

# Fair assessment policy: Reasonable adjustments, special consideration and minimising bias

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## Policy statement

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YMCA Awards are committed to maintaining standards and ensuring fairness in the assessment of our qualifications. This includes compliance with the expanded provisions of the Equality Act 2010. We aim to:

- Design products and services that recognise and minimise the potential for bias in assessment, particularly against the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and pregnancy or maternity).
- Ensure all learners are provided with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, skills, and behaviours.
- Provide reasonable adjustments to create fair access to assessment, reflecting the expanded definition of disability, including temporary and non-visible impairments.
- Offer special considerations where temporary and unexpected circumstances impact a learner's performance in an assessment.

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## Scope

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This policy applies to all YMCA Awards products and services including regulated qualifications, end-point assessment and endorsed programmes. It is designed to support learners capable of meeting product or service outcomes but may require additional support/consideration to do so.

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## Related guidance and legislation

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- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [The Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

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## Related policies, procedures and templates

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- [Central YMCA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Feedback and complaints policy](#)
- [Appeals policy](#)

## Definitions

<b>Reasonable adjustment</b>	<p>A reasonable adjustment is a modification to an assessment that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compensates for a disadvantage imposed by a disability, impairment, or other difficulty, including those impacting professional activities as per the Equality Act 2010.</li><li>• Does not otherwise advantage learners.</li><li>• Ensures learners have appropriate opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, skills, and behaviours.</li></ul> <p>Where reasonable adjustments have been applied, the work produced by the learner will be marked to the same standard as the work carried out by other learners. The application of any reasonable adjustments is not typically taken into consideration during the marking of a learner's work.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments must maintain the validity, reliability, and fairness of assessments. Adjustments may include changes to the assessment environment, extra time, assistive technologies, or alternative formats and should not give a learner an advantage over other learners undertaking the assessment without adjustment.</p>
<b>Special consideration</b>	<p>Special consideration is an adjustment to a learner's assessment mark or outcome to compensate for unexpected – and temporary – circumstances which may affect them at the time of assessment. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• illness or injury</li><li>• unexpected caregiving responsibilities, including those related to breastfeeding or other family obligations</li><li>• 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 their level of attainment in an assessment (this may include, but is not limited to, an accident, bereavement or serious disturbance during or prior to the assessment).</li></ul> <p>Special consideration <b>cannot</b> be requested in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Part of the assessment was missed due to personal arrangements, including unauthorised absence and holidays.</li><li>• No evidence was supplied by the centre indicating that a learner was affected by illness, injury, bereavement or other indisposition at the time of the assessment.</li><li>• Centre difficulties experienced during the course – for example, building work, lack of facilities and staff shortages.</li></ul>

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## Minimising bias

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Supporting diverse communities is core to our charitable objectives, mission, vision and values. Since our formation, we have helped to break down barriers to increase participation and success in the Charity's services and programmes. Core to this, we are committed to:

- Designing products and services with diverse and inclusive content with examples, scenarios and assessments that represent the full range of cultures, backgrounds, perspectives and traditions of the areas in which we operate.
- Assessing the impact on equality, diversity and inclusion during our product development process and continuously looking to improve our products to ensure learners are not disadvantaged – no matter their background – and provide the support needed to overcome barriers to success.
- Creating unbiased assessment criteria that are written in plain English and exclusively target the knowledge, understanding, skills and behaviours required for the qualification.
- Providing standardisation and training for all individuals involved in the assessment process – including assessors, internal and external quality assurance staff – both within YMCA Awards and at our centres.
- Regularly reviewing reasonable adjustment requests, appeals and external quality assurance outcomes to identify and address potential biases in our products and services.
- Increasing feedback and input from existing and potential customers, learners, and service-users to improve our understanding of how we can better support learners and minimise bias.
- Measuring current participation and achievement, to create targets and action plans to identify and address potential bias and improve underrepresentation.

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## Expanded Definition of Disability

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YMCA Awards recognises that disabilities include physical, mental, and sensory impairments that impact daily or professional activities. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Long-term or temporary physical impairments (e.g. long COVID, musculoskeletal conditions, chronic pain)
- Mental health conditions (e.g. anxiety disorders, depression, bipolar disorder)
- Sensory processing difficulties (e.g. visual or auditory impairments, sensory sensitivities)
- Neurological conditions (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, epilepsy)
- Hormonal or biological changes (e.g. menopause, severe premenstrual syndrome, endocrine disorders).

We are committed to proactively identifying and addressing barriers faced by such individuals through reasonable adjustments.

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## Addressing associated and indirect discrimination

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YMCA Awards requires that no learner or associated individual (e.g. carers, parents, dependents) faces disadvantages due to indirect or associated discrimination. Centres are encouraged to:

- Offer flexible scheduling – such as alternative dates or times – to accommodate caregiving responsibilities.
- Avoid rigid policies – like single physical venues – that may disadvantage certain groups.
- Identify and address barriers during assessment planning to ensure fairness.

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## Breastfeeding protections

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YMCA Awards requires centres to provide accommodations for breastfeeding mothers. These must include:

- Additional breaks during assessments
- Access to private, comfortable facilities that meet appropriate standards.
- Flexible scheduling where needed – such as rescheduling assessments or allowing breaks at specific intervals – to accommodate individual requirements.

Such accommodations ensure breastfeeding mothers are not unfairly disadvantaged in assessments.

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## Reasonable adjustment principles

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We provide a reasonable adjustment process to enable learners with disabilities and impairments with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, skills and behaviours. We aim to ensure that:

- any person using the certificate to identify an individual's competence is not misled regarding the learner's attainments
- assessment is rigorous and fair
- assessment activity is valid and may be measured against appropriate and relevant national standards where these apply
- assessment results are reliable
- assessments are practically able to operate within available resources, facilities and during a manageable timeframe.

YMCA Awards and its centres are legally required to take reasonable steps to ensure learner access. When reviewing reasonable adjustment requests, we consider factors such as feasibility, effectiveness, and health and safety implications. We aim to understand the learner's "*usual way of working*" to inform our decision-making. However, this does not mean that requests outside of

a learner's usual working methods will be automatically excluded, as some adjustments may still be necessary.

Circumstances where an application for a reasonable adjustment is likely to be **rejected** include where:

- The requested reasonable adjustment would prevent the learner from fulfilling a major part of the requirements of the assessment and it proves impossible to overcome this difficulty.
- The requested reasonable adjustment may constitute a serious safety hazard that cannot be reasonably overcome.

Neither YMCA Awards nor our centres can refuse to accept or register learners on the grounds that better facilities for application of a reasonable adjustment or support could be provided elsewhere, unless in particularly exceptional circumstances (for instance, reasonable adjustments requiring highly specialized equipment with limited availability).

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## Centre responsibilities

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Centres need to follow our fair assessment policy to maintain the validity of qualifications they are approved to deliver. Failure to follow this policy – resulting in unfairness within assessment – is likely to result in malpractice.

Centres must:

- Provide ongoing training to staff, ensuring awareness of access-related issues and the centre's approach to fair access and assessment.
- Identify as early as possible – preferably before registering a learner – any difficulties the learner may have in accessing assessment.
- Involve the learner in any decisions relating to a reasonable adjustment, ensuring appropriate resources are available to fulfil required adjustments.
- Follow our procedures for requesting and implementing reasonable adjustments, keeping all records of agreed adjustments for external quality assurance and audit.
- Source and arrange any assistance for the learner, such as a reader, scribe, additional invigilator, or British Sign Language interpreter.
- Have a robust internal appeals procedure to enable learners can challenge any decision to:
  - not to apply a reasonable adjustment
  - provide a reasonable adjustment that does not meet their needs.

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## Alternative methods of assessment

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Our expectations for assessment for our qualifications are set out in:

- Qualification specifications
- Learner Assessment Records (LARs).

Where centres wish to make changes to an assessment – for an individual or group of learners – they need to seek written approval from YMCA Awards. We will usually allow learners to present evidence in alternative format where the assessment:

- Has equal rigour to that used by other learners (with accompanying evidence that the assessment is sufficient, reliable and valid)
- Enables learners to reasonably meet – and demonstrate achievement of – the assessment criteria
- Does not give learners any unfair advantage over other learners.

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## Use of bilingual translation dictionaries

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Use of a bilingual translation dictionary is permitted only when

- This represents the learner's normal way of working.
- The bilingual translation dictionary only contains the word in English and the equivalent word in the other language.

Any type of dictionary which provides the following is not permitted:

- definitions or explanations of words (in any language)
- pictures or diagrams.

Web-based translators such as google translate are not permitted. An electronic bilingual translation dictionary is permitted but must:

- not provide definitions or explanations of words
- give information visually/on-screen only (unless an additional reasonable adjustment is required for learners with a visual disability or difficulty).

Bilingual translation dictionaries to be used in the external assessment must be thoroughly checked to ensure:

- no unauthorised information such as notes have been enclosed within
- no additional information has been written on the pages of the dictionary
- no additional information has been stored on the device used for the electronic bilingual translation dictionary.

Any breach of this rule must be dealt with as potential learner malpractice and immediately reported to YMCA Awards.

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## Other types of reasonable adjustment

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The table below lists commonly requested reasonable adjustments to assessment arrangements. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list and centres are advised to contact YMCA Awards for further advice.

If the column labelled “decision made by” indicates “centre”, we will automatically approve the decision. However, all reasonable adjustments requests must be submitted to YMCA Awards through Y-Connect to enable monitoring and review of our assessment arrangements.

Reasonable adjustment	Decision made by
Extra time up to 25%	Centre
Extra time in excess of 25%	YMCA Awards
Supervised rest breaks	Centre
Change in the layout of the assessment room	Centre
Separate accommodation within the Centre	Centre
Taking the assessment at an alternative venue	YMCA Awards
Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles, CCTV, OCR scanners and amplification equipment	Centre
Use of a bilingual translation dictionary (see rules below)	YMCA Awards
Use of assistive software	YMCA Awards
Assessment material in enlarged format	Centre
Language modified assessment material	YMCA Awards
Assessment material in sign language recognised as an official language of the UK (e.g. BSL)	YMCA Awards
Assessment material on coloured paper	Centre
Assessment material in audio format	YMCA Awards
Responses recorded in audio or audio-visual formats	YMCA Awards
Responses in sign language recognised as an official language of the UK (e.g. BSL)	YMCA Awards
Reader	Centre
Scribe	Centre
BSL interpreter	Centre
Prompter	Centre
Practical assistant	YMCA Awards
Braille transcript	YMCA Awards
Allowance for modification to equipment/resources where necessary	YMCA Awards



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## How special consideration is applied

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We review each application for special consideration to ensure application of an adjustment would not:

- Provide a learner with an unreasonable advantage over other learners.
- Compromise the validity of assessment.
- Misrepresent a learner's ability.

In some cases, there may be restrictions on the extent to which we can apply special consideration e.g. 'license to practice' qualifications. This may result in us rejecting an application, even where the evidence to support the request would otherwise have been accepted. This may mean the most appropriate action is for the learner to resit the assessment.

Where we judge special consideration is appropriate, we review the learner's assessment performance in regard to their specific circumstances. Our review may result in:

- A proportionate adjustment to the learner's mark for an assessment, relative to the circumstances for special consideration and the learner's performance.
- Consideration of alternative evidence of achievement collected through other assessment activities.

Where special consideration is applied, we will notify centres of the outcome. It's important to note that applying special consideration may not impact the learner's overall achievement of an assessment.

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## Requesting reasonable adjustment or special consideration

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Centres must submit requests for reasonable adjustment and special consideration through Y-Connect using the Access arrangement, reasonable adjustment and special consideration request form.

Evidence of the learner's learning need or reason for a special consideration request must be submitted with the application. This should be in the form of a student support report, medical report or other appropriate record. YMCA Awards aim to confirm a decision regarding reasonable adjustments and special consideration within 10 working days of acknowledging the request.

Applications for reasonable adjustments must be submitted as soon as possible after initial registration of the learner with YMCA Awards and no later than 21 days **prior** to the scheduled external assessment. This enables YMCA Awards to review the application and make the necessary arrangements to ensure that the reasonable adjustment is made in good time for the centre and learner.

Applications for special consideration may be submitted any time up to 21 days **after** the learner has taken the external assessment.

Centres are encouraged to contact YMCA Awards without delay if an event relating to special consideration occurs on the day of a scheduled external assessment or in the days leading up to the assessment, in case the assessment can be rescheduled or an appropriate reasonable adjustment applied to mitigate the impact of the event or the situation that has arisen.

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## Decisions for reasonable adjustments in EPA

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YMCA Awards, as an End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO), is solely responsible for making all decisions regarding reasonable adjustments for End-Point Assessments (EPA). These adjustments are designed to:

- Ensure fair access for candidates while maintaining the validity and reliability of the assessment.
- Address individual candidate needs without providing an unfair advantage.
- Examples of adjustments for EPA include:
  - Extending time allowances where necessary.
  - Providing assistive technology or modified assessment materials.
  - Adjusting assessment locations to improve accessibility.

YMCA Awards collaborates with the training provider, employer, and learner to identify requirements for reasonable adjustments for EPA as early as possible, ideally during the initial registration process or early planning stages. This collaborative process relies on appropriate supporting evidence to ensure informed and well-documented decisions, maintaining consistency and fairness throughout.

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## Appeals

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Our [Appeals Policy](#) enables centres to appeal decisions made by YMCA Awards, including relating to reasonable adjustment and special consideration.

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## Review

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Our Quality Review Group (QRG) are responsible for reviewing reasonable adjustment requests, appeals and external quality assurance outcomes to identify and address potential biases in our products and services. Any trends identified are reported to our Continuous Improvement Group (CIG) which is made up of leads of all YMCA Awards functions. This enables a 'whole organisation' approach to addressing potential barrier to fair assessment.