Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

How Maximize Education supports learners with a disability, learning difficulty, injury or difficult circumstances to take their Functional Skills assessments fairly.

Awarding organisation	VQA
Approved by	Christine Jamieson, Head of Centre
Date approved	November 2026
Next review	November 2027

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

Centre	Maximize Education Ltd, 9 Telford Court, Loansdean, Morpeth, NE61 2DB
Awarding organisation	VQA, formerly TQUK (Functional Skills English and maths, Levels 1 and 2)
Head of Centre	Christine Jamieson, CEO
Centre Contact and Exams Officer	Joe Briddon, General Manager
Applications to VQA	Joe Briddon, Exams Officer, through VQA's Verve portal or operations@tquk.org
Date approved	November 2026
Next review	November 2027, or sooner if VQA guidance changes

1. Purpose and scope

This policy explains how Maximize Education makes reasonable adjustments and applies for special consideration, so that every learner can show what they know and can do in their VQA Functional Skills assessments.

It applies to all learners registered with us for VQA Functional Skills English and maths at Levels 1 and 2, and to all staff involved in teaching, assessing, invigilating or administering these qualifications.

It follows VQA's Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy (O.P.9), and meets our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition (Conditions G6 and G7). It should be read with our Exam Complaints and Internal Appeals Policy and our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

2. Definitions

Reasonable adjustment: a change to an assessment, or to how it is taken, that removes or reduces a disadvantage caused by a learner's disability or difficulty. A learner does not have to meet the Equality Act definition of disability to be considered. An adjustment does not make the assessment easier, change what is being assessed, or give an unfair advantage.

Special consideration: an adjustment for a learner who is temporarily affected by illness, injury or another event outside their control at the time of an assessment. Before the test, this is usually an access arrangement. After the test, it is usually a small mark adjustment, normally between 1% and 5%. A successful application does not always change a learner's result.

Exemption: in rare cases, a learner may be exempted from a whole component where no other reasonable adjustment would remove the disadvantage. Their certificate will show that not all assessments were completed.

3. Principles

Every adjustment we make or request will:

- Be based on the individual learner's needs and their usual way of working in lessons and timed tasks

- Keep the assessment valid, reliable and secure, without changing the standard or what is being assessed
- Not give the learner an unfair advantage, or disadvantage anyone else
- Be agreed before the assessment and, where VQA's approval is needed, not be used until VQA approves it
- Be supported by evidence, recorded and available for internal and external quality assurance
- Involve the learner, and their parent or carer if they are under 18, in the decision

We do not make assumptions about a learner's needs. Test or exam anxiety and stress on their own are not treated as a reason for special consideration, in line with VQA's policy. Learners who feel anxious are supported through our usual pastoral and tutoring support.

4. Responsibilities

- **Head of Centre (Christine Jamieson):** overall responsibility for this policy. Makes sure staff know about it, and that adjustments are made fairly and in line with VQA's rules.
- **Exams Officer (Joe Briddon):** checks whether VQA's approval is needed, completes and submits VQA forms, keeps records and evidence, and makes sure approved adjustments are in place on the day.
- **Tutors:** identify learners who may need support as early as possible, provide evidence of the learner's usual way of working, and use agreed adjustments in lessons and mock tests.
- **Lead Internal Quality Assurer:** advises on adjustments for English Speaking, Listening and Communicating, and checks adjustments made to internal assessments as part of internal quality assurance.
- **Invigilators and facilitators:** apply approved adjustments correctly on the day and record anything that goes wrong.

5. Identifying a learner's needs

1. At enrolment and initial assessment, learners and their parents or carers are asked about any disability, learning difficulty, medical condition or other need that may affect their assessments.
2. Tutors tell the Exams Officer straight away if they notice a learner may need support, or if a learner's needs change.
3. The Exams Officer and the learner's tutor discuss the need with the learner, and their parent or carer if they are under 18, and agree what would help.
4. Where a learner's condition could affect their health and safety during an assessment, a suitably qualified person completes a risk assessment before the test. If the learner cannot safely meet every requirement, we tell VQA so an alternative can be discussed.

We aim to identify needs as early as possible, so that adjustments can be used in lessons and mock tests and become the learner's usual way of working before their test is booked.

6. Evidence

VQA may refuse a request without suitable evidence. The evidence must show the learner's need and their usual way of working. It can include:

- An assessment of the learner's needs by a competent member of staff
- A history of support given to the learner at Maximize Education or a previous school or college, such as an EHCP or support plan

- Written evidence from an independent specialist, such as a doctor, specialist assessor or educational psychologist
- For extra time, samples of timed work or mock tests showing the extra time in use, with tutor comments on why it is needed

For special consideration, the evidence depends on the circumstances. For example, a medical note for an illness or a note of a disturbance from the invigilator.

7. Who decides: the centre or VQA

Some adjustments can be decided by Maximize Education. Others need VQA's approval. The Exams Officer checks VQA's current policy each time, and contacts VQA if unsure.

Adjustments the centre can decide

- A separate room within the centre
- An alternative venue, as long as test security is kept
- A communication professional, such as a British Sign Language interpreter
- Up to 25% extra time in Functional Skills tests. VQA must be told of this decision on its 25% Extra Time for Functional Skills form.
- Use of an English dictionary in the English reading test. No application is needed.
- Adjustments to the English Speaking, Listening and Communicating assessment, such as rest breaks or extra time, as long as the assessment criteria are still fully met. We ask VQA's advice if unsure.

Adjustments that need VQA's approval

- More than 25% extra time. We state the exact percentage needed.
- Supervised rest breaks in a test
- A reader, computer reader, reading pen, prompter, scribe or transcriber
- A word processor or other ICT. Spelling and grammar checks are switched off unless VQA agrees otherwise.
- A bilingual dictionary, or white noise
- Modified papers, such as coloured, enlarged or audio papers. VQA needs more notice for these.
- An exemption from a component

Rules for Functional Skills English

- **Reading:** a human reader is not allowed. A learner who needs reading support takes a paper-based test using an exam reading pen, such as a C-Pen, with VQA's approval.
- **Writing:** a learner who uses a spellchecker or scribe cannot gain the marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar. We explain this to the learner before the request is made.

8. Applying to VQA

1. The Exams Officer completes the right VQA form: Reasonable Adjustment, 25% Extra Time for Functional Skills, Special Consideration or Exemption.
2. One form is completed for each learner. Where one event affects a group, one form can be sent with a list of the learners affected.
3. Each form includes the learner's name, our VQA centre number, the tests affected, the adjustment or consideration requested with the reason, and the supporting evidence.

4. Forms are sent through VQA's Verve portal, or to operations@tquk.org.
5. Reasonable adjustment requests are sent before the learner's test is booked. We wait for VQA's decision before booking and do not use the adjustment until it is approved.
6. The learner is told the outcome. If VQA refuses, we explain the reasons and discuss any alternative it suggests.

Before any information is sent, the learner, or their parent or carer if they are under 18, gives written consent. We explain what will be shared, and that VQA will use it only to process the request. Information is stored securely in line with UK GDPR.

9. Special consideration

When a learner may be eligible

- Their performance was affected by circumstances outside their control, such as recent illness, an accident, a bereavement or a serious disturbance during the test
- Agreed alternative arrangements turned out to be inadequate
- They missed part of an assessment for reasons outside their control

When a learner is not eligible

- There is no evidence the learner was affected at the time of the test
- They were absent because of a holiday, other personal arrangements or unauthorised absence
- Their preparation was affected by issues such as staff absence or building work
- The problem was caused by not following centre or VQA instructions, misreading the paper, or taking recreational drugs
- A disruption was minor and was dealt with straight away by the invigilator

Deadlines

- **Before the test:** at least 15 working days before the test date.
- **After the test:** within 5 working days of the test.
- If a need arises within 15 working days of a test, we normally move the test to a later date instead. Functional Skills tests are on demand, so this is usually the fairest option.
- VQA only accepts a request after results are issued if we overlooked the application, or medical evidence shows the learner was affected at the time.

Invigilators record any incident or disturbance during a test on the day, so that it can be used as evidence.

10. On the day of the test

- The Exams Officer gives invigilators a list of approved adjustments for each test, and checks they are in place before the test starts.
- Anyone acting as a reader, scribe, prompter or other facilitator is trained, follows VQA's rules and the JCQ Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments, and is not the learner's Functional Skills tutor.
- Equipment and assistive technology are checked before the test.
- If an approved adjustment is not in place or fails, the invigilator records it, and the Exams Officer considers applying for special consideration within 5 working days.

11. Appeals

A learner, or their parent or carer, who disagrees with a centre decision about a reasonable adjustment or special consideration can appeal under section 7.3 of our Exam Complaints and Internal Appeals Policy. They write to admin@maximizeeducation.com within 5 working days of the decision, and receive a written outcome within 5 working days, before their test where possible.

If the decision was made by VQA, the learner can appeal to VQA under its Appeals Policy. We will help them do this.

12. Malpractice

Giving an adjustment that has not been agreed or approved, or misusing an adjustment, is malpractice. It is dealt with under our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

13. Records and review

The Exams Officer keeps a record of every adjustment and application (Appendix A), with the evidence, VQA forms and outcomes. Records are kept securely for at least 3 years, and until any appeal, malpractice case or results enquiry is complete, whichever is later. They are made available to our Internal Quality Assurers and to VQA's External Quality Assurer.

This policy is shared with learners and parents or carers at enrolment and is available on request. The Head of Centre reviews it every year, or sooner if VQA guidance changes, and shares it with all staff.

Approval

	Name	**Date**
Approved by Head of Centre	Christine Jamieson	
Signed		
Next review		November 2027

References

- VQA, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy (O.P.9)
- VQA, Appeals Policy (C.P.1)
- Ofqual, General Conditions of Recognition, Conditions G6 and G7
- Equality Act 2010
- JCQ, Instructions for conducting Functional Skills assessments (English and mathematics), 2025 to 2026

Appendix A: Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Record

Complete one record for each learner. Keep it with the supporting evidence, and a copy of any VQA form and outcome, for at least 3 years.

Learner

Learner name	
VQA registration number	
Qualification and component (tick)	☐ English reading ☐ English writing ☐ English Speaking, Listening and Communicating ☐ Maths
Level and test date(s)	

Need and evidence

Request type (tick)	☐ Reasonable adjustment ☐ Up to 25% extra time (centre decision, VQA notified) ☐ Special consideration before the test ☐ Special consideration after the test ☐ Exemption
Description of need or circumstances	
Evidence held (for example needs assessment, history of provision, specialist report, medical note)	
Learner's usual way of working	
Adjustment agreed	

Consent and approval

Learner consent to share information with VQA (signature and date)	
Parent or carer consent, if learner is under 18 (signature and date)	
Agreed by Exams Officer (signature and date)	
VQA approval needed? (tick)	☐ No, centre decision ☐ Yes, VQA notified only (25% extra time) ☐ Yes, VQA approval needed
Date sent to VQA, and VQA outcome	
Learner told outcome (date)	
In place on test day (name and date)	