

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration policy and Procedure

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1. Introduction

Param Qualifications is committed to ensuring that all learners are able to participate in assessment activities fairly and are given an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding. We recognise that learners come from varied backgrounds and may experience different challenges, including disabilities, health conditions, learning needs, or unexpected personal circumstances.

In some situations, standard assessment arrangements may unintentionally disadvantage certain learners. Where this occurs, Param Qualifications and its Delivery Centres will take proportionate and appropriate steps to reduce such disadvantage, while ensuring that assessment outcomes remain meaningful, reliable, and comparable.

This policy explains how reasonable adjustments and special considerations are identified, planned, applied, and reviewed. It also explains the limits of such arrangements, particularly where changes could affect assessment standards or fairness for other learners.

This policy operates alongside Param Qualifications' Safeguarding Policy. Where information disclosed through reasonable adjustment or special consideration requests indicates a potential safeguarding concern, the matter will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and internal reporting arrangements.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to clearly explain how Param Qualifications manages accessibility and fairness within assessment activities.

Specifically, this document aims to ensure that equality and inclusion are actively supported in practice, not just in principle. It provides clarity on how learners can be supported where genuine barriers exist, while also protecting the integrity of assessment decisions.

The policy also sets out clear expectations for Delivery Centres, Param Qualifications staff, and learners, so that requests are handled consistently, evidence is considered appropriately, and decisions are transparent and well-reasoned.

- Param Qualifications Ltd implements this policy within its wider Equality, Safeguarding and Data Protection frameworks.
- In applying reasonable adjustments and special consideration, the organisation operates in line with the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and relevant safeguarding requirements.
- Learner information associated with adjustment or special consideration requests is handled in accordance with applicable data protection legislation, including

Regulation (EU) 2016/679, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, to ensure that learner needs are considered in a fair, inclusive and secure manner.

3. Scope of Application

This policy applies across all Param Qualifications programmes and assessment activities and is relevant to three key groups.

3.1 Delivery Centres

Delivery Centres and their staff are required to follow this policy when supporting learners who may require a reasonable adjustment or special consideration. This includes situations where a learner has a permanent disability, a temporary illness or injury, a learning difficulty, or experiences an unexpected event that affects assessment performance.

3.2 Param Qualifications Staff

Staff involved in quality, assessment oversight, and decision-making are responsible for reviewing requests, approving or rejecting arrangements where required, maintaining records, and monitoring implementation.

3.3 Learners

This policy applies to all learners registered on Param Qualifications programmes who require support to access assessments fairly or who are affected by unforeseen circumstances at or around the time of assessment.

4. Key Definitions and Concepts

4.1 Reasonable Adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is a planned change to an assessment arrangement that is made to reduce disadvantage for a learner with a disability. Without such an adjustment, the learner would be placed at a significant disadvantage compared to other learners when attempting to demonstrate the required competence.

Reasonable adjustments typically relate to physical, sensory, or mental impairments that have a substantial and long-term impact on a learner's ability to carry out normal daily activities. An impairment is generally considered substantial where its effect is more than

minor or trivial, and long-term where it has lasted, or is expected to last, at least twelve months.

Examples of situations where a substantial disadvantage may exist include persistent difficulty reading or understanding written material in the learner's native language due to impairment, difficulty maintaining concentration, difficulty understanding simple verbal instructions, or physical limitations affecting the use of standard equipment such as a keyboard.

By contrast, minor spelling difficulties, low-level nervousness, difficulty reading very small print without magnification, or difficulty speaking a non-native language are not normally considered substantial disadvantages requiring adjustment.

4.2 Types of Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments may take many forms, depending on the learner's needs and the nature of the assessment. These may include providing assessment materials in alternative formats, adapting the physical environment, allowing additional time or rest breaks, using assistive technology, or providing specific forms of support such as a reader or scribe.

All adjustments must be considered carefully to ensure they improve access without altering the competence being assessed. Adjustments are intended to remove barriers, not to make the assessment easier or to give an unfair advantage.

4.3 Special Consideration

Special consideration refers to action taken when a learner is affected by a temporary condition or unexpected event that occurs at or around the time of assessment and has a material impact on performance.

Unlike reasonable adjustments, which are normally planned in advance, special consideration is reactive. It is used only where circumstances could not reasonably have been anticipated or controlled and where the learner's ability to complete the assessment or demonstrate attainment has been affected.

Examples include sudden illness, serious injury, bereavement, major disruption during assessment, or situations where previously agreed arrangements prove unsuitable on the day. Special consideration is not intended to compensate for long-term issues that should have been addressed through reasonable adjustments.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Delivery Centres

Delivery Centres play a key role in identifying learner needs and applying this policy effectively. Centres are expected to ensure that staff involved in assessment and learner support understand this policy and are able to guide learners appropriately.

Centres must discuss potential barriers with learners during induction wherever possible, gather appropriate evidence, and select adjustments that support access without lowering assessment standards. They must also maintain accurate records and retain these for a minimum of three years.

Delivery Centres are responsible for ensuring that any locally applied adjustment is based on clear evidence and aligns with this policy. They must also operate an effective appeals process so that learners can challenge decisions where necessary.

5.2 Param Qualifications

Param Qualifications is responsible for ensuring consistency and fairness in decision-making across all Delivery Centres. This includes reviewing requests that require internal approval, ensuring that equality principles are applied appropriately, and protecting the reliability and integrity of assessment outcomes.

Where a disadvantage cannot reasonably be removed without affecting assessment standards, Param Qualifications will record the justification for this decision and retain supporting evidence. Param Qualifications will ensure that decisions remain consistent with its organisational commitments relating to equality, safeguarding, fair access and data protection.

5.3 Learners

Learners are expected to engage with this policy responsibly. They must declare relevant conditions or needs as early as possible, provide supporting evidence when requested, and inform the Delivery Centre promptly if unexpected circumstances arise that may affect assessment performance.

6. Policy Principles and Decision-Making

Reasonable adjustments are normally agreed before the assessment takes place. Early planning allows appropriate support to be implemented in a controlled and consistent manner and avoids last-minute changes that could affect assessment integrity.

Whether an adjustment is considered reasonable depends on several factors, including the learner's needs, the effectiveness of the adjustment, practical feasibility, cost, and the impact on other learners.

Adjustments will not be approved where they compromise assessment security, undermine the validity of outcomes, require disproportionate resources, or provide unfair advantage. Assessment objectives and competence standards must not be changed.

7. Requests, Processes, and Timelines

Requests for reasonable adjustments should normally be submitted at least 30 working days before the assessment date. This allows sufficient time for review, clarification, and implementation.

Requests for special consideration must be submitted within 10 working days after the assessment has taken place. Special consideration cannot be applied where a reasonable adjustment has already addressed the same issue, and it cannot be applied cumulatively.

Mark or grade adjustments are considered only where the learner's result is borderline and the adjustment would change the final outcome. Group applications are accepted only in exceptional circumstances where all learners are affected in the same way.

8. Evidence Requirements

Evidence must always be appropriate, reliable, and sufficient. Where the impact of a condition is obvious and verifiable, additional evidence may not be required. Where the impact is not clear, independent professional evidence may be needed to demonstrate how the condition affects assessment performance.

The aim of evidence review is to ensure that support is proportionate and necessary, without creating unfair advantage.

9. Communication of Decisions

Param Qualifications will acknowledge receipt of requests promptly. Decisions relating to reasonable adjustments will be communicated within a defined timeframe, and outcomes relating to special consideration will be confirmed once assessment results are available.

Clear communication ensures transparency and allows Delivery Centres and learners to understand how decisions have been reached.

10. Posthumous Certification

In rare cases where posthumous certification is requested, the Delivery Centre must submit details of units and outcomes already achieved, along with those expected to be achieved. Requests must be authorised by the Delivery Centre Head, and supporting evidence may be required.

11. Appeals

Where a Delivery Centre disagrees with a decision made by Param Qualifications, a request for review may be submitted through the internal appeals process. This ensures that decisions can be reconsidered fairly and independently.

12. Monitoring and Record Keeping

Delivery Centres must maintain records of all reasonable adjustments and special consideration cases for audit and monitoring purposes. Records must be retained for at least three years.

Param Qualifications will periodically review implementation and effectiveness to ensure the policy continues to support fair assessment practice.

13. Review and Continuous Improvement

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective, reflects operational experience, and continues to support fairness, accessibility, and assessment integrity.

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14. ANNEX A – Reasonable Adjustments Matrix

Adjustment Type	Centre-managed Assessments(Assignments / Portfolio / Non-exam)	Time-controlled / Supervised Assessments	Key Conditions & Explanation
Extra Time	Delivery Centre may approve	Internal approval required	Extra time is used where a learner’s condition affects reading, processing, or response speed. The amount must reflect the actual impact. Up to 25% is commonly considered; more than this is only for exceptional cases. Unlimited extra time is not permitted as it would affect assessment comparability.
Supervised Rest Breaks	Delivery Centre may approve	Internal approval required	Rest breaks support learners who struggle with sustained concentration. Learner and work must remain supervised. Break time must not reduce assessment time and must not invalidate assessment requirements.
Mechanical / Electronic Aids	Delivery Centre may approve	Internal approval required	Includes adapted keyboards or devices. Learner must already be familiar with the aid. The aid must support access only and must not give unfair advantage or

			change what is being assessed.
Assistive Technology (screen readers, voice software)	Delivery Centre may approve	Internal approval required	Technology may help access or response recording. Centres must ensure it does not alter assessment intent. As technology evolves rapidly, guidance must be sought where impact is unclear. Extra time may be needed in some cases.
Bilingual Translation Dictionaries	Not permitted	Not permitted	Bilingual translation dictionaries are not allowed where assessment responses are expected in English, as this would change the nature of the assessment.
Enlarged Assessment Materials	Delivery Centre may approve	Internal approval required	Entire assessment must be accurately enlarged. Centres are responsible for security and completeness. For digital assessments, screen magnification and colour options may be used.
Assessment Materials in Braille	Internal approval required	Internal approval required	Braille must be accurate and complete. Not all visually impaired learners use Braille, so suitability must be confirmed. Centres are responsible for security and accuracy.

Language-modified Assessment Materials	Internal approval required	Internal approval required	General wording may be simplified for accessibility (e.g. deaf learners), but technical language must not be changed. Questions and expected answers must remain the same.
British Sign Language (BSL) - Materials or Responses	Internal approval required	Internal approval required	Learners may respond in BSL where appropriate. Written transcripts must be produced for marking and verification. Translators must be suitably qualified and records retained.
Coloured Paper / Screen Backgrounds	Delivery Centre may approve	Delivery Centre may approve	Used to reduce visual stress. Centres must ensure full assessment content is reproduced accurately. For digital assessments, learners should test settings in advance.
Assessment Materials in Audio Format	Delivery Centre may approve	Internal approval required	Audio recordings must accurately reflect assessment content. Centres are responsible for security and recording quality. Errors may disadvantage learners and must be avoided.
Electronic Recording of Responses	Delivery Centre may approve	Internal approval required	Learners may record responses electronically where writing/typing is a barrier. A written transcript must be

			produced and retained with the recording.
Responses in Braille	Delivery Centre may approve	Not applicable	Where responses are provided in Braille, an authenticated written transcript must be produced and retained for assessment records.
Reader	Delivery Centre may approve	Internal approval required	A reader may read assessment content or learner responses. The reader must not interpret or guide answers. Alternatives (software, electronic formats, BSL) should be considered first.
Scribe	Internal approval required	Internal approval required	A scribe records exactly what the learner dictates. Writing itself must not be the competence being assessed. Voice recognition may be used if it reflects normal practice.
Prompter	Delivery Centre may approve	Internal approval required	A prompter may refocus a learner with severe attention difficulties. The prompter must not assist with content. In some cases, rest breaks may be more appropriate.

Important Notes for Delivery Centres

- Adjustments must always be supported by evidence.

- Adjustments are intended to remove barriers, not to change assessment standards.
- Where there is any doubt, Delivery Centres must seek internal guidance before implementation.
- Records of all approved adjustments must be retained for a minimum of three years.

15. ANNEX B – Special Consideration Matrix

Allowance Level	Nature of Circumstances	Examples (Indicative, not exhaustive)	Key Guidance & Conditions
5% (Maximum – Exceptional cases only)	Extremely serious circumstances with major impact on assessment performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner terminal illness • Terminal illness of immediate family (parent, sibling, carer) • Death of immediate family shortly before assessment • Extremely serious crisis directly affecting the learner at the time of assessment 	This level is used only in rare and exceptional situations. Delivery Centres must be fully satisfied that the learner’s performance was significantly affected. Evidence is essential. Requests must not be submitted for ordinary or manageable situations.
4% (Very serious circumstances)	Very serious events likely to have a substantial effect on performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life-threatening illness (learner or immediate family) • Major surgery close to assessment date • Severe illness such as cancer • Very recent death of extended family • Severe or permanent injury at the time of assessment 	“Very recent” generally means within one month of assessment. Centres must be confident that the learner’s performance was materially affected and not merely inconvenienced.
3% (Serious circumstances – commonly applied)	Serious circumstances with clear impact on assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent traumatic experience (death of close friend or relative) • Flare-up of serious medical condition • Flare-up of mental health condition • Significant injury (e.g. broken limb) • Physical assault or serious distress before assessment 	“Recent” generally means up to four months before the assessment. Centres must ensure there is a clear link between the circumstance and reduced assessment performance.

2% (Moderate circumstances)	Temporary conditions or events affecting performance at assessment time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness on the day of assessment • Recovery from injury • Concussion • Effects of pregnancy (not pregnancy itself) • Extreme emotional distress on the assessment day 	This is the most commonly applied level. Normal exam stress alone does not qualify. Evidence may be required depending on the situation.
1% (Minor but valid circumstances)	Minor issues with limited but noticeable impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing noise disturbance during assessment • Illness of another learner causing disruption • Anxiety or stress requiring medical support • Hay fever or similar condition on assessment day • Minor administrative disruption 	This level applies only where there is a genuine impact. Trivial or everyday inconveniences must not be submitted for special consideration.

Important Rules for Applying Special Consideration

- Special consideration is not a substitute for reasonable adjustments.
- It must not be applied where the issue should have been addressed through prior reasonable adjustment.
- Allowances must not be cumulative (multiple percentages cannot be added together).
- Special consideration is considered only where the learner’s result is borderline and the allowance would change the overall outcome.
- If the learner has already passed clearly, or clearly failed, special consideration will not be applied.
- Group applications are accepted only in exceptional cases where all learners are affected in the same way.
- Requests for trivial or everyday issues must not be submitted.

Evidence Expectations

Delivery Centres must ensure that appropriate evidence is available where required.

Evidence should demonstrate:

- the nature of the circumstance, and
- how it affected the learner’s assessment performance.

Evidence must be proportionate to the allowance requested.

Closing Guidance

Special consideration exists to recognise genuine, temporary, and unforeseen difficulties, not to compensate for lack of preparation or ongoing issues. Decisions must always balance compassion with fairness and confidence in assessment outcomes.