

SIGTA LTD

Fair Access to Assessment Policy

<u>Date</u>	<u>Version</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Checked</u>	<u>Approved</u>
15-01-26	2.0	Annual review of this policy review completed.		
		Minor updates to format and content (format).	Mike Driscoll	Alison Foxwell
		Introduction of version control table to record amendments made.	IQA - SIGTA	CEO -SIGTA

Next revision due: 15-01-27

Introduction and Purpose

SIGTA Limited aims to provide fair access to learning and assessment for all learners engaged in programmes managed by SIGTA. When applicable, learning and assessment practices will be fully compliant with the guidance and requirements defined by awarding and regulatory bodies under whose approval SIGTA operates.

SIGTA is committed to complying with all current and relevant legislation in relation to the development and delivery of its services, including, but not limited to, the Equality Act 2010.

SIGTA will make reasonable adjustments where learning and assessment arrangements would put a learner with a disability at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a learner who is not disabled.

SIGTA will uphold the rights of learners and staff relating to their protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, and the special educational needs of learners. SIGTA will provide equal reasonable adjustments and special considerations for all learners registered on SIGTA programmes.

Exam/Assessment and Fair Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for learners based on evidence of their need and normal ways of working. Assessments and examinations should be a fair test of a learner's knowledge and what they're able to do, however, for some learners the usual format of assessment may not be suitable. In such cases a reasonable adjustment to the normal methods of assessment can often be made without undermining the integrity of the assessment.

SIGTA staff are required to consult current awarding body guidance and regulations to determine the scope of reasonable adjustments that can be made. Awarding body requirements will define reasonable adjustments that can be applied at the discretion of SIGTA and those that require awarding body pre-approval. If clarification is required, the awarding body must be consulted before applying any adjustment.

It is recognised that reasonable adjustments or special considerations may be required at the time of assessment/examination where:

- Learners have a permanent disability or specific educational needs
- Learners have a temporary disability, medical condition or learning needs
- Learners are indisposed at the time of the assessment.

The provision for reasonable adjustments and special consideration arrangements are 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.

The normal ways in which access to fair assessment can be maintained is through reasonable adjustments and special considerations.

Definition of a Reasonable Adjustment

A reasonable adjustment is any action/step that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or learning difficulty that places the learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment/examination situation. Adjustments are made to an assessment/examination for a qualification to enable a learner to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding at the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification.

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

- changing usual assessment/examination arrangements, for example allowing a learner extra time to complete the assessment activity.
- adapting assessment/examination materials, such as providing materials in braille
- providing assistance during assessment/examination, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader
- re-organising the assessment/examination room, such as removing visual stimuli for an autistic learner.
- changing the assessment/examination 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/examinations or asking for permission for copying to different coloured paper for paper-based assessments.
- providing and allowing different coloured transparencies with which to view examination papers.
- supervised rest breaks and the use of a prompter

Reasonable adjustments are applied by SIGTA (Where appropriate and allowed by the awarding body) or applied for and approved in writing by the awarding body before the assessment/examination activity takes place. Reasonable adjustments constitute an arrangement to give the learner access to the programme, they will not be taken into consideration during the assessment/examination of a learner's work.

SIGTA and awarding bodies are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of giving access. What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances, cost implications and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment. Other factors, such as the need to maintain competence standards and health and safety, must also be taken into consideration.

Definition of Special Considerations

A special consideration is applied after an assessment if there was a reason the learner may have been disadvantaged during the assessment/examination.

Reasons for special consideration could be:

- temporary illness, injury, or adverse circumstances at the time of the assessment/examination
- a learner who misses part of the assessment/examination due to circumstances outside their control and are made where this has had, or is likely to have had, a material effect on that learner's ability to take an assessment/examination or demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment/examination.
- reasonable adjustments agreed in advance were inappropriate or inadequate.
- posthumous certification

A Special consideration must not give a learner an unfair advantage; neither should its use cause any party to be misled regarding a learner's achievements. The learner's results must reflect their achievement in the assessment/examination and not their potential ability.

A Special consideration, if successful, may result in a small post-assessment/examination adjustment to the mark of the learner. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances and reflect the difficulty faced by the learner.

A learner will not be eligible for special consideration if:

- no 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/examination 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.

In some circumstances, for example for on-demand assessments/examinations, it may be more appropriate to offer the learner an opportunity to take the assessment/examination at a later date, rather than considering the use of a special consideration request.

It must be noted that special considerations cannot be applied in all assessment/examination situations. Awarding body guidance and requirements must be fully consulted, and the advice of the awarding body sought if further clarification is required before making a reasonable adjustment/special consideration request.

Process for requesting or applying Reasonable Adjustments and/or Special Considerations

SIGTA learners should be fully involved in any decisions about reasonable adjustments. As the needs and circumstances of each learner are different, SIGTA staff must consider requests for reasonable adjustments on a case-by-case basis. In many instances learner initial assessment and interviewing will indicate the possible requirement for the application of reasonable adjustments.

The two routes through which a learner may be granted a reasonable adjustment to assessment/examination are:

- Using reasonable adjustments permitted by the awarding body applied at SIGTA's discretion.
- Applications made by SIGTA to the awarding body.

SIGTA staff must consult current awarding body guidance and regulatory material to determine the scope and application process for the use of reasonable adjustments.

No reasonable adjustment will be applied without the knowledge of SIGTA's designated Assessment Centre Co-ordinator, who will sign and date the application request to confirm approval. Records of centre applied reasonable adjustments must be maintained for inspection. These records must be kept for a minimum of 3 years following the assessment to which they apply, or longer if specifically required by the awarding body.

Reasonable adjustment requests, requiring awarding body pre-approval, made on behalf of a SIGTA learner must be made through the SIGTA Assessment Centre Co-ordinator. They will process the application and supporting evidence in accordance with awarding body guidelines and maintain compliant records.

Supporting evidence for reasonable adjustments may include but is not limited to:

- medical letter
- SEN statement
- Education, Health and Care Plan
- Specific Learning Difference (SpLD) Reports
- individual education/learning plans or development/support plans

Supporting evidence for special considerations may include but is not limited to:

- original medical certificate
- letter from an appropriate medical professional
- letter from an appropriate independent individual/authority
- death certificate or a letter confirming the death

All evidence must:

- be on headed paper
- dated
- contain the Name of the author
- be signed
- be no older than 12 years
- contain details of the learners disability or requirements or statement of events

Applications for reasonable adjustments must be processed and approved (Confirmed by the SIGTA Assessment Centre Co-ordinator) before the reasonable adjustment is applied to the learner in the examination or assessment.

Notice Period

SIGTA staff requesting reasonable adjustments on behalf of a SIGTA learner must provide all supporting evidence to the Assessment Centre Co-ordinator as soon as the need for the adjustment is identified. In all but exceptional circumstances this must be a minimum duration specified by the awarding body, plus 10 days for internal processing. If by exception this timescale cannot be met, the Assessment Centre Co-ordinator must be consulted and will liaise with the awarding body to identify the appropriate course of action.

Requests for special consideration must be submitted as soon as possible after the assessment to allow the Assessment Centre Co-ordinator to inform the awarding body, no later than 7 working days after the assessment. Requests for a special consideration may only be accepted after the results of the examination have been released in the following circumstances:

- application has been overlooked at the centre and the oversight is confirmed by the Centre Coordinator
- 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 examination, even though the problem revealed itself only after the assessment
- for onscreen assessments where results are immediately available

It must be noted that a successful application for a special consideration will not necessarily change a learner's result.

Actions to Implement and Develop Policy

SIGTA Management will, at the appropriate time, introduce new members of staff to this policy and promote its use during staff meetings and training sessions.

National Guidance

- Ofqual Guidance on Accessible Assessments (UK): Statutory guidance for awarding bodies on using clear language, consistent layouts, and neutral source materials to avoid disadvantaging students.
- Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Regulations (UK): Provides the industry-standard [Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#) manual used by most UK exam centres.
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Specifically Advice and Guidance: Assessment, which expects providers to support all students in achieving successful outcomes through fair practices.

Communication and training for staff

SIGTA is committed to the continuous professional development of its employees.

We believe that investing in staff training is essential for maintaining excellence, fostering innovation, and ensuring a safe, productive workplace. The company will provide relevant learning opportunities to enhance job-specific skills, meet regulatory requirements, and support long-term career growth, ensuring all employees have the tools necessary to succeed in their roles.



Please refer to our SIGTA Training and Development Policy for more information.

