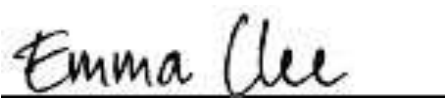




Access to Assessment Policy (Including Exam Invigilation)

Prepared by	Authorised by	Board Signature
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Purpose of this policy

Apprentify Group Limited ("the Organisation") is committed to promoting equality, inclusion and fair access to assessment for all learners. The Organisation recognises that some learners may require additional support or adjustments to ensure they have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding and to achieve their full potential.

This policy sets out the Organisation's approach to identifying, implementing and recording reasonable adjustments and special considerations in line with awarding body organisation requirements. The aim is to remove unnecessary barriers to assessment whilst maintaining the integrity, validity and reliability of qualifications.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the relevant awarding body organisation's policies, procedures and guidance for reasonable adjustments and special considerations. Where specific awarding body organisation requirements differ, the awarding body organisation's guidance will take precedence. Learners, staff and stakeholders should refer to the relevant awarding body organisation website for the most up-to-date guidance.

Scope

The Group Quality Manager is responsible for overseeing the development, review and implementation of this policy to ensure compliance with awarding body organisation requirements and relevant legislation. The Group Quality Manager has overall responsibility for compliance relating to access arrangements, reasonable adjustments, special considerations and assessment invigilation. Whilst operational duties may be delegated to the Quality lead, Teaching & Assessment Leads (TALs) and other authorised staff, overall accountability remains with the Group Quality Manager.

The Quality Lead is responsible for monitoring the effective implementation of this policy and ensuring that Trainers, Teaching & Assessment Lead (TALs) and Invigilators adhere to its requirements. This may include undertaking observations of assessment and invigilation activities, sampling assessment decisions and reviewing the application of reasonable adjustments and special considerations. Monitoring activities may also include learner file sampling, sampling of access arrangement decisions, invigilator observations, standardisation activities and internal quality audits.

Line Managers are responsible for working collaboratively with the Quality Lead, Trainers, Teaching & Assessment Lead (TALs) and other relevant stakeholders to identify learner needs and ensure appropriate arrangements are implemented to support fair access to assessment. Where reasonable adjustments or special considerations are required, Line Managers will assist in facilitating suitable arrangements in accordance with awarding body organisation requirements.

All staff involved in the delivery, assessment, quality assurance and administration of qualifications are responsible for understanding and complying with this policy and for ensuring that learners are treated fairly, consistently and without discrimination throughout the assessment process. Learners are encouraged to disclose any support needs at the earliest opportunity to enable appropriate arrangements to be considered and, where applicable, approved. Learners will be given opportunities to disclose support needs during onboarding, induction, initial assessment, one-to-one reviews and throughout their programme. Support needs may also be identified through assessment activities, teaching activities, employer feedback or referrals from staff.

Definitions

Definition of Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are pre-approved adjustments that enable learners to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding without changing the demands or validity of the assessment. Examples of access arrangements include additional assessment time, the use of a reader, scribe, assistive technology, the use of recorded professional discussions, rest breaks or modified assessment materials.

Access arrangements must be identified, assessed and approved, where required, before an assessment takes place. They are designed to support learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), learning difficulties, long-term health conditions or temporary injuries, ensuring they have fair and equitable access to assessment while maintaining assessment integrity.

Definition of a Reasonable Adjustment

A reasonable adjustment is an arrangement or action taken before or during the delivery and assessment process to reduce or remove a disadvantage experienced by a learner due to a disability, learning difficulty, medical condition or other identified needs.

Reasonable adjustments are intended to enable learners to access teaching, learning and assessment on an equal basis with others, without affecting the reliability or validity of the assessment outcome. All reasonable adjustments must be appropriate to the learner's needs and implemented in accordance with awarding body organisation requirements.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, Netcom will take reasonable steps to ensure learners with disabilities, learning difficulties or medical conditions are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to other learners.

Definition of Special Consideration

Special consideration is a post-assessment adjustment that may be applied when a learner has experienced a temporary illness, injury, adverse circumstance or other event beyond their control at the time of the assessment.

Special consideration is intended to ensure that a learner is not unfairly disadvantaged where an eligible circumstance has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a significant impact on their ability to undertake an assessment or demonstrate their normal level of attainment. Applications for special consideration must be supported by appropriate evidence and submitted in accordance with the relevant awarding body organisation's requirements and timescales.

It is important to note that special consideration cannot compensate for a lack of preparation, poor attendance, insufficient learning or long-term difficulties that should have been addressed through reasonable adjustments.

Procedures

Determining Suitable Access Arrangements

When considering whether an access arrangement is appropriate, Trainers and Teaching & Assessment Lead (TALs) must take into account the individual needs of the learner and the requirements of the qualification.

The following factors should be considered:

- Whether the proposed arrangement is permitted for the qualification and assessment being undertaken.
- The learner's normal way of working, including any support, equipment or arrangements routinely used during learning and assessment activities.
- Whether the arrangement enables the learner to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding without compromising the validity, reliability or integrity of the assessment.
- How the access arrangement will operate in practice during the assessment.
- Any awarding body organisation requirements relating to evidence, prior approval or notification.

Supporting evidence may include:

- Medical evidence.
- Diagnostic assessment reports.
- Professional assessments or recommendations.
- Evidence of the learner's normal way of working.
- Previous approved access arrangements.

Evidence requirements will be determined in accordance with awarding body organisation requirements and retained securely in line with organisational procedures.

Access arrangements must not compensate for a lack of knowledge, skills, understanding or preparation. Learners must be able to meet the standards required by the qualification and demonstrate competence against the assessment criteria.

Guidance regarding permitted arrangements should be obtained from the relevant awarding body organisation's qualifications handbook, assessment guidance or website. Where clarification is required, enquiries should be directed through the Quality Team, including the Quality Lead or Group Quality Manager, who will liaise with the awarding body organisation as necessary.

Before implementing an access arrangement, staff must establish:

- Whether supporting evidence is required.
- Whether prior approval is required from the awarding body organisation.
- Whether any additional resources, technology or personnel are required to facilitate the arrangement.

Principles for Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

Each request for a reasonable adjustment or special consideration will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the learner's circumstances, the assessment requirements and awarding body organisation guidance.

Any adjustment or consideration must:

- Be appropriate to the learner's identified needs.
- Maintain the validity, reliability and integrity of the qualification.
- Not compromise the assessment standards or requirements of the qualification.
- Not provide the learner with an unfair advantage over others.
- Reflect the learner's normal way of working wherever possible.
- Support fair and equal access to assessment.
- Be supported by appropriate evidence where required.
- Comply with awarding body organisation policies and procedures.

All decisions regarding reasonable adjustments and special considerations must be documented and retained in accordance with organisational and awarding body organisation requirements.

Records relating to access arrangements, reasonable adjustments, special considerations, supporting evidence, approvals and appeals will be retained in accordance with Netcom's Data Protection Policy, Records Retention Policy and awarding body organisation requirements.

Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Appeals

Learners have the right to appeal if they believe a request for a reasonable adjustment or special consideration has not been considered appropriately.

Any appeal relating to a reasonable adjustment or special consideration must be submitted and managed in accordance with the Organisation's Appeals Policy and Procedure.

The appeal will be reviewed by an independent member of staff who has not been involved in the original decision wherever possible. Learners will be informed of the outcome of the appeal in writing.

Where the decision is subject to awarding body organisation approval, the awarding body organisation's decision shall be final. Learners will be advised of any further rights of escalation available through the awarding body organisation's appeals process.

Examination and Assessment Invigilation

Netcom will ensure that all examinations and assessments, whether online or paper-based, are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the relevant awarding body organisation and, where applicable, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

Suitably trained and competent invigilators, readers, scribes and other approved access arrangement facilitators will be used to support learners and maintain assessment integrity.

Individuals involved in assessment, invigilation or the provision of access arrangement support must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest in accordance with organisational requirements.

Netcom will ensure that:

- All invigilators receive appropriate induction and training before undertaking invigilation duties.
- New invigilators are observed during their first assessment session to confirm competence.
- Invigilators receive regular updates on awarding body organisation and regulatory requirements.
- Invigilators are observed periodically, and at least annually where applicable, to ensure continued compliance with organisational and awarding body organisation requirements.
- Assessment environments are secure, fair and conducive to assessment.
- Any approved access arrangements or reasonable adjustments are implemented appropriately and documented accordingly.

Netcom will maintain appropriate records relating to invigilator induction, training, observations, competency checks, standardisation activities, confidentiality declarations and assessment incidents. Such records will be subject to internal quality assurance monitoring and external review where required.

Malpractice and Maladministration

Any suspected malpractice or maladministration associated with access arrangements, reasonable adjustments, special considerations or assessment invigilation will be reported, investigated and managed in accordance with Netcom's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and awarding body organisation requirements. Appropriate records will be maintained and action taken where non-compliance is identified.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective, current and compliant with legislative, regulatory and awarding body organisation requirements.

The policy may also be reviewed earlier where necessary, including in response to:

- Changes to legislation, regulations or statutory guidance.
- Updates to awarding body organisation requirements, policies or procedures.
- Changes to organisational structure, processes or delivery methods.
- Findings from internal or external quality assurance activities.
- Recommendations arising from audits, complaints, appeals or investigations.
- The identification of best practice or areas for improvement.

The Group Quality Manager is responsible for ensuring that the policy is reviewed, updated and communicated to relevant staff. During periods where no Head of Quality is appointed, all responsibilities assigned to senior quality leadership functions within this policy will be undertaken by the Group Quality Manager or their nominated deputy.

All staff will be provided with access to the most current version of the policy and informed of any significant changes that may affect their roles or responsibilities.