LANGUAGECERT®

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy for SELT

August 2026

Version 5.0

Public

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Document Revision History		
Version	**Date**	**Description of Change**
5.0	**07/08/2026**	Update in Section 6.4 Changes to exam conditions
4.0	**15/01/2026**	Annual review
3.0	**01/10/2024**	2024 Rebranding
2.0	**17/05/2024**	Update of 2024
1.0	**04/02/2020**	Initial version

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About LANGUAGECERT®

LANGUAGECERT® is an Ofqual recognised Awarding Organisation responsible for the development and award of language qualifications. LANGUAGECERT®'s mission is to offer high quality language qualifications that are truly fit-for-purpose for the markets/candidates they serve.

About us

LANGUAGECERT® is a business name of PeopleCert Qualifications Ltd, hereinafter referred to as LANGUAGECERT®. It is part of PeopleCert Group, a leading global certification provider which has been delivering millions of exams in 215 countries.

LANGUAGECERT® is a UK-registered awarding organisation, responsible for the development and awarding of language qualifications. It is recognised and regulated by Ofqual and Qualifications Wales and approved by UK Visas & Immigration as a Secure English Language Test (SELT) Provider worldwide.

1 Introduction

This policy is primarily aimed at our candidates who are registered on or have taken a Secure English Language Test (SELT). It is also for use by our staff and Test Centre staff to ensure they deal with all reasonable adjustments and special consideration requests in a consistent manner.

This policy outlines:

- Our approach to accessibility.
- Our arrangements for making reasonable adjustments and special considerations in relation to SELTs and how candidates qualify for reasonable adjustments and special considerations.
- The reasonable adjustments we will permit.
- Which and whether special considerations will be given to candidates.

1.1 Review arrangements

We will review the policy annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it when necessary in response to candidate feedback, changes in our practices, actions from the regulatory authorities or external agencies or changes in legislation.

1.2 Arrangements not covered by this policy

Special exam circumstances not covered in this policy should be discussed with LANGUAGECERT® before the exam takes place.

1.3 Appeals

If you wish to appeal against our decision to decline your request for reasonable adjustments or special consideration arrangements, please refer to our Appeals policy (SELT).

1.4 LANGUAGECERT®'s approach to Accessibility

We are committed to complying with all current and relevant legislation in relation to the development and delivery of our qualifications and which at the time of writing includes, but is not limited to, the Equality Act 2010. We seek to uphold human rights relating to race relations, disability discrimination and special educational needs of our candidates and to provide equal accessibility, reasonable adjustments and special considerations for all candidates registered on SELTs.

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LANGUAGECERT® ensures that all Test Centres approved for SELTs have fair access to examination. As such, venues are checked to confirm that they are accessible to those with a range of disabilities. An exam should be a fair test of candidates' knowledge and what they are able to do; however, for some candidates, the usual exam format may not be suitable. We ensure that our SELTs do not bar candidates from taking them.

We recognise that accessibility arrangements, including reasonable adjustments or special considerations may be required where:

- Candidates have a permanent disability or specific learning difficulties.
- Candidates have a temporary disability or medical condition.
- Candidates are indisposed at the time of the exam.

The provision for accessibility arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration arrangements is made to ensure that candidates receive recognition of their achievement so long as the equity, validity and reliability of the exams can be assured. Such arrangements are not concessions to make the exam easier for candidates, nor advantages to give candidates a head-start.

1.5 How to make accessibility enquiries or requests

It is highly recommended that accessibility enquiries or requests be made at the earliest opportunity by completing the relevant form which can be found on the LANGUAGECERT® website or by contacting our Customer Service team at SELT@LanguageCert.org, or by online chat or phone available on www.languagecert.org.

2 Reasonable Adjustments

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 exam situation. It is applied to an exam to enable a disabled candidate to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding of the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the integrity of what needs to be assessed, but may involve changing usual exam arrangements, for example, allowing a candidate extra time to complete the exam or adaptation of exam materials. Reasonable adjustments are approved or set in place before the exam activity takes place; they constitute an arrangement to give the candidate access to the programme. The use of a reasonable adjustment will not be taken into consideration during the assessment of a candidate's exam.

LANGUAGECERT® and Test Centres are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of granting 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.

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

As the needs and circumstances of each candidate are different, LANGUAGECERT® considers any request for a SELT reasonable adjustment on a case-by-case basis.

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A candidate requesting a reasonable adjustment must submit the following information:

- Candidate's name, Candidate Registration Number and Unique Registration Number (URN).
- Nature of, and rationale for the request.
- Supporting information/evidence (e.g. medical evidence or any other appropriate information).

Requests for reasonable adjustments should be submitted no later than 30 calendar days before the exam.

3 Special considerations

Special consideration can be applied after an exam if there was a reason the candidate may have been disadvantaged during the exam. For example, special consideration could apply to a candidate who had temporarily experienced:

- An illness or injury.
- Some other event outside of their control (e.g. exam conditions) which has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on that candidate's ability to take an exam or demonstrate their level of attainment in an exam.

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 their achievement in the exam and not necessarily their potential ability.

LANGUAGECERT®'s decision to award special consideration will be based on various factors, which may vary from candidate to candidate and from one exam to another. These factors may, for example, include the severity of the circumstances and the nature of the exam.

A candidate requesting a special consideration must submit the following information:

- Candidate's name, Candidate Registration Number and Unique Registration Number (URN).
- Nature of, and rationale for the request.
- Supporting information/evidence (e.g. medical evidence, a statement from the Test Centre Administrator or any other appropriate information).

Requests for special consideration should be submitted as soon as possible after the exam and no later than 5 calendar days after the exam.

Requests for special consideration may only be accepted after the results of the exam have been released in the following circumstances:

- 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 exam, even though the problem revealed itself only after the exam.
- For computer-based exams, where results are immediately available.

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.

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4 How LANGUAGECERT® will deal with requests

We will respond to all requests within 48 hours of receipt. If we are unable to respond within this timeframe for a legitimate reason, we will provide you with an estimated response date.

In considering an application, we will:

- Review the evidence and rationale submitted by the candidate to assess the merits of the claim and whether the incident (in relation to special considerations) or the condition (in relation to reasonable adjustments) is valid and a special consideration or reasonable adjustment should apply.
- Review the exam criteria/learning outcome(s) relating to the claim to determine whether such a consideration or adjustment can be reasonably applied and to what extent, and in doing so, that it will not provide an unfair advantage to the candidate(s).

In all cases, we will communicate our decision to the applicant party and in doing so outline the extent to which a special consideration or reasonable adjustment will be applied. If an application is rejected, we will provide a clear rationale as to why and in doing so inform the applicant that they have the right to appeal the decision, if relevant, in accordance with the arrangements outlined in our Appeals policy.

Some requested adjustments may not be considered reasonable if they:

- Do not meet the published criteria.
- Involve unreasonable costs to LANGUAGECERT®.
- Involve unreasonable timeframes (For example, Braille papers cannot be produced at short notice).
- Affect the security and integrity of the exam and qualification itself.

Adjustments must not put in jeopardy the health and well-being of the candidate or any other person.

5 Contact us

For any queries about the contents of the policy or in case you would like to feedback any views, please contact us at SELT@languagecert.org or, by using the channels described in our website.

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6 Section 1 Making Reasonable Adjustment

6.1 Principles of making reasonable adjustments

These principles should be followed when making decisions about a candidate's need for adjustments to an exam.

Adjustments should:

- Not invalidate the exam requirements of the qualification.
- Not give the candidate an unfair advantage.
- Reflect the candidate's normal way of working.
- Be based on the individual need of the candidate.

We and our Test Centres have a responsibility to ensure that the exam process is robust and fair, and allows the candidate to show what they know and can do without compromising the exam criteria.

When considering whether an adjustment to an exam is appropriate, LANGUAGECERT® will bear in mind the following (where appropriate for the related qualification):

- Adjustments to the exam should not compensate the candidate for lack of knowledge and skills. The candidate must be able to cope with the content of the exam and be able to work at the level required for the exam.
- Any adjustment to the exam must not invalidate the exam requirements of the qualification or the requirements of the exam strategy. Competence standards should not be altered. Whilst we will take all reasonable steps to ensure that a candidate with a disability or difficulty is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled, in terms of access to the exam, there is no duty to make any adjustment to a provision, criterion or practice which is defined as a competence standard. All candidates' performance must be assessed against set standards. These standards cannot be altered, but it may be possible to change the delivery or process of the exam so that each candidate has an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do.
- Any adjustment to the exam must not give the candidate an unfair advantage or disadvantage over other candidates. The qualification of a candidate who had an adjustment to the exam must have the same credibility as that of any other candidate.
- Any adjustment to the exam must be based on the individual need of the candidate. Decisions about adjustments to the exam should be taken after careful consideration of the exam needs of each individual candidate, the exam requirements of the qualification and the nature and extent of the support given as part of normal teaching practice. It should not be assumed that the same adjustment will be required for all exams. Different qualifications and different methods of exams can make different demands on the candidate. The candidate should be consulted throughout the process.
- Any adjustment to the exam 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.
- Any adjustment to the exam must be supported by evidence, which is sufficient, valid and reliable.

All adjustments to the exam must be authorised by LANGUAGECERT®.

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6.2 The process for making the adjustment

In all cases, the candidate may be granted adjustments to the exam, if this is approved by LANGUAGECERT®.

6.3 Qualification specific information

Identifying candidates who are eligible for reasonable adjustments

Candidates will only be eligible for reasonable adjustments if their disability or difficulty places them at a substantial disadvantage in the exam situation, in comparison to a person who is not disabled or affected.

Any adjustment to the exam will be based on what the candidate needs to access the exam. Below are some examples of candidate needs that may be eligible for adjustments to the exams. This list is not exhaustive, and it should be noted that some candidate needs will fall within more than one of the categories set out below.

Communication, cognition and learning needs

A candidate with learning difficulties, and difficulties with comprehension and communication, may benefit from extra time in time-constrained examinations. They may also need assistance with reading and writing.

Sensory and physical needs

Candidates with reduced vision or specific learning difficulties may benefit from using the zoom-in function which allows for screen magnification of up to 150%. In addition, a candidate may benefit from extra time to complete the exam.

Identifying candidates' needs

Any adjustment to the exam should be based on the individual candidate's needs to access the exam. Candidates are encouraged to make any access-related exam needs known to LANGUAGECERT® at the earliest opportunity, and preferably before or at the time of registering for their SELT exam. Once the candidate's need has been identified, LANGUAGECERT® will ensure this is documented for audit purposes. Accessibility enquiries or requests should be made by completing the relevant form which can be found on the LANGUAGECERT® website or by contacting our Customer Service team at SELT@LanguageCert.org, or by online chat or phone available on www.languagecert.org.

Identifying whether reasonable adjustments may be needed

LANGUAGECERT® will decide, in conjunction with the candidate, whether they will be able to meet the requirements of the exam or whether adjustments will be required. It is important that the candidate is involved in this discussion as the candidate knows best what the effect of their particular disability or difficulty is on how they do things.

Ensuring the adjustment is in accordance with the guidelines in this policy

LANGUAGECERT® will ensure that the adjustment will not impair the ability to assess the candidate's performance, skill or knowledge fairly in each exam.

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Identifying and obtaining supporting evidence

Any application for an adjustment to an exam must be supported by evidence, which is valid, sufficient and reliable and by using the form available on our website.

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

In all cases, the applicant must provide evidence of the candidate's disabilities to LANGUAGECERT®.

Written evidence produced by independent, authoritative specialists

This could take the form of medical, psychological or professional reports or assessment. These reports should state the name, title and professional credentials of the person who carried out the assessment 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 changes might be expected in the way the candidate is affected by the difficulty, there will have to be recent and relevant evidence of assessment and consultations carried out by an independent expert.

A candidate with a Statement of Special Educational Need does not automatically qualify for reasonable adjustments. The demands of the qualification should be taken into account. The reasons for the statement may have only limited effect on achievement in the exam.

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that all applications for reasonable adjustments are based on their individual needs and that the evidence in support of the application is sufficient, reliable and valid. LANGUAGECERT® will maintain records of all cases for audit purposes and for monitoring the effectiveness of any reasonable adjustments that have been made.

Range of reasonable adjustments

Applicants should note that:

- Not all the adjustments to exams described below will be reasonable, permissible or practical in particular situations. If in doubt, the applicant is advised to contact LANGUAGECERT® 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 to exams will mostly be needed for exams which are taken under constrained/examination conditions.

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6.4 Changes to exam conditions

Extra time

Where exam activities are time-constrained, a candidate may be allowed extra time during an exam if they have a condition which affects the speed of processing.

Before LANGUAGECERT® allows extra time for the candidate, it should be satisfied that the candidate can cope with the content of the qualification and that the candidate is medically fit to undertake the extended exam. This will be reviewed by LANGUAGECERT® as part of the overall reasonable adjustment application.

Supervised rest breaks

Where exam activities are time-constrained, a candidate may, if there is demonstrated need, be allowed supervised rest breaks during an exam. Rest breaks are always awarded in conjunction with extra time, ensuring that the overall examination time remains fixed.

Supervised rest breaks may be taken either in or outside the exam room.The Test Centre must be aware that, during the supervised rest breaks, the candidate is still under exam conditions and that the usual regulations governing conduct of exams will apply during this time.

Change in the organisation of the exam room

Minor changes to the organisation of the exam room may benefit some candidates with autistic spectrum disorder, visual or hearing impairment or physical difficulties, including use of chairs with arm rests or adjustable heights, and sitting in a different part of the testing room.

6.5 Modifications to the presentation of the exam material

Exam material in enlarged format

Enlargements for paper-based exams may be used. Examples of these include:

- Modified enlarged paper where the paper is modified by simplifying the layout while still meeting the same objectives as those tested in the original paper.

Exam material in Braille

Exam material may be provided in Braille for a blind or visually impaired candidate. The material will be modified to remove any visual content prior to Brailling.

Braille is not always an appropriate adjustment for the candidate, as not all blind people are fluent in Braille. In these circumstances, a Reader may be a more appropriate adjustment for the candidate.

Modified exam material

In listening tests, a transcript of the test may be provided, which can be read to the candidate by a live speaker. This is an accommodation specifically designed for hearing-impaired candidates who can lip-read. the text.

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6.6 Use of access facilitators

Reader

A reader is a person who, when requested, will read to the candidate all or part of the exam material and the candidate's written responses.

LANGUAGECERT® should, in consultation with the candidate, decide whether the use of a reader will be an effective arrangement.

LANGUAGECERT® will liaise with the Test Centre to make the necessary arrangements for the provision of a reader.

Scribe

A scribe is a person who, in an exam, writes down or word processes a candidate's dictated responses. Where there is evidence of need, a scribe may be allowed in all exams where writing or keyboarding is not the competence being assessed. Candidates who are unable to write on the own (e.g. a recently blind candidate who does not know how to read Braille or a candidate with a temporary injury) may be allowed to use a scribe to record their answers.

LANGUAGECERT® will, in consultation with the candidate, decide whether the use of a scribe is an appropriate adjustment. As the effective use of a scribe requires high level communication skills from the candidate, the candidate should consider whether they would be more comfortable with the use of a computer.

For a candidate requiring a scribe and a reader, the same person may act as both, provided permission has been given by LANGUAGECERT® for both.

LANGUAGECERT® will liaise with all parties (e.g. the Test Centre, candidate and scribe) to ensure all are clear about the limitations of the scribe's role. LANGUAGECERT® will give the scribe clear instructions regarding what they are required to do and what is not allowed during the exam. These instructions should also be given to the Test Centre Administrator.

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7 Section 2 Making special considerations

We will review the circumstances and evidence surrounding each request for special consideration to ensure that the decision made maintains the equity, validity and reliability of the exam for the candidate and does not give the candidate an unfair advantage.

A candidate who is fully prepared and present for a scheduled exam may be eligible for special consideration if:

- Part of an exam has been missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the candidate.
- Performance in the exam is materially affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control. These include:
  - Temporary illness or accident/injury at the time of the exam.
  - Bereavement at the time of the exam.
  - Serious disturbance during an examination, particularly where recorded material is being used.
  - Technical issues encountered during the exam.
- Alternative exam arrangements which were agreed in advance of the exam proved inappropriate or inadequate.

A candidate will not be eligible for special consideration if we are unable to verify that the candidate was affected at the time of their SELT exam by a particular condition.

A candidate will not be eligible for special consideration if performance in the examination is affected by:

- Domestic inconvenience, such as moving house, taking holidays at the time of the exam.
- Long-term illness, unless the illness manifests at the time of the exam.
- The consequences of the candidate's own actions, personal arrangements and performance on the day.

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Appendix 1 – Glossary

Term	Definition
Access to exam	The removal of artificial and unnecessary barriers to the process of judging an individual's competence.
Appeal	A process through which an awarding organisation may be challenged on the outcome of a decision.
Exam	The process of making judgments about the extent to which a candidate's work meets the exam criteria for a qualification or unit, or part of a unit.
Exam criteria	The requirements that a candidate needs to meet in order to achieve success (or a given grade) in a qualification, unit, or part of a unit.
Exam method	The means by which an individual's competence is assessed.
Exam needs	The adjustments that some individuals require to the exam strategy and/or exam task in order to demonstrate that they can meet the required standard.
Exam task	An activity undertaken by an individual candidate to show that they can meet the required standard.
Assessor	The person who assesses a candidate's work.
Assistive technology	Mechanical or electronic devices which help individuals with particular needs to overcome these limitations.
BSL/English interpreter	An individual who interprets communication into and from British Sign Language (BSL).
SELT Test Centre	An organisation (Test Centre) approved to offer SELTs, and, accountable to LANGUAGECERT® for the specified exam arrangements leading to a SELT qualification.
Competence	The ability to perform to the required standard.
Enabling technologies	See assistive technology.
Test Centre Administrator (Invigilator)	A person who supervises individuals taking a SELT exam.
Malpractice	Actions and practices which threaten the integrity and the security of SELTs.
Moderation	The process of checking that exam standards have been applied correctly and consistently between assessors, between Test Centres and over time, and making adjustments to results - where required - to compensate for any differences in standard that are encountered.
Reasonable adjustment	Any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the candidate at a substantial disadvantage in the exam situation. Arrangements are approved in advance of an exam.
Risk assessment	An estimation of the likelihood of something unfortunate happening as a result of a course of action.
Scribe	Person who writes down or word processes a candidate's dictated responses.

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Term	Definition
Qualification specification	A detailed statement or document which sets out the aims, purpose, content, structure, and exam arrangements for a qualification.
Standards	The combination of knowledge, understanding and skills required to perform a job or task to the level of competence required in the workplace.
Special consideration	Procedures implemented at the time of an exam to allow attainment to be demonstrated by a candidate who has been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury, indisposition or adverse circumstances at the time of the examination.

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