



## **The Royal College of Ophthalmologists**

### **Reasonable Adjustments and Access Arrangements Policy for Examinations**

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The Royal College of Ophthalmologists (RCOphth) is committed to ensuring that all candidates have fair and equitable access to its examinations. The College recognises its legal and professional responsibility to remove or reduce substantial disadvantage experienced by candidates with disabilities or health conditions, while maintaining the integrity, validity and competence standards of its assessments.

Reasonable adjustments are designed to enable access to examinations. They are not intended to confer advantage or to alter the professional standards required to pass examinations.

Consideration of requests for reasonable adjustments will be based on the definitions within the Equality Act (2010) and will apply to candidates who “...have a physical or mental impairment” that “has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

## Guiding Principles

- All enquiries will be dealt with confidentially
- We will be open-minded and try to help find suitable solutions
- We welcome your guidance and input into what will help you
- We aim to avoid unnecessary delays and will endeavour to respond in a timely manner
- Adjustments are about levelling the playing field, not providing an advantage

## Which examinations does this policy apply to

### Written Examinations

- Part 1 FRCOphth Examination (written)
- Part 2 FRCOphth Examination (written)
- Certificate of Refractive Laser Surgery (written)
- Duke Elder Undergraduate Prize Examination (written)

### Practical Examinations

- Refraction Certificate (OSCE)
- Part 2 FRCOphth Oral Examination (Structured Viva/OSCE)
- Certificate of Refractive Laser Surgery (Structured Viva)

## Definitions within this policy

### Reasonable Adjustment

A modification to examination arrangements made to reduce or remove disadvantage arising from disability or health condition.

## **Access Arrangement**

A practical adjustment enabling a candidate to access the examination environment.

## **Competence Standard**

A professional standard of knowledge, clinical skill, judgement, communication or behaviour that must be demonstrated to achieve a pass in an RCOphth examination. Competence standards cannot be adjusted.

## **Eligibility**

Candidates may apply for reasonable adjustments if they have:

- A physical disability
- A sensory impairment
- Medical conditions
- A mental health condition
- A Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Dyscalculia
- A neurodevelopmental condition such as Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Tourette's Syndrome and Tics
- A fluctuating or progressive illness
- A temporary injury or illness (where feasible within logistical constraints)
- Pregnancy

A diagnosis alone does not automatically entitle a candidate to adjustments. The College will consider the functional impact of the condition on the candidate's performance in the specific examination format.

## **Medical Conditions**

The College will consider requests for special arrangements, by way of reasonable adjustments, where a candidate has a temporary, ongoing or fluctuating medical condition which falls outside the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010 but has a demonstrable impact on their capacity to sit a planned examination. It is essential that candidates are fit to sit the examination if the adjustment is made, and candidates may be asked to sign a declaration to this effect. You can find details of our fit to sit policy in our Terms and Conditions. <https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/examinations/book-an-exam/examinations-terms-conditions/>

## **Special Arrangements for Pregnancy**

Candidates who are pregnant should contact the examinations department at the earliest opportunity if they experience pregnancy-related illness or discomfort, if they wish to request a reasonable adjustment. Candidates should provide appropriate

medical confirmation of pregnancy. This may include a MATB1 certificate or a brief letter from a registered healthcare professional.

Where appropriate, the College may consider reasonable adjustments for pregnancy-related conditions. All requests will be assessed on an individual basis, and decisions will reflect the specific circumstances presented.

## Types of Adjustments

The adjustments available will depend on the examination format and the competence standards being assessed.

The examples below are illustrative and not exhaustive.

### Written Examinations

Possible adjustments include:

- Additional time
- Pen and paper to make notes
- Modified screen display (e.g Different fonts and sizes)
- Permission to bring medication, food or drink
- Toilet Breaks
- Keyboard-only navigation
- Support for Windows Magnifier or in-browser magnification

### Clinical Examinations

Possible adjustments include:

- Additional time.
- Scheduled rest stations within the circuit.
- Pen and paper to make notes.
- Allocation to an accessible circuit.
- Additional time for physical movement between stations.
- Adjusted examiner positioning for sensory impairments.
- Enlarged printed materials.
- Communication accommodations (e.g. hearing support).

### Adjustments Not Normally Permitted

The College will not approve adjustments that:

- Lower or change competence standards
- Alter marking criteria or pass marks
- Remove assessment of essential clinical, diagnostic, or communication skills
- Compromise patient-safety principles embedded within examination design

- Compromise exam security or fairness
- Are unsupported by appropriate evidence
- Cannot be delivered safely or practically

## Supporting Evidence Requirements

Assessments need to have been obtained after the age of 16.

All applications must be supported by independent evidence from a suitably qualified professional.

These include:

- Specialist teachers who hold a practising certificate, such as Dyslexia Action, BDA or PATOSS. Candidates can check if an assessor holds the appropriate qualifications on the SASC ([Find an Assessor | SASC](#)) website
- A practising chartered or educational psychologist who is registered with the Healthcare Professionals Council. A candidate can check if an assessor is registered on the [Check the Register and find a registered health and care professional | The HCPC](#) website
- Letter/report from a hospital consultant, registered healthcare professional or GP
- Documents issued by institutions or individuals outside of the above requirements will not be accepted as supporting evidence, for example a university or educational institution's Learning Support Agreement (LSA)/Student Support Plan (SSP) or similar report.
- Where toilet breaks are requested, appropriate medical evidence or equivalent supporting documentation must be provided. Approval of toilet breaks does not automatically entitle the candidate to additional time, which will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **The report should describe the following information:**

- Confirm the diagnosis or condition
- Describe the functional impact on examination performance
- Recommend specific adjustments with clear rationale

The College may request updated or additional evidence if required

For long-standing approved reasonable adjustments, evidence only needs to be provided once and does not need to be resubmitted with each exam application. Supporting evidence must be submitted for all new reasonable adjustment requests.

The candidate must specify which of the recommended adjustments within their documentary evidence they are requesting for consideration by the College.

## Application Process

Candidates must:

- Upload a completed reasonable adjustments application form for each attempt
- Upload appropriate supporting evidence (For first-time requests and for any new requests). If evidence has been previously provided for a lasting/long term medical condition, you do not need to resubmit evidence for each exam sitting
- Submit the application form and evidence (if required) for reasonable adjustments by the published application deadline for the relevant examination sitting

If a reasonable adjustment is not possible to provide or approve, we will offer a full refund.

The College will not accept reasonable adjustment requests submitted after the closing date. To allow sufficient time for review and implementation, all supporting medical documentation must be received by the published deadline.

Upon receipt of the medical documentation the College may request additional evidence if deemed necessary.

Applications are reviewed by the Examinations Team.

The decision will be communicated in writing.

Candidates must confirm acceptance of the approved arrangements.

## Decision-making criteria

The College makes decisions using a structured, evidence-based process within an established governance framework.

In determining whether an adjustment is reasonable, the College will consider:

- Whether the candidate would otherwise experience substantial disadvantage
- Whether the adjustment would be effective in reducing disadvantage
- Compatibility with the competence standards of the examination
- Operational feasibility and logistical constraints
- Impact on examination integrity and fairness
- Proportionality

The College may seek specialist advice where appropriate.

## Appealing a decision

Where a candidate does not believe the adjustments, they have been granted are reasonable, they may ask for their case to be reviewed by the Director of Examinations and Chair of Examinations, whose decision will be final.

## Nullification and granting of additional attempts with late diagnosis

Candidates who receive a diagnosis after sitting an examination may apply for reasonable adjustments for future sittings. A late diagnosis does not automatically invalidate previous attempts. Any request for nullification of a prior attempt or for additional attempts will be considered in accordance with the AoMRC Principles on Nullification and Number of Attempts. [Principles for nullification and number of attempts](#)

Candidates seeking adjustments for future sittings must submit a written request to the Director of Examinations and provide:

- The date of diagnosis
- An explanation for non-disclosure at earlier sittings
- Independent evidence of the functional impact of the condition at the time of the examination(s) concerned

Each case will be considered on its individual merits, with reference to the available evidence and the applicable AoMRC guidance.

## Confidentiality and Data Protection

Information provided in support of a request for reasonable adjustments will be treated as confidential and processed in accordance with UK data protection legislation. Health information is processed as special category personal data and will be used solely for the purpose of assessing and implementing reasonable adjustments.

Access to this information will be restricted to those staff and examiners who need it to determine or implement appropriate arrangements. Information will not be shared more widely without the candidate's knowledge unless required by law.

Candidates should be aware that certain adjustments (for example, modified examination circuits or individual invigilation arrangements) may reduce or remove anonymity during delivery.

Personal data will be retained in accordance with the College's data retention schedule.

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