



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Argyll College

Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean
Colaiste Earra-Ghàidheil

Argyll College UHI Access to Assessment Arrangements Policy and Procedures

Policy Number:	AAP1
Revision Number:	1
Date of Issue:	1 st June 2017
Status:	Approved
Date of Approval:	16 th June 2017
Responsibility for Policy:	Head of Student Services
Responsibility for Implementation:	Head of Student Services
Responsibility for Review:	Head of Student Services
Date of Last Review:	June 2021
Date of Last Revision:	June 2021
Date of Next Review:	June 2024

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1 Purpose

Assessment should be a fair test of a learner's knowledge and what they are able to do. However, for some learners the usual format of assessment may not be suitable. This policy will outline how Argyll College UHI's management and dissemination of qualifications and assessments does not bar learners from being able to access qualifications offered by the college. This Policy is necessary for maintaining the integrity of qualifications.

For students who are disabled, as defined under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 (see also Argyll College UHI Equality and Diversity Policy), assessment arrangements might be the 'reasonable adjustments' required to compensate for a substantial disadvantage, but there may be other unique adjustments that need to be made to meet their individual needs.

Argyll College UHI has a responsibility to all enrolled students, irrespective of the Awarding Body, to ensure that all alternative assessment arrangement requests are considered (where the request is supported by suitable and sufficient evidence of need). Where assessment arrangement needs have been identified, the College will provide any suitable assessment arrangements to students.

The Equality Act 2010 requires that reasonable adjustments are made where a candidate who is disabled within the meaning of the Act would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a candidate who is not disabled.

2 Scope

Assessment arrangements allow candidates who are disabled, and/or have been identified as having additional support needs, appropriate arrangements to access the assessment without compromising its integrity. Candidates are individuals with a diverse range of needs and it is important that the individual needs of each candidate is assessed when considering the most appropriate assessment arrangements.

Argyll College UHI recognises that reasonable adjustments or special considerations may be required at the time of assessment where:

- Learners have a permanent disability or specific learning needs
- Learners have a temporary disability, medical condition or learning needs
- Learners are indisposed (e.g. sudden onset illness) at the time of the assessment

The provision for reasonable adjustments and special consideration arrangements is made to ensure that learners receive recognition of their achievement so long as the equity, validity and reliability of the assessments can be assured. Such arrangements are not concessions to make assessment easier for learners, nor advantages to give learners a head start.

There are 2 ways in which access to fair assessment can be maintained:

- Through reasonable adjustments and
- Through special considerations.

It is important to recognise that some adjustments may not be possible for some qualifications.

For candidates who have additional support needs as defined under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009, an assessment arrangement might be required to meet their identified assessment needs and allow them an equal opportunity to demonstrate their attainment.

Not all candidates with assessment needs will be disabled and, conversely, not all disabled candidates will necessarily require assessment arrangements to enable them to access an assessment and demonstrate their attainment. In all cases, it is the individual assessment needs of candidates that should be the basis for the provision of an assessment arrangement.

3 Principles

The principles that this policy is based on are:

3.1 **Candidates for whom assessment arrangements are provided should potentially have the ability to achieve the national standards, but be unable to do so using the published assessment arrangements for the particular qualification.**

It is important that candidates are entered for a qualification at the right level, given their general level of ability and attainment. Assessment arrangements are designed to enable candidates' access to an assessment to allow them to demonstrate their attainment.

For example, a candidate may have difficulty reading the questions in an assessment. Assessment arrangements, such as the use of a computer with text reading software, may alleviate this disadvantage.

Any adjustment to an assessment must not give the learner an unfair advantage or disadvantage over other learners. The qualification of a learner who had an adjustment to an assessment must have the same credibility as that of any other learner.

3.2 **The integrity of the qualification must be maintained.**

Assessment arrangements must be considered in the context of the assessment standards or competence standards for each qualification. Assessment arrangements must not compromise these standards or undermine the integrity of the qualification. Any qualification that is awarded must provide a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills, understanding and competence of the holder.

For example, it is not possible for a candidate to use a human scribe in a National Literacy Unit, where writing skills are being explicitly assessed.

Any adjustment to an assessment must not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification or the requirements of the assessment strategy. Competence standards should not be altered.

3.3 Assessment arrangements should be tailored to meet a candidate's individual needs.

The individual needs of candidates should be the basis for the provision of an assessment arrangement. As part of the overall support offered to them, candidates should have an assessment arrangements plan, considered subject by subject, with no assumption that the same kind or level of support will be required in every case.

For example, a candidate with writing difficulties might not be at any disadvantage in a multiple-choice question paper in the National 5 Chemistry examination. However, the same candidate might have difficulties producing a written essay in the National 5 History examination.

There should be documented evidence of a candidate's assessment needs.

3.4 Assessment arrangements should reflect, as far as possible, the candidate's normal way of learning and producing work.

The method used to facilitate access to an assessment will generally, though not always, be the method that has been used in the learning environment. For example, if a candidate with dyslexia normally uses a computer with a spellchecker in class to overcome writing difficulties, this should be the assessment arrangement provided in the assessment. However, there may be situations where a candidate's particular way of working in the learning environment is not acceptable in an assessment.

For example, a candidate who has a profound speech and language impairment, and who normally has someone in class explaining words and terms, would not be allowed such support in the externally-set examination question paper. For this reason, it is very important that candidates are aware of, and have practice in, working in a way that reflects what is going to be allowed as support.

Adjustments to assessment should not compensate the learner for lack of knowledge and skills. The learner must be able to cope with the content of the assessment and be able to work at the level required for the assessment.

All learners' performance must be assessed against set standards. These standards cannot be altered, but it may be possible to change the delivery or process of assessment so that each learner has an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do.

4 Definitions

4.1 Reasonable Adjustment:

A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation. It is made to an assessment for a qualification to enable a disadvantaged learner to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding of the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the integrity of what needs to be assessed, but may involve:

- Changing usual assessment arrangements, for example allowing a learner extra time to complete the assessment activity,

- Adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in Braille,
- Providing assistance during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader,
- Re-organising the assessment room, such as removing visual stimuli for an autistic learner,
- Changing the assessment method, for example from a written assessment to a spoken assessment,
- Using assistive technology, such as screen reading or voice activated software,
- Providing the mechanism to have different colour backgrounds to screens for onscreen assessments or asking for permission for copying to different coloured paper for paper based assessments before the assessment activity takes place.
- Providing and allowing different coloured transparencies with which to view assessment papers

The use of a reasonable adjustment will not be taken into consideration during the assessment of a learner's work.

These principles should be followed when making decisions about a learner's need for adjustments to assessment. The adjustment:

- Should not invalidate the assessment requirements of the qualification
- Should not give the learner an unfair advantage
- Should reflect the learner's normal way of working
- Should be based on the individual need of the learner

Argyll College UHI has a responsibility to ensure that the process of assessment is robust and fair and allows the learner to show what they know and can do without compromising the assessment criteria.

4.2 Special Consideration

Special consideration can be applied after an assessment if there was a reason the learner may have been disadvantaged during the assessment.

For example, special consideration could apply to a learner who had temporarily experienced:

- an illness or injury
- some other event outside of their control and which has had, or is likely to have had, a material effect on that learner's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment.

Special consideration should not give the learner an unfair advantage. The learner's result must reflect his / her achievement in the assessment and not necessarily his / her potential ability.

5 Process for requests (alternative assessment arrangements and/or special consideration and/or reasonable adjustments)

- The tutor/centre staff will liaise with the learner to identify the nature of assessment support required.
- The tutor will, at the earliest possible opportunity, and no later than 14 December of each year, inform the Head of Student Services of the identified need for additional assessment support.
- For SQA external exams, all students registering on an exam will be asked to complete an Exam Registration form, which asks for additional support requirements. The Quality Officer will send this form to all Tutors to give to their students with instructions for it to be returned no later than 14 December of each year.
- The Head of Student Services will liaise with the tutor and arrange for relevant diagnostic tests to be carried out.
- The tutor/Head of Student Services and Centre staff will liaise with students to arrange supporting documentation to support the request for alternative assessment arrangements. This documentation will include:
 - Confirmation of medical conditions from the learner's Doctor (where this is appropriate)
 - Diagnostic evidence, where appropriate
 - Two suitable and sufficient pieces of assessment evidence, annotated by the tutor, that show learner results with and without support
- The Head of Student Services will ensure that each request is supported by a checklist that includes details of the individual learner, examination diet, nature of support required, consultation with tutors/other staff, consultation with learners and supporting evidence.
- The Approval for Support is granted by the Head of Student Services once due process has been followed and all evidence supports the assessment arrangements request.
- The Quality Officer (who is also the SQA Co-ordinator), in conjunction with the Head of Student Services, will arrange a verification meeting, prior to the awarding body deadline for requests to be registered. Requests will be approved or rejected at this meeting.
- The Head of Student Services will record minutes of the internal verification meeting. The Quality Officer (who is also the SQA Co-ordinator) and the Head of Student Services will keep signed minutes of the verification meeting.

The Head of Student Services will register all approved requests with the following awarding bodies by the required deadline:

5.1 SQA Internal assessments

There is no requirement to submit a request to SQA for the provision of assessment arrangements in an internal assessment, provided that the assessment arrangement does not compromise the assessment/competence standards.

However, if there is any doubt about whether a candidate is eligible for a particular assessment arrangement, or whether the assessment arrangement compromises the assessment or competence standards, the college SQA Co-ordinator (who is also the Quality Officer) will seek advice from SQA. This will be done before the candidate undertakes the assessment. The SQA Co-ordinator (who is also the Quality Officer) will submit full details of the candidate's disability and/or additional support needs, the proposed assessment arrangement, and the Unit assessment being undertaken, to the SQA Assessment Arrangements team by e-mailing aarequests@sqa.org.uk

External assessments

For all external assessments, requests are submitted by the Head of Student Services, using the Assessment Arrangement Request Submission software (AAR). Requests for assessment arrangements in external assessments are submitted by the published deadline dates, which are published in the SQA Co-ordinators guide ('key dates' section). This is particularly important in relation to the production of adapted question papers. Due to the processes involved in the production and quality assurance of these papers, it is essential that requests are submitted as early as possible, and that the modification required is correctly identified.

5.2 Other Awarding Bodies - BCS

The BCS Centre Manager (who is also the Quality Officer) and/or Head of Student Services will complete the Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration request form including relevant supporting information, which will include:

- The learner's name and BCS registration number
- The nature of, and rationale for, the request
- Any supporting information/evidence (e.g. medical evidence or a statement from the invigilator or any other appropriate information)

Learners can, in exceptional circumstances, make requests direct to BCS.

Requests for reasonable adjustments will be submitted no later than 10 days before an assessment.

Requests for special consideration will be submitted as soon as possible after the assessment and not later than 5 working days after the assessment. Requests for special consideration may only be accepted after the results of assessment have been released in the following circumstances:

- An application has been overlooked at the centre and the oversight is confirmed by the
- BCS Centre Manager (who is also the Quality Officer).
- 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 onscreen assessments where results are immediately available, it should be noted that a successful application of a special consideration will not necessarily change a learner's result.

Advice will be sought from BCS in any case where there is any doubt if an adjustment is needed or how it should be applied.

6 Responsibilities

This policy and procedure applies to all college staff and other relevant individuals who interact with students.

Academic and support staff have a responsibility to:

- Identify a student's assessment need and compile relevant documentation to evidence a clear requirement for additional support.

The Head of Student Services is responsible for receiving and processing requests from academic staff for alternative assessment support and ensuring requests are properly evidenced. The Head of Student Service will:

- Verify the student's need for the assessment arrangement
- Determine the most appropriate assessment arrangement

The Quality Officer (who is also the SQA Co-ordinator), in liaison with the Head of Student Services, will:

- Authorise the submission of a request for an assessment arrangement in an external assessment.

At all stages, professional dialogue is essential between teaching staff, learning support staff, those responsible for quality assurance and those responsible for submitting requests for assessment arrangements to SQA or any other awarding body. In some cases, other key professionals, such as therapists, specialist teachers or educational psychologists, may also be involved.

However, in all cases, the college Quality Officer (who is also the SQA Co-ordinator and BCS Centre Manager) will work closely with staff in learning support to ensure they are aware of the assessment arrangements that may be required for candidates.

7 Audit requirements for Awarding Bodies

Argyll College UHI will provide, on request, evidence of the following for audit purposes:

- Evidence of the centre's internal verification meetings,
- Evidence that students have agreed to the provision of assessment arrangements and to their details being disclosed to SQA, and any other relevant awarding bodies.
- Evidence of student's disabilities/additional support needs and how this affects them in the learning and teaching situation,
- Evidence of a student's need for current assessment support, how this is met, and how it relates to the arrangements being requested or provided,
- Evidence that varying needs across subjects have been taken into account
- Evidence for specific types of assessment arrangements (e.g. scribe),
- Evidence of a system for the management of SQA (and any other relevant awarding body) assessment arrangements which is supported by senior management.

8 Retention of Evidence

Argyll College UHI is required to retain all appropriate records and documentation in accordance with relevant Awarding Body regulations. This is detailed in the Argyll College UHI Retention Policy.

9 References

- **SQA Assessment Arrangements – accessed at:**
http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/AA_AssessmentArrangementsExplained.pdf
- **BCS Policy documents – accessed at:** <https://tcforum.ecdl.co.uk/tcforum/secure-acf/news-information/document-library/policy-documents>
- **UHI Academic Standards and Quality Regulations – accessed at:**
<https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/about-uhi/governance/policies-and-regulations/regulations/regulations-2015-16>
- **Argyll College UHI Equality and Diversity Policy – accessed at:**
https://www.argyll.uhi.ac.uk/about-us/structure-and-policies/policy-docs/equality_and_diversity_edp1

10 Review

This policy will be reviewed every 4 years or sooner if changes in linking policies or awarding bodies necessitate amendments.