



Guide for Assessing Persons with Disabilities

How to determine and implement assessment
accommodations

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Overview

The Government of Canada is committed to a workplace where people of diverse cultures and abilities can contribute fully. Under federal staffing law, all applicants being assessed during an appointment process must be provided with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications. This being said, the notion of equitable assessment does not necessarily imply using the same assessment procedures for everyone in the assessment process. For example, when assessing persons with disabilities, certain changes or modifications in the standard assessment procedure or in the format or content of assessment tools may be required. Accommodating the needs of persons with disabilities during the assessment allows them to participate to the appointment process on the same level playing field as their peers. To help ensure the equitable assessment of persons with disabilities, the Public Service Commission (PSC) is providing this Guide for Assessing Persons with Disabilities.

The purpose of this document is to provide those in charge of determining and implementing accommodations with practical guidance on decisions about the changes or modifications to assessment tools and procedures that can be made, to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities within an appointment process. Changes or modifications to the assessment procedure or to the assessment tools are called assessment accommodations. This designation helps differentiate accommodations in the assessment stage of the appointment process from workplace accommodations.

This guide includes eight sections addressing issues related to assessing persons with disabilities. The first four sections cover essential background information and the other four offer guidance on how to determine and implement accommodations in an assessment process.

1. **Key definitions** – This section provides definitions for key terms used throughout the document such as “persons with disabilities”, “accommodations in the assessment process”.
2. **Legal framework** – A summary of the legal framework and related policy on which assessment accommodations must rest is presented.
3. **Principles for assessment accommodations** – The four principles guiding the determination and implementation of assessment accommodations are discussed.
4. **Roles and responsibilities** – The roles and responsibilities of those involved in establishing accommodations in the assessment process are highlighted.
5. **Determining and implementing assessment accommodations** – A six step procedure for determining and implementing assessment accommodations is proposed.
6. **Standards for professional documentation** – In some cases, it is recommended to obtain documentation from a qualified professional relative to an applicant’s functional limitations. This section discusses the standards of such documentation.
7. **Concerns to request assessment accommodations or to provide information** – Suggestions on how to handle persons with disabilities’ concerns about requesting accommodations and/or providing information on their functional limitations are outlined.
8. **Issues applicable to specific disabilities** – Discussions of issues related to nine specific types of disabilities and examples of assessment accommodations are presented.

Key definitions

Duty to accommodate

The duty to accommodate is based on the legal obligations set out in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (CHRA) and the *Employment Equity Act* (EEA), and is a requirement that must be applied throughout the appointment process. The duty to accommodate refers to the obligation of an employer or service provider to take measures to eliminate disadvantages to employees, prospective employees or clients that result from a rule, practice or physical barrier that has, or may have, an impact on individuals or groups protected under the CHRA, or on designated group under the EEA. Employers must make sure that they build accommodation into their policies and practices as much as possible from the outset, and must accommodate up to the point of undue hardship, considering health, safety and cost.

Merit

Merit is the extent to which a person meets the essential qualifications, including official language proficiency, of the work to be performed. In addition, managers may take into consideration other "merit criteria" such as asset qualifications, operational requirements and future or present organizational needs.

Persons with disabilities

The term “persons with disabilities” is defined in the *Employment Equity Act* (EEA) as:

“persons who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment and who

(a) consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, or

(b) believe that a employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment,

and includes persons whose functional limitations owing to their impairment have been accommodated in their current job or workplace”.

For the purpose of this guide the term “persons with disabilities” is not limited to this definition. This guide also includes temporary conditions such as injuries, recuperation from surgery or specific requirements due to pregnancy or childbirth.

Functional limitations

Functional limitations result from disabilities and are restrictions in an individual’s functioning that hinder the ability to perform tasks or activities.

Accommodations in the assessment process

In the context of assessing persons with disabilities, accommodations, also called assessment accommodations in this guide, are designed to ensure that each person is assessed according to his or her own personal characteristics rather than presumed group characteristics. Specifically, they provide individuals with an opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications without being limited or unfairly restricted due to the effects of a disability, while respecting the core values of merit and non-partisanship, as well as the values guiding appointments, which are access, fairness, representativeness and transparency.

Assessment accommodations are changes or modifications that are made to an assessment procedure, format or content. They are purposely designed to remove obstacles that are presented by an individual's disability, without modifying the nature or level of the qualification that is being assessed¹. This ensures the validity of the assessment results, which is essential to the fair treatment of everyone and for selecting qualified personnel.

Ideally, assessment accommodations should modify the standard assessment administration process to the least extent possible and should resemble as much as possible to the accommodations which would be provided on the job to do the related tasks. These considerations help on ensuring that the results obtained under modified assessment conditions are valid and comparable to results obtained in assessment conditions originally intended, and on which norms and cut off points are based². This is essential for selecting qualified employees.

When the proposed changes to the assessment procedure or modifications to the content of the assessment alter the nature or level of the qualification being assessed, they should not be considered as potential accommodations. The same principle applies when the provision of certain adaptive technologies or services will alter the nature or level of the assessed qualification. The consequence of using assessment accommodations that modify the qualification being assessed is to invalidate results obtained, and therefore, can lead to bad appointment decisions.

Types of assessment accommodations

The decision to modify assessment procedure or content must rests on the functional limitations presented by the individual, the nature of the assessment instrument itself and the qualification being assessed³. Depending on the nature and extent of the functional limitations of the individual, one or more assessment modifications may be appropriate in a particular situation. The listing of possible modifications provided here should not suggest that the full array of strategies is routinely available or appropriate.

¹ American Education Research Association, American Psychological Association, National Council on Measurement in Education (1999). Standards for educational and psychological testing. American Educational Research Association: Washington DC (2004)

² Nester, M.A., Bruyere, S.M.(2000). Pre-Employment Testing and the ADA. Disability & HR: Tips for Human Resource Professionals, Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute. On the World Wide Web: http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/hr_tips/article.cfm?group_id=3

³ American Education Research Association, American Psychological Association, National Council on Measurement in Education (1999). Standards for educational and psychological testing. American Educational Research Association: Washington DC (2004)

Modifications in setting. One strategy can be to alter the setting of the assessment. For example, a test that is normally administered in a group setting may be administered individually. Other potential alterations include changing the test location if it is not wheelchair-accessible, providing a table and/or a chair that provides greater physical support, or altering the lighting conditions in the assessment room.

Modifications in presentation format. The medium used to present the instructions or questions to the person can be altered. For example, a test booklet may be produced in Braille, large print or audio format. A reader could also be appropriate for persons who are blind. Another example would be to provide instructions through the use of sign language or in writing.

Modifications in response format. Modifications can be made to allow individuals with disabilities to give responses using their preferred communication modality. For example, having the respondent use a tape recorder, a computer, a Braillewriter, or its own adaptive equipment to answer questions. Another example would be to allow someone who has dexterity problems to mark his or her answers directly into the test booklet rather than using the standard multiple-choice answer sheet.

Modifications in scheduling/timing. Another accommodation strategy is to alter the timing of the assessment. This may include extended time to complete a test or an interview and/or more breaks during assessment. It may also include scheduling an assessment session at the most appropriate time of day for a person.

Other modifications. In certain circumstances, there may be other appropriate accommodations that are not included in the four strategies previously-mentioned. For example, another possible assessment accommodation strategy could entail the use of different assessment method to assess the person with a disability. Although a substitute assessment instrument may sometimes represent a desirable accommodation solution, it may be very difficult to find an adequate replacement that measures the same qualification with comparable technical quality, and for which scores can be placed on the same scale as the original instrument. It is important to remember that the use of different assessment methods or sources of information must be justified on the basis that such differential usage provides for a more accurate assessment of the person's qualification while remaining equitable and fair to everyone. It should also make the case that the information gathered on qualifications from these different methods or sources is comparable.

Another example of an assessment accommodation not covered above could involve administering only certain portions of a test to an individual. This procedure is sometimes used in clinical assessment when subparts of a test require capabilities that a person with a disability does not have. However, it should be noted that eliminating a portion of a test is an exceptional measure and may not be appropriate in situations such as certification assessment or employment assessment. This is because the component of the qualification being assessed by each portion of a test may represent a separate and necessary job or occupational requirement. Therefore, it would probably not be recommended in the assessment phase of an appointment process.

Legal framework

The duty to provide accommodations to persons with disabilities is well-established in Canadian law and jurisprudence. Emphasis is placed on the obligation to accommodate persons with disabilities, up to the point of undue hardship, to provide them with equal employment opportunities.

This section outlines the organization's obligations under the law and related policies requirements, considering the key notions of merit, duty to accommodate, reasonable accommodation, *bona fide* occupational requirement and undue hardship. Each relevant section of the different acts and policies are highlighted relative to accommodations during the appointment process

***Canadian Human Rights Act* (Amended 1998)**

Sections 2, 3, and subsections 15 (1) (a) and 15 (2) of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (CHRA) have an impact on the accommodation of persons with disabilities during the appointment process.

Section 2 states the purpose of the Act and emphasizes the obligation to provide accommodations, commonly referred to as the "duty to accommodate". For its part, section 3 lists the prohibited grounds of discrimination, and disability is one of them.

Subsection 15 (1) (a) specifies that a practice is not considered discriminatory if it is established by an employer to be based on a *bona fide* occupational requirement (BFOR). Subsection 15 (2) establishes that for a practice to be considered base on a BFOR, the employer must demonstrate that accommodating the needs of an individual or class of affected individuals would impose undue hardship, considering health, safety and cost.

***Employment Equity Act* (1995)**

Sections 2, 5 and 6 of the *Employment Equity Act* (EEA) have an impact on the provision of assessment accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Section 2 states the purpose of the Act and identifies persons with disabilities as one of the four designated employment equity groups. Section 2 also states that "employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences."

Section 5 requires employers to identify and remove barriers to the employment of persons in the four designated groups, to institute positive policies and practices and to make "reasonable accommodations". This is to ensure that the representation of the four designated groups in the organization's workforce is at least proportionate to their labour market availability.

Section 6 establishes a number of limits to the employer's obligation to implement employment equity. Two of those limits are particularly relevant to assessment accommodations in the appointment process in the public service. They are:

- employers are not required to undertake measures that would cause undue hardship;
- employers are not required to hire or promote persons without basing the hiring or promotion on merit.

Thus, the manager engaged in an appointment process must respect merit, be prepared to assess applicants fairly and provide reasonable accommodations.

Public Service Employment Act (2003)

Sections 11 and 15 of the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA) gives the Public Service Commission (PSC) the authority to appoint, or provide for the appointment of, persons to or from within the public service (paragraph 11(a)) and to delegate any of the powers and functions related to appointment to deputy heads (subsection 15(1)) who, in turns, are encouraged to sub-delegate in writing their authorities.

The PSEA identifies merit and non-partisanship as the core values of staffing in the public service. Section 30 defines merit-based appointments as follows:

“30. (1) Appointments by the Commission to or from within the public service shall be made on the basis of merit and must be free from political influence.

(2) An appointment is made on the basis of merit when:

(a) the Commission is satisfied that the person to be appointed meets the essential qualifications for the work to be performed, as established by the deputy head, including official language proficiency; and

(b) the Commission has regard to:

(i) any additional qualifications that the deputy head may consider to be an asset for the work to be performed, or for the organization, currently or in the future,

(ii) any current or future operational requirements of the organization that may be identified by the deputy head, and

(iii) any current or future needs of the organization that may be identified by the deputy head.”

Thus, appointment must be based on merit and applicants must undergo an assessment to demonstrate that they meet the qualifications of the position, which are established by the deputy head or its delegate before conducting the assessment. In the context of assessing persons with disabilities, providing accommodations when disabilities prevent persons from fully demonstrating their qualifications contributes to merit.

Appointment Policy (2005)

To ensure proper delegation of its authorities, the Public Service Commission (PSC) has developed an appointment framework to guide its delegates in building their own staffing systems while respecting the core values of merit and non-partisanship, as well as the values guiding appointments, which are access, fairness, representativeness and transparency. This framework has three components: Appointment Policy ; Delegation ; and Accountability .

The Appointment Policy includes requirements to ensure that the appointment process is inclusive, respectful of differences and free of discrimination on the prohibited grounds contained in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (CHRA). Specifically, these requirements are found in the following three policies: Advertising in the Appointment Process; Employment Equity in the Appointment Process; and Assessment.

For its part, the policy on “Advertising in the Appointment Process” requires “the provision of accessible formats, upon request, for communicating with persons with disabilities”. This requirement ensures that persons who require other formats will also have access to communications.

Both the “Employment Equity in the Appointment Process” and the “Assessment” policies require deputy heads and those responsible for assessment to:

“Use assessment tools and processes that are designed and implemented without bias and do not create systemic barriers.”

This requirement refers to the use of assessment tools and procedures that must treat everyone in a non-discriminatory and equitable manner thereby contributing to an inclusive assessment process. This does not necessarily mean treating everyone the same since assessment accommodations may be required for certain people in order to place them on a level playing field. Assessment tools and process must not restrict or exclude persons in designated groups and must not discriminate on any prohibited ground of discrimination. Therefore, every attempt must be made to use assessment tools and processes that are inclusive in their design and implementation. However, this may not always be possible, in which case assessment accommodations for individuals will be required. Tips on “How to think inclusion by design” can be found in appendix 1.

In addition, the “Employment Equity in the Appointment Process” policy states:

“Deputy heads must:

- accommodate the needs of persons through all stages of the appointment process to address, up to the point of undue hardship, disadvantages arising from prohibited grounds of discrimination”.

This requirement refers to the obligation of an organization to take measures to eliminate disadvantages to employees and persons applying for employment in the public service. Emphasis is placed on disadvantages that result from a rule, practice or physical barrier that has or may have an impact on individuals or groups under the CHRA or identified as a designated group under the EEA. This policy requires employers to design employment systems, processes and practices that are inclusive and do not create systemic barriers to employment. However, in situations where barriers cannot be removed, individuals must be accommodated, when disadvantages arising from prohibited grounds of discrimination occur. For more information on inclusive designs, refer to the

document “Guidance Series - Integrating Employment Equity in the Appointment Process”, section 3.2.

The “Assessment” policy states that:

“Deputy heads must:

- inform the persons to be assessed, in a timely manner, of the assessment methods to be used, their right to accommodation and how to exercise that right”.

This requirement allows for applicants to determine whether, depending on the nature and extent of their functional limitations, they need accommodations for a specific assessment method.

In addition, the “Assessment” policy also state that, deputy heads must:

- ensure that those responsible for assessment:
 - adhere to the guidelines set forth in the document entitled "*Testing in the Public Service of Canada*", published by the PSC, when developing and using standardized tests.”

The document entitled "*Testing in the Public Service of Canada*" describes professional standards for developing and using assessment tools in appointment processes. Six specific standards are included for ensuring fairness when providing assessment accommodations (standard 3.7 and standards 6.1 to 6.5). These standards adhere to the four key principles that underlie the determination of accommodations, which are discussed in the section Principles for assessment accommodations (page 10).

Policy on the Duty to Accommodate Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service (2002)

This joint policy of the Treasury Board and the Public Service Commission addresses accommodations in the workplace and in appointment process. With respect to accommodation in the workplace, the policy applies to all organization listed in Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the *Public Service Relations Act* from whom the treasury Board is the employer. With respect to accommodation during appointment processes, it applies to all organizations for which the Public Service Commission has the exclusive authority to appoint persons.

The objective of the policy is to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in the federal Public Service whether as applicants to appointment processes or as employees. The implementation of this policy involves:

- identifying and removing barriers to employment, career development and promotion of persons with disability unless doing so would result in undue hardship;
- designing all employment systems, process and facilities to be accessible by building accommodation into workplace standards, systems, processes and facilities; and
- accommodating individuals when such barriers cannot be removed. Such accommodation must be made to the point of undue hardship, taking into consideration health, safety and cost. Accommodation must be made on a case by case approach and respect an individual’s right to privacy and confidentiality

The reader is referred to the policy document for a description of the specific requirements arising from its implementation.

***Privacy Act* (1985)**

The purpose of the *Privacy Act* is “to extend the present laws of Canada that protect the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves held by a government institution and that provide individuals with a right of access to that information” (section 2). The Act clarifies the nature of the personal information that can be collected by government organizations. As well, it specifies why and how personal information can be collected and how it may be used. Requirements related to the retention and disposal of personal information are also described. Finally, the Act discusses issues concerning the disclosure of personal information.

When collecting personal information to establish assessment accommodations, one also has to be particularly aware of sections 4, 7 and subsection 8 (2) of the *Privacy Act*. Section 4 of the Act specifies that no personal information should be collected by a government institution unless it relates directly to an operating program or activity of the institution. Thus, when establishing assessment accommodations for persons with disabilities, the information that is collected from the applicant or any professional must be directly related to the establishment of the accommodations.

Section 7 and subsection 8 (2) of the Act specify that personal information shall not, without the consent of the individual to whom it relates, be used by the organization except for the purpose for which the information was obtained, in this case to establish assessment accommodations; and when subject to another Act of Parliament, such as in the case of a complaint, to the Attorney General for use in a legal proceeding.

Principles for assessment accommodations

This section covers the four principles by which those responsible for assessment should be guided in determining accommodations when assessing persons with disabilities.

These principles are in accordance with the statutory provisions of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Employment Equity Act*, which highlight the employers' duty to provide accommodations to persons with disabilities. They are also aligned with the *Public Service Employment Act* core values of merit and non-partisanship and the staffing guiding values of access, fairness, representativeness and transparency. Furthermore, the four principles adhere to the professional standards in assessment⁴.

Principle 1: Provide all applicants with an equal opportunity to fully demonstrate their qualifications

Every applicant in an appointment process should have the opportunity to fully demonstrate his or her competence in the qualifications being assessed. This principle is designed to ensure merit in the appointment process and from it derives the rationale for accommodating persons with disabilities needs in an assessment context. A disability may hinder a person from fully demonstrating his or her qualifications using a particular assessment instrument. Therefore, adjustments need to be made to the administration procedures or to the assessment instrument itself so that the person is in a position to fully demonstrate his or her qualifications.

This principle is sometimes referred to as the “fairness principle.” In the context of appointment, fairness means being fair to every applicants in the process. Thus, assessment accommodations must be designed so that persons with disabilities are neither at a disadvantage nor are advantaged relative to other applicants.

Principle 2: Determine assessment accommodations on a case-by-case basis

Three key elements must be considered when determining appropriate accommodations.

- The nature and the extent of the individual's functional limitations.
- The type of assessment instrument being used.
- The nature and level of the qualification being assessed.

Since the information on these elements varies from one person to another and from one assessment situation to another, each request for assessment accommodations must be considered individually, using a case-by-case approach. The variability associated with these elements also highlights that assessment accommodations are deemed appropriate only for one specific assessment situation, and they cannot be applied arbitrarily to all other possible assessment situations.

⁴ American Education Research Association, American Psychological Association, National Council on Measurement in Education (1999). Standards for educational and psychological testing. American Educational Research Association: Washington DC (2004) ; and Public Service Commission of Canada (2007). Testing in the Public Service of Canada. Public Service Commission of Canada: Ottawa

Principle 3: Do not alter the nature or level of the qualification being assessed

When changes or modifications are made to the administration procedures, to the format or to the content of an assessment instrument, there is a possibility that these modifications may affect the qualification being assessed. Research on the effect of assessment accommodations shows that, depending on the situation, even small modifications to the standard procedure can affect in some way the nature or level of what is being assessed, consequently putting doubt on the validity of the results obtained⁵. In some cases, even accommodations requested by individuals and provided in good faith, were found to have a negative impact on the results obtained⁶. Having this in mind, caution is essential when determining accommodations to be provided in an employment situation when merit must be applied.

Like all other applicants, persons with disabilities must demonstrate that they meet the qualifications that are identified in the statement of merit criteria, which are linked to job performance. Therefore, provided assessment accommodations should not alter the nature or the level of difficulty of a qualification being assessed, since each qualification is a requirement for the position.

- For example: Although providing additional time to complete a test could be appropriate when the qualification “knowledge of the organization’s mandate and its business” is assessed, providing additional time could be inappropriate for a test assessing the qualification “verify information rapidly and accurately”. In the latter case, the obtained result may not be representative of the applicant’s true ability to do the task rapidly, considering the additional time given.

When applying this principle, it should be stressed that the assessed qualification must be related to job performance. Furthermore, managers and those responsible for the assessment must ensure that the demands of the assessment instrument do not exceed those of the job and that it does not create systemic barriers to employment.

- For example: An applicant who is deaf and has limited reading skill is to take a written knowledge test in an appointment process for a clerical position. When determining the accommodations to be provided to this applicant, those responsible for the assessment realize that the reading skills required on the knowledge test exceed those normally required on the job. Therefore, they decide that the test is inappropriate. Another test with an appropriate level of reading will be used for all applicants.

Principle 4: Base assessment accommodations on complete information

To make appropriate decisions when determining assessment accommodations, there is a need to rely on complete information on the three elements mentioned earlier justifying the case-by-case approach:

⁵ Thompson, S., Blount, A., & Thurlow, M. (2002). *A summary of research on the effects of test accommodations: 1999 through 2001* (Technical Report 34). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

⁶ Johnstone, C. J., Altman, J., Thurlow, M. L., & Thompson, S. J. (2006). *A summary of research on the effects of test accommodations: 2002 through 2004* (Technical Report 45). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes. On the World Wide Web: <http://education.umn.edu/NCEO/OnlinePubs/Tech45/>

1. The nature and the extent of the individual's functional limitations

Functional limitations result from a disability and are restrictions in an individual's functioning that hinder the ability to perform tasks or activities. The nature and extent of functional limitations will differ across individuals, as are the adaptive strategies that they use. Without adequate information about the individual's specific limitations, neither the manager nor the person with a disability can be confident about the appropriateness of accommodations.

- For example: The appropriate assessment accommodations for one person who is partially sighted may require a large print format of a test, while for another person who is also partially sighted, the appropriate accommodation may require special lighting. These differences arise because the nature and extent of the functional limitations vary from one individual to another.

Detailed advice on the information needed on the individual's functional limitations can be found in steps 2 and 3 of the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16).

2. Type of assessment instrument

When determining accommodations, there is a need to consider the specific characteristics of the assessment tool to be used. These characteristics include: the number of questions, the time allotted, if there is a lot of reading involved, the expected length of responses to be provided orally or in writing, etc. Depending of these characteristics, assessment accommodations will vary.

- For example: Someone who has functional limitations that affect his or her manual writing speed may need some additional time to write an essay-style exam, while the same person may not need additional time for a multiple choice exam that does not require written responses beyond filling in circles on a response sheet.

3. Nature of the qualification being assessed

Knowledge and understanding of the qualifications being assessed is required to determine assessment accommodations. Thus, questions, such as the following, must be answered: What is the assessment instrument measuring specifically? Does it assess knowledge, abilities/skills, aptitude, personal suitability or a mix? Is there a requirement for job performance associated with speed? Etc. Knowing and understanding the qualification assessed prevents providing accommodations that modify its nature or level.

- For example: Allowing the use of a calculator for a test assessing "ability to perform financial calculation" could be appropriate. However, allowing the use of a calculator when the "ability to do mental calculation" is assessed would be inappropriate. In the latter case, the provision of the calculator would invalidate the result, as it would then not be representative of the applicant's ability to do the task mentally.

A procedure for determining assessment accommodations which applies these four principles is presented in the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16).

Roles and responsibilities

A number of parties are involved in the process of determining accommodations for persons with disabilities who undergo assessment in an appointment process. These parties include the Public Service Commission (PSC) and its Personnel Psychology Centre (PPC), the deputy head, the manager, the assessment board and the applicant.

Public Service Commission

The *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA), gives the PSC the authority to appoint, or provide for the appointment of, persons to or from within the public service. It also gives the PSC the power to delegate its appointment and appointment-related authorities to deputy heads who, in turns, are encouraged to sub-delegate in writing their authorities. To ensure proper delegation of its authorities, the PSC can establish regulations and policies concerning appointments. With respect to assessing persons with disabilities, the PSC has the following responsibilities:

- to provide regulation and appointment policies, which ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are respected;
- to provide guidance to delegated organizations on how to respect the rights of persons with disabilities, while protecting the core values of merit and non partisanship, as well as the values guiding appointments, which are access, fairness, representativeness and transparency;
- to provide multiple formats of its standardized tests, practice tests, backgrounds documents or any other document relevant to its tests; and
- to determine assessment accommodations to be provided to applicants with disabilities when a PSC standardized test is used, and when it occurs:
 - to obtain adequate information, documentation on which to base decisions about assessment accommodations;
 - to engage in discussion with qualified professionals with the consent of the applicant, if more information is required; and
 - to handle private information and documentation related to assessment accommodations in accordance with the *Privacy Act*.

Note that the responsibilities related to determining assessment accommodations to be used with PSC standardized tests are assumed by the Personnel Psychology Center (PPC) of the PSC. Since the results of PSC standardized tests can be used in other future appointment processes within the public service, it is essential to monitor through the same organization the conditions under which these tests are administered across the public service, in order to insure the validity of the results.

Deputy heads

Under the PSEA, deputy heads, to which the PSC has delegated its appointment authority, have a number of responsibilities with respect to persons with disabilities:

- to inform applicants that they have a right to accommodation;
- to constitute knowledgeable and, to the extent feasible, representative assessment boards, and provide training as required to ensure competent assessment of persons with disabilities;

- to provide all services and materials associated with assessment accommodations, such as sign language interpreters, readers or scribes, adaptive technology, and assessment materials in multiple formats other than standard print; and
- to assume the costs related to assessment accommodations, up to the point of undue hardship.

Managers and assessment boards

Under the PSEA, deputy heads can delegate to managers their responsibilities for appointment processes. Managers are to determine the qualifications required for the job to be staffed, and to issue a statement of merit criteria. They are also responsible for the assessment of applicants, to determine if they meet the merit criteria.

To assist them with the assessment phase, managers usually create an assessment board. The manager and the assessment board become jointly responsible to ensure a fair assessment of all applicants. The manager and the assessment board have a number of specific responsibilities related to the assessment of persons with disabilities:

- to inform all applicants that they have a right to accommodation;
- to determine the assessment tools to be used;
- to inform applicants of the nature of the assessment tools that will be used (for example, whether it is going to be oral or written) so that they may judge if they will need to request accommodations in the assessment process;
- to determine assessment accommodations to be provided for the fair assessment of everyone;
- to contact the PPC of the PSC when assessment accommodations are requested for a PSC standardized test (see section on PSC above);
- to document all requests for assessment accommodations from the point of the initial request through to their conclusion, including their rationale;
- to obtain adequate information or documentation from applicants on their specific needs and functional limitations;
- to engage in discussion with qualified professionals with the consent of the applicant, if more information is required;
- to ensure that assessment accommodations are implemented appropriately during the assessment; and
- to handle private information and documentation related to the establishment of assessment accommodations in accordance with the *Privacy Act*;

Applicants

As those being assessed, applicants have an essential role to play in the process of determining assessment accommodations. They have clear responsibilities in the following areas:

- to communicate their need for assessment accommodations to the person in charge of the appointment process; and
- to discuss their needs with those responsible for the assessment who are determining accommodations. More specifically:

- to provide information on the nature and extent of their specific functional limitations (for more details on the nature of information and professional documentation that may be requested, go to the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16) steps 2 and 3); and
- to provide input on any past accommodations and their appropriateness.

Note that information on the nature and extent of functional limitations is essential to establish proper assessment accommodations. In a situation where a person is unwilling to share this essential information, it may not be possible to provide the most appropriate accommodations.

While it is essential and required to consult with applicants throughout the process of determining accommodations, the final decision on the accommodations to be provided in an assessment process rests with the manager and the assessment board. As opposed to workplace accommodations, there are limits to applicant's role in determining accommodations in an assessment process. While applicants may ask for specific accommodations based on past experience (for example, on the job or at school), it is possible that these accommodations be refused by the manager or the assessment board. However, any refusal of a specific accommodation requested by an applicant must be justified as to why it is not appropriate in the specific assessment context. For example, the accommodation requested would alter the nature or level of the qualification being assessed.

Determining and implementing assessment accommodations

Appointment processes should be conducted in a manner so that persons with disabilities have their needs accommodated throughout the entire process. Below is a 6-steps procedure to help those in charge of assessment to determine and implement accommodations within an appointment process.

All requests for assessment accommodations and evaluation conducted with them should be well documented. You will find within each step discussed here a list of documents or information related to the request for assessment accommodations that should be kept in the appointment process file.

Step 1 - Communicate essential information appropriately

From the outset of the appointment process, those in charge of the process must provide information in a timely manner. Persons with disabilities who require a different format to access printed material should not be obliged to wait a long time to have access to the information that is made available to other applicants, as this delay could constitute a disadvantage.

Keep the needs of persons with disabilities in mind by:

- Providing information on the right to accommodation in communications with all potential applicants, including the advertisement and any other means of communication in the early stages of an appointment process.
- Giving information about chosen assessment tools and methods to applicants promptly, as they need this information to help them decide whether they will request assessment accommodations;
 - For example, a person who is deaf in one ear and function well in one-on-one communication situations may realize that his or her disability could affect his or her performance only after learning that the assessment will involve a group discussion around a table.
- Making all of the assessment-related information available, including advertisements and study packages, in an accessible format to applicants. It is advisable to discuss with the applicant about his or her preferred format to ensure accessibility. Costs for provision of materials in multiple formats are assumed by the hiring organization.

If a person indicates for the first time his or her need for accommodations at the assessment session, it is recommended that he or she be tested at a later date. Test administrators should then explain to the person that this is a standard procedure and specify that he or she will not be disadvantaged by waiting to be assessed. This delay is necessary not only to provide adequate assessment accommodations but to ensure that others are not disturbed by any differences in administration procedures that may be required. Hiring organizations should make sure that test administrators are aware of this procedure.

What information should be kept in the appointment process file?

- All documents and correspondence provided by the hiring organization to applicants – including documentation by which applicants were made aware of their right to be

accommodated (usually the advertisement) and any documentation by which applicant where informed about the assessment tools to be used.

- All correspondence with the person with the disability, including e-mails, concerning his or her request for assessment accommodations.

Step 2 - Confer with the applicant to obtain information on functional limitations

Once applicants have notified that they need accommodations for the assessment process, they have discharged their initial obligation. Then, it is the responsibility of the manager or those responsible for the assessment to follow up and obtain information on the person's needs and functional limitations. Therefore, those responsible for the assessment must confer with the person to obtain further information as soon as possible after receiving the request for accommodations, as collecting information may require considerable time.

The manager and those responsible for the assessment have the obligation to get the ongoing input from the person requesting accommodations, to determine assessment accommodations. The information gathered from the person will usually include the following:

- a clear description of the nature and the extent of functional limitations resulting from the disability, which are the restrictions in a person's functioning that hinder his or her ability to perform tasks or activities;
- accommodations used in past assessment situations;
- workplace or other accommodations used, including any adaptive technology that the person is accustomed to; and
- if applicable, medication taken that could affect test performance.

Additional information may be required, depending on the complexity of the functional limitations. Examples of questionnaires that can be helpful to gather information on functional limitations from applicants are made available in appendix 2. Note that the disclosure of a diagnosis or the nature of the disability or any other information that is not relevant to the establishment of assessment accommodations is not required.

When collecting information, it is often useful to consider what workplace accommodations would be made available to the person to do tasks that are similar to the ones simulated during the assessment. Workplace accommodations that would be provided to the person for these similar tasks can constitute good accommodations in the assessment process. As such, these accommodations may provide a basis for a realistic evaluation of the qualification being assessed.

While the applicant is the first source of information to describe his or her functional limitations, he or she may be able to suggest other persons or sources of information, and give permission to contact these individuals. Before going ahead, be sure to have the applicant's written consent to do so. For example, the applicant's supervisor may be able to provide a useful perspective on how the person accomplishes the job, and discuss details that the person might not think of because he or she takes them for granted. When considering such information, the subjectivity of the information provider should be taken into consideration. If the current supervisor is the hiring manager as well, some additional sources of information would be recommended.

Note that when the request for assessment accommodations is related to the use of a Public Service Commission (PSC) standardized tests, the Personnel Psychology Center (PPC) is responsible for determining assessment accommodations and it must be notified as soon as possible. The PPC has this responsibility in order to ensure consistency of assessment accommodations with these tests across departments, as these tests results can and may be used in future appointment processes.

If a person has concerns to provide information on his or her functional limitations, see the section on Concerns to request assessment accommodations or to provide information (page 26), for ideas on how to respond.

What information should be kept in the appointment process file?

- a record of any information provided by the person concerning his or her functional limitations and needs, including all correspondence with the person.
- In addition to the above, when a PSC standardized test is used, all information shared with the PSC's PPC, including all correspondence.

Step 3 - When necessary, obtain information from a qualified professional

Although the person with the disability is always the first source of information on his or her functional limitations and needs, in some cases, additional documentation from a qualified professional will also be necessary to determine appropriate accommodations. It is important to stress that such professional documentation or report is not required as a proof of a diagnosis of the disability. It is required because, in some cases, a clear description of the nature and extent of functional limitations requires knowledge that only professionals in the field possess.

The person with a disability does not have to share the entire professional document with those responsible for determining accommodations. The parts of the document related to the nature and extent of the person's functional limitations, including standardized tests results and interpretation if applicable, and the professional's recommendations are usually sufficient. The disclosure of the other parts of the documentation that are not related to the assessment accommodation request is left to the person's discretion.

As a reminder, it is recommended that professional documentation regarding the nature and the extent of functional limitations be obtained in the following cases:

- When the functional limitations are not evident, temporary, progressive or cyclical, multiple or complex, and/or subject to interpretation.
 - For example: Disabilities affecting mental functioning, concentration or memory, such as learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, psychiatric disabilities and head injuries. Disabilities that are complex and may manifest themselves in various ways, such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or cerebral palsy.
- When an applicant identifies that he or she suspects having a particular disability for which he or she was never assessed professionally in order to determine it and to obtain a clear description of his or her particular functional limitations.

- For example: An applicant experiences cognitive functional limitations and suspects having a learning disability. This applicant should be assessed by a qualified professional in order to confirm or disconfirm his or her suspicion before assessment accommodations can be determined.

Hiring organizations are responsible for covering the costs related to professional assessments as required for the determination of the nature and extent of functional limitations of applicants. They are also responsible for the costs related to assessment accommodations during the appointment process.

In situations where the person determining assessment accommodations needs to consult the professional to get additional information or documentation, the person with a disability must sign a written consent for such consultation to occur. Thereupon, the written consent must be sent or faxed to the professional before the consultation may occur or before the additional documentation may be obtained. A consent form sample is available in appendix 3.

For more information on professional documentation and on what it should include, refer to the section on Standards for professional documentation (page 23). If a person has concerns to provide professional documentation, see the section on Concerns to request assessment accommodations or to provide information (page 26), for suggestions on how to respond.

What information should be kept in the appointment process file?

- A copy, if provided, of any professional documentation received.
- If applicable, a copy of the consent form signed by the person to contact or obtain information from a professional.
- If applicable, record of any conversation or correspondence that occurred with a professional.

Step 4 - Determine assessment accommodations, considering all information

Once appropriate information has been gathered and the functional limitations are understood, accommodations in the assessment process may be determined. These assessment accommodations should be designed with two primary objectives in mind. First, that the accommodations do not alter the nature or level of the assessed qualification; and second, in the extent possible, that the accommodations resemble those that would be made available to the applicant in the target position to perform similar tasks. The analysis of the following information is essential for achieving these objectives:

- **The nature and extent of the person's functional limitations.** In general, the information gathered on the nature and extent of the functional limitations received from the person with the disability (step 2) and, if necessary, from a qualified professional (step 3), should be sufficient to obtain a clear understanding of their impact on the person's functioning
- **The assessment tool(s) being used.** Having a thorough knowledge of the assessment tool or methods to be used is essential to determine appropriate assessment accommodations. Is it an essay-style exam, a case study, an open-book test, a multiple choice test, an in-basket

exercise, a group exercise or interview? What is the number of questions, the time allotted, the expected length of responses to be provided orally or in writing? Is there a lot of reading involved? Etc.

- **The qualification(s) being assessed.** Having a good knowledge of the qualification being assessed is required. This ensures that assessment accommodations do not modify the nature and level of the qualification assessed. What are the qualifications assessed - knowledge, skills, abilities, aptitude, or personal suitability? How is it defined? Is there any requirement for job performance associated with speed? Does the level of the qualification assessed reflect the job requirement? Etc.

To determine appropriate assessment accommodations, a systematic analysis of all three elements, of the impact they have on one another and the principles for assessment accommodation is required. The information gleaned from this analysis is particularly important since it will provide a sound rationale for the assessment accommodations. This rationale explains how the accommodations will prevent a person's functional limitations from being a disadvantage and will enable the demonstration of his or her qualifications. It will also explain how the person is not been given an advantage compared to other applicants, protecting merit in the appointment process.

For examples of possible accommodations that can be provided, please refer to the definition of accommodations in the assessment process in the Key definitions section (page 2) and to the section on Issues applicable to specific disabilities (page 29).

When is further consultation required?

There might be times when those in charge of the assessment are still unsure of the impact that have the person's functional limitations, the assessment tool requirements and the qualification assessed on one another. Therefore, it is recommended to seek advice from other experts in the following circumstances:

- when the disability is complex and can manifest itself with various functional limitations with different individuals and that are subject to interpretation, such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or cerebral palsy;
- for all disabilities affecting cognitive functioning, concentration, or memory, including learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), psychiatric disabilities and head injuries;
- for multiple functional limitations such as, for example, an individual with both vision and mobility disabilities; and
- for individuals who are deaf where literacy skills are an issue.

What information should be kept in the appointment process file?

- A copy of the proposed assessment accommodations and the rationale for them;
- When a PSC standardized test is used, all information shared with the PPC.
- If an expert was consulted all correspondence and information shared with the expert; and a copy of the consent form signed by the applicant to contact the expert.

Step 5 - Inform the person with a disability of proposed assessment accommodations well in advance of assessment

It is imperative that the applicant with a disability be informed well in advance of the proposed assessment accommodations prior to the assessment. Enough time should be made available for the person to request clarification or suggest modifications to the proposed accommodations. This early consultation should give the person time to make their own arrangements for the assessment, such as scheduling accessible transportation services.

If the person has questions or concerns about the proposed assessment accommodations, it is crucial to resolve them before the assessment takes place. It is essential for the person to feel comfortable with the proposed assessment accommodations as it is a pre-condition for him or her to be able to do his or her best. Failure to inform the person sufficiently in advance of a planned assessment accommodation has been upheld in the past as a legitimate ground for a complaint.

What information should be kept in the appointment process file?

- All correspondence with the person with a disability.
- A record of all comments made by the person on proposed assessment accommodations.
- In addition to the above, when a PSC standardized test is used, all correspondence and information shared with the PPC.

Step 6 - Prepare and conduct the assessment session

When preparing the assessment session: First, you have to choose your assessment administrators. A few things should be considered in making this choice. Primarily, assessment administrators should be sensitive to the person's needs. They also should be able to use sound judgment if flexibility is called for when unusual or unanticipated situations arise. They should understand how the accommodated assessment differs from standard procedures.

To prepare assessment administrators, the following should be observed:

- They should be thoroughly briefed on the applicant's specific assessment accommodations and able to identify any areas where it is possible that flexibility may be called for, such as variations in timing and/or duration of breaks.
- They should review instructions and assessment accommodations with the applicant before the assessment date to ensure that procedures are adequate before the assessment begins.
- When applicable and in advance, assessment administrators have to try out with the applicant the software or technological aids that will be used during the assessment session, with the goal of ensuring that these aids meet his or her needs for the task to accomplish.

When conducting the assessment session: Assessment administrators have to carefully follow the assessment accommodations that have been decided upon when assessing the person. They have to remain watchful to ensure that the accommodations are adequate and, if appropriate, verify this fact with the person, while making sure not to interrupt the assessment process unnecessarily.

In some cases, it may be necessary to alter the administration procedures that have previously been set or to defer the test administration session to another time. Don't forget to document those occurrences. Here are some examples where this change would be justified:

- When the software or technological aids are discovered not to be adapted to the applicant's needs. Note that these have to be tried out in advance.
- When an applicant with limited tolerance becomes excessively fatigued and can no longer function effectively.
- When assessment accommodations are seen to be inadequate from the beginning; this fact occasionally becomes evident during the instruction phase immediately prior to assessment. For example, an individual who is deaf who has difficulty understanding verbal instructions to a large group. Note that instructions can be reviewed with the applicant before the assessment date, to verify procedures ahead of time, to avoid this potential problem.

What information should be kept in the appointment process file?

- Name and contact information of the assessment administrator.
- A record of all pertinent comments made by the applicant during the assessment *per se* and any details concerning his or her behaviour indicative of the appropriateness of the accommodations.
- A record of all pertinent comments from the assessment administrator in regard to the assessment session.
- A detailed record of alterations to the assessment accommodations is essential in cases where it was necessary to modify them as the assessment session progressed. Items that should be included are:
 - the actual time taken by the applicant to complete each test, subtest or exercise;
 - problems which develop during assessment (e.g., signs of increased fatigue; any complaints expressed by the applicant; time, nature and duration of distracting noises outside the assessment room, etc.); and
 - any actions taken to resolve the problems.
- When a PSC test is used, a copy of the above records must also be sent to the PPC.

Standards for professional documentation

Although the person with the disability is always the first source of information on his or her functional limitations, in some cases, the description of the nature and extent of functional limitations requires the knowledge that only professionals in the field possess. Therefore, it is possible that in addition to the information provided by the person, a document from a recognized professional specialized in the specific disability, would be required. Such document would be expected to detail the extent and nature of the functional limitations specific to the person's condition. It is good practice to require documentation in the following cases:

- When the functional limitations are not evident, temporary, progressive or cyclical, multiple or complex, and/or subject to interpretation.
 - For example: Disabilities affecting mental functioning, concentration or memory, such as learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, psychiatric disabilities and head injuries. Disabilities that are complex and may manifest themselves in various ways, such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or cerebral palsy.
- When an applicant identifies that he or she suspects having a particular disability for which he or she was never assessed professionally in order to determine it and to obtain a clear description of his or her particular functional limitations.
 - For example: An applicant experiences cognitive functional limitations and suspects having a learning disability. This applicant should be assessed by a qualified professional in order to confirm or disconfirm his or her suspicion before assessment accommodations can be determined.

When professional documentation is required, the purpose of this documentation is not to cast doubt on the validity of the person's needs or to get a confirmation of a diagnosis. Rather, the focus is on having an adequate description of the nature and extent of functional limitations to determine appropriate accommodations.

The importance of having documentation where a disability is not confirmed has been underlined by a Federal court decision, which has cast doubt as to the validity of assessment accommodations that were proposed in the absence of documentation to support the existence of a suspected disability (*Girouard vs Canada (Attorney General), A-177-01*). Thus, if a person suspects that he or she has a disability that may affect his or her performance in the appointment process but has not yet been diagnosed; it is recommended that appointment-related assessment be delayed until the applicant has been assessed by a qualified professional.

It is important to point out that the costs associated with a professional assessment intended to determine and describe functional limitations caused by a disability must not create an additional barrier for applicants who have disabilities. Consequently, hiring organizations are responsible for covering the costs related to professional assessments as required for the determination of the nature and extent of functional limitations.

In order to be deemed adequate, professional documentation should adhere to certain standards as to its source, content and if it is up-to-date.

Who is an appropriate source?

The source or provenance of the professional documentation should be appropriate. This means that the documentation provided should be produced by a professional who is qualified in the specific disability and accredited by an appropriate regulated professional association.

What should the professional documentation include?

The following information is expected in the required professional documentation:

- a clear description of the nature and extent of the functional limitations that are specific to the applicant and resulting from the disability;
- although the applicant is not required to share the diagnosis of his or her disability, the documentation detailing his or her functional limitations must be based on a systematic and differential assessment method;
- when applicable, a description of the variability or of the progression of the person's functional limitations;
- the person's history, whether educational, developmental or medical, where relevant to understanding the disability for the purpose of providing assessment accommodations;
- accommodations that the person is currently using, has used or could benefit from, as well as any means by which he or she compensates for the functional limitations;
- when applicable, for example with learning disabilities, information on professionally-recognized standardized test results, indicating the nature and measuring the extent of the applicant's specific functional limitations; and
- when applicable, any side effect of medications taken that are specific to the applicant.

Those responsible for assessment have the responsibility to examine the relevance of any suggested accommodations that are provided by the professional, as he or she will not normally be aware of the specific assessment context in which his or her suggestions may be applied. Those responsible for assessment may choose not to implement the accommodations suggested by the professional or expert. In these situations, it may be advisable to first discuss the decision with the professional or expert, or with another professional or expert familiar with both the applicant and the issues involved. The applicant must agree in writing to this further consultation (see step 3 in the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16)).

What is meant by up-to-date?

The timeframe which is accepted as “up-to-date” will depend on the type of disability or disabling condition that is being discussed.

- **For stable disabilities** (for example, physical or learning disabilities): Documentation may be a number of years old and still be up-to-date as long as the applicant was 18 years old or older when the document was produced. Assessments that were completed before age 18 are generally not considered up-to-date if more than three years have passed since the assessment, as the abilities and skills of individuals are still changing and developing during these years.

- **For permanent disabilities that are susceptible to change** (for example, mental health disabilities): Documentation should be recent enough to cover recent changes to the applicant's condition and should include a prognosis for future change related to the individual's functional limitations.
- **For temporary conditions** (for example, recuperation from an operation, a broken bone, or a condition resulting from an accident): Documentation should include the date on which the condition began and the attending professional's estimate of a recovery date.

If those who are responsible for assessment are unsure whether the documentation is current, it is recommended that the applicant be asked to return to a qualified professional to see if a new assessment should be conducted.

More information on appropriate documentation is provided for nine categories of disabilities in the section entitled Issues applicable to specific disabilities (page 29).

Concerns to request assessment accommodations or to provide information

Some persons with disabilities have demonstrated concerns to request assessment accommodations in the context of an appointment process. Information about a person's functional limitations is private and can be sensitive. Applicants may have concerns to share such type of information. A number of factors influence people in deciding either not to request assessment accommodations, or not to provide information about their functional limitations:

- **Belief that they have to self identify as a person with disability for purpose of departmental records**

Requesting accommodations does not imply that a person has to self-identify as a person with a disability for purposes of departmental records. Those are two separate processes and a person may engage in one without completing the other. For example, a person with a temporary disabling condition such as a broken wrist would not be self-identifying as a "person with a disability" in departmental records but may require assessment accommodations.

- **Belief that disclosure will result in negative bias rather than equitable treatment**

Applicants' concerns about the possible implications of disclosing their functional limitations generally arise when the disability is not apparent. In some cases, people may feel that their particular disability carries a stigma, and so are unwilling to disclose any limitations, for example, limitations resulting from an emotional disorder. In other cases, some individuals may believe that disclosure will work against them because of unfounded perceptions by managers or assessment board members about their ability to perform on the job, for example, limitations due to a learning disability.

- **Belief that the disability is not relevant to performance**

Applicants who do not feel that their functional limitations affect their performance on the job may not request assessment accommodations, even when the functional limitations are evident. For example, a person who uses a wheelchair and who applies for a policy analyst position may not request accommodations because he or she feels that his or her disability does not have an impact on his or her job performance. The same may be true for invisible disabilities. For example, a person with a learning disability who has developed strategies for dealing with his or her limitations may not request accommodations, since he or she copes well on the job. Likewise, persons with chronic illnesses such as diabetes or Crohn's disease may feel that they can work around their limitations through careful scheduling of the assessment session, thereby obviating the need to disclose their limitations which, they feel, could be perceived negatively. In any of these cases, depending on the qualification assessed and the method used to assess it, assessment accommodations may in fact be needed to allow the applicants to fairly demonstrate their qualifications.

- **Belief that assessment accommodations constitute an undue advantage, coupled with a desire to succeed based “on one’s own merits”**

The desire to succeed on “one’s own merits” usually means that the person perceives the proposed assessment accommodations as conferring an undue advantage, rather than as creating an equal opportunity to demonstrate one’s abilities. This belief can lead applicants to either refrain from fully disclosing their accommodation needs, or to request one assessment accommodation but refuse another (for example, ask for a computer but refuse extra time).

- **Concern that confidential information about the limitations will become common knowledge in the workplace**

Concerns about confidentiality may lead people to hesitate to identify themselves as requiring assessment accommodation or to disclose details about their functional limitations, or to decline requests to provide documentation.

Applicants’ beliefs affect their choices during the appointment process. In dealing with them, those responsible for the appointment and accommodation process have a delicate balance to maintain: they need to always respect the rights to privacy and confidentiality, as well as applicants’ own views of their abilities, while taking a proactive approach to obtaining necessary information.

In the end, it is up to applicants to decide whether they will request assessment accommodations and supply information about their functional limitations to those responsible for establishing assessment accommodations, or whether they will accept or reject offered assessment accommodations.

Handling concerns

To encourage persons with disabilities to disclose their need for assessment accommodations, it is important to create a positive and confidential atmosphere. It should be clear that the manager or assessment board is open to providing assessment accommodations and the applicant’s chances of success in the appointment process will not be diminished by requesting assessment accommodations.

External applicants in particular should be made aware of their right to be accommodated. They should be reminded that, in the context of applying for a position in the federal government, identification of specific needs related to a disability will help them demonstrate their qualifications on an equitable basis.

It should be clearly explained that assessment accommodations can be provided only when applicants indicate their needs and provide necessary information. The following suggestions are added for handling specific difficulties that may arise:

- **How to dispel concerns about the confidentiality of information about the disability**

Send a clear message that the information on functional limitations will be treated confidentially, and no one else will have access to this information. Explain that only information that is pertinent to the assessment process needs to be provided to the manager or the assessment board.

- **When applicants request accommodations but offer no further information**

It is appropriate to probe further, in a respectful way. Explain the importance of obtaining adequate information to provide assessment accommodations that are appropriate to the person's needs.

- **Where applicants request accommodations but decline the proposed assessment accommodations**

Investigate whether any other possible assessment accommodation could be suitable. If no other possibilities can be suitable, remain accepting of the person's choice while emphasizing that he or she should be prepared to accept the results of the assessment. It should be made clear that retaking the test will not be an option.

- **Where an applicant has a functional limitation that is known, but has not requested assessment accommodations**

It is appropriate to ask such applicant whether there are any adjustments to assessment procedures that need to be considered to allow them to better demonstrate their qualifications during the assessment. For example, for a wheelchair user, it is advisable to check the match between the wheelchair and the table height, or for a person known to be mildly hard of hearing, one should inquire about the possibility of seating him or her at the front of the room to better hear instructions. Often, such arrangement may not be perceived by the individual concerned as "accommodations" since he or she does not consider that their job performance is affected by it. However these adjustments may prove to be important in the context of an assessment session.

- **If applicants have documentation from a professional but have concerns to supply it because of confidentiality issues**

Explain that the documentation is required to determine the assessment accommodations that will provide them an equitable opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications. Also, assure them that the documents will be kept confidential throughout the appointment process and after.

Issues applicable to specific disabilities

The following section presents accommodations considerations applicable to a number of disabilities. For each of the nine disabilities discussed, you will find a brief description of what does the disability might involve, a discussion on the information needed when determining assessment accommodations, and, to conclude, some examples and considerations of accommodations.

Vision disabilities (page 29)

Hearing disabilities (page 34)

Mobility or agility related disabilities (page 39)

Learning disabilities (page 44)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (page 49)

Mental health disabilities (page 54)

Chronic illnesses (page 58)

Temporary conditions (page 64)

Environmental sensitivities (page 67)

Vision disabilities

What do you need to know about the disability?

Problems related to vision loss differ markedly from one person to another. Persons with vision disabilities who may require assessment accommodations include:

1. Individuals who are blind and unable to access printed test material, even with magnification. While some of these individuals have light perception, they still need to receive all written information through sound or touch. Since persons who are unable to access print material function on the job using various types of adaptive technology, there is an important variation from one individual to another, in the types of formats they are most comfortable using for an assessment.
2. Individuals who are partially-sighted, also known as having “low vision”. These individuals have some usable vision, which enables them to read standard print with accommodations. These individuals can use their vision to access printed materials with large print formats, magnification, or other adaptive technology. The vision they have may also permit them to see the pattern or layout of graphs, charts, or diagrams. Partially sighted individuals may or may not be classified as legally blind⁷.

⁷ To be classified as legally blind, an individual must have a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best correction. Persons with a severely restricted field of vision (no more than 20 degrees across) may also be classified as legally blind

Persons who are partially-sighted may have a range of eye conditions, which vary widely from one person to another in terms of the limitations they entail. The following are listed as examples only:

- Low vision acuity across the visual field (lack of sharpness or perception of detail) that cannot be improved by corrective lenses;
 - Loss of central vision due to Macular Degeneration, a progressive eye disease, with varying degrees of peripheral vision remaining;
 - Partial vision loss due to cataracts, glaucoma or other diseases of the eye;
 - Restricted field of vision, with vision only in a narrow central vertical band, often called “tunnel vision”; and
 - Variable sight difficulties or sudden periods of vision loss, often associated with a chronic illness (for example: diabetes, multiple sclerosis).
3. Individuals who have significant loss in both sight and hearing. This includes:
- Individuals who are blind and lose their hearing, either gradually or suddenly;
 - Individuals who are deaf and lose their sight; and
 - Individuals who are blind and deaf, or have had both severe vision and hearing loss since birth or early childhood.
4. Individuals with vision disabilities, such as colour blindness, vision in only one eye, or difficulty in adapting to changes in brightness.

What information or professional documentation is needed?

Persons with vision disabilities do not typically need to provide documentation from a qualified professional, as long as the limitations are permanent, stable and evident. In most cases, those in charge of establishing assessment accommodations can get all the information needed on the nature and extent of the functional limitations by consulting with the applicant.

Note that when the vision disability is associated with a chronic illness (such as diabetes or multiple sclerosis), documentation from the relevant attending professional for that condition may be needed. For more detail, please refer to the section on chronic illnesses.

What are the key elements to consider?

When determining assessment accommodations for persons with visual functional limitations, the following three elements should be considered:

1. The nature and extent of the person’s functional limitations must be clearly understood.

The following questions may help to gather useful information:

- How does the applicant usually access written material (for example: electronic format, Braille, large print, regular print, regular print with magnification)?
- Is the applicant’s vision disability progressive? What is the current stage of the condition?
- Does the vision disability fluctuate as a result of a chronic illness such as diabetes or multiple sclerosis or is it affected by external factors such as time of day or ambient lighting?
- Do light intensity or source, glare, spacing of text, or colour of print affect vision?

- If the applicant read Braille, which grade (integral or abridged)?
- How does the applicant usually record answers or write documents?
- For an applicant who is deaf and blind, what means does he or she use to communicate orally in interviews or interactive exercises?
- Does the applicant experience fatigue from eye strain or require frequent breaks, based on the method of reading written material?

It is important to reiterate that persons with disabilities are the first source of information on the way their limitations affect them and on how to accommodate their specific needs.

Consequently, this information is usually gathered through exchanges with the person. To help you to gather these details, you may wish to refer to the questionnaire available for this purpose in appendix 2.

- 2. A thorough knowledge of the assessment tool to be used is required.** Depending on the assessment tool's characteristics, accommodations which are necessary for one tool may be unnecessary for another. Here are some considerations to help you identify the characteristics of your assessment tool.

For an interview:

- Are written documents provided before or during the interview? If so, how much reading is involved?
- Is there time to prepare responses prior to the interview?
- What is the expected length of responses to be given orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

For a written test:

- Is it an essay-style exam, short answers or a multiple choice test?
- Is it a case study, an in-basket exercise?
- Is it an open book test?
- How many questions are there?
- How much reading and writing are involved?
- What is the time allotted?
- Will the instructions be provided orally or in writing?

For an interactive situation:

- Is it a group setting? If so, how many participants are there? Is it advisable to inform other participants of the person's functional limitations? If so, who tells them, the person or the individual administering the interactive assessment session?
- Is written documentation provided before or during the situation? If so, how much reading is involved?
- What is the expected length of exercise to happen orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

3. Knowledge of the qualification being assessed is essential. This information will help you ensure that accommodations do not modify the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. Considerations include:

- What qualification(s) is (are) assessed by the instrument? It is knowledge, abilities/skills, aptitude or personal suitability? How is it defined?
- Is there a speed requirement?
- Does the level of the qualification assessed reflect the job requirement?

Determining appropriate assessment accommodations necessarily requires research and analysis of all three elements above; of the impact they have one another, and the application of the principles for assessment accommodations. This analysis is the foundation of the rationale for the accommodations. This rationale has to explain how the accommodations are enabling the demonstration of the person's qualifications, preventing his or her functional limitations from being a disadvantage. It also has to explain how the person is not being given an advantage compared to others in the appointment process, therefore, that merit is preserved.

Examples of assessment accommodations and considerations

The following are examples and considerations that may be helpful in determining assessment accommodations. It also includes a number of specific examples of assessment accommodations relative to possible functional limitations.

While reviewing these examples, keep in mind that accommodations are determined on a case by case basis and their appropriateness will depend on the nature and extent of the individual's functional limitations, the assessment tool to be used and the qualification to be assessed. Also, accommodations must resemble, if possible, the usual way in which the person would perform the task requested as if he or she was on the job, and must not alter the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. For more details, please refer to the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16).

Adaptive technologies: In general, applicants should be provided with the devices or software that they use on a regular basis, both for reading material and for writing. Applicants' personal equipment may be brought into the testing environment and used, or they may be tested in their office in a supervised session. The use of applicants' own equipment has the advantage that it is configured appropriately for the individual, who is familiar with the settings, position of keys, etc. For a listing and brief description of adaptive technologies commonly used, see the glossary of adaptive technology and services in appendix 4.

Individual session: Individual assessment sessions are good practices in all cases where test administration differs from standard procedure. For example: when multiple formats or adaptive technology are used, when additional time or breaks are provided, or when interveners for a person who is deaf and blind are used.

Additional time: Additional time is normally required for accommodating persons with vision disabilities and, depending on the mode of accessing the test materials, the added time may be quite substantial. The required amount of time needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis. Not only do individuals differ widely in the extent of their sight limitations but the test formats and the

type of adaptive technology that are used will influence the requirement for additional time. When additional time is required, consider separately the time requirements of the methods used for reading and providing answers.

Breaks: Extending test administration time usually means that breaks will be required, which are not included in the test administration time itself. Breaks will also be required if the applicant uses a method of reading that is very fatiguing, such as a magnifying lens. If the vision disability is a secondary result of another illness, breaks may also be required as part of the accommodations for that other illness. A stopwatch should be used to keep track of the exact time spent on assessment and the time spent on breaks

Choice of format for tests and preparation materials: Applicants with vision disabilities must have access to tests as well as to preparatory materials in a format that they can use efficiently. It is essential to determine the most appropriate format for each applicant, including the level of Braille or the required font size for large print, since what is necessary for one person may not be useful or appropriate for another. For applicants who are unable to access print test material, even with magnification, an oral examination instead of a written one may be considered, depending on the qualification assessed.

The most frequently-used formats other than standard print are:

- Large print, generally defined as print using more than 14-point. A font size of 16- or 18-point is often considered standard but larger fonts may be required by applicants;
- Electronic format for use with a large screen monitor and/or a screen magnification software;
- Electronic format for use with screen reader or refreshable Braille display;
- Audio format, including audio cassettes and compact discs;
- Braille: Grade 1 (integral) or Grade 2 (abridged).

For providing answers to tests: It is good practice to allow applicants to use the adaptive technology they normally use to do similar task. Examples are:

- Use of a computer with a screen reader;
- Use of a personal computer with a larger font;
- Use of a dictaphone, answers recorded are later transcribed onto the answer sheet by the test administrator;
- Use of a reader or scribe, who enters answers directly onto the answer sheet;
- A manual braille, such as a “Perkins Braille”, may be used by the person to write answers, which can then be dictated to the test administrator or into a tape recorder
- For multiple choice tests, adapted answer sheet may be used by some persons with low vision (for example, sheet with large squares in which to indicate an answer choice, instead of darkening circles) or allows them to circle directly on the test booklet.

For note-taking for interviews, simulations or interactive exercises, or for preparation for writing of long texts: It is good practice to allow applicants to bring in the equipment that they normally use for note-taking or preparation, depending on the particular assessment context. Two examples of such equipment are:

- Portable electronic note-takers are very useful for note-taking in interviews or simulations, or for preparation.
- A manual braille (“Perkins Braille”) is often used for individual preparation.

Additional considerations for applicants who are deaf and blind

Assessment accommodations should be made based on the communication and reading modes adopted by the applicant in his or her daily work. An important communication strategy will be the use of interveners for applicants who are deaf and blind. Intervenors provide auditory and visual information to a person who is deaf and blind using a variety of methods, depending on what works best for the individual. These methods include visual sign language, tactile sign language, tactile finger spelling, Braille, and large-print notes.

Hearing disabilities

What do you need to know about the disability?

Persons who have hearing loss usually refer to persons who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing:

- **Persons who are deaf have severe or profound hearing loss.** They have lost their hearing at birth or soon afterwards, before developing spoken language.

Since most individuals who are deaf do not acquire linguistic skills through their auditory channel, they normally rely on a visual communication mode, such as sign language, lip or speech reading, or writing. However, some individuals, who were trained in the “oral method” of communication in school may rely solely on speech and hearing as primary methods of communication and do not use sign language. For most individuals who have severe or profound hearing loss, speech is not an effective mode of communication even with the use of adaptive technologies. This is also true even if some individuals who are deaf use technology to amplify any residual hearing. Depending on the educational background and a number of other factors, the literacy skills (reading and writing) of the individuals may also be affected.

The majority of people who have severe or profound hearing loss rely on sign language to communicate, and consider their first language to be American Sign Language (ASL) or Langage des signes québécois (LSQ).

- **Persons who are deafened.** They have experienced a severe or profound loss of hearing after having developed speech and language skills. Some of these individuals may have had a progressive loss of hearing, while others may have experienced a sudden onset of deafness. Most members of this group are no longer able to hear speech, even with the use of adaptive technology. However, with appropriate amplification, some are able to communicate using speech and hearing. More recently, some individuals have been able to benefit from the use of cochlear implants.

Individuals who are deafened are often not proficient in sign language, although there are exceptions, and they may use lip or speech reading as a means of understanding speech. They also frequently communicate by means of writing, especially if their speech has been significantly affected by their hearing loss. Their literacy (reading and writing) skills are not normally affected, since the onset of the hearing loss follows the acquisition of these skills.

- **Persons who are hard of hearing.** They have hearing loss that does not preclude an understanding of spoken language - most often with the assistance of technology. The hearing loss may range from mild to severe, but, with the use of a hearing aid, these individuals can

still communicate primarily by speech. As well, they may often rely on speech reading and assistive listening devices to communicate; sign language may or may not be used. The extent of hearing loss may not be the same in both ears; some persons may have a significant hearing loss in one ear but have usable hearing in the other.

The level of hearing loss will not normally be so severe as to have affected the acquisition of a spoken language. The speech intelligibility of these persons will vary depending on individual and environmental circumstances, and literacy will show the same variation as is found in the general population.

What information or professional documentation is needed?

Persons with hearing disabilities do not typically need to provide documentation from a professional. In most cases, those who are in charge of determining assessment accommodations can get all of the required information on the nature and extent of the applicant's hearing-related functional limitations by consulting with that individual directly.

What are the key elements to consider?

When determining assessment accommodations for persons with hearing functional limitations, the following three elements should be considered:

1. The nature and extent of the person's functional limitations must be clearly understood.

The following questions may help to gather useful information:

- What is the extent and the time of onset of the applicant's hearing loss?
- What is the applicant's preferred means of communication for instructions and spoken components of the assessment, both receptive and expressive?
- To what extent are the applicant's literacy skills (reading and writing) affected?
- What are the communication technology/methods that the applicant normally uses?

It is important to reiterate that persons with disabilities are the first source of information on the way their limitations affect them and on how to accommodate their specific needs.

Consequently, this information is usually gathered through exchanges with the person. To help you to gather these details in a discussion, you may wish to refer to the questionnaire available for this purpose in appendix 2.

2. A thorough knowledge of the assessment tool to be used is required. Depending on the assessment tool's characteristics, accommodations which are necessary for one tool may be unnecessary for another. Here are some considerations to help you identify the characteristics of your assessment tool.

For an interview:

- Are written documents provided before or during the interview? If so, how much reading is involved?
- Is there time to prepare responses prior to the interview?
- What is the expected length of responses to be given orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

For a written test:

- Is it an essay style-exam, short answers or a multiple choice test?
- Is it a case study, an in-basket exercise?
- Is it an open book test?
- How many questions are there?
- How much reading and writing are involved?
- What is the time allotted?
- Will the instructions be provided orally or in writing?

For an interactive situation:

- Is it a group setting? If so, how many participants are there? Is it advisable to inform other participants of the person's functional limitations? If so, who tells them, the person or the individual administering the interactive assessment session?
- Is written documentation provided before or during the situation? If so, how much reading is involved?
- What is the expected length of exercise to happen orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

3. Knowledge of the qualification being assessed is essential. This information will help you ensure that accommodations do not modify the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. Considerations include:

- What qualification(s) is (are) assessed by the instrument? It is knowledge, abilities/skills, aptitude or personal suitability? How is it defined?
- Is there a speed requirement?
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Determining appropriate assessment accommodations necessarily requires research and analysis of all three elements above; of the impact they have on one another, and the application of the principles for assessment accommodations. This analysis is the foundation of the rationale for the accommodations. This rationale has to explain how the accommodations are enabling the demonstration of the person's qualifications, preventing his or her functional limitations from being a disadvantage. It also has to explain how the person is not being given an advantage compared to others in the appointment process, therefore, that merit is preserved.

Examples of assessment accommodations and considerations

The following are examples and considerations that may be helpful in determining assessment accommodations. It also includes a number of specific examples of assessment accommodations relative to possible functional limitations.

While reviewing these examples, keep in mind that accommodations are determined on a case by case basis and their appropriateness will depend on the nature and extent of the individual's functional limitations, the assessment tool to be used and the qualification to be assessed. Also, accommodations must resemble, if possible, the usual way in which the person would perform the task requested as if he or she was on the job, and must not alter the nature or level of the

qualification being assessed. For more details, please refer to the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16).

Mode of communication: Ensuring effective communication with persons with hearing loss is the first concern. Applicants are usually the best source of information as to how to accommodate their needs through sign language interpreters, communication technology or other means.

Importance of instructions: Ensuring that instructions and sample questions are thoroughly understood is often the principal assessment accommodation. Allowing adequate time for instructions and using the appropriate communication resource is important.

Additional time: Additional time is generally required in oral assessment situations to allow adequate time for communication. This is not necessarily a standard assessment accommodation for persons with hearing loss on written tests.

Communication technology: It is important to provide applicants with the devices or software that they use on a regular basis, both for reading test material and for writing responses. If necessary, applicants' own equipment may be brought into the assessment environment and used, or they may be tested in their office in a supervised session. For listing and brief description of adaptive technologies commonly used, see the glossary of adaptive technology and services in appendix 4.

Literacy level of a written examination: The level of literacy that is required for success on an assessment tool should not exceed the level of literacy required on the job; this is true for all applicants. When the job requirements include high-level verbal skills, it is appropriate that these be reflected in the assessment tools or methods.

When modifying instructions:

- Instructions normally delivered orally may be written down on paper or on a flip chart.
- A pad of paper may be provided to enable the applicant to pose questions.
- An oral interpreter may be used.
- Allow the extra time that it may take to communicate instructions.
- It may be appropriate to simplify the language of the instructions.
- It may be appropriate to have the applicant repeat the instructions in his or her preferred means of communication so that comprehension can be monitored.

For oral assessments:

- In an interview, communication can be accomplished by means of a laptop computer.
- Depending on the qualification being assessed, an applicant may submit a written composition instead of an oral presentation.
- In a group-evaluation setting, communicating with a person who is deaf can be done through real-time captioning.
- For a group administration, when applicant has mild hearing loss, it may only be necessary to seat the applicant at the front of the room and to verify that instructions are clearly understood.
- For interviews, if the applicant has a "good" ear, speak to that side.
- Use a normal speaking volume, check to see if you are clearly heard by the applicant, and adjust accordingly.

When modifying the assessment environment:

- The environment should be visually non-distracting with good lighting, and the examiner's face should be free of shadows and glare.
- The use of curtains on windows, carpets on floors and fabric in the furniture can help reduce the reverberation of sound and therefore improve the listening environment.
- Indicate the start and finish of a written examination visually, for example: turning the light off and on.

When the applicant is lip or speech reading:

- The best distance for lip or speech reading is two to three feet between examiner and applicant.
- Avoid standing directly in front of a light source (for example: a window) to avoid having your face in shadow.
- If possible, you should be at the same level as the applicant (sitting or standing) when communicating with him or her.
- Provide a clear view of your mouth. Face the applicant when you speak. A moustache, beard, or chewing gum, as well as hand movements or glasses held near the mouth, make speech reading much more difficult.
- Speak expressively; a person who is speech-reading relies on your facial expression, gestures, and body movements to understand you.
- Speak clearly and distinctly, but do not exaggerate. Verify your speed with the applicant and slow down if necessary.
- Provide time for the applicant to read the instructions and the examples after each has been read aloud. The applicant cannot receive instructions using lip or speech reading and read at the same time.
- Watch for signs of lip or speech reading fatigue, such as an increase in misinterpretation by the applicant, restlessness, fidgeting with a hearing aid, irritability or a tired appearance.
- Use round or oval tables to improve sight lines in a group evaluation situation.

When a sign language interpreter is used:

- Discussions with the interpreter on assessment procedures should be conducted with the applicant present before and not during the assessment session.
- Before the assessment session, the interpreter should become familiar with the test instructions and the terminology used in the test that he or she will be interpreting.
- An interpreter always lags a few words or phrases behind the person who is speaking. It is a good idea to allow short pauses for the applicant to respond or to ask questions.
- The interpreter must avoid standing directly in front of a light source (for example: a window) to avoid having your body in shadow.
- As the test administrator, remember to speak directly to the applicant even when an interpreter is present.
- Allow extra time for the instructions phase. The applicant may first need to receive the instructions through sign language, and then read them. Remember that, unlike persons who can read the instructions at the same time as the test administrator is reading them aloud, the applicant cannot simultaneously receive the signed instructions and read them.
- Have the applicant sign back the instructions to the sign language interpreter so that comprehension can be monitored.

- For written tests with a number of sub-tests where instructions vary, consider a tutorial session where the instructions are reviewed and comprehension is ensured.
- Allow the candidate to use sign language to deliver an oral presentation, with a sign language interpreter to interpret. In this case, rating the applicant should be based on content, not on style of communication.

Mobility or agility related disabilities

What do you need to know about the disability?

Mobility or agility related disabilities include a wide variety of conditions and functional limitations, the causes of which may be either congenital or acquired. Persons with mobility or agility related disabilities who may require assessment accommodations include:

- Individuals who have limitations associated with mobility, coordination, dexterity, pain, limited physical tolerance and fatigue. Disabilities include, but are not limited to:
 - Spinal Cord Injuries (paraplegia and quadriplegia);
 - Muscular Dystrophy (MD);
 - Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS);
 - Arthritis;
 - Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTD), also known as Repetitive Strain Injuries or Repetitive Trauma Disorders, such as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Epicondylitis (“tennis elbow”)
- Individuals who, in addition to the limitations above, have functional limitations in speech, sensory functions (vision or hearing), cognition, memory, or other areas. Disabilities include, but are not limited to:
 - Cerebral Palsy (CP)
 - Spina Bifida.

It is important to note that not all persons with these disabilities will have the additional limitations.

When considering assessment accommodations, the functional limitations resulting from mobility or agility related disabilities may cause the following principal difficulties in assessment situations:

- **Difficulties in reading** that may result from problems turning pages, head movements, vision, or other factors.
- **Difficulties in writing** that may result from limited dexterity, pain, or other factors.
- **Oral communication difficulties** that may result from speech disability, or other factors.
- **Difficulty undergoing sustained assessment** that may result from pain, fatigue or limited tolerance (for example, inability to sit for long periods).

When determining assessment accommodations where functional limitations are caused by sensory impairments, the sections on vision disabilities (page 29) and/or hearing disabilities (page 34) should be read.

What information or professional documentation is needed?

Persons with mobility or agility related disabilities of a permanent nature and where the functional limitations are evident, stable over time, and not subject to interpretation will not normally need to provide documentation from a health-care professional. In most cases, those in charge of determining assessment accommodations can get all of the required information on the nature and extent of the functional limitations from the applicant.

Although no documentation from a professional is needed in the majority of cases related to mobility or agility related disabilities, professional documentation may be required in some cases. It is good practice to obtain documentation from a recognized professional when the disability in question entails additional functional limitations that are less evident or subject to interpretation, such as those that are of a cognitive nature.

What are the key elements to consider?

When determining assessment accommodations for persons with mobility or agility related functional limitations, the following three elements should be considered:

1. The nature and extent of the person's functional limitations must be clearly understood.
The following questions may help to gather useful information:

- What are the specific functional limitations (mobility, coordination, fatigue, impairment of particular abilities such as speech, etc.)?
- Are there any specific requirements (assistance reaching the assessment site, wheelchair access, table height, attendant service, etc.)? Which ones?
- How the applicant usually works or performs the tasks required in the assessment?
- Does the person use adaptive technology, equipment or ergonomic furniture? Which ones?
- Does the person take medication? If yes, what are the effect (concentration difficulties, fatigue, etc.)? And what is the best time of day for the assessment?

It is important to reiterate that persons with disabilities are the first source of information on the way their limitations affect them and on how to accommodate their specific needs.

Consequently, this information is usually gathered through exchanges with the person. To help you to gather these details in a discussion, you may wish to refer to the questionnaire available for this purpose in appendix 2.

2. A thorough knowledge of the assessment tool to be used is required. Depending on the assessment tool's characteristics, accommodations which are necessary for one tool may be unnecessary for another. Here are some considerations to help you identify the characteristics of your assessment tool.

For an interview:

- Are written documents provided before or during the interview? If so, how much reading is involved?
- Is there time to prepare responses prior to the interview?
- What is the expected length of responses to be given orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

For a written test:

- Is it an essay-style exam, short answers or a multiple choice test?
- Is it a case study, an in-basket exercise, an open book test?
- How many questions are there?
- How much reading and writing are involved?
- What is the time allotted?
- Will the instructions be provided orally or in writing?

For an interactive situation:

- Is it a group setting? If so, how many participants are there? Is it advisable to inform other participants of the person's functional limitations? If so, who tells them, the person or the individual administering the interactive assessment session?
- Is written documentation provided before or during the situation? If so, how much reading is involved?
- What is the expected length of exercise to happen orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

3. Knowledge of the qualification being assessed is essential. This information will help you ensure that accommodations do not modify the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. Considerations include:

- What qualification(s) is (are) assessed by the instrument? It is knowledge, abilities/skills, aptitude or personal suitability? How is it defined?
- Is there a speed requirement?
- Does the level of the qualification assessed reflect the job requirement?

Determining appropriate assessment accommodations necessarily requires research and analysis of all three elements above; of the impact they have one another, and the application of the principles for assessment accommodations. This analysis is the foundation of the rationale for the accommodations. This rationale has to explain how the accommodations are enabling the demonstration of the person's qualifications, preventing his or her functional limitations from being a disadvantage. It also has to explain how the person is not being given an advantage compared to others in the appointment process, therefore, that merit is preserved.

Examples of assessment accommodations and considerations

The following are examples and considerations that may be helpful in determining assessment accommodations. It also includes a number of specific examples of assessment accommodations relative to possible functional limitations.

While reviewing these examples, keep in mind that accommodations are determined on a case by case basis and their appropriateness will depend on the nature and extent of the individual's functional limitations, the assessment tool to be used and the qualification to be assessed. Also, accommodations must resemble, if possible, the usual way in which the person would perform the task requested as if he or she was on the job, and must not alter the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. For more details, please refer to the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16).

Use of adaptive technologies: Applicants are usually the best source of information on how to accommodate their needs through adaptive technology or by other means. In general, they should be provided with the devices or software that they use on a regular basis. If necessary, applicants' own equipment may be brought into the assessment environment and used, or they may be tested in their office, in a supervised session. For a listing and brief description of various adaptive technologies commonly used, see the glossary of adaptive technology and services in appendix 4.

Access to assessment site and facilities / attendant services: When assessing persons with mobility or agility related disabilities, it is important to ensure that they have access to the assessment site, the assessment room, the washroom facilities and other available facilities just like any other applicants. It should also be ascertained whether any attendant services are required before the person's assessment session is scheduled.

Individual sessions: Individual assessment sessions are normally required in cases where test administration differs from standard procedures, to ensure that the requirements of persons with specific needs can be met without affecting the assessment of the other applicants. However, changes to physical accommodations such as adjusting a table's height or providing a specific chair, which do not involve any other change to assessment protocol (for example, extended time or breaks), do not require individual session.

Additional time: Additional time is normally required for mobility or agility disabilities that affect motor coordination, dexterity, head movements, etc. Extra time may also be indicated for applicants where pain, fatigue and/or limited physical tolerance are factors. The amount of additional time provided must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Not only do individuals differ widely in the nature and extent of their limitations, but the type of adaptive technology that is used by particular applicants will also influence the requirement for additional time. As a general rule, when determining the amount of additional time in a particular case, the time requirements occasioned by limitations in reading and in providing answers should each be taken into account.

Test stress as a factor with motor impairments: Those in charge of determining assessment accommodations should be aware that the normal stress experienced by applicants who undergo assessment will often increase the uncontrollable movements of persons with motor impairments (for example, those with cerebral palsy). As a result, such movements may become more pronounced during an assessment session or interview than at other less-stressful times. Additional time should be built in to account for this likelihood, and assurances about extra time will generally help to reduce the applicant's anxiety level.

Breaks: It is frequently necessary to provide time for breaks that is not included in the test administration time, thus extending the total time required for the assessment session. This assessment accommodation is especially important if the person experiences pain while writing or

sitting, or has limited tolerance and tires easily. Breaks are also recommended when administration time has been extended such that the total assessment time is three hours or more. A stopwatch should be used to keep track of the exact time spent on assessment and the time spent on breaks

For difficulties in reading:

- An adjustable-height reading table.
- A mechanical page turner.
- A voice synthesizer software, with test material on computer.
- Audio test material.
- Test materials in large print.
- A reader.

For examples of accommodations for visual limitations, please refer to the section on vision disabilities (page 29).

For difficulties in writing:

- For applicants who are able to write but who are unable to use a standard multiple choice answer sheet, with small circles to darkened:
 - use of a different format answer sheet; or
 - allowing the applicant to indicate answers directly in the test booklet.
- Use of a specific device for holding a pen.
- Use of a word processor with a specific keyboard for tests where extensive writing is required.
- Use of a specific mouse or pointing system for use with a computer.
- For applicants who are unable to write, the use of computer with voice recognition software, such as “Dragon NaturallySpeaking”. Note that the use of such software requires a significant amount of practice, so it is essential that the applicant use a familiar system.
- Use of a dictaphone to record verbal responses, which are later transcribed by the test administrator and checked by the applicant.
- Use of a scribe to record responses for multiple choice, short answer or essay tests.

Note that each time responses are transcribed or recorded by another individual, the person accommodated should have enough time to review what is being written to ensure no transcription mistakes have been made.

For difficulties in oral communication:

- Allow the applicant to use the communication adaptive technology that he or she usually uses, when possible.
- Allow extra time for oral communication in situations such as an interview, oral presentation, or interactive exercise, according to the functional limitations or technology used.
- When applicable, adjust evaluation criteria, focusing on the content of the message and eliminating any factors affected by the applicant's impairment (speed of delivery, pronunciation, clarity, volume, etc.).
- Write a paper instead of doing an oral presentation, in cases where oral communication or presentation skills are not being assessed.

For examples of accommodations for hearing limitations, please refer to the section on hearing disabilities.

For pain, fatigue and limited physical tolerance:

- An individual assessment session in a quiet room is usually required for persons coping with pain or having limited tolerance, even if no other aspects of the administration procedures are changed.
- A morning test session is advisable to reduce the impact of fatigue. Check with the person about the most effective time of day for assessment.
- Frequent breaks that are not counted in the test's administration time limit may be required. For example, a 15-minute rest period for each hour of assessment, or even more frequently in some cases.
- Providing flexible breaks whenever the person requires, with the use of a stopwatch to keep track of the exact time spent on assessment and the time spent on breaks.
- If a test is long (for example, three hours), it may be necessary to break the session up into two sections, administering one-half one day, and the other half on the second day.
- If more than one test is to be administered, it is normally advisable to schedule them on separate days.
- Use of ergonomic seating (for example, Obus chair) or facilities for resting during breaks.

Learning disabilities

What do you need to know about the disability?

The Learning Disability Association of Canada (LDAC) defines learning disabilities as followed:

“Learning disabilities refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. These include, but are not limited to: language processing; phonological processing; visual spatial processing; processing speed; memory and attention; and executive functions (e.g., planning and decision-making).”⁸

Learning disabilities range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the abilities that are listed below.

- **Oral language:** Affect listening, speaking, understanding speech and memory of things presented orally. These difficulties can include problems in differentiating sounds, discriminating sounds from background noise and sequencing sounds (other terms used are auditory processing difficulty or oral comprehension problem).
- **Reading:** Affect decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension, and memory of things perceived visually. These difficulties can include visual-perceptual

⁸Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. Adopted January 30, 2002. Website: www.ldac-taac.ca

problems such as shape discrimination (e.g., seeing the difference between similarly-shaped letters), sequencing letters or words (e.g., reversing letters), and discriminating an image from its background (other terms used are dyslexia or visual-perception problem).

- **Written language:** Include problems organizing ideas or material to be written and poor spelling (other term used is dysorthography), syntax and grammar.
- **Mathematics:** Affect computation and problem-solving. These difficulties can include reversal of digits, poor memory for quantitative symbols, and errors in writing numbers or aligning columns (other term used is dyscalculia).

The LDAC definition of learning disabilities also specifies that:

“Learning disabilities may also involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction and perspective taking.

Learning disabilities are due to genetic and/or neurobiological factors or injury that alters brain functioning in a manner which affects one or more processes related to learning. These disorders are not due primarily to hearing and/or vision problems, socio-economic factors, cultural or linguistic differences, lack of motivation or ineffective teaching, although these factors may further complicate the challenges faced by individuals with learning disabilities. Learning disabilities may co-exist with various conditions including attentional, behavioural and emotional disorders, sensory impairments or other medical conditions.”

What information or professional documentation is needed?

Persons with learning disabilities are the first source of information about their functional limitations and the accommodations that are useful to them. However, due to the wide variation in types and severity of learning disabilities, persons identifying themselves as having a learning disability requiring assessment accommodations will normally be required to provide professional documentation to clarify the nature and the extent of the resulting functional limitations.

Applicants may present a variety of documents describing their needs in terms of assessment accommodations, such as school reports of accommodations received, or notes from their family physician. However, in order to provide appropriate assessment accommodations, a report of an assessment that was conducted by a qualified professional in the field, accredited by the appropriate regulated professional association, is required to complement the information already provided by the applicant. Because the disability is not evident, is complex and subject to interpretation, it is of the utmost importance to have as precise a picture as possible of the effect of the disability on a particular person’s mode of functioning.

The professional documentation is expected to reflect the person’s current mode of functioning. Generally, thorough assessments that have been conducted after the age of 18 are considered to be adequate. However, if a long period has elapsed since the report was produced, the person may be asked to return to a specialist to see if a new assessment should be conducted. Alternately, if the report indicates that the condition is not stable, an update may be required. For a more general discussion on professional documentation requirements and standards, refer to the section on Standards for professional documentation (page 23).

Typically, the professional documentation should include:

- a clear description of the nature and extent of the current functional limitations;
- an interpretative summary of standardized test results used during the assessment done by the professional;
- any means by which the applicant compensates for his or her functional limitations; and
- a description of accommodations that the person is using, has used or could benefit from.

Having this information in the professional report or document allows for a description of the person's current strengths and limits with implications for assessment accommodations. Specific accommodations may be suggested in the assessment report. While they may not be directly transferable to the specific assessment situation, depending on the context for which they were intended (for example, school versus employment settings), they may still provide useful information. When there is a difference between the professional's suggestions and the planned accommodations, it may be necessary to consult with the professional or another external expert familiar with both the applicant and the issues involved. This may happen with more complex cases of accommodating persons with learning disabilities, including dyslexia. The Personnel Psychology Centre has encountered this situation from time to time in determining accommodations for PSC standardized tests, specifically in one case it dealt with, the Powers case. The applicant must agree in writing to this further consultation (see step 3 of the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16)).

What are the key elements to consider?

When determining assessment accommodations for persons with learning disabilities, the following three elements should be considered:

1. The nature and extent of the person's functional limitations must be clearly understood.

The following questions may help to gather useful information:

- What are the specific abilities or functions that are affected by the applicant's disability: is it listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, mathematics, motor coordination, social skills, working memory, processing speed, visual construction?
- What is the extent of the limitations that are imposed by the disability: is it mild, moderate or severe?
- Does the learning disability co-exist with another disability? For example, an attention deficit disorder leads to other functional limitations. If this is the case, this fact will normally be indicated in the report from the qualified professional, and you may refer to the section on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (page 49).
- What accommodations does the applicant use on the job to accomplish work tasks that are similar to the tasks to be accomplished during the assessment situation?

It is important to reiterate that persons with disabilities are the first source of information on the way their limitations affect them and on how to accommodate their specific needs. Consequently, although for the disability discussed here some documentation will have to be provided by a professional, information on functional limitations will also be gathered through exchanges with the person. To help you to gather these details in a discussion, you may wish to refer to the questionnaire available for this purpose in appendix 2.

The documentation provided by a professional will ensure a precise understanding of the multifaceted functional limitations associated with the disability. For more information on professional documentation requirements please refer to the section Standards for professional documentation (page 23).

- 2. A thorough knowledge of the assessment tool to be used is required.** Depending on the assessment tool's characteristics, accommodations which are necessary for one tool may be unnecessary for another. Here are some considerations to help you identify the characteristics of your assessment tool.

For an interview:

- Are written documents provided before or during the interview? If so, how much reading is involved?
- Is there time to prepare responses prior to the interview?
- What is the expected length of responses to be given orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

For a written test:

- Is it an essay-style exam, short answers or a multiple choice test?
- Is it a case study, an in-basket exercise?
- Is it an open book test?
- How many questions are there?
- How much reading and writing are involved?
- What is the time allotted?
- Will the instructions be provided orally or in writing?

For an interactive situation:

- Is it a group setting? If so, how many participants are there?
- Is written documentation provided before or during the situation? If so, how much reading is involved?
- What is the expected length of exercise to happen orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

- 3. Knowledge of the qualification being assessed is essential.** This information will help you ensure that accommodations do not modify the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. Considerations include:

- What qualification(s) is (are) assessed by the instrument? It is knowledge, abilities/skills, aptitude or personal suitability? How is it defined?
- Is there a speed requirement?
- Does the level of the qualification assessed reflect the job requirement?

Determining appropriate assessment accommodations necessarily requires research and analysis of all three elements above; of the impact they have on one another, and the application of the principles for assessment accommodations. This analysis is the foundation of the rationale for the accommodations. This rationale has to explain how the accommodations are enabling the demonstration of the person's qualifications, preventing his or her functional limitations from

being a disadvantage. It also has to explain how the person is not being given an advantage compared to others in the appointment process, therefore, that merit is preserved.

Examples of assessment accommodations and considerations

The following are examples and considerations that may be helpful in determining assessment accommodations. It also includes a number of specific examples of assessment accommodations relative to possible functional limitations.

While reviewing these examples, keep in mind that accommodations are determined on a case by case basis and their appropriateness will depend on the nature and extent of the individual's functional limitations, the assessment tool to be used and the qualification to be assessed. Also, accommodations must resemble, if possible, the usual way in which the person would perform the task requested as if he or she was on the job, and must not alter the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. For more details, please refer to the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16).

Individual session: Individual assessment sessions are required in all cases where test administration differs from standard procedures.

Additional time: Additional time will frequently be required to accommodate learning disabilities. The amount of time needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis, as individuals differ widely in the nature and extent of their limitations. When determining the amount of additional time to give, consider separately the time requirements that are due to difficulties in receiving test information (reading or listening) and producing responses (writing or speaking).

Breaks: The provision of additional time often means that extra breaks will be required. Breaks should not be included in the time allotted for test administration but should be in addition to it, thus extending the total time required for the assessment session. A stopwatch should be used to keep track of the exact time spent on assessment and the time spent on breaks

Choice of formats: Formats of tests and preparatory materials may be altered, depending on the nature of the functional limitations. For example, if an applicant has a reading impairment, an oral format or a large-print format could be appropriate, depending on the circumstances.

Use of adaptive technologies: Applicants are usually the best source of information on how to accommodate their needs through adaptive technology or by other means. In general, they should be provided with the devices or software that they use on a regular basis. For a listing and brief description of various adaptive technologies that are commonly used, see the glossary of adaptive technology and services in appendix 4.

For listening or oral comprehension difficulties:

Oral instructions or interview questions can be modified.

- Slow down the presentation of instructions or interview questions, ensuring that the total administration time is adjusted accordingly.
- Simplify instructions or questions by presenting them in small chunks of information. Ensure that they are clearly understood before moving on to other assessment steps.

- To verify comprehension, have the applicant repeat the instructions or interview questions in his or her own words and correct any misinterpretations about the instructions or each question's content before he or she responds.
- Present instructions or interview questions orally and in written form simultaneously and allow extra time for the applicant to reread them.

For reading difficulties:

Instructions may be given orally.

- Use a moderate pace and clear articulation.
- A reader, computer diskette with voice synthesizer, or taped version of test material may be used with or without the written examination in front of the applicant.
- Verify, with a brief question, that the instructions have been understood.

If reading difficulties are linked to visual perception difficulties:

- Use of a coloured plastic overlay placed over reading material or non-white paper (e.g., light blue) may be appropriate.
- Provision of a ruler to help the applicant to focus on one line at a time.

For written language difficulties:

- Assistance with Spell Check and Grammar Check software: It is important to note that this assessment accommodation may be inappropriate depending on the qualification being assessed.

For speaking difficulties:

- The applicant may use a written communicator (see the glossary of adaptive technology and services in appendix 4) or a lap-top computer.
- Assessors should be careful not to penalize applicants for speech difficulties when clear speech is not part of the qualification being assessed. Rather, they should focus on the content of the applicant's message and eliminate from consideration such factors affected by the disabilities as speed of delivery, pronunciation, clarity, volume, etc.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

What do you need to know about the disability?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD) are characterized by inattention, distractibility, disorganization and can be accompanied by restlessness and impulsivity when associated with hyperactive type characteristics.

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, predominantly inattentive type (also referred to as ADHD-H, or "ADHD minus Hyperactivity" or ADHD - Inattentive type or ADD). These individuals have difficulty in:
 - selecting appropriate information to which to attend (e.g., neglect important details or make careless errors, lose track of things);
 - sustaining attention for extended periods, including being easily distracted, following through on instructions, or forgetting; and
 - alternating attention between two or more tasks being done simultaneously (i.e., multitasking).

- Attention deficits accompanied by restlessness and impulsivity (also referred to as ADHD Hyperactive type). In addition to attention problems, individuals may have difficulty sitting still and working on a task without fidgeting, pacing, talking to others, or interrupting the task.

Functional limitations relatively to attending to information may also lead to problems similar to those seen with learning disabilities, in such areas as acquiring, organizing, retaining, understanding, and using verbal or non-verbal information. Thus, as with learning disabilities, the following abilities may be affected: oral language, reading, written language and mathematics. ADHD could also be associated with anxiety or depressive disorders.

What information or professional documentation is needed?

Persons with ADHD should be the first source of information regarding their limitations and the assessment accommodations that are useful to them. However, they will normally be required to provide professional documentation to clarify the nature and the extent of their functional limitations. In order to provide appropriate assessment accommodations, a report of an assessment conducted by a qualified professional in the field, accredited by the appropriate regulated professional association, is required to complement the information already provided by the applicant. Because the disability is not evident and is complex and subject to interpretation, it is of the most importance to have as precise a picture as possible as to the effect of the disability on a particular person's mode of functioning.

Documentation should reflect the person's current mode of functioning. While ADHD was previously thought to affect only children, it is now recognized that the impairment can sometimes continue into adulthood, although it may be expressed differently at this more mature stage. If the professional documentation presented dates from childhood or adolescence, the person may be asked to return to a specialist for a new and current assessment of their level of functioning. For a more general discussion on professional documentation requirements and standards, refer to the section on Standards for professional documentation (page 23).

Typically, the professional documentation should include:

- a clear description of the nature and extent of the functional limitations;
- an interpretative summary of test results;
- any means by which the applicant compensates for his or her functional limitations;
- a description of functional limitations that are not improved by the use of prescription medications (such as Ritalin) should also be included, as should any other side effects of medications, if applicable; and
- a description of accommodations that the person is using, has used or could benefit from.

Having this information in the professional report or document allows for a description of the person's current strengths and limits with implications for assessment accommodations. Specific accommodations may be suggested in the assessment report. While suggested accommodations from the report may not be directly transferable to the specific assessment situation, depending on the context for which they were intended, they may still provide useful information. When there is a difference between the professional's suggestions and the planned accommodations, it may be necessary to consult with the professional or another external expert familiar with both the

applicant and the issues involved. The applicant must agree in writing to this further consultation (see step 3 of the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16)).

What are the key elements to consider?

When determining assessment accommodations for persons with ADHD, the following three elements should be considered:

1. The nature and extent of the person's functional limitations must be clearly understood.

The following questions may help to gather useful information:

- What is the extent of the functional limitations imposed by the disability at the current time, taking into account effects of any medication used (mild, moderate, severe)?
- Does the person who has ADHD also have restlessness and impulsivity?
- What specific functions are affected in addition to attention? These functions could include oral language, reading, written language and mathematics. You may refer to the section on learning disabilities for information on determining accommodations for difficulties in these areas.
- Does the person who has ADHD also have another disability (for example, a learning disability)? If this is the case, this fact will normally be indicated in the report from the qualified professional, and you should refer to the appropriate section for examples of possible accommodations.
- What are the accommodations used by the person on the job to accomplish work tasks that are similar to the tasks to be accomplished during the assessment situation?

It is important to reiterate that persons with disabilities are the first source of information on the way their limitations affect them and on how to accommodate their specific needs.

Consequently, although for the disability discussed here some documentation will have to be provided by a professional, information on functional limitations will also be gathered through exchanges with the person. To help you to gather these details in a discussion, you may wish to refer to the questionnaire available for this purpose in appendix 2.

The documentation provided by a professional will ensure a precise understanding of the multifaceted functional limitations associated with the disability. For more information on professional documentation requirements please refer to the section Standards for professional documentation (page 23).

2. A thorough knowledge of the assessment tool to be used is required. Depending on the assessment tool's characteristics, accommodations which are necessary for one tool may be unnecessary for another. Here are some considerations to help you identify the characteristics of your assessment tool.

For an interview:

- Are written documents provided before or during the interview? If so, how much reading is involved? Is the applicant allowed to bring these documents into the interview to refer to?
- Is there time to prepare responses prior to the interview? If so, how long is it?
- Is the applicant allowed to make notes of his or her planned responses and refer to them throughout the interview?

- How long is the interview?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- Is the interview room free from visual and/or auditory distractions?

For a written test:

- Is it an essay-style exam or a multiple choice test?
- Is it a case study, an in-basket exercise?
- Is the test an open book test?
- How many questions are there?
- How much reading and writing are involved?
- What is the time allotted?
- What is the expected length of responses to be provided?
- Is the assessment room free from visual and/or auditory distractions?

For an interactive situation:

- Is it a group interactive situation? If so, how many participants are there?
- Is written documentation provided before or during the situation? If so, how much reading is involved?
- What is the expected length of exercise to happen orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

3. Knowledge of the qualification being assessed is essential. This information will help you ensure that accommodations do not modify the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. Considerations include:

- What qualification(s) is (are) assessed by the instrument? It is knowledge, abilities/skills, aptitude or personal suitability? How is it defined?
- Is there a speed requirement?
- Does the level of the qualification assessed reflect the job requirement?

Determining appropriate assessment accommodations necessarily requires research and analysis of all three elements above; of the impact they have on one another, and the application of the principles for assessment accommodations. This analysis is the foundation of the rationale for the accommodations. This rationale has to explain how the accommodations are enabling the demonstration of the person's qualifications, preventing his or her functional limitations from being a disadvantage. It also has to explain how the person is not being given an advantage compared to others in the appointment process, therefore, that merit is preserved.

Examples of assessment accommodations and considerations

The following are examples and considerations that may be helpful in determining assessment accommodations. It also includes a number of specific examples of assessment accommodations relative to possible functional limitations.

While reviewing these examples, keep in mind that accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis and their appropriateness will depend on the nature and extent of the individual's functional limitations, the assessment tool to be used and the qualification to be assessed. Also,

accommodations must resemble, if possible, the usual way in which the person would perform the task requested as if he or she was on the job, and must not alter the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. For more details, please refer to the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16).

Individual session: An individual assessment session in a quiet room free from distracting noises, and where the person may move about or talk aloud, if needed, is particularly important for persons with ADHD.

Additional time: Additional time may be required to accommodate difficulties attending to the task at hand, following instructions and concentrating on the important elements.

Short test sessions: Break longer test sessions into shorter segments, providing for extra breaks, when this change can be done without disrupting attention. These breaks are not counted in the test's administration time.

Use of assessment accommodations suggested for those with learning disabilities: ADHD may affect many of the abilities also affected by learning disabilities, such as oral language, reading, written language and mathematics. Thus, many of the accommodations previously described in the section on learning disabilities may be appropriate depending on the identified functional limitations. Particularly important are accommodations that aid the person to:

- reduce distractions;
- concentrate on important elements in a assessment procedure by simplifying information and presenting it in small chunks;
- organize information; and
- follow instructions and work within time limits.

For primarily attention difficulties

- use of sound-suppression earphones or earplugs;
- use of white noise or environmental sound machines;
- allow the person to play soothing music (e.g., with a cassette player and headset);
- have the person verbalize test instructions, test questions, or interview questions in his or her own words to aid in maintaining attention and to monitor comprehension; and
- provide choice in the scheduling of examination sessions to take into account the individual's best working periods.

For attention deficits accompanied by restlessness and impulsivity

- allow the person to bring in beverages or food if this helps to concentrate and focus on the task at hand;
- allow frequent breaks, not counted in the administration time, to enable the person to walk around for a few minutes to discharge excess energy.

Mental health disabilities

What do you need to know about the disability?

There are many types of mental health disabilities. Our objective here is not to list them but to make you familiar with their possible resulting functional limitations. These limitations can affect cognitive, emotional and social functioning and they may be temporary, recur episodically, or be long-lasting.

Functional limitations associated with mental health disabilities can vary from mild to severe, and may fluctuate in time. In relation to assessment performance, mental health disabilities may interfere with a person's abilities in the following three areas:

1. **Mental alertness:** Depression, anxiety, and side effects of medication may interfere with a person's attention and slow down speed of information processing and reaction time.
2. **Concentration and organization:** The presence of others, ambient noise, visual stimuli, intrusive thoughts, low energy levels and/or side effects of medication may all interfere with a person's ability to maintain concentration and organize ideas.
3. **Dealing with stress and anxiety:** Excessive anxiety, including anxiety about assessment performance, about the interpersonal nature of the evaluation (for example, group assessment), or as a side effect of a medication can affect a person's performance in an assessment.

What information or professional documentation is needed?

Persons with mental health disabilities are the first source of information about their functional limitations and the accommodations that are useful to them. However, due to the variety of ways that mental health disabilities may affect applicants' performance, a report from a qualified professional in the field, accredited by the appropriate regulated professional association, is required to complement the information already provided by the applicant. Because these types of disabilities are not evident and are complex and subject to interpretation, it is of the utmost importance to have as precise a picture as possible as to the effect of the disability on a particular person's mode of functioning.

Professional documentation should reflect the person's current level of functioning. If a long period has elapsed since the documentation was produced, or if there is uncertainty about whether new documentation is needed, the person may be asked to return to a specialist to see if a new assessment should be conducted. The same applies if the documentation suggests that the condition is not stable, or that there are variable medication effects - an update may be required. For a more general discussion on professional documentation requirements and standards, refer to the section on Standards for professional documentation (page 23).

Typically, the professional documentation should include:

- a description of the nature and extent of the functional limitations resulting from the disability;
- an interpretative summary of test results if applicable;

- the current effects of any medication being taken, if applicable; and
- a description of any accommodations that the person is using, has used or could benefit from.

Having this information from the professional allows for a description of the person's current strengths and limits with implications for assessment accommodations. Specific accommodations may be suggested in the assessment report. While suggested accommodations may not be directly transferable to the specific assessment situation, depending on the context for which they were intended, they may still provide useful information. When there is a difference between the professional's suggestions and the planned accommodations, it may be necessary to consult with the professional or another external expert familiar with both the applicant and the issues involved. The applicant must agree in writing to this further consultation (see step 3 of the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16)).

What are the key elements to consider?

When determining assessment accommodations for persons with mental health disabilities, the following three elements should be considered:

1. The nature and extent of the person's functional limitations must be clearly understood.

The following questions may help to gather useful information:

- Which of the following three abilities are affected by the mental disability: mental alertness, concentration/organization, or dealing with stress and anxiety?
- What is the extent of the functional limitations that are imposed by the mental health disability (mild, moderate, severe), taking into consideration that the disability may be episodic?
- What are the specific effects of the person's medication on mental alertness, energy level, optimum time of day for assessment, etc.?
- What are the accommodations used by the person on the job to accomplish work tasks that are similar to the tasks to be accomplished during the assessment situation?

It is important to reiterate that persons with disabilities are the first source of information on the way their limitations affect them and on how to accommodate their specific needs. Consequently, although for the disability discussed here some documentation will have to be provided by a professional, information on functional limitations will also be gathered through exchanges with the person. To help you to gather these details in a discussion, you may wish to refer to the questionnaire available for this purpose in appendix 2.

The documentation provided by a professional will ensure a precise understanding of the multifaceted functional limitations associated with the disability. For more information on professional documentation requirements please refer to the section Standards for professional documentation (page 23).

2. **A thorough knowledge of the assessment tool to be used is required.** Depending on the assessment tool's characteristics, accommodations which are necessary for one tool may be unnecessary for another. Here are some considerations to help you identify the characteristics of your assessment tool.

For an interview:

- Are written documents provided before or during the interview? If so, how much reading is involved?
- Is there time to prepare responses prior to the interview?
- What is the expected length of responses to be given orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

For a written test:

- Is it an essay-style exam, short answers or a multiple choice test?
- Is it a case study, an in-basket exercise?
- Is it an open book test?
- How many questions are there?
- How much reading and writing are involved?
- What is the time allotted?
- Will the instructions be provided orally or in writing?

For an interactive situation:

- Is it a group setting? If so, how many participants are there?
- Is written documentation provided before or during the situation? If so, how much reading is involved?
- What is the expected length of exercise to happen orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

3. **Knowledge of the qualification being assessed is essential.** This information will help you ensure that accommodations do not modify the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. Considerations include:

- What qualification(s) is (are) assessed by the instrument? It is knowledge, abilities/skills, aptitude or personal suitability? How is it defined?
- Is there a speed requirement?
- Does the level of the qualification assessed reflect the job requirement?

Determining appropriate assessment accommodations necessarily requires research and analysis of all three elements above; of the impact they have on one another, and the application of the principles for assessment accommodations. This analysis is the foundation of the rationale for the accommodations. This rationale has to explain how the accommodations are enabling the demonstration of the person's qualifications, preventing his or her functional limitations from being a disadvantage. It also has to explain how the person is not being given an advantage compared to others in the appointment process, therefore, that merit is preserved.

Examples of assessment accommodations and considerations

The following are examples and considerations that may be helpful in determining assessment accommodations. It also includes a number of specific examples of assessment accommodations relative to possible functional limitations.

While reviewing these examples, keep in mind that accommodations are determined on a case by case basis and their appropriateness will depend on the nature and extent of the individual's functional limitations, the assessment tool to be used and the qualification to be assessed. Also, accommodations must resemble, if possible, the usual way in which the person would perform the task requested as if he or she was on the job, and must not alter the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. For more details, please refer to the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16).

Individual session: Individual assessment sessions are required in cases where test administration differs from standard procedures, to ensure that the specific accommodations requirements of the person can be met without affecting the assessment of the other applicants. For persons with mental health disabilities, individual sessions may be beneficial, even if there are no changes to assessment procedures, as a way to accommodate any functional limitations that are related to mental alertness, concentration and organization problems or difficulties with stress and anxiety.

Additional time: Additional time will frequently be required to compensate for slower information processing, difficulty concentrating, or the effects of anxiety. The amount of extra time provided needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis, as individuals differ widely in the extent of their functional limitations, depending on the nature of their disability.

Breaks: Extra breaks, which are not included in the test administration time, may be useful for persons with mental health disabilities to help relieve anxiety or other symptoms associate with the assessment experience. A stopwatch should be used to keep track of the exact time spent on assessment and the time spent on breaks

Flexible scheduling of assessment sessions: Flexible scheduling of the assessment session can be used to take into account the person's preferred time of day. Due to the episodic nature of some mental health disabilities, flexibility should also be exercised in re-scheduling a session if a person is unable to participate at the scheduled time.

For difficulties in maintaining mental alertness:

- Divide a lengthy examination into two or more parts, with each part administered in a separate session. For example, a morning assessment session could be followed by an afternoon session, or sessions could be scheduled on separate days.
- Additional time will likely be required.

For difficulties in maintaining concentration:

- Present instructions in both oral and written formats.
- Additional time may be required to ensure that instructions are understood.
- Using white noise or environmental sound machine (may be helpful to some persons but may hinder others).

For difficulties in organizing tasks:

- Provide information on test-taking strategies and time management in advance.
- Consider having the administrator provide time check-points as the test session progresses.
- Provide an applicant with a clock, stopwatch, or digital or talking timer to monitor time.

For difficulties handling stress and anxiety

- It is important for the person to be involved in the process of determining the accommodations that will be provided during the assessment, this can help reduce anxiety.
- The person may be permitted to play soothing music using a cassette player and headset.
- For persons who experience a high level of anxiety in interpersonal situations, it is important that the assessor be sensitive to the needs of the person and project a calm presence.
- When the assessment is done individually, the assessor might leave the person alone in the room if she or he prefers to work alone, once proper security arrangements have been made (e.g., taking books and other materials out of the room).
- The person may be invited to use self-talk through written examination tasks, or to walk around during the assessment if this activity helps him or her focus.
- The person may wish to consider obtaining professional help with relaxation techniques or other strategies prior to starting an assessment process.

Chronic illnesses

What you need to know about chronic illnesses?

Chronic illnesses include, but are not limited to, long-term diseases such as:

- Cancer
- Crohn's disease
- Chronic pain
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Fibromyalgia
- Lupus
- Multiple sclerosis
- Rheumatoid arthritis

While chronic illnesses are by definition long-term, they may be subject to fluctuations in severity and thus may affect the same individual in several different ways at different times. In addition, they are frequently exacerbated by stress, resulting in sudden flare-ups of the condition.

Here are some ways that a chronic illness can manifest itself which are relevant an assessment context:

Fatigue or limited physical tolerance

Some people can fatigue easily or have a low energy level for extended periods or during specific times of the day, due to fluctuations in the effects of the illness, or the presence of chronic pain. Those with limited physical tolerance may require frequent rests to compensate for the effects of everyday activities on their body. This need may be exacerbated by the added stress of undergoing an assessment such as a written examination or an interview.

Concentration and speed of information processing

A person's concentration and speed of information processing which are required for reading, writing, speaking, or decision-making, may be reduced due to the illness or to side effects of medication. Diminished concentration and a slower speed of information processing can also result from fatigue or can occur before medication has taken effect.

Motor coordination or mobility

Nerve damage, tremors, inflammation of the joints, stiffness, or pain may limit gross motor or fine motor coordination, as well as, lack of muscle strength may affect mobility.

Certain chronic illnesses may also affect other areas of functioning of the individual. For example, with Multiple Sclerosis, there may be cognitive impairments relating to short-term memory, perception or executive functions, as well as problems of vision or speech. For appropriate assessment accommodations for this illness, it will be useful to consult the sections on learning disabilities (page 44), visual disabilities (page 29), or others, depending on the areas affected. It is also recommended that a qualified professional, who is accredited by the appropriate regulated professional association, be consulted for assessment accommodations for individuals with illnesses such as Multiple Sclerosis, as it can affect a number of areas of functioning.

What information or professional documentation is needed?

Applicants are the first source of information on how their chronic illness affects them and the accommodations which are useful to them, including any adaptive technology they may normally use. However, unless the functional limitations caused by a chronic illness are obvious, long-standing and stable, professional documentation in the form of a report of a medical assessment will be needed to determine appropriate accommodations.

A report from a medical specialist or family physician will help to clarify the nature and the extent of the functional limitations. The report may also take the form of an occupational health assessment or work capacity evaluation. Because a given chronic illness may be expressed differently from one person to another or fluctuate for one specific individual, it is essential to clearly understand the nature and extent of functional limitations for a particular person. A qualified professional will be in a position to complement the information already provided by the applicant, and give a more precise picture of his or her actual mode of functioning.

Professional documentation is expected to reflect the person's current level of functioning. Due to the fluctuating nature of some chronic illnesses, if a long period has elapsed since the report, or if the report suggests that the condition is not stable, an update may be required. For a more general discussion on professional documentation requirements and standards, refer to the section on Standards for professional documentation (page 23).

The medical report should describe:

- the nature and extent of the current functional limitations due to the illness;
- the current effects of any medication being taken, if applicable; and
- any accommodations the person is using, has used or could benefit from.

Having this information in the professional report or document allows for a description of the person's current strengths and limits with implications for assessment accommodations. Specific accommodations may be suggested in the assessment report. While suggested accommodations may not be directly transferable to the specific assessment situation, depending on the context for which they were intended, they may still provide useful information. When there is a difference between the professional's suggestions and the planned accommodations, it may be necessary to consult with the professional or another external expert familiar with both the applicant and the issues involved. The applicant must agree in writing to this further consultation (see step 3 of the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16)).

What are the key elements to consider?

When determining assessment accommodations for persons with chronic illness, the following three elements should be considered:

1. The nature and extent of the person's functional limitations must be clearly understood.

The following questions may help to gather useful information:

- What are the functional areas affected by the person's illness: fatigue or limited tolerance, concentration, rate of information processing, motor coordination, mobility, or other areas of functioning?
- What is the extent of the limitations imposed by the illness (mild, moderate, severe), and whether symptoms are constant or tend to recur periodically?
- What are the current effects of medication?
- What are the practical requirements such as access to the test site and other facilities (for example: washroom, cafeteria), specific needs for food or beverages (for example, for a person with diabetes) or other medical requirements?
- What are the accommodations used by the person on the job to accomplish tasks similar to those of the assessment situation?

It is important to reiterate that persons with disabilities are the first source of information on the way their limitations affect them and on how to accommodate their specific needs. Consequently, this information is usually gathered through exchanges with the person. To help you to gather these details in a discussion, you may wish to refer to the questionnaire available for this purpose in appendix 2.

However, as mentioned earlier, for person with chronic illness professional documentation may be required to complement the information already provided by the applicant. This documentation will ensure a precise understanding of complex functional limitations associated with the disability. For more information on professional documentation requirements please refer to the section Standards for professional documentation (page 23).

2. A thorough knowledge of the assessment tool to be used is required. Depending on the assessment tool's characteristics, accommodations which are necessary for one tool may be unnecessary for another. Here are some considerations to help you identify the characteristics of your assessment tool.

For an interview:

- Are written documents provided before or during the interview? If so, how much reading is involved?
- Is there time to prepare responses prior to the interview?
- What is the expected length of responses to be given orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

For a written test:

- Is it an essay-style exam, short answers or a multiple choice test?
- Is it a case study, an in-basket exercise?
- Is it an open book test?
- How many questions are there?
- How much reading and writing are involved?
- What is the time allotted?
- Will the instructions be provided orally or in writing?

For an interactive situation:

- Is it a group setting? If so, how many participants are there? Is it advisable to inform other participants of the person's functional limitations? If so, who tells them, the person or the individual administering the interactive assessment session?
- Is written documentation provided before or during the situation? If so, how much reading is involved?
- What is the expected length of exercise to happen orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

3. Knowledge of the qualification being assessed is essential. This information will help you ensure that accommodations do not modify the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. Considerations include:

- What qualification(s) is (are) assessed by the instrument? It is knowledge, abilities/skills, aptitude or personal suitability? How is it defined?
- Is there a speed requirement?
- Does the level of the qualification assessed reflect the job requirement?

Determining appropriate assessment accommodations necessarily requires research and analysis of all three elements above; of the impact they have on one another, and the application of the principles for assessment accommodations. This analysis is the foundation of the rationale for the accommodations. This rationale has to explain how the accommodations are enabling the demonstration of the person's qualifications, preventing his or her functional limitations from being a disadvantage. It also has to explain how the person is not being given an advantage compared to others in the appointment process, therefore, that merit is preserved.

Examples of assessment accommodations and considerations

The following are examples and considerations that may be helpful in determining assessment accommodations. It also includes a number of specific examples of assessment accommodations relative to possible functional limitations.

While reviewing these examples, keep in mind that accommodations are determined on a case by case basis and their appropriateness will depend on the nature and extent of the individual's functional limitations, the assessment tool to be used and the qualification to be assessed. Also, accommodations must resemble, if possible, the usual way in which the person would perform the task requested as if he or she was on the job, and must not alter the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. For more details, please refer to the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16).

Individual assessment session: Individual assessment sessions are required in all cases where test administration differs from standard procedures. As a means of reducing extraneous stimuli and enhancing concentration, individual session is especially important for persons who experience low energy levels or process information slowly.

Assessment stress as a factor with chronic illnesses: The test administrator or interviewer should be aware that the normal stress produced by assessment tends to have a disproportional effect on persons with limited physical tolerance. Allowing additional time and breaks may be helpful.

Additional time: Additional time may be required to compensate for lower energy levels, decreased concentration, or limitations to fine motor coordination affecting the person's ability to read or write. For a person with limited tolerance, it may allow her or him to work at a pace that will control the level of stress on his or her body caused by the assessment situation. The amount of time needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis, as individuals differ widely in the way a disease affects their capabilities and endurance.

Breaks: Breaks not included in the test administration time will frequently be necessary to allow the person to function effectively for the duration of the assessment session. This will be particularly true for those with fatigue or limited physical tolerance. A stopwatch should be used to keep track of the exact time spent on assessment and the time spent on breaks

Flexible scheduling of assessment sessions: Flexible scheduling of the assessment session is recommended to take into account the optimal time of day for assessing the person, given his or her illness and the timing of any medication which is being taken. Flexibility should be used to reschedule the assessment session of a person not well enough to participate at the scheduled time.

Adaptive technologies: Applicants using adaptive technologies may be provided with the devices or software that they use on a regular basis. Applicants' personal equipment may be brought into the assessment environment and used, or they may be tested in their office or at home. Use of applicants' own equipment has the advantage that it is configured appropriately for the individual, who is familiar with the settings, position of keys, etc. For listing and brief description of adaptive technologies commonly used, see the glossary of adaptive technology and services in appendix 4.

For fatigue or limited physical tolerance:

- Divide a lengthy examination into two or more parts, and administer each part in a separate session (e.g., a morning assessment session followed by an afternoon session, after a lengthy break, or test sessions scheduled on separate days).
- Use of a computer to provide answers may be beneficial for some persons with limited tolerance because less physical exertion is required. This may permit them to complete the assessment session more quickly and with less fatigue.
- Provide ergonomic seating (Obus chair, adjustable height table, etc.) as required.
- Schedule frequent breaks to allow the person to recoup enough energy to continue the assessment session:
 - In some cases, the person may require lengthy breaks and may benefit from a couch or comfortable chair on which to rest;
 - In other cases, the person may need frequent short breaks to change position, to rest muscles used for writing, or to get up and stretch to relieve discomfort or pain.

For difficulties of concentration or a slow rate of information processing:

- Individual assessment sessions to reduce distractions are desirable.
- Conduct interviews at a relaxed pace with breaks as required by the person.
- For interviews and interactive exercises the following may be used:
 - Give the person the interview questions in writing, immediately prior to the interview, and allow preparation time in a quiet room.
 - For interactive exercises, present the situation to the person in advance, preferably in writing, and allow time to prepare.
 - NOTE: If all applicants are to be given the questions or situations in advance, increase the time allowed for persons with difficulties of concentration or rate of information processing.

For mobility limitations

- Use of a computer or other adaptive device may be beneficial for persons with fine motor coordination difficulties. Be guided by devices the applicant normally employs in work or school.
- Refer to the section on mobility or agility disabilities (page 39) for consideration and example of accommodations.

Specific medical requirements

Particular illnesses may entail specific medical requirements, which should be discussed with the person in advance. These requirements can generally be accommodated by simply scheduling the test session around the person's needs. However, for longer assessments occurring over the course of a day, it is important to build in time for the person's medical requirements. The following may serve as examples, but there are many other possible medical requirements:

- Persons with diabetes need to test their glucose level at specific times during the day, or they may need to inject insulin, for which they should have privacy (for example, a washroom).
- Persons with diabetes also need to eat at specific times, which should be taken into account in scheduling the assessment session. For a long assessment, allowing the person to bring in food and beverages is a possible option.

- Persons with conditions require frequent washroom breaks (for example, Crohn's disease or Irritable Bowel Syndrome), for which allowance must be made, both in terms of breaks and scheduling. For example, build in extra time in an assessment centre, where the person's time is typically scheduled to the minute.

Temporary conditions

Although the following two conditions are not disabilities, persons with these conditions may have functional limitations which require assessment accommodations:

- temporary medical conditions; and
- pregnancy and childbirth related conditions.

Note that temporary illnesses of short duration are not included in this section since assessment is usually postponed until the person is able to eventually return to work and further accommodation is not normally required.

What do you need to know about the conditions?

Temporary medical conditions

People frequently return to work before all effects of an injury or of surgery are gone. If they must be assessed during the recuperation period, any remaining limitations may require assessment accommodations. For example, injuries which affect the ability to write, such as a sprained wrist or a broken arm; or injuries which affect ability to concentrate or to sit for extended periods of time due to pain or discomfort, should be accommodated. Surgery may include operations for carpal tunnel syndrome, or other operations affecting wrists, arms or shoulders, where writing is affected. Effects from the surgery which affect the person's physical tolerance to undergo assessment may also require accommodations.

Pregnancy and childbirth-related conditions

Women who are pregnant may present temporary functional limitations which will require some accommodations. For example, they may have difficulties sitting down for long period of time and therefore may have to stretch or frequently change position. Another example could be that, due to pregnancy diabetes, a woman has to eat a little something regularly.

It may also be appropriate to provide accommodation to a woman who is on maternity leave and nursing her baby.

What information or professional documentation is needed?

Applicants are normally the first source of information on their functional limitations and the assessment accommodations they require. Professional documentation will usually not be needed for applicants who are pregnant or who have clear and obvious functional limitations.

In case of persons who have temporary conditions associated with functional limitations that are not evident, complex or subject to interpretation, documentation can be requested. Such documentation should describe the nature and extend of the functional limitations and any current effect of medication. It should also indicate the date on which the condition began and an estimate of a recovery date.

What are the key elements to consider?

When determining assessment accommodations for persons with temporary functional limitations, the following three elements should be considered:

1. **The nature and extent of the person's functional limitations must be clearly understood.**

The following questions may help to gather useful information:

- What is the nature and extent of the functional limitations caused by the condition: are they mild, moderate or severe?
- What are the current effects of any medication being taken, if applicable?
- Are there any specific requirements? For example: Is there a need to feed the baby every 3 hours? Is there a need to use the washroom every other hour?
- What accommodations is the person currently using on the job?

It is important to reiterate that persons with disabilities are the first source of information on the way their limitations affect them and on how to accommodate their specific needs. Consequently, this information is usually gathered through exchanges with the person. To help you to gather these details in a discussion, you may wish to refer to the questionnaire available for this purpose in appendix 2.

2. **A thorough knowledge of the assessment tool to be used is required.** Depending on the assessment tool's characteristics, accommodations which are necessary for one tool may be unnecessary for another. Here are some considerations to help you identify the characteristics of your assessment tool.

For an interview:

- Are written documents provided before or during the interview? If so, how much reading is involved?
- Is there time to prepare responses prior to the interview?
- What is the expected length of responses to be given orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

For a written test:

- Is it an essay-style exam, short answers or a multiple choice test?
- Is it a case study, an in-basket exercise, an open book test??
- How many questions are there?
- How much reading and writing are involved?
- What is the time allotted?
- Will the instructions be provided orally or in writing?

For an interactive situation:

- Is it a group setting? If so, how many participants are there?
- Is written documentation provided before or during the situation? If so, how much reading is involved?
- What is the expected length of exercise to happen orally?
- Is there a written component? If so, how much writing is involved?
- What is the time allotted?

3. Knowledge of the qualification being assessed is essential. This information will help you ensure that accommodations do not modify the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. Considerations include:

- What qualification(s) is (are) assessed by the instrument? It is knowledge, abilities/skills, aptitude or personal suitability? How is it defined?
- Is there a speed requirement?
- Does the level of the qualification assessed reflect the job requirement?

Determining appropriate assessment accommodations necessarily requires research and analysis of all three elements above; of the impact they have on one another, and the application of the principles for assessment accommodations. This analysis is the foundation of the rationale for the accommodations. This rationale has to explain how the accommodations are enabling the demonstration of the person's qualifications, preventing his or her functional limitations from being a disadvantage. It also has to explain how the person is not being given an advantage compared to others in the appointment process, therefore, that merit is preserved.

Examples of assessment accommodations and considerations

The following are examples and considerations that may be helpful in determining assessment accommodations. It also includes a number of specific examples of assessment accommodations relative to possible functional limitations.

While reviewing these examples, keep in mind that accommodations are determined on a case by case basis and their appropriateness will depend on the nature and extent of the individual's functional limitations, the assessment tool to be used and the qualification to be assessed. Also, accommodations must resemble, if possible, the usual way in which the person would perform the task requested as if he or she was on the job, and must not alter the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. For more details, please refer to the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16).

Individual assessment session: An individual session is required whenever the test administration differs from standard procedure (for example: use of adaptive technology, additional time, or breaks).

Additional time: Additional time may be required to accommodate persons with functional limitations which require adaptive technology, or where pain or discomfort interferes with the assessment task.

Breaks: Breaks which are not counted in the test administration time are an appropriate assessment accommodation when the person's condition entails a need to stretch to relieve discomfort, to rest cramped muscles, or to use washroom facilities. A stopwatch should be used to keep track of the exact time spent on assessment and the time spent on breaks

For writing difficulties:

- For mild difficulties, allow the person some additional time and breaks for resting the affected arm or hand;
- For essay-type examinations, it may be more effective for the person to use a computer or other assistive technology to record answers;
- For an injury where the person cannot write at all, consider the use of a scribe or recording answers on a Dictaphone, with an appropriate time extension.

For fatigue, pain or limited physical tolerance

- For persons with limitations causing discomfort when sitting for extended periods of time, provide an Obus chair or other ergonomic seating which meets the person's needs.
- Provide breaks as required to allow the person to stretch or rest.
- A woman in the last trimester of pregnancy may require frequent stretch breaks to relieve the discomfort of sitting for an extended period of time, as well as breaks to use the washroom.

See the section on mobility or agility disabilities (page 39) or chronic illnesses (page 58) for other ideas on ways to accommodate pain, fatigue or limited physical tolerance.

For applicants who are pregnant or nursing

- For a nursing mother who is being assessed while still on maternity leave, schedule around nursing times or allow breaks as required to nurse the baby. Note that the applicant should provide a caregiver to care for the child in a nearby space away from the assessment room.

Environmental Sensitivities**What do you need to know about environmental sensitivities?**

Individuals with environmental sensitivities may have adverse reactions to foods, chemicals or environmental agents, singly or in combination. For assessment accommodations to be warranted, the condition must potentially have a significant effect on the person's performance during the assessment. Environmental sensitivities include adverse reactions to specific allergens, such as cleaning agents, dust, perfumes or building construction materials.

What information or professional documentation is needed?

Applicants are the first source of information on their environmental sensitivities. They must provide information on the substance that causes their allergy and any accommodations that are currently necessary for them. Professional documentation will usually not be needed.

What are the key elements to consider?

When determining assessment accommodations for persons with environmental sensitivities, the following three elements should be considered:

1. The nature and extent of the person's functional limitations must be clearly understood.

The following questions may help to gather useful information:

- What is or are the substances to which the person is allergic?
- What is the nature and extent of the functional limitations caused by the environmental sensitivity, and are they mild, moderate, severe?
- Is the allergic reaction potentially life-threatening?
- What are the current effects of any medication being taken, if applicable?
- Are there any specific requirements, such as a need to be tested away from certain substances?

It is important to reiterate that persons with disabilities are the first source of information on the way their limitations affect them and on how to accommodate their specific needs. Consequently, this information is usually gathered through exchanges with the person. To help you to gather these details in a discussion, you may wish to refer to the questionnaire available for this purpose in appendix 2.

2. A thorough knowledge of the assessment tool to be used is required. In regard to the specific environmental sensitivity of the person, elements of questioning include:

- Is the assessment material free from the specific allergen(s)?
- Is the assessment location free from the specific allergen(s)?
- In group situation, are other potential participants to the assessment session free from the specific allergen(s)?

3. Knowledge of the qualification being assessed is essential. This information will help you ensure that accommodations do not modify the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. Considerations include:

- What are the qualifications assessed by the instrument?
- Does having an assessment environment and materials free from the specific allergen substance modify the nature or level of what is assessed?

Determining appropriate assessment accommodations necessarily requires research and analysis of all three elements above; of the impact they have on one another, and the application of the principles for assessment accommodations. This analysis is the foundation of the rationale for the accommodations. This rationale has to explain how the accommodations are enabling the demonstration of the person's qualifications, preventing his or her functional limitations from being a disadvantage. It also has to explain how the person is not being given an advantage compared to others in the appointment process, therefore, that merit is preserved.

Examples of assessment accommodations and considerations

The following are examples and considerations that may be helpful in determining assessment accommodations. It also includes a number of specific examples of assessment accommodations relative to possible functional limitations.

While reviewing these examples, keep in mind that accommodations are determined on a case by case basis and their appropriateness will depend on the nature and extent of the individual's functional limitations, the assessment tool to be used and the qualification to be assessed. Also, accommodations must resemble, if possible, the usual way in which the person would perform the task requested as if he or she was on the job, and must not alter the nature or level of the qualification being assessed. For more details, please refer to the section Determining and implementing assessment accommodations (page 16).

- Allow the person to take written examinations in an environment that is free from allergens. Having a back-up examination room could also be a good preventive measure.
- When the allergen is perfume for example, inform examiners and other participant that no perfume or scented products should be used, and that no clothing that has come into contact with perfume should be worn. For example, a wool sweater or coat can retain perfume in its fibres for many days.
- Depending on the severity of the person's sensitivity, you may wish to ask for a contact number in the event of an emergency or severe attack.

Appendix 1

How to think inclusion by design

As stated in the assessment policy of the Public Service Commission, those responsible for assessment are required to “use assessment tools that do not create systemic barriers to employment”. This involves the use of tools that are inclusive in their design and implementation. The more inclusive the tools are, the less there is needs for assessment accommodations, as the tools are already adapted to many applicants. As a result, the uniformity of the process is increased and last minute difficult accommodations might be avoided. Inclusion by design increases fairness and access to everyone and allows for robust tools to assess merit.

Manager or assessment board may not be aware that certain assessment tools could pose a barrier to employment equity. To remove barriers involves a heightened awareness of potential barriers, and using judgment in applying the principles of fair assessment and inclusiveness. To help you choose or develop assessment tools and process that are fair and inclusive, here are some considerations.

- Explore the many acceptable ways the job could be accomplished at the earliest stage of the human resources planning. When a position is defined or when merit criteria are established, examine if the requirements or criteria identified are really required by the position. Assess also if the way these requirements or criteria are defined is really representative of the demands of the job.
- Have as many diverse applicants in mind when developing an assessment tool, and think about possible accommodations that could be made should there be a need for it, such as breaks or the use of a computer. Doing so, explore if it could be possible to extend those possible accommodations to all applicants by making them part of the design of the tool. For example, if this does not alter the nature and level of the qualification being assessed:
 - Develop a written test on electronic format that can be completed on the computer as well as by hand writing.
 - Just before conducting the interview, allow applicants 30 minutes to prepare with the questions.
- Use multiple assessment tools so that persons have the opportunity to demonstrate their competencies in different ways.
- Assess whether the questions and scenarios of the assessment tool require culture-specific knowledge that is not work-related, or do they constitute a disadvantage for certain groups, for example: subtle word meanings, colloquialisms or jokes can be meaningless to persons not belonging to the same group.
- Assess if the demands of the assessment tool exceed those of the job. For example, when staffing a clerical position that does not require advanced writing skills, it would not be fair to ask in a written test to answer complex procedural questions in writing which would require advanced writing skills. Here are some considerations:

- If speed of executing a particular task is not a requirement of the job, does the time allotted to do the same task in the assessment long enough so everyone can finish?
 - If, to do the job to be staff, the person has access to grammar and spelling tools to write documents, why not choose or develop a test that allows access to such tools?
 - Do the assessment instruments focus only on knowledge and skills which could be acquired only through job experiences, and ignore other competencies and the ability to learn? For example, persons who have not had access to opportunities such as acting appointments or contract work may be at a disadvantage.
- Explore if the existing assessment tool is available in multiple formats. And when developing a new tool, ensure that the tool allows for multiple formats. Remember that :
 - Not all electronic formats are accessible. For example, documents produced in Portable Document Format (PDF) are not yet fully accessible to persons with visual impairments.
 - The use of diagrams, columns, and other visually based elements may render a document partially inaccessible, if not accompanied by a narrative description.
 - When developing an assessment tool which includes video elements, make sure that the video produces include closed or open captions for persons with hearing disabilities, an audio descriptive track for persons with visual impairments.
 - Ensure that all assessors are coached/trained on bias-free assessment practices and perspectives.
 - Include persons with disabilities in assessment boards or in the development team of an assessment tool. One of the potential benefits of a diverse assessment board and diverse test development team is the availability of a broader understanding of the ways in which persons may demonstrate their qualifications, thus better enabling managers to make sound selection decisions based on work-related requirements.

References on inclusion by design:

http://www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/psea-lefp/guides/equity/guidance_e.htm#N3_2

http://www.psagency-agencefp.gc.ca/ee/accom-amen/inclusion_e.asp

Appendix 2

Questionnaires to gather information on functional limitations

When determining assessment accommodations, a good understanding of the nature and extent of the applicant's functional limitations is essential. You will find in this appendix four questionnaires designed to help you gather such information in part.

- The first questionnaire can be used for persons who have limitation related to mobility or agility, mental health, chronic illnesses, temporary conditions or environmental sensitivities (such as allergies).
- The second questionnaire can be used for persons who have visual limitations.
- The third questionnaire can be use for persons who have hearing limitations.
- The fourth questionnaire can be used for persons who have learning disabilities or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Applicant name: _____ Date: _____

Information on functional limitations

This information is required to determine assessment accommodations that might be necessary in an appointment process within the Public Service of Canada.

1. Please describe the functional limitations you experience presently (for example: reduced mobility, manual dexterity, anxiety, lack of concentration, pain, fatigue, etc)

2. How do the above functional limitations impact the following areas?

a. reading

b. writing

c. speaking

d. hearing

e. concentration or attention

3. Is your condition stable? Yes No
Is your condition episodic in nature? Yes No

Please describe:

Applicant name: _____ Date: _____

4. Do you take medication that may affect your performance in an assessment situation?
 Yes No

Please describe the current effect of medication on:

a. your speed of information processing

b. your concentration

c. other

5. What is the most appropriate time of day for assessment?

Morning _____ Afternoon _____ (Specify hour if necessary)

6. Is fatigue or pain a factor when undergoing assessment?

A great deal Some None

Must you frequently stretch or change position? Yes No

How often do you require breaks? Every _____ minutes/or _____ hours

7. Are you usually using an adaptive technology? Yes No

If yes, specify make and model:

8. In regard to ergonomic setting, if applicable:

Do you require specific seating or ergonomic devices? Yes No

If yes, specify: _____

If you use a wheelchair or a scooter:

What is the space required? _____

Is a higher table required? Yes No

If yes, at what knee clearance? _____

Is a device for holding paper or testing materials required? Yes No

If yes, specify: _____

Other _____

Applicant name: _____ Date: _____

9. In regard to transportation, if applicable:

Do you require a drop-off site? ___Yes ___No

Do you require an accessible parking spot? ___Yes ___No

Do you need assistance to travel to the assessment site? ___ Yes ___ No

Do you need assistance to go to the assessment room from a drop-off point?
___Yes ___No

10. Have you received any accommodations for your current functional limitations in past appointment process, at school or on the job? If so, please describe.

11. What accommodations do you feel are necessary in the current appointment process? Please describe for each assessment situation (for example: written test, interview, group task, simulation, etc).

12. Please add any other relevant information:

PLEASE NOTE: If you present limitations that affect cognitive or emotional functioning, you may be required to provide additional documentation from a professional who is qualified in the specific type of disability and who is accredited by the appropriate professional association of the province in which he or she works.

Applicant name: _____ Date: _____

Information on Visual Functional Limitations

This information is required to determine any assessment accommodations that might be necessary in an appointment process within the Public Service of Canada.

1. Please describe your current functional limitations (for example: low vision, lack of peripheral vision or central vision, blind, blind in one eye, etc.)

2. Is the disability associated with any other medical condition or disability?
 Yes No

If yes specify: _____

3. Is the condition stable? Yes No

If no, please describe: _____

4. Specify the adaptive methods (technology, format or services) you normally use, if applicable, for the following: (Specify as many as apply)

Reading textual information

Large print text material, specify the acceptable font size: _____

Electronic format

Close Circuit Television (CCTV)

Magnifying lens

Screen magnifier, specify which one: _____

Screen reader, specify which one: _____

Refreshable Braille display

Reader (person reading text aloud)

Braille, specify which grade: _____

Other, specify: _____

Applicant name: _____ Date: _____

Writing short answers or take notes

- Scribe (person who takes notes)
- Computer
- Braille note-taker
- Slate and stylus
- Perkins Braille
- Other, specify: _____

Writing and editing documents

- Computer with large screen
- Computer with a screen magnifier, specify which one: _____
- Computer and a screen reader, specify which one: _____
- Computer and a refreshable Braille display
- Computer and a Braille printer
- Scribe (person who takes notes)
- Other, specify: _____

5. Speed of reading using preferred format: Normal Slower
Speed of writing by hand: Normal Slower
Speed of keyboarding: Words per minute _____

6. Does the method or methods of reading printed materials involve an element of fatigue?

Yes No

If yes, how often are breaks required?

Every _____ minutes or _____ hours.

7. Do you use a guide dog? Yes No

If yes, specify any specific arrangements:

Applicant name: _____ Date: _____

8. What accommodations do you feel would meet your needs in the current appointment process? Please describe for each assessment situation (for example: written test, interview, group task, simulation, etc.)

9. For people who are deaf and blind, will an intervenor for the deaf-blind be required for the assessment? Yes No

What is your usual mode of communication? (Specify as many as apply)

- Intervenor for the deaf and blind
- Tactile sign language
- Visual sign language
- Tactile finger spelling
- Braille
- Other, specify: _____

10. Please add any other relevant information:

Applicant name: _____ Date: _____

Information on Hearing Functional Limitations

This information is required to determine any assessment accommodations that might be necessary in an appointment process within the Public Service of Canada.

1. Which of the following best describes your hearing loss?

Person who is deaf – Person who has severe or profound hearing loss and has lost his or her hearing before developing spoken language.

Person who is deafened – Person who has experienced a severe or profound loss of hearing after having developed speech and language skills.

Person who is hard of hearing – Person who's hearing loss does not preclude understanding spoken language - most often with the assistance of a technical aid. The hearing loss may range from mild to severe, but, with the use of a hearing aid, a person who is hard of hearing can still communicate primarily by speech.

2. Extent of hearing loss Mild Moderate Severe
Hearing loss in both or one ear Both Left only Right only

3. Does your hearing limitations impact on the following areas? If yes, specify

Oral communication: _____

Reading: _____

Writing: _____

4. Did you attend a school for the deaf? Yes No

If yes, which school: _____

And please explain your educational experience, including:

- how you learned English and/or American Sign Language (ASL)
- highest level of education received

Applicant name: _____ Date: _____

**Information on Functional Limitations
Associated with Learning Disabilities or
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**

This information is required to determine any assessment accommodations that might be necessary in an appointment process within the Public Service of Canada.

1. At what age, and in what circumstances was it established that you had your disability?

2. Were you given specific help or accommodations during your school or post-secondary studies? If so, please describe.

3. Describe your current functional limitations which may affect your performance in assessment situations (for example: difficulties with reading, writing, numbers, spatial orientation, oral communication, memory, following directions, maintaining attention, concentration, etc.).

4. Are you taking medication?

Yes No

If yes, describe the impact of the medication on your functional limitations.

Applicant name: _____ Date: _____

5. Have you received any accommodations for your functional limitations in past assessments, or on the job? If yes, which ones?

6. Do you make use of any adaptive technology? Yes No
If yes, specify: _____

7. What assessment accommodations do you feel would meet your needs in the current appointment process? Please describe for each assessment situation (for example: written test, interview, group task, simulation, etc.)

8. Please add any other relevant information:

PLEASE NOTE: You may be required to provide additional documentation from a professional who is qualified in the specific type of disability and who is accredited by the appropriate regulated professional association of the province in which he or she works.

When requested, the report should include:

- a clear description of your functional limitations; and
- an interpretative summary of test scores which describes the limitations caused by the disability.

Appendix 3 Consent to release information

I, _____ (name of the applicant), consent that _____
_____ (name of the professional) release information on my
condition to _____
(person and organization name). This information will be used for the express
purpose of determining appropriate accommodations for examinations, tests,
interviews and other exercises part of the assessment component of the
appointment process in the Public Service of Canada for which I applied.

Applicant name (please print): _____

Telephone number: _____

Date (dd-mm-yyyy): _____

Signature: _____

Applicant date of birth: _____

(Note that the date of birth is usually required by the professional office,
in order to retrieve the specific file of the person)

Professional phone number: _____

Professional fax number: _____

Professional address: _____

Appendix 4

Glossary of adaptive technology and services

Adaptive technology

Adaptive technology describes the use of hardware and software to assist individuals who have difficulty accessing information systems using conventional methods.

Alternative keyboard

Alternative keyboard layouts and other enhancements allow people who experience difficulty with conventional keyboard designs to use computers. The products available range from key guards that prevent two keys from being pressed simultaneously, to alternative keyboards with differing layouts, sizes, etc. for people who have specific needs, to alternative input systems which require other means/methods of getting information into a computer.

- **Keyguard for keyboard**– A plate, which fits over the top of a keyboard and has holes over some or all of the keys. A key guard can allow the user a place to rest the hands while typing but it is primarily designed to prevent inadvertent key presses caused by poor motor control or other factors.
- **Large format keyboard** – Keyboards that have keys that are larger than those found on standard keyboards. They help people who have trouble either pressing the keys or seeing the letters on a standard keyboard.
- **Light touch keyboard** – A keyboard which has very little or no resistance on the keys. Sometimes useful for persons with Repetitive Strain Injury who incur pain from the resistance found when using traditional keyboards. Also useful to persons with neurological or motor problems who cannot exert much pressure on keys.
- **Micro-keyboard (mini)** – A keyboard on which the keys are grouped together as closely as possible so users whose fingers cannot flex over a standard keyboard can access the entire keyboard. The micro-keyboard is very often the size of a pocket calculator.
- **Non-QWERTY keyboard** – Several other keyboard layouts have been devised in an attempt to reduce motion, facilitate one-handed typing or to enable one finger typing. Some layouts also help persons with cognitive disabilities who are more comfortable with an ABC keyboard where keys are arranged in alphabetical order. The most common alternative layout is the DVORAK keyboard. The Dvorak keyboard was designed with the most common consonants on one side of the middle or home row and the vowels on the other side so that typing tends to alternate key strokes back and forth between hands. It was designed for speed typing but is sometimes helpful to persons with repetitive strain injury.
- **One-handed keyboard** – Allows for typing with only one hand. Some of these devices use chording techniques, which means that the user would depress a combination of keys in order to create certain letters or functions. One-handed keyboards have a special shape and letter layout. Speeds of 60 words per

minute have by demonstrated by operators using single handed keyboards. They are designed for "Touch Typing" and have Push-On Push-Off keys for Shift, Control and Alt functions, which is essential for single hand operation. There are also software programs that turn a standard keyboard into a half QWERTY one by allowing the one-handed user to type on a QWERTY keyboard with the good hand and when the space bar is depressed, the other side of the keyboard is mapped onto the keys under the good hand in a mirror image, such that the typing hand does not have to change positions to access the keys on the far side of the keyboard.

- **On-screen keyboard** –An onscreen keyboard generally appears on the same display used for programs and will remain permanently visible. The keyboard can then be accessed using the pointer device. In the simplest sense this means a standard mouse, but through the use of alternative mouse systems or switches a large number of disabilities can be addressed.
- **Split keyboard**
Keyboards that separate the keys activated by the left hand from the keys activated by the right hand. They rotate the hands outward and upward so that the hands are in a more natural position than traditional rectangular keyboards. The keyboard is spit down the middle and rotated slightly upward and outward, which facilitates a more natural (straight) alignment of the wrist. The slight external rotation of the hand creates less tension in the muscles of the shoulder and less pressure on the nerves of the elbow. Often helpful to persons with Repetitive Strain Injury.

Alternative mouse system (alternative pointing device)

Alternative mouse system allows people who experience difficulty with conventional mouse designs to use computers.

- **Foot / toe mouse** – Foot-operated computer mouse that uses either the feet or a toe to move the cursor and activate mouse. Some units work in conjunction with other switching techniques (for mouse clicks) such as dwell software or toggle switches
- **Infrared / camera (optical mouse)** – Gives full mouse control to people who cannot use conventional pointing devices. An infrared sensing device is placed on the top of the monitor that follows a tiny dot that is place on the forehead (or other part of the body). The device translates head movements into direct movements of the cursor. The unit is used in conjunction with a switch or dwell software that perform mouse clicks. The most common switch used with an infrared head pointer is a "sip 'n puff" which is a "straw" type device that allows the user to click by breathing in or out of the "straw".
- **Keyboard keypad** – The keyboard keypad can function as a mouse using Mousekeys. Many of the alternative keyboards have Mousekeys built in, so the keys on the keyboard can toggle between text input or mouse input.
- **Mouth activated pointing device** – A simple device resembling a stick that the user holds in the mouth to replace functions that would be performed with the

hands. It is sometimes used on a keyboard. Some keyboards are designed especially for this purpose. If the mouth pointer is made of conductive material, it can be used on a touch pad (which has an active capacitance surface) to move the cursor. It is also used to perform clicks. These devices have been used for many years but are quickly being replaced by high tech alternatives such as lasers, which require less physical exertion.

- **Sip 'n' puff switches** – An alternative switch that is a little like a drinking straw. It is a pneumatic switch which means the individual uses the breath to perform mouse clicks. It can be programmed so that "breathing in" creates a double click and "breathing out" performs a single click. Some models also allow the user to activate the switch by biting. Often used in conjunction with a wireless transmitter that allows the user to move around without being attached to the computer by the switch wire.
- **Touch pad** – A small, touch-sensitive pad used as a pointing device. It works on a principle known as capacitance. Touch pads are often found on portable computers. By moving a finger or other object along the pad, the user can move the pointer on the display screen. Clicks are performed by tapping the pad. Many users find them to be less of a strain on the wrist, hand and arm because there is less movement and resistance than a traditional mouse. Persons with upper mobility problems have successfully adopted the Touch pad as a pointing device operated by the toe using dwell software or other switch to control the clicks. Dwell software follows the movement of the cursor.
- **Trackballs** – Trackballs are upside down mouse, with the ball on top and several buttons. Many trackballs offer the left and right mouse buttons plus one or two more which can be programmed to be a double click or drag lock. Many local computer vendors stock trackballs- the programmable ones are also available from assistive technology vendors. These allow the user to use one to 5 switches to control the mouse- the more switches the user can control, the faster the mousing around. It is used in many notebook computers. The user rolls the ball to direct the cursor to the desired place on the screen and can click one of two buttons (identical to mouse buttons) near the trackball to select desktop objects or position the cursor for text entry. Many persons with Repetitive Strain Injury prefer a trackball to the use of a mouse. Persons with limited hand movement who cannot use a mouse can sometimes use a trackball.

American Sign Language (ASL)

ASL, sometimes called Ameslan, is the most common of several signed languages used by the deaf to communicate in North America. ASL is a completely different language from English or French; it has its own grammar and syntax and involves well-defined hand and arm movements that represent concepts. Grammar and syntax can be conveyed by facial expression. Common gestures are not part of ASL and there is no such thing as a functioning universal signed language.

Assistive listening systems

Assistive listening systems (ALSs) are sometimes called assistive listening devices (ALDs). Essentially they are amplifiers that bring sound directly into the ear. They

separate the sounds, particularly speech, that a person wants to hear from background noise. They improve what is known as the "speech to noise ratio". ALSs utilize FM, infrared or inductive loop technologies:

- **FM systems** are ALSs that use radio broadcast technology. It transmits speech picked up from a microphone on an FM radio frequency; special receivers are worn by persons who are hard of hearing or deaf so that they can hear the transmitted message. In a small group of fifteen or fewer people, it is possible to place two or three microphones along the table, allowing the applicant to participate fully in the discussion.
- **Infrared systems** are ALSs that utilize light-based technology. It transmits speech picked up from a microphone on an infrared wavelength.
- **Inductive loop systems** utilize an electromagnetic field to deliver sound. They offer convenience to groups of t-coil hearing aid users because those users do not require body worn receivers. Loop systems can be used by non-hearing aid users through use of a headphone and inductive loop receiver.

Bell relay service (BRS)

Bell relay service enables people with a hearing and/or speech disability to communicate via the telephone and a device called a TTY (text-telephone). A relay service operator reads the message typed by the TTY user to the hearing person and relays a reply back. Each province in Canada has a similar message-relay system provided by the phone company servicing the province. The number for service in Ontario is 1-800-855-0511. For information about service provided in other areas of the country, call 1-800-331-9948.

Braille

A writing system using raised dots in patterns (cells) that represent the standard text alphabet.

- **Integral, grade I Braille** - Consists of the standard Braille alphabet, with no contractions (or abbreviations).
- **Abridged, contracted or grade II Braille** - The words and text are contracted or abridged in order to increase reading speed and to reduce the space required for transcription.

Braille note taker

Electronic portable note-taking devices that allows input via a Braille-style keyboard and output in synthesized speech and/or a one or two-line refreshable brail display consisting of tiny pins made of metal and plastic. Portable note takers are useful for taking notes in meetings, etc.

Braille embosser / printer

A printer that creates Braille instead of text.

Brailier

A mechanical device to write Braille on paper, such as a Perkins Brailier.

Closed circuit television (CCTV)

Closed circuit televisions (CCTV) are a video magnification system consisting of a video screen interfaced with a video camera. This technology produces major advances for people with low vision. The stand-mounted CCTVs can be configured with either television receivers, video monitors, or computer monitors. The CCTV system provides high contrast, inverse video display, gray scale, and control of contrast level and brightness.

Computerized note taking

A method utilizing a computer keyboard and screen to take simultaneous notes of verbal communication so that persons with hearing loss can understand conversations or group proceedings. A projector, which projects the text image onto a screen, can be connected to a port in the computer. Notes are usually summarizations, rather than verbatim transcriptions. A computerized note taker has been trained and inputs at an average rate of 40 wpm.

Finger spelling

A manual representation of the words of a spoken language using a separate hand shape for each letter of the alphabet. It is often used as a supplement to American Sign Language to represent words for which a sign is not known and in some cases for proper nouns.

Haptic devices

A haptic interface is a device which allows a user to interact with a computer by receiving tactile feed back. There are two main types of haptic devices:

- glove or pen-type devices that allow the user to "touch" and manipulate 3-dementional virtual objects
- devices that allow users to "feel" textures of 2-dementional objects with a pen or mouse-type interface

Hearing aid

A device that amplifies the sound received by the user's ear. Because hearing aids amplify all sound, including background noise, the acoustic condition of the room impacts upon the user's ability to hear speech.

Intervenor for the deaf-blind

Can provide for simultaneous interpretation as well as other communication and related information for a person who is deaf-blind. Depending on what works best for the individual, intervenors may use visual sign language, tactile sign language, tactile finger spelling, Braille or large-print notes (for those with some vision).

Keyboards

See Alternative keyboards.

Keyboard modification software

Changes the properties of a keyboard so that it behaves differently than it otherwise would. Characteristic modifications include “sticky keys” which allow a one handed typist to activate shift, control and function keys in combination with other keys.

Langage des signes québécois (LSQ)

The predominant signed language of the deaf in Quebec. Although native to Quebec, LSQ is not "signed French" and is an independent language in its own right.

Large monitor

Any monitor that is larger than 17 inches. It enables the user to enlarge print without losing continuity.

Large print

Letters or numbers magnified about 150 per cent or more by various means, such as a photocopier or word processor. A font of 16- or 18-point is commonly used but the font may be much larger, depending on the requirement of the individual.

Large print (Software)

Software that makes certain parts (or all) of the computer screen large, up to 16x larger than normal. It turns the pointer/cursor into a tool that simulates the action of putting a magnifying glass over a printed page.

Lip reading

A method utilized by persons with a hearing loss for understanding speech by watching the motion and pattern of the speaker's lips when talking. Lip reading is a difficult task since only 33% of English speech sounds are visible on the lips. Lip reading is a component of what is referred to as speech reading.

Manually coded English (MCE)

A general term for all artificially developed communication systems that may use signs and finger spelling to represent English. Within most of these systems, each sign is used to convey English. Both the sender and receiver of the message must have an understanding of English grammar and syntax in order to communicate using this method. Signed English is primarily used for educational purposes. Although some person who are deafened prefer this type of signed communication, because various forms of MCE were inappropriately used in early educational programs, it is not uncommon to find people who are deaf expressing negative views about the use of MCE.

Mouse

See Alternative mouse system.

Multimedia captioning (Hardware)

Hardware that allows the display of text or a sign language interpreter as an alternative to audio information.

Multimedia captioning (Software)

Software that allows for the display of text or a sign language interpreter as an alternative to audio information.

Multiple formats

Print material is made accessible through multiple formats: Braille, large print, audio taped, and electronic format.

Obus chair

Ergonomically designed chair with high back and adjustable height. Commonly used by persons with neck and back pain.

Optical character recognition (OCR)

Optical character recognition (OCR) is the process of converting an image of text, such as a scanned paper document or electronic fax file, into computer-editable text. The text in an image is not editable: the letters are made of tiny dots (pixels) that together form a picture of text. During OCR, the software analyzes an image and converts the pictures of the characters to editable text based on the patterns of the pixels in the image. After OCR, you can export the converted text and use it with a variety of word-processing, page layout, and spreadsheet applications. OCR also enables screen readers and refreshable Braille displays to read the text contained in images.

Oral interpreter

A trained professional who facilitates communication between a hearing person and a person with a hearing loss who prefers to communicate through speech reading and hearing. The oral interpreter repeats the exact message of the speaker in words and phrases that are easy to speech read, and uses appropriate facial expressions and gestures to facilitate communication.

To request interpreter services, call the Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada: 613-996-3346 or 613-996-0921. Arrangements for an interpreter should be made as early as possible.

Paperless Braille display

See Refreshable Braille displays

Personal date assistants

Personal digital assistants (PDAs) are portable computers that are designed to act as organizers, note takers and/or communication devices. There are also a group of PDAs that are designed to be used by users with disabilities. These PDAs use aural output, Braille displays and Braille keyboards to comprise their user interface.

Pidgin sign English (PSE)

Varieties of signed languages used by people who have a hearing loss which combine certain elements of both American Sign Language (ASL) and English. For example, PSE may use English word order rather than ASL syntax.

Portable note taker

An electronic device that allows notes to be taken in Braille. The device can be linked to a computer in order to print the recorded information.

Reader

A task of a reader is to read a written examination to the applicant who is blind or has low vision, or who has visual processing impairment. This includes reading the response alternatives if the test is using a multiple choice format. The person selected as a reader should be a native speaker of the language of the test and someone who reads well and articulates clearly. It is useful to familiarize the reader with the test procedures and terminology used in the test material beforehand, especially if the test is of a technical nature.

Real-time captioning (RTCD)

Also called Real-Time Reporting. A method for taking simultaneous notes of verbal communication so that persons with a hearing loss can understand conversations or group proceedings. A machine-shorthand reporter produces computer-aided transcription of the spoken word at the rate of speech at which the proceedings are taking place. A projector, which projects the text image onto a screen, can be connected to a port in the computer.

Refreshable Braille displays

Refreshable Braille Displays are electronic devices that are used to read text that a computer sends to the monitor. The device is connected to the computer by a serial cable and produces Braille output on the Braille display. Refreshable Braille displays only read one line of text at a time.

Screen magnifiers

Screen magnification software helps visually impaired persons to use computers by enlarging the picture on the screen by any factor they choose. Some programs enlarge the entire screen while others only enlarge the area around the mouse, producing a moving enlargement area. Features may include screen enlargement, mouse design and size, and colour contrast control.

Screen reader

A Screen Reader is the commonly used name for voice output technology. Hardware and software produce synthesized voice output for text displayed on the computer screen, as well as for keystrokes entered on the keyboard.

Scribe

A person who writes from dictation or sign language interpretation.

Sign language interpreter

A trained professional who acts as an intermediary between those who use Sign Language and those who use speech. 'Accredited' sign language interpreters have achieved the professional standards established by an official provincial body. 'Certified' sign language interpreters have achieved professional status through the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada.

To request interpreter services, call the Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada: 613-996-3346 or 613-996-0921. This service is free of charge in many cases, but arrangements for an interpreter should be made as early as possible.

Speech reading

Refers to reading the facial expressions, eye expressions, gestures, and body movements of the speaker, as well as watching his or her lip movements, in order to understand what the speaker is saying. Lip reading is a part of speech reading and refers to watching the words as they appear on a person's lips.

Speech synthesizer

An external speech synthesizer is a hardware device used for speech output. Typically, they are used with screen readers or OCR/scanning software (optical character recognition) programs for people who have vision disabilities.

Spell and grammar check

Software feature found in most word processing applications such as Microsoft Word or Word Perfect that allows user to check and correct spelling and grammar errors.

TTY (text-telephone or teletypewriters)

Provides deaf people with instantaneous communication by telephone to all others who have TTYs. If a TTY user wants to contact a person with a regular phone, he or she must use the Bell Relay System. As TTY users type their message, a signal representing each letter is electrically transmitted over phone lines to the receiving TTY where the signal is converted and the corresponding message is printed. The conversation is limited only by the typing speed and reading and writing skills of the users. A printed copy of the transaction is often available.

Tactile imaging

Production of raised line / raised dot images that can be felt and interpreted by user who have vision disabilities.

Talking browsers

Talking browsers use the same technology as screen reading software, but the reading functions are limited to Internet use.

Text-to-Braille translator (software)

Converts text to Braille format so that it may be stored, printed out or sent to a tactile based display. Most translators also show a visual display of the dots on the screen. Most programs allow translation to grade 1, grade 2, or both Braille derivatives.

Text-to-speech systems

Text-to-Speech systems can convert words from a computer document (for example, word processor document, web page) into audible speech spoken through the computer speaker. This would aid persons who cannot see or read text on a computer.

Total communication

Incorporates appropriate aural, manual, and oral modes of communication in order to ensure effective communication with and among persons with hearing loss. That is, all available means of communication are utilized: Sign language, finger spelling, gestures, facial expressions, body movements, pantomime, writing, reading, speech, speech reading, amplification with technical aids, pictures, and other means of communication. This is an educational approach that is not generally in use at the present time.

Touch screen

An input device that allows access to a computer by touching the screen. These are widely used commercially at retail outlets and banks.

Voice output communication aids (VOCA)

Voice output communication aids (VOCA) are electronic devices that are able to generate printed and/or spoken text. They aid individuals who are unable to use natural speech to meet all of their communication needs. There are many different products available. Some products are dedicated for communication purposes only while others are software programs in lap-top computer systems. Some have additional features built in such as appointment schedules and reminders, simple environmental control units, alternative access methods, dual displays, and abbreviation expansion programs.

Voice recognition system

Voice recognition allows a user to use his/her voice as an input device. Voice recognition may be used to dictate text into the computer or to give commands to the computer (such as opening application programs, pulling down menus, or saving work). While the accuracy of voice recognition has improved over the past few years, the system is not yet perfected and works only in restricted circumstances for selected users.

Voice synthesizer

See Speech synthesizer.

Word prediction

Word prediction technology is used to assist with text entry. These software packages predict the word you are typing and the next word based on word frequency and context. They may also include features such as spell checking as you type, speech synthesis, and hotkey's for frequently used words. Word prediction is particularly useful for slow typists, probe or pen users, and people with minor visual impairments or dyslexia.

Written communicator

Portable written communicators allow people with hearing loss and/or oral language expression problems to communicate via printed text. The user types a message on an expanded keyboard and the information entered is then printed on a small roll of paper, much the same way as on an adding machine.

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