



Special Consideration and Reasonable Adjustments Policy

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

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and Quality Assurance

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Version Control

History of amendments	Version/ pages/ section affected	Summary of changes
Last amended May 2024	All sections	Initial policy framework
Updated August 2025	All sections	Comprehensive revision including expanded definitions, application processes, mental health provisions, technology adjustments, and appeals procedures

The persons/group answerable for this document reserve the proper to amend this document at any time should the requirement arises. All appropriate staff are going to be informed should this occur.

The Purpose

This policy establishes a comprehensive framework for providing reasonable adjustments and special consideration to ensure that all learners have equitable access to assessment opportunities and can demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding without being disadvantaged by circumstances beyond their control. The policy recognizes that learners may face various barriers to assessment performance, including permanent disabilities, temporary impairments, personal circumstances, or situational factors that require institutional response to maintain fairness and accessibility in educational assessment.

The fundamental principle underlying this policy is that reasonable adjustments and special consideration should level the playing field for affected learners without compromising the validity, reliability, or integrity of assessment outcomes. This means that while adjustments may change how a learner demonstrates their capabilities, they must not alter what is being assessed or provide unfair advantage over other learners undertaking the same or equivalent assessments. The policy ensures compliance with disability discrimination legislation, awarding body requirements, and professional body standards while maintaining the academic standards and learning outcomes that define the value and recognition of AIC qualifications.

AIC is committed to fostering an inclusive learning environment where diversity is valued and all learners are supported to achieve their potential regardless of individual circumstances or characteristics. This commitment extends beyond mere compliance with legal requirements to embrace a proactive approach that anticipates learner needs, removes unnecessary barriers, and promotes educational equity. The policy applies to all forms of assessment including examinations, coursework, practical assessments, presentations, group work, and any other method used to evaluate learner achievement across all programmes and qualification levels offered by the institution.

Definitions and Scope

Reasonable adjustments are modifications or adaptations made to assessment arrangements, criteria, or methods that help reduce the effect of a disability, learning difficulty, or other significant barrier that places a learner at substantial disadvantage compared to their peers. These adjustments are planned in advance through careful assessment of individual needs and circumstances, implemented consistently throughout the learner's studies, and designed to provide equal opportunity to demonstrate competence without altering the fundamental nature of what is being assessed. Reasonable adjustments may include modifications to assessment format, additional time allowances, alternative assessment methods, assistive technology provision, environmental modifications, or support person assistance.

The scope of conditions and circumstances that may warrant reasonable adjustments is deliberately broad and inclusive, recognizing the diversity of human experience and the various ways that barriers to assessment performance may manifest. Physical disabilities encompass mobility impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments, and other physical conditions that may affect assessment participation. Learning difficulties include dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, attention deficit disorders, and other specific learning differences that may impact academic performance. Mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and other psychological conditions may require assessment modifications to accommodate their effects on concentration, memory, or performance under pressure.

Special consideration represents post-assessment recognition of temporary circumstances that adversely affected a learner's performance during the assessment period but could not be anticipated or accommodated through advance planning. Unlike reasonable adjustments which are proactive accommodations, special consideration is a reactive response to unexpected circumstances that occurred immediately before or during assessment. These circumstances typically include sudden illness, bereavement, family emergency, accident or injury, or other traumatic events that significantly impact the learner's ability to perform to their usual standard. Special consideration may result in additional marks, grade adjustment, opportunity for reassessment, or other compensatory measures depending on the severity of impact and available evidence.

Eligibility and Assessment Criteria

Eligibility for reasonable adjustments is determined through comprehensive assessment that considers the nature and extent of the learner's condition, the specific barriers it creates to assessment performance, and the effectiveness of potential adjustments in addressing those barriers. The assessment process begins with identification of need, which may occur through self-disclosure by the learner, referral by academic staff, or systematic screening procedures designed

to identify learners who may benefit from additional support. Professional evidence is typically required to substantiate claims for adjustment, including medical reports, educational psychology assessments, specialist teacher evaluations, or other relevant professional documentation that establishes the existence and impact of the condition.

The concept of substantial disadvantage is central to eligibility determination and requires evidence that the learner's condition creates barriers to assessment performance that would not be experienced by learners without that condition. This disadvantage must be more than minor or trivial and must have a significant impact on the learner's ability to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, or understanding through standard assessment methods. The assessment considers both direct effects of the condition and indirect consequences such as fatigue, medication side effects, or anxiety related to the condition that may impact performance.

Reasonableness of adjustments is evaluated against multiple criteria including effectiveness in removing barriers, proportionality to the level of disadvantage experienced, feasibility within available resources and expertise, compliance with regulatory requirements, and maintenance of assessment validity and standards. An adjustment is considered reasonable if it successfully addresses the identified barrier without imposing disproportionate burden on the institution or fundamentally altering the nature of the assessment. The evaluation process involves collaboration between academic staff, student support services, external specialists where appropriate, and the learner themselves to identify the most effective and least intrusive accommodations.

Special consideration eligibility requires evidence that temporary circumstances significantly impacted assessment performance and that these circumstances were beyond the learner's control and could not reasonably have been anticipated. The timing of the circumstances is crucial, as they must have occurred immediately before or during the assessment period to qualify for consideration. The severity of impact must be substantial enough to affect performance but not so severe as to make the assessment invalid. Documentary evidence such as medical certificates, death certificates, police reports, or other official documentation is typically required to substantiate claims for special consideration.

Application Processes and Procedures

The application process for reasonable adjustments is designed to be accessible, transparent, and responsive to learner needs while ensuring appropriate evaluation and approval procedures. Learners seeking reasonable adjustments are encouraged to make contact with student support services as early as possible in their studies, ideally before or during the enrollment process, to allow sufficient time for assessment, planning, and implementation of appropriate accommodations. Early engagement enables comprehensive needs assessment, trial of different adjustment options, and seamless integration of accommodations into the learner's educational experience.

Initial consultation involves detailed discussion of the learner's condition, its impact on their studies and assessment performance, previous accommodations that have been helpful or unhelpful, and their preferences for potential adjustments. This consultation is conducted by trained support staff who understand both the range of available accommodations and the requirements of different academic programmes and assessment methods. The consultation process is confidential and sensitive, recognizing that disclosure of disability or personal circumstances may be difficult for learners and that trust and rapport are essential for effective support provision.

Assessment of need typically involves review of professional evidence, observation of the learner in relevant contexts where appropriate and consented to, trial of potential adjustments to evaluate their effectiveness, and collaboration with academic staff to understand specific course and assessment requirements. The assessment process may include referral to external specialists for additional evaluation or recommendations, particularly for complex cases or where internal expertise is insufficient to make informed decisions about appropriate accommodations.

The formal application requires completion of appropriate documentation that records the learner's condition, the specific adjustments being requested, the rationale for these adjustments, and any supporting evidence provided. Applications are reviewed by designated staff with appropriate expertise and authority, typically including representatives from student support services, academic departments, and quality assurance functions. The review process evaluates the evidence provided, considers the reasonableness and effectiveness of proposed adjustments, and ensures compliance with institutional policies and external requirements.

Decision-making involves careful consideration of all relevant factors including the learner's needs and preferences, the nature of the assessment requirements, available resources and expertise, regulatory compliance requirements, and potential impact on other learners or institutional operations. Decisions are made as quickly as possible while ensuring thorough evaluation, typically within agreed timeframes that allow sufficient notice for implementation. Learners are informed of decisions in writing with clear explanation of approved adjustments, any conditions or limitations that apply, and information about appeals procedures if they are dissatisfied with the outcome.

Special consideration applications follow a different timeline and process, reflecting their post-assessment nature and the need for prompt response to temporary circumstances. Applications must typically be submitted within specified timeframes following the affected assessment, usually within five working days, to ensure that circumstances can be properly evaluated and appropriate action taken. Late applications may be considered in exceptional circumstances where delay was unavoidable, but early submission is strongly encouraged to facilitate effective response.

Types of Reasonable Adjustments

Assessment format modifications represent one of the most common categories of reasonable

adjustment, involving changes to how assessments are presented or structured to accommodate specific needs without altering the learning outcomes being evaluated. Alternative formats may include provision of assessment materials in large print, Braille, audio, or electronic formats for learners with visual impairments, or simplified language versions for learners with specific learning difficulties while maintaining academic rigor and assessment validity. Question format modifications might involve multiple choice alternatives to essay questions for learners with writing difficulties, or practical demonstrations instead of written explanations for learners with language processing challenges.

Time-related adjustments acknowledge that some learners may require additional time to demonstrate their knowledge and skills due to processing speed differences, physical limitations, or other factors that affect their rate of working without reflecting their actual competence. Extra time allowances typically range from 25% to 100% additional time depending on the nature and severity of the condition and the type of assessment involved. Rest breaks may be provided for learners who experience fatigue, concentration difficulties, or medical conditions that require periodic respite during extended assessments. Modified scheduling might involve taking assessments at different times of day to accommodate medication effects, energy patterns, or other temporal factors that influence performance.

Environmental modifications create physical conditions that support optimal performance for learners whose conditions are affected by environmental factors. Separate room arrangements provide quiet, distraction-free environments for learners with attention difficulties or anxiety disorders while maintaining appropriate supervision and security. Specialized lighting, seating, or positioning may be necessary for learners with visual impairments, mobility limitations, or other physical conditions. Temperature control, reduced crowding, or elimination of specific environmental triggers may be required for learners with certain medical conditions or sensory sensitivities.

Technology and equipment provision enables learners to access assessments and demonstrate their capabilities through alternative means when standard methods create barriers. Computer access with appropriate software may be provided for learners with writing difficulties, visual impairments, or other conditions that make handwritten responses challenging. Assistive technology such as screen readers, voice recognition software, or specialized input devices may be necessary for learners with various disabilities. Recording equipment may be provided for learners who have difficulty with written expression but can demonstrate their knowledge verbally.

Support person assistance provides human support when technological or environmental modifications are insufficient to address access barriers. Reader services may be provided for learners with dyslexia or visual impairments who require assistance accessing written materials. Scribe services enable learners with physical disabilities or severe writing difficulties to dictate

responses while maintaining the independence and authenticity of their answers. Sign language interpreters facilitate communication for deaf or hard of hearing learners during oral assessments or examinations with audio components. Support workers may assist with practical tasks that are not part of the assessment itself but are necessary for the learner to participate.

Alternative assessment methods may be implemented when standard assessment formats are fundamentally incompatible with a learner's condition and other adjustments are insufficient to provide meaningful access. Oral assessments may replace written examinations for learners with severe dyslexia or physical conditions that prevent writing. Practical demonstrations may substitute for theoretical examinations where appropriate to the learning outcomes. Portfolio-based assessment may replace time-constrained examinations for learners whose conditions are exacerbated by time pressure. Continuous assessment methods may replace single high-stakes examinations for learners whose conditions create particular difficulties with traditional examination formats.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Considerations

Mental health conditions require particularly sensitive and individualized approaches to reasonable adjustment and special consideration, recognizing both the significant impact these conditions can have on academic performance and the fluctuating nature of many mental health challenges. Anxiety disorders may manifest in various ways that affect assessment performance, including panic attacks during examinations, excessive worry that impairs concentration, or avoidance behaviors that interfere with assessment participation. Reasonable adjustments for anxiety might include separate room arrangements to reduce social pressure, extended time to compensate for anxiety-related checking behaviors, or alternative assessment methods that reduce performance pressure.

Depression and mood disorders can significantly impact motivation, concentration, energy levels, and cognitive functioning in ways that affect academic performance despite preservation of underlying knowledge and skills. Adjustments may include flexible deadlines that accommodate periods of reduced functioning, alternative assessment formats that better suit fluctuating energy levels, or modifications to group work requirements that recognize social withdrawal symptoms. The episodic nature of many mood disorders requires flexible approaches that can be activated or modified based on current symptom levels and treatment progress.

Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders present unique challenges for traditional assessment methods that assume sustained attention and behavioral control over extended periods. Reasonable adjustments might include movement breaks during long examinations, fidget tools or other sensory supports that aid concentration, reduced distraction environments, or alternative demonstration methods that better align with the learner's attention patterns and processing style. Time modifications may involve either additional time to compensate for attention difficulties or

shorter time periods with multiple sessions to accommodate attention span limitations.

Trauma-related conditions including post-traumatic stress disorder require careful consideration of potential triggers in assessment environments and methods. Adjustments may include avoiding assessment content or methods that might trigger traumatic memories, providing safe spaces and exit strategies during assessments, or allowing support persons to be present when appropriate. The unpredictable nature of trauma responses requires flexible policies that can accommodate sudden changes in the learner's ability to participate in scheduled assessments.

Eating disorders may affect assessment performance through various mechanisms including cognitive effects of malnutrition, anxiety around food-related timing, or medical complications that impact concentration and energy. Adjustments might include flexible meal timing around assessments, private spaces for medical monitoring if required, or modified scheduling that accommodates treatment appointments and medical needs. The relationship between eating disorders and perfectionism may require careful attention to assessment pressure and performance expectations.

Technology and Digital Accessibility

Digital accessibility considerations have become increasingly important as educational delivery and assessment methods incorporate more technology-based approaches. Screen reader compatibility ensures that all digital assessment materials and platforms can be accessed by learners using assistive technology, requiring careful attention to document formatting, alternative text for images, and navigation structure. Keyboard accessibility enables learners who cannot use standard pointing devices to navigate and complete digital assessments through keyboard commands or alternative input methods.

Visual accessibility accommodations address the needs of learners with various visual impairments through adjustable text size and contrast options, alternative color schemes that accommodate color blindness, and scalable interface elements that can be customized to individual visual needs. High contrast modes, inverted color schemes, and customizable font options provide flexibility for learners with light sensitivity, visual processing difficulties, or other vision-related conditions.

Audio accessibility features support learners with hearing impairments or auditory processing difficulties through captions for video content, transcripts for audio materials, visual indicators for audio alerts, and compatibility with hearing aids and assistive listening devices. Text-to-speech functionality enables learners with reading difficulties to access written materials through auditory channels, while speech-to-text capabilities support learners with writing difficulties in producing text-based responses.

Motor accessibility accommodations address the needs of learners with physical disabilities that

affect their ability to interact with standard computer interfaces. Alternative input devices such as eye-tracking systems, sip-and-puff controls, or specialized keyboards may be necessary for learners with limited mobility. Adjustable timing controls allow learners who work at different speeds due to physical limitations to complete timed activities appropriately. Single-switch access and scanning interfaces enable learners with severe motor limitations to access complex digital interfaces through simplified interaction methods.

Cognitive accessibility features support learners with various cognitive and learning differences through simplified navigation interfaces, clear and consistent layout designs, and options to reduce cognitive load through customizable complexity levels. Memory aids such as built-in glossaries, formula sheets, or reference materials may be integrated into digital assessment platforms for learners with memory impairments or processing difficulties. Attention support features might include focus aids, distraction reduction options, or break reminders that help learners maintain concentration during extended digital assessments.

Implementation and Support Framework

The implementation of reasonable adjustments requires coordinated effort across multiple departments and staff roles to ensure consistent, effective, and timely provision of accommodations. Academic staff play a crucial role in identifying potential needs through observation of learner difficulties, understanding how adjustments apply within their specific subject areas and assessment methods, and implementing approved accommodations consistently and sensitively. Regular training ensures that academic staff understand their responsibilities, know how to recognize signs that learners may need additional support, and can effectively collaborate with student support services to provide appropriate accommodations.

Student support coordinators serve as the primary liaison between learners and the broader institutional support system, conducting initial assessments of need, coordinating with external specialists when additional evaluation is required, and developing individualized support plans that address both academic and pastoral needs. These coordinators maintain expertise in various types of disabilities and conditions, understand the range of available accommodations and their effectiveness for different situations, and provide ongoing support and advocacy for learners throughout their studies.

Examination and assessment administration requires specialized knowledge and procedures to implement accommodations effectively while maintaining security and fairness. Alternative venues must be arranged for learners requiring separate room accommodations, with appropriate supervision and equipment provided. Timing modifications require careful coordination to ensure additional time is provided accurately and consistently. Technology setup and troubleshooting support ensures that assistive devices and software function properly during assessments. Backup plans and contingency procedures address technical failures or other unexpected issues that might

arise during accommodated assessments.

Quality assurance processes monitor the effectiveness of reasonable adjustment provision through regular review of outcomes, feedback from learners and staff, and analysis of patterns in accommodation usage and success rates. Internal verification procedures ensure that adjustments are implemented consistently across different courses and departments, while external quality reviews provide independent evaluation of institutional practices and compliance with regulatory requirements. Documentation and record-keeping systems maintain appropriate confidentiality while ensuring that necessary information is available to support continuity of accommodations and institutional planning.

Training and professional development programs ensure that all staff members have appropriate knowledge and skills to support learners with additional needs. Awareness training helps all staff understand disability and diversity issues, recognize their responsibilities under relevant legislation, and know how to respond appropriately when learners disclose additional needs. Specialized training for key staff develops expertise in specific areas such as mental health awareness, assistive technology use, or particular types of disabilities. Regular updates ensure that staff knowledge remains current with changing legislation, emerging best practices, and new technologies or accommodation methods.

Appeals and Review Procedures

The appeals process provides learners with recourse when they are dissatisfied with decisions regarding reasonable adjustment applications, special consideration outcomes, or the implementation of approved accommodations. The process is designed to be accessible, fair, and timely while ensuring thorough review of concerns and appropriate resolution. Learners have the right to appeal decisions that they believe are unfair, inadequately considered, or based on incomplete or inaccurate information. The appeals process also addresses situations where approved accommodations are not being implemented consistently or effectively.

Initial informal resolution encourages learners to discuss concerns directly with relevant staff members before proceeding to formal appeals procedures. Many issues can be resolved through improved communication, clarification of requirements, or minor adjustments to implementation approaches. Student support coordinators often facilitate these discussions, helping to identify practical solutions that address learner concerns while maintaining appropriate standards and procedures. Documentation of informal resolution attempts provides useful background information if formal appeals subsequently become necessary.

Formal appeals require written submission outlining the specific concerns, the outcome being sought, and any additional evidence or information that supports the appeal. Appeals are reviewed by senior staff members who were not involved in the original decision, ensuring independence

and objectivity in the review process. The review considers all available evidence including the original application materials, decision rationale, any additional information provided by the appellant, and relevant institutional policies and external requirements.

Appeals review may involve consultation with external specialists, particularly in complex cases where specialized expertise is required to evaluate accommodation needs or the appropriateness of institutional responses. Independent medical or educational psychology opinions may be sought to provide additional perspective on accommodation requirements or the reasonableness of institutional decisions. Professional body guidance or regulatory authority consultation may be necessary when appeals involve questions about professional standards or qualification requirements.

The appeals outcome provides clear explanation of the review findings, any changes to original decisions that are deemed appropriate, and the rationale for the final determination. Where appeals are upheld, corrective action is taken promptly to address identified deficiencies and prevent similar issues in future cases. Where appeals are not upheld, clear explanation is provided of why the original decision was deemed appropriate, along with information about any further appeal options that may be available through external bodies or regulatory authorities.

Learning from appeals contributes to continuous improvement of reasonable adjustment and special consideration policies and procedures. Regular analysis of appeal patterns identifies potential areas for policy clarification, staff training needs, or procedural improvements. Feedback from appellants provides insight into learner perspectives and experiences that inform service development and enhancement efforts.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

Comprehensive monitoring systems track the effectiveness of reasonable adjustment and special consideration provision through quantitative and qualitative measures that provide insight into both individual outcomes and institutional performance. Statistical monitoring includes analysis of application volumes and trends, approval rates for different types of accommodations, academic achievement comparisons between learners with and without accommodations, and progression and completion rates for supported learners. This data helps identify potential disparities, emerging needs, or areas where additional support or resources may be required.

Outcome evaluation examines the effectiveness of specific accommodation types and implementation approaches through learner feedback, academic performance analysis, and staff observations. Learner satisfaction surveys provide direct feedback on the quality and appropriateness of accommodations received, the effectiveness of support services, and suggestions for improvement. Academic staff feedback contributes perspective on implementation challenges, resource requirements, and observed impacts on learner performance and classroom

dynamics.

Benchmarking against sector standards and best practices ensures that institutional approaches remain current and effective compared to other educational providers. Participation in professional networks, conference attendance, and literature review provide insight into emerging approaches, technological developments, and research findings that may inform service enhancement. External quality reviews and accreditation processes provide independent evaluation of institutional practices and identification of improvement opportunities.

Regular policy review ensures that procedures remain current with changing legislation, evolving best practices, and emerging needs within the learner population. Annual review cycles examine policy effectiveness, identify areas requiring clarification or update, and incorporate feedback from various stakeholders including learners, staff, external specialists, and regulatory bodies. Major policy revisions undergo appropriate consultation and approval processes, with implementation supported by staff training and communication campaigns.

Continuous improvement initiatives respond to identified challenges and opportunities through targeted enhancement projects, pilot programs for new approaches, and systematic implementation of improvements based on evidence and feedback. Innovation in accommodation provision may involve trials of new technologies, alternative assessment methods, or support approaches that show promise for improving accessibility and effectiveness. Evaluation of improvement initiatives provides evidence for wider implementation and contributes to the broader knowledge base about effective reasonable adjustment provision.

Staff development programs ensure that knowledge and skills remain current with evolving practice requirements and emerging needs. Professional development opportunities include training in new accommodation technologies, awareness of emerging disability issues, legal update sessions, and sharing of best practices from other institutions or organizations. Specialist staff may pursue advanced qualifications or professional certifications that enhance their expertise and contribute to service quality improvement.