

# **Access Arrangements Policy**

V2.1

## Introduction

This is version one of the Access Arrangements Policy and replaces all previous versions of the Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policies. This document is subject to regular revision and maintained electronically by its owner. Electronic copies are version controlled. Printed copies are not subject to this control.

Change history (V2.0) June 2024

Section	Change
Centre Responsibilities	Updated to ensure Centres report all adjustments and special considerations to SFEDI

Change history (V1.0))

Section	Change
All	Combined and updated Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policies and renamed as Access Arrangements Policy.

## Scope

This policy outlines SFEDI Award's arrangements for both Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations in relation to all qualifications which we make available. This policy applies across all qualifications. There is no specific or individual guidance relating to one or more particular qualification.

SFEDI Awards actively supports the policy of removing barriers to assessment that might disadvantage learners who have particular requirements or who experience special circumstances.

## Definitions

SFEDI Awards makes sure that learners who have particular requirements can demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding by making arrangements that will allow them to do this. Access arrangements are essentially modifications to the assessment or assessment conditions. These arrangements must not give an unfair advantage over other learners as the aim is to provide a level playing field for all. Nor may the arrangements undermine the integrity of our qualifications.

### Reasonable Adjustments

The regulatory definition of Reasonable Adjustment is:

*"An adjustment made to an assessment for a qualification so as to enable a disabled learner to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills and understanding to the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification".* Reasonable Adjustments are agreed **prior** to assessment.

### Special Considerations

The regulatory definition of Special Consideration is:

*“Consideration to be given to a learner who has temporarily experienced an illness or injury, or some other event outside of his or her control, which has, or is reasonably likely to have, materially affected the learner’s ability to:*

*(a) take an assessment, or*

*(b) demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment.”*

Special considerations are adjustments made to the marking or outcome of an assessment, **after** the assessment has taken place, when the learner was present or prepared for the assessment but who may have been disadvantaged by temporary illness, indisposition or other unforeseen circumstance, injury or adverse circumstances that came about at the time of the assessment.

It may not be possible to apply special considerations where:

- An assessment requires demonstration of a practical competence
- The assessment would not provide a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding being measured
- Units or qualifications confer licence to practice or other regulatory requirements
- To do so, would unfairly advantage or disadvantage learners

## Examples

An example could be by providing modified assessment material such as large print or Braille for visually impaired learners. Also Centres must give special consideration to learners who are affected by an unforeseen and temporary situation at the time of the assessment, e.g., illness or bereavement.

Examples of some of the most common situations can be found below.

Visual impairment and possible arrangements:

- Modified assessment paperwork with large print, Braille or Moon
- A reader
- A scribe (who takes dictation)
- Audio recording equipment
- A keyboard to produce typescript or raised type responses

Hearing impairment and possible arrangements:

- Communicators/interpreters
- Mechanical and electronic aids
- Induction loops

Physical impairment (these may be permanent or temporary) and possible arrangements:

- A reader/interpreter/amanuensis

- Extra time allowance
- Appropriate mechanical or electronic aids

Learning difficulties (specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia) and possible arrangements:

- Extra time allowance/extension
- Recording equipment
- An amanuensis and/or reader
- Appropriate audio visual aids

Other potential barriers to assessment such as:

- Wheelchair users (permanent or temporary)
- Temporary illness or accident
- Bereavement
- Domestic crisis
- Prescribed medication or medical treatment

### ***Workplace Constraints***

It is possible to consider alternative approaches for learners who do not have access to the appropriate workplace circumstances to complete work-based assignments. These can be scenario based assignments or work placements. These options may only be offered if there is no unfair advantage gained over other learners.

An application must be submitted to SFEDI Awards to approve alternatives such as this, prior to any assessment taking place.

## **Centre Responsibilities**

All Centres are required to have their own guidance on Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations and to ensure that all staff within the Centre are familiar with the content.

### ***Reasonable Adjustments***

It is important to note that Centres must undertake the recruitment and acceptance of learners onto any programmes with integrity. This is to ensure that not only does the qualification meet the learner's needs, but also to use their professional judgement to determine whether the learner has the potential to successfully complete the assessment and gain the qualification.

Centres are advised to consider any access arrangements that may be required before a learner is enrolled on a qualification. Access arrangements must not invalidate the learning outcomes or assessment criteria and where possible should reflect the learner's normal way of working within the centre or workplace. Centres must consult SFEDI Awards where an arrangement could invalidate the assessment.

Centres may need to make reasonable adjustments to the assessment environment to meet disability legislation so as not to discriminate against individuals. Health and Safety may be a consideration for some qualifications, and this should be taken into account when agreeing suitable access arrangements. Learners must not complete an assessment in a way that could put their safety, or the safety of others, at risk.

## Process

### ***How a learner may qualify for Reasonable Adjustments***

#### ***What Reasonable adjustments may be made***

Centres should consider the following points when determining suitable access arrangements:

- What arrangements are suitable for the qualification (e.g., consideration of verbal questioning rather than written questioning for a small proportion of assessment criteria within a unit)
- The learner's normal way of working (e.g., support normally given with learning or in the workplace)
- The details of how specific access arrangements would work in an assessment
- Whether an application to SFEDI Awards is required (e.g., consideration of verbal questioning rather than written questioning for whole units/large proportion of the qualification)
- Any assistance from SFEDI Awards that may be required to put the arrangements in place

The following access arrangements can be given without having to consult SFEDI Awards:

- Amplification equipment
- Bilingual dictionary
- Coloured overlays
- Low vision aid/magnifier
- Optical character reader (OCR) scanners
- Prompter
- Read aloud/reading pen
- Word processor

If a Centre wishes to use an arrangement that is not listed in this document, then the Centre should contact SFEDI Awards to discuss the arrangement further, before any assessment takes place. Arrangements will usually be permitted if they are appropriate for the assessment and for the learner. The fact that it is not listed does not mean it is not permitted. SFEDI Awards recognises that individual learners may have a range of specific access requirements and it is not practicable to list them all here.

Applications for reasonable adjustments (where a Centre cannot authorise these themselves), must be made in writing by the Head of Centre, per learner, per assessment and sent to SFEDI Awards before the assessment takes place. Details of the circumstances must be supplied. No applications will be accepted if submitted directly by learners, parents, or employers. Any request for reasonable adjustments should include the following information:

- A list of all SFEDI Awards qualifications for which the learner requires reasonable adjustments

- Units for which the learner requires reasonable adjustments (if not all)
- Specific details of the reasonable adjustment(s) being requested
- Any supporting evidence available to support with the request. This may be a medical report, a report from other professionals, (e.g., if a learner is dyslexic), a statement from the assessor etc. Applications which do not have the relevant documentary evidence cannot be considered.

SFEDI Awards will not make, or allow Centres to make, a reasonable adjustment which:

- Would prevent the qualification from providing a reliable indication of the extent to which a learner has the knowledge, skills and understanding being measured
- Would alter the knowledge, skills and understanding being measured which would contradict the way they are demonstrated; or
- Unfairly advantages or disadvantages any learner or group of learners

### ***How a learner may qualify for Special Considerations***

#### ***What Special considerations may be given***

The types of assessments that form part of the SFEDI Awards units and qualifications are not of the examination type assessment to be taken on a specific time and day. They are work-based assessments and assignments which are required to be submitted by a deadline. Any extra time allowance may be applied as extensions to the submission deadline agreed between the learner, Assessor, and Internal Quality Assurer. Because SFEDI Awards qualifications do not include any timed, knowledge or practical examinations, the need to request Special Considerations is minimised. Any flexibilities to assessment methods or timings are for the Centre to agree with the learner without compromising the integrity of the qualification requirements. For example, it may be more appropriate for a Centre to reschedule an assessment to enable fair access.

Special Consideration could include, but is not limited to:

- An adjustment to a learner's mark for a learner whose performance in an assessment has been affected (e.g., reconsidering a pass/fail result for a learner completing an assignment or work based activity where the learner was placed at a temporary disadvantage due to circumstances outside of their control)
- An adjustment to the arrangements for accessing an assessment for a learner who is not disabled, but whose ability to access the assessment has been affected by an injury or illness (e.g., a learner who was not able to complete an assignment or work based activity to the best of their ability due to undergoing medical treatment).
- Carrying over the fee for an assessment that the learner was unable to take to a later assessment opportunity (e.g., a request to extend a period of registration as the learner was unable to complete the assessments in the initial timeframe, due to ill health or domestic crisis).

Applications for special considerations must be made on a case by case basis and should be completed and sent to SFEDI Awards within 7 days of the assessment.

Applications for special consideration must be made in writing by the Head of Centre, per learner, per assessment and sent to SFEDI Awards. Details of the circumstances must be supplied. No applications will be acceptable if submitted directly by learners, parents, or employers. Any request for special considerations should include the following information:

- A list of all SFEDI Awards qualifications for which the learner requires special consideration
- Summary of the adverse circumstances that affected the learner
- Specific details of the special consideration being requested
- Any supporting evidence available to support with the request. This may be a medical report (e.g., if a learner has broken an arm and is unable to write/type), a statement from the assessor etc. Applications which do not have the relevant documentary evidence cannot be considered.

SFEDI Awards will not grant, or allow Centres to apply, any special considerations which:

- Would prevent the qualification from providing a reliable indication of the extent to which a learner has the knowledge, skills and understanding being measured
- Would alter the knowledge, skills and understanding being measured which would contradict the way they are demonstrated; or
- Unfairly advantages or disadvantages any learner or group of learners

Should a Centre disagree with SFEDI Awards decision to not grant Reasonable Adjustments or Special Considerations they should follow the SFEDI Awards Appeals Process.

## SFEDI Awards Responsibilities

SFEDI Awards ensures that its staff and any relevant contractors are made aware of their responsibilities for Access Arrangements under Equalities Law and that they maintain an up to date knowledge of any changes.

Our intention is to balance the need to ensure the award of a qualification gives a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding the learner has achieved, with the need to ensure as far as possible, that the learner is not disadvantaged because of an event outside of their control.

SFEDI Awards will consider each application for Access Arrangements on a case by case basis, taking account of all information supplied. The decision will be made by a member of SFEDI Awards who has the appropriate level of training and competence and who has had no previous involvement or personal interest in the matter.

SFEDI Awards will forward an Access Arrangement acknowledgement letter to the applicant within 2 working days. The outcome of any request for Access Arrangements will be sent to the applicant within 10 working days from receipt of an accurate and fully completed request. If further time is required due to the nature of the request, then we will notify all parties of the new timescales for completion. The outcome of the request will include any conditions and timescales which apply to the Access

Arrangements. For example, any reasonable adjustment for a learner who cannot write or type due to a broken arm will have a time limit.

SFEDI Awards applies clear and consistent criteria for determining each request so that cases are treated equitably. We will consider any request against the following.

- Based upon the individual needs of the learner
- The circumstances of the individual
- The impact of the situation on the individual
- The cost implications
- Other implications such as Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities legislation or licence to practise
- The practicality and effectiveness of any arrangement
- Not making the assessment any easier or more difficult
- Not give the learner an unfair advantage
- Be auditable and capable of being internally and externally quality assured
- Give a realistic indication to a potential employer of what the holder of the certificate can do

Should we not grant Access Arrangements, we will provide a clear reason to the Centre or learner and, where appropriate, suggest suitable alternative Access Arrangements to those requested.

To maintain ongoing responsibilities for Access Arrangements, SFEDI Awards engages with relevant stakeholders and representative groups (such as Centres) to make sure arrangements are fit for purpose. This could be through EQA sampling activities or other forums with Centres and Users of the qualifications.

A record of requests for Access Arrangements is maintained by SFEDI Awards including any change to assessment results, those requests authorised and not authorised. A log of appeals and complaints in relation to Access Arrangements is also maintained. This data will be analysed by Centre and by qualification in June and December of each year.

Through its quality assurance interventions SFEDI Awards monitors the Centre delegated authorisation of Access Arrangements and uses information, intelligence and data to identify, and prevent potential misuse. Where misuse is identified, SFEDI Awards will take action through its Centre risk rating (Quality Assurance Overview document) and its Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

Where Access to Assessment affects a whole Centre (e.g., damage to Centre premises) or a number of Centres (e.g., national pandemic) we will consider the need for consistency in similar cases, including between other relevant awarding organisations and in this instance, we will follow guidelines from Government and Regulators.



## Regulation

SFEDI Awards will take into consideration any intelligence, data or requests received from it's Regulators in it's review and evaluation of it's policy, procedures and processes regarding Access Arrangements. We will respond to any reasonable request from a Regulator for information and action regarding Access Arrangements. This will be within the timescales stipulated and, in a format, requested by the Regulator.

## Review Arrangements

We will review this policy as part of our annual self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer and learner feedback, changes in our practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies, changes in legislation, or trends identified from previous allegations.

In addition, this policy may be updated considering operational feedback to ensure our arrangements for dealing with Access Arrangements remain effective.

If you would like to feedback any views, please contact us via the details provided at the end of this policy.

## Other Related SFEDI Policies and Documents

- SFEDI Awards Appeals Policy
- SFEDI Awards Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- Qualification Specifications
- SFEDI Awards Quality Assurance Overview

## Contact Us

If you have any queries about the content of this policy, please contact our customer service department.

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