

Access arrangements: special consideration and reasonable adjustments

Policy and procedures

Contents

Access arrangements: special consideration and reasonable adjustments in relation to Covid-19

For the period of:	September 2021 – August 2022
For the attention of Heads of:	Centre / IQA / IM

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Compliance Manager	January 2022

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1 Introduction

This is the ASDAN qualification guidance on special consideration in relation to Covid-19 document. This version replaces all previous versions and it is the centre's responsibility to ensure that all staff involved in the provision of ASDAN qualifications including centre assessments familiarise themselves with this version of the document.

As an approved awarding organisation, ASDAN has confirmed with the regulatory authorities that it has adopted the principles outlined in:

- General/Standard Conditions of Recognition
- The Vocational and technical qualifications contingency regulatory framework, COVID-19 Conditions and Requirements (VCRF)
- Equality Act 2010

ASDAN recognises that the ongoing nature of this pandemic has caused disruptions for centres and that the observation of government guidance can mean additional challenges for the administration of assessments.

In order to help mitigate these, we are offering a number of possible assessment adaptations for centres delivering our qualifications. ASDAN is committed to developing a process that, as far as possible, will:

- be practical and manageable for centres,
- support the validity and reliability of learner results,
- maintain standards.

Special consideration supports this process, where learner performance in assessments is adversely affected by the pandemic. This document provides guidance on the available special consideration options and application process.

This document defines the terms Special Consideration and Reasonable Adjustments and identifies the context of particular assessment requirements and the procedures for making applications. ASDAN provides application forms and additional guidance on permitted adjustments for centres.

2 Special consideration

The term **special consideration** applies post-assessment, and may be applied for learners who suffer temporary illness, injury or indisposition at the time of assessment. It is applied when the issue or event has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a learner's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment. It may not be considered at all if alternative assessment arrangements can be made.

Learners cannot enter a request for a special consideration for assessment solely on the grounds of disability or learning difficulty, and must declare their needs prior to the assessment period. All necessary reasonable adjustments arrangements must have been implemented before the time of the assessment.

A special consideration is normally a circumstance relating to the health and/or personal life of a learner which is of a sufficiently serious and significant nature to result in them being unable to attend, complete or submit an assessment on time.

It is important that centres assess the learner/cohort after the assessment period has ended to determine if an application to ASDAN should be made.

Special consideration can be applied at learner and at cohort level, depending on the circumstances. It can be applied following large-scale external events beyond their control such as a lockdown or year group closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

They are also expected to be either:

- a) **Unforeseeable**, in that the learner could have no prior knowledge of the event concerned; and/or
- b) **Unavoidable**, in that the learner could have done nothing reasonably in their power to prevent or avoid such an event.

If the assessment has been partially achieved, special consideration may be considered and will depend on their circumstances and should reflect the difficulty faced by the learner or the reason for the special consideration request.

Special consideration should not give the learner an unfair advantage. The learner's result must reflect his or her achievement in the assessment and not necessarily his or her potential ability.

2.1 Eligibility for special consideration due to Covid-19

When managing the impacts of the pandemic, centres should refer to the ASDAN specific [Qualification assessment adaptation guidance](#) documents in the first instance, to check whether any permissible adaptations would allow learners to complete the assessments as normal.

Learners may still be eligible for special consideration where the impact of Covid-19 means that they:

- are unable to complete an assessment; or
- completed the assessment but were disadvantaged.

2 Special consideration

2.2 Examples of special consideration

Learners could be eligible for special consideration if they have been disadvantaged due to Covid-19, for example this could include:

- Illness of a family member or class which led to self-isolation for a prolonged period of time.
- Stress or anxiety for which medication has been prescribed.
- Extreme distress on the day of an assessment (not simply assessment related stress).

Some other event outside of the learner's control, which has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on that learner's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment for example:

- Bereavement – death of close relative/friend/significant other (of a nature which, in a learning context, would have led to an absence).
- Serious short-term illness or temporary illness immediately before or during assessments.
- Significant adverse personal/family circumstances.
- Significant disruption of an assessment.
- Severe adverse weather conditions.
- A significant failure of due process by the centre.
- Other significant exceptional factors for which there is evidence of stress caused anxiety.

2.3 ASDAN on-demand assessments

In the case of an on-demand assessment, where a learner's performance is likely to be affected by circumstances beyond their control, the assessment should be rescheduled. However, if this is not possible, the centre should contact ASDAN as soon as possible.

If an on-demand assessment cannot be rescheduled and the learner has completed all the other required components/units for the qualification, it may be possible to apply for special consideration. However, ASDAN will explore all options for the learner to take the assessment first, before applying special consideration.

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

- Performance in an assessment is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the learner eg recent personal illness, accident, bereavement, serious disturbance during the assessment;
- Alternative assessment arrangements which were agreed in advance of the assessment proved inappropriate or inadequate;
- Part of an assessment has been missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the learner;

2 Special consideration

- There is a sufficient difference between the part of the assessment to which special consideration is applied and other parts of the qualification that have been achieved to infer that the learner could have performed more successfully in the assessment.

A learner will not be eligible for special consideration if:

- No evidence is supplied by the centre that the learner has been affected at the time of the assessment by a particular condition;
- Any part of the assessment is missed due to personal arrangements including holidays or unauthorised absence;
- Preparation for an assessment is affected by difficulties during the course, for example, disturbances through building work, lack of proper facilities, changes in or shortages of staff, or industrial disputes.

N.B. Where the centre is unable to provide supporting evidence or rationale, **it may not be possible** to apply special consideration. It may be more appropriate to offer the learner the opportunity to take the assessment at a later date or to withdraw the unit. In all cases, where applicable, unit certification is available.

2.4 Partially completed internal assessments

Should learners or the cohort only be able to complete some of the tasks within an assessment due to disruption or adverse circumstances, centres should check whether any permissible adaptations would be appropriate or useful to allow the learner(s) to complete the assessment in the first instance.

When and how the assessments were completed should be captured to support assessment and subsequent external quality assurance by ASDAN.

All learners, regardless of their special consideration must still meet the minimum requirement of the qualification (award or certificate).

Please remember, special consideration is not available where:

- there is another assessment opportunity available to the learner within the academic year
- the learner has already taken and passed the assessment
- the learner has not completed all the other required components/units for the qualification.

In these exceptional instances, ASDAN will look at whether it is possible to use an established minimum requirement of supporting evidence to derive an appropriate result for the incomplete assessment. This provision is called the **Exceptional Assessment Adaptation** and requires that at least 70% of the qualification has been assessed and the remaining 30% has been taught but not formally assessed.

2 Special consideration

Extraordinary assessment arrangements – minimum requirement

Evidence of incomplete assessments could include:

- Partially completed assessments
- Other completed comparable assessments
- Practice or mock assessments
- Teacher observations
- Internal assessor notes/decisions

Centres must keep clear records of the assessments their learners have completed, along with any mock or formative assessments. Where possible, these should be stored electronically. These records will support the special consideration process.

Where the established minimum requirement for an assessment is not met, special consideration will not be applied, and learners will need to complete these assessments at the next available opportunity.

If the learner or cohort have been unable to complete a planned assessment, please contact ASDAN. There may be other instances where centres may feel it appropriate to request special consideration. In all cases, centres are required to put that request in writing to compliance@asdan.org.uk. Each request will be judged on a case by case basis.

ASDAN will communicate the process for centres to submit supporting evidence as part of these special consideration applications in the [Summer 2022 Awarding Guide for Centres](#).

2.5 Procedure for applying for special consideration

Applications for special consideration must be made in writing by the head of centre/ examinations officer, per learner/cohort, per assessment and sent to ASDAN. Details of the circumstances supporting the application must be supplied. No applications will be accepted if submitted directly by learners, parents or employers.

- 1 The need for special consideration is identified within a centre. Following internal consideration a decision is made that an application should be made to ASDAN.
- 2 Applications are made in writing to compliance@asdan.org.uk using copies of the forms provided on the ASDAN website , together a list of supporting evidence. Applications must be sent as early as possible following the event, and at the latest four weeks prior to the external moderation.

Please do not apply for a Special Consideration during the external moderation, as this should have been identified prior to the results being uploaded to the ASDAN website and an application should have been sent at least four weeks prior to moderation.

- 3 Applications will not be accepted after the publication of learner results. It is important to process applications before the issue of results, so it may not be possible to respond individually to each request.

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- 4 Once received by ASDAN details are recorded on a pro forma and acknowledgement sent within 5 working days.
- 5 If necessary, the application is discussed with the Compliance Manager and appropriate other senior staff (eg Principal Moderators). Centres and/or other relevant persons are informed of the decision in writing within two weeks of the request. All information is recorded on pro forma.
- 6 If the decision is not straightforward and cannot be made without further consultation, advice is sought from other bodies eg Ofqual and/or other regulatory bodies. In the event of continued consultation acknowledgement is sent to relevant parties. Centres are informed of final decisions in writing as soon as possible.
- 7 ASDAN will provide reports on data and information on special consideration to the regulatory bodies on request.

3 Reasonable adjustment

A reasonable adjustment is any action which helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation. All adjustments will be consistent with the learner's normal way of working and will not give the learner an unfair advantage over other learners. Reasonable adjustments are approved and put in place before the assessment activity takes place.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments applies to three separate requirements:

1 Adjusting the way things are done

This refers to any provision, criterion or practice which may place a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. These cover all aspects of teaching and assessment, for example: recruitment and selection; training; including sickness absence policies.

2 Adjusting physical features of the school or centre

It may be necessary to make adjustments to overcome barriers created by the physical features of the classroom. This includes any physical feature which puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with a non-disabled person.

3 Providing extra equipment

The Equality Act 2010 refers to this as an auxiliary aid (for example a hearing-loop) or an auxiliary service (a person/service provider that gives assistance to the disabled person). This requirement means taking reasonable steps to provide an auxiliary aid where the absence of such an aid would place a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage when compared with persons who are not disabled.

3.1 Examples of reasonable adjustments

Examples of reasonable adjustments can include:

- Giving more one-to-one support to help prioritise the work of a learner suffering from anxiety.
- Allowing more frequent breaks for someone with diabetes to get the right amount of food or drink throughout the day.
- Giving more time for someone with dyslexia to do any written or reading tests that are part of the assessment process.
- Modifying instructions or reference manuals, eg providing them in Braille or large print.
- Providing additional or tailored training, coaching or mentoring, for example for someone with severe dyslexia.
- Adjusting teaching hours. For example, allowing someone whose medication side effect is fatigue, a later or flexible start time, or more frequent rest breaks.
- Changing the place of study. For example moving an individual with limited mobility to a ground-floor location or allowing home working for part of the working week.

3 Reasonable adjustment

- Providing special equipment. For example voice-activated software for someone with a visual impairment.
- Providing a reader or interpreter, eg for someone who is deaf.
- Changing the method of doing the assessment, eg allowing a learner who cannot drive due to epilepsy to use buses for travel.
- Modifying procedures for testing and / or assessments as part of a group exercise, this will need to be pre-approved by ASDAN before teaching and assessments start.

3.2 Procedure for applying for reasonable adjustments

- 1 Particular assessment requirements are identified within a centre and reference is made to **ASDAN's reasonable adjustments guidance**. Following internal consideration, a decision is made either that an application is made to the awarding body or that the centre will allow access arrangements (depending on the nature of the adjustment required).
- 2 Applications are made in writing to **compliance@asdan.org.uk** using copies of the forms provided (downloadable from the ASDAN website: **asdan.org.uk** as appropriate), together with relevant supporting evidence. Applications must be sent as early as possible and no later than 10 working days prior to the external moderation.
- 3 Once received by ASDAN details are recorded on a pro forma and, if necessary, acknowledgement sent in writing within 5 working days. Where a formal notification is issued by ASDAN, this should be inserted at the front of the portfolio prior to moderation.
- 4 If necessary, the application is discussed with the Compliance Manager and appropriate other senior staff (eg Principal Moderators) and raised as a standing item on the QA Managers' meeting agenda.
- 5 Centres and/or other relevant persons are informed of the decision in writing within one week of the request.
- 6 If the decision is not straightforward and cannot be made without further consultation, advice is sought from other bodies eg Ofqual and/or other regulatory bodies. In the event of continued consultation acknowledgement is sent to relevant parties. Centres are informed of final decisions in writing as soon as possible.
- 7 The Compliance Manager ensures that relevant learners are included in the moderation sample and notifies the relevant External Quality Assurer of any reasonable adjustment. This is ensure requirements have been met by the centre.
- 8 Details of access arrangements requested are saved and all information relating to this is recorded on the relevant pro forma and retained for monitoring purposes.

4 Associated policies and procedures

Document name	Responsible person
Approval guide for centres	Compliance Officer
Document retention policy	Compliance Manager
Summer awarding 2022: Guidance for centres	Compliance Manager
Qualification development policy	Qualification Manager
Validity and reliability policy	Qualification Manager



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