



## Special considerations

### Who is this policy for

This policy is for centres and/or learners who want to submit special consideration in relation to AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group approved qualifications/ units/components. This policy is not for our Access to HE provision please refer to Access to HE final Award boards Policy

<b>Owner</b>	Compliance Director
<b>Date of next review:</b>	December 2026

## Version control

Version number	Date	Description
1	May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Document created</li></ul>

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## Section 1 – Scope

### 1.1 Scope

This policy and related procedures are intended for:

- Centres and their staff delivering AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group approved qualifications or units who wish to request and apply a special consideration for a learner
- Learners registered on AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group approved qualifications or units, who require and/or have been granted a special consideration
- AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group staff to ensure that all special consideration requests are dealt with and applied in a consistent and fair manner and to meet the requirements of qualifications regulations

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define special considerations
- Identify examples of reasons why special considerations may and may not be authorised by AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group
- Detail the responsibilities that AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group, centres, centre staff and learners have
- Provide key information relating to special considerations, including timescales, and variations for Access to HE qualifications
- Provide information on evidence requirements for special considerations requests
- Detail follow-up actions after special consideration decisions have been made by AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group
- Provide the regulatory references which apply
- Provide useful contacts of both AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group and the various regulators

### 1.2 About us

AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group is a leading Awarding Organisation and one of the UK's largest Access Validating Agencies (AVA). We work in partnership with colleges, independent training providers, universities, employers and voluntary organisations to develop accredited and regulated vocational qualifications. Our qualifications cover a range of academic levels from Entry Level to Level 6 across a wide range of subject areas. As an AVA we are licensed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to develop and award nationally recognised Access to Higher Education Diplomas. AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group is also an independent, government recognised, End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) responsible for an apprentice's final assessment to ensure they can do the job for which they've trained.

### Section 2 – Policy detail

#### 2.1 Definition

A special consideration is a post assessment adjustment which can be applied if there is reason a learner may have been disadvantaged during an assessment or examination, due to an unforeseen circumstance during or near to the time of that assessment or examination.

Special Considerations are called Extenuating Circumstances for Access to HE provision. Where an Access to HE learner may be eligible for extenuating circumstances, AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group requires centres to follow their own internal policy and ensure these are evidenced and submitted as part of the moderation process. Please also refer to the AIM Final Awards Board Policy where extenuating circumstances can also be raised. Therefore, this policy does not apply to our Access to HE provision.

#### 2.2 Reasons for special considerations

The items listed below are examples of reasons why special considerations may be authorised by AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group. These are not exhaustive, and the examples are only intended as indicative guidance.

##### 2.2.1 Examples eligible for special considerations

The following are reasons which may lead to a special consideration being authorised by AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group:

- Incapacitating illness
- Terminal illness
- Recent bereavement of a family member or close friend
- Terminal illness of a parent, child or dependent
- Serious domestic crisis
- Serious accident or injury
- Flare up of congenital illness
- Physical assault trauma
- Illness at the time of the assessment
- Serious disturbance during the assessment

##### 2.2.2 Examples not eligible for special considerations

The following are reasons which are not eligible for special considerations to be considered by AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group:

- Assessments requires the demonstration of practical competence

- Minor disturbance during the assessment, e.g. a mobile phone ringing or momentary distraction caused by another learner
- Long term illness unless the illness manifests at the time of the assessment
- Bereavement which occurs more than six months before the assessment, unless there are any ongoing implications because of the bereavement, such as a court case
- General domestic inconveniences, e.g., moving house
- Lack of preparation on behalf of the centre, e.g., staff shortages, lack of facilities
- Faulty equipment
- Failure to adhere to assessment timetables or conducting the assessment at the correct time and/or place
- Personal arrangements, e.g., a wedding, holiday, centre field trip
- The consequences of committing a crime, where formally charged
- The consequences of being under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs
- Failure to undertake assessment due to the learner joining part way through
- If English is not the learners first language
- Learning difficulties or a disability over and above those that a previously approved access arrangement or reasonable adjustment would have alleviated.

### 2.3 Responsibilities

The following represent the key responsibilities of AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group, centres, centre staff and learners.

#### 2.3.1 AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group responsibilities:

Overseen by the Compliance Director, AIM will ensure that all:

- Special considerations fully comply with equality legislation and regulatory requirements
- Special considerations ensure that the rights of individual learners to access qualifications and assessments in a way most appropriate for their individual needs are upheld
- Reasonable steps are taken to remove any disadvantage to learners which is unjustifiable, and to maintain records of any disadvantage which it believes is justifiable, and the reasons why
- Special considerations are approved, and processes applied fairly and consistently
- Qualifications and assessments integrity are always maintained

#### 2.3.2 Centre responsibilities:

All centres delivering AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group qualifications must:

- Ensure that all staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group qualifications and any learners undertaking one are fully aware of this policy and related procedures.
- Have a named person in place with designated responsibility.
- Have an assessment policy in place.
- Have a policy and related procedures in place for dealing with special considerations.
- Ensure that all staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group qualifications and any learners undertaking one are fully aware of the centres special considerations policy and procedures and appeals policy and procedures.
- Create an atmosphere which encourages learners to disclose needs which may require special considerations to be requested from AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group.
- Anticipate and make adequate provision for possible adjustments future learners might need.
- Follow AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group procedures for requesting special consideration.
- Ensure that either the Head of centre or examinations officer support each application for a special consideration.
- Ensure that evidence is gathered, and records retained, for each special consideration requested and approved by AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group, for audit purposes.
- Ensure that buildings used for assessment are accessible to all learners, as far as is practicable.
- Ensure health and safety is not compromised.

### 2.3.3 Centre staff responsibilities

All centre staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group qualifications must:

- Be fully aware of this policy and related procedures.
- Be fully aware of the centre's access to assessment policy, and special considerations policy and procedures and appeals policy and procedures.
- Select appropriate qualifications for learners depending on their particular circumstances.
- Identify and discuss with learners during initial diagnostic, any difficulties they may have in accessing assessment.
- Explain to learners the assessment requirements of the qualification.
- Make it clear to learners at the outset if it seems they will not be able to meet all of the assessment requirements and explain the restriction on achievement to them, as a result.
- Discuss with learners at the assessment point that they are ready to take the assessment using the methodology required.
- Design centre set assessment activities or material in an inclusive way so that they are accessible to all learners, with language that is also clear, unambiguous and free from jargon.

- Follow AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group procedures for requesting each special consideration.
- Follow AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group guidance for implementing each special consideration.
- Gather evidence and retain records for each special consideration requested and approved by AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group, for audit purposes.

### 2.3.4 Learner responsibilities

Any learner undertaking AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group qualifications must:

- Be aware of this policy and related procedures.
- Be familiar with the centre's access to assessment policy, special considerations policy and procedures and appeals policy and procedures.
- Declare any illnesses or conditions which require special needs when registering with the centre and prior to course commencement.
- Declare any illnesses or conditions, for the purposes of special consideration being given, prior to the assessment.
- Provide supporting evidence to the centre.

## 2.4 Process

Where AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group permission is required, centres must complete a special considerations form providing relevant details and, where appropriate, supporting evidence.

### 2.4.1 Special considerations

Special consideration can be applied after an assessment if there was a reason the learner may have been disadvantaged during the assessment. Special considerations must not give the learner an unfair advantage, neither should its use cause the user of the certificate to be misled regarding a learner's achievements. The learner's result must reflect his/her achievement in the assessment and not necessarily his/her potential ability.

Centres must note that:

- Where an assessment requires the learner to demonstrate practical competence or where criteria have to be met fully, or in the case of qualifications that confer a Licence to Practise, it may not be possible to apply a special consideration
- In some circumstances, e.g., on-demand assessments or Externally Verified qualifications, it will usually be more appropriate to offer the learner an opportunity to take the assessment at a later date
- Special consideration will normally be given by applying an allowance of additional marks to each component affected within a specification. The size of the allowance depends on the timing, nature and extent of the illness or misfortune. The maximum allowance given will be 5% of the total raw marks available in the component concerned, including coursework/non-examination assessment.



- Where the request for special consideration fails to meet the criteria, it will be rejected

Requests for special consideration must be submitted using the Special Consideration Form as soon as possible and no later than 5 working days after the assessment. Failure to submit a Special Consideration application within the 5 working days period will result in the application being rejected and possible sanctions applied to the centre for not following documented procedures.

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

- Demonstrates that the learner must have been affected by the condition at the time of the assessment, even though the problem revealed itself only after the assessment
- For onscreen assessments where results are immediately available

If the application for special consideration is successful, the learner's performance will be reviewed in the light of available evidence. It must be noted that a successful application of special consideration will not necessarily change a learner's result.

### 2.4.2 Evidence

Evidence must be submitted with the special consideration form. See appendix 2 for examples of evidence. Where an incident occurs during an examination, which leads to the request for a special consideration, the examination invigilation report will be requested. This should contain a full description of the occurrence, as witnessed by the invigilator.

### 2.4.3 Communication of decisions

AIM will acknowledge receipt of the Special Consideration within 2 working days of submission. The outcome of the decision to authorise a special consideration will be communicated directly to the centre within 10 working days.

### 2.4.4 Appeals against the special consideration decision

If a centre disagrees with a decision made by AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group about a special consideration, the centre can ask for the decision to be reviewed under the AIM Enquiries and Appeals policy providing further evidence such as medical evidence is now available which may change the original decision made by AIM Qualifications and Assessment group.

## Section 3 – Regulatory References

### Conditions, Principles and licencing criteria

This policy is intended to meet our regulatory requirements. In particular:

Section	Condition/Principle/ Licensing criteria
Malpractice and maladministration	Condition A8
Accessibility of qualifications	Condition D2
Designing an assessment	Condition E4
Language of the assessment	Condition G2
Use of language and stimulus materials	Condition G3
Arrangements for special consideration	Condition G7
Completion of the assessment	Condition G8
Delivering the assessment	Condition G9
Marking the assessment	Condition H1
Results of a qualification based on sufficient evidence	Condition H5
Appeals process	Condition I1
The awarding body and its providers must provide clear information on their procedures, products and services and ensure that they are accurate and appropriate to accredited qualifications	Principle 5
The awarding body must ensure that its systems and processes for the identification, design, development, implementation and review of qualifications and assessments are fit for purpose	Principle 10
The awarding body and its providers must ensure that they have the necessary arrangements and resources required to manage and administer qualification delivery and assessment	Principle 12
The awarding body and its providers must ensure that its qualifications and their delivery and assessment are fair, inclusive and accessible to learners	Principle 14
The awarding body and its providers must ensure that it has safeguards to prevent and manage cases of malpractice and maladministration	Principle 18
Documented accessible procedures for appeals	Licensing Criteria 30a, c
Procedures for appeals	Licensing Criteria 31
Assessment practices on access to HE courses	Licensing Criteria 96
Consistent standards are applied in assessment	Licensing Criteria 99

### Section 4 – Appendix

#### Appendix 1 - Useful contacts

The following provides contact details for AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group and its regulators.

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##### AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group Contact details

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact us.

Telephone: [0844 2253377](tel:08442253377)

Email: [enquiries@aimgroup.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@aimgroup.org.uk)

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##### Regulators' contact details

###### CCEA

Telephone: [02890 261 200](tel:02890261200)

Email: [info@ccea.org.uk](mailto:info@ccea.org.uk)

###### Ofqual

Telephone: [0300 303 3344](tel:03003033344)

Email: [public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk)

###### Qualifications Wales

Telephone: [0333 077 2701](tel:03330772701)

Email: [enquiries@qualificationswales.org](mailto:enquiries@qualificationswales.org)

###### The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

Telephone: [01452 557 000](tel:01452557000)

Email: [enquiries@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@qaa.ac.uk)

###### SQA Accreditation

Telephone: [0345 279 1000](tel:03452791000)

Email: [accreditation@sqa.org.uk](mailto:accreditation@sqa.org.uk)

## Appendix 2 - Examples of required evidence for special consideration

Evidence must be supplied with every request for special consideration. The nature of the documentary evidence will vary according to the circumstances. In all cases evidence must demonstrate how the learner’s circumstance has or will impact on their ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.

In the case of special consideration, it is important that the learner provides details of how any circumstances such as those listed below affected them, rather than confirmation of any actual event. For example, if the learner has been ill with the flu for a period of 10 days, we will expect a doctor’s note which says they were incapacitated between the two relevant dates. If, on the other hand, they have suffered the loss of a close relative and feel their work has been affected, we will need a death certificate or a letter confirming the death from an independent person confirming the relationship with the deceased and how this affected their performance, e.g. their emotional condition, their ability to work effectively, etc. It is important that they provide details of how any circumstances such as these affected them, rather than confirmation of any actual event.

Circumstance	Required evidence
Illness	An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional confirming the nature of the illness and the likely impact it is having on the learner's ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.
Hospitalisation	A medical letter/certificate from the relevant hospital confirming the nature and severity of the learner's circumstances and the likely period of impact on the learner's ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.
Family	A medical certificate/letter from an independent medical professional confirming the nature and severity of the family circumstances and the likely impact it is having on the learner's ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.
Bereavement	A death certificate or a letter confirming the death from an independent person eg doctor or counsellor (usually not a family member) with their contact details provided and including a view on the closeness of the relationship and the impact it is having on the learner's ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.
Circumstance	Required evidence
Acute personal/emotional circumstances	An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional confirming the nature of the illness and/or circumstances and the likely impact it is having on the learner's ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.

Victim of crime	A written statement of events which is supported by written evidence from the Police (including a crime reference number). Where the impact of the crime has led to a medical or other professional consultation, an original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional confirming the likely impact the reported crime had/is having on the learner's ability to undertake formal assessment and/or study.
Domestic disruption	Where significant and unforeseen domestic disruption has occurred very close to a timetabled examination a letter from an appropriate independent individual/authority detailing the relevant circumstances and an indication of the likely impact with their contact details provided.
Jury service (UK)	A letter from the court together with proof that a deferral has been requested and rejected or proof that a previous request for deferral has been accepted.
Court attendance (UK)	Where a learner is required to attend a tribunal or court as a witness, defendant or plaintiff the learner must provide official correspondence from the tribunal/court confirming attendance or a solicitor's letter detailing the nature and dates of the legal proceedings and the requirement for the learner to attend.
Other	The list of circumstances cannot be exhaustive, and it is possible that other circumstances will arise that must be considered as acceptable

### Appendix 3 Examples of circumstances and the allowance which may be applied

Adjustment to grade	Examples of circumstances
5%	<p>This is the maximum allowance and will be reserved for the most exceptional cases, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>terminal illness of the candidate;</li> <li>terminal illness of a parent/carer;</li> <li>death of a member of the immediate family within two months of the examination;</li> <li>very serious and disruptive crisis/incident at or near the time of the examination.</li> </ul>
4%	<p>Very serious problems such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>life-threatening illness of candidate or member of immediate family;</li> <li>major surgery at or near the time of the examination;</li> <li>severe disease;</li> <li>very recent death of member of extended family;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ severe or permanent bodily injury occurring at the time of the examination;</li> <li>▪ serious crisis/incident at the time of the examination.</li> </ul> <p>NB 'Very recent' is defined as within one month of the examination(s) taking place. The centre must be satisfied that there has been a material detrimental effect on the candidates examination performance or in the production of coursework or non examination assessment.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">3%</p>	<p>A more common category (more cases will fall into this category), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ recent traumatic experience such as death of a close friend or distant relative;</li> <li>▪ recent illness of a more serious nature;</li> <li>▪ flare-up of a severe congenital/medical condition or a psychological condition;</li> <li>▪ broken limbs;</li> <li>▪ organ disease;</li> <li>▪ physical assault trauma before an examination;</li> <li>▪ recent crisis/incident;</li> <li>▪ witnessing a distressing event on the day of the examination involved.</li> </ul> <p>NB 'Recent' is defined as up to four months prior to the examination(s) taking place. The centre must be satisfied that there has been a material detrimental effect on candidate examination performance or in the production of coursework or nonexamination assessment.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2%</p>	<p>The most common category of allowance (most cases will fall within this category):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ illness at the time of the examination;</li> <li>▪ broken limb on the mend;</li> <li>▪ concussion;</li> <li>▪ effects of pregnancy (not pregnancy per se);</li> <li>▪ extreme distress on the day of an examination (not simply exam related stress);</li> <li>▪ allowance on the last paper taken in a day when a candidate has been entered for three or more examinations timetabled for the same day and the total duration of those papers is more than 5 hours 30 minutes (GCSE examinations) or more than 6 hours (GCE examinations). (Where extra time has</li> </ul>

been used following formal approval, this should be included in the calculation.) (Supervised rest breaks must not be included in the total duration of the papers when applying for special consideration.)

**Disclaimer:** Please note that any downloaded version of our policies may not be the most current iteration. For the latest updates and accurate information, kindly refer to the version available on our official website.