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Reasonable Adjustments and Access Arrangements Policy



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1. Purpose and scope

The Equality Act 2010 requires an awarding body to make reasonable adjustments where a student, 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 undertaking the same course of learning and assessments.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the requirements and process for accessing reasonable adjustments, including access arrangements, and is designed to provide an evidence-based process that supports equality and fairness to all ICAS students, without affecting the integrity, reliability or validity of the course delivery or assessment process.

The term 'student' is applicable to anyone completing an ICAS qualification.

Pathways include, but are not limited to:

- School leaver or Graduate (including integrated training contract and industrial placements).
- Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation Professional Apprenticeship.
- RGU Graduate Apprenticeship.
- Continuing CA Student
- CA/CTA Joint Programme
- Special entrants.

The scope of the policy is course delivery and assessment - the learning and assessment journey.

Whether the adjustment will be considered within the bounds of 'reasonable' will depend on several factors including, but not limited to, the needs of the student and the likely impact of the adjustment on the student, and other students.

An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.

Out of Scope

Below are some examples of circumstances which would not be considered for reasonable adjustments:

- English as a second language.
- Retrospective applications after the release of results.
- Workplace adjustments.

Access arrangements

Applications for access arrangements can also be considered under this policy. Examples of circumstances that may qualify for access arrangements, usually in the form of permitted breaks, include (but are not limited to):

- Pregnancy
- Breastfeeding
- Regular prayer

Guiding Principles

ICAS looks to the Joint Council for Qualifications guidance document to inform its policy development, processes, and decisions on making reasonable adjustments, including access arrangements.

2. What is a reasonable adjustment?

ICAS recognises that some students will require an adjustment to the provision of learning and assessments as a result of a disability, learning difficulty, temporary injury or other circumstances. ICAS recognises that this may require a long term/permanent adjustment, or a short term/interim solution only. It may also be necessary for a student to have multiple concurrent reasonable adjustments in place. The reasonable adjustment, including access arrangement, must be applied for and will only come into effect once it has been formally agreed and communicated in writing to the student. ICAS is unable to retrospectively issue an adjustment or access arrangement.

The Equality Act (2010) replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (and its associated duties). The Equality Act (2010) gives the definition of a disability as follows:

'A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities' (Equality Act, 2010, Section 6).

Schedule 1 of the Equality Act (2010) provides determination of disability stating the effect of the impairment as long term if:

- *it has lasted for at least 12 months;*
- *it is likely to last for at least 12 months;*
- *it is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person.*

Examples of a long term/permanent adjustment may include (but are not limited to):

- neurodiverse conditions (e.g., dyslexia or ADHD)
- a permanent physical impairment (e.g., cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis)
- a sensory impairment (e.g., visual or hearing impairment)

Examples of a short term/interim adjustment may include (but are not limited to):

- a temporary physical injury that inhibits mobility (e.g., broken arm(s))
- a temporary cognitive condition (e.g., memory loss)
- another reasonable short-term request (e.g., breastfeeding mother)

ICAS has a duty to make a reasonable adjustment where a student experiences a substantial disadvantage in comparison with another student, when accessing our education programme and assessments.

A reasonable adjustment may be unique to the individual student and will depend on several factors, including (but not limited to):

- the needs of the student
- the effectiveness of the adjustment
- the cost of the adjustment
- the likely impact of the adjustment upon the student and other students.

An adjustment will not be approved if it is deemed unreasonable, for example;

- it involves unreasonable cost,
- it involves unreasonable timescales,
- affects the security, validity, or integrity of the assessment.

As an awarding body, ICAS:

- Does not adjust the standard of competency required to achieve an ICAS Qualification but will make a reasonable adjustment to the process by which competence is assessed to ensure equality of opportunity.
- Will ensure any adjustment made does not provide an unfair advantage or disadvantage over other students. Any reasonable adjustment must reflect the usual learning of a student in these circumstances.

3. Eligibility for a reasonable adjustment including access arrangement

Reasonable adjustments must be applied for at least 5 working days prior to the course commencement date.

Examples of individuals who may apply for a reasonable adjustment (but not limited to):

- a permanent physical impairment (e.g., cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis)
- a fluctuating or recurring effect (e.g., rheumatoid arthritis)
- a progressive condition (e.g., HIV infection, cancer, or multiple sclerosis)
- behaviour, emotional, social needs (e.g., chronic depression or ADHD)
- a sensory impairment (e.g., visual or hearing impairment)
- neurodiverse conditions (e.g., dyslexia or dyspraxia)
- cognitive conditions (e.g., memory loss or epilepsy)
- motor difficulties (e.g., hand or eye co-ordination, difficulty moving hands or arms)
- cultural practice (e.g., regular prayer)
- another reasonable request (e.g., breastfeeding mother).

Please be aware that there are some specific conditions which are not included in the definition of a disability under the Equality Act (2010). Examples of these include addiction to drugs or alcohol.

4. Reasonable adjustment including access arrangements process

To receive a reasonable adjustment, students must submit an application form on the Advantage platform at least 5 working days before their course begins. Exceptions can be made for those applying for a short term/interim adjustment.

For mock and final assessments:

- Applications must be received by ICAS at least 5 working days before the course commencement date.
- Applications take 5 working days to process.
- Applications may take longer if further evidence is required.
- There is no duty on an awarding body to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested, instead they are made to adjust how the assessment is taken.
- Reasonable adjustments will be confirmed or declined by ICAS prior to the assessment.
- A reasonable adjustment cannot be retrospectively applied for after the assessment has taken place.

For course delivery:

- Reasonable adjustments must be agreed 5 working days prior to the course start date, so that the arrangements are in place from the start of the course.
- Where this is not possible, reasonable adjustments can be agreed during the course but will only take effect in the following term.
- In the case of an external training provider delivering your course, reasonable adjustments for course delivery must be applied for directly with your Training Provider. Reasonable adjustments for ICAS assessments must be applied for with ICAS in the usual way.

ICAS will assess each application on a case-by-case basis. Any information provided as part of a claim for a reasonable adjustment will be treated confidentially, and any medical conditions will not be disclosed beyond those who require this to fulfil their duties. ICAS may need to inform employers if extra time is required for assessments. In this case, ICAS will seek permission from students, prior to contacting employers.

For requests based on temporary disability and occurring within the 10 days prior to assessment, you must contact ICAS as soon as possible on 0131 347 0100.

ICAS reserves the right to request further supporting information or evidence or reject an application if it is not submitted within a reasonable timeframe. ICAS does not accept any liability if the application and/or evidence is not provided with reasonable notice to implement the adjustment.

4.1 Applying for a reasonable adjustment including access arrangements

Each application must:

- Be submitted using the Reasonable Adjustments form on the Advantage platform.
- Be submitted by the required deadline (at least 5 working days prior to the course commencement date).
- Be supported by relevant independent evidence from a medical professional (such as a GP, specialist, or consultant).

It is likely that most applications will require medical evidence to be submitted, though ICAS acknowledges that this may not be applicable in every case. The medical evidence must include:

- The diagnosis confirming the disability (including specifics on whether it is long term or short term and the prognosis, if applicable)
- The date of the diagnosis
- The impact of the condition on day-to-day activities
- State the specific recommendation(s) of the required adjustment (see 'Outcomes' section below).

Students are responsible for obtaining and submitting medical evidence to support their request for a reasonable adjustment. ICAS reserves the right to refer the evidence to an independent medical professional for their opinion.

We only accept diagnoses and recommendations from qualified medical practitioners. Diagnoses from nurses, complementary health practitioners, or occupational health advisors will not be accepted on their own, though they may be considered alongside a doctor's diagnosis. In most cases, the medical practitioner must have assessed you in person, and the diagnosis must be current.

ICAS acknowledges that due to appointment waiting lists, confirming a diagnosis can take some time and therefore you may not have the medical evidence to attach to your application. However, if students have evidence of being referred for a specific diagnosis by a medical practitioner/occupational health practitioner, but are still awaiting the formal diagnosis, ICAS will take this evidence into account when reviewing your application.

Your evidence must be up-to-date and clearly outline the specific challenges you may face, along with the adjustments that would help you overcome them. Simply stating that "extra time is needed" is insufficient. Instead, provide detailed information, such as: "An additional five minutes per exam hour is required to allow for necessary stretches." Applications that do not include comprehensive evidence of your circumstances and the corresponding recommendations will not be accepted.

Additional evidence may be submitted to support an application, such as a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education or Health & Care Plan (EHCP).

If students are unable to complete the application form personally, you can ask ICAS to assist you by emailing reasonableadjustments@icas.com

Where there is evidence of a fraudulent reasonable adjustment claim, the matter will be investigated and presented to the Academic Integrity and Appeals Advisory Panel (see the Academic Integrity Policy for possible outcomes).

4.2 Approval or rejection of a reasonable adjustment request including access arrangement

Students will be contacted within 5 working days with the outcome of their application. The confirmation will be in writing and will include what the adjustment will be and how long it will be in place for. ICAS encourage you to share your reasonable adjustment with your organisation to ensure that you have the appropriate support both at work and during your course.

If the request has been rejected, ICAS will outline the reasons for doing so in writing.

Should circumstances change, or if the student wishes to request a further adjustment, please contact ICAS. You may be required to provide additional medical evidence to support these requested changes.

5. Outcomes

Each application will be considered based on the facts and the evidence provided by the student including a review of medical evidence, if required. Each application and adjustment provided will be individually considered.

The following are examples of the adjustments that can be applied either within an assessment environment or during course delivery (but is not an exhaustive list):

- extra assessment time (10%, 25% or 50%)
- supervised rest breaks during assessment (25%)
- classroom or assessment adjustments (e.g., scribe, reader, or sign language interpreter)
- seating arrangements during in-person classes assistive technology (e.g., speech to text software).

It is important to remember that not all adjustment requests will be deemed as reasonable, practical, or permissible. Students may not need, or be allowed, the same adjustment for all assessments. Students with the same conditions may not need the same adjustments. Whilst ICAS will support approved reasonable adjustments, it may be that the student is liable for any associated costs i.e. arranging a scribe. Any student who requires a private assessment environment will be required to book and sit their assessment remotely

6. Follow up queries

By entering the assessment, the student is deeming themselves 'fit-to-sit' the assessment. If, however, a student believes that their reasonable adjustment was not applied correctly during an assessment, they must alert ICAS to this as soon as possible by email or phone, or by submitting a Special Consideration Form (by midnight on the day of the assessment).

If a student receives a disability diagnosis after sitting their assessment and fails, and it is their final permitted assessment attempt, and they would have been eligible for reasonable adjustments, they may request that ICAS consider voiding the result if the diagnosis occurs within three months of the release of results. Each case will be reviewed individually to determine an appropriate outcome.

7. Appeal

A student who applied for a reasonable adjustment or access arrangement may have the right to appeal if they believe that the correct ICAS process was not followed. Please refer to the ICAS Appeals Policy.

8. Continuous improvement

ICAS will review the outcomes from reasonable adjustment including access arrangement applications. Any scenarios identified which result in the setting of precedents will be used to implement improvement to ICAS policy, process, communication, and training.



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