

College of Policing Selection & Assessment's policy on accommodations and reasonable adjustments

For candidates attending the online assessment process

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Introduction

This policy applies to candidates applying for reasonable adjustments or accommodations for the online assessment process. For candidates sitting any other College of Policing Selection & Assessment (S&A) examination or assessment process, please refer to the reasonable adjustment and accommodation policy for the process you have applied to.

The College of Policing's S&A team are committed to providing valid, fair and reliable assessment products for the police service. In doing so it is sometimes appropriate to make accommodations or reasonable adjustments (RAs) to these assessment products for candidates with particular requirements to enable them to undertake a fair assessment. We encourage all candidates who feel they will need RAs or accommodations at an assessment or examination to apply for these. We are committed to supporting candidates to ensure they receive the support they need so that they are not disadvantaged in any way and are able to perform to the best of their ability. In doing so this will help the police service to ensure they are reflective of the communities they serve and continues to value the difference of individuals.

Specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) is a term which is becoming frequently less used in the workplace when referring to dyslexia and related conditions, as it is considered to be a term focused more on education than the workplace. The Division of Occupational Psychology working group in this area is called the 'Neurodiversity in Employment Working Group', and the Department for Work and Pensions and some other public sector bodies have adopted the term 'neurodiversity' in place of SpLDs. Therefore from this point onwards this policy will use the terms "neurodiversity" and "neurodiverse conditions" to refer to those neurodevelopmental conditions termed SpLDs in previous S&A policies.

Background

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) prohibits unlawful discrimination against people within protected characteristic groups that are specified in the Act. These include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The Act requires the College of Policing and police forces to take steps to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against individuals within a protected characteristic group in a range of circumstances, covering the provision of goods, facilities and services, the exercise of public functions, disposal and management of premises, work, education and associations. This includes the provision of testing and assessment processes.

The aim of this document is to outline to both forces and candidates the process by which candidates who feel they may require an accommodation or an RA can apply for this for the online assessment process. This includes candidates who are requesting an RA because of a neurodiversity or other disability.

RAs and accommodations

As previously stated, the Act prohibits discrimination against people within protected characteristic groups that are specified in the Act. There are a number of circumstances under which candidates may require an accommodation or adjustment to their assessment. The most common of these is when a candidate has a disability and requests a 'reasonable adjustment'. Under the Act, the College of Policing and police forces have a duty to make RAs to practices, premises and services to support a person with a disability at a 'substantial disadvantage' because of their disability, in comparison with persons who are not disabled. Failure to carry out this duty can constitute discrimination.

There are also instances when a candidate may request an accommodation because of a physical or mental condition which is not considered a disability.

An important distinction is made between an RA and an accommodation. An RA refers specifically to a requirement within the legislation relating to disability whereas an accommodation may be considered and supported in a wider range of circumstances to ensure candidates receive the necessary support. For example, allowing a candidate with a temporary back injury (which did not meet the definition of a disability) to use a customised chair or supporting candidates who are pregnant or who have recently returned from maternity having more regular access to facilities. The sections below provide more guidance on the circumstances in which an RA or accommodation might apply.

RAs

A disabled person as defined by the Act is:

‘someone who has a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’

Only an individual who has a disability that complies with the above legal definition is entitled to an RA. However, those who have a condition that is not a disability may still be eligible to receive an accommodation and should refer to Section 5. A condition must have a long-term effect to be categorised as a disability. Schedule 1 of the Act tells us that to be long term, the effect of the condition is likely to last, or must have lasted, for at least 12 months.

If a candidate is in doubt as to whether their condition meets the definition of a disability they should seek clarification from a specialist. The guidance given under section 6 and Schedule 1 of the Act should be considered.

The Act’s definition of a disability includes physical impairments (eg, hearing impairments, mobility impairments) and mental impairments or differences in functioning (eg, mental health conditions and neurodiverse conditions). Both physical and mental impairments are subject to the requirement that they meet the requisite criteria under the Act of having a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the individual. The term neurodiversity includes Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Attention Deficit Disorder, Specific Language Impairment (SLI) and Asperger’s Syndrome among other differences.

Accommodations

The College of Policing aims to provide all candidates with a fair assessment and will aim to support requests for accommodations where these are appropriate. However, in considering whether an accommodation is appropriate it is important to ensure that the accommodation does not change the standard the candidate is being measured against, nor that the candidate is provided with an unfair advantage over other candidates.

It will be unlikely that an accommodation would lead to a candidate being awarded additional time in an assessment as this could potentially provide the candidate with an unfair advantage. However, alternative accommodations such as breaks may be able to be considered depending upon the individual circumstances. It will also be necessary to consider the cost and logistical impact of supporting any accommodations and whether this is reasonable in the circumstances. For this reason all requests will be considered on an individual basis.

Determining RAs or accommodations

Every application for RAs or accommodations is considered individually to reflect the understanding that every individual has unique requirements. However, in determining any RAs it is the responsibility of S&A to decide that the adjustment is 'reasonable'. The 'reasonableness' of any adjustment is determined by the following principles:

- Whether or not the RA would impact on what is being assessed. RAs which impact what is being assessed could invalidate the measure of the candidate's suitability against role requirements. This would not be an RA.
- Whether the RA can reasonably be replicated in the working environment. Where an RA is applied within the context of the assessment but cannot be applied in an analogous way within the role, this would render the assessment invalid. This is because it cannot measure a candidate's suitability against role requirements. This would not be a reasonable RA.
- The RA should be sufficient to provide the candidate with an equal opportunity to meet the requirements of the assessment. However, the extent of the RA should not place the candidate at an advantage as this would be unfair to other candidates.
- It will also be necessary to consider the cost and logistical impact of supporting any accommodations and whether they are reasonable in the circumstances. For this reason all requests will be considered on an individual basis.

Candidates resitting

A candidate who was granted an accommodation or RA and failed to reach the standard at the online assessment process will need to reapply for the accommodation or RA for any future attempts at the process.

The candidate should declare on their Reasonable Adjustment and Accommodation Declaration Form (the declaration form) (Appendix A) that they are seeking an accommodation or RA provision and when they previously applied for this. The force will then review if this was for the online assessment process. If the candidate was previously granted an RA or accommodation for this process then the same will be granted.

If a candidate has previously been granted RAs or an accommodation for the online assessment process but would like additional RAs or accommodations to be provided at a future process, they will need to complete the declaration form (Appendix A) and provide supporting information to evidence their request. This will need to be reviewed to identify which RAs or accommodations would now be appropriate.

Please note that the provision of RAs and accommodations is based on an individual's needs at that specific time, as well as the context and format of the online assessment process. It therefore follows that the RA or accommodation will reflect the current situation and may not necessarily be consistent with previous provisions.

Process for applying for a RA or accommodation

The section below provides specific guidance for candidates on the process for applying for an RA or accommodation for the College of Policing's online assessment process.

As the assessment provider, the College of Policing will be responsible for providing guidance to forces on how to implement the policy and the process for granting RAs and accommodations. Forces will also be provided with information on which RAs and accommodations can be granted without referral to the College. The police force is responsible for determining the RAs or accommodations that should be granted for its candidates utilising the guidance provided by the College.

Please note: While this process requires candidates to liaise with their force to request RAs or an accommodation for their assessment, this would not prevent candidates contacting the College directly to request RAs or accommodations, if they did not wish to disclose their application to their force.

There are six stages in the process of requesting an RA or an accommodation. This represents the process that forces should follow in relation to all RA and accommodation requests. These stages are outlined below and are intended to ensure candidates are treated fairly and on an individual basis.

Please note: It is likely that in many instances where a candidate has requested an **accommodation** that it will not be necessary to complete all of the steps outlined below as these will not always be relevant. The force should discuss this with the candidate, after the candidate has notified them. However, both candidates and forces should familiarise themselves with the details provided below.

Process for candidates when applying for RAs or accommodations for the online assessment process

Stage 1

If you believe you require RAs or accommodations, you can declare this when applying for the online assessment process. If you currently work for a police force, you are not required to notify your line management of your application for RAs or accommodations.

After your declaration, the police force should contact you and check you wish to apply for RAs or accommodation. If you wish to apply, then they should send you a copy of the declaration form (Appendix A) and request supporting information*.

*If you have previously been granted RAs or an accommodation for the online assessment process or if you are an internal candidate and the force holds internal records of your disability or medical condition then you will not need to submit supporting information, and instead you just need to complete the declaration form.

Stage 2

You should complete the declaration form and provide supporting information (if required) to support your request and return this to your force.

It is your responsibility to ensure the supporting information contains the information required. See Appendix B for details on supporting information.

Stage 5

Once the force has determined the RAs or accommodations that can be granted they should communicate this with you via an acceptance form. If you agree* with what has been offered then you should sign and return the form. If no RAs or accommodations can be granted, the force will communicate this with you.

*If you disagree with what has been offered or are unsure of the meaning, you should contact your force as soon as possible. If you request additional RAs or accommodations to be granted then you will need to provide additional supporting information. The force will need to ensure that your request is reasonable, according to the Act. Where no agreement can be gained the force should escalate the request to the College of Policing Recruit team. Where necessary, the online assessment product lead will consider further action.

Stage 4

The force should determine the RAs or accommodations that can be offered based on the information they have been provided and any specialist's recommendations. If it is not possible to determine the RAs or accommodation that should be granted then the force should contact the College of Policing Recruit team to seek advice see page 10 for further information.

Stage 3

The force should review your declaration form and check the RAs or accommodation requested. If you are applying for RAs the force should gather evidence of previously agreed RAs or workplace arrangements (if you are an internal candidate). If not available, the force should review your supporting information, checking it complies with the College's policy (see Appendix B).

Stage 6

You will sit the online assessment process with the RAs or accommodations granted. Once RAs or accommodations are agreed there can be no further changes to these unless discussed and agreed with the force and the College. If you request further or different RAs or accommodations it may be necessary to delay your assessment (where possible). See page 10 for the ways in which the online assessment process is managed.

Process if RAs or accommodations cannot be determined

If it is not possible to determine the RAs or accommodation that should be granted based on the information provided by the candidate then the force should contact the College of Policing Recruit team to seek advice.

Where consultation with the College is required and medical reports or supporting information is shared with the College, these will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018. Access will be strictly controlled to those individuals who need to be involved with establishing the correct provisions for the candidate. Where the College is provided copies of the medical information and reports, these will be deleted one year after the assessment and during this time will be held securely and confidentially in a restricted area on the secure College network. For individual police forces' policies in regards to information and data retention please contact the force directly.

Online assessment process delivery

If the College of Policing Recruit team is delivering the online assessment process on behalf of the force, the force should communicate the RAs or accommodations granted for each of their candidates and share the signed acceptance forms as well as a CSV file for uploading onto the system with the College. This should be communicated within the agreed timeframes to ensure the College has all the necessary information to arrange the RAs or accommodations for the College-run online assessment process. The College Recruit team should record the RAs or accommodation granted and make arrangements for these to be put in place.

For forces running their own online assessment processes or in collaboration with other forces, they do not need to submit the acceptance forms to the College Recruit team. However, for monitoring purposes the force will notify the College Recruit team of the candidates who received RAs or accommodations and the details of these.

For force-run processes, if RAs or accommodations have been agreed then the force is not required to submit the candidate's supporting information. However, S&A does reserve the right to monitor the RAs or accommodations that have been granted. To do so S&A will conduct intermittent reviews throughout the year to check forces are applying the policy correctly and have offered the correct RAs or accommodations based on the candidate's supporting information. This will ensure that candidates are receiving the correct and fair RAs or accommodations.

Appendix A – Example reasonable adjustment and accommodation declaration form

Reasonable adjustment declaration form for College of Policing online assessment process

(To be completed by candidates and distributed by the force)

Name:
Candidate number (if known):
Police force:
Process: Online assessment process

1. Will you require a reasonable adjustment/accommodation during the online assessment process?

For instance, you may require a reasonable adjustment such as extra time or an accommodation such as using a reading ruler

- Yes
 No

2. Have you previously been granted reasonable adjustments or an accommodation for a College of Policing process?

(Please note: processes include Police Recruit SEARCH® Assessment Centre, Day One Assessment Centres, PCSO Recruit Assessment Centre, Specials Assessment Process, Direct Entry Assessment Centres)

- Yes
 No

If Yes, please state the previous reasonable adjustments or accommodation you received and the date you received them

--

3. Your reason for requiring a reasonable adjustment or accommodation

Provide details of any disabilities, neurodiversities or conditions. These details better enable us to support you

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4. Please state the reasonable adjustments or accommodation you would like to be provided with at the online assessment process

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Candidate declaration

I declare that the above information and any supporting information I have provided is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I consent for this information to be shared and used with the College of Policing who will use it to process my application for reasonable adjustments or an accommodation.

I accept that the information will be stored on the secure College network and all associated documentation will be permanently deleted after 12 months of the assessment process. I also acknowledge that a positive indication of my requirement for a reasonable adjustment by way of a 'Y/N tick box' may be stored on the College Assessment Information Management System (AIMS) and that this will be removed when my 'candidate identifiable information' is deleted. In line with the AIMS retention policy, this will be 3 years or 30 years respectively, depending on whether I am unsuccessful or successful in my chosen assessment process. I also understand that I may be required to provide additional supporting information from an appropriately qualified specialist to support my request and it is my responsibility to provide this to my force if required to do so.

Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Appendix B – Supporting information requirements

Where candidates are applying for an RA they are required to provide supporting information. The purpose of the supporting information is to establish whether or not the candidate has a disability as defined by the Act. Secondly, where a candidate does have a disability, the purpose of the supporting information is to obtain initial recommendations about what may constitute an RA for the candidate.

Please note: In some instances where a candidate has requested an accommodation, no further information might be required. However, in all instances where a candidate is requesting an RA, the candidate will be required to provide supporting information (if the force does not hold any information) or evidence of previous RAs.

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure the supporting information provided contains the information required in order to offer RAs. The College of Policing **will not** be responsible for meeting the cost of any assessments or reports.

Candidates with a disability or medical condition – supporting information requirements

Supporting information should take the form of a medical or specialist's report which provides information regarding the candidate's disability/the difficulties they experience. To ensure the most appropriate RAs are granted, it is helpful if this also includes recommendations that would be helpful to the candidate within an assessment process. This will enable police forces to better support candidates by ensuring the RAs they grant will meet their needs.

Police forces will determine the RAs that should be granted based on the specialist's recommendations. Where these are not available then it may be appropriate to offer RAs, which have been found to help support candidates and create a level playing field. Where these are not available these will be determined following a conversation with the candidate/discussion with the specialist (where possible) as well as a member of the S&A team.

Candidates with neurodiverse conditions – supporting information requirements

Neurodiversity is an overarching term that applies, but not exclusively, to conditions such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Attention Deficit Disorder, Specific Language Impairment (SLI) and Asperger's Syndrome among other neurodevelopmental differences and hidden disabilities.

Diagnostic Reports for neurodiverse conditions

In most cases the first step in determining RAs is to ensure that the individual concerned has undergone a formal assessment of their neurodiverse condition.

The aim of an assessment and the resultant report is to:

- Determine if someone has a condition under the term neurodiversity.
- Identify the nature of the condition/s (eg, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, or Attention Deficit Disorder).
- Diagnose the specific cognitive processing abilities affected.
- Determine the extent of any impairment/difference.
- Provide practical advice and guidance associated with the diagnosis.
- Provide recommendations for reasonable adjustments that support the candidate and the specific impairments diagnosed.

A good quality diagnostic assessment also ensures the candidate receives the most appropriate advice, guidance and reasonable adjustment(s) to meet the needs of their impairment. It also helps to ensure there is clarity about what their condition is and avoids the need to generalise about what their needs might be. This can be helpful in ensuring the candidate receives the appropriate adjustments for their needs.

Candidate diagnostic reports which were completed before the age of 16 will be accepted.

Alternative supporting information for candidates with neurodiverse conditions

While diagnostic assessments for neurodiverse conditions are helpful in providing an accurate picture of an individual's abilities, it is recognised that there can be barriers in obtaining such assessments, for example the cost of reports.

Therefore in support of an application for RAs alternative forms of supporting information, completed by suitably trained and qualified individuals, will be accepted, for candidates who have a neurodiverse condition but do not yet have a diagnostic report. These alternatives include:

- Evidence of exam/assessment access arrangements obtained while in education (known as Form 8).
- Evidence of Disabled Students Allowance report.
- Evidence of Study Aid and Strategies report completed while in education.
- Evidence of Workplace needs assessment report.

Please note: in cases where supporting information does not provide specific personal recommendations for assessments, it is likely standard RAs will be offered which have been found to be helpful for candidates who experience this neurodiversity.

Candidates with a neurodiverse condition whose first language is not English

Candidates who have a neurodiverse condition, ie, dyslexia, in a first language other than English are likely also to have it in English. The same procedures should apply for candidates whose first language is not English. However, please note the College of Policing is unable to support the translation of supporting information from an individual's native language to English.

Appendix C – Overview of the online assessment process

The following provides information regarding the online assessment process. For further information on other College of Policing S&A assessments please refer to the College of Policing's website.

This information and the directions to the webpages provided should allow specialists to make more informed recommendations when providing a report for the purpose of police selection and assessment.

The process includes a number of exercises:

Situational judgement test:

- The situational judgement test which contains 12 questions on various policing work scenarios. For each question candidates are asked to select the answer they believe to be correct.*

* If forces have their own pre-assessment process, they may use this instead of the situational judgement test. In those cases, candidates who are successful in the force sift would progress directly to the competency-based interview.

Competency-based interview:

- Candidates are then progressed to a competency-based interview with five questions, lasting five minutes each. Candidates are provided with one minute preparation before each question.

Written exercise:

- Candidates will be provided with written materials outlining a scenario in the community. They will have various sources of information and will be asked to provide typed written responses to their sergeant in relation to the issues contained in the materials. This exercise lasts approximately 50 minutes.

Briefing exercise:

- Candidates will be presented with a short brief of a community-based scenario and they will have time to prepare their responses to key questions. The scenario will evolve and additional information will be presented to the candidate for them to consider and respond to. Candidates' verbal responses to the questions will be recorded. This exercise lasts approximately 60 minutes.

For further information on the online assessment process, please refer to:
<https://recruit.college.police.uk/Officer/Pages/College-of-Policing-Online-Assessment-Process-Overview.aspx>

About the College

We're the professional body for the police service in England and Wales.

Working together with everyone in policing, we share the skills and knowledge officers and staff need to prevent crime and keep people safe.

We set the standards in policing to build and preserve public trust and we help those in policing develop the expertise needed to meet the demands of today and prepare for the challenges of the future.

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