



# ESRA-DRA Disability Policy and Reasonable Adjustments

## Reasonable adjustments at examinations – arrangements for disabled candidates

### 1. Policy statement

The ESRA-DRA Board is committed to ensure that all candidates have equal opportunities to demonstrate their ability in all types of ESRA-DRA examination settings. To this aim, the ESRA-DRA Board will make 'reasonable adjustments' to examination arrangements as appropriate for individual disabled candidates. The account of a candidate's personal circumstances will be taken and any professional advice given in the corroborative evidence of the disability that has been supplied. Therefore, adjustments are not merely based on the impairment(s) but how the impairment(s) would potentially impact on a candidate's performance.

### 2. Definition of disability

Disability is a protected characteristic, and the definition of disability is as follows:

A person has a disability if:

- they have a physical or mental impairment
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.

For the purpose of the definition, these words have the following meaning:

- 'substantial' means more than minor or trivial
- 'long term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months
- 'normal day-to-day activities' include everyday things such as eating, washing, walking, working and examinations.

Persons with certain conditions are deemed to be disabled without having to satisfy the criteria set out above. Those conditions are:

- HIV infection, cancer and multiple sclerosis
- severe disfigurements (with the exception of unremoved piercings and tattoos)

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### 3. Definition and provision of reasonable adjustment

**3.1** ‘Reasonable adjustment’ is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places a candidate at a substantial disadvantage in an examination situation.

**3.2** The ESRA-DRA Board will make reasonable adjustment for disabled candidates who undertake ESRA-DRA examinations, where any provision, criterion or practice and/or physical feature of the exam environment puts disabled candidates at a substantial disadvantage compared with those who are not disabled. The Board will provide or allow the use of auxiliary aids, where without one a disabled candidate will be put at a substantial disadvantage. See Examples of reasonable adjustments below.

**3.3** The ESRA-DRA Board will also consider temporary (such as broken arm, eye injury ... etc), on-going or fluctuating medical conditions for the purpose of examination adjustment, where the condition affects a candidate’s ability to take a planned sitting of an examination.

**3.4** Reasonable adjustment to examination arrangements is provided to candidates with a disability in order to reduce the potential disadvantage they face compared to a non-disabled candidate. It is not designed to give any type of advantage to disabled candidates in the receiving of additional examination accommodations. Reasonable adjustments must not affect the reliability or validity of the examination and does not apply to the application of a competence standard. It is not possible or appropriate to attempt to define a pre-determined set of reasonable adjustments and therefore any decisions will need to be made on a case-by-case basis.

### 4. Requesting reasonable adjustments

**4.1** Any candidate who has a physical or mental disability, specific learning difficulty (SpLD) or on-going or fluctuating condition that they believe could affect their performance in an examination may be entitled to reasonable adjustments or special arrangements.

**4.2 Booking instructions:** All candidates should **state the ‘I have a disability’ and ‘I require exam adjustment’ at the time of booking an exam**, upload supporting evidence of their disability from an appropriate authority, such as: an educational psychologist, the candidate’s GP, their college tutor or supervising consultant, and summarise the adjustments requested.

Applicants should book as early as possible to ensure that there is sufficient time to put in place any specific requirements. **This process should also be carried out at all**

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**reapplications and repeat attempts at any component(s) of the examination.** Candidates should not assume that they will be granted adjustments at forthcoming exams just because they were provided certain adjustments at previous attempts.

**4.3** Candidates whose need for reasonable adjustments or special arrangements arises after the submission of their application (due to an accident or sudden condition/illness) must contact [esra-dra@esraeurope.org](mailto:esra-dra@esraeurope.org) as soon as possible.

**4.4** If a candidate is seeking reasonable adjustments for a SpLD, they must provide a report from an approved assessor\*

**The report must include recommendations in regard to exam adjustments.**

**\*Approved assessors include:**

- Specialist teachers who hold a practicing certificate, such as Dyslexia Action, BDA or PATOSS or equivalent. Candidates can check if an assessor holds the appropriate qualifications on the SASC (SpLD Assessment Standards Committee) website
- A practicing chartered or educational psychologist who is registered with the Healthcare Professionals Council. A candidate can check if an assessor is registered on the HCPC website or equivalent.

**When supporting a report, candidates should ensure that:**

- educational psychologists and experts have reviewed and understand the professional nature of the examinations and also the competence standard being assessed.
- the experts have contacted the ESRA-DRA Office in order to be aware of the exam structure, knowledge and skills that are tested.
- reports from experts confirm that they have received such information

Exam information is located on the ESRA / ESRA-DRA web page:

<https://esraeurope.org/esra-dra/>

**4.5** If the rationale for reasonable adjustments in the evidence or report provided is unclear or it is felt that further explanation is required, the ESRA-DRA Office may seek consent from the candidate to approach the relevant GP, consultant or assessor/expert concerned for further clarification.

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**4.6** Candidates are advised that failure to contact the ESRA-DRA Office promptly may mean that there will be insufficient time for some or all of the reasonable adjustments requested to be put in place. In such cases, candidates can either agree to sit the examination with no or some reasonable adjustment or withdraw and receive a full refund less an administration fee. They can then reapply for the next sitting of the examination, where a full and fair assessment of the reasonable adjustments required can be made.

## **5. Consideration of Reasonable adjustments**

**5.1** All decision makers receive training in equality and diversity, reasonable adjustments and unconscious bias. The ESRA-DRA Board is responsible for undertaking an evidence-based evaluation of the entitlement to adjustments for disabled candidates and to those with conditions similar to those raised at paragraph 3.3.

Re-evaluations of entitlement for each exam application made by individual candidates requesting reasonable adjustments will be undertaken.

**5.2** Whilst it cannot be assumed that candidates with the same type of disability will all benefit from the same adjustments, where a precedent has already been set, previously awarded adjustments will be used as a starting point for consideration and discussion. See paragraph 5.3 in regard to SpLDs.

**5.3** Good practice in the support of candidates with SpLDs such as dyslexia is applied in offering a provision of extra time for written examinations, although this should be raised as a recommendation in the assessor's report in order to be used as a starting point for reasonable adjustment considerations. Extra time accommodations for candidates with SpLDs will also be considered for other exam components where the reading of information is required. Additionally, such candidates may have different or further requirements, such as the use of particular fonts, overlays or exam questions printed on coloured paper. Where this is the case different and/or additional reasonable adjustments will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**5.4** Where the ESRA-DRA Office has no precedent for an adjustment for a particular disability or special need or where the adjustment requested is more significant than any previous adjustment permitted, then the case may be referred to the ESRA-DRA Chairs.

**5.5** All candidates who have submitted written requests for reasonable adjustments will be notified in writing of the reasonable adjustments that have been permitted for their examinations.

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**5.6** The ESRA-DRA Part 2 examinations are regarded as high-level competence exams, assessing understanding, cognitive skills and behaviour as well as clinical knowledge and practical skills. As such the method of assessment is a crucial element of these examination components and any adjustments made must maintain the integrity and validity of these assessments and not affect the format of the examinations.

*While there is a duty to make a reasonable adjustment, in enabling the competency standards to be met, there is no requirement to make adjustments that would alter the standard of competency required.*

**5.7** Where a candidate does not believe the adjustments they have been granted are reasonable, they should refer to the ESRA-DRA Appeal / Complaint process and regulations.

## **6. Examples of reasonable adjustments**

There are three types of situations where the duty to make reasonable adjustments might arise.

- where the ESRA-DRA Office applies a provision, criterion or practice which substantially disadvantages a disabled person compared with a person who is not so disabled; or
- where a disabled person is substantially disadvantaged (compared with a person who does not have that disability) as a result of a physical feature of the premises; or
- where, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, a disabled person would be placed at a substantial disadvantage (compared with a person who does not have that disability)

The following examples of the reasonable adjustments that could be applied to each of the three situations above - they are included for guidance purposes only:

*Provision, criterion or practice (for example, requiring the exam to be completed within a set period of time with no breaks and the exam paper being in a standard font on white paper)*

- Extra time for candidates with dyslexia / SpLD
- Rest breaks for candidates with certain medical conditions or to allow medication to be taken.
- Exam papers in large fonts or a specific colour.



### *Physical features*

- Adjusting exam cubicles to allow wheelchair access.
- Provision of access lifts, accessible toilets and staircase ramps

### *Auxiliary aids*

- Hearing induction loop
- Coloured overlays.

Candidates are strongly advised that should they feel that their performance may have been impaired by an underlying disability, they should seek advice after their initial failure rather than taking further attempts at the examination.

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