

Access and Reasonable Adjustments Policy

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1. Introduction

VTCT Skills is committed to ensuring fair and equitable access to assessment for all learners. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, which protects individuals from discrimination and the Equality Act 2010 (Disability) Regulations 2010, which clarify what qualifies as a disability, awarding organisations must make Reasonable Adjustments (RAs) where a disabled learner would otherwise be placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to their non-disabled peers.

This policy sets out the principles, procedures, and guidelines for centres when requesting and implementing RAs. It outlines the steps to be followed in decision-making and details VTCT Skills' responsibilities in taking reasonable steps to prevent both direct and indirect disadvantage.

The policy is informed by best practice developed by the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and reflects current regulatory requirements and expectations.

By following this policy, VTCT Skills and its approved centres ensure that all learners are assessed fairly, consistently, and with appropriate support in place where needed.

2. Centre Responsibilities

All VTCT Skills centres are responsible for ensuring that every learner has equitable access to qualifications, units, and assessments, whether conducted under formal examination conditions or through other assessment methods. Centres must uphold the rights of learners by identifying and implementing appropriate arrangements that reflect individual needs, ensuring that assessments are both accessible and inclusive while maintaining the integrity and standards of the qualification.

Key Responsibilities

Centres must:

- Ensure appropriate infrastructure - Have the necessary resources, processes, and qualified personnel to make informed decisions regarding RAs.
- Promote staff awareness and training - Ensure all staff involved in the management, delivery, assessment, and quality assurance of qualifications are fully familiar with the RA Policy. Staff advising current or prospective learners must receive training to understand the impact of learning difficulties, disabilities, or other relevant factors, enabling them to provide effective and equitable support.
- Uphold learner rights- Guarantee that learners can access qualifications, units, and assessments in ways that meet their individual needs. Assessment environments and resources should be as accessible as practicable.
- Maintain inclusive assessment practices: Ensure assessments comply with disability and equal opportunity legislation and regulatory requirements. Assessment standards must be upheld, and arrangements clearly communicated to staff and learners. Centres should foster a culture where learners feel confident to disclose any need for RA.

- Protect health and safety- Under no circumstances should a learner’s health and safety be compromised during assessment. Where a disability or difficulty may present risks during practical activities, a qualified staff member must conduct a risk assessment. Any RA application in such cases must be supported by this assessment
- Support qualification selection - Select appropriate qualifications based on each learner’s circumstances and provide accurate information about qualification content. Centres may conduct initial assessments prior to registration to make informed judgments about a learner’s ability to complete assessments and identify any support or RA needs. These should be discussed with the learner and applied for on their behalf.
- Provide internal appeals procedures- Ensure learners can query decisions where an adjustment to assessment has been denied.
- Design inclusive assessments - Centre-set assessment activities and materials should be accessible to learners with access-related needs. Language used in assessments must be clear, unambiguous, and free from jargon.

This list is not exhaustive. Centres must take all practical steps to apply Reasonable Adjustments to promote equality of access for learners who may be at a substantial disadvantage due to disability or difficulty.

In some cases, the need for RA may not be apparent at the outset. Centres should therefore remain vigilant and aim to identify such needs as early as possible. Learners should be actively involved in any decisions regarding the application of RA.

For many vocational qualifications, assessment requirements are designed to be flexible and inclusive. In these types of assessments, learners are permitted to demonstrate that they meet the specified assessment criteria in any valid way. This approach allows centres to tailor assessment strategies, activities, and methods to suit individual learner needs, while still maintaining the integrity and standards of the qualification.

Centres are encouraged to take a creative and learner-centred approach when designing assessments, ensuring that they remain accessible and appropriate. Where alternative arrangements are being considered to meet specific learner needs, centres should ensure that these remain valid and reliable and align with the qualification’s learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

3. Definition and Principals of Reasonable Adjustments

3.1. Definition

The following definition is given by Ofqual’s General Conditions of Recognition:

“Reasonable Adjustments are adjustments made to an assessment for a qualification so as to enable a disabled Learner to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding to the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification. “

A learner does not necessarily have to be disabled (as defined by the Equality Act) to be entitled a RA for their assessment. Every learner who is disabled will also not necessarily be entitled to or need an adjustment to assessment. The learner may have developed coping mechanisms which minimise or remove the need for Reasonable Adjustments.

3.2. Principles

VTCT Skills and its centres are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of giving access, and what is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances. An adjustment to assessment should only be considered where the disability or difficulty experienced places the learner at a disadvantage, in comparison with persons who are not disabled. Where the difficulty is minor, the centre should assist the learner by offering help with study and assessment skills. Centres should also bear in mind that:

- Learners may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all qualifications.
- Learners may need a single adjustment or a combination of adjustments.
- Adjustments to assessments will mostly be needed for assessments which are taken under constrained/examination conditions.
- RA are approved or set in place before the assessment activity takes place; they constitute an arrangement to give the learner access to the qualification.
- Where RA has been applied the work produced by the learner will be marked to the same standard as the work of other assessed learners.

When considering whether an adjustment to assessment is appropriate, VTCT Skills and the centre need to bear in mind that any adjustments to assessment:

- Must not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification or the requirements of the assessment strategy.
- Must not give the learner an unfair advantage or disadvantage.
- Must reflect the learner's normal way of working.
- Must be based on the individual needs of the learner.
- Must not compensate the learner for lack of knowledge and skills.
- Must not alter competency standards.
- Must not comprise health and safety.

Any application for an adjustment to assessment must be supported by evidence which is valid, sufficient and reliable. 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.

4. Declaring Reasonable Adjustments

Centres are required to inform VTCT Skills of any intent to apply a RA to a learner's assessment by submitting a **Notice of Intent (NOI)**. This must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the scheduled assessment or exam date to allow sufficient time for VTCT Skills to review the request and update relevant systems particularly in cases where adjustments such as extra time are being applied.

Unless explicitly indicated (i.e. in cases of temporary adjustments), Reasonable Adjustments will remain in place for 3 years or the duration of the learner's study, whichever is sooner. Centres will need to resubmit a new NOI should the duration of a learner's study exceed this.

Whilst centres are not required to seek VTCT Skills' approval, NOIs, along with the associated supporting evidence, are subject to sampling from VTCT Skills. Centres are expected to have full, current, supporting evidence in place before submitting an NOI. Evidence sampling is based on, and prioritised by, the RA complexity/risk.

VTCT Skills has published process guides to support centres with completing the electronic form.

Click [here](#) for **VTCT Skills system guidance**

Click [here](#) for **iTEC system guidance**

4.1. Types of Reasonable Adjustments

Determining whether a Reasonable Adjustment is required and which type of adjustment may be put in place, will depend on:

- The specific assessment requirements of the qualification.
- The type of assessment.
- The particular needs and circumstances of the individual learner.

The following table outlines the most common Reasonable Adjustments and VTCT Skills' associated risk rating.

Reasonable Adjustment	Risk
Use of bilingual dictionaries	N/A
Change in the organisation of assessment room	N/A
Separate accommodation within the centre	N/A
Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles, CCTV and OCR scanners	N/A
Assessment material on coloured paper	N/A
Prompter	N/A

Stress ball/fidget toys	N/A
Non electronic ear defenders/ear plugs/headphones	N/A
25% extra time	Low
Supervised rest breaks	Low
Assessment material on coloured paper	Low
Assessment material in audio format	Low
Use of ICT to present responses	Low
Spoken responses using electronic recording devices	Low
Reader/E-reader/Computer reader	Medium
Scribe/speech recognition technology	Medium
Use of bilingual dictionaries <u>PLUS</u> 25% extra time	Medium
Responses in BSL	Medium
Responses in Braille	Medium
BSL/English interpreter	Medium
Practical assistant	Medium
Transcriber	Medium
Access to electronic device - medical	Medium
Taking the assessment at an alternative venue	High
Assessment material in enlarged format/font	High
Assessment material in Braille	High
Language modified assessment material	High
Assessment material in BSL	High
Extra time in excess of 25%	High
Other	High

5. Guidance for Applying Reasonable Adjustments

5.1. Specific Skill Assessments

Assessments covering specific skills are exempt from Reasonable Adjustments, below are examples of several areas where it is not appropriate to apply adjustments.

5.1.1. Reading, Writing and Speaking

- Reader
A reader is not permitted during assessments where reading or understanding of the written word is an assessment requirement or a competency being assessed.
- Scribe
A scribe is not permitted in any assessments where writing or keyboarding is the competency being assessed.
- British Sign Language (BSL)/English interpreter
An English interpreter/BSL is not permitted in any assessments where reading or speaking and listening are the competencies being assessed. BSL or any other sign language may only be used for the assessment material rubric and instructions.
- Responses in BSL (British Sign Language)
The signing of responses should not be permitted if the ability to write or speak English, Welsh or Irish is being assessed.
- Assessment Material in Audio Format
Assessment materials in audio format are not permitted in any assessments where reading is the competency being assessed.

5.1.2. Computer Based

- Extra time
Extra time will not be allowed for computer-based assessments testing the time in which a skill is performed, such as keyboarding speed tests.

5.1.3. Practical

- Extra time
Extra time will not be allowed in practical activities where the timing is a crucial part of the assessment. E.g. commercial service standards.
- Supervised Rest Breaks
Rest breaks are not applicable where speed or time (e.g. commercial service standards) 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.
- Practical Assistant
A practical assistant will not normally be allowed in those qualifications where the practical skill is the focus of the assessment.

5.2. English as an Additional Language (EAL)

In order for an EAL learner to be eligible for a RA, they must have an impairment in their first language which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect. A learner's primary language being anything other than English, Irish or Welsh cannot be defined as a learning difficulty.

5.3. General Application

5.3.1. Extra Time

- a) Extra time will not be allowed if a learner's literacy difficulties are primarily caused by English, Irish or Welsh not being their first language and must not be awarded to a learner using a bilingual translation dictionary to compensate for difficulties in reading and writing in English.
- b) Where assessment activities are time constrained a learner may be allowed extra time during an assessment if they have a condition which affects their speed of processing.
- c) 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.
- d) Extra time may be available for computer-based assessments where the manipulation of software, and not processing speed, is the primary aim of the assessment.
- e) 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 that the learner is medically fit to undertake the extended assessment.

5.3.2. Reader/E-reader/Computer Reader

A reader is a person or software who/which when requested, will read to the learner all or part of the assessment material and the learner's written responses.

- a) A reader will not be allowed if a learner's literacy difficulties are primarily caused by English, Irish or Welsh not being their first language.
- b) A reader may be allowed in all assessments where reading or understanding of the written word is not an assessment requirement or the competency being assessed and where there is evidence of need.
- c) 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 accessing the assessment material in electronic format, in Braille or through sign language.
- d) The centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a reader.
- e) 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, VTCT Skills should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a reader.

- f) 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.
- g) Wherever possible, a learner should have practiced working with the nominated reader and should have used this arrangement during the training programme leading up to the assessment.
- h) The centre should ensure that the learner and reader are clear about the limitations of the reader's role.
- i) A separate invigilator should be present when a reader is used to ensure that the guidance regarding readers is followed.
- j) 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. These instructions should also be given to the invigilator.
- k) 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.
- l) The learner using a reader should be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other learners.
- m) 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. Separate invigilation should be arranged in these cases. The invigilator may not correct the reading of the learner.
- n) The reader is responsible to, and should be approved by, the Head of Centre or the centre staff member with delegated responsibility.
- o) The reader:
 - Should read only as requested by the learner. The learner may choose to read some parts of the assessment themselves.
 - 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 the 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 invigilator.

5.3.3. Scribe/Speech Recognition Technology

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 competency being assessed.

- a) A scribe or speech recognition technology software will not be allowed if a learner's literacy difficulties are primarily caused by English, Irish or Welsh not being their first language.
- b) 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. The learner is also more likely to use a word processor rather than a scribe in the workplace.
- c) For a learner requiring a scribe and a reader, the same person may act as both, provided permission has been given for both.
- d) 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.
- e) 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.
- f) The centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a scribe.
- g) A scribe is not permitted in an assessment requiring word processing, or where the writing is the competency being assessed.
- h) 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.
- i) A learner should, wherever possible, have had previous practice in working with the scribe and used this arrangement during their learning programme.

- j) The centre should ensure that the learner and scribe are clear about the limitations of the scribe's role.
- k) The centre should give the scribe clear instructions regarding what they are required to do/what they are not allowed to do during the assessment. These instructions should also be given to the invigilator.
- l) The learner using a scribe should be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other learners.
- m) A separate invigilator should be present when a scribe is used to ensure that the guidance regarding scribes is followed.
- n) The scribe is responsible to and should be approved by the Head of Centre or the centre staff member with delegated responsibility.
- o) 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 themselves.
 - 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 VTCT Skills 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.
 - Should immediately refer any problems in communication during the examination to the invigilator.

5.3.4. Use of Bilingual Dictionaries or Bilingual Translation Dictionaries

The use of bilingual dictionaries and bilingual translation dictionaries (including BSL/English dictionaries/glossaries) can be allowed in all VTCT Skills vocational assessments unless its use is expressly forbidden by the assessment requirements. Bilingual dictionaries and bilingual translation dictionaries must not contain word definitions, only translations.

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, Welsh or Irish impairs their ability to complete the assessment within the normal time allocated, an additional allowance of

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extra time may be permitted. However, very few bilingual translation dictionary users will need to have extra time - this is a rare and exceptional arrangement specifically for learners who entered the United Kingdom less than 3 years before the time of the assessment(s), with no prior knowledge or experience of the English Language.

The centre must 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 for the use of 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.

5.3.5. Supervised Rest Breaks

Where assessment activities are time constrained a learner may, if there is a demonstrated need, be allowed supervised rest breaks during an assessment.

- a) 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 the conduct of assessments will apply during this time.
- b) For online assessments, the centre needs to check with VTCT Skills whether the time for rest breaks must be built into the extra time requested for the assessment. This will be necessary if 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.

5.3.6. 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, visual or hearing impairment(s), or physical difficulties.

- a) Visually impaired learners may benefit from sitting near a window so that they have good lighting.
- b) Hearing impaired learners may benefit from sitting near the front of the room and in good light.
- c) Some learners may benefit from using chairs with armrests or adjustable heights.
- d) Learners with autistic spectrum disorder may benefit from having visual/noise stimuli, such as a ticking clock, removed from the room.

5.3.7. 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.

5.3.8. Taking the Assessment at an Alternative Venue

In certain circumstances, the learner may be permitted to take an assessment at an alternative venue. E.g. at home or in a hospital. Where such a need has been identified, centres will be expected to provide VTCT Skills with details relating to the venue and exam arrangements (i.e. management of exam papers, invigilation). Details should be sent to exams@vtctskills.org.uk. Centres must ensure that the learner is medically fit to take the assessment.

5.3.9. Use of Coloured Overlays, Low Vision Aids, Tinted Spectacles, CCTV and OCR Scanners

- a) Use of coloured overlays also includes reading rulers, virtual overlays and virtual reading rulers.
- b) The centre should ensure that the learner has had sufficient practice in the use of these aids and that any electronic aids are in good working order.
- c) For assessments taken under examination conditions, the learner should be accommodated separately with separate invigilation if the use of any of these aids will disturb other learners. In these cases, the invigilator should be fully informed of the learner's support.

A centre should contact VTCT Skills if they are unclear about whether any new technology will unfairly advantage the learner or invalidate the assessment requirements.

5.3.10. Assessment Material in Enlarged Format/Font

- b) For paper-based assessments

Enlargements for paper-based assessments may be used. Examples of this 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.

It is the centre's responsibility to provide centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference material in a suitable format for the learner.

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 their work which occur as a result of incomplete enlargement of the material.

Centres need to request copies of any externally set assessment materials by contacting VTCT Skills' Exams Department (exams@vtctskills.org.uk). The centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable, or within 30 working days before the date of the assessment.

- c) On-screen assessments

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

5.3.11. 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.

If Braille assessment material has been ordered but is no longer required, the centre should inform VTCT Skills' Exams Department immediately (exams@vtctskills.org.uk) 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. VTCT Skills 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 in braille. The learner may be penalised for any errors in their work which occur as a result of errors in the braille material.

Braille is not always an appropriate adjustment for the learner, not all blind people are fluent in Braille, and others methods may suit (including reader and scribe).

It is the centre's responsibility to arrange for the brailleing of centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference materials.

Centres need to request copies of any externally set assessment materials by contacting VTCT Skills' Exams Department (exams@vtctskills.org.uk). The centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable, or within 30 working days before the date of the assessment.

5.3.12. Language Modified Assessment Material

The carrier language in assessment material may be modified for a hearing-impaired 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.

- a) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) Where VTCT Skills provides language modified externally set assessment material, the centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable

- d) 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 their work which occur as a result of inaccurate modification of the material.
- e) It is the centre's responsibility to arrange for the modification of centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference materials.

Centres need to request copies of any externally set assessment materials by contacting VTCT Skills' Exams Department (exams@vtctskills.org.uk). The centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable, or within 30 working days before the date of the assessment.

5.3.13. Assessment Material in BSL (British Sign Language)

Where the centre cannot provide a BSL/English interpreter for the assessment, and if language modified assessment material does not provide sufficient assistance, a BSL version of assessment material may be provided on videotape instead of (or in addition to) the assessment material in written English. This facility may not be permitted for assessments where reading or listening is the competency being assessed.

- a) Where VTCT Skills provides externally set assessment material in BSL, the centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable.
- b) Where the centre is permitted to translate externally set assessment material into BSL, they should take responsibility for the security of the material and for the accuracy of the translation. The learner may be penalised for any errors in their work which occur as a result of errors in the material.
- c) It is the centre's responsibility to arrange for the translation of centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference materials into BSL.
- d) Centres should note that this adjustment will not be suitable for all assessments and that they need to contact the awarding body for further advice if they are unclear whether this adjustment is appropriate.

Centres need to request copies of any externally set assessment materials by contacting VTCT Skills' Exams Department (exams@vtctskills.org.uk). The centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable, or within 30 working days before the date of the assessment.

5.3.14. Assessment Material on Coloured Paper

- a) Where VTCT Skills provides externally set assessment material on coloured paper, the centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable. The
- b) 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.
- c) The learner may be penalised for any errors in their script which occur as a result of incomplete copying of the document.

- d) It is the centre's responsibility to provide centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference material on coloured paper if required
- e) Where the centre is using on-screen assessments, it may be possible to provide a screen background in a colour that is suited to the learner's needs. Centres should contact VTCT Skills for advice.

Centres need to request copies of any externally set assessment materials by contacting VTCT Skills' Exams Department (exams@vtctskills.org.uk). The centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable, or within 30 working days before the date of the assessment.

5.3.15. 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 competency 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.

- a) Where VTCT Skills provides externally set assessment material in audio format, the centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable.
- b) 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 their work which occur as a result of errors in the recording.
- c) It is the centre's responsibility to provide centre-devised assessment material/resource or reference material in a suitable format for the learner.

Centres need to request copies of any externally set assessment materials by contacting VTCT Skills' Exams Department (exams@vtctskills.org.uk). The centre will have to apply by the deadline outlined in the assessment timetable, or within 30 working days before the date of the assessment.

5.3.16. Use of ICT to Present Responses

Learners that require a Reasonable Adjustment may be entitled to the use of ICT where appropriate. However, learners are not entitled to the use of ICT where they do not require a Reasonable Adjustment, even when this is their normal way of working.

Where e-testing is available to the centre and learners, the centre doesn't need to consider this as a Reasonable Adjustment.

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.

- a) 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.

- b) 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 their normal way of working. The learner should be consulted before a decision is taken whether the use of ICT is an appropriate adjustment.
- c) 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.
- d) The use of the computer should not create a misleading impression of the learner's attainment or confer an unfair advantage over other learners.
- e) The centre should ensure that workstations are adapted to 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.
- f) Where it is apparent that assessment objectives cannot be met fully if a computer is used, the centre should suggest alternative arrangements.

5.3.17. Spoken Responses using Electronic Recording Devices

Electronic recording devices can include CDs, memory sticks and audio cassettes. Where there is evidence of need, the learner may be permitted to record their responses electronically.

- a) This arrangement will only be available for assessments where there is no requirement for the learner to produce visual material.
- b) Where the learner's responses are recorded electronically, the centre should provide an authenticated transcript of the learner's responses.
- c) 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.

5.3.18. Responses in BSL (British Sign Language)

Where there is evidence of need, the learner may be allowed to sign their responses to questions.

- a) 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. This must all be videoed for quality assurance purposes. The centre will provide a translation of the responses for assessment.
- b) The centre should ensure that the person doing the translation is appropriately qualified.
- c) The centre should ensure that sufficient recording equipment is available and that it is in good working order.
- d) 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.

5.3.19. Responses in Braille

Where there is evidence of need, a learner may be permitted to present their responses in Braille.

- a) In these cases, an authenticated transcript of the learner's responses should be provided by the centre.
- b) 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.

5.3.20. British Sign Language (BSL)/English interpreter

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.

Where BSL is the primary means of communication for a hearing-impaired 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 competencies being assessed, BSL or any other sign language may only be used for the assessment material rubric and instructions.

- a) 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. Some awarding bodies may provide the centre with a specification for the person allowed to interpret the written assessment material into BSL.
- b) Wherever possible, a learner should 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.
- c) The centre should ensure that the learner and the person providing the interpretation are clear about the limitations of the latter's role in the assessment situation.
- d) 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 VTCT Skills.
- e) 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.
- f) 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.
- g) The learner using a BSL/English interpreter should be accommodated separately so as not to disturb other learners.

- h) A separate invigilator should be present when a BSL/English interpreter is used to ensure that guidance regarding BSL/English interpreters is followed.
- i) The BSL/English interpreter:
- Should have access to the assessment material in advance of the examination to prepare for the signing. Please contact VTCT Skills in respect of recommendations of how long before the assessment the BSL/English interpreter needs access to the assessment material
 - 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.

5.3.21. 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, VTCT Skills 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 their attention is no longer on the assessment task and that they are 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 their 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 (though not in a way that may be taken to indicate any part of the examination question paper nor cause disturbance of other learners).

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 absence, 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. These instructions should also be given to the invigilator.

The centre should ensure that the learner and the prompter have had experience of working together.

A separate invigilator should be present when a prompter is used to ensure that the guidance regarding prompters is followed. The invigilator 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 at 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 invigilator.

5.3.22. 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.

- a) 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.
- b) The centre is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for the provision of a practical assistant.
- c) 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, VTCT Skills should be specifically consulted. On no account may a relative, friend or peer of the learner be used as a practical assistant.

- d) A practical assistant should be a person who is able to ensure the safety of the learner and carry out their instructions accurately.
- e) 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 invigilator and learner. The centre should note that the practical assistant may not perform tasks for which the learner will receive credit.
- f) The use of a practical assistant should not modify the specification requirements. For example, where the manipulation of apparatus, use of equipment or making accurate visual observations may be the skill being assessed, the use of a practical assistant will not be permitted.
- g) A learner using a practical assistant may need to be accommodated separately from other learners. In these cases, a separate invigilator 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.
- h) 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, they 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 invigilator/supervisor.

5.3.23. Transcriber

A transcriber may be used by a learner in the following circumstances:

- Where the learner's handwriting is illegible, but they are unable to use a computer or dictate responses - it may not be allowed where writing by hand is the competency being assessed.
- Where the learner's responses are produced in Braille or in BSL.

The transcriber will produce a transcript to assist the examiner/assessor in the assessment of a learner's work. The examiner/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 examiner/assessor may refer solely to the transcript).

- a) The centre should, in consultation with the learner, decide whether the use of a transcript will be an effective arrangement.
- b) The centre should give the transcriber clear instructions regarding what they are required to do before, during, and after the assessment.
- c) 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).
- d) 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 VTCT Skills.
- e) The centre should not attach to the learner work or transcript the reason why a transcript was necessary.
- f) 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, for examinations, produce the transcript immediately after the examination under secure conditions.
 - 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, Welsh or Irish or modern foreign language examinations 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 ink. 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.

5.3.24. Access to Electronic Device – Medical

In some instances, it may be necessary for a learner to have access to a mobile phone for medical purposes during exams. E.g. managing diabetes.

To ensure the integrity of the examination, an invigilator must individually supervise a learner with a medical condition when handed their mobile phone. It is the centre's responsibility to put measures in place to ensure appropriate management of the mobile device.

5.3.25. Stress Ball/Fidget Toys

Access to stress balls and fidget toys during an assessment may be helpful for learners with ADHD, anxiety, or autism, as they can help with self-regulation, focus, reduce anxiety, and provide a calming outlet for excess energy or movement.

5.3.26. Non Electronic Ear Defenders/Ear Plugs/Headphones

Learners who experience anxiety, sensory processing differences, or medical conditions that are exacerbated by noise may need ear defenders during assessments. This includes learners with Auditory Processing Disorder (APD), autism, or those who are easily distracted by noise and benefit from a quieter environment.

6. Supporting Evidence

Whilst VTCT Skills is not currently a member of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), all policies and procedures (including guidance on supporting evidence) are designed to align with the JCQ as closely as possible.

Where a need for a Reasonable Adjustment has been identified, it is expected that centres obtain information evidencing the **need/condition alongside details outlining the learner's normal way of working within the centre**. The exception to this will be any temporary Reasonable Adjustment (i.e. an adjustment needed to support a temporary illness/injury).

6.1. Examples of Evidence

Below is a non-exhaustive list of supporting evidence commonly used to support requests for RA in addition to information outlining normal ways of working within the centre:

- JCQ Form 8 / JCQ Form 9
- Document outlining Learner Medical Diagnosis
- Learner Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)
- Centre file note
- Signed Centre Letter outlining specific learner needs

6.2. Evidence Validity and Retention

VTCT Skills cannot determine whether a candidate has a learning difficulty therefore centres are expected to have access to an assessor and a SENCo/Access Arrangements Coordinator, or other appropriately qualified individual, to support the identification and processing of Reasonable Adjustments.

Full, current, supporting evidence should be in place before submitting an NOI to VTCT Skills and all supporting evidence should be retained within the centre for up to 3 years. Supporting evidence may be subject to periodical sampling as outlined in the RA Sampling Strategy policy (document ref: 5POAD33).

7. Malpractice

A centre should note that failure to comply with the guidance regarding adjustments to assessments set out by VTCT Skills has the potential to constitute malpractice and may lead VTCT Skills to withhold the learner's result. Failure to comply is defined as any or all the following:

- Failure to cooperate with VTCT Skills sampling requirements.
- Implementing Reasonable Adjustments without sufficient assessment/supporting evidence.
- Failing to declare Reasonable Adjustments to VTCT Skills.
- Failing to retain records of Reasonable Adjustments in accordance with VTCT Skills' requirements.

Instances of malpractice will be dealt in accordance with the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, which is available on the VTCT Skills website.

8. Appeals

If you wish to appeal against a VTCT Skills decision regarding reasonable Adjustments, please refer to our Enquires and Appeals Policy (located on the VTCT Skills website).

Document amendment history page

Version	Document Owner	Issue Date	Changes	Role
v12	Head of Assessment	25/01/2024	Update to Section 3.5. Addition of requirement for Modified Assessment Material application form to Section 8.9, 8.10, 8.11, 8.12, 8.13, 8.14.	Head of Assessment
v13	Head of Assessment	24/10/2024	Branding updated. Document owners updated	Head of Assessment
v14	Director of Qualifications and Standards	29/08/2025	Re-draft. Removed reference to Special Considerations and updated/expanded guidance throughout.	Head of Quality Assurance and Centre Admin

Document Review

Role	Review Status
Head of Quality Assurance and Centre Admin	Reviewed

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Document Sign-off

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