

Reasonable Accommodation Policy for Learners with a Disability, Medical Condition or Learning Difficulty

Policy Owner: Quality Assurance Manager

Policy Contact: Quality Assurance Manager registration@metac.ie

1. Reason for Policy

METAC is committed to building an inclusive learning environment. In compliance with legislation, METAC is further committed to the provision of reasonable accommodation as defined in that legislation as a response to meet individual needs and as far as possible to enable full access and participation for all learners with a disability, a significant on-going medical condition or learning difficulty. The disability must be long-term and impact on learning and must be substantial.

2. Policy Statement

Under the Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2015, METAC is fully committed to providing reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of learners with a disability, a significant on-going medical condition or learning difficulty to enable them to successfully complete their programme on an equal footing with other learners. A reasonable accommodation might be any action that helps alleviate a substantial disadvantage arising from the learner's disability, significant medical condition or learning difficulty, without changing the demands or the integrity of the examination or the programme.

Providing a reasonable accommodation might involve changing procedures, modifying the delivery of the course taken, providing additional services (e.g., examination arrangements, materials in large print), or altering the physical environment. It does not substitute for, or exempt learners from meeting the core requirements of their programme. All learners registered with METAC must be able to meet the learning outcomes of their programme. Reasonable and appropriate accommodations (adjustments and supports) and/or auxiliary aids are determined on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the individual's certified disability/significant medical condition/specific learning difficulty. Reasonable accommodations are intended to support learners to become more independent in their learning.

3. Scope

All learners seeking reasonable accommodation in relation to a disability, a significant medical condition or learning difficulty are required to confidentially disclose their status to METAC prior to programme commencement. Disclosure of a disability, significant medical condition or learning difficulty does not necessarily imply the need for reasonable accommodation or that an application for accommodation would be successful.

The named person in METAC for advice and support is the Quality Assurance Manager available on registration@metac.ie or 057 87 56540

4. Procedures

A) Initial Application

Learners seeking reasonable accommodation in relation to a disability, a significant medical condition or learning difficulty are required to confidentially disclose their status to METAC prior to programme commencement.

This can be done by requesting the Reasonable Accommodation Request Form (Appendix 1) from the Quality Assurance Manager at registration@metac.ie

Learners should ensure that they have gathered all necessary medical evidence as outlined in Appendix 2 in advance of this application.

This applies to incoming learners or an existing learner who may not have previously declared a disability/significant medical condition/learning difficulty, or whose personal circumstances have recently changed.

In the case of the recent diagnosis of a previously unknown condition, the sudden onset or worsening of a significant medical/health condition, or where a learner has experienced an accident, consideration may be given to a late application on a case-by-case basis.

Whilst every effort will be made by METAC to facilitate learners in these circumstances, it may not be feasible to respond effectively to unanticipated learner needs within the period preceding scheduled assessments.

B) Assessment Process

Upon receipt of a correctly completed and signed application for reasonable accommodation and supporting documentation, the Quality Assurance Manager will contact applicants to arrange a meeting with an internal disability expert to conduct a Learning Needs Assessment (LNA).

LNAs determine the level of support that learners require. Based on appropriate evidence of a disability/significant medical condition/specific learning difficulty, and information obtained from the learner on the impact of this, the internal expert will identify supports designed to meet the learner's needs. This assessment meeting may be conducted face-to-face or remotely via phone or video conference (Microsoft Teams).

As part of the LNA, the following areas are addressed:

- Nature of disability or condition, to include impact on education, severity, hospital admissions etc.
- Treatment: any medication they are taking, outpatients' appointments, physiotherapy

- Previous support: what arrangements were made at secondary school or other FET/HE institutions, if any
- Current difficulties: what difficulties does the learner anticipate they may have with their course
- Access to equipment and IT facilities
- Appropriate academic and disability support. These might include, for example, accessible class venues, in-course support, examination support arrangements

The Quality Assurance Manager will consider the recommendations identified within the report following this assessment and determine the feasibility of making the accommodations required.

Where the necessary accommodations result in additional costs, beyond those which are standard in assessment, the Quality Assurance Manager will consult the Director of Training and Director of Finance for approval.

Where a reasonable accommodation request has been granted, the learner will be notified in writing as indicated and will be required to confirm acceptance of the offer of reasonable accommodation in writing within 2 weeks of the date of the letter of offer. A failure to confirm acceptance in writing within the defined time period will be taken as a rejection of the offer and the file will be closed.

Where an application for reasonable accommodation has been refused, the learner will be notified in writing as indicated.

The Quality Assurance Manager will provide, to the Internal Quality Panel an anonymised summary report on reasonable accommodations granted. This will include the number of applications received, the basis of the application and the accommodations granted.

C) Guidelines for Granting and Providing Reasonable Accommodations

Alternative Venues – Learners receiving reasonable accommodations may sit their examinations in a different venue to their peer group and can, if necessary, sit an examination in a room of their own. Alternative venues should be fully accessible to learners with disabilities. The physical space available should be appropriate for the effective provision of the reasonable accommodation, for example:

- A large table to accommodate enlarged papers, Braille material, and/or technological aids
- Adequate floor space for manoeuvring wheelchairs, mobility aids, crutches, canes and any other physical aid
- Access to power points for equipment and/or assistive technology

It is the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Manager to ensure that all announcements are conveyed to all learners sitting examinations in separate examination venues.

Time Allowance – Learners whose examination performance is significantly impacted by a disability/significant medical condition/learning difficulty may require extra time in examinations. Extra time is set at 10 minutes per hour. In exceptional circumstances this extra time may be extended.

Rest Breaks – Learners who may require a rest break in examinations include learners whose ability to complete the examination within the required time is significantly impacted by a medical, sensory, psychological or physical disability. Rest breaks should be considered as pauses in the exam and the exam time should be stopped when a learner takes a rest break. Learners will have 10 minutes per hour.

Learners should tell the invigilator when they wish to have a rest break. They may take as much or as little out of their allocation as they wish at any one time. Learners can choose to stay in the room for their rest break or may leave the room if supervised. This can include going to the bathroom, taking a drink or snack if recommended, or moving around to relieve physical discomfort. Learners may not talk about or work on the examination during their rest break. The learner's examination paper(s) should also be turned over during rest breaks.

Scribe – Scribes may only be granted for learners who cannot handwrite due to the nature of their disability/significant medical condition/learning difficulty. Additional time of ten minutes per hour and a separate assessment room may be provided when using a scribe.

Both the learner and scribe should have access to training and practice sessions before the examination. The scribe should be an independent person and not known to the learner. The scribe may also act as the invigilator for the examination. Sometimes a learner may require a reader and a scribe. In such instances, the same person may act as both. A recording of the session is recommended as this will act as a secondary source of information for the examiner if required. Scribes should be capable of writing legibly at appropriate speed when writing a learner's dictated answers.

The scribe is required to produce an accurate record of the learner's answers and to write at an appropriate speed. The scribe should arrive before the commencement of the examination, allowing sufficient time to establish a rapport with the learner, to make seating arrangements and to agree guidelines for:

- Presentation
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- New paragraphs

The scribe should be relaxed. This may help to alleviate any anxieties the learner may have in relation to the examination. The scribe should advise learners as to the duration of the examination, the number of questions to be answered and any additional instructions. The starting time and finish time of the examination should be clearly stated by the scribe and/or invigilator. If the learner needs a rest or toilet break the scribe/invigilator should accompany them. A learner may elect to write sections of the paper themselves. If the learner writes notes, essay plans or illustrations, these should be included with the examination script. For example, the learner might draw rough diagrams from which the scribe will draw a final version and include both copies with the examination script.

Reader – Learners whose ability to read is significantly impacted by a disability may require a reader in examinations. Most learners will be accommodated together in the same venue with a shared reader. In exceptional cases only an individual reader may be required. If the examination is assessing competence in reading and reading comprehension the provision of a reader may not be appropriate.

Both the learner and reader should have access to training and practice sessions before the examination. The reader should be an independent person and not known to the learner. In the case of a foreign language, scientific, mathematical, or technical subject, the reader should have a working knowledge of that subject/language. The reader should be able to read accurately and at a reasonable rate. The reader may also act as the invigilator for the examination. Sometimes a learner may require a reader and a scribe. In such instances the same person may act as both.

The reader should not provide content to the learner or offer any suggestions. The reader should not advise the learner on which questions to attempt, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which questions should be attempted. Instructions given on the examination paper can only be repeated when the reader is specifically requested to do so by the learner. The reader should make no other comment or use any intonation which emphasises any part of the examination questions, nor make any interpretation of the examination question(s). The reader should not discuss any matter with the learner during the examination unless it relates to the re-reading of an examination question (Having been requested to do so by the learner).

When working with vision-impaired learners, readers should read the examination questions as often as requested. Readers should provide information regarding time elapsed and time remaining. Readers should help a learner using tactile maps, diagrams, graphs and tables to extract the information which the print copy would provide to a sighted learner. Readers should give the spelling of a word on an examination paper if requested.

Sign Language Interpreter – A sign language interpreter translates oral-based language, text and speech, into Irish Sign Language (ISL) so a Deaf person can understand what is being communicated.

Where a learner's first language is ISL, an interpreter may, if requested, be made available to translate the examination paper into ISL. An interpreter may also be made available to facilitate a learner whose first language is ISL answering the examination questions in ISL. This can be done in one of the following ways:

- The learner may wish to sign their examination and to have this simultaneously transcribed by a scribe
- In exceptional circumstances where learning outcomes cannot be assessed by any other mode, the presentation of assignments or examinations in ISL recorded on videotape may be permitted. If a learner signs the examination to a scribe or on video, additional time, a separate examination venue and appropriate invigilation will be granted

The interpreter should arrive before the commencement of the examination, to make seating arrangements and to interpret interactions between invigilators and learners. This time should also be used as an opportunity for the learner and the interpreter to become familiar with each other's communication styles. The interpreter should translate all announcements and information given by the invigilator prior to and during the examination. The interpreter should translate all interaction between the examiner and the learner, including questions and clarifications. The interpreter should interpret no other speech/sign, nor go beyond the learner's or the invigilator's/examiner's communications.

The learner may request that the interpreter translate questions from the written examination paper. If, following translation, there is need for further clarification, the interpreter may attempt to rephrase their interpretation, but they must not attempt to introduce additional information over and above that which is specifically mentioned in the question. Any further clarification that is sought should be referred to the examiner and not offered by the interpreter.

Where a learner's first language is ISL an interpreter may, if requested, offer a translation of ISL vocabulary into English; this may include offering the spelling of word in English based on ISL vocabulary. The interpreter must not provide additional examples, contextual information nor should they attempt to provide guidance to the learner in answering a question.

If a learner wishes to sign their assignment or examination and to have this simultaneously transcribed by a scribe, the interpreter may seek clarification, as is normal in interpreted interaction. This should be done in a manner that reduces the impact upon the learner's flow. If the interpreter is seeking frequent clarification, the matter should be raised with the Quality Assurance Manager at the earliest opportunity, and a suitable replacement for further examinations should be found.

Furniture in Examination Venues – A learner with a disability or significant medical condition may require alternative furniture (i.e., chair support, writing board, footstool etc.) in examination venues.

Personal Assistants – Learners who have a Personal Assistant may require the Personal Assistant to attend the examination venue.

Examination Papers in Alternative Formats – Learners who are visually impaired may require examination papers in enlarged print. Learners who have a visual impairment may require graphs, diagrams, maps, or other visual elements of the examination paper presented in a tactile format. Learners who are blind or vision-impaired and fluent Braille readers may require a Braille version of the examination paper. Learners who have difficulty reading the examination paper may require coloured overlays.

Flexible Examination Arrangements – Flexible examination arrangements refer to any alteration in the standard form of assessment to accommodate a learner's disability/significant medical condition/learning difficulty. This might include:

- Provision of an oral examination instead of a written test
- Some flexibility around the scheduling of examinations, such as, allowing more time between examinations for a learner with a physical disability or medical condition who experiences fatigue
- Examinations split into more than one session

It should be noted that flexible examination arrangements are granted in exceptional circumstances only.

D) Review

All reasonable accommodations will be subject to annual review to ensure the effectiveness of the accommodations provided and to facilitate the termination of accommodations no longer required or necessary. Learners who fail to use a reasonable accommodation that has been granted will have that accommodation reviewed.

5. Policy History

Issue No.	Date	Approved by:	Details of Change
1	08/12/2021	Ross O'Donoghue, QA Manager	New policy

6. References

Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2011

APPENDIX 1

Reasonable Accommodation Request Form

METAC will facilitate learners who may need extra support/resources in order to access assessment on an equal footing with other learners.
Further information can be found in Appx 19 Reasonable Accommodation Policy for Learners with a Disability, Medical Condition or Learning Difficulty.

Instructions for Completion:

- A relevant Medical Consultant/Specialist who has the training and experience with a condition/disability **must** complete this form
- This form must be stamped
- All applicants must complete this form, except for those with Specific Learning Difficulties (e.g., Dyslexia), who must provide a recent Educational Psychologist's report

Please complete ALL sections below in BLOCK capitals:

1. Learner Details

Name:
Date of Birth:
Phone Number:
Email:

To be completed by the Learner:

I consent to sharing this information with relevant personnel at METAC for the purpose of my application for reasonable accommodation.

I understand that this information will be stored as outlined in METAC's Records Management and Retention Policy.

Signed: _____

2. Qualified Health Professional/Specialist Details

Name:
Phone:
Email:
Position/Professional Credentials:
Date of Report:

If you are a GP or other health professional (not a Consultant or Specialist), please tick the relevant box below:

I have a diagnosis on file from the appropriate consultant/specialist named above
N.B. A copy of the document in which the diagnosis is confirmed must be attached to this form.

OR

I can confirm that I have diagnosed this person with a disability e.g. depression/ acute anxiety

3. Disability Information (to be completed by qualified health professional)

Please tick all that apply:

Disability Type	✓	Disability Type	✓	Disability Type	✓
ADHD	<input type="checkbox"/>	Autism Spectrum Disorder	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dyspraxia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blind/Visual Impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deaf/Hard of Hearing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mental Health Condition	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neurological Condition	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Significant Ongoing Illness	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speech and Language Communication Disorder	<input type="checkbox"/>	Specific Learning Difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

Please state the specific name of the disability/medical condition/learning difficulty:

Date of Diagnosis/Onset of Disability: _____

Please briefly describe the course of the condition i.e., will remain static, may have periods of relapse/remission, may deteriorate:

Duration: Ongoing/Permanent Temporary Fluctuating

How does the disability/medical condition impact on the learner's ability to study and participate (example, fatigue, concentration, pain, etc.)?

Please describe measures currently being taken to treat the disability/condition (e.g., medication, therapy).

What recommendations would you make for reasonable adjustments to enable equal participation in education (e.g., examination accommodations, adaptive equipment etc.)?

Where a Consultant has completed this form, the Consultant must complete the details below:

Signature:

Date: ___ / ___ / _____

Name of Consultant: _____

Official Stamp:

If a stamp is not available, this form should be accompanied by a business card or headed paper.

Where a GP has completed this form, the GP must complete the details below:

Signature:

Date: ___ / ___ / _____

Name of GP: _____

IMC Number:

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Official Stamp:

If a stamp is not available, this form should be accompanied by a business card or headed paper.

APPENDIX 2

Documentation Required for Verifying a Disability

Type of Disability	Type of Documentation	Appropriate Professional
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	Evidence of Disability Form OR Existing report	Consultant Psychiatrist OR Psychologist OR Neurologist
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (including Asperger's Syndrome)	Evidence of Disability Form OR Existing report	Consultant Psychiatrist OR Psychologist OR Neurologist
Blind/Vision Impaired	Evidence of Disability Form OR Existing report N.B. Evidence from high street retailers not acceptable	Ophthalmologist OR Ophthalmic Surgeon OR Letter from the National Council for the Blind confirming registration with the council OR If a learner has attended a school for the Blind, a letter on headed notepaper signed by the principal which confirms attendance at the school

Type of Disability	Type of Documentation	Appropriate Professional
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	Evidence of Disability Form OR Existing report N.B. Evidence from high street retailers not acceptable	An audiogram from a professionally qualified Audiologist and/or ENT Consultant, with signature, clearly indicating moderate to profound bilateral hearing loss (i.e. above 40dB). OR If a learner has attended a school for the Deaf, a letter on headed notepaper signed by the principal which confirms attendance at the school
Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) - Dyspraxia/ Dysgraphia.	Full psychoeducational assessment AND Evidence of Disability Form OR Existing report	Psychologist AND Occupational Therapist OR Neurologist OR Chartered Physiotherapist
Mental Health Condition	Evidence of Disability Form completed no more than 5 years before point of Needs Assessment OR Existing report which must be no older than 5 years at point of Needs Assessment	Consultant Psychiatrist OR Specialist Registrar
Neurological Condition (incl. Epilepsy and Brain Injury)	Evidence of Disability Form OR Existing report	Neurologist OR Other relevant Consultant
Physical Disability	Evidence of Disability Form OR Existing report	Orthopaedic Consultant OR Other relevant consultant appropriate to the disability/ condition
Significant on-going illness	Evidence of Disability Form no more than 5 years before point of Needs Assessment OR	<i>Diabetes Type 1:</i> Endocrinologist OR Paediatrician <i>Cystic Fibrosis (CF):</i> Consultant Respiratory

Type of Disability	Type of Documentation	Appropriate Professional
	Existing report which must be no older than 5 years at point of Needs Assessment	Physician OR Paediatrician <i>Gastroenterology Conditions:</i> Gastroenterologist <i>Other Conditions:</i> Relevant Consultant/ Specialist in area of condition
Speech and Language Communication Disorder	Evidence of Disability Form OR Existing report	Speech and Language Therapist
Specific Learning Difficulty (incl. Dyslexia & Dyscalculia)	Full Adult Educational Psychology Assessment	Psychologist This must be less than three years old and must have been conducted by an educational psychologist