Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment

DDLETB Assessment Procedures

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Our thanks to Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), and the Further Education Support Service (FESS), for their support in developing the procedures outlined in this handbook

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[1]). 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[2].

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

[1] QQI (2013) Quality Assuring Assessment Guidelines for Providers. Available at: http://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Quality%20Assuring%20Assessment%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20Providers%2C%20Revised%202013.pdf [Accessed 28th February 2018]
[2] Ibid.

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 procedure 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 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.

1. Definitions

1.1 Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment

The Equal Status Act 2000 (Section 4) requires education and training establishments to provide reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of learners who have a disability (Government of Ireland, 2000[3]).

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 his/her 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 his/her peers.

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

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

- 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. A provider is responsible for their implementation and any associated costs incurred[4].

[3] Government of Ireland (2000) Equal Status Act 2000. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

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

1.2 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
- Speech and Language Report
- Guidance Counsellor Report[5]

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, unless specifically approved by the awarding body
- 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

[5] Note from Working Group: The cost of an educational psychologist's report can be prohibitive for many learners. Further investigation into other options needs to be investigated and added to this list at a later date, e.g. online testing.

2. Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The Learning Support Coordinator

The Learning Support Coordinator (working with the College's Learner Support Team) must coordinate and assess the application for Reasonable Accommodation. The Learning Support Coordinator must also inform the learner of the outcome of his/her application. If an application is successful, the Learning Support Coordinator must work with the Teacher (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.

2.2 The Teacher

Once an application for Reasonable Accommodation is approved, the Teacher together with the Learning Support 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.

2.3 The Learner

Specific Needs

The learner is required to inform the College 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, ideally prior to the commencement of the course, but at the very least prior to the assessment event, as per the requirements of the College. 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 College 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 Section 1.2).

3. Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Process

Any application for reasonable accommodation in assessment should follow the process outlined in Figure 1.

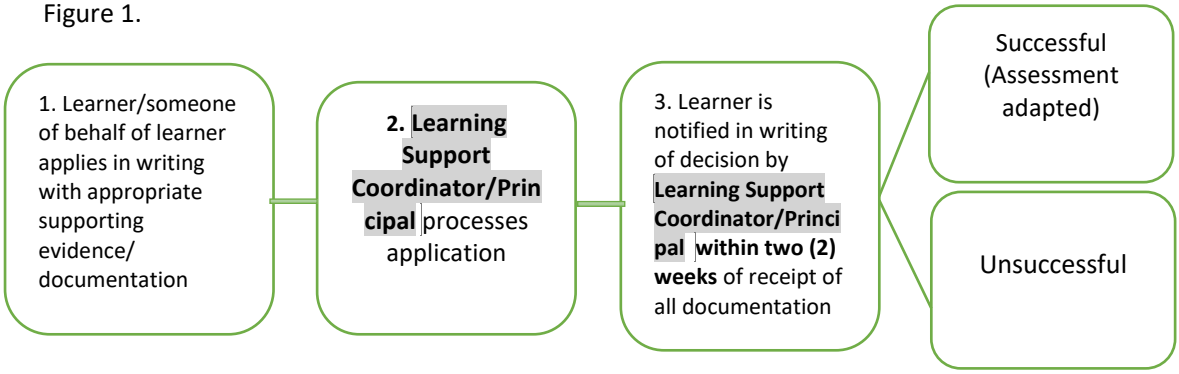

Figure 1 Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Process

1. The learner (or someone on behalf of the learner) applies in writing for reasonable accommodation in assessment to the Learning Support Coordinator/Principal, using the **Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Application Form** (see Appendix 1).

   Specific Needs: The application must be completed ideally prior to the commencement of the course, but at the very least prior to the assessment event, as per the requirements of the College

   Temporary Injury: The application must be completed as soon as possible

   The application **MUST** be supported with **all** relevant evidence/documentation (see Section 1.2). A dialogue between the Learning Support Coordinator and/or Principal 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 Learning Support Coordinator and/or Principal must decide whether there is sufficient evidence (see Section 1.2) to proceed with the application. Additional information may be sought through dialogue between the Learning Support Coordinator and/or Principal and the learner.

3. The Learning Support Coordinator/Principal 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 Learning Support Coordinator/Principal will inform the learner of the outcome **within two weeks from receipt of all evidence/documentation**. The Learning Support Coordinator will work with the Teacher (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 Learning Support Coordinator/Principal will inform the learner. The learner may appeal this decision.

4. 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 one (1) working day of the decision. (In exceptional circumstances, the Learning Support Coordinator may extend this). All appeals must be made in writing using the relevant Appeals Application Form (Reasonable Accommodation) (see Appendix 3).

The ETB will endeavour to complete all appeals within a reasonable timeframe (recommended timeframe: **six (6) working days)** after receipt of appeal applications. Every effort should be made to process the application as promptly as possible, especially if CAO/other deadlines may be impacted.

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities relating to Appeals

4.1.1 The Principal

The Principal must:

- Convene an Independent Appeals Committee of three members, the members of which were not involved in the original decision
- Submit the appeals application to the Independent Appeals Committee
- Inform the learner of the outcome of the appeals application

4.1.2 The Independent Appeals Committee

An Independent Appeals Committee must:

- Examine the learner appeal
- Investigate whether relevant assessment procedures were followed
- Make a decision on the appeal using the Independent Appeals Committee form (see Appendix 4).

4.2 Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Appeals Process

Where possible the learner discusses the appeal application with the Teacher and /or Learning Support Coordinator. There is an appeal fee of €40, which is refunded to the learner if the appeal is granted. A fee waiver may be granted at the discretion of the Principal where the learner is unemployed or facing other financial constraints.

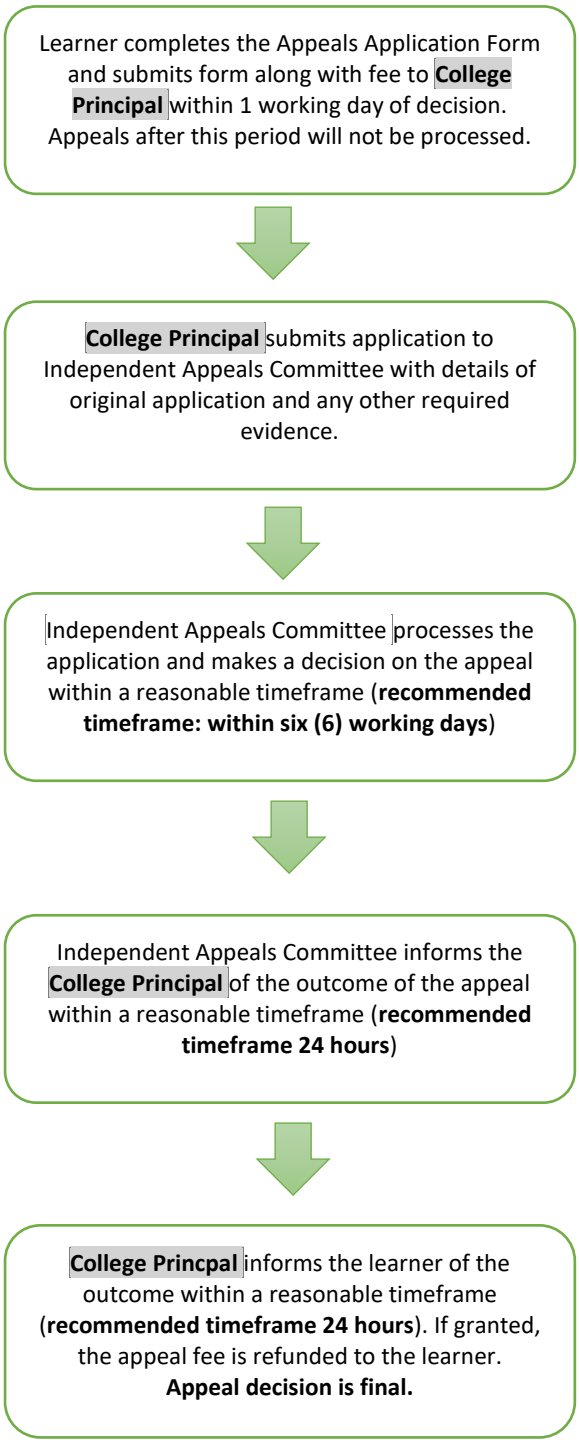

Figure 2 Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Appeals Process

4.3 Payment of the Assessment Process Appeals fee

- A fee of €40 is payable for appealing the reasonable accommodation in assessment decision and must accompany the application form.
- The College must issue the learner with a receipt.
- The College will lodge the funds to AIB, 7/12 Dame Street, BIC: AIBKIE2D,
    - IBAN: IE39 AIBK 9320 8680 144042, and code the payment to S0020/1180/<relevant Location Code>. Please label the lodgement inscription "<relevant location code> Appeals", and inform Treasury of the lodgement in the normal manner.
- If an appeal is successful, the fee will be returned to the learner. Refunds must be issued via the school bank account (Petty Cash). Alternatively, the Centre can withhold the lodgement of the fee and lodge it only if the appeal is unsuccessful.
- If an appeal is not successful, there will be no refund.

Appendix 1

Reasonable Accommodation in Assessment Application Form

APPLICATION FORM REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION IN ASSESSMENT		
This request must be completed at the start of the academic year and be submitted along with relevant evidence/documentation to the Learning Support Coordinator/Principal for approval.		
Part A: This section must be completed by the learner		
Centre Name:		
Learner Name:		
Award/Course:		
Module(s):		
Teacher(s):		
Assessment Techniques	Examination ☐ Skills Demonstration ☐ Assignment ☐	Project ☐ Learner Record ☐ Collection of Work ☐
Details of reasonable accommodation being requested:		
Supporting relevant evidence/documentation included:	Yes ☐ No ☐	
Details of supporting relevant evidence/documentation:		
Learner Signature:		
Date:		

Appendix 1

APPLICATION FORM REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION IN ASSESSMENT	
Part B: (Office Use) This section must be completed by the Learning Support Coordinator	
Learning Support Coordinator Name:	
Receipt date of application:	
Details of relevant evidence/documentation:	
Application:	Successful ☐ Unsuccessful ☐
Adaptation of assessment details:	
Signature:	
Date:	

APPLICATION FORM REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION IN ASSESSMENT	
Part C: This section must be completed by the Learning Support Coordinator and returned to the learner *This section should accompany relevant assessment material when submitted.*	
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 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 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. Learners are not permitted to read, write or complete any other examination related activity during the rest break. During a rest break, the clock is effectively stopped for the learner involved and the time taken during the rest break(s) is added at the end of the assessment. Rest breaks must be supervised by the invigilator, or another staff member if the rest break is taking place outside of the exam centre.

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 ten (10) minutes per hour, or part thereof, is allowed for learners with a visual impairment; for learners for whom 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.

Appendix 2

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.

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.

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, dyspraxia or other certified specific learning difficulties.

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 a requirement for correct spelling is included in the learning outcome or performance criteria, the spellchecker should be switched off.

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 College 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.

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.

Appendix 2

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 his/her 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, or an exam reading pen. An exam reading pen is a small hand-held device which students use to scan words, phrases or sections of the examination paper and have the text converted to speech which they listen to using ear-phones. Unlike ordinary reading pens, an exam reading pen does not have the functionality to explain the meaning of words or to translate words as this functionality would undermine the integrity of the examinations. Such technologies are also becoming more accessible in terms of general availability and price.

Appendix 3

Appeals Application Form Reasonable Accommodation

APPEALS APPLICATION FORM Reasonable Accommodation	
Part A: This section must be completed by the Learner	
Centre Name:	
Learner Name:	
Date of Application:	
Reason for Appeal:	
Reason why decision was declined:	
Details of supporting evidence provided:	
Appeal fee (€40) included:	
There is an administrative fee of €40 per module that you wish to appeal. This fee must be made payable to Stillorgan College of Further Education. Fee should be paid by EFT, cheque, postal order or bank draft. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated to you in 10 College Working days. If the outcome is successful, the administrative fee of €40 per module will be refunded to you. Appeals will be processed only with payment of the 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 €___. The fee is refundable if the appeal is successful.	
Learner Signature:	
Date:	

Appendix 3

Part B: (Office Use) This section must be completed by the College Principal	
Name:	
Receipt date of application:	
Application outcome:	I can confirm that a review of the application has been completed and that the Appeal is: Granted ☐ Declined ☐
Reason:	
Appeal fee refunded:	Yes ☐ No ☐
Signature:	
Date:	

Appendix 4

Independent Appeals Committee Form

Reasonable Accommodation

Independent Appeals Committee Form Reasonable Accommodation		
To be completed by the Independent Appeals Committee		
Independent Appeals Committee Members:		
Details of evidence received:		
Date received:		
Outcome of decision:	Granted ☐ Declined ☐	
Date:		
Decision Details:		
Independent Appeals Committee **Signatures and Date:**	Signature	Date