



ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES INC.
CANADA'S TESTING COMPANY

STRATÉGIES EN ÉVALUATION INC.
LA SOCIÉTÉ SPÉCIALISTE DES EXAMENS AU CANADA

TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES

**Guidelines for Use by the
Provincial/Territorial Regulatory Authorities**

February 2013

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Introduction

Candidates with disabilities are entitled under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and/or provincial/territorial human rights legislation to reasonable testing arrangements that provide for fair and valid assessment. Organizations administering tests must respond to requests for testing accommodations while ensuring the integrity of the examination. For an assessment to be valid, the examination must accurately test the knowledge, skills or whatever it is intended to measure, rather than the candidate's disability. In other words, testing accommodations should be made to ensure the accurate assessment of a candidate, not the functional limitations caused by the candidate's disability. **However, the accommodations should not place candidates with disabilities at an advantage or disadvantage in comparison to other candidates.**

Canada's Testing Company, Assessment Strategies Inc. (ASI) supports reasonable and appropriate modifications to the registration examination procedures and/or materials to accommodate candidates with disabilities.

This document provides guidelines on modifying the examination procedures and/or materials, as appropriate, to ensure fair and valid assessment of candidates with disabilities. It is designed for use by the provincial/territorial regulatory authorities when considering requests for accommodations from candidates with disabilities.

Before using these guidelines to determine what modification(s) should be made to testing conditions, individuals involved in making and implementing such decisions must be familiar with the:

- registration requirements;
- examination and the procedures for its administration;
- nature of disabilities of the candidate(s); and
- nature of modifications required by the candidate(s) in similar situations (e.g., test accommodations provided during the candidate's program of study).

Guidelines for Use by the Regulatory Authorities

Guiding Principles

- A. The regulatory authority is responsible for ensuring that the candidate meets all the requirements to become registered and is eligible to write the registration examination (i.e., the candidate is able to perform the essential functions of the profession). It should be reasonably determined in advance that a candidate's disability does not constitute an obstacle to registration.
- B. The examination is one of the measures on which a candidate's eligibility for registration is based. It is used to assess the candidate's overall knowledge of theory and practice and supplements other information a regulatory authority collects about a candidate.
- C. The examination is the last stage of the process leading to registration. The candidate is required to successfully complete the earlier stages to be eligible to write the exam.
- D. The determination of whether a testing accommodation is appropriate should be based on:
 - 1) the submission of complete documentation by the candidate to the provincial/territorial regulatory authority with the request for accommodation;
 - 2) whether the disability disadvantages the candidate in the standard test-taking task;
 - 3) whether the test-taking task that is being accommodated by the modification is critical to performance in the workplace;
 - 4) the extent to which the same or a similar accommodation is likely to be needed or made available in the workplace;
 - 5) whether the accommodation alters the skills and abilities that are measured, and the level at which they are assessed; and
 - 6) whether the accommodations provided give the candidate with a disability an unfair advantage over other candidates.
- E. The provincial/territorial regulatory authority, in consultation with ASI, will modify the examination procedures, as appropriate, to meet the needs of candidates with disabilities, while protecting the integrity of the examination. ASI will modify the examination material, as appropriate, to meet the needs of candidates with disabilities, while protecting the integrity of the examination.
- F. Candidates with disabilities should be informed in advance that they can request testing accommodations with the appropriate documentation.

Definition of Disability

Candidates with disabilities are individuals who:

- i) have any temporary or permanent physical impairment, or any persistent cognitive, psychological, sensory or learning impairment; and/or
- ii) believe that they would be considered disadvantaged in relation to other candidates for testing purposes because of a condition such as:
 - visual disabilities;
 - hearing impairment;
 - motor disabilities;
 - learning disabilities; and/or
 - limited physical tolerance.

Categories of Disabilities and Common Testing Accommodations

The following is a classification of testing accommodations for candidates with various types of disabilities. This classification is not exhaustive nor does it provide the decisions that should be made regarding the appropriate accommodations for specific individuals.

The classification is designed to provide direction regarding typical accommodations. It should be noted that the same accommodation may be used by individuals with different disabilities, and individuals with the same disability may use different accommodations. The great variety of disabilities makes it close to impossible to generalize rules for testing accommodations. Each request for accommodations should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Decisions regarding appropriate accommodations should be based on the nature of the disability and its impact on the candidate's ability to perform the tasks involved in taking a multiple-choice examination.

Candidates with Visual Disabilities

These candidates are unable to read test material or can only do so with the aid of enlarging devices, or may encounter problems with certain types of printed material. Reasonable accommodations include:

- reader (individual who reads test instructions and questions);
- recorder (individual who fills in answers for the candidate);
- large print test book and/or large print answer sheets (if large print answer sheets are used by a candidate, a recorder will also have to be provided to transfer the candidate's answers to a regular answer sheet);
- mechanical enlarging/magnifying equipment;
- electronic version of test for use with voice output software (e.g., Kurzweil);
- special lighting;
- additional time; and
- separate testing room.

Candidates with Hearing Impairment

These candidates usually have to receive information through printed material or oral/sign language. Reasonable accommodations include:

- written instructions;
- oral/sign language interpreter (an oral interpreter will enable the candidate to lip-read);
- special seating to allow candidate to view person giving oral instructions;
- additional time; and
- separate testing room.

Candidates with Motor Disabilities

These candidates have reduced mobility or loss of coordination and dexterity or are disabled in recording their responses in writing. Reasonable accommodations include:

- recorder (individual who fills in answers and turns test book pages for the candidate);
- additional time; and
- separate testing room.

Candidates with Learning Disabilities

These candidates are disabled in processing information from the printed page. Reasonable accommodations include:

- reader;
- electronic version of test for use with voice output software (e.g., Kurzweil);
- additional time; and
- separate testing room.

Candidates with Limited Physical Tolerance

These candidates have limited physical tolerance due to physical, psychological or cognitive disabilities. Reasonable accommodations include:

- special timing with frequent breaks;
- additional time; and
- separate room.

Documentation of Disability

To protect the integrity of the testing process and avoid unnecessary preparation for testing accommodations, it is reasonable to require documentation of eligibility and advance notification of disability-related needs.

The purpose of documentation is to substantiate the request for accommodation and to provide information about what accommodations are required. Requests for documentation of disability must be limited to establishing the need for accommodation. For those candidates who have observable disabilities (e.g., a fractured arm), there is no need for further documentation of the existence of the disability. For candidates with hidden disabilities (e.g., a learning disability), it is appropriate to request documentation to substantiate the need for accommodation. The candidate may be required to bear the cost of providing the requested documentation.

Diagnosis of Disability

The candidate should submit a formal diagnosis from a qualified health professional (e.g., physician, psychologist registered with a professional regulatory body) that describes the disability. Unless the candidate has recently been disabled, the candidate may already have such documentation. If so, it would not be necessary to require another diagnosis.

Examples of documentation from a qualified health professional (e.g., physician, psychologist) that would support the request for testing accommodations include:

- identification of the specific disability and/or diagnosis;
- the approximate date when the disability was first diagnosed and/or identified;
- a brief history and description of the disability;
- identification of the tests and/or protocols used to confirm the diagnosis;
- a description of past accommodations granted for the disability;
- the nature/type of the accommodation currently being requested;
- an explanation why the specific accommodation is needed;
- a legible signature, title and qualifications (registration # or licence # of a professional regulatory body), and contact information (telephone, e-mail) of the qualified health professional; and
- history of accommodations provided to the candidate in testing situations during her/his program (this can be supplied by persons involved in providing the accommodations at the educational institution, such as a disability counsellor).

Diagnostic information related to the candidate's disability is highly confidential and should not be disclosed to third parties. It should also be maintained separately from application and test result files.

Types of Testing Accommodations

Accessible Writing Centre

When selecting writing centres, it is important to ensure that the sites are accessible (e.g., ramps, railings) to meet the needs of candidates with limited mobility. If some writing centres are not accessible, an alternative site that is accessible should be provided upon request.

The writing centre should also be screened to determine its suitability for a secure and standardized administration.

Separate Room

Because of their disability, some candidates may require a testing environment that minimizes distractions resulting from noise, movement or both. Conversely, other candidates compensate for their difficulty in processing information by talking aloud and will require a separate room so that they do not disturb other candidates. A separate room should normally be provided when using a reader or a recorder.

Additional Time

Extending the time for an examination is frequently done to accommodate a variety of disability-related conditions and is often provided in combination with other accommodations. It should normally be provided when accommodations include a reader or a recorder.

The standard extension is time and one half (e.g., standard 4 hours is extended to 6 hours). However, decisions regarding the provision of additional time should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Recorder

The use of an individual to fill in the answers may be appropriate for candidates who have difficulty writing. In general, the recorder can only write what is dictated by the candidate.

For the registration examination, the recorder will be asked to complete the information portion of the answer sheet and to fill in the ovals indicating the candidate's answers to each question. The candidate will be requested to sign a *Candidate Declaration Form*, which absolves the recorder, the regulatory authority and ASI from responsibility for unintentional errors in recording the candidate's answers and other information provided. However, steps can be taken to minimize potential errors (e.g., have the recorder read the response after recording it). Specific instructions for recorders are provided in the attachments section of this document. Since the candidate will most likely be taking the examination in a separate room, the person invigilating the examination could also act as the recorder. There should be no pre-existing relationship between the candidate and the recorder, as this presents a conflict of interest. The recorder will also be required to sign a *Security Declaration for Recorders and Readers* form.

Reader

The provision of reader services is a traditional means of accommodating candidates whose disability precludes independent reading of the test material. The role of the reader is simply to read, not to interpret, what is presented. Interpretation of test questions is completely inappropriate.

The reader should be a native speaker of the language of the examination and someone who reads well and articulates clearly. There should be no pre-existing relationship between the candidate and the reader, as this presents a conflict of interest. The following criteria for selecting readers have been identified by major testing programs.

A good reader:

- reads clearly;
- reads at a normal pace;
- has good enunciation;
- speaks without a heavy accent;
- is patient;
- understands that the candidate may need to have the test questions repeated several times;
- follows instructions to read only the words on the page and not to change or add anything; and
- is familiar with the words, terms, symbols or signs that are specific to the test content.

Since the candidate will most likely be taking the examination in a separate room, the person invigilating the examination could also act as the reader. The candidate will be requested to sign a *Candidate Declaration Form*, which absolves the reader, the regulatory authority and ASI from responsibility for unintentional errors in reading the examination and other information provided. Specific instructions for readers are provided in the attachments section of this document. The reader will also be required to sign the *Security Declaration for Recorders and Readers* form.

Interpreter

Some candidates with a hearing disability may request to have an interpreter who has proficiency in sign language or an oral interpreter who speaks in a way that enables the candidate to lip-read accurately. The use of a qualified interpreter for interpreting test instructions and to assist in communication between the candidate and the person invigilating the examination is appropriate, but it may not be necessary. Alternative methods of conveying the information may be arranged between the candidate and the person invigilating the examination.

If interpretation is required, the candidate will most likely take the examination in a separate room. The invigilator should always address the instructions to the candidate, not the interpreter.

Voice-Output Software

The use of voice output software (e.g., Kurzweil) may be appropriate for some candidates whose disability precludes independent reading of the test material. If a regulatory authority is considering this accommodation, ASI should be contacted to obtain the *Guidelines and Restrictions for the Use of Voice Output Software*. The regulatory authority must be able to administer the examination in accordance with these guidelines to proceed with the accommodation. ASI will also require the regulatory authority to sign a *Security Protocol* before the exam.

Modification of Test Material

For some candidates, it may be appropriate to modify the test presentation to accommodate them. **The modifications must be made to the format/presentation of the examination material, not the content of the examination.** Examples of modifications include providing the examination on coloured paper or providing a large print test book and answer sheet. Each request should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the type of accommodation being requested and the disability involved.

Cost of Testing Accommodations

Testing accommodations should be provided at no cost to the candidate. Requiring the candidate to pay could be perceived as discriminatory under Canadian human rights legislation.

The provincial/territorial regulatory authority will be responsible for all costs associated with providing accommodations to candidates. The regulatory authority will be responsible for deciding how such costs will be covered. When more costly accommodations are required, ASI can help regulatory authorities find alternative accommodations or cost-saving strategies.

Informing Candidates of Availability of Testing Accommodations

Candidates should be informed as soon as possible of the process, procedures and deadlines for requesting accommodations to write the registration examination so that appropriate and timely arrangements can be provided. Failure to inform candidates might generate complaints and necessitate a reassessment of the candidate at the regulatory authority's expense. This does not mean that the accommodation guidelines have to be communicated routinely to each candidate, but a reasonable attempt must be made to inform all candidates of the availability of testing accommodations.

Candidates should receive information when applying to write the examination. The following wording is suggested for inclusion on the application form and in the "*Information for Candidates Writing the Registration Examination*" leaflet:

“If you have a disability that could adversely affect your performance on the examination and may require some accommodation in taking the examination, you should complete a testing accommodation *Candidate Application Form*. This form is available by contacting your provincial/territorial regulatory authority. If accommodations are not requested in advance, we cannot guarantee that accommodations will be available.”

Guidelines for Requesting Testing Accommodations

Candidates must seek approval from the regulatory authority prior to the examination for medical needs that do not affect their ability to write the examination but require the candidate to bring special materials into the examination room (e.g., hearing aids, medication(s), asthma pumps). These needs do not have to be communicated to ASI, but the regulatory authority should ensure that these allowances do not interfere with other candidates' ability to write the examination. If there is a possibility of interference, a separate room should be considered.

Guidelines for the Candidate

1. The candidate must submit the *Candidate Application Form* to the provincial/territorial regulatory authority by the deadline indicated on the form.
2. The candidate is required to submit appropriate documentation with the request for testing accommodations and to bear the cost of obtaining the required supporting documentation from a qualified health professional.
3. On examination day, the candidate must complete the *Candidate Declaration Form* before the exam materials are distributed.

Guidelines for the Regulatory Authority

1. The regulatory authority must inform candidates of the availability of testing accommodations.
2. The regulatory authority must provide the necessary form(s) to a candidate who indicates the need for testing accommodations.
3. The regulatory authority must ensure that the required form(s) are completed and that the supporting documentation is submitted by the candidate prior to the deadline.
4. The regulatory authority must determine whether it can support the request for testing accommodation. If necessary, the regulatory authority may communicate with ASI to discuss the request and the proposed accommodations before the request is submitted in writing to ASI. This is especially important when: dealing with accommodations that are not common; the regulatory authority is uncertain how to proceed; or approval of the request is uncertain.
5. The regulatory authority is required to complete the *Regulatory Authority Form* to notify ASI that it supports the request.
6. The regulatory authority must submit the *Regulatory Authority Form* to notify ASI of requests for modifications to examination procedures or examination material at least 40 business days prior to the examination date.
7. Upon receiving confirmation from ASI, the regulatory authority must notify the candidate requesting the testing accommodations of its decision to support or reject the request. The regulatory authority may also want to consider establishing a mechanism for candidates who wish to appeal the decision.
8. The regulatory authority must provide the approved accommodation(s) and is responsible for all associated costs.
9. On examination day, the regulatory authority must arrange to have the candidate sign the *Candidate Declaration Form* before the exam materials are distributed. A copy of this form must be returned to ASI.
10. On examination day, the regulatory authority must arrange to have recorders and readers sign the *Security Declaration Form for Recorders and Readers*. A copy of this form is included with the exam materials and must be returned to ASI.

Guidelines for Assessment Strategies Inc. (ASI)

1. For requests regarding modifications to the examination procedures, ASI will notify the regulatory authority in writing that it supports or does not support the decision to provide the accommodations requested. ASI may also propose alternative accommodations.
2. For requests regarding modifications to the examination material, ASI will notify the regulatory authority in writing that it supports or does not support the decision to modify the examination material. ASI may also recommend alternative accommodations.
3. ASI will maintain a record of all accommodations that have been provided and will make this information (with the exception of confidential information) available to the regulatory authority.

Summary

The process for considering candidate requests for accommodations is as follows.

1. The regulatory authority receives the candidate's request for accommodations when the candidate applies to write the examination.
2. The regulatory authority reviews the documentation submitted in support of the request to ensure it is complete.
3. The regulatory authority follows up with the health-care professional for clarification or further documentation, if needed.
4. The regulatory authority makes a decision whether to grant the accommodation and the type of accommodation it grants.
5. If granted, the regulatory authority informs ASI of its decision by completing the *Regulatory Authority Form*. For modifications to examination material or examinations procedures, ASI should be informed 40 business days before the examination date.
6. ASI reviews the accommodations granted, specifically in terms of whether they are likely to alter the nature of what the test essentially measures or whether it provides an unfair advantage over other candidates or poses potential examination security concerns. ASI then communicates its findings to the regulatory authority and, if any issue needs to be resolved, discussions are held to reach a solution.
7. The regulatory authority provides the candidate with its final decision on the request for accommodations.
8. The jurisdiction makes arrangements with the appropriate body so that the accommodations can be implemented.

Attachments

National Associations

The references below are for your information. Other organizations may be available locally to assist you in understanding the nature of various disabilities as well as the kinds of accommodations that can be considered. Technical aids required for the testing session, if necessary, may be supplied by some of the community organizations listed below.

Canadian National Institute for the Blind

www.cnib.ca

Institute for Rehabilitation Research and Development, The Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre

505 Smyth Rd.

Ottawa, ON K1H 8M2

www.irrd.ca

Causeway Work Centre

22 O'Meara St.

Ottawa, ON K1Y 4N6

www.causewayworkcentre.org

The Canadian Hearing Society

271 Spadina Rd.

Toronto, ON M5R 2V3

www.chs.ca

Technical Aids Loan Bank

Program Development (Employment Equity)

Public Service Commission

L'Esplanade Laurier, West Tower

300 Laurier Ave. W.

Ottawa, ON K1A 0M7

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

1188 Wellington Street West, Suite 200

Ottawa, ON K1Y 2Z5

www.ldac-acta.ca

Testing Accommodations

Specific Instructions for Recorders

Please familiarize yourself with the *Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for Presiding Officers and Invigilators* prior to exam day.

On exam day, recorders should do the following:

1. Arrange to be seated next to the candidate so the candidate can clearly see the answers that you fill in (applies only when candidates have adequate visual acuity).
2. Fill in the identification section of the response sheet with the information provided by the candidate.
3. Orally verify each answer the candidate chooses before recording it on the answer sheet.
4. Allow the candidate to visually and/or orally review the completed answer sheet and make changes within the allotted time period, before ending the examination session.
5. Do not discuss the questions or the response options with the candidate. If the candidate asks you any questions concerning the content of the examination, do not provide any interpretation.

Testing Accommodations

Specific Instructions for Readers

Please familiarize yourself with the *Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for Presiding Officers and Invigilators* prior to exam day.

On exam day, readers should do the following:

1. Read each question and the response options clearly and stress each option equally to the candidate.
2. Avoid trying to (mentally) identify the correct answer while reading the response options to the candidate.
3. In cases of an unfamiliar word, a word that is difficult to pronounce or a word that is pronounced the same as another word, spell out the word.
4. Give special emphasis to words that are underlined or in quotes, and tell the candidate about these printing variations.
5. Re-read the question and/or the response options if the candidate:
 - requests you to do so;
 - indicates the answer by indicating the location of the response option (e.g., “the second one”) or by letter (e.g., “C”) instead of by number;
 - chooses an answer before you have read all the response options; or
 - pauses for any considerable length of time after you have read all the response options.
6. Do not discuss the questions or the response options with the candidate. If the candidate asks you any questions concerning the content of the examination, do not provide any interpretation. Always limit your responses to re-reading the relevant questions/options/instruction.