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## Guidance to Centres for Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

### 1. Introduction

**Both disability legislation and the regulatory criteria require regulated awarding organisations and their approved centres and providers of programmes which lead to RHS qualifications to ensure that all candidates are given access to fair assessment.**

#### 1.1 Disability legislation

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 brought in measures to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities. The provisions of the Act have since been widened to bear upon training providers and awarding organisations in such a way that they are now required to make reasonable adjustments to any examination arrangements which place disabled candidates at a substantial disadvantage. Although the provisions of the law cover only those individuals who fall within the statutory definition of disability, under the Equality Act 2010 and any subsequent legislation regulated awarding organisations and their approved centres/ distance learning providers have a duty, to make reasonable adjustments for disabled persons. It is unlawful for a regulated awarding organisation to discriminate against, harass or victimise a person, because of a protected characteristic, when conferring relevant qualifications (which includes renewing or extending a relevant qualification).

#### 1.2 Regulatory requirements

The regulatory requirements for Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration are set out in the current version of the 'General Conditions of Recognition.

This guidance is aimed to satisfy those requirements.

### 2. Definitions

#### 2.1 Throughout this guidance the Royal Horticultural Society as an Awarding Organisation is stated as RHS Qualifications

There are three ways in which access to fair assessment can be maintained:

- through reasonable adjustments
- through special consideration
- through consideration of the needs of all potential candidates when developing, reviewing or extending qualifications.

## **2.1 Reasonable adjustments**

2.1.1 A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the candidate at a substantial disadvantage in the examination / practical assessment situation.

2.1.2 Reasonable adjustments must not affect the reliability or validity of what needs to be assessed, but may involve:

- changing standard examination arrangements, for example allowing candidates extra time to complete the assessment activity
- adapting examination materials, such as providing materials in Braille
- providing access facilitators during the examination, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader
- re-organising the examination room, practical assessment space, such as removing visual stimuli for an autistic candidate
- changing the assessment method, for example from a written assessment to a spoken assessment
- using assistive technology, such as screen reading or voice activated software.

All adjustments should be consistent with the candidate's normal way of working and must not give the candidate an unfair advantage over others.

2.1.3 Reasonable adjustments are approved or set in place before the examination / practical assessment takes place. They constitute an arrangement to give the candidate access to the assessment within a unit(s)/qualification. The use of a reasonable adjustment will not be taken into consideration during the assessment of a candidate's work.

2.1.4 Awarding organisations and centres are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of giving access. What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances, cost implications and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment. Other factors, such as the need to maintain competence standards and health and safety, will also be taken into consideration.

## **2.2 Special consideration**

2.2.1 Special considerations are procedures implemented at the time of an examination to allow attainment to be demonstrated by a candidate that has been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances which arose at, or near, the time of examination.

2.2.2 Special consideration should not give the candidate an unfair advantage, neither should its use cause the user of the certificate to be misled regarding a candidate's achievements. The candidate's result must reflect his or her achievement in the examination and not necessarily his or her potential ability.

2.2.3 Special consideration may result in a small post-examination adjustment to the mark of the candidate. The size of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances during the examination and will reflect the specific difficulty faced by the candidate, but will always be a minor adjustment as to do more may jeopardise the standard.

2.2.4 Special consideration will not be applicable to practical assessments where the assessment requires the candidate to demonstrate a competence standard (standard applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability). However, centres approved to run RHS practical assessments will be in a position to offer candidates opportunities to take the practical assessment at a later date.

### **2.3 Development of qualifications**

2.3.1 When developing new qualifications RHS Qualifications takes into account the capabilities of all potential candidates to take the assessment both theoretical and practical. RHS Qualifications works closely with Lantra (the sector skills council for the environment and land-based sector) to ensure that the needs of all candidates are considered when qualification standards are being developed and reviewed.

## **3. Duties/Responsibilities of RHS Qualifications**

To ensure that RHS Qualifications meets its responsibilities in terms of disability legislation and regulatory requirements, it:

- 3.1 has a policy in place to prevent discrimination (direct, dual or indirect) in the assessment of skills and knowledge. This policy conforms to the requirements of Equality and Disability legislation and is subject to regular review. The policy is communicated to all its approved centres through the guidance issued to centres for its qualifications and by the RHS website and web portal.
- 3.2 has systems in place to approve adjustments to the examination / practical assessment for candidates with disabilities or particular examination / practical assessment needs. RHS Qualifications will respond quickly and effectively to requests for adjustments to the assessment.
- 3.3 provides clear and comprehensive guidance to its centres on the procedures for making adjustments to the assessment. The guidance includes information about when centres are permitted to allow adjustments to the assessment and when centres have to apply to the awarding body for permission. The guidance also specifies the requirements for supporting evidence and for record keeping.
- 3.4 ensures, as part of the centre approval process and the external verification process, that centres have policies and procedures in place to prevent discrimination against candidates with disability or particular needs in terms of providing access to assessments which lead to RHS qualifications and monitor these policies and procedures.
- 3.5 ensures, as part of the centre approval process and the external verification process, that buildings used as assessment venues are accessible to disabled candidates, as far as is practicable.
- 3.6 considers the needs of all potential candidates when developing, reviewing or extending qualifications.
- 3.7 ensures assessment tasks are sufficiently varied and flexible to make certain that no particular group of candidates is placed at a disadvantage.
- 3.8 makes adjustments to assessment procedures when appropriate and necessary.

#### **4. Duties/Responsibilities of Approved Centres**

To ensure that Approved Centres meet their responsibilities in terms of Equality and Disability legislation and regulatory requirements, they should:

- 4.1** have a clear access policy relating to examinations, and where appropriate, practical assessments and communicate this to all staff and candidates.
- 4.2** select an appropriate qualification for the candidate based upon their particular circumstances. It should be made clear to the candidate, if the candidate will not meet all the assessment criteria. Centres should explain to the candidate any restriction on progressions to other qualifications as a result of not achieving all the criteria.
- 4.2** identify as early as possible, preferably before registering a candidate for a qualification, any difficulties the candidate may have in accessing the assessment.
- 4.3** ensure that all applications for reasonable adjustments are based on the individual need of the candidate and that the evidence in support of the application is sufficient, reliable and valid.
- 4.4** follow the RHS Qualification procedures for requesting and implementing adjustments to the assessment. Centres should select and apply to RHS Qualifications for appropriate adjustments on behalf of the candidate. The centre should also involve the candidate when making any decision about appropriate adjustments deemed necessary for that candidate

An appropriate person within the centre must support all applications made for adjustments to the assessments. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that candidates only use those adjustments agreed with RHS Qualifications and that they keep records including supporting evidence for applications for reasonable adjustments for audit purposes.

- 4.5** ensure that buildings used for assessments are accessible to disabled candidates, as far as is practicable.
- 4.6** ensure that there is an effective internal appeals procedure in place so that the candidate can query any decision taken by the centre not to allow an adjustment
- 4.7** ensure that the external verifier is informed in good time if reasonable adjustments have to be implemented for individual candidates, in advance of any practical assessment that takes place. The external verifier may wish to visit the centre to observe an adjustment to assessment taking place.
- 4.8** ensure candidates who are unable to demonstrate practical competence in a practical assessment because of a temporary illness, injury or adverse circumstances which arose at, or near, the time of the practical assessment, will have further opportunities to complete practical assessments within a reasonable period of time.

## **5. Types of Assessment and Reasonable Adjustments**

### **5.1 General Guidance**

#### **Health and safety considerations for practical examinations**

There are no circumstances when the health and safety of a candidate should be compromised in the name of an assessment. In a practical activity, if there is a concern that the effects of a person's disability or difficulty may have health and safety implications for him/herself and for others, a suitably qualified person in the centre should carry out a risk assessment related to the candidate's particular circumstances. The risk assessment should identify the risks associated with the particular activity, but should also take account of any reasonable adjustments put in place for the candidate which may remove or reduce the risk. The risk assessment may reveal that it is not possible for the candidate to fulfil all the requirements of the assessment. Centres should contact RHS Qualifications at an early stage to discuss individual cases where further clarification is necessary.

Where the candidate uses alternative means of providing evidence, the method must have equal rigour to those used for other candidates.

## **6. About the Candidate**

- 6.1.1 Candidates will be eligible for reasonable adjustments if their performance during an assessment is likely to be substantially affected by a particular impairment. Many of these candidates will be defined as being disabled under the Disability Discrimination Act and the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.1.2 An adjustment to the assessment should only be considered where the difficulty experienced places the candidate at a substantial disadvantage. Where the difficulty is minor, centres should assist candidates by offering help with study and assessment skills.
- 6.1.3 A candidate does not necessarily have to be disabled (as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act/ Equality Act 2010) to be entitled to reasonable adjustments to the assessment. Every candidate who is disabled will also not necessarily be entitled to or need an adjustment to the assessment. Candidates may have developed coping mechanisms which minimise, or remove the need for assistance.

### **6.2 Identifying the candidate's needs**

Centres have a responsibility to ensure that they have effective internal procedures for identifying candidates' needs and that these procedures comply with the requirements of Disability and Equal Opportunity legislation (Equality Act 2010).

Centres may choose to use the following guide when identifying candidates' needs.

- 6.2.1 Identify those candidates who are having difficulties or are likely to have difficulties with the assessment.

Candidates should be encouraged to make any assessment related needs known to the centre at the earliest opportunity, and preferably before they are registered or entered for a qualification. Centres should ensure that all staff who recruit, advise or guide potential candidates have had access awareness training. Centres should begin to record the candidate's need for

assistance and the kind of assistance provided during the learning programme as soon as the need has been identified.

#### 6.2.2 Identify whether reasonable adjustments may be needed.

Relevant centre staff should decide, in conjunction with the candidate, whether they will be able to meet the requirements of the assessment or whether adjustments will be required. It is important that the candidate is involved in this discussion as they will know best what the effect of their particular disability or difficulty is on how they do things. Where the implications of a particular difficulty are unclear, centres should make use of specialist advice in order to determine how the difficulty will affect the candidate's performance in the assessment. Centres should avoid making assumptions, on the basis of previous experience, about whether adjustments may be necessary. Judgments should be made on the basis of individual need. If an adjustment will be needed, it should be documented for audit purposes (for the approved centre and RHS Qualifications).

#### 6.2.3 Identify the appropriate adjustment.

When identifying appropriate adjustments for the assessment, centre staff should take into consideration the candidate's normal way of working, history of provision during teaching and during informal assessments and also the assessment requirements for the qualification. Certain simple adjustments may be all that is required, e.g. adjusting seat height or providing an armrest, etc. The same candidate may not require the same adjustment for all types of assessment. Different RHS qualifications make different demands. For example, a dyslexic candidate may need extra time to complete a written paper, but may not need extra time for a practical assessment activity. Once the adjustment has been identified, it should be documented for audit purposes (for the approved centre and RHS Qualifications).

#### 6.2.4 Ensure that the adjustment is in accordance with these guidelines.

Centres must ensure that the adjustment will not impair RHS Qualifications ability to examine the candidate's performance, skill, or knowledge fairly.

### **6.3 Identifying and obtaining supporting evidence**

6.3.1 In order to ensure that any adjustment to the assessment will only provide the candidate with the necessary assistance without giving him or her an unfair advantage over others, centres must be clear about the extent to which the candidate is affected by the disability, or difficulty.

6.3.2 The implications of some disabilities are not obvious and it may be necessary for centres to obtain specialist advice to determine what level and kind of assistance the candidate will need.

6.3.3 Where the centre can verify evidence of the disability and where the implications are clear, such as for candidates with physical difficulties, profound hearing impairment or who are registered as blind or partially-sighted, the centre does not need to provide further evidence of these physical difficulties.

6.3.4 A candidate with a Statement of Special Educational Needs does not automatically qualify for reasonable adjustments. The demands of the

qualification and the needs of the individual candidate should be considered. The reasons for the statement may only have a limited effect on achievement in the assessment.

6.3.5 Where the implications of the difficulty are not obvious, such as for learning difficulties, the centre will have to provide additional evidence of the effect of the impairment on the candidate's performance in the assessment. Any of the following types of evidence will be accepted. The centre should decide which of these will best assist understanding of the candidate's situation.

- Evidence of assessment of the candidate's needs in relation to the particular assessment, made within the centre by relevant qualified centre staff such as learning support staff, teaching staff, trainers, assessors and other specialist staff. This evidence should include an indication of how the centre plans to meet the candidate's needs and should show that the candidate can cope with the level and content of the assessment. The evidence should be documented for audit purposes. Information from previous centres attended by the candidate may also be included.
- History of provision within the centre. This should include information about the support received by the candidate during the learning, or training programme and during informal assessments. Evidence of the way in which the candidate's needs are being met during the learning programme should be documented for audit purposes.
- Written evidence produced by independent, authoritative, external specialists. This could take the form of medical/ specialist reports or assessments. These reports should state the name, title and professional credentials of the person who carried out the assessments and wrote the report. The report should set out the nature of the difficulty and extent to which the candidate is affected by the difficulty; including the effects of any medication that the candidate may be taking. In cases where it might be expected that there could be changes in the way the candidate is affected by the difficulty, there will have to be evidence of assessments and consultations carried out within the preceding two years by an independent expert.

## **6.4 Requesting reasonable adjustments from RHS Qualifications**

If after consideration of all the factors above the centre decides that an application for reasonable adjustment is appropriate, then the centre should apply to RHS Qualifications for reasonable adjustments on behalf of the candidate. An appropriate person within the centre must support all applications for adjustments to the assessment. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that candidates only use those adjustments agreed with RHS Qualifications and that they keep records of reasonable adjustments for audit purposes.

## **7. Making Reasonable Adjustments**

### **7.1 These principles should be followed when making decisions about a candidate's need for adjustments to the assessment.**

7.1.1 Candidates should potentially be able to achieve all the assessment

requirements. Adjustments to the assessment should not compensate the candidate for lack of knowledge and skills. The candidate must be able to cope with the content of the assessment and be able to work at the level required for the assessment.

- 7.1.2 Any adjustment to the assessment must not invalidate the requirements of the qualification or the requirements of the assessment.
- 7.1.3 Any adjustment to the assessment must neither give the candidate an unfair advantage nor should it disadvantage the candidate. The qualification of a candidate who had an adjustment to the assessment must have the same credibility as that of any other candidate.
- 7.1.4 Any adjustment to the assessment must be based on the individual need of the candidate.
- 7.1.5 Any adjustment to the assessment should reflect the candidate's normal way of working providing this does not affect what is being assessed in any way. The candidate should have experience of and practice in the use of the adjustment.
- 7.1.6 Any adjustment to the assessment must be supported by evidence which is sufficient, valid and reliable.
- 7.1.7 All adjustments to the assessment must be approved by a senior member of staff within the centre's Examinations office and authorised by RHS Qualifications.
- 7.1.8 All adjustments to the assessment must be implemented in accordance with the guidance given by RHS Qualifications.

## 7.2 Range of reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments permitted by RHS Qualifications:

Table A lists the most commonly requested adjustments to standard assessment arrangements.

**Table A**

<b>REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT</b>
Extra time up to 25%
Supervised rest breaks
Change in the organisation of the examination room
Separate accommodation within the centre
Bi-lingual translation dictionaries
Reader or a scribe

The following sections provide guidance for centres on how various types of reasonable adjustments should be implemented.

Centres should note the following:

- not all the adjustments to the assessment described below will be reasonable, or practical, for particular situations. If in doubt, centres are advised to contact

RHS Qualifications for advice.

- the candidate may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all qualifications. Some candidates may need a single adjustment, others may require a combination of several adjustments. Adjustments should not compensate for lack of knowledge and skills. The candidates must be able to cope with the content of the assessment and be able to work at the level required for the assessment.
- centres will be required to implement the adjustment to the examination in accordance with the guidance given below in sections 7.2.1 - 7.2.6. If centres exceed the level of assistance and type of assistance as set out in these sections it may be viewed as malpractice and lead to sanctions for both the candidate and the centre.

### **7.2.1. Extra time**

Where assessments are time constrained a candidate may be allowed extra time during an assessment if they have a condition which affects speed of processing.

- 7.2.1.1 The amount of extra time allowed should accurately reflect the extent to which the completion of the assessment will be affected by the candidate's difficulty. The usual allowance is up to a maximum of 25% of the timed assessment, although centres should not assume that every candidate will need 25%. 'Unlimited' extra time will not be allowed. It is the centre's responsibility to specify the amount of extra time the candidate will need, using as a guide the extra time required during informal assessments in the centre.
- 7.2.1.2 Before the centre allows extra time for the candidate, the centre should be satisfied that the candidate can cope with the content of the assessment and that the candidate is medically fit to undertake the extended assessment.
- 7.2.1.3 Extra time may not be allowed in practical assessments where the timing is a crucial part of the assessment.

### **7.2.2 Supervised rest breaks**

Where assessments are time constrained, a candidate may, if there is a demonstrated need, be allowed supervised rest breaks during an assessment.

- 7.2.2.1 Supervised rest breaks may be taken either in or outside the examination room / practical assessment area. The duration of the breaks will not be deducted from the assessment time.
- 7.2.2.2 Rest breaks are not applicable where speed, or time, is a component of what is being assessed, although, if there is a natural break in the assessment, i.e. between tasks, supervised rest breaks can be allowed.
- Centres should ensure that both the candidate and their work are supervised during the break.
  - The duration of the break should not be deducted from the assessment

- time.
- Rest breaks should not be allowed where its use will invalidate the assessment criteria.

### **7.2.3 Change in the organisation of the assessment area**

Minor changes to the organisation of the examination room / practical assessment area may benefit some candidates with autistic spectrum disorder, with visual or hearing impairment or with physical difficulties.

- 7.2.3.1 Visually impaired candidates may benefit from sitting near a window so that they have good lighting.
- 7.2.3.2 Hearing-impaired candidates may benefit from being seated near the front of the room.
- 7.2.3.3 Some candidates may benefit from using chairs with armrests, or adjustable heights.
- 7.2.3.4 Autistic candidates may benefit from having visual/ noise stimuli, such as a ticking clock, removed from the room.

### **7.2.4 Separate accommodation within the centre**

It may be necessary to accommodate candidates separately. Centres should ensure that where candidates are accommodated separately for the assessments, the usual assessment conditions apply and separate invigilation is arranged.

### **7.2.5 Bi-lingual translation dictionaries**

- 7.2.5.1 Bi-lingual translation dictionaries may be used in assessments only by candidates whose first language is not English, Irish (or Gaeilge) or Welsh. The use of a bi-lingual translation dictionary should reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre.
- 7.2.5.2 Where a candidate has been permitted the use a bi-lingual translation dictionary they may also be allowed a maximum of 25% extra assessment time, depending on their need, **if they have been resident in the UK for less than two years at the time of the assessment. Holiday periods are included in the two year rule.**
- 7.2.5.3 Centres must determine the needs of the individual candidate. Not all candidates will need to use a dictionary and have extra time, The candidates need of the dictionary does not in itself justify allowing the candidate extra time.
- 7.2.5.4 The centre should check the dictionary used by the candidate to ensure it does not contain any notes which would give the candidate an unfair advantage. Where permission is given to use electronic dictionaries, the centre must check that the equipment does not contain additional functionality that will give the candidate an unfair advantage. If such functionality is present, it must be disabled or the equipment disallowed.

Candidates must be made aware that any dictionary used during the assessment must be clean of any notes. If when checking the dictionary the centre staff find any notes the candidate will not be allowed to use the dictionary during the assessment.

### **7.2.6 Practical assistant**

A practical assistant is a person who, during a practical examination, carries out practical tasks at the instruction of the candidate. The practical assistant cannot carry out tasks at the instruction of the candidate if that task / skill is the focus of the assessment.

A practical assistant will not be allowed to assist with those specific skills that are the focus of the assessment. In some cases, for example, the manipulation of apparatus or making accurate visual observations may be the skill being assessed and in these cases the use of a practical assistant will not be permitted. The practical assistant cannot participate in the invigilation, marking or moderation of examinations, or verification activities.

#### **7.2.6.1 Guidance for the practical assistant**

During a practical assessment a practical assistant:

- should follow the instructions prepared by the centre on the level and kind of assistance that can be given to the candidate.
- should carry out instructions exactly as they are given unless to do so would cause a hazard. If the practical assistant does not understand the candidate's instructions, they may ask for clarification but must not lead the candidate in any way or attempt to interpret the candidate's wishes; if incorrect or inadequate instructions are given by the candidate this must be reflected in the outcome of the assessment
- should immediately refer any problems during the assessment to the invigilator/ supervisor.

## **7.3 The process for making the adjustments**

### **7.3.1 Adjustments permitted by RHS Qualifications**

Centres have to apply for adjustments to the assessment on behalf of the candidate. The following information should be provided for the awarding body:

- Centre number and name
- Candidate name
- Candidate number (where available)
- Qualification and/ or unit number/ code
- Qualification title and level
- Date of the examination (month and year)/ course start and end dates of practical qualifications (day/ month and year)
- Adjustment required. It is the centre's responsibility to recommend the adjustment needed by the candidate
- Reason for the adjustment. The centre should give details of the effect of the disability on the candidate's performance in the assessment
- Indication of support given to the candidate in the learning and assessment

situation

- Supporting evidence. This may include written reports of assessments of the candidate's needs done within the centre, history of provision within the centre or copies of current medical, specialist evidence (the credentials of the assessor must be clearly indicated). Information about a candidate's disability should only be sent to RHS Qualifications with the candidate's consent

The application should be signed and dated by a member of the centre staff who has formally been given delegated authority for this by the centre's Examinations Office and should represent the following:

- the details in the application are accurate
- the centre will be able to provide the arrangements requested if their use is approved by the awarding body
- the reasonable adjustment will be implemented in accordance with the guidance given by the awarding body
- the centre will not exceed the allowances given.

For each adjustment case on behalf of each candidate, an application must be made to RHS Qualifications. Where a request is a further application for a candidate whose details have been previously lodged for a different assessment date, an application must still be made (i.e. examination series or verification year).

An application for an external examination should be submitted by the due date stipulated by RHS Qualifications. It should be noted that applications received after the deadline has expired may not be processed in time for the candidate to take the assessment. An application for practical assessments must be submitted before assessments take place. In some cases the evidence may follow the application. If evidence is not submitted to support that application, assessments where access arrangements have been implemented may not be valid. The candidate will be required to re-sit the assessments under normal conditions considered for that assessment.

Therefore the centre must also ensure that their external verifier is informed in good time if reasonable adjustments have to be implemented for individual candidates, in advance of any practical assessment that takes place. The external verifier may wish to visit the centre to observe an adjustment to assessment taking place.

## **8 Requirement for keeping records within the centre**

### **8.1 Requirements for recording adjustments to the examination agreed with RHS Qualifications.**

Centres should retain a copy of the application form, supporting evidence and relevant documentation received from the RHS Qualifications for a period of at least 12 months from the date of the assessment.

## **9 Monitoring and Quality Assurance**

RHS Qualifications will, as part of its processes and procedures:

- 9.1** ensure that approved centres have policies in place to prevent discrimination against disabled candidates in terms of providing access to qualifications and assessments.

- 9.2 monitor centres' adherence to these policies and procedures.
- 9.3 provide approved centres with these Guidelines.
- 9.4 regularly review these procedures in light of changes in legislation and regulatory criteria.
- 9.5 ensure that RHS Qualifications approved centres have effective internal systems and procedures for requesting and permitting reasonable adjustments for assessments.
- 9.6 monitor applications for reasonable adjustments to ensure that the adjustments requested are reasonable and supported by evidence which is valid.
- 9.7 monitor centres to check whether their internal systems meet RHS Qualifications criteria. This may include additional external verifier visits to centres approved to offer practical assessments, in order to observe and collect data on the implementation of adjustments to ensure centres compliance with RHS Qualifications policies and procedures.

## 10 Special Consideration

Special consideration is an action taken after the examination to allow candidates who have been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury, indisposition, or adverse circumstances at the time of the examination to demonstrate attainment.

### 10.1 Eligibility criteria

Special consideration only applies to scheduled examinations

A candidate who is fully prepared for an examination **may** be eligible for special consideration if:

- performance in an examination is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the candidate e.g. recent personal illness, accident, bereavement, serious disturbance during the examination.
- alternative examination arrangements which were agreed in advance of the examination proved inappropriate, or inadequate.
- part of an examination has been missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the candidate.

provided that

- all other parts of the examination components have been achieved.
- there is a sufficient link between the part of the examination to which special consideration is applied and other parts of the qualification that have been achieved to infer that the candidate could have performed more successfully in the examination.
- the application of special consideration would not mislead the end-user of the certificate.

A candidate will **not** be eligible for special consideration if:

- they have not attempted at least 35% of the examination component for which special consideration is sought.
- no evidence is supplied by the centre that the candidate has been affected at the time of the examination by a particular condition.
- any part of the examination is missed due to personal arrangements including holidays or unauthorised absence.
- insufficient evidence is available from achievement in comparable examination components or there is no sufficient link between the part of the examination to which special consideration is applied and other parts of the qualification that have been achieved to infer that the candidate could have performed more successfully in the examination.
- preparation for a component is affected by difficulties during the course e.g. disturbances through building work, lack of proper facilities, changes in or shortages of staff or industrial disputes.

## 10.2 Applying for special consideration

Centres should provide the awarding body with the following information:

- Centre number and name.
- Candidate name.
- Candidate number (where available).
- Qualification and/or unit number/code.
- Qualification title and level.
- Date of the examination (month and year).
- Summary of adverse circumstances affecting the candidate's performance in the assessment.
- List of other units of the qualification already achieved and provide outcomes
- Estimated result for the candidate.
- Details of other candidates of comparable standard.

Candidates need to submit evidence in support of special consideration, if appropriate. This may include medical evidence or a statement from the invigilator or any other appropriate information.

The application should be signed and dated by a member of the centre staff who has formally been given delegated authority for this by the centre's Examinations Supervisor. The signatory must declare that the information given is accurate.

The application for special consideration should be submitted as soon as possible after the examination and no later than 7 working days after the examination.

In exceptional cases requests for special consideration may be accepted before the results of the examination have been released in the following circumstance:

- medical evidence comes to light about a candidate's condition, which demonstrates that the candidate must have been affected by the condition at the time of the examination, even though the problem revealed itself only after the examination.

If the application for special consideration is successful, the candidate's performance will be reviewed in the light of available evidence. It should be noted that a

successful application of special consideration will not necessarily change a candidate's result.

### **10.3 Aegrotat**

An Aegrotat is a mechanism used to establish a grade of a candidate who was absent from part of the assessment due to illness and where RHS Qualifications has agreed to award a grade based on the availability of at least 75% of the marked assessment material.

To be considered for an Aegrotat the candidate, must apply through their centre to RHS Qualifications within four weeks of the assessment date.

RHS Qualifications will then submit the Aegrotat request to the Senior Examiner for consideration at moderation / Senior External Verifier for consideration at the end of the course.

The Aegrotat process for examinations will take place during the moderation of results where the Senior Examiner is in attendance to make a decision with RHS Qualifications together with a member of the moderation team.

- An Aegrotat can only be implemented where there is at least 75% of available material to make a judgement of the missing 25%
- An Aegrotat is decided by averaging the other components available and adding the calculated mark to the existing score

The Aegrotat Process for other assessments which lead to RHS qualifications in practical horticulture will take place where the Senior External Verifier is in attendance to make a decision with RHS Qualifications. In most cases the candidate will have the opportunity to retake assessments at an approved centre. However:

- An Aegrotat can only be implemented where there is at least 75% of available material to make judgement of the missing 25%
- An Aegrotat is decided by considering all other assessments available and making a judgement as to whether the candidate assessment material meets the requirements of the assessment criteria.

## **11 Appeals and Malpractice**

**11.1** Appeals against decisions involving assessment arrangements for candidates with disabilities or assessment-related needs will be covered by the RHS Qualifications Appeals procedure.

**11.2** Centres need to ensure that they have effective internal appeals procedures so that candidates can query any decision taken by the centre not to allow an adjustment to the assessment. These procedures should be made available to candidates and should include details of the grounds for appeal and the timescales associated with investigations of appeals.

**11.3** Centres should note that failure to comply with this Guidance regarding adjustments to assessments has the potential to constitute malpractice and may lead RHS Qualifications to withdraw the centre approval for the centre. Failure to comply in this respect is defined as:

- putting in place arrangements without seeking prior approval from the awarding body, where this is required
- exceeding the allowances agreed with the awarding body
- failing to maintain records of reasonable adjustments and special considerations for audit

**11.4** Where a candidate is proved to have been complicit in any failure by the centre to comply with this Guidance then any certificate issued to that candidate will be invalidated.