

Building Safety Competence Foundation

**Access Arrangements
and Reasonable Adjustments
for candidates with disabilities and specific
requirements**

This booklet covers the following Schemes:

Competence Validation Assessment – Building Control
Inspector
(All Bands)

1 June 2022 to 30 June 2023

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Importance of these guidelines

These guidelines illustrate BSCF's approach to access and reasonable adjustments arrangements. It is therefore the responsibility of the BSCF Management Team, senior leadership team, the assessor(s) and any relevant Scheme or Impartiality Committee(s) to familiarise themselves with the entire contents of this document.

- The member of staff within BSCF, supported their line manager and members of the senior leadership team, must lead on the access arrangements/reasonable adjustments process.
- Members of the senior leadership team must support the Coordinating staff in identifying, determining and implementing appropriate access arrangements and reasonable adjustments.
- BSCF Coordinating staff must work with Scheme Managers, Assessors, Events Team, support staff and office personnel to ensure that approved access arrangements/ reasonable adjustments are put in place for assessment.
- Where appropriate, the BSCF will also need to work with specialist advisors.
- The Coordinating Team must work with Scheme Manager to identify the most appropriate format of modified papers which will enable the candidate(s) to access their examinations.

Failure to comply with the principles contained in this document have the potential to constitute malpractice which may impact on the candidate's result(s).

Examples of failure to comply include:

- putting in place access arrangements/adjustments that are not approved;
- failing to consider putting in place access arrangements (which may be a failure to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments);
- permitting access arrangements/adjustments within the centre which are not supported by appropriate evidence; or
- charging a fee for providing reasonable adjustments to disabled candidates.

Whilst this document addresses the duty upon BSCF to make reasonable adjustments and avoid unfavourable treatment towards restricted candidates, it cannot cover every scenario. Each case will be determined by on its own facts as to what is reasonable.

Deadlines for submitting applications for access arrangements/ reasonable adjustments and orders for modified papers

Arrangements must be processed and approved before an examination or assessment, no later than the published deadline as below.

Access arrangement	Final deadline
Modified papers	20 Days Prior to assessment
All other access arrangements	20 Days Prior to assessment

Terms and Definitions

Access arrangements

Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow candidates with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment.

The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment.

BSCF has adopted the principles and requirements the 'Equality Act 2010' makes upon awarding bodies to ensure that our competence assessment schemes are equitable and impartial for all applicants, candidates and certificated persons.

Reasonable adjustments

BSCF is required to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled.

BSCF is required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. An example would be a Braille paper which would be a reasonable adjustment for a vision impaired candidate who could read Braille. A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements.

Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- the needs of the disabled candidate;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; and
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the candidate and other candidates. An adjustment will not be approved if it:
 - involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body;
 - involves unreasonable timeframes; or
 - affects the security and integrity of the assessment.

This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'.

In most cases it will not be reasonable for adjustments to be made to assessment objectives within a Certification scheme. To do so would likely undermine the effectiveness of the scheme in providing a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of the candidate. There is no duty to make adjustments that the Scheme Committee have specified should not be made.

There is no duty to make adjustments to competence.

*References to legislation are to the Equality Act 2010.

Evidence of need

The evidence of need will vary depending on the disability and the access arrangement(s) being applied for.

Failure to produce the appropriate evidence of need will lead to the application being rejected. Usually, further evidence of need will be required for a substantial impairment.

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability

Generally, impairments have to meet the statutory requirements set out in section 6 and Schedule 1 to the Equality Act 2010 and associated regulations.

The Equality Act 2010 definition of disability is usually considered cumulatively in terms of:

- identifying a physical or mental impairment;
- looking into adverse effects and assessing which are substantial;
- considering if substantial adverse effects are long term;
- judging the impact of long-term adverse effects on normal day-to-day activities.

Statutory guidance on the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability has been produced by the Office for Disability Issues (within the Department for Work and Pensions) to help better understand and apply this definition:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570382/Equality_Act_2010-disability_definition.pdf

The clear starting point in the statutory guidance is that disability means 'limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'.

'Substantial' means 'more than minor or trivial'. Substantial adverse effects can be determined by looking at the effects on a person with the impairment, comparing those to a person without the impairment, to judge if the difference between the two is more than minor or trivial.

'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months or is likely to do so.

'Normal day-to-day activities' could be determined by reference to the illustrative, non-exhaustive list of factors on pages 47 to 51 of the statutory guidance relating to the Equality Act 2010. (Study and education related activities are included in the meaning of 'day-to-day' activities.)

The guidance from the Office for Disability Issues referred to above illustrates the factors which might reasonably be regarded as having a substantial adverse effect on normal day-to-day activities. Factors that might reasonably be expected not to have a substantial adverse effect are also provided.

Factors that might reasonably be expected to have a substantial adverse effect include:

- persistent and significant difficulty in reading and understanding written material where this is in the person's native language, for example because of a mental impairment, a learning difficulty or a sensory or multi-sensory impairment;
- persistent distractibility or difficulty concentrating;
- difficulty understanding or following simple verbal instructions;
- physical impairment – for example, difficulty operating a computer because of physical restrictions in using a keyboard.

Factors that might reasonably be expected not to have a substantial adverse effect include:

- minor problems with writing or spelling;
- inability to read very small or indistinct print without the aid of a magnifying glass;

- inability to converse orally in a language which is not the speaker's native spoken language.

Assessments - information and guidance

The BSCF has a duty, in relation to granting certification, to not discriminate in respect of all protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 (with the exception of the protected characteristics of marriage and civil partnership).

We will take steps when developing specifications, identifying the assessment criteria and drafting question papers to ensure that the impact of each of these upon individuals with differing protected characteristics is minimised.

This section specifically sets out the duty upon BSCF to make reasonable adjustments and avoid unfavourable treatment towards disabled candidates.

1.1 Conferring Certification

When assessing candidates and granting certificates BSCF must not discriminate, harass or victimise and have a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

1.2 Duty to make a reasonable adjustment

The duty for BSCF to make a reasonable adjustment will apply where assessment arrangements would put a disabled candidate at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a candidate who is not disabled.

In such circumstances, the BSCF is required to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage. BSCF are not required to make adjustments to the standard being applied when conducting an examination/assessment.

Where BSCF is under a duty to make a reasonable adjustment, it must not charge a disabled candidate any additional fee in relation to the adjustment or aid.

1.3 Definition of disability

A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on someone's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

1.4 Reasonable adjustments for candidates defined as disabled under the terms of the Equality Act 2010?

A reasonable adjustment required by a candidate who is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010 will usually be an access arrangement for the assessment in question, as listed in Chapters 5 and 6 of this document.

The arrangements set out in this document are the most common ones that are put in place. They will be sufficient to enable candidates who experience persistent and significant difficulties (whether those are a result of a disability within the meaning of the Equality Act or otherwise) to access assessments.

1.5 Candidates with substantial needs

There may be disabled candidates who require other adjustments which are not listed in this document. Accordingly, the list of arrangements is not exhaustive.

The BSCF may require more compelling evidence of need before approving an arrangement that would otherwise unfairly advantage the candidate. The requirement for evidence of need is important to maintain the rigour and standard of the examination system. Evidence is also necessary to ensure that

those trusting BSCF certificates can continue to have confidence in the Certification Scheme.

Each application will be considered in the light of the candidate's needs. The response will relate primarily to the effect the requested adjustment may have on the assessment objective being tested in the qualification.

1.6 The BSCF - Duty to Make Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 states that when assessing candidates and conferring vocational qualifications awarding bodies must not discriminate, harass or victimise and have a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

1.7 What are our duties?

The duty for BSCF to make a reasonable adjustment will apply where an assessment arrangement would put a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. In such circumstances, the BSCF is required to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage. BSCF not required to make adjustments to the standard being applied when conducting an examination/assessment.

It is vital that the BSCF act with integrity with regard to all certification activities. BSCF must ensure that candidates have the correct information and advice on their selected certification assessment(s) and that the assessment(s) will meet their needs. As part of the application process BSCF must make justifiable and professional judgements about the candidate's potential to successfully complete the assessment and achieve certification. Such an assessment must identify, where appropriate, the support that will be made available to the candidate to facilitate access to the assessment(s).

BSCF must ensure that candidates are aware of:

- the range of options available, including any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary, to enable the demonstration of attainment across all the required assessments; and
- any restrictions on progression routes to the candidate as a result of not achieving certain outcomes.

1.8 Guidance on reasonable adjustments

BSCF aims to ensure open access to competence assessments to all candidates who are eligible for reasonable adjustments in assessments, without compromising the assessment of the skills, knowledge, understanding or competence being measured.

A reasonable adjustment is agreed at the pre-assessment stage (following formal application) and is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty, which places the candidate at a substantial disadvantage.

An adjustment will not be reasonable if it affects the reliability or validity of assessment outcomes, or it gives the candidate an unfair (i.e., not reasonable) assessment advantage over other candidates undertaking the same or similar assessments.

The Scheme Manager (or designated nominee) must ensure that an adjustment implemented on behalf of the candidate is based on firm evidence of a barrier to assessment and is in line with this guidance. Failure to do so may result in advice or action of the Independent Certification Committee (ICC) to address any malpractice.

1.9 Reasonable adjustments within competence assessments

Competence assessments certify competence against specifications and assessment criteria, and/or National Standards and an approved assessment mechanism. Any reasonable adjustment must reflect the working practice of a candidate

Candidates may, however, use electronic and other aids to demonstrate competence. The aids must either be generally commercially available, or available from specialist suppliers, and be feasible to use in the assessment process.

The following adaptations are examples of what may be considered as facilitating access if they do not impact on any competence standards being tested:

- adapting assessment materials;
- adaptation of the physical environment for access purposes;
- adaptation to equipment;
- assessment material in an enlarged format or Braille;
- assessment material on coloured paper or in audio format;
- extensions;
- British Sign Language (BSL);
- adapting the assessment method;
- changing usual assessment arrangements;
- extra time, e.g. assignment
- modified language assessment material;
- practical assistant;
- prompter;
- providing assistance during assessment;
- reader;
- scribe;
- use of assistive software/technology;
- use of coloured overlays, low vision aids;
- use of a different assessment location;
- use of ICT/responses using electronic devices.

It is important to note that not all the adjustments (as above) will be reasonable, permissible or practical in some situations. The candidate may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all assessments.

Candidates should be fully involved in any decisions about adjustments/adaptations. This will ensure that individual needs can be met, whilst still bearing in mind the specified assessment criteria.

As the needs and circumstances of each candidate are different, BSCF must consider any request for a reasonable adjustment on a case-by-case basis. Evidence of need will be required.

1.10 Modified papers

To apply for Braille papers, modified enlarged papers, modified language papers or papers adapted for the purpose of using a recording, the BSCF must be informed no later than 10 weeks before the date of the assessment.

Where it reflects the learner's normal way of working, BSCF may provide an A3 enlargement of assessment materials

The language of all assessment materials must not be changed without the prior permission of the Scheme Manager.

Secure question papers must not be opened early.

Application of assessment objectives for Candidates with disabilities and other difficulties

2.1 General

BSCF must ensure that applicants, candidates and certified persons have, in an accessible format, the correct information and advice on their selected certification and that the certification will meet their needs.

BSCF must assess each potential candidate and make justifiable and professional judgements about the applicant's potential to successfully complete the assessment and achieve certification. Such an evaluation must identify, where appropriate, the support that will be made available to the candidate to facilitate access to the qualifications.

2.2 Assessment objectives

The candidate must demonstrate attainment in a number of assessment objectives in order to demonstrate competence in chosen scope of certification.

The assessment objectives define the competencies being tested by the specification. These test knowledge, understanding, skills and their application. The assessment objectives are set out in the Scheme information documentation.

To be awarded certification, the candidate must be able to demonstrate the level of competence or ability against the assessment objectives.

2.3 Disability and other difficulties that may affect the candidate's ability to demonstrate one or more of the assessment objectives.

An alternative route may be available in the specification and advice must be sought from Independent Certification Committee and Scheme Committees.

In some cases, a disabled candidate may have to be exempted from a component if that is the only adjustment available to enable him/her to overcome a substantial disadvantage in accessing the specification.

Sometimes, however, alternatives cannot be found because the impairment relates to a fundamental part of the assessment.

In most cases it will not be reasonable for adjustments to be made to assessment objectives. To do so would likely undermine the effectiveness of the certification in providing a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of the candidate. There is no duty to make adjustments which the scheme committee have specified should not be made.

Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and other difficulties

Some candidates with disabilities and other difficulties are likely to have several needs as set out below. They may require a range of adjustments. The examples given are therefore not exhaustive and are illustrative only.

3.1 Cognition and learning needs

E.g., Learning difficulties or specific learning difficulties (such as Dyscalculia and Dyslexia)

Candidates with cognition and learning needs may require, for example:

- supervised rest breaks
- extra time
- a computer reader or a reader
- read aloud or an examination reading pen
- a scribe
- a word processor
- a prompter
- a practical assistant
- coloured overlays
- coloured/enlarged papers
- modified language papers.

3.2 Communication and interaction needs

E.g., Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

Candidates with communication and interaction difficulties may require, for example:

- supervised rest breaks
- extra time
- a computer reader or a reader
- read aloud or an examination reading pen
- a scribe
- a word processor
- modified language papers.

3.3 Sensory and physical needs

E.g., Hearing Impairment (HI), Vision Impairment (VI), Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI), Physical Disability (PD)

Candidates with sensory and physical needs may require, for example:

- supervised rest breaks
- extra time
- a computer reader or a reader

- read aloud or an examination reading pen
- a scribe
- a word processor
- a Language Modifier
- a live speaker
- a Communication Professional
- a practical assistant
- Braille papers modified enlarged and/or modified language papers.

3.4 Social, emotional and mental health needs

E.g., Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Mental Health Conditions

Candidates with social, emotional and mental health needs may require, for example:

- supervised rest breaks
- extra time
- a computer reader or a reader
- read aloud or an examination reading pen
- a scribe
- a word processor
- a prompter
- alternative site arrangement
- separate invigilation within the centre.

Access arrangements and adjustments

4.1 Supervised rest breaks

BSCF will fully consider the option of supervised rest breaks before making an application for 25% extra time.

BSCF may provide a supervised rest break to a candidate where it is their normal way of working.

BSCF must be satisfied that:

- the candidate has an impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect, giving rise to persistent and significant difficulties (the candidate is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act); and
- there is a genuine need for the arrangement.

Supervised rest breaks will be awarded on account of:

- cognition and learning needs;
- communication and interaction needs;
- a medical condition;
- sensory and physical needs;
- social, emotional and mental health needs.

The timing of the examination should be paused and re-started when the candidate is ready to continue.

During the supervised rest break the candidate must not have access to the question paper/answer booklet.

If the candidate needs to leave the examination room, an invigilator must accompany the candidate.

The supervised rest break is not affected by or have any effect on any extra time allowance.

4.2 Awarding extra time

Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments are determined on an individual basis, based on the assessment evidence, the candidate's demonstrated needs within their normal way of working. If a candidate with processing difficulties can demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills with 25% extra time then it would not be appropriate to award more than this. To do so would not create a level playing field. It would advantage the candidate over his/her peers.

For the overwhelming majority of candidates with cognition and learning needs who require extra time, 25% will be sufficient. If more than this is needed, there must be a strong justification as to why more than 25% extra time is required, including a substantial body of centre-based evidence.

In order to award 25% extra time BSCF must determine the needs of the candidate based on one of the following:

Detailed picture of need

- Evidence of normal way of working within current role;
- showing a history of need and a clear, measurable and long-term adverse effect on performance and speed of working and;
- comments and observations from line manager as to why the candidate needs extra time and how they use the extra time awarded.

Factors BSCF must consider

Where extra time is to be made available to a candidate BSCF must ensure that appropriate invigilation and timetabling arrangements are in place.

Candidates may not require extra time for every examination/assessment and every subject. As subjects and the methods of assessment vary, so the demands on the candidate will vary.

Extra time may not be appropriate in:

- practical examinations; or
- non-examination assessments where the impairment has a minimal effect on the assessment.

Care must be taken within the centre to ensure that candidates (whose normal way of working is to use extra time) are not placed at a disadvantage.

4.3 Word processor

Candidates may be allowed to use a word processor to better resemble a candidates normal way of working within their current role.

Note Examinations which have a significant amount of writing, as well as those that place a greater demand on the need to organise thought and plan extended answers, are those where candidates will frequently need to type. Examinations which require more simplistic answers (short answer questions) are often easier to handwrite within the answer booklet as the candidate avoids the difficulty of visually tracking between the question paper and computer screen.

The use of word processors.

Types of candidates that would benefit from the use of a word processor. A candidate with:

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly;
- a medical condition;
- a physical disability;
- a sensory impairment;
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand;
- poor handwriting. This list is not exhaustive.

4.4 Modified papers

Modified papers are individually prepared for candidates for whom other adjustments are unsuitable. The modification of papers involves additional resources. Therefore, BSCF will require early notification that a candidate will require a modified paper.

The standard formats available are:

- A4 modified 18 point bold
- A3 modified 24 point bold
- A4 modified 24 point bold
- A3 modified 36 point bold

As candidates' needs are on-going and long term, and modification of printed material reflects their normal way of working, therefore, an assessment of the candidate is not required to determine their need for modified enlarged papers.

Modified enlarged papers are intended for candidates who cannot read a standard examination paper. The layout and presentation of the standard paper is modified to remove elements of visual complexity without changing the demands

Making Your Application

BSCF will approve your application to attend the competence assessment based on the eligibility criteria of the specific scheme. Any required/requested access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will NOT have any bearing on your eligibility.

As part of your initial application, you will be invited to indicate any requirements that you would like BSCF to consider.

Upon your approval of your initial application, having established eligibility, we will contact and invite you to complete the Reasonable Adjustments Application form.

We then liaise with you and make every effort to meet your needs without compromising the objectives of the assessment.

For further information, please contact the certification department.

Contact details

certification@thebscf.org