.)
 - Coordinate and assess applications for Reasonable Accommodation.
 - Inform the learner of the outcome of their application.
 - If the application is successful, the Programme Coordinator must work with the Learning Practitioner (and other relevant persons as required), to accommodate the learner, while **strictly adhering** to the assessment principles above and the standard of knowledge, skill and competence required for certification.
 - If the application is unsuccessful the Programme Coordinator must facilitate the applicant to appeal the decision if required.
 - **Appeals:** Should a learner wish to appeal a Reasonable Accommodation decision the Programme Coordinator should
 - Facilitate the learner in making their appeal,
 - Communicate the outcome
 - i. If successful adapt the assessment with the Learning Practitioner while **strictly adhering** to the assessment principles above and the standard of knowledge, skill and competence required for certification.
 - ii. If the learner is unsuccessful at appeal the Learning Practitioner should provide details of the LOETB Complaints Policy if required.



- 2. Learning Practitioner:** Once an application for Reasonable Accommodation is approved, the Learning Practitioner together with the Programme Coordinator (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.

Contact

All queries in relation to this policy should be addressed to the LOETB Quality Assurance Support Service.

APPENDIX 1 - Reasonable Accommodation guidelines for online exams.

Where an online exam is taking place in an LOETB exam centre.

The learner should apply for Reasonable Accommodation in the usual way via the Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Application form.

The following Reasonable Accommodations are available for online exams

- Reader
- Scribe
- Extra time
- Separate exam venue

If other forms of Reasonable Accommodation are required, the centre or service should contact the QA Support Service.

It is vital that learners apply for Reasonable Accommodation as soon as possible as additional arrangements may need to be made to modify online exams. For example, extra time needs to be added to the learner's online exam paper.

Online exams during Covid-19 closures.

Where an online exam is taking place outside of an LOETB exam centre due to Covid-19 closures, the QA Support Service is responsible for providing Reasonable Accommodation.

It is mandatory that all learners requiring RA for these exams are notified to the QA Support Service. Failure to notify the QA Support Service of learners requiring RA, means the learner may not sit the exam.

QA staff will work directly with the learners to put appropriate supports in place.

APPENDIX 2: LOETB Guidelines for Readers for QQI assessments*

A **Reader** is a person who, on request, will read the entire exam, or any part of the exam paper to the learner. A reader may only support one learner at a time and the assessment should take place in a separate room or area.

Guidelines for Readers

You must:

- Be able to read the examination paper in the assessment language.
- Read the exam paper, or parts of the paper as often as the learner requests it.
- Read aloud, speaking in a clear voice and pronounce words correctly.
- Read each question clearly. Place special emphasis on words printed in boldface, italics or capitals and inform the learner that words are printed that way.
- Only spell words that appear in the examination paper.
- If, when reading a word that is pronounced like another word with a different spelling, and there is doubt about which word is intended, spell the word for the learner after you have pronounced it.
- Place equal stress on each response option in the case of multiple-choice questions.

You must not:

- Give, or change the meanings of words, or expand on what is written in the exam paper.
- Provide an interpretation, or add any additional information beyond what is written in the exam paper
- Suggest, or choose parts of the paper for repetition without the learner's direction.
- Advise the learner which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which questions should be answered.
- Try to solve the problems or determine the correct answers as you read. Doing so may result in an unconscious pause or change in inflection that could be misleading or disconcerting to the learner.
- Place your own emphasis on words not emphasised in the examination paper.

*Guidelines adapted from State Exams Commission, (2018). *Reasonable Accommodations at the 2018 Certificate Examinations, Implementing Access Arrangements during the Written Examinations.* Athlone.

https://www.examinations.ie/schools/cs_view.php?q=7dcefd8554ec84824778f3fdb7374965e0d2dfcf
[Accessed 7/09/2020]

APPENDIX 3: LOETB Guidelines for Scribes for QQI assessments*

A Scribe is a person who will write the answers dictated by the learner in an exam. A scribe may only support one learner at a time and the assessment should take place in a separate room or area. These guidelines also apply to online exams.

Please check that the learner has applied for and been awarded extra time in order to allow sufficient time for the dictation and transcription of their answers. (See Extra Time, p.10 below)

Guidelines for Scribes

You must:

- Be able to write, or type clearly in the language of the assessment.
- Be familiar with the symbols used in Maths or Science when scribing for these subjects.
- Write down, or type, answers exactly as they are dictated.
- Read back the learner's responses as requested.

If required, you can use a dictionary to check your spelling only.

You must not

- Advise the learner which questions to do, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which questions should be answered.
- Provide an interpretation of any part of the exam paper.
- Produce sketches and/or drawings in any question.
- Provide any other form of assistance to the learner in relation to the content of the exam paper, or the subject of the exam.

***Guidelines adapted from State Exams Commission, (2018). *Reasonable Accommodations at the 2018 Certificate Examinations, Implementing Access Arrangements during the Written Examinations.* Athlone.**

https://www.examinations.ie/schools/cs_view.php?q=7dcefd8554ec84824778f3fdb7374965e0d2dfcf
[Accessed 7/09/2020]

Appendix 4: Possible adaptations for Reasonable Accommodation in 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 compromised. Only the method(s) by which the learner demonstrates his/her 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 twenty-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.

Split Sessions

Splitting the assessment into two or more sessions may be an appropriate alternative for some learners.

Extra Time

In the case of assessments that are based on time, additional time of 25% of the specified assessment duration is allowed, e.g. 15 minutes' additional time for every hour of assessment. This also applies to learners with a visual impairment; 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 conditions.

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/s 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.

Where a computer is being used as a form of Reasonable Accommodation, all files, study notes, and classwork relating to the assessment should be removed from it.

Where the exam is not being conducted online, the computer should be a standalone model, not connected to the internet or any Local Area Network (LAN). Wifi access should also be disabled.

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 recording and a blank recording device/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.

Enlarge print i.e. A3 size

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

Examination papers in colour

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

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.