

Covering Note

This draft document is based on the notes recorded in the briefing paper “Implementing the Equality Act 2010 in the delivery of examinations/assessments” previously seen by the Academy Assessment Committee. It is proposed as a set of principles for all colleges and faculties to adopt. We are aware that most organisations will already have published policies and procedure in this area so we are not proposing that these be replaced by this document, rather that this document provides a set of agreed principles which will inform future development of these policies.

Adjustment Principles for Examinations Candidates with Disabilities

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide a policy statement to support individual organisation’s operational guidelines, to ensure that candidates with disabilities, specific learning difficulties and long-term medical conditions receive an equal opportunity in examinations to perform to the best of their abilities.

1.2 This guide has been written to apply to current candidates of participating organisations’ who have been assessed as being disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010. This includes people who have:

- i. Physical or sensory impairments
- ii. Specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia and dyspraxia) or other cognitive impairments
- iii. Mental health issues
- iv. Hidden impairments (e.g. epilepsy, respiratory problems or heart conditions)
- v. On-going or fluctuating medical conditions including unforeseen medical circumstance.

2 Monitoring

At the point of application to sit an examination candidates should be asked if they consider themselves to have a disability and this information should be recorded for the purpose of monitoring. A candidate who declares a disability at this stage is not necessarily assumed to be requesting an adjustment for the examination and may have no need of any adjustment. However they should be asked whether or not they require any adjustment to be made.

3 Requesting Adjustments

Candidates requiring an adjustment must specifically request this in writing, identifying themselves and their potential needs to the relevant organisation’s office staff as soon as possible and no later than the relevant published deadlines.

4 Supporting Evidence

Disabilities and adjustments can take many forms. For example, a candidate with a hearing impediment may need examiners to sit on a particular side during an oral examination or someone with mobility issues may need to be examined in a ground floor room. Where the disability is self-evident or the adjustment is straightforward and unlikely to confer any benefit to a non-disabled candidate then further medical evidence will not be required.

In cases where the adjustment is not straightforward, or would confer a benefit to a non-disabled candidate, then further supporting evidence will be required. This is most commonly the case with conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia where a candidate is requesting additional time. Corroborating evidence will be required from an appropriate medical practitioner or a chartered educational psychologist along with expert advice on what adjustments are required and reasonable in order that the candidate is not disadvantaged. It may also be of help for the candidate to provide evidence of existing workplace adjustments. Candidates providing supporting medical evidence will be advised that the evidence will be reviewed by the relevant Chief examiner, and then securely and confidentially stored in the appropriate offices for a period of 5 years for the purposes of record if any subsequent question arises in relation to the question of adjustment.

The granting of an adjustment and the level of the adjustment are at the discretion of the relevant College coordinating the examination. GMC guidance¹ indicates that while there is a duty to make a reasonable adjustment, in enabling the competence standards to be met, there is no requirement to make adjustments that would alter the standard of competency required.

5 Examples of Adjustments

Exams can take many forms and can be hand written, computer based or practical in nature. It is therefore not possible or appropriate to attempt to define a pre-determined set of possible adjustments as any decisions will need to be made on a case-by-case basis. The below example adjustments are included for guidance purposes only:

Element of exam requiring adjustment	Example reasonable adjustments
Venue	Use of ground floor rooms, separate rooms, ramps, adapted chairs or desks, hearing loops, access to food & drink (e.g. for diabetes)
Notification to examiners and invigilators	Notifying examiners or invigilators that candidates may display symptoms or have mobility issues that need consideration but no additional adjustment.
Extra Time	Typically for dyslexia 25% extra time at written exams or the reading components of practical exams can be granted. Breaks for rest/meals.
Materials	Large-font papers and answer sheets.
Assistive Technology	Large computer screen/font, adapted mouse, allow typing instead of handwriting, IT to support visual impairment, audio recording of answers, scribe.

6 Responsibilities

Organisations will be responsible for the following:

- i. Undertaking an evidence based evaluation of the entitlement to adjustments for disabled candidates (as defined by the Equality Act 2010); and to those with temporary conditions (e.g. broken arms, pregnancy)
- ii. Arranging for implementation of the relevant adjustment in each case
- iii. Undertaking re-evaluations of entitlement (based on evidence) where the needs of the candidate changes.

Candidates will be responsible for the following:

- i. Making a written request for reasonable adjustment before the published deadlines and setting out the nature of their disability/temporary condition and suggested adjustment
- ii. Providing appropriate evidence of requirement of reasonable adjustment
- iii. Providing evidence of any current workplace adjustments if appropriate
- iv. Informing the relevant organisation should they decide not to use agreed adjustments in any or all of their examinations at least one week before the examination.

ⁱ http://www.gmc-uk.org/9_Health_and_Disability_in_Postgraduate_Medical_Education_and_Training.pdf 46554398.pdf