



Policies & Procedures



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Student Charter

Welcome to your course. At Animal Courses Direct we value our diverse community of students and have high expectations of all learners. This Charter reflects our vision to offer excellent standards of animal care education.

The Charter also outlines the commitment we expect that will help you to get the most out of your studies and to be successful.

We strive to continue to reach more students by offering a wide range of study options and qualifications that raise the standards of animal welfare. We continually measure and review how we are meeting our commitments and take relevant action to improve.

Commitment we expect from students

- Treat your tutor, our team and your fellow students with respect, dignity and courtesy at all times, considering them as individuals. Make every effort to work together with your tutor and with other students, ensuring politeness throughout your communications. We have a zero-tolerance policy to verbal/written abuse and bullying; evidence of abuse or bullying may lead to expulsion.
- Work hard and take responsibility for your own learning.
- If you are experiencing any problems with your work, please email your tutor or Student Support and seek help when you need to.
- Actively participate in our feedback reviews.
- Regularly check your online learning account for information updates.
- Ensure the details you provided when you enrolled are current and correct, and if not, please let us know of any updated information.
- Complete our waiver form and behave in a safe and responsible manner when attending practical training, thereby helping to ensure that your practical training is a safe environment for everyone.
- Uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Academic misconduct is a breach of the values of academic integrity and can occur when a student cheats in an assessment, or attempts to deliberately mislead an examiner that the work presented is their own when it is not. Evidence of academic misconduct may lead to expulsion. (Also see Malpractice/Maladministration policy).



Commitment we make to students

- Commitment from caring and experienced staff who will: Provide notice and an explanation of any unavoidable cancellation or rescheduling of practical placements; provide regular, fair and accurate assessment of your work; mark all submitted work and return it within 14 working days unless otherwise stated; ensure that our Awarding Organisations' policies and regulations are met by putting your work through our internal quality assurance process and through external quality assurance; provide you with constructive feedback and advice about how to improve. Provision of good quality distance learning materials and relevant practice-based learning. If a student has a specific learning requirement that has been made known to us, we will endeavour to accommodate this wherever reasonable.
- Support for students to achieve positive personal and career development outcomes.
- We respect confidentiality and only use information we have been given for the legitimate purposes for which it is provided.
- Provision of clear and accurate information on course content and methods of delivery.
- Provide opportunities to express your views about the quality of our learning programmes through opinion and feedback surveys.
- Provide access to our Job Board and advice on further studies/progression once you have completed your course.

Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

It is the aim of Animal Courses Direct, that no learner receives less favourable treatment, either directly or indirectly, irrespective of their age, disability, economic status, ethnic or national origins or nationality, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity.

Animal Courses Direct is committed to complying with all current and relevant legislation which at the time of writing includes but is not limited to the Equality Act 2010 and Northern Ireland Equality Law. The point of contact for Equality and Diversity is our Career Advisor and Student Support Officer, Lisa Park who can be contacted on 0208 432 2838 or by emailing parklisa@animalcoursesdirect.co.uk



Health and Safety Policy Statement

Animal Courses Direct seeks to carry out all statutory duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

All company employees, associates and students are encouraged to perform their own risk-assessment as described in the "*Display screen equipment (DSE) workstation checklist*" provided by the Health and Safety Executive, and to complete any remedial steps needed.

The checklist includes questions relating to the user's workstation and work environment, specifically the Keyboard, Mouse tracking-device, Display screens, Software, Furniture, and Environment. It is available free-of-charge from the Health and Safety Executive on the following link: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf>

Animal Courses Direct encourages further reading from the Health and Safety Executive on working with display screen equipment available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l26.pdf>

Health and Safety during practical placements should be discussed with the workplace prior to undertaking any practical tasks. Each placement will have its own task specific risk assessments, and these should be understood to ensure the safety of the students and others in the workplace. Points to consider are –

- Fire evacuation procedures and location of designated assembly points.
- Task/animal specific risk assessments and preventative measures - such as wearing the correct Personal Protective Equipment and ensuring you are confident in the procedures to follow to complete the task, including what to do in an emergency.
- Follow correct animal handling procedures as instructed. If unsure, ask your supervisor for more information.
- Have an allocated supervisor that you can ask for advice if required.
- Be aware of the risks associated with COSHH (Control Of Substances Hazardous to Health) products, and ensure relevant risk assessment procedures are adhered to. Any relevant allergies should be disclosed to the placement provider, such as dust, as this falls under these guidelines.
- Ensure you are aware of any Zoonotic Diseases which may apply in the workplace, be familiar with the basic signs of an infected animal and be aware of how transmission can occur.



This list is not exhaustive and H&S for yourself, the animals and others around you must be considered at all times.

Safeguarding Policy for Learners

The information provided below is intended for general awareness and information only, Animal Courses Direct is not responsible for safeguarding users against these threats.

The company encourages all users to understand the risks of working with the Internet and to take reasonable steps to protect themselves. The list below is not a comprehensive list of all risks, but may be a help in highlighting some of the more common threats.

- All Internet enabled devices should be configured with up-to-date anti- virus and firewall software.
- Users should never divulge passwords, banking details, or usernames for any reason whatsoever, and should change their passwords on a regular basis.
- Users should never download unsolicited software, or let anyone connect to their Internet enabled devices remotely.
- Users should never click on a link in an unexpected email or text. Emails sent from Animal Courses Direct will include the **@animal- job.co.uk or @animalcoursesdirect.com** domains. Roll your mouse pointer over the sender's name in an email to reveal its true address.
- If you are not certain that an email has genuinely come from Animal Jobs/Courses Direct please phone us for confirmation before taking any actions or clicking on any links in the email.
- Users should be aware of the risks of *Ransomware* - malicious software that infects your computer and displays messages demanding a fee to be paid in order for your system to work again. Avoid clicking on links in unsolicited emails or downloading software from the internet.
- Users are encouraged to perform a regular backup of their computer systems and devices to facilitate the recovery of lost data. Backups should be kept in a secure location and not accessible via the internet (to protect from *Ransomware*).
- The "**Take Five**" campaign offers straightforward and impartial advice to help everyone protect themselves from preventable financial fraud. While Animal Courses Direct has no connection with the campaign, their website is a valuable source of information which may be of interest to users wanting to keep themselves safe online. <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/>



Students are encouraged to contact their tutor or student support for advice on any aspect of their course and other matters they feel can be supported by their tutor. When enrolling, students select the level of programme for their ability, and should report any concerns regarding this aspect of their studies to their tutor. Our Careers Advisor and Student Support Officer, Lisa Park, who can be contacted on – parklisa@animalcoursesdirect.co.uk and is the point of contact for Safeguarding, who ensures the relevant DBS checks are in place.

Data Protection Policy Statement

Animal Courses Direct is required to retain information about its employees, associates and students and other users to monitor performance and achievements. It is also necessary to process information so that Animal Courses Direct can comply with its legal obligations. To comply with the law, information must be collected and used fairly, stored safely and not disclosed to any other person unlawfully.

To achieve this, Animal Jobs/Courses Direct must comply with the Data Protection Act (DPA) Principles, including GDPR which is set out in the Data Protection Act 2018 (the 2018 Act).

Students must ensure that all personal data provided to the Animal Courses Direct is accurate and up to date.

Right to Access Information

All students have a right under the 2018 Act to access certain personal data being kept about them either on computer or in certain files. Any person who wishes to exercise this right should contact us by email (tutor or student support).

The company aims to comply with requests for access to personal information in a timely fashion, but will ensure that it is provided within one calendar month, as required by the 2018 Data Protection Act.

It is the responsibility of students not to share any course information or staff contacts with others. Any information about other students on your course that you may be in contact with should also be handled securely and not shared.



Refund Policy

Online Courses:

In line with The Consumer Rights Act 2015, you have a 14 day right to change your mind and get a full refund for digital content- i.e., online courses, that you have purchased, unless you have already begun to download the course or you have accessed it via our learning platform.

To cancel your course you must send a signed, written notice via recorded delivery to our registered address (cancellations by phone or email will not be accepted).

Upon receipt of cancellation notice, we will process the refund due to you within thirty days of our receipt of your written notice of cancellation. We retain the right to charge a fee and this will be deducted from any refund awarded. For course fees less than £500, you will be required to pay a £50 cancellation fee. For enrolment fees greater than £500 you will be required to pay 10% of the course fees in addition to the £50 cancellation fee.

Practical Courses/Placements:

While we make every effort to run courses as advertised, we reserve the right to change the content, timing, dates or venue of our courses. We reserve the right to cancel a course up to the date of the course if insufficient bookings have been received. We will strive to give as much notice as possible in such an event. In all cases, students who had registered to attend a cancelled course will be given the option of a full refund for their course fees only or of rescheduling to a future course date but we disclaim any further liability and will not be expected to pay for travel or hotel costs.

If you are unable to attend, and not in a position to transfer your place to another person, then full charges will apply. Please note that full payment is required for non-attendance on a booking that has been transferred. No refund will be payable for non-attendance.

Where a student has been expelled from a course, we reserve the right to not issue a refund of any kind.

Waiver and Release of Liability:

Students will only be able to participate in a Practical Placement if they have completed their waiver. Students voluntarily participate at their own risk in practical activities with knowledge of the dangers involved and agree to accept any and all inherent risks of personal injury, or death.

Our Waiver specifies that students covenant not to claim against Animal Jobs/Courses Direct, its officers, directors, employees, agents, and contractors, from any and all present and future claims resulting from ordinary negligence, for personal injury, or death arising as a result of participating in a practical placement.



Students voluntarily waive any and all claims resulting from ordinary negligence, both present and future, which may be made by family estate heirs, assigns, or the student.

Malpractice/Maladministration Policy

We require our staff and learners to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Failure to do so will result in a breach of this policy as detailed below and may lead to expulsion.

The above policy relates to both Animal Courses Direct staff, and its learners who come across suspected or actual malpractice or maladministration.

If a staff member or learner suspects any deliberate activity or practice that contravenes regulations and compromises the integrity of the internal or external assessment process and/or the validity of certificates; or sees any activity or practice which results in non-compliance with administrative regulations and requirements and includes the application of persistent mistakes or poor administration by Animal Courses Direct, they must report findings and this must be recorded appropriately and fully investigated.

Examples include (non-exhaustive list)

- Fraudulent claim for certificates;
- Intentional withholding of information from us which is critical to maintaining the rigor of quality assurance and standards of qualifications;
- Collusion or permitting collusion in exams/assessments;
- Learners still working towards qualification after certification claims have been made;
- A loss, theft of, or a breach of confidentiality in, any assessment materials;
- Plagiarism by learners/staff;
- Submission of false information to gain a qualification or unit;
- Failure to carry out internal assessment, internal moderation or internal verification in accordance with our requirements;
- Deliberate failure to adhere to our learner registration and certification procedures;
- Unauthorised amendment, copying or distributing of exam/assessment papers/materials;
- Inappropriate assistance to learners by centre staff (e.g. unfairly helping them to pass a unit or qualification);



If you need to make an allegation of malpractice or maladministration, we will need the following information to investigate –

- Learner's name (where relevant) and awarding organisation registration number (if applicable);
- Course that is currently being studied;
- Staff members details (name, job role) if they are involved;
- Nature of the suspected or actual malpractice and associated dates;
- Details and outcome of any initial investigation carried out by ACD or anybody else involved in the case, including any mitigating circumstances.

On receiving the above information, we will conduct an initial investigation into the allegation. We will ensure that staff involved in the initial investigation are competent and have no personal interest in the outcome of the investigation. In all instances, we will immediately notify the awarding organisation if we suspect malpractice or maladministration has occurred. Information may then be passed to the regulatory authorities to ensure that all investigations are carried out rigorously and effectively.

Investigation

All suspected cases of malpractice and maladministration will be passed to senior staff, who will normally acknowledge receipt, as appropriate, within 3 working days. The allocated senior staff member will be responsible for ensuring the investigation is carried out in a prompt and effective manner and in accordance with the procedures in this policy and will allocate a relevant member of staff to lead the investigation and establish whether or not the malpractice or maladministration has occurred and review any supporting evidence.

Next steps

In all cases of suspected or actual malpractice, we will notify the Head of the Centre and/or Faculty involved in the allegation of the investigation. In doing so we may withhold details of the person making the allegation if to do so would breach a duty of confidentiality or any other legal duty.

Where applicable, Head of faculty will inform the appropriate regulatory authorities if it is believed there has been an incident of malpractice or maladministration which could either invalidate the award of a qualification or which could affect another awarding organisation.



Timeframes for investigation

We aim to have investigated and actioned/resolved the issue within 10 working days. If there are delays in this process, we will keep all parties informed of the delay and progress made.

We will conduct the investigation in a fair way and ensure that all relevant evidence is considered without bias. In doing so investigations will try to -

- Establish the facts relating to allegations;
- Identify the cause, scale of allegation and those involved;
- Evaluate any action already taken;
- Consider if remedial action is required to minimise risks to current learners/staff;
- Ascertain if action is required in respect of certificates already issued and if awarding organisation need to be informed to consider sanctions.

All materials and information collected as part of the investigation will be kept securely and treated in confidence. Documentation will be retained for a period of not less than 5 years.

Report and conclusion

After a full investigation, a draft report will be produced for all involved to check for factual accuracy. Any amendments required will be agreed between all involved. The final report will be produced and sent to other external agencies as applicable.

Outcomes

If the investigation confirms that malpractice or maladministration has taken place, we may:

- Amend aspects of our qualification assessment and / or monitoring arrangements and associated guidance to prevent the issue from reoccurring;
- Inform relevant third parties (e.g. funding / awarding bodies) of our findings in case they need to take relevant action;
- Review assessment and certification processes and amend as necessary;
- Look at staff training and induction processes to ensure relevant staff are competent and they have a clear understanding of their role;
- A clear action plan is created and implemented where required, with all involved knowing their responsibility to action any changes.

Complaints Procedure

The above policy can be used for informal or formal complaints about the quality of the services provided by Animal Courses Direct and about the delivery and quality of teaching, support, supervision, marking or any other matters relating to a programme of study. The following procedure can be used for any complaint. Each complaint will be treated consistently and fairly.



Making a complaint

If you have a complaint, in the first instance we recommend that you discuss this informally with a member of staff. This could be your Tutor or a member of the support team. If they cannot help or you wish to speak with someone else, you can ask to speak to a senior manager.

If matters cannot be resolved informally, the complaint will be referred to the Head of Centre. If the complaint is still unresolved it will be passed to the Director, who will respond the complaint within ten working days or receipt. The decision of the Director is final and will be made according to the information provided.

What we will need

When you contact us, please give your full name, contact details including an email address and daytime telephone number along with:

- a full description of your complaint (including the subject matter and dates and times if known);
- any names of the people you have dealt with so far;
- copies of any correspondence to do with the complaint.

What happens next

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 3 working days. We will then aim to have responded to your initial complaint within 5 working days. Should this need to be referred to the Director, this will be responded to within 10 working days (as above).

If the complaint requires an extension to the above deadlines, we will keep all parties informed and revised times and progress will be provided.

If your complaint is upheld, we will respond accordingly and carefully consider improvements to our service/systems. In extreme circumstances, internal disciplinary procedures may be exercised where the performance or behaviour of our staff is deemed inappropriate.

In situations where the complaint is upheld, we will also review processes to ensure there are no other or future learners affected.



Enquiries and Appeals Policy

This policy details our enquiries and appeals procedure that learners can access if they wish to appeal against a decision taken by Animal Courses Direct. All appeals made in relation to decisions taken by us will go through this process to hopefully be resolved, before being escalated to the relevant bodies if required.

Learners can enquire regarding decisions taken by Animal Courses Direct. Examples of this could include:

- results of an assessment or piece of work;
- results of complaints, malpractice and maladministration;
- reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations.

This stage of the enquiry will be informal.

Making an enquiry

An enquiry should be made in writing by post or email, supplying the following information:

- learner's name and course/qualification being studied;
- date(s) the learner received notification of the original ACD decision they wish to enquire/appeal;
- full nature of the enquiry;
- contents and outcome of any investigation carried out by ACD relating to the issue.

We will acknowledge receipt of this within 3 working days, and all documentation received will be assessed to ensure we have all the required information to be able to proceed and to ascertain if the issue can be resolved.

The review of all presented information will be undertaken by a senior member of the team with the appropriate levels of competence and who has no prior involvement in the case to ensure procedures have been applied fairly and in line with our policies. Decisions following an enquiry will be fed back to the appellant within a further 7 working days.

Next steps

Where the learner does not accept a decision following an enquiry and that decision relates to:

- results of assessment;
- reasonable adjustments and special considerations;
- malpractice and maladministration decisions.

At this point, the learner may proceed to the formal appeals stage.



Formal appeal

Learners have 10 working days to appeal to ACD following receipt of a decision made at the enquiry stage. The request to go to appeal must be made in writing – either by letter or email.

We will aim to complete the formal appeals process within 20 working days of receipt of this notification.

A full review of the original decision and outcome of the enquiry will take place in which we will consider all the evidence provided and will determine whether relevant ACD procedures have been applied fairly, appropriately and consistently in line with the relevant policy.

The appeal panel will consist of staff or independent parties that are not employees of ACD, with appropriate levels of competence and who have no personal interest in the decision being appealed.

Please note that in some cases the review processes may take longer, for example if further investigation or information gathering is required. In such instances, we will keep all parties fully informed of revised timescales and progress.

After the appeal

We will write to the learner with details of the decision to either:

- amend the original decision considering a review of any new rationale/evidence put forward.
- to confirm the original decision and provide a rationale.

If the learner is still unhappy with the outcome at this stage, they are entitled to raise the matter with the relevant qualification regulator (e.g. Open College Network West Midlands).

In situations where the appeal is successful, ACD will give due consideration to the outcome and will take appropriate actions to amend any decisions made and review how this may also have affected other learners. There will be a review of associated processes and policies to ensure that the 'failure' does not occur again or mitigate the situation as far as possible if the failure that occurred cannot be corrected.



Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that we are able to recognise adjustments that can be made to assessments and how to request and implement those adjustments. It ensures that all learners have every opportunity to access assessments and to achieve the qualification/unit they are undertaking.

If you encounter circumstances not covered in this policy affecting your assessment you must contact your Tutor before assessment takes place to agree any variation in the specified assessment arrangements.

If you wish to appeal against a decision relating to reasonable adjustments or special consideration arrangements, please refer to the Enquiries and Appeals Policy.

Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable Adjustments are adjustments made to an assessment to enable a disabled learner to demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding to the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification.

The Equality Act 2010 requires organisations to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate, who is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled. The awarding organisation is required to take reasonable steps to overcome that disadvantage. An example would be a Braille paper which would be a reasonable adjustment for a visually impaired learner who could read Braille.

A reasonable adjustment may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements. The reasonable adjustment must reflect the learner's normal way of working, to ensure that an unfair advantage is not provided to the learner during assessment.

Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on a number of factors which will include, but are not limited to:

- the needs of the disabled learner
- the effectiveness of the adjustment
- the cost of the adjustment and the likely impact of the adjustment upon the learner and other learners.



An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs
- involves unreasonable timeframes
- unfairly advantages or disadvantages a learner or group of learners
- prevents the qualification from providing a reliable indication of the extent to which a learner has the knowledge, skills and understanding being measured
- would alter the knowledge, skills and understanding being measured as opposed to the way they are demonstrated.

This is because the adjustment is not “reasonable.”

Implementing reasonable adjustments

The process for implementing reasonable adjustments depends on the nature of the adjustment. Some adjustments may be used at the discretion of Animal Courses Direct, others require permission from the Awarding Organisation/s.

This table outlines some reasonable adjustments that can be made, as long as they do not compromise the validity of the assessment. However, we have a duty to seek advice from our Awarding Organisation in any case where we are in doubt if an adjustment is needed or how it should be applied.

There are some restrictions to the provision of reasonable adjustments for certain qualifications. Reasonable adjustments will only be permitted in accordance with the qualification requirements detailed within each qualification guide.

- Permitted – Reasonable adjustment permitted at the discretion of Animal Courses Direct
- Apply – Apply to Awarding Organisation for permission

(see the following table for examples)



Reasonable Adjustment example	Assessments NOT taken under examination conditions	Assessments taken under examination conditions
Extra time up to 25%	Permitted	Apply
Extra time in excess of 25%	Permitted	Apply
Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles, CCTV and OCR scanners	Apply	Apply
Use of assistive software	Apply	Apply
Use of bilingual translation dictionaries	Apply	Apply
Assessment Material in enlarged format	Permitted (if possible)	Apply
Assessment material in Braille	Apply	Apply
Language modified assessment material	Apply	Apply
Assessment material on coloured paper	Permitted (printed by learner)	Apply
Assessment material in audio format	Apply	Apply
Use of assistive ICT	Apply	Apply
Responses using electronic devices	Permitted	Apply
Responses in Braille	Apply	Apply
Reader	Permitted	Apply
Scribe	Permitted	Apply
Transcriber	Permitted	Apply
Other	Apply	Apply
This is not an exhaustive list, and individual requests will be considered on an individual basis		

Applying for Reasonable Adjustment

Reasonable adjustments permitted at the discretion of the centre –

Where a reasonable adjustment is permitted at the discretion of Animal Courses Direct, we must have documented procedures for: implementing adjustments equitably; maintaining supporting evidence relating to the barrier to assessment, and the adjustment granted. We are required to keep records for inspection (including any declarations that are signed and dated by the Head of Faculty). Failure to implement reasonable adjustments in line with this policy may be dealt with through the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.



Reasonable adjustments requiring Awarding Organisation permission –

Where Awarding Organisation permission is required, Animal Courses Direct will complete a Reasonable Adjustment Request Form providing relevant details and appropriate supporting evidence. Requests for reasonable adjustments should be in English and submitted no later than 25 working days before the assessment. Records will be kept of adjustments they have permitted and those they have requested. These records should normally be kept for 3 years following the assessment to which they apply. Persons appointed to provide reasonable adjustments must be independent of the candidate and must be suitably trained and/or qualified.

Special Considerations

Special Consideration is consideration to be given to a learner/candidate who has temporarily experienced:

- an illness or injury
- some other event outside of the learner's control which has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on that learner's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her level of attainment in an assessment.

Special consideration can be applied either before or after an assessment if there was a reason the learner may have been disadvantaged during the assessment.

For example, special consideration could apply to a learner who had temporarily experienced:

- Incapacitating illness
- Serious injury
- Terminal illness
- Recent bereavement of a family member or close friend
- Terminal illness of a parent, child or dependent
- Serious disturbance at the time of the assessment
- Accidental events at the time of the assessment (i.e. being given the wrong examination paper or equipment failure)
- Serious domestic crisis
- Serious car accident
- Flare up of congenital illness



- Physical assault trauma.

This list is not exhaustive.

Special consideration should 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.

The extent of the adjustment will depend on the circumstances and reflect the difficulty faced by the learner. Where such an adjustment is impractical, the learner will be allowed a further opportunity to undertake a comparable assessment.

where an assessment requires the learner to demonstrate practical competence or where criteria must be met fully, it may not be possible to apply special consideration.

Applying for Special Consideration

Requests for special consideration should be sent to the relevant tutor or support staff as soon as possible and not later than 5 working days after the assessment. Requests for special consideration will only be accepted after the results of assessment have been released in the following circumstances:

- the application has been overlooked, and the oversight is confirmed by the Head of Centre;
- medical evidence comes to light about a learner's condition, which 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 should be noted that a successful application of special consideration will not necessarily change a learner's result.