Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for centres

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Contents

Introduction

This document contains information for teachers and lecturers and is about what to do when considering the provision of assessment arrangements for candidates who have a physical difficulty (including medical or sensory difficulty), a behavioural or mental health difficulty or a learning difficulty. It details the principles that apply when determining a candidate's need for an assessment arrangement and how and when to request an assessment arrangement. It also describes some examples of assessment arrangements that can be provided in SQA assessments.

You must read this document in conjunction with all other relevant assessment arrangements guidance on SQA's website, which can be found at:
http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14976.html

The purpose of assessment arrangements is to provide disabled candidates with an equal opportunity to **demonstrate their attainment** in an assessment (ie to show the skills, knowledge and understanding they have achieved) without compromising the integrity of the assessment. Candidates are individuals with a diverse range of needs and it is important that you consider the individual assessment needs of your candidates when considering the most appropriate assessment arrangements.

For example:
♦ a candidate who is profoundly deaf, and who uses sign language, may need sign language support to access an assessment task
♦ a candidate experiencing mental health difficulties, who is very lethargic first thing in the morning due to medication, may need the start time of an assessment adjusted
♦ a candidate with dyslexia, who experiences difficulties with reading, may need a text reader and may also need extra time to complete an assessment
♦ a candidate with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), who has persistent difficulties with concentrating, may need to undertake an examination in a separate room, or in a room with only a small number of candidates.

For candidates who are disabled, as defined under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010[*], assessment arrangements such as those listed above might be the 'reasonable adjustments' required to compensate for a substantial disadvantage, but there may be other unique adjustments that need to be considered to meet their individual needs. However, it is important to recognise that some adjustments may not be possible for some qualifications. It is not possible to make an adjustment to the standard of the qualification where to do so would mean that it did not provide a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of the candidate.

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[*] The Equality Act 2010 requires that SQA make reasonable adjustments where a candidate who is disabled within the meaning of the Act would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a candidate who is not disabled.

Some candidates, defined as having additional support needs under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009[†], may also need an assessment arrangement to meet their identified physical (including medical or sensory), behavioural, mental health or learning difficulty.

In all cases, it is the individual assessment needs of candidates that must be the basis for the provision of an assessment arrangement. This means that you have a critical role in ensuring that the process of providing assessment arrangements is fair and operates with integrity.

To this end, SQA requires that all centres have effective internal quality assurance systems and procedures in place to identify and verify candidates' need for assessment arrangements. Your internal quality assurance system will be subject to SQA's own quality assurance procedures as detailed in the *Quality Assurance of Assessment Arrangements*: *Information for Schools* (publication code FA7266) or *Quality Assurance of Assessment Arrangements: Information for Colleges* (publication code FA7265) available here.

[†]The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) provides the legal framework underpinning the system for supporting children and young people in their school education. It is important to remember that the Act automatically deems that all looked after children and young people have additional support needs unless it is determined that they do not. It is therefore important that you consider whether a candidate who is looked after and has been identified as having additional support needs also has an identified physical (including medical or sensory), behavioural, mental health or learning difficulty and requires an assessment arrangement.

Access to assessment: the principles

As the national awarding body for Scotland, SQA has a responsibility to ensure that assessment leading to certification is rigorous and fair for **all** candidates, and that it allows candidates to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding required for the qualification. This is why it is important that assessment arrangements are only provided to those candidates identified as having a physical (including medical or sensory), behavioural, mental health or learning difficulty that prevents them from accessing an assessment and demonstrating their attainment.

The four key principles that underpin our assessment arrangements policy focus on the need to remove barriers for disabled candidates to provide them with an equal opportunity to access their assessments.

Principle 1: Assessment arrangements are intended to enable candidates to demonstrate their attainment, not to compensate for lack of attainment.

Assessment arrangements must be considered in the context of the distinction between a candidate's attainment and that of their ability to demonstrate their attainment under assessment conditions. They are agreed before an assessment takes place and allow disabled candidates to *access* the assessment and show the skills, knowledge and understanding they have acquired.

> For example, a candidate may have an identified reading difficulty and may require text-reading software to support decoding written text to access a History assessment and show their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Assessment arrangements are not designed to compensate for a candidate not having acquired the key skills, knowledge and understanding of the qualification concerned.

> For example, where a candidate has not been physically able to develop the practical skills in a subject such as Practical Metalwork or where a candidate has not been able to develop any reading skills in a subject such as ESOL, assessment arrangements cannot be put in place to compensate for this.

Principle 2: Assessment arrangement must not compromise the integrity of the qualification.

Assessment arrangements must be considered in the context of the assessment standards or competence standards for each qualification. Assessment arrangements must not compromise these standards or undermine the integrity of the assessment or the credibility of the award. All relevant stakeholders, including candidates, must have confidence that the qualification that is awarded to a candidate provides a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills, understanding and competence of that candidate.

For example, it is not possible for a candidate to use a human reader in a National Literacy unit, where independent reading skills are being explicitly assessed. The provision of a human reader would undermine the fundamental assessment objectives for reading in the National Literacy Unit and candidates would not be able to demonstrate the required level of skill.

Principle 3: Assessment arrangements must be tailored to meet a candidate's individual needs.

Assessment arrangements must be considered in the context of the individual assessment needs of a candidate in each different subject area.

As part of the overall support offered to them, candidates should have an assessment arrangement plan, considered subject by subject, with no assumption that the same kind or level of support will be required in every case. Subjects and their methods of assessment may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. This is why you must consider the candidate's need for assessment arrangements on a subject-by-subject basis and, in collaboration with the subject specialist, make a judgement about the difficulties the candidate will experience in the specific assessment.

This will require due consideration of the candidate's achievements in the subject concerned and the extent to which the published assessment arrangements will prevent the candidate demonstrating these achievements.

For example, a candidate with significant writing difficulties might not be at any disadvantage in the multiple-choice question paper in the National 5 Chemistry examination. However, the same candidate might have significant difficulties producing a written essay in the National 5 History examination.

Principle 4: Assessment arrangements should reflect, as far as possible, the candidate's normal way of learning and producing work.

Assessment arrangements must be considered in the context of the on-going support the candidate needs to access teaching and learning. There should be continuity between the candidate's need for support in learning and need for support in assessment. Assessment arrangements that are put in place should, where possible, reflect the ongoing support given to the candidate in the class.

For example, if a candidate with dyslexia uses a computer with a text reader regularly in class to overcome specific reading difficulties, this would most likely be the assessment arrangement provided in the assessment.

However, there may be situations where a candidate's particular type of support provided in the learning environment is not acceptable in an assessment.

For example, a candidate who has a language and communication impairment, and who normally has someone in class supporting their learning by explaining words and terms, would not be allowed such support in the externally-set examination question paper.

For this reason, it is very important that candidates are aware of, and have practice in, working in a way that reflects what could be permitted as support in the assessment situation.

Assessment arrangements: contacting SQA

This section provides details of how and when to contact SQA in relation to assessment arrangements, and describes some examples of assessment arrangements which can be provided in SQA assessments. It is not an exhaustive list — you should work from the need of the individual candidate in identifying the most appropriate assessment arrangement, rather than from a fixed list of options. Again, where particular examples of difficulties/disabilities are used, they are just examples and not a list of all eventualities.

Each candidate's assessment needs must also be considered in relation to the particular subject and assessment being undertaken. Subjects and their methods of assessment may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. You must consider the candidate's need for assessment arrangements on a subject-by-subject basis.

The inherent flexibility of some internal assessments will allow many candidates to achieve the standard for the qualification without the need for an assessment arrangement to be provided. For example, in many internal assessments, candidates can provide evidence in a variety of ways, using a range of assessment methods to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

When to contact SQA

Internal assessments

You do not have to submit a request to SQA for the provision of assessment arrangements in an internal assessment, provided that the candidate's need for the assessment arrangement has been appropriately verified and the assessment arrangement required does not compromise the assessment/competence standards. However, if you are in any doubt about whether a candidate is eligible for a particular assessment arrangement, or whether the assessment arrangement compromises the assessment or competence standards, you must discuss this with your centre's SQA co-ordinator before contacting us for advice. You should then contact us as soon as possible, and before the candidate undertakes the assessment. You should submit full details of the candidate's difficulty in accessing the assessment, the proposed assessment arrangement, and the specific assessment being undertaken, to the Assessment Arrangements Team by e-mailing aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

External examinations

You must submit requests using the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) software for all assessment arrangements required in the external Diet of examinations. In submitting requests for assessment arrangements in the external examination it is understood that the arrangements requested may also be used in any assessments undertaken internally. Each year, in October, access details and a link to the AAR user guide will be e-mailed to your SQA co-ordinator. You must read the AAR user guide in conjunction with this guidance. Please contact the

Assessment Arrangements Team at **aarequests@sqa.org.uk** if you require more information.

If you are in any doubt as to whether a particular assessment arrangement would be acceptable for a candidate in the external examination or in any externally assessed coursework, you must contact us for advice as soon as possible, and, where possible, before the candidate embarks upon the course.

Requests for assessment arrangements in the external diet of examinations must be submitted by the published deadline dates. This is published in the 'Key dates' section of the Delivering National Qualifications: Guide for SQA Co-ordinators (which is available on SQA Connect). This is particularly important in relation to the production of adapted question papers. Due to the processes involved in the production and quality assurance of these papers, it is essential that you submit your requests as early as possible, and that the modification required is correctly identified.

Note: SQA can also provide adapted versions of coursework assessment tasks for Administration and IT and Accounting on request. These requests must be submitted to SQA by e-mail to aarequests@sqa.org.uk
Please do not request these adaptions through the AAR system.

The guidance in the next section (Examples of assessment arrangements) can be downloaded and photocopied for your candidates or, where appropriate, invigilators and for any other people involved in delivering the assessment arrangements, for example, those undertaking the role of scribe, reader, prompter etc.

In the context of the external examination, it is very important that you discuss the assessment arrangements being provided for a candidate with your chief invigilator before the candidate undertakes the assessment. Before the start of the examination timetable, the chief invigilator must be provided with a copy of the AAR system report showing which candidates are to have which assessment arrangements in place during each examination.

In all cases, it is essential that your candidates are well prepared for, and have had practice in using, the assessment arrangement being provided before the live external examination. For example, in the external examination, a candidate who is to be provided with an adapted question paper should be familiar and be comfortable with, the adapted format to be provided.

Examples of assessment arrangements

Adapted question papers

The following types of adapted question papers can be requested from SQA using the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system. Please also refer to the AAR system user guide which can be found on SQA secure.

♦ Digital question paper — this is the original question paper supplied as a PDF for on-screen display and completion. You must read the guidance on digital question papers on the Digital Question Papers' webpage at http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/digitalquestionpapers

♦ Question paper printed on one of SQA's suite of six specified colours. Examples of the six specified colours are available in '*Additional Guidance for Requesting Adapted Question Papers and Artwork*', which can be found here. SQA can also provide samples of the six colours available— e-mail aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

♦ Standard enlarged print question paper — this is the original question paper enlarged to 18pt, in standard SQA font, on A3 white paper

♦ Modified enlarged print question paper — this is the question paper produced in one of the following font sizes: 14pt; 18pt; 24pt; 36pt and 48pt; and in one of the following font styles: SQA Standard; Arial; or Comic Sans font. In addition, and where appropriate, visual content is appropriately modified

♦ Braille question paper — this is the question paper produced in braille with visual content appropriately modified

♦ Raised diagrams — these are adapted tactile diagrams supplied with braille question papers. They can also be supplied with a modified large print paper on request

♦ Question paper with double line spacing — this is the question paper produced with double spacing between lines of text. Please remember that this increased line spacing will significantly increase the total number of pages in the question paper

You must ensure that your candidates are familiar with the format of the adapted or digital question paper being requested from SQA. Candidates must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the format that will be provided in the actual examination. Examples of adapted question papers and artwork are available in '*Additional Guidance for Requesting Adapted Question Papers and Artwork*, which can be found here.

If your candidate is unable to use any of the available options on the AAR system, select the 'other' box and provide details of what is required and why the candidate is unable to use any of these options in the comments box. A member of our Assessment Arrangements Team will contact you directly to discuss your requirements.

Note: Where a candidate is unable to use any of the colours from our standard suite of coloured question papers, you will be asked to supply the coloured paper in the required paper size.

Note: SQA can also provide adapted versions of coursework assessment tasks for Administration and IT and Accounting on request. These requests must be submitted to SQA by e-mail to aarequests@sqa.org.uk. **Please do not request these adaptions through the AAR system.**

For internal assessments, you do not need to seek approval from SQA to produce adapted assessment material in your centre, provided the adaptations made do not change the assessment standards or competence standards. If you are concerned that a particular adaptation may have changed the assessment standards, please contact us for advice.

Assistance in aural assessments

Technological aids
Technological aids which provide better access to sound, such as radio aids for deaf candidates, may be used in an aural assessment.

Extra time in the listening assessment in the external examination
Where a candidate requires extra time for a listening assessment presented to them on CD, you can request a version of the CD with extended pauses using your centre's CD requirements pro forma.

Live presentation of the listening assessment in the external examination
Listening assessments, which are normally presented to candidates on CD, may be presented live to enable deaf candidates to lip-read.

In the assessment of listening in Modern Languages, the live presentation should, where possible, be given by someone whose first language is the language being assessed. Copies of the transcript for the listening assessment will be provided for the reader's use.

Before the start of the examination, and in isolation, the person reading the transcript to the candidate should be allowed sufficient time to read through the transcript and hear the CD through. This is to enable them to match the speed and style of the recording. If required, an additional CD may be requested for this purpose. The transcript should then be read to the candidate with appropriate pauses.

The contents of the listening transcript must not be communicated to any other party.

Example
Magda has a hearing impairment and lip-reads. Her school asks for a live presentation in the external assessment of listening. This is done by the teaching assistant who is German.

Extra time

In National Qualifications that have timed external assessments, SQA recognises that some candidates, due to their disability, may need extra time to complete these assessments. In order to ensure that the process of assessment is rigorous and fair for all candidates when taking timed assessments, SQA must ensure that extra time is only provided to candidates to address an identified disadvantage.

Only those candidates who have been identified as having a particular disability and where there is appropriate evidence of their ongoing need for extra time are eligible. It is therefore important that you have the necessary evidence available to support the provision of extra time.

The amount of extra time required may vary according to the candidate's individual needs. There must be appropriate evidence indicating

(i)   the impact of the candidate's disability on their ability to complete tasks in a specified time.
(ii)   that a candidate is normally given and uses extra time to complete other class learning activities, tasks and assessments
(iii)   that a specific amount of extra time is appropriate.

Internal assessments
If a candidate is identified as requiring extra time in an internal assessment, you only **need to seek approval from SQA for any assessments where the performance of a task in a specified time is an actual assessment requirement.**

External examination
If a candidate requires extra time in an external examination, you must submit a request for this through the SQA Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system.

The amount of extra time requested for the external examination through the (AAR) system should accurately reflect the candidate's assessment needs. While it is recognised that you may not have absolute values for the extra time needed, it is nevertheless important that you have evidence available to show that the candidate needs extra time and evidence of how you have determined the amount necessary.

For example, to allow a significant extra time allowance (25%) to a candidate with mild spelling difficulties who reads accurately and writes fluently, and where there is only evidence to support an extra time allowance of 10% to check over spelling and punctuation, could provide an unfair advantage over other candidates.

Remember:
Evidence that extra time is used when given in a timed assessment is not sufficient evidence on its own of the need for additional time.

Too much extra time in an assessment may be tiring for the candidate and may ultimately disadvantage them.

Example 1

Claire has dyslexia which affects her speed of writing. The centre requests 25% extra time for her in her Higher English and Higher History examinations and 15% extra time in her Higher Chemistry and Higher Mathematics. There is clear evidence of Claire's ongoing significant difficulty in completing tasks (class tasks, assignments, assessments) in the normal allocated time. There is evidence available to show that Claire needs approximately 25% extra time for English and History, and for Chemistry and Mathematics (where less extended writing is required), approximately 15% extra time is sufficient to meet her needs.

Example 2

Kaja experiences mental health difficulties that means that she becomes very anxious before her assessments and has difficulty concentrating. Based on evidence from previous class assessments, the college provides Kaja with 15% extra time that is sufficient for her to complete her SQA assessments. Knowing that she has this amount of extra time available has been shown to reduce Kaja's anxiety and allow her to complete the assessment.

Example 3

Jamie is blind and uses braille. There is extensive reading in the Higher History question paper, and there are many diagrams and tables to interpret in the Higher Mathematics question paper. Jamie's centre requests 50% extra time to complete his examinations in these two subjects based on evidence that this is the approximate amount of extra time he needs in class to read extended text and to interpret diagrammatical material.

Example 4

Luke has a physical disability and uses word processing software when producing responses. His typing speed is quite slow, so he takes much longer to complete tasks. As he is undertaking National 4 courses where there are no timed external assessments, he is able to complete the assessment tasks over a longer period.

Extension to deadlines

Depending on the circumstances, an extension to the published dates for the submission of estimate grades, projects, internal assessment results, and to the dates arranged for assessments, may be permitted. Requests should be made in writing to the Assessment Arrangements Team at SQA's Lowden office, Dalkeith or alternatively by e-mail to extensions@sqa.org.uk. However, it should be noted that extensions should be carefully managed to prevent additional 'bunching' of assessments and deadlines during a short time period.

Example 1

Jane has experienced mental health difficulties during her time at college, and so has had less time to complete her assessments. Her college has provided an extension to her assessment deadlines.

Example 2

Thomas has chronic fatigue syndrome, and this has meant that he has been unable to complete his Higher Care project by the published submission date. His school requests an extension to this deadline to allow him to complete his project.

Use of ICT or Digital Question Papers

Use of ICT to type/speak responses or to read while using the conventional question paper.

For many disabled candidates, using ICT to type, to dictate with speech recognition software or to read, provides a more effective and independent means of communication than using human support such as a reader and/or scribe.

If your candidate wishes to use the conventional question paper but requires the use of ICT, you must request this using the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system. You must select the **ICT option**. If your candidate is using speech recognition or a text reading pen (without a dictionary or storage), you must identify this in the 'Other Arrangements' field, for example 'Dragon NaturallySpeaking', 'Reading Pen'.

You must ensure that the required technical resources are available and that SQA's technical and security requirements have been met. Please refer to the SQA Co-ordinator's Guide on SQA Connect.

Remember: Candidates must be confident, competent users of the technology before it is used in any SQA examination or assessment.

Digital answer books (DABs)
Using digital answer books for question papers in 'question and answer' (structured) format
Some conventional question papers come in the format of a 'question and answer' booklet where candidates would normally insert their answers. For these question papers, candidates will need to use the generic digital answer book Generic Digital Answer Book (DAB).

The generic answer books are only available as MS Word files so if your candidate is authorised to use a spell-checker, you will need to ensure that the PC's MS Word settings are correct. Please note that the generic answer books can be used for both practice purposes and, unless otherwise indicated, for use in the actual examination.

Using digital answer books for question papers in 'question only' (unstructured) format
More commonly, the conventional question papers come in the format of a question-only paper where candidates have to write their answers into a separate answer book. The list of current question papers that are 'question-only' and that require a separate answer book can be found at DAB spreadsheet - exams requiring answer books.

For question papers in this format, candidates can use the paper-specific digital answer books. For practice purposes, the current paper-specific digital answer books

(available from [Digital Answer Books](#) page) should be used. SQA will advise centres when the answer books on the website can be used in the actual examination. These paper-specific answer books are available in both MS Word and PDF formats and in both '*SpellCheck-on'* and '*SpellCheck-off'* versions. You must ensure that you provide the correct one for your candidate and that the 'SpellCheck-on' version is only used where it is appropriate.

Remember: The paper-specific answer books are only for practice purposes until SQA confirm their use for examinations.

Use of Digital Question Papers

The digital question paper is a copy of the conventional examination question paper provided in PDF format. If your candidate wishes to use the digital question paper you must select the **digital question paper option** to order the disk containing the digital question paper. This will also automatically populate the 'separate accommodation' field and open the options for use of a spellchecker. If your candidate requires any additional software such as speech recognition or text reading software, you must identify the required software in the 'Other' field, for example 'Dragon NaturallySpeaking'.

If you wish to know more about SQA's digital question papers, please go to the 'Digital Question Papers' webpage at https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/30030.html

Contingency Arrangements
The contingency arrangements that apply in all examinations apply also to candidates using ICT. In the event of any technical difficulties occurring during the examination, the designated teacher/technician may be allowed into the examination room to repair or provide another machine to enable the candidate to complete the examination. An additional allowance of time equal to the time lost will be made available to the candidate, and the candidate should be advised of this at once to allay anxiety.

If the repair or change to another machine, and the allowance of additional time, resolves the problem, the matter should simply be reported to SQA by the invigilator.

In any case where a fault results in the spoiling of, or changing of the candidate's work, a brief report should be prepared by the invigilator and countersigned by the SQA co-ordinator. This should be sent to the Assessment Arrangements Team. The report should indicate the name of the centre and the candidate's name.

Remember: in the event of any technical difficulties, it is expected that a reader and/or scribe is available as a contingency arrangement if the candidate requires this type of support. **You do not need to record this on the AAR system.**

Example 1

A centre requests the use of ICT for Atif, who has dyslexia and has significant writing difficulties. He is allowed to use word processing with spellchecking software for all his external examinations.

Example 2

Gill experiences severe anxiety difficulties and finds it difficult to hand-write her responses in her assessments. Her college allows her to produce her answers on her laptop for all her internal assessments.

For further guidance on using speech recognition software, please read the guidance "*Speech Recognition Software in SQA Examinations and Assessments*" on the Assessment Arrangements webpages.

For further helpful information on the use of information, communication and assistive technologies visit CALL Scotland.

Numerical Support in Mathematics Assessments

Candidates appropriately identified as having a specific disability in number manipulation/calculation/retention (dyscalculia), could be permitted, as a reasonable adjustment, to use a number square/line, multiplication square or basic, four function, calculator in mathematics assessments.

Note: The calculator must be a basic, non-scientific, four-function calculator, no other type of calculator can be permitted.

The provision of this type of basic numerical support is permitted as a reasonable adjustment for disabled candidates to remove their substantial disadvantage and allow them to demonstrate their attainment of the required mathematical operational and reasoning skills.

It is generally recognised that this specific learning difficulty is characterised by difficulties in processing number concepts and mastering basic numeracy skills. It often occurs alongside other specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia but not all dyslexic candidates have problems with number. This is why SQA requires centres to have appropriate evidence that a candidate has been identified as having a particular disability/specific difficulty with numbers and is placed at a substantial disadvantage in demonstrating their attainment because of this particular disability/difficulty.

For example, candidates' specific difficulties with numbers must be appropriately identified and must be quantifiably below what is expected for an individual's chronological age, and must not be caused by lack of ability/prior knowledge/motivation.

As with the provision of any assessment arrangement, there would also need to be appropriate evidence that this is the assessment arrangement which meets the disabled candidate's needs and reflects their classroom practice.

Note: Candidates who use any form of numerical support should be encouraged to write all of their working, even if this is simply recording what they are entering into the calculator.

Practical assistant

A practical assistant is someone who carries out some tasks in a practical assessment under the explicit instruction of the candidate. This is permitted for candidates who have physical or visual difficulties that prevent them carrying out practical assessments safely and independently. Approval to use this arrangement depends on both the assessment and competence/assessment standards for the practical assessment and the degree of assistance that is needed by the candidate.

Guidelines for centres
It is your responsibility to:

♦ make the necessary arrangements for providing a practical assistant
♦ ensure that the candidate is clear about what the practical assistant can and cannot do — a candidate using a practical assistant should have had practice using this arrangement during their course
♦ ensure that the candidate is trained on how to work effectively with the practical assistant under the various constraints that might apply in an assessment situation
♦ prepare clear instructions for the practical assistant on the assistance they are able to give to a candidate in a particular practical assessment — for invigilated assessments, a copy of these instructions must be available for the invigilator

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Example 1
Emily has hemiplegia affecting her left side. She is right-handed. She needs a practical assistant in her HND in Chemistry to hold equipment still while she undertakes the practical tasks. Emily is able, with the aid of the assistant, to demonstrate the practical skills that are being assessed and meet the competence standards for this qualification.

Example 2
Eva has a severe tremor in both hands and requires a practical assistant to allow her to take part in class activities in the National 5 Practical Woodworking course. However, Eva is unable to meet the assessment standards for the assessed practical activity as she is unable to demonstrate the key practical skills required for this qualification.

Information for practical assistants: what to do (and what not to do)
You should:

♦ be familiar with the requirements of the subject and assessment
♦ carry out instructions exactly as they are given, unless to do so would cause a hazard (Do not give factual help or make suggestions regarding what has to be undertaken. If you do not understand the candidate's instructions, you may ask for clarification)
♦ aim to ensure that the candidate is not disadvantaged or advantaged — the object is to enable an accurate assessment of the candidate's practical skills to be made without the assessment competence/assessment standards being compromised

Remember: Assistance may not be required throughout the whole practical assessment — there may be parts of the assessment that the candidate can do without help.

Any problems arising during a practical assessment must be referred immediately to the teacher/lecturer in charge.

Information for candidates: are you using a practical assistant?
Things you should know

Your practical assistant:
♦ should know the subject and the assessment requirements
♦ will carry out your instructions exactly as you give them (unless to do so would cause a hazard)
♦ will not be able to give you any factual help or tell you what you have to do
♦ might ask you to explain if they do not understand your instructions
♦ might not need to help you throughout the whole assessment, as there may be parts of the assessment that you can do without help
♦ should have been working with you during your course, and you should know how to work with them in an assessment situation

Prompters

A prompter is someone who can be present during an assessment to ensure that a candidate stays on task. A prompter may be required where a candidate has little or no sense of time, or has significant concentration difficulties. The prompter may sit beside the candidate to keep their attention on the assessment.

Guidelines for centres
It is your responsibility to:
♦ make the necessary arrangements for providing a prompter
♦ ensure that the prompter is someone with whom the candidate is comfortable and who is familiar enough with the candidate to know the difference between a real attention lapse and, for example, periods of thinking
♦ ensure that the candidate and prompter are clear about the limitations of the prompter's role in the assessment situation

In the context of the external examination, it is your responsibility to:
♦ fully inform the invigilator beforehand of the methods to be used to prompt the
♦ candidate - methods can include verbal prompts, the use of cue cards, or any other appropriate or familiar prompts, for example, a tap on the desk
♦ the content of any cue cards should be e-mailed to the Assessment Arrangements Team at aarequests@sqa.org.uk for consideration prior to submitting the request via the AAR system
♦ provide separate, suitable accommodation when a prompter is used - remember to take account of the need for additional invigilation.

Example 1
David has Asperger's syndrome and loses sense of time. In the Higher Mathematics examination, the prompter sees that David is staring out of the window and has stopped working. The prompter taps on the desk to bring David's attention back to the answer he was writing.

Example 2
Sean has mental health difficulties and his condition results in him spending extended periods reading and re-reading his assessment task. The college provides him with a prompter who uses a variety of agreed cue cards with instructions to keep him on task.

Information for prompters: what to do (and what not to do)

Normally, you will be familiar enough with the candidate to know the difference between a real attention lapse and periods of thinking.

Before the assessment you should:
♦ agree with the candidate where you should sit, and the method you will use to bring back his/her attention, for example, light tap on the desk, use of a cue card
♦ ensure that the invigilator is aware of how you intend to prompt the candidate in an external examination

During the assessment you should only draw the candidate's attention back to the assessment task and must not explain any words or questions to the candidate. You do not need to be in a position to read the candidate's responses.

Remember: In an external examination, the invigilator is there to ensure that the correct procedures are followed, and that the required examination conditions are met. The invigilator should be fully informed of the method you will use to regain the candidate's attention.

Information for candidates: are you working with a prompter?
Your prompter will be someone you know, but he/she cannot be a relative or close friend.

Before the assessment, you should agree with the prompter how he/she will prompt you and where they will sit.

During the assessment, the prompter will only draw your attention back to the task, and will not be able to explain any words or questions to you.

Reader

The use of a human reader can be allowed to meet the needs of disabled candidates who have **substantial** difficulties with reading text and who cannot access the assessment material by any other more appropriate means, for example, by using a text/screen reader.

A human reader reads out text verbatim in an assessment to enable the candidate to access it. This may involve reading out all written instructions and questions to the candidate, or only certain questions and words as directed by the candidate. Candidates may also ask that their written responses are read back to them.

It should be noted that where a human reader is used by the candidate in normal teaching and learning, the reader's role may be different in an SQA assessment. For this reason, it is important that candidates are aware that the reader in the assessment situation will be restricted to reading verbatim the text in the assessment and is not permitted to provide any further clarification or explanation of the text.

Please also note that using a human reader may not be possible in some assessments. For example, in the National Literacy units, a human reader is not permitted in the assessment of reading because independent reading skills are explicitly assessed. In these units, candidates are required to demonstrate the ability to read and understand word-based texts. Guidance on other, more appropriate, assessment arrangements can be found here.

Scientific and mathematical notation
A human reader can read out any scientific or mathematical notation in an assessment where the candidate is unable to do so. For example, where a candidate has a severe visual impairment.

Guidelines for centres
It is your responsibility to:
♦ make the necessary arrangements for providing a reader
♦ ensure that the reader does not have a personal interest in the success of the candidate or is a relative or a teacher who is involved in the candidate's study of the subject - there may have to be exceptions to this, but you must contact SQA to discuss
♦ select appropriately skilled readers on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the candidate
♦ ensure that readers are able to read accurately, intelligibly and at a reasonable rate, and have sufficient knowledge of the subject to read technical terms effectively
♦ ensure that both the candidate and the reader are well prepared for working together
♦ ensure that the candidate has had previous practice in working with the reader

- ensure that candidates using a reader have been using this arrangement as part of the support normally provided during their course
- ensure that candidates are trained on how to work effectively with a reader under the various constraints which apply when used in an assessment situation
- provide separate, suitable accommodation when a reader is used in an external examination - remember to take account of the need for additional invigilation in the external examination.

Example 1

Becky has a visual impairment and her centre requests an enlarged question paper for her Higher Modern Studies examination. By the time of the examination, her vision has deteriorated and Becky has very little sight left. The centre requests a human reader to read the question paper to Becky, as there has been insufficient time for Becky to become comfortable with a screen reader before the examination.

Example 2

Lyle has mental health difficulties and finds it difficult to concentrate sufficiently to read his unit assessments thoroughly. His college provides him with the option of using a human reader or text reader for his graded unit assessment. As Lyle does not feel confident using ICT, Lyle needs to use a human reader in his assessment to maintain his attention on the assessment text.

Example 3

Anna has a severe physical disability and has difficulty focusing on texts; she normally has her support assistant read text for her in class as she finds it very difficult to use a text reader. She uses her support assistant to read for her in all of her assessments, both internal and external.

Information for human readers: what to do (and what not to do)

You should ensure that the candidate is clear about your exact role in the assessment. For example, in the external examination you might say:

♦ 'I can only read what you ask me to read.'
♦ 'I cannot explain any words or questions to you, but I can read words and questions as many times as you like.'

Before you start, you should decide, with the candidate, which side to sit on so that you are both comfortable.

You must only:
♦ read as requested by the candidate (candidates will indicate to you those instructions, questions, or parts of questions, they wish to have read. When a dictionary is allowed, you may consult this at the candidate's request and read out entries)
♦ read the exact wording (instructions and questions) of an external examination question paper — you must not give meanings of words, rephrase, or interpret anything.

You must **not**:

Give any advice regarding which questions the candidate should answer, which order the questions should be answered in, etc.

Remember: If asked to, you can read back the candidate's answers.

Candidates should have the option of reading some parts of the assessment themselves and having other parts read to them.

Although the candidate should study and interpret any diagrams, graphs, formulae, equations or pictorial material themselves, they can ask you to read out any scientific or mathematical notation or any text associated with such material.

A separate invigilator is required when a reader is used in the external examination, and the invigilator may need to be positioned alongside you. You should discuss this with the invigilator before the start of the assessment.

You must refer any problems during the external examination to the invigilator.

Information for candidates: are you working with a human reader?

You will have had practice using a reader before the assessment. The reader will make sure that you are clear about his/her exact role. For example, your reader may say

♦ 'I can only read what I am asked to read.'
♦ 'I cannot explain any words or questions to you, but I can read things as many times as you like.'

Before you start, or during a practice session, your reader will decide with you which side to sit on so that you are both comfortable.

During the assessment you can read some parts of the assessment yourself and have other parts read to you.

You must study any diagrams, graphs, formulae, equations or pictures yourself. However, you can ask your reader to read out scientific or mathematical notation or any text associated with such material if you cannot read it yourself.

You should tell your reader the instructions, questions or parts of questions you wish to have read (If you are allowed a dictionary, you can ask your reader to look something up for you and read it.)

Your reader can also read back your answers to you.

Your reader can only read the exact wording of the external examination question paper, and cannot give meanings of words, rephrase questions, or interpret anything for you, for example telling you what a word or question means.

Your reader cannot give you any advice regarding which questions to answer, which order the questions should be answered in, etc.

An invigilator may need to be positioned beside your reader during the external examination.

Referral of a candidate's scripts to the principal assessor

In certain external examinations where extended written responses are required, and the candidate has substantial difficulties with written communication, centres can request that the candidate's scripts be referred to the principal assessor (PA).

Referral to the PA may be requested for candidates whose examination scripts may be difficult for a marker to interpret. The purpose of referral is to ensure that no undue penalty has been imposed by a marker.

All candidate scripts are marked against set criteria, and referring a script to the PA does not change this. All candidates will be subject to the same marking instructions, regardless of their particular difficulties.

The list of examinations where this arrangement is allowed is available in the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system user guide for centres.

Please note this list is subject to review.

Example

Amy is deaf and does not use sign; she has an idiosyncratic use of English that means a marker might have some difficulty in understanding her written responses.

Her school decides that the most appropriate assessment arrangement is to refer her Higher Modern Studies scripts to the PA to ensure that her marked script is checked to ensure the marker has not, in any way, over-penalised her written responses.

Scribe

The use of a scribe can be allowed to meet the needs of disabled candidates who have **substantial** difficulties with writing and who cannot produce their written responses by any other more appropriate means, for example by using appropriate ICT.

A scribe records a candidate's dictated responses. This may involve scribing all the candidate's responses, or the candidate may request only certain questions or words are scribed. The scribe cannot enhance or refine the candidate's dictated responses, but can use their discretion with regard to the correct spelling of a word and, where necessary, the correct punctuation.

In a number of assessments, subject specific answer books are available for the scribe to use and can be downloaded by the centre in advance of the assessments from the SQA website. We recommend that the scribe should use these specific answer books in the external examination.

Note: A scribe as defined above is **not allowed** in the assessment of writing in:
♦ Modern Languages and Gaelic (Learners)
♦ National Literacy Units

In assessments for Modern Languages and Gaelic (Learners), it is the overall quality of the written language, including spelling accuracy that is being assessed. For example, the spelling of a particular word in French can indicate a particular tense. The French word passer, sounds the same as *passez*, *passé*, *passée*, and *passes.* Further information is available on our assessment arrangements webpages.

For National Literacy units, candidates are required to demonstrate the ability to write technically accurate texts. Guidance on other, more appropriate assessment arrangements can be found on the supportive practices webpages here.

Guidelines for centres
It is your responsibility to:
♦ make the necessary arrangements for providing a scribe
♦ ensure that the scribe does not have a personal interest in the success of the candidate or is a relative or a teacher who is involved in the candidate's study of the subject - there may have to be exceptions to this, but you must contact SQA to discuss
♦ ensure that scribes are able to produce an accurate record of candidates' dictated responses — they must be able to write legibly or type at a reasonable rate, spell correctly and have sufficient knowledge of the subject to be able to accurately record technical terms, including place names or names of characters in literary texts
♦ select appropriately skilled scribes on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the candidates

- ensure that both the candidate and the scribe are well prepared for working together and that the candidate has had previous practice in working with the scribe — candidates using a scribe should have been using this arrangement during their course
- ensure that the candidates are familiar with how to work effectively with a scribe under the various constraints that might apply if used in a timed external examination
- ensure that the candidate and the scribe are clear about the limitations of the scribe's role in the assessment situation
- provide separate, suitable accommodation when a scribe is used in the external examination — remember to take account of the need for additional invigilation.

> **Example**
> Steven has cerebral palsy. He has no use of his hands and has very indistinct speech, which prevents him using voice recognition software effectively. In his external examinations, he uses a scribe who works with him on a regular basis and who understands his speech.

Information for scribes: what to do (and what not to do)
You should ensure that the candidate is clear about your exact role in the assessment. For example, you might say:
- 'I can only write down or record what you dictate to me.'
- 'I cannot explain anything to you, but you can tell me to change anything I have written.'

Before you start, decide, along with the candidate, which side to sit on so that you are both comfortable.

You should ensure you are familiar with any technical terms (including place names, names of characters in literary texts, etc.) the candidate is likely to use.

You must only record responses exactly as they are dictated by the candidate. You may use your discretion regarding spelling and, where necessary, punctuation. You may read back what you have written when asked to do so by the candidate.

You must not:
- give any advice regarding which questions to answer, which order the questions should be answered in, etc.
- enhance or refine the candidate's dictated responses
- produce any diagrammatical or graphical material — if the candidate is unable to draw maps, graphs, diagrams, etc. you may be allowed to assist, but this must have been agreed beforehand with SQA

Remember: The candidate may choose to write some responses and dictate others.

A separate invigilator is required when a scribe is used in the external examination and the invigilator may need to be positioned beside you. You should discuss this with the invigilator before the start of the assessment.

In subjects where there is a multiple-choice-question answer grid in the question-and-answer booklet, for example in National 5 Biology, it is important that you ensure that all assessment material is placed behind the question-and-answer booklet that contains the candidate's responses to the multiple-choice questions. Please do this before passing the assessment material to the invigilator, at the end of the assessment.

You must refer any problems during the assessment to the invigilator.

Information for candidates: are you working with a scribe?
You will have had practice using a scribe before the assessment.

Your scribe will make sure that you are absolutely clear about their role in the assessment.

Before you start, or during a practice session, decide which side your scribe should sit on so you are both comfortable.

During the assessment you can choose to write some responses and dictate others if you like, and you might also want to write or draw something extra. You must produce any diagrams, maps or graphs by yourself. If you are unable to draw these, your scribe may be allowed to assist, but only if this has been agreed with SQA beforehand.

An invigilator may need to be positioned beside your scribe in the external examination.

Using sign language in SQA assessments

With the exception of English, ESOL, Gàidhlig, Gaelic (Learners) and Modern Languages, deaf candidates may have the contents of a question paper or assessment task signed to them by a sign communicator in any external assessment. Deaf candidates may also sign their responses, which must be recorded, translated and transcribed prior to submission to SQA. You must submit a request to use sign language through the SQA Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system.

You do not need to seek approval from SQA to sign internal assessment material to a candidate and for the candidate to use sign to respond, unless by doing so you are changing the assessment criteria.

More detailed information on using sign language in SQA assessments can be found on the Assessment Arrangements web pages, or by e-mailing aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

Supervised breaks or rest periods in a timed assessment

Rest periods and supervised breaks are permitted during a timed assessment. The time taken for the break does not count towards the time allowed for the assessment concerned.

It is your responsibility to supervise the candidate if they are out of the room. This is not the invigilator's responsibility.

Example 1
Christopher has ME. He was given rest breaks of 15 minutes in each hour for each of his prelims. This worked well for Christopher, even though the extended time was tiring. The school decides to request this arrangement for Christopher's SQA assessments.

Example 2
Amar experiences mental health difficulties. He has increased anxiety levels, difficulties with concentration and his condition also involves ritualised behaviour. He sometimes spends extended periods checking and rechecking work. This means that he has limited time within an assessment to produce answers. Having carefully considered his assessment needs, his college does not provide him with extra time because, for Amar, an extended assessment period actually exacerbates his concentration difficulties and increases the amount of time he spends checking and rechecking work. Instead they provide scheduled rest breaks, or 'stop the clock breaks' during the course of the assessment. This is the most appropriate arrangement for Amar.

Example 3
Lesley is severely dyslexic and requires 25% extra time to complete her examinations. This means that she becomes very tired due to the extended length of some of her National 5 examinations. The centre request that Lesley be allowed to have a supervised rest break, in addition to her 25% extra time, during her examinations.

Transcription with correction of spelling and punctuation

The key purpose of transcription with correction is to remove the illegibility or the 'unreadability' of a candidate's written responses to aid in the marking of the candidate's script in an external assessment.

This arrangement can be requested for candidates who have been identified as having substantial difficulties with writing. In particular, where candidates' written work is effectively illegible due to the very high frequency of spelling and/or punctuation errors, and where a marker would have difficulty in deciphering the candidate's script.

The transcriber must be familiar with the candidate's handwriting and is only allowed to correct errors of spelling and punctuation, the transcript must otherwise be an **_exact copy_** of the candidate's original script.

In a number of external examinations, subject specific answer books are available for the transcriber to use and can be downloaded by the centre in advance of the examination from the SQA website. We recommend that the transcriber should use these specific answer books in the external examination.

Guidelines for centres
♦ the transcriber should be familiar with the candidate's handwriting and should also be familiar with the correct spelling of any technical terms (including place names, names of characters in literary texts, etc.) the candidate is likely to use
♦ the candidate must not be present when the transcript is being produced and the transcript must be produced under secure conditions as soon as possible after the assessment
♦ in the context of the external examination, an invigilator does not need to be present when the transcript is being produced. Where there is a delay involved, scripts must be secured overnight and completed the following morning
♦ the transcript may be handwritten or word-processed. If the transcript is to be handwritten, the transcriber should have legible handwriting. In either case, the transcriber should be able to correct spelling and punctuation accurately
♦ diagrammatical material must not be transcribed unless specific permission has been given by SQA. Assessment of such material will be based on the candidate's own work.

Remember
The transcript must be produced separately and be a word-for-word transcription, with only spelling and punctuation errors corrected. It should be attached to the back of the candidate's script, and for the external examination, both should be passed to the chief invigilator for despatch to SQA in the normal way. The transcriber must not sign the transcript or inform the marker of the reason why a transcription was necessary.

For internal assessments, the transcript should be attached to the candidate's original work and retained for verification purposes.

Modern Languages, Gaelic (Learners) and National Literacy units
Please remember that, because writing (including spelling accuracy) is being explicitly assessed in these subjects, transcription with correction is **not** permitted.

Example 1

Sarah has Asperger's syndrome and is both dysgraphic and dyslexic. She is unable to use ICT and insists on handwriting her responses in her Higher History and Higher Psychology examinations. Learning support staff believe that a marker who is unfamiliar with her handwriting would struggle to decipher her responses. Her extremely poor spelling also makes her responses very difficult to understand. The college requests transcription with correction for both of her Higher external examinations.

Transcription without correction

This arrangement is designed to meet the needs of those candidates who have illegible handwriting and who are unable to use appropriate ICT.

In a number of examinations, subject specific answer books are available for the scribe to use and can be downloaded by the centre in advance of the examinations from the SQA website. We recommend that the scribe should use these specific answer books in the external examination.

Guidelines for centres
It is your responsibility to ensure that:

♦ any errors of spelling and punctuation are **not** corrected — the transcript must be an exact copy of the candidate's original work
♦ any diagrammatical material is **not** transcribed — assessment of such material will be based on the candidate's own work
♦ the transcriber is familiar with the candidate's handwriting
♦ the candidate is not present when the transcript is being produced
♦ In the context of the external examination, the transcript must be produced under secure conditions as soon as possible after the examination. An invigilator does not need to be present. Where there is a delay involved, scripts must be secured overnight and completed the following morning.
♦ the transcriber does not sign the transcription of the external examination script or inform the marker why a transcript was necessary
♦ the transcript may be handwritten or word-processed — if it is to be handwritten, the transcriber must have legible handwriting

Remember: The transcript must be produced separately and be a word-for-word transcription. For external assessments, the transcript should be attached to the back of the candidate's script, and in the external examination, both must be passed to the chief invigilator for despatch to SQA in the normal way.

Who to contact for more information

If you have a query about a particular assessment arrangement, please contact the Assessment Arrangements Team on 0345 213 6890 or e-mail them at aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

For further up-to-date information on assessment arrangements, please visit www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

If you have a general enquiry about SQA or its qualifications, please call our Customer Contact Centre on 0345 279 1000 or e-mail them at customer@sqa.org.uk.