

# Access to Fair Assessment Policy and Procedures

## Policy Statement

Laser Learning Awards (LASER)<sup>1</sup> is committed to providing a high quality service and to maintaining the highest standards for its learners, centres, and other stakeholders. This includes ensuring that, where reasonable, assessments are accessible to learners who have particular needs and may require reasonable adjustments where appropriate, and that special consideration is given to learners who experience unexpected temporary circumstances which may affect them at the time of assessment.

These reasonable adjustments and special considerations, whilst supporting the needs of individual learners, must also ensure that in order to maintain the integrity of awards, assessment continues to be valid, reliable and consistent and demonstrate achievement of all learning outcomes against the stated assessment criteria, at the stated level.

## Policy Relevance

This policy applies to any LASER regulated and unregulated qualification or provision, and to any learner who has a permanent or temporary impediment to accessing planned assessment, but who is potentially capable of achieving the qualification or provision with suitable support/consideration. The policy sets out the principles and procedures which should be followed in each case, and gives some examples of what may be 'reasonable'.

## Policy Responsibility and Review

This policy is the responsibility of the Quality Manager, and will be reviewed by December 2022 at the latest.

## Reasonable Adjustments

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.

Reasonable adjustments are made for individual learners, based on each learner's individual needs.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the reliability and validity of the assessment outcomes, 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 specific assistance for the learner to access the assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader.
- Re-organising the assessment room, such as removing visual stimuli for a learner with autism.
- 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.

Reasonable adjustments must be approved or set in place before the assessment activity takes place, to enable the learner to access the assessment. The work produced by the learner must be marked in the same way as the work of other assessed learners; 'allowances' cannot be made once the assessment is complete, and ad hoc, unapproved adjustments may not be put in place.

Awarding organisations and centres are required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of giving access. What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances, the impact of the disability on the individual, cost implications, and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment. Other factors, such as the need to maintain competence, must also be taken into consideration.

Different types of assessment make different demands on the learner and will influence whether reasonable adjustments will be needed and the kind of reasonable adjustment which may be put in place.

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<sup>1</sup> All references to LASER in this document also refer equally to Trident Awards, which is the brand name for LASER's work in the security industry.

The adjustments that may be appropriate for a particular assessment will depend upon:

- The specific assessment requirements of the units and/or qualification.
- The type of assessment.
- The particular needs and circumstances of the individual learner.

### **Assessments not taken under examination conditions**

These types of assessments may include, for example, coursework, set assignments which are researched in the learner's own time, assessment activities devised by the centre or LASER, and assessments where the learner has to collect evidence in order to demonstrate competence. With these types of assessments, the centre has greater flexibility to be responsive to an individual learner's needs and to choose an assessment activity and method that will allow the learner to demonstrate attainment.

In these types of assessments, the centre may allow the learner to present their answers or evidence in any format that is valid, reflects the learner's normal way of working, and enables him or her to meet the specified assessment criteria, unless specifically stated. For example, answers or evidence do not have to be in written format unless specified by the assessment criteria. Centres are advised to adopt a flexible approach in identifying alternative ways of achieving the assessment requirements where learners have particular needs, and may contact the LASER to discuss alternative arrangements that may be appropriate for specific situations.

Any adjustments made must:

- Meet the requirements of the specifications regardless of the process or method used.
- Enable the assessment criteria to be assessed, and moderated or verified.
- Ensure the assessment methods are as rigorous as those used with other learners.
- Be consistent with the learner's normal way of working.
- Not change the level of the achievement required.
- Not give the learner an unfair advantage.

Assessment criteria may not be amended, re-worded or omitted.

The learner may use any mechanical or electronic aids which are available in the workplace or which are commercially available in order to demonstrate competence. For example, these may include specially adapted equipment or assistive technology.

The centre is required to provide the necessary resources to enable a learner with access-related needs to produce evidence of developing the portfolio. Where evidence is produced in Braille or using sign language on video, it is the centre's responsibility to ensure that a person who is suitably qualified in Braille or sign language is available to translate the material for the internal and external quality assurers.

Where reasonable adjustments are put in place for assessments taken under non-examination conditions, the centre should check whether approval needs to be obtained from LASER. It is advised that this is done at as early a stage as possible. The centre should ensure that they adhere to LASER requirements for record keeping and supporting evidence.

The learner must achieve all the required units to gain a LASER regulated/unregulated qualification. It may sometimes be the case that some full qualifications are inaccessible because of a learner's inability to demonstrate competence in all parts of the qualification. In these cases, unit certification will be available, however the practicalities, feasibility and appropriateness of being able to vary the assessment evidence and implement an appropriate method of obtaining evidence should be taken into account by the centre when the learner is first considered for a programme.

### **Assessments taken under examination conditions**

Where the method of assessment is more rigidly determined, such as for assessments taken under specified conditions including written/multiple choice examinations marked by LASER, there may be a greater need for adjustments to standard assessment arrangements in order to enable access.

Approval must always be sought by the centre from LASER as soon as possible before the examination session. Examination sessions with reasonable adjustments must not be carried out until approval has been given by LASER, otherwise the examination is likely to be invalidated.

### Identifying learners who are eligible for reasonable adjustments

Below are some examples of learner needs that may require adjustments in order for the learner to access assessments. This list is not exhaustive and it should be noted that some learner needs may fall within more than one category.

- Communication and interaction needs.
- Cognition and learning needs.
- Sensory and physical needs.
- Behavioural, emotional and social needs.

A learner will be eligible for reasonable adjustments only if their performance during an assessment is likely to be substantially affected by a particular impairment, *and* their performance in the particular assessment can be improved by an adjustment which can reasonably be implemented. Many of these learners will be defined as being disabled under the Equality Act 2010, however a learner does not necessarily have to be registered, or defined as, disabled to be entitled to reasonable adjustments to assessment. Conversely, not every learner who is disabled will necessarily need or be entitled to an adjustment to assessment. Similarly, a learner with a Statement of Special Educational Need or Education Health and Care (EHC) plan does not automatically qualify for reasonable adjustments, as the reasons for this may have limited or no effect on achievement in the assessment. The demands of the units and qualification must always be specifically considered in the context of the individual learner's difficulties and needs.

An adjustment to assessment should only be considered where the difficulty experienced places the learner at a substantial disadvantage, in comparison with persons who are not affected by the impairment. Where the difficulty is minor, the centre should assist the learner by offering help with study and assessment skills.

### Identifying learners' needs

The centre has a responsibility to ensure it has effective internal procedures for identifying learners' needs, and that these procedures comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. In order to ensure that any adjustment to assessment will only provide the learner with the necessary assistance without giving them an unfair advantage over others, the centre must be clear about the extent to which the learner is affected by the disability or difficulty.

A centre should:

- Identify those learners who are having difficulties or are likely to have difficulties accessing assessment.
- Identify whether reasonable adjustments may be needed.
- If so, secure evidence of each learner's specific needs, where necessary.
- Identify the appropriate adjustment in accordance with the LASER requirements and guidelines.
- Seek approval from LASER for each reasonable adjustment proposed.

Where the centre can verify evidence of the disability or difficulty and where the implications are clear, such as for a learner with physical difficulties, profound hearing impairment or who are registered as blind or partially sighted, the centre does not necessarily need to provide further evidence of these physical difficulties.

Where the implications of the difficulty are not obvious, such as for learning difficulties, mental health difficulties, or dyslexia, the centre must provide evidence of the impairment and its effect on the learner's functioning. Any of the following types of evidence (which is not an exhaustive list) may be acceptable, depending on the circumstances:

- Evidence of assessment of the learner's needs in relation to the particular assessment, made within the centre, only by staff suitably qualified to do so and with competence and responsibility in this area. If necessary, external experts may be called upon to assess the learner. This evidence should include a full identification and explanation of the learner's difficulties and needs, an indication of how the centre plans to meet the learner's needs, and an explanation of how the learner can cope with the level and content of the assessment. The evidence must be clear, detailed, complete, and documented for audit purposes. Information from previous centres attended by the learner may also be included.
- History of reasonable adjustments for assessment for the same learner within the same centre. This should

include evidence of LASER's approval of previous reasonable adjustments for the same learner, and for the same assessment methods.

- Written evidence produced by independent, authoritative, specialists. This would usually take the form of medical, psychological or professional reports or assessments, such as those compiled by a medical doctor, or the British Dyslexia Association. These reports must state the name, title and professional credentials of the person who wrote the report. The report should set out the diagnosis, the nature of the difficulty, and the extent to which the learner is affected by the difficulty, including the effects of any medication that the learner may be taking. In cases where it might be expected that there could be changes in the way the learner is affected by the difficulty, there will have to be recent and relevant evidence of assessments and consultations carried out by an independent expert.

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that all applications for reasonable adjustments are based on the individual needs of the learner and that the evidence in support of the application is sufficient, reliable and valid. A centre should maintain records of all cases for audit purposes and to monitor the effectiveness of the reasonable adjustments which have been made

### Approval

In some cases, LASER may permit the centre to implement reasonable adjustments without seeking prior permission. LASER will require the centre to report back when they have permitted reasonable adjustments. The centre should declare that the information provided for LASER is accurate and that the adjustments to assessment have been made in accordance with LASER's guidance. The declaration should be signed and dated by a member of the centre staff who has formally been given delegated authority for this by the Head of Centre.

For all other reasonable adjustments, the centre must apply to and gain approval from LASER, using the standard LASER form, before the reasonable adjustments is implemented.

See below for different types of reasonable adjustments, which types may be implemented by the centre without LASER approval, and which types require LASER approval in advance.

Where approval is required, the application must always be made by the centre on behalf of the learner. A separate form should be completed for each learner and submitted by the deadline stipulated by the LASER. It should be noted that applications received after the deadline may not be processed in time for the learner to take the assessment. The application must be signed and submitted by a member of the centre staff with the appropriate authority, which will usually only be either the head of centre, or the head of quality.

### Types

The table below lists the most commonly requested adjustments to standard assessment arrangements, with some notes. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list and centres are advised to contact LASER to discuss alternative ways of accessing assessment for particular situations where appropriate.

Not all the adjustments to assessments listed will be reasonable, permissible or practical in every situation. The learner may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all units and qualifications. Some learners may need a single adjustment, whilst others may require a combination of several adjustments.

### Records

Centres must keep records of each reasonable adjustment submitted to LASER, and the response from LASER, as well as all adjustments made which do not require LASER approval.

### Permissions table

The table below lists the most commonly requested adjustments to standard assessment arrangements. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list. At all times and in all circumstances, the centre is responsible for providing any facilities or equipment and ensuring it is fully functioning, and remains responsible for the security of all assessments and for ensuring that the validity of assessments is not in any way compromised by the implementation of reasonable adjustments.

*KEY: A: Reasonable adjustment permitted at the discretion of the centre, B: LASER approval required*

Reasonable adjustment	Notes	Internally set and internally assessed	Externally set and internally assessed	Externally set examination
Extra time	Usually only relevant to timed examinations	A	A	B
Supervised rest breaks	Learner and work must be supervised during the break Must not be deducted from assessment time	A	A	B
Changes in organisation of the assessment room		A	A	B
Separate accommodation within the centre	Usual examination conditions apply and separate invigilation must be arranged	A	A	B
Taking the assessment at an alternative venue	Usual examination conditions apply including invigilation	A	A	B
Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles, CCTV and OCR scanners	Learner should be familiar with how the aid works	A	A	B
Use of assistive technology	Learner should be familiar with how the technology works	A	B	B
Use of bilingual dictionaries and bilingual translation dictionaries		A	B	B
Assessment material in enlarged format		A	A	B
Assessment material in Braille	Centre responsible for accurate translation	A	B	B
Assessment material in BSL	Centre responsible for accurate translation	A	B	B
Assessment material on coloured paper		A	A	B
Assessment material in audio format		A	B	B
Use of ICT to present responses	Learner must have access only to those programmes (eg spell/grammar checker, voice activated software, speech reading software, etc) approved in advance by LASER Learner should be in a separate room with separate invigilation if use of computer may distract other learners Work must be saved frequently, preferably automatically	A	A	B
Responses using electronic recording devices	Learner should be in a separate room with separate invigilation if use of device may distract other learners	A	B	B
Responses in BSL		A	B	B
Reader	Reader must be fully briefed on their responsibilities and limits Learner should be in a separate room with separate invigilation	A	B	B
Scribe	Scribe must be fully briefed on their responsibilities and limits Learner should be in a separate room with separate invigilation	A	A	B
BSL interpreter	Interpreter must be suitably qualified/experienced in BSL	A	B	B

Reasonable adjustment	Notes	Internally set and internally assessed	Externally set and internally assessed	Externally set examination
	Interpreter must be fully briefed on their responsibilities and limits Learner should be in a separate room with separate invigilation			
Prompter	Prompter must be fully briefed on their responsibilities and limits Learner should be in a separate room with separate invigilation	A	B	B
Practical Assistant	Assistant must be fully briefed on their responsibilities and limits Learner should be in a separate room with separate invigilation	B	B	B
Transcriber	Transcriber must be fully briefed on their responsibilities and limits Learner should be in a separate room with separate invigilation	A	A	B

### Special Consideration

A special consideration may be requested when a one-off, unexpected, temporary event has taken place during an assessment event, which has or potentially could have affected the performance of one or more learners at the time of assessment.

Special consideration may be given to whole groups of learners where an event affects the whole group (such as a fire alarm going off during an assessment), or may be given to one individual learner (eg as a result of bereavement).

Further information and advice should be sought from LASER where necessary.

A learner who is fully prepared and present for a scheduled assessment may be eligible for special consideration if:

- Performance in an assessment is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the learner for example recent personal serious illness, accident, bereavement, or serious disturbance during the assessment, such as a fire alarm.
- Part of an assessment has been missed due to circumstances genuinely beyond the control of 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 is missed due to personal arrangements including holidays or unauthorised absence.
- Preparation for a component is affected by difficulties during the course, such as disturbances through building work, lack of proper facilities, changes in or shortages of staff, or industrial disputes.

Centres should note that, where an assessment requires the learner to demonstrate practical competence, and/or where criteria have to be met fully, and/or in the case of qualifications that confer a licence to practice, for example in the security sector, it may not be possible to apply special consideration.

In some circumstances, for example for on-demand assessments, it may be more appropriate to offer the learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date.

Special consideration should not give the learner an unfair advantage neither should its use cause the user of the certificate to be misled regarding a learner's achievements. The learner's result must reflect their achievement in the assessment, and not necessarily their potential ability.

### **Approval**

A centre should apply for special consideration using the standard LASER form. A separate form should normally be completed for each learner for each unit or qualification, however, in cases where a group of learners has been disadvantaged by a particular event (for example a fire alarm during an assessment) a single form should be submitted for the whole group, with a list of learners affected attached to the form.

Where the request is for an individual learner, the learner needs to supply appropriate evidence to the centre in support of special consideration. This may include medical evidence or a statement from the invigilator or any other appropriate information.

The application must be signed and submitted by a member of the centre staff with the appropriate authority, which will usually only be either the head of centre, or the head of quality.

The application for special consideration must be submitted as soon as possible after the assessment and not later than seven working days after the assessment.

If the application for special consideration is successful, the learner's performance will be reviewed in the light of available evidence. It should be noted that a successful application of special consideration will not necessarily change a learner's result.

### **Policy Approval**

Approved internally by Deputy CEO 17.10.2018

Approved externally by Quality Committee 02.11.2