

## Responses received to the Welsh Government's consultation on the reasonable adjustments of general qualifications (Exercising Welsh Ministers' regulatory power under the Equality Act 2010) held from 11 July to 03 October 2011

There were twelve responses to the consultation. This document shows eleven responses as one respondent requested confidentiality.

### Reasonable adjustments of general qualifications

#### Consultation response form

Your name: Janet Barlow

Organisation (if applicable): Agored Cymru

Your address: 3-4 Ash Court, Parc Menai, Bangor  
Gwynedd, LL57 4DF

<b>Q.1</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be used only as a last resort?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b> Only when no other reasonable adjustment is suitable, should disabled candidates be granted an exemption which must be agreed <b>in advance</b> by the awarding organisation. Where exemption applies, this should be indicated ( along with the rationale for exemption) on the learners' certificate transcripts.			

<b>Q.2</b>	<b>Do you agree with our proposals for the amount of a qualification that can be exempted?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
			<b>X</b>
<b>Comment</b> 50% seems excessive and could undermine the validity of the qualification in providing a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and experience of the learner.			

<b>Q.3</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be made for whole components only?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
			<b>X</b>
<b>Comment</b> All learners should be required, and have the opportunity, to complete as many aspects of the assessments as possible. There are opportunities for flexibility for learners and organisations by not looking at whole components.			

<b>Q.4</b>	<b>Do you agree that grade boundaries and pass marks should be the same for disabled candidates and non-disabled candidates?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b> All learners should be benchmarked consistently to avoid any discriminatory practice and to protect the integrity of the qualification.			

<b>Q.5</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>reading ability</u> a human reader should not be available as a reasonable adjustment (though the use of a computer/screen reader could be considered)?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b> Aids which compromise the reliability of the individual's qualification as a testament to his/her abilities are inappropriate. Human readers have the potential to interfere with the independence of a learner's performance. Assistive technologies, such as a computer/screen reader, are more manageable.			

<b>Q.6</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>writing ability</u>, scribes and voice recognition systems should not be available as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b> However, this is complex as even in English, Welsh and MFL, it is not the ability to write in the physical sense that is the fundamental assessment. The assessment focuses on the ability to construct language in an accurate and coherent way. A learner who cannot physically write or type may or may not have the ability to create language appropriate to the written form.			

<b>Q.7</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to demonstrate their <u>ability to speak or listen</u>, British Sign Language should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Comment</b> For MFL and Welsh, BSL would not be appropriate. However the issue is the same as raised in Q6 above; it depends on exactly which competence is being tested, the ability to speak or the ability to communicate. Would there be an argument to allow it in English?			

<b>Q.8</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to <u>carry out physical tasks or demonstrate physical skills</u>, practical assistants should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b>			

<b>Q.9</b>	<b>Do you agree that candidates should not be exempted from the <u>option</u> requirement or the main elements of the <u>core</u> within the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b> .. given the effectiveness of the current arrangements and the considerable flexibility that already exists.			
<b>We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.</b>			
<b>Please enter here:</b>			

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here:

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## Reasonable adjustments of general qualifications

### Consultation response form

Your name: Gareth Jones

Organisation (if applicable): Association of  
School and College  
Leaders Cymru

Your address: Trem-y-Cwm, Kilgwrrwg,  
Chepstow, NP16 6DB

<b>Q.1</b>	Do you agree that exemptions should be used only as a last resort?	Yes	No
		<b>X</b>	
Comment			

<b>Q.2</b>	Do you agree with our proposals for the amount of a qualification that can be exempted?	Yes	No
		<b>X</b>	
Comment			

<b>Q.3</b>	Do you agree that exemptions should be made for whole components only?	Yes	No
		<b>X</b>	
Comment			

<b>Q.4</b>	Do you agree that grade boundaries and pass marks should be the same for disabled candidates and non-disabled candidates?	Yes	No
		<b>X</b>	
Comment			

<b>Q.5</b>	Do you agree that when testing <u>reading ability</u> a human reader should not be available as a reasonable adjustment (though the use of a computer/screen reader could be considered)?	Yes	No
		<b>X</b>	
Comment			

<b>Q.6</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>writing ability</u>, scribes and voice recognition systems should not be available as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b>			

<b>Q.7</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to demonstrate their <u>ability to speak or listen</u>, British Sign Language should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b>			

<b>Q.8</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to <u>carry out physical tasks or demonstrate physical skills</u>, practical assistants should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b>			

<b>Q.9</b>	<b>Do you agree that candidates should not be exempted from the <u>option</u> requirement or the main elements of the <u>core</u> within the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b>			
<b>We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.</b>			
<b>Please enter here:</b>			

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## Reasonable adjustments of general qualifications

### Consultation response form

Your name: Paul Simpson

Organisation (if applicable): British Association  
of Teachers of the  
Deaf (BATOD)

Your address: 21, Keating Close, Rochester ME1 1EQ

<b>Q.1</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be used only as a last resort?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	

#### Comment

It would be better if the design of the qualification was such that an exemption was not necessary. However, this is not possible in all cases so an exemption is the solution. If a certificate indication is required then the wording should relate to the inaccessibility of the qualification. In England an awarding body, having granted an exemption, then refused to follow the JCQ and Ofqual guidance that in the case of an exemption the performance of the candidate on the other parts of the examination should lead to the final grade. This awarding body decided to determine the grade for the exempted element based on the national performance on that element – totally discriminatory and contrary to the regulations. I do hope this would not happen in Wales. Reassurance would be welcome.

<b>Q.2</b>	<b>Do you agree with our proposals for the amount of a qualification that can be exempted?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	

#### Comment

It makes sense that 50% should be the maximum permitted amount which can be exempted.

<b>Q.3</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be made for whole components only?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
			<b>X</b>

#### Comment

Although practically it would be difficult it would be better if only those parts of a component which the candidate could not access were exempted. It would require the allocation of marks to specific parts of a component.

<b>Q.4</b>	<b>Do you agree that grade boundaries and pass marks should be the same for disabled candidates and non-disabled candidates?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	

**Comment**

Reasonable adjustments are to enable the candidate to access the qualification on the same basis as other candidates and therefore any difference in grade boundaries would be quite inappropriate.

<b>Q.5</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>reading ability</u> a human reader should not be available as a reasonable adjustment (though the use of a computer/screen reader could be considered)?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

**Comment**

BATOD would not comment on this.

<b>Q.6</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>writing ability</u>, scribes and voice recognition systems should not be available as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

**Comment**

BATOD would not comment on this.

<b>Q.7</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to demonstrate their <u>ability to speak or listen</u>, British Sign Language should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

**Comment**

The small number of deaf students who use BSL should be allowed to do so in the speaking and listening component but only if the examination is no longer called English. The fact that BSL is allowed in English functional skills is not tenable – it is not logical or justifiable. Some students use Sign Supported English whilst speaking and listening. There needs to be clarification that this is indeed acceptable in the speaking and listening as the signs support the spoken English and are not therefore a different language.

<b>Q.8</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to <u>carry out physical tasks or demonstrate physical skills</u>, practical assistants should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

**Comment**

BATOD would not comment on this.

<b>Q.9</b>	<b>Do you agree that candidates should not be exempted from the <u>option</u> requirement or the main elements of the <u>core</u> within the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Comment</b> I will need to consult Welsh colleagues on this before responding. I hope to get a response before the closing date which I will send on separately.			
<b>We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.</b>			
<b>Please enter here:</b> Why are there no proposals relating to oral language Modifiers? These are very important to a number of deaf candidates.			

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here:

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## Reasonable adjustments of general qualifications

### Consultation response form

Your name: Greg Pope

Organisation (if applicable): **Catholic Education  
Service**

Your address: 39 Eccleston Square,  
London, SW1V 1BX

<b>Q.1</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be used only as a last resort?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b> We understand and support the fact that exemptions are needed in some limited circumstances. In order to maintain the integrity of the qualification and public confidence in it we agree that exemptions should only be used as a last resort. It is important in our view that the number of qualifications should not grow significantly beyond the current approximate number of 100 per annum across all general qualifications awarded by JCQ awarding bodies in Wales, England and Northern Ireland.			

<b>Q.2</b>	<b>Do you agree with our proposals for the amount of a qualification that can be exempted?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b> We welcome the fact that the proposed exemptions are closely aligned with current working practice. We would support the proposal that an exemption must not be used as a reasonable adjustment where it would form more than 50% of the available marks of a qualification.			

<b>Q.3</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be made for whole components only?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<b>Comment</b> We agree that exemptions should only apply to whole components. We would like to see a provision, perhaps in subsequent guidance, that where a candidate has difficulty with an element within a component other reasonable adjustments should be considered.			

<b>Q.4</b>	<b>Do you agree that grade boundaries and pass marks should be the same for disabled candidates and non-disabled candidates?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	

**Comment**

It is important that there should be equality between disabled and non-disabled candidates in terms of grade boundaries and we support the proposal to leave this unchanged.

<b>Q.5</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>reading ability</u> a human reader should not be available as a reasonable adjustment (though the use of a computer/screen reader could be considered)?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	

**Comment**

On balance this proposal seems to us to be inclusive in nature whilst supporting the integrity of the assessment in question. A move which would allow some candidates to demonstrate their skills rather than seek an exemption is welcome.

<b>Q.6</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>writing ability</u>, scribes and voice recognition systems should not be available as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	

**Comment**

We agree that scribes and voice recognition systems should not be used where writing ability is being assessed and to do so could undermine confidence in the qualification. We further agree that this should not restrict the use of scribes or voice recognition systems where a candidate's ability to write is not being assessed.

<b>Q.7</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to demonstrate their <u>ability to speak or listen</u>, British Sign Language should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	

**Comment**

Many groups do feel that British Sign Language (BSL) should be recognised as a language in its own right. Furthermore GCSE Welsh, English and other modern languages require an ability to understand the spoken language in question and use of BSL would not demonstrate this. We believe that in these instances it is important that either other reasonable adjustments or an exemption be made.

Q.8	Do you agree that where candidates are required to <u>carry out physical tasks or demonstrate physical skills</u> , practical assistants should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?	Yes	No
		X	

**Comment**

In our view the role of practical assistants in examinations should be limited to performing tasks which, whilst of help to the candidate, do not form part of the assessment objectives. We welcome the fact that the proposals reflect the current working arrangements.

Q.9	Do you agree that candidates should not be exempted from the <u>option</u> requirement or the main elements of the <u>core</u> within the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification?	Yes	No
		X	

**Comment**

We agree that all candidates taking the WBQ should complete the WEW, PSE and WRE components of the core, especially as there is scope for this to be carried out in a flexible way and other reasonable adjustments are allowed. As in our response to previous questions, we welcome the fact that the proposals reflect the current arrangements which have proved effective.

**We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.**

**Please enter here:**

We have no further comments.

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## Addasiadau rhesymol i gymwysterau cyffredinol

**Ffurflen ymateb**  
i'r  
**ymgyngoriad**

Eich enw: Arwel George

Corff (os yn briodol): **CYDAG**

Eich cyfeiriad: Llys Hedd, Bow Street,  
Aberystwyth, SY24 5AX

<b>C.1</b>	Ydych chi'n cytuno mai dim ond pan fydd popeth arall wedi methu y dylid defnyddio esemptiadau?	Ydw	Nac ydw
		✓	
Sylwadau			

<b>C.2</b>	Ydych chi'n cytuno gyda'n cynigion o ran faint o gymhwyster y gellir cael esemptiad ohono?	Ydw	Nac ydw
		✓	
Sylwadau			

<b>C.3</b>	Ydych chi'n cytuno mai ar gyfer cydrannau cyfan yn unig y dylid gwneud esemptiadau?	Ydw	Nac ydw
		✓	
Sylwadau			

<b>C.4</b>	Ydych chi'n cytuno y dylai ffiniau gradd a marciau pasio fod yr un fath i ymgeiswyr anabl ag yr ydynt i ymgeiswyr nad ydynt yn anabl?	Ydw	Nac ydw
		✓	
Sylwadau			

<b>C.5</b>	Ydych chi'n cytuno na ddylid cynnig darllenwr dynol fel addasiad rhesymol pan fo'r <u>gallu i ddarllen</u> yn cael ei brofi (er y gellid ystyried defnyddio darllenwr cyfrifiadur/sgrîn)?	Ydw	Nac ydw
		✓ <b>Ond...</b>	

**Sylwadau:**

Cytunir yn llwyr gyda'r cynnig na ddylid defnyddio darllenwr dynol. Fodd bynnag, a oes posibilïad y gallai fod amrywiaeth mewn ansawdd a pherfformiad gwahanol fathau o dechnolegau cymorth a allai gyflwyno elfen o danseilio dibynadwyedd yr asesiad.

<b>C.6</b>	Ydych chi'n cytuno na ddylid cynnig ysgrifenyddion a systemau adnabod llais fel addasiad rhesymol pan fo'r <u>gallu i ysgrifennu</u> yn cael ei brofi?	Ydw	Nac ydw
		✓	

**Sylwadau**

<b>C.7</b>	Ydych chi'n cytuno na ddylid defnyddio laith Arwyddion Prydain fel addasiad rhesymol lle mae disgwyl i ymgeiswyr ddangos <u>eu gallu i siarad neu wrando</u> ?	Ydw	Nac ydw
		✓	

**Sylwadau**

<b>C.8</b>	Ydych chi'n cytuno na ddylid defnyddio cynorthwyyr ymarferol fel addasiad rhesymol lle mae disgwyl i ymgeiswyr gyflawni tasgau corfforol neu ddangos sgiliau corfforol?	Ydw	Nac ydw
		✓	

**Sylwadau**

<b>C.9</b>	Ydych chi'n cytuno na ddylai ymgeiswyr gael esemptiad rhag cyflawni'r gofyniad <u>opsiwn</u> neu brif elfennau'r <u>craidd</u> o fewn Cymhwyster Bagloriaeth Cymru?	Ydw	Nac ydw
		✓ <b>Ond...</b>	

**Sylwadau:**

noda'r ddogfen ymgynghorol at yr Opsiynau gan ddweud "bod dysgwyr yn gallu dewis eu Hopsiynau o blith yr ystod lawn o gymwysterau perthnasol y cymeradwyir eu defnyddio yng Nghymru." Nid yw'r ystod lawn honno ar gael trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg ar hyn o bryd. Deil yr angen i wthio a gwasgu (ar ran swyddogion AdaS, CYDAG a sefydliadau unigol) ar sawl corff dyfarnu i ddarparu cyrsiau trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg.

**Rydym wedi gofyn nifer o gwestiynau penodol. Os oes gennych unrhyw faterion cysylltiedig i'w crybwyll nad ydynt wedi eu cynnwys, nodwch hwy isod.**

**Rhowch eich sylwadau yma:**

Mae'n bosibl y bydd ymatebion i ymgynghoriad yn cael eu cyhoeddi – ar y rhyngrwyd neu mewn adroddiad. Pe bai'n well gennych i'ch ymateb gael ei gadw'n gyfrinachol, ticiwch y blwch.

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# Reasonable adjustments of general qualifications

## Consultation response form

Your name: Ele Hicks

Organisation (if applicable): **Diverse Cymru**  
(formerly Cardiff and  
Vale Coalition of  
Disabled People and  
Awetu)

Your address: 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Alexandra House,  
307-315 Cowbridge Road East,  
Cardiff, CF5 1JD

<b>Q.1</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be used only as a last resort?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	
<b>Comment</b> We generally agree that wherever possible other appropriate adjustments should be used instead of exemptions. We believe that disabled candidates should be given support and alternative means of demonstrating that their knowledge, skills and competence are comparable to non-disabled candidates.  However, given that individual disabled people's access requirements vary greatly, we would urge the Welsh Government against making any absolute rules regarding either the amount of a qualification from which a candidate may be exempted or the circumstances in which exemptions cannot apply.			

<b>Q.2</b>	<b>Do you agree with our proposals for the amount of a qualification that can be exempted?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	
<b>Comment</b> As mentioned in response to question 1, we do feel that as exemptions are rare and improvements to the accessibility of general qualifications are being constantly made, it is appropriate to provide guidance on the maximum amount of a qualification that a disabled candidate can be exempted from. However, we would urge the Welsh Government to consider possibilities for exceptions to these rules based on individual circumstances and to make provision for ensuring that qualifications considered essential, such as GCSE or equivalent Maths, Science and English and/or Welsh are able to be achieved by all pupils, regardless of impairment.  We would also urge the Welsh Government to provide guidance to teachers on advising disabled learners on which courses to pursue and the most appropriate learning route for them. This is essential, as a disabled learner			

who would be unable to take over 50% of the assessment and who had not been advised of this in advance, would leave school or college with less qualifications than their non-disabled counterparts and would have pursued a course for which they have received no certification.

Such advice should be able the best interests of the learner and taking account of their skills and interests whilst taking account of access, but not presuming that their impairment will necessarily be a barrier to undertaking a course, qualification or learning pathway.

Q.3	Do you agree that exemptions should be made for whole components only?	Yes	No
		✓	
Comment			

<b>Q.4</b>	<b>Do you agree that grade boundaries and pass marks should be the same for disabled candidates and non-disabled candidates?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	

**Comment**

We do agree that in most circumstances it is inappropriate to alter the grade boundaries or pass marks for disabled candidates, especially given that candidates who have received exemptions are marked on purely the components they have undertaken.

However there are some limited circumstances where it may be appropriate to alter a grade boundary. This would apply where no adjustments can compensate for the disadvantage a candidate faces and the difference in their assessment performance can be clearly attributable to the effects of their impairment.

It is also important to be clear that circumstances where a portion of the grade is attributed to a skill that is not core to the assessment objectives, such as spelling and/or grammar, the grade awarded could reflect an exemption from these marks.



Q.5	Do you agree that when testing <u>reading ability</u> a human reader should not be available as a reasonable adjustment (though the use of a computer/screen reader could be considered)?	Yes	No
		✓	
<b>Comment</b> We agree with the comments in the consultation document that a human reader automatically adds intonation and their own interpretation to written information and therefore is generally not appropriate. We also welcome the proposal to allow computer/screen readers when testing reading ability. We feel that guidance will be needed regarding the circumstances where ‘testing reading ability’ applies, in order to avoid circumstances where awarding bodies could deny a human reader as a reasonable adjustment as they feel that reading is part of the assessment, where in fact it is not one of the assessment objectives being assessed.			

Q.6	Do you agree that when testing <u>writing ability</u> , scribes and voice recognition systems should not be available as a reasonable adjustment?	Yes	No
			✓
<b>Comment</b> We understand the reluctance to allow the use of scribes when writing ability forms part of the assessment objectives, however we feel that there should be alternative arrangements for allowing exemptions from spelling and grammar marks and allowing the use of scribes to test the ability to write. For example in some elements of GCSE English written assessments sentence structure, compositional phrasing and creative writing skills are being assessed just as much, if not more so than spelling and grammar. In such circumstances and where no other alternative presentation format enables a disabled candidate to access this component of the assessment, we feel that not allowing scribes, with an exemption for spelling and grammar or where candidates have to spell each word, would be devaluing the skills and abilities of the disabled candidate.			

Q.7	Do you agree that where candidates are required to demonstrate their <u>ability to speak or listen</u> , British Sign Language should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?	Yes	No
		✓	

**Comment**

We recognise that British Sign Language is a language in its own right and should be recognised as such. Therefore we agree that assessing ‘English’, ‘Welsh’ or other language skills interpretation into BSL would not be assessing these skills.

However we would urge the Welsh Government to consider adjustments to the qualifications themselves, such as the examples given for Functional Skills English, rather than exempting a candidate from the entire component. We would also suggest that Awarding Bodies should be given clear guidance on the differences between Sign Supported English and BSL and the adjustments that are acceptable for assessing the ability to speak or listen.

<b>Q.8</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to <u>carry out physical tasks or demonstrate physical skills</u>, practical assistants should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	

**Comment**

We support the idea of ensuring that the definition of ‘required to carry out physical tasks or demonstrate physical skills’ is as narrow as possible, as mentioned in the consultation documents.

We would, again, recommend clear guidance for Awarding Bodies on when a physical task is being assessed and when it is merely present in the circumstances, to ensure that disabled candidates are not disadvantaged by this.

<b>Q.9</b>	<b>Do you agree that candidates should not be exempted from the <u>option</u> requirement or the main elements of the <u>core</u> within the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	

**Comment**

Given the flexibility inherent within the design of the Welsh Baccalaureate we broadly agree with this, however guidance to Awarding Bodies and teachers will be essential to ensure that this flexibility is retained and employed effectively within the qualification framework and thereby ensure that disabled candidates are not disadvantaged by the application of this policy.

**We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.**

**Please enter here:**

In summary, we broadly agree with the majority of proposals contained in the consultation documents, but would urge the Welsh Government and Awarding Bodies to apply flexibility to each individual’s needs and circumstances; to ensure that qualifications are designed with reasonable adjustments in mind in future; and to ensure there is very clear guidance for Awarding Bodies and teachers on the limited circumstances where these criteria apply and alternative reasonable adjustments which should be explored.

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## Reasonable adjustments of general qualifications

### Consultation response form

Your name: Meinir Rees

Organisation (if applicable): Estyn

Your address: Llys Angor, Heol Keen  
Caerdydd, CF245JW

<b>Q.1</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be used only as a last resort?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	
<b>Comment</b>			

<b>Q.2</b>	<b>Do you agree with our proposals for the amount of a qualification that can be exempted?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	
<b>Comment</b>			

<b>Q.3</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be made for whole components only?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	
<b>Comment</b>			

<b>Q.4</b>	<b>Do you agree that grade boundaries and pass marks should be the same for disabled candidates and non-disabled candidates?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	
<b>Comment</b> This is key in maintaining public confidence and ensuring that qualifications provide a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and experience of the candidate.			

<b>Q.5</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>reading ability</u> a human reader should not be available as a reasonable adjustment (though the use of a computer/screen reader could be considered)?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	

**Comment**

Use of assistive technologies is the way forward but its success will depend on the availability of high quality of computer/screen readers in all the languages being assessed.

Use of computer/screen readers could also disadvantage candidates that have not been using them in an everyday working and classroom environment.

<b>Q.6</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>writing ability</u>, scribes and voice recognition systems should not be available as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	

**Comment**

<b>Q.7</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to demonstrate their <u>ability to speak or listen</u>, British Sign Language should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	

**Comment**

<b>Q.8</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to <u>carry out physical tasks or demonstrate physical skills</u>, practical assistants should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	

**Comment**

<b>Q.9</b>	<b>Do you agree that candidates should not be exempted from the <u>option</u> requirement or the main elements of the <u>core</u> within the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	

**Comment**

Current arrangements for the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification minimise the extent to which disabled candidates are disadvantaged, ensure that the qualification gives a reliable indication of knowledge, skills and understanding and maintain public confidence in the qualification.

**We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.**

**Please enter here:**

During the process of reviewing qualification criteria for accessibility and inclusion, qualifications will hopefully, over time, become more accessible resulting in a reduction in the need for exemptions and reasonable adjustments.

This will be key in minimising the extent to which disabled candidates are disadvantaged.

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here:

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## Reasonable adjustments of general qualifications

### Consultation response form

Your name: Cllr Jonathan Bishop FBKS

Organisation (if applicable): Centre for Research  
into Online  
Communities and E-  
Learning Systems

Your address: The Institute of Life Sciences,  
Swansea University,  
Singleton Park,  
Swansea, SA2 8PP

<b>Q.1</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be used only as a last resort?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
			<b>X</b>
<b>Comment</b> I don't think there should be exemptions, as being disabled and received these, you don't feel equal to others or value your qualification as much – also having something written on your certificate acknowledging this is degrading.			

<b>Q.2</b>	<b>Do you agree with our proposals for the amount of a qualification that can be exempted?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
			<b>X</b>
<b>Comment</b> Alternative assessment should be used in place of exemptions. For instance someone who is deaf and needs to demonstrate listening in French could use an instant messaging, online chat or textphone assessment. Someone who is blind and needs to demonstrate reading French and responding to that could use a screen reader and keyboard. The aims of such a French course should be to enable them to independently communicate in French taking into account their disability.			

<b>Q.3</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be made for whole components only?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
			<b>X</b>
<b>Comment</b> I do not believe any exemptions should be made only alternative instruction and assessment.			

<b>Q.4</b>	<b>Do you agree that grade boundaries and pass marks should be the same for disabled candidates and non-disabled candidates?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

**Comment**

Yes, as someone with 5 A-C GCSEs, who has passed a degree at 40% and 3 Masters at 50% I think the passmarks should be the same.  
I think grade-boundaries should be based on a normal distribution of the average marks of the institution the person is at and not beyond. So if the top passmark at one school was 70% and another 60% then both these top performers would get A\* grades and that and their average mark (GPA) would be displayed on the diploma.

<b>Q.5</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>reading ability</u> a human reader should not be available as a reasonable adjustment (though the use of a computer/screen reader could be considered)?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

**Comment**

I think wherever possible the assessment of reading should reflect what would be best transferable into an independent lifestyle beyond the education, where the person needs to use the skill to fully participate in society. Degree students like me get to use our laptops in our personal life as well as at university. So if students doing GCSEs were introduced to screen-readers, text-to-speech which they can use at home, then meeting the requirements of the course could help them develop independent living skills.

<b>Q.6</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>writing ability</u>, scribes and voice recognition systems should not be available as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

**Comment**

I think they should as far as possible follow the recommendations of charities who know how that disabled person might best exercise the task of writing when living independently. For instance, I have autism, which gives me poor fine motor skill, meaning writing, especially under pressure is difficult. I therefore need to use my laptop keyboard and sign documents electronically over the Internet. So in essence, the assessment on writing should reflect how the disabled person would normally 'write' if living an independent life. So if someone with severe dyslexia would normally use Dragon Naturally Speaking then they should be able to use this in assessment. I don't think scribes should be used, unless the disabled person would be unlikely to have these except in exceptional circumstances with Access to Work.

<b>Q.7</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to demonstrate their <u>ability to speak or listen</u>, British Sign Language should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
			<b>X</b>

**Comment**

As I have said, the assessment of ability to speak or listen should be based on what the person is most likely to use in their life when they live or work independently. Being able to listen is not about being able to hear, but about being able to comprehend what others are saying. Comprehension and the ability to form a response is the essence of what speaking/listening are about.

<b>Q.8</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to <u>carry out physical tasks or demonstrate physical skills</u>, practical assistants should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
			<b>X</b>

**Comment**

The aim of the task should be considered and the context in which it would be used in an independent life. For instance people with autism often have poor motor skills. So in a grooming task in say PSHE, instead of demonstrating competency for shaving they should show that they can locate and get to a barber shop that can provide that service. So in a physical task its purpose is to achieve an outcome to change something about oneself, to meet ones needs, or change the environment, that needs to be tested and not any prescribed method that would discriminate.

<b>Q.9</b>	<b>Do you agree that candidates should not be exempted from the <u>option</u> requirement or the main elements of the <u>core</u> within the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	

**Comment**

Reasonable adjustments should be made to enable a disabled person to complete it. As the Welsh Baccalaureate is equivalent to an A-grade A-Level then giving exemptions would undermine it. The assessment may need to change so that the student can demonstrate the learning outcomes using the assessment best suited to overcoming their disability.



**We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.**

**Please enter here:**

Yes, as I have suggested these should be the key principles:

- Reasonable adjustments should be in the format changes in the way the student is assessed through providing additional equipment that the student would be likely to use to overcome their impairment in an independent living setting where the skill being tested is needed
- Assessment should be on the basis of specific outcome not arbitrary methods. Assessors should ask why does the student need to know a particular learning outcome and is there any way they can demonstrate it in such a way that they would be expected to in an independent living situation.
  - The purpose of speaking is to independently communicate one's needs or beliefs in a social situation so others can appreciate where we are coming from.
  - The purpose of writing is to express oneself formally to others in order to achieve our goals, in whatever means we most comfortably can.
  - The purpose of listening is to understand others' points of view so we can understand where they are coming from in whatever way they effectively can.

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here:

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## Reasonable adjustments of general qualifications

### Consultation response form

Your name: Owen Hathway

Organisation (if applicable): NUT Cymru

Your address: Ty Sinnott, 18 Neptune Court,  
Vanguard Way, Cardiff, CF24 5PJ

<b>Q.1</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be used only as a last resort?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	
<p>Yes. Exemptions should only be used where no other reasonable adjustment is appropriate. However, it is also important to ensure that the impact of the adjustments is also taken into account. The example given in the consultation notes that an exemption should not be given to a blind candidate for an e-assessment as an alternative, such as Braille paper, can be provided. In this case the additional time taken to undertake the assessment through Braille should be considered. Where exemptions are not granted due to an alternative being available the potential complexities of the adjustment should be taken into account when formulating any assessment.</p>			

<b>Q.2</b>	<b>Do you agree with our proposals for the amount of a qualification that can be exempted?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
			<b>X</b>
<p>No. It does not seem reasonable to set an upper limit to a candidate's right to exemption. If the premise of exemption is accepted it does not appear consistent to then state that exemptions should not be granted if they make up 51% of a course when they should if they make up 50%.</p> <p>Alternatives and adjustments should always be sought to avoid any individual candidate exceeding a limit of 50% exemption, but where that is not possible failing to grant an exemption because it is above 50% is not balanced with the principle of exemption in the first place.</p>			

<b>Q.3</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be made for whole components only?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	

Yes. Exemptions should be made for the limit of the candidate's ability to undertake any assessment. If the candidate (as in example 2) cannot undertake part of the assessment then part of the assessment should be given an exemption if no other reasonable adjustment can be provided. If the candidate cannot access any part of the assessment (as in example 1) then exemption should be given to the whole component if no reasonable adjustment can be provided.

<b>Q.4</b>	<b>Do you agree that grade boundaries and pass marks should be the same for disabled candidates and non-disabled candidates?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	

<b>Q.5</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>reading ability</u> a human reader should not be available as a reasonable adjustment (though the use of a computer/screen reader could be considered)?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>X</b>	

Yes. When appropriate computer/screen readers should be considered to ensure that the candidate can undertake the assessment. As with answer 1 any impacts the use of this option may have on the candidate should be taken into consideration when formulating the parameters of the assessment. Equally where this option is not appropriate exemptions should be given.

Human readers should be allowed where the reading ability is not being assessed.

<b>Q.6</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>writing ability</u>, scribes and voice recognition systems should not be available as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
			<b>X</b>

No. The current arrangements have already incorporated fail safes that deal with the concerns raised under this section.

Under the current arrangements voice recognition technology is already restricted for exams (such as GCSE English and Welsh) where the candidate's written ability is assessed. Furthermore candidates are expected to spell each word letter by letter to ensure that the candidate's language accuracy skills, not the scribe's, are assessed. These current precautions already ensure impartiality of assessment and therefore make the proposal redundant. Changes to the system would not achieve any significant improvements but only undermine public confidence in those learners who have already achieved qualifications under the current stringent system.

Q.7	Do you agree that where candidates are required to demonstrate their <u>ability to speak or listen</u> , British Sign Language should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?	Yes	No
<p>This is a proposal that would need greater review. The proposal and the consultation question relate to assessments where the ability to speak or listen are examined. The Example relates to the ability to understand a foreign language. These are not necessarily comparable.</p> <p>In principle the argument that BSL should not be used as an adjustment as it undermines the ability to test the candidates ability to speak and listen is valid. However, this is not a simple yes or no approach and individual circumstances should be considered and greater guidance produced.</p>			

Q.8	Do you agree that where candidates are required to <u>carry out physical tasks or demonstrate physical skills</u> , practical assistants should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?	Yes	No
		X	

Q.9	Do you agree that candidates should not be exempted from the <u>option</u> requirement or the main elements of the <u>core</u> within the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification?	Yes	No
		X	
Yes. Candidates should continue under the current system where they are not exempted from the requirements to complete the core or option sections of the Welsh Baccalaureate. However, where a candidate is unable to complete an element within the core or option modules as a result of their disability reasonable adjustments and possible exemptions should be considered. While a candidate should be expected to complete the sections within the Welsh Baccalaureate they should not be restricted in doing so because of a disability and should be allowed exemptions in areas of the qualification where reasonable adjustments cannot be provided.			

**We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.**

The NUT welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on Reasonable Adjustments of General Qualifications.

While it is understandable that Ministers will wish to review the arrangements in light of their new powers in relation to reasonable adjustments, it is vital that any variations to current arrangements are undertaken in liaison with the examination regulators in England and Northern Ireland and with the Joint Council for Qualifications. A leading principle for qualifications with the same title available in different UK countries, such as the GCSE and GCE AS and A level should be a comparability of standards across Awarding Bodies and across countries in which the qualification is available. Arrangements for reasonable adjustments should be on an equal basis, whether a qualification is designed in Wales and sat in England, for example, or vice versa. Unless arrangements are agreed across all countries where a qualification with the same or similar title is available, standards cannot be said to be truly equivalent, nor can there be a guarantee that candidates with a disability or specific learning need are treated in such a way as to ensure that they are neither unfairly advantaged nor disadvantaged relative to their peers.

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here:

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## Reasonable adjustments of general qualifications

### Consultation response form

Your name: Rory Cobb

Organisation (if applicable): **Royal National  
Institute of Blind  
People (RNIB)**

Your address: 105 Judd Street, London, WC1H 9NE

*RNIB is a membership organisation with over 10,000 members who are blind or partially sighted, or the friends and family of people with sight loss. 80 per cent of our Trustees and Assembly Members are blind or partially sighted. We encourage members to be involved in our work and regularly consult with them on government policy and their ideas for change.*

As a campaigning organisation of blind and partially sighted people, RNIB fights for the rights of people with sight loss in each of the UK's countries.

During the next five years we want to tackle the isolation of sight loss by focusing on three clear priorities:

1. Stopping people losing their sight unnecessarily;
2. Supporting blind and partially sighted people to live independent lives; and
3. Creating a society that is inclusive of blind and partially sighted people.

RNIB provides a strong national lead within visual impairment education, underpinning improvements in inclusive education through research, policy work, training and support for specialist professional networks. In the area of qualifications we work closely with Ofqual, the Joint Council for Qualifications and all the UK awarding bodies for General Qualifications.

<b>Q.1</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be used only as a last resort?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	
<b>Comment</b> In common with other disability organisations, RNIB disagrees with exemptions on principle. We believe they would be rendered unnecessary if qualifications were designed inclusively to recognise the different working methods used by disabled candidates. However, we recognise that exemptions need to remain as a reasonable adjustment of last resort until such time as inclusive design is properly implemented.  Exemption clearly affects the resulting qualification because the exempted candidate is receiving the same qualification on the basis of less work than other candidates. This problem has until now been partly addressed by the use of certificate indications, which RNIB also disagrees with on principle			

because they mean that some disabled candidates are awarded qualifications on different terms to non-disabled candidates. We note that the proposals make no reference to the future of indications, which suggests that awarding bodies will be free to continue to use them. We understand that this may be unavoidable in the short term, but believe it is a case of two wrongs not making a right.

Example 2 given in the document is unfortunate because it suggests that a written paper may be an acceptable alternative to e-assessment in the longer term. We maintain that such an attitude is likely to reinforce difference and discrimination. E-assessment processes should be designed to be fully accessible to all learners and taking account of the needs of visually impaired candidates from the outset is an essential part of ensuring that this happens.

Q.2	Do you agree with our proposals for the amount of a qualification that can be exempted?	Yes	No
		✓	
<b>Comment</b> On the basis that exemptions are undesirable in the first place, RNIB believes they should be applied to as little of a qualification as possible. Exempting a candidate to more than 50% undermines public confidence and does not give a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of the candidate.			

Q.3	Do you agree that exemptions should be made for whole components only?	Yes	No
			✓
<b>Comment</b> It is generally agreed that exemptions are undesirable, so requiring them to be applied to more rather than less of a qualification seems illogical. It has been argued elsewhere that 'allowing exemptions for whole components only where a candidate cannot access any of that component, helps to ensure that exemptions are seen as a reasonable adjustment of last resort'. We disagree with this argument. Under the current arrangements, a blind candidate might need an exemption from the reading component of English GCSE because they cannot read the paper independently. We see no sense in exempting them from the whole reading component, when the only thing they cannot do is gain visual or tactile access to the text (for which no marks are given anyway).  RNIB does not claim expertise in the design of qualifications. However, we question whether the proposal that exemptions should apply to a whole component arises more from the administrative convenience of the awarding bodies than from the needs of candidates or the requirements of qualifications themselves. At the risk of making the system even more complex than it is now, we would argue that there should be a more explicit relationship between reasonable adjustments and assessment objectives, so that if a reasonable adjustment could not be granted for a particular qualification (eg a practical assistant in a science exam), then the candidate would be exempted			

only from the marks associated with that specific objective. This would also allow candidates to choose whether to be exempted or to lose the marks associated with that objective if they did not wish to accept the exemption.

Q.4	Do you agree that grade boundaries or pass marks should be the same for disabled candidates and non-disabled candidates?	Yes	No
		✓	
<b>Comment</b> Changing grade boundaries and pass marks for disabled candidates would undermine all three of the principles listed on page 4 of the consultation document. RNIB strongly opposes the adoption of this approach.			

Q.5	Do you agree that when testing <u>reading ability</u> a human reader should not be available as a reasonable adjustment (though the use of a computer/screen reader could be considered)?	Yes	No
		✓	
<b>Comment</b> We are pleased to see that this issue has been recognised after many years of lobbying and we believe that this proposal is a sensible way to address it. The principle of distinguishing between the use of a computer reader and a human reader has already been established in Functional Skills English and extending it to English GCSE is a logical next step. We support the arguments given in the consultation document and would just add the following comments:  1. We believe that more attention should be paid to the way in which disabled people function in the workplace. The use of computer readers is widespread among blind adults and it cannot be right to create a barrier to their attaining a gateway qualification for employment which does not exist in later life.  2. There is a possible argument for saying that if the physical act of reading is not being assessed in English GCSE, then any form of reader (human or computer) should be allowed. However, we believe that emphasising the 'independent' aspect of reading makes clear why only a computer reader should be allowed, because this leaves the candidate in full control of the material in a way which would not be possible with a human reader.  3. We have also heard the view that restricting the arrangement to the use of computer readers could be unfair on candidates who may not have access to the necessary equipment for financial reasons. We do not believe that it is the role of awarding bodies to make judgements on issues of local provision for learners with SEN/LLDD which surely lie outside their remit. The only test they can rightfully apply is that the use of a reasonable adjustment in exams reflects a candidate's normal classroom practice. As long as this principle is followed, we believe that the use of computer readers in exams which test reading should be treated no differently to any other reasonable adjustment.  4. We would also like to point out that, if this proposal is adopted, it will be			



necessary for awarding bodies to make modified English GCSE papers available in accessible electronic formats which can be readily accessed with computer speech software. Many such papers are currently produced in PDF formats which do not meet the required standard of accessibility.

<b>Q.6</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>writing ability</u>, scribes and voice recognition systems should not be available as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
			✓

**Comment**

This issue is of less urgent importance to visually impaired learners than that of readers. However, we believe the proposal to allow the use of computers to meet the definition of independent reading should logically be matched by a similar arrangement for independent writing. The argument used for computer readers that working methods which are used in the workplace should be recognised as legitimate for use in the qualifications that lead to employment, holds true in this instance too.

<b>Q.7</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to demonstrate their <u>ability to speak or listen</u>, British Sign Language should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

**Comment**

No opinion. We are aware from colleagues in the HI field that this is a complex area and we do not feel it would be appropriate to comment on issues which we do not fully understand.

<b>Q.8</b>	<b>Do you agree that where candidates are required to <u>carry out physical tasks or demonstrate physical skills</u>, practical assistants should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		✓	

**Comment**

We agree with this proposal but have concerns about the process by which it should be implemented. The use of practical assistants often involves a fine distinction between what is and what is not allowed, depending on the nature of the qualification. For example, their use in a science practical may be allowed for some tasks but not for others. It is therefore very important that the specification for each qualification makes clear, in the form of inclusion sheets, what level of practical assistance can be given for different tasks. In drawing up this guidance it is important to consult fully with disability specialists, to avoid the danger of false assumptions being made on the basis of limited knowledge and understanding.

<b>Q.9</b>	<b>Do you agree that candidates should not be exempted from the <u>option</u> requirement or the main elements of the <u>core</u> within the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Comment</b> No opinion.			
<b>We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.</b>			
<p><b>Please enter here:</b></p> <p>1. RNIB would like to draw attention to ongoing difficulties with the quality of modified exam papers in braille and large print. We appreciate that issues concerning the central production of these papers lies outside the scope of this consultation. However, we believe it would be helpful for the regulators to include mention of the early opening of modified exam papers, making clear that this may be considered a reasonable adjustment. Until awarding bodies are capable of providing modified papers in a wider range of formats, there will always be a difficulty in ensuring that these are suitable for all visually impaired candidates, whose needs vary considerably. Some further modification of presentation is often required, yet since 2010 early opening of modified papers has been removed from the JCQ access arrangements in order to achieve greater consistency of practice between different awarding bodies. This is a backward step and we are keen to work with the awarding bodies to agree ways in which early opening can be allowed without compromising the contents and security of the papers concerned.</p> <p>2. On several occasions (most recently in connection with early opening of modified papers) RNIB has been told that arrangements which we have requested in relation to visually impaired candidates cannot be allowed because they would be requested by other learners too for whom they would be inappropriate. This flies in the face of the fact that the duty to make reasonable adjustments is an individually owed duty which should be negotiated on the basis of individual need. The argument that an arrangement cannot be granted to one candidate, whose needs justify it, because it would then have to be offered to other candidates with completely different needs, surely represents a misunderstanding of the principles on which the Equality Act is based.</p> <p>3. Both of the issues outlined above illustrate the danger that the administrative convenience of the system can take precedence over the needs of individual candidates. This is evident in the use of Access Arrangements Online to approve requests. While we appreciate that AAO is a valuable tool for streamlining the considerable task of processing and approving applications for access arrangements, it should not dictate the range of arrangements that are available or to whom they are offered.</p> <p>4. We would like to see more reference in the consultation document to the need for inclusive design of e-assessment, which is likely to be the future means of testing for many qualifications. It is unfortunate that the only</p>			

reference to e-assessment in the whole document suggests that it may be unsuitable for visually impaired candidates, when we believe that with appropriate design e-assessment could solve many of the difficulties they encounter with the current system.

5. We believe the consultation document should make reference to the important principle of ensuring that candidates are assessed in ways with which they are familiar from their normal classroom practice. Awarding bodies should be required to make more determined efforts to ensure that centres are fully aware of the reasonable adjustments that can and cannot be allowed for particular qualifications. In the case of visually impaired candidates, this should include a greater commitment to making modified copies of past papers in large print and braille available for practice purposes.

6. Overall, we believe the consultation document should take a much more positive tone in recognising the diversity of methods and skills which disabled people use in their education, work and daily lives. We are concerned that it still reflects an essentially medical model of disability, where the assumption is that the effects of disability need to be isolated and removed so that disabled learners can be assessed in the same way as everyone else. We would like to see a greater emphasis on valuing the working methods and achievements of disabled people on equal terms and in their own right.

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here:

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## Reasonable adjustments of general qualifications

### Consultation response form

Your name: Tudor Thomas

Organisation (if applicable): WJEC

Your address: 245 Western Avenue,  
Cardiff, CF5 2YX

<b>Q.1</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be used only as a last resort?</b>	Yes	No
		<b>YES</b>	
<b>Comment</b> <p>Exemptions are not the ideal approach and should only be used as a reasonable adjustment of last resort. There should be a certificate indication where an exemption has been granted. Access arrangements exist to reduce barriers to assessment. In most cases an access arrangement will remove the barrier and the candidate will be able to access the assessment. It is important, normally, mainly from the perspective of public confidence, but also the candidate's own development, that he/she accesses all components within a specification wherever possible.</p>			

<b>Q.2</b>	<b>Do you agree with our proposals for the amount of a qualification that can be exempted?</b>	Yes	No
			<b>NO</b>
<b>Comment</b> <p>More than 50% is too high a percentage of the overall qualification for an exemption to be used. If public confidence in public qualifications is to be maintained the percentage should be kept below 50%. In Principal Learning 40% might be more applicable than 50% in relation to the size of the qualification.</p> <p>WJEC would prefer candidates to complete at least one A2 unit, but the percentage could legitimately be reduced from 50% to 40%. That is, an exemption must not be used as a reasonable adjustment where it would form more than 40% of the available (weighted) marks of a qualification. The present percentage of 50% could be deemed too high and 40% is perhaps more realistic and fairer to candidates.</p>			

<b>Q.3</b>	<b>Do you agree that exemptions should be made for whole components only?</b>	Yes	No
		<b>YES</b>	
<b>Comment</b> <p>A candidate <b>must</b> only be exempt from a whole unit.</p>			

<b>Q.4</b>	<b>Do you agree that grade boundaries and pass marks should be the same for disabled candidates and non-disabled candidates?</b>	Yes	No
		<b>YES</b>	

**Comment**

Where a disabled candidate is not subject to an exemption, grade boundaries **must** be applied in a consistent fashion. The status quo must be maintained since the awards made will provide both an appropriate and reliable indication of the candidate's skills and knowledge, and continue to maintain confidence in the public examinations system.

Access arrangements exist to ensure a level playing field for all candidates. Consequently, there is not a requirement to vary grade boundaries.

<b>Q.5</b>	<b>Do you agree that when testing <u>reading ability</u> a human reader should not be available as a reasonable adjustment (though the use of a computer/screen reader could be considered)?</b>	Yes	No
		<b>YES</b>	

**Comment**

In a GCSE English or Modern Foreign Language Reading examination, designed to test the candidate's reading ability, a human reader should not be used. However, it is recommended alternative reasonable adjustments such as a computer/screen reader or reading pen could be used. Before responding to the question itself, it is worth highlighting that reading pens are not currently permitted by the JCQ regulations.

It is acknowledged that the use of a computer/screen reader in the Reading paper of a Functional Skills English qualification, but not in the Reading paper of a GCSE English qualification, does cause confusion to schools, candidates and parents. However, the key question which should be addressed is whether the use of a computer/screen reader would satisfy current subject criteria for GCSE English/GCSE English Language specifications and GCSE/GCE MFL specifications. Would the use of a computer/screen reader be permissible following a future review of qualification criteria? Current ('new') GCSE English/English Language specifications have been accredited using the principles of the DDA 1995, not the Equality Act 2010, with regard to accessibility and inclusion. Therefore, current subject criteria are founded upon the DDA 1995.

It is noted on page 16 (Ofqual - Specifications in relation to the Reasonable Adjustment of General Qualifications: Consultation Questions) that the intention of Ofqual is 'to ensure that subject criteria are assessed for accessibility and inclusion as they are reviewed in future'. Therefore, the use of a computer/screen reader in GCSE English/GCSE English Language specifications and GCSE/GCE MFL specifications, where reading is being assessed, can surely only be considered following the conclusion of the current National Curriculum Review.

Computer readers are invariably used in Visually Impaired schools/units. The use of a computer/screen reader in a paper testing reading removes the need for an exemption for a blind/significantly visually impaired candidate who cannot read Braille or a modified enlarged paper independently, and reflects his/her normal way of working. State schools could not manage a sudden demand for computer readers, whether for candidates with learning difficulties or a hearing impairment.

Rightly or wrongly, there is an equitable approach at the moment in that neither a computer reader nor a human reader is allowed in GCSE English/English Language specifications and GCSE/GCE MFL specifications where reading is being assessed.

We should not link computer/screen readers solely to the needs of blind/visually impaired candidates. Some dyslexic and hearing impaired candidates will want to use computer readers.

Further clarification is needed from the regulators about whether in GCSE English/GCSE English Language and GCSE/GCE MFL Reading papers a computer reader is acceptable and does not undermine the assessment objective of 'reading'. The understanding has always been that 'reading' has required the candidate to physically decode for him/ herself and lift meaning from the page.

Further identification is needed from the regulators about whether computer readers/reading pens can be used in GCSE English/GCSE English Language and GCSE/GCE MFL specifications in 2012/2013 or only after a future subject specification review.

Q.6	Do you agree that when testing <u>writing ability</u> , scribes and voice recognition systems should not be available as a reasonable adjustment?	Yes	No
		<b>YES</b>	
<p><b>Comment</b></p> <p>WJEC would strongly support the principle that scribes and voice activated software should not be used in a way that undermines the assessment objectives.</p> <p>As with readers, we need to make a scribe an arrangement of the last resort with greater emphasis being placed on the use of a word processor with the spell check facility disabled, the use of a transcript, the use of a word processor with the spell check facility enabled and voice activated software. All these arrangements allow the candidate to demonstrate independence. In GCSE and GCE MFL writing papers candidates are required to spell each foreign word letter by letter. Computer software would pre-empt this and start generating complete whole words. The status quo should be maintained with regard to GCSE and GCE MFL specifications. A scribe should only be permitted where a candidate is able to dictate each foreign word letter by letter.</p>			

However, with regard to GCSE English/GCSE English Language specifications, the use of voice activated software would be consistent with Functional Skills English specifications, would reflect the candidate's normal way of working and would allow the candidate to demonstrate independence. Thus, a candidate could either use a word processor with the spell check facility disabled; a word processor with the spell check facility enabled (but loses marks for spelling and punctuation) or voice activated software which would be akin to a human scribe. A human scribe will write or type the candidate's dictated responses; voice activated software will record the candidate's dictated responses.

Q.7	Do you agree that where candidates are required to demonstrate their <u>ability to speak or listen</u> , British Sign Language should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?	Yes	No
		YES	

**Comment**

WJEC agrees with the proposal as set out above. To change from the above would have serious implications for the assessment of speaking and listening. The current status quo should be maintained.

It is noted on page 43, paragraph 4.38, that 'current GCSE subject criteria in English and Foreign Languages specifically reference the ability to speak and listen'. A similar reference should be made to reading and writing.

Q.8	Do you agree that where candidates are required to <u>carry out physical tasks or demonstrate physical skills</u> , practical assistants should not be used as a reasonable adjustment?	Yes	No
		YES	

**Comment**

The physical tasks or demonstration of physical abilities in Music or Design and Technology are being tested and cannot in any way be replicated by anyone other than the candidate. There are, however, occasions when a candidate in Design and Technology or Catering has the use of practical help for multiples of the skill demonstrated that would take the candidate an unreasonable amount of time e.g. if the candidate can demonstrate julienne strips of one carrot and the recipe demands four to be done, the assistant could complete the others, likewise hammering a nail, or repeating a textile process.

<b>Q.9</b>	<b>Do you agree that candidates should not be exempted from the <u>option</u> requirement or the main elements of the <u>core</u> within the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
		<b>YES</b>	
<b>Comment</b> This is really two questions A) In relation to the options WJEC agree there should be no additional adjustments made. As the options are standalone qualifications all reasonable adjustments will have been made through the relevant AO.  B) In relation to the core. Elements such as WRE, WEW, PSE and the investigation are written in such a way that learners have flexibility to present their work in a way that best suits their individual needs. However, ESW are also part of the core and as such the standards are very prescriptive. In this area WJEC feel that the current exemptions (for KS) within L2 and L3 should remain.			
<b>We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.</b>			
<b>Please enter here:</b>  N/A			

Responses to consultations may be made public – on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to be kept confidential, please tick here:

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