

Special Considerations Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out the process for requesting special considerations and provides VTCT Skills centres with guidance for implementing these. This policy covers the ways in which learners can be granted access to fair assessment by special consideration usually applied post assessment.

Circumstances not covered by this policy, or where further clarification is necessary, should be discussed with VTCT Skills before assessment takes place.

2. Centre responsibilities

In line with current equality legislation and regulatory requirements, centres have a duty to support individual learners by ensuring fair access to assessment. To fulfil these responsibilities, centres should, wherever practicable:

- identify at the earliest opportunity any circumstances that may warrant a special consideration application.
- submit applications for special consideration promptly to prevent delays or missed deadlines.
- maintain accurate records of all special consideration applications for audit and quality assurance purposes.

This list is not exhaustive. Centres are expected to take all reasonable and practical steps to ensure that special consideration is applied appropriately, thereby promoting equitable access for learners who may be placed at a significant disadvantage.

Centres should refer to this Special Consideration Policy in conjunction with the Access and Reasonable Adjustment Policy to ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach to learner support.

3. Special considerations

3.1. Definition of special considerations

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

“Special Consideration is consideration to be given to a Learner who has temporarily experienced an illness or injury, or some other event outside of his or her control, which has, or is reasonably likely to have, materially affected the Learner's ability to –

1. (a) take an assessment, or
2. (b) demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment.”

3.2. Principles of special considerations

Special consideration may be granted to a learner who has been temporarily affected by illness, injury, or other unforeseen circumstances at the time of their assessment. This provision is designed to support learners when such events have had, or are likely to have had, a significant impact on their ability to complete the assessment or demonstrate their typical level of performance.

Although special consideration can offer limited support to learners facing a range of physical or emotional challenges, it cannot fully mitigate the impact of those difficulties. In some cases, it may not be appropriate for a learner to be entered for an assessment, particularly where only minor adjustments are possible.

Each request for special consideration is assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the specific learner and assessment involved. These guidelines outline general principles for centres to follow; however, further advice should be sought from VTCT Skills for individual cases.

Special consideration may be applied after a scheduled assessment for a learner who:

- was present but disadvantaged due to temporary illness, injury, or adverse circumstances occurring at or near the time of assessment.
- missed part of the assessment due to circumstances beyond their control.

Centres should be aware that in assessments requiring demonstration of practical competence, full achievement of criteria, or those linked to a Licence to Practise, special consideration may not be applicable.

In certain situations, offering the learner an opportunity to retake the assessment at a later date may be more appropriate.

Special consideration must not provide an unfair advantage, nor should it misrepresent a learner's achievements to certificate users. The outcome must reflect the learner's actual performance during the assessment, rather than their potential ability.

Special consideration will not be applied if it compromises the reliability of the qualification in measuring the intended knowledge, skills, and understanding, or if it results in unfair advantage or disadvantage to any learner.

If an application for special consideration is approved, the learner's performance will be reviewed based on the available evidence. It is important to note that a successful application does not guarantee a change in the learner's result.

3.3. Eligibility criteria

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

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

A learner may not be eligible for special consideration if:

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

3.4. Applying for special considerations

Centres need to apply for special consideration using the Form for Special Considerations, which is available in the [Document Library](#) from the secure area of VTCT Skills' website. A separate form should normally be completed for each learner for each qualification. However, in cases where a group of learners has been disadvantaged by a particular event (e.g. fire alarm), a single form should be submitted, with a list of learners affected should be attached to the form.

The application for special consideration should be submitted immediately or within 24 hours after the assessment and never later than 5 working days after the assessment. Requests for special consideration may only be accepted after the results of the assessment have been released in the following circumstances:

- the application has been overlooked at the centre and the oversight is confirmed by the Head of Centre;
- medical evidence comes to light about a learner's condition, which demonstrates that the learner must have been affected by the condition at the time of the assessment, even though the problem revealed itself only after the assessment;
- for on-screen assessments where results are immediately available.

4. Record retention requirements

VTCT Skills states its record retention requirements in the Centre Handbook, which is available to view on the VTCT Skills website.

In relation to special considerations, centres are required to retain any requests or decisions for special considerations, including any supporting evidence and relevant documentation received from VTCT Skills, for 3 years. This can be retained in electronic or paper format.

5. Malpractice

A centre should note that failure to comply with the guidance regarding special considerations 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 of the following:

- failing to make applications before the deadline set out in the key dates document for performance table qualifications;
- failing to retain records of special considerations 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.

6. Appeals

If you wish to appeal against a VTCT Skills decision regarding special considerations, please refer to our Enquires and Appeals Policy which can be found on the VTCT Skills website.