It is important that you familiarise yourself with the detail in this document before completing an application for Reasonable Accommodations.
The State Examinations Commission (SEC) operates a simplified devolved application model in relation to the Reasonable Accommodation Scheme at the Junior Certificate Examinations. Essentially, the SEC accepts the school’s confirmation on the application form as sufficient evidence to enable the SEC to confirm an accommodation.

Please take particular note that any confirmation is given on the basis of the devolved model of the scheme in place for the Junior Certificate examinations only. An accommodation approved at Junior Certificate **DOES NOT** automatically guarantee that approval will be given at Leaving Certificate.

A fresh application will be required in respect of the Leaving Certificate which will be considered on its own merits. Schools must include documentary evidence in addition to completing the relevant Leaving Certificate Reasonable Accommodations application form.

It is essential that all applications for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate exams are in line with the principles set out hereunder. These are the principles under which the State Examinations Commission approves applications and ultimately any case referred by way of appeal to the Appeal Group will be determined by the Independent Appeal Group under the same set of principles.

**Contact Details:**

If assistance is required in relation to any aspects of the Junior Certificate application process, we can be contacted directly as below.

Direct Phone: 090 644 2781 / 2782 / 2783 / 2784 / 2785 / 2786
Fax: 090 644 2744
Email: sec.specialneeds@examinations.ie
Web: www.examinations.ie
1. Reasonable Accommodations should be made for candidates who, because of a temporary, permanent or long-term disability, have special assessment needs in examinations.

2. Provision should be made for both physical and learning disabilities.

3. Reasonable Accommodations should not put the integrity, status, or reputation of the examination at risk.

4. Reasonable Accommodations should be designed to remove as far as possible the impact of a disability on a candidate’s performance, so that he or she can demonstrate in the examination his or her level of achievement.

5. Reasonable Accommodations are designed to assist a candidate in demonstrating his or her achievements in an examination setting. They are not designed to compensate for a possible lack of achievement arising from a disability.

6. Since a core principle of the Certificate examinations is to ensure equitable treatment for all candidates, arrangements should not give the candidate for whom they are made an advantage over other candidates.

7. Independent evidence of a disability and support needs should be required before allowing reasonable accommodations.

8. The precise arrangements to be made should be determined on the basis of the disability or impairment established in each individual case and of the particular needs of the candidate in each individual subject area. Different subjects and different methods of assessment may make different demands on candidates.

9. A candidate’s disability may be such that it is not possible for him or her to participate in a particular mode of assessment (an aural examination for a candidate with severe hearing impairment), in which case it should be open to the candidate to apply for exemption from part of the assessment procedure.

10. Where it is not possible for a candidate to participate in a particular mode of assessment, an alternative assessment procedure may be specified.

11. An alternative procedure is not acceptable where the purpose of an examination would be compromised by its use (e.g., providing a scribe to draw for a candidate in an Art examination).

12. When an element or elements of an examination have been waived, so that the purpose of the examination regarding that element or elements has not been met, or the method of examining has been significantly altered, this should be indicated by the presence of an explanatory note on the candidate’s certificate of results.

13. Circumstances that may affect a candidate’s performance (e.g., illness, trauma, bereavement) should, insofar as is possible, be addressed during the examination period.
Application on the Grounds of a Specific Learning Difficulty

Reasonable Accommodations for students sitting State Examinations are provided under the terms of Circulars S40/94, S11/00, S70/00 and S24/12 which state “…that the existence of a specific learning difficulty does not automatically entitle a candidate to special arrangements in examinations. Even though candidates may have a specific difficulty with reading, writing or spelling, they may not require the provision of any special facilities provided they can read the question papers of the required level and write legibly. Each case is considered on its merits…”

As not all candidates with SLD will need accommodations, application rates from individual schools would be expected to amount to no more than six candidates approximately in a Junior/Leaving Certificate cohort of (e.g.) three to four classes or 100 candidates. This is on the basis of prevalence rates of approximately 6.5 to 8%, referred to in the Dyslexia Task Force Report and on the Dyslexia Association of Ireland website.

Identification

A specific learning difficulty may be indicated where there is

• Marked failure to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic skills such as reading and writing
• A history of such failure not related directly to factors such as poor attendance, poor motivation or problems in social interaction, which may affect attainments.
• The observed level of difficulty is inconsistent with the candidate’s ability as demonstrated in knowledge of course content and knowledge of other areas of the curriculum

All candidates applying for Reasonable Accommodations in Certificate Exams under the category of Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) must meet criteria: A or B.

A) Evidence of a Psychological Report that clearly states that the student presents with a Specific Learning Difficulty (other acceptable terminology include: Dyslexia or Specific Learning Disability/Disorder)

Or

B) A specific learning difficulty may be indicated where there is

• Marked failure to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic skills such as reading and/or writing.
• Attainments which are inconsistent with the candidate’s ability.
**Students whose general intellectual ability is below the average range**

Approval for any of the accommodations on the grounds of a specific learning difficulty is only appropriate where it can be established that a candidate whose general intellectual ability is below the average range also presents with a specific learning difficulty.

The following accommodations may be available to candidates who present with a specific learning difficulty and are eligible under the terms of the current scheme:

- Access to a reader
- Waiver from the assessment of spelling, grammar and punctuation in the language subjects
- Use of a mechanical aid i.e. tape recorder or word processor
- Assistance of a scribe.

Please note that some of the accommodations listed above may necessitate the use of a shared or individual special centre.

Please find below a list of suggested tests that schools can use when considering applications for Reasonable Accommodations in the 2015 Certificate Examinations. These tests fall into two main categories:

- Tests that provide estimates of ability.
- Tests of literacy-related skills

**Informal Dictation**

It may also be helpful to ask candidates to complete a short piece of dictation. Such a test can yield useful information about a range of skills, including: rate of writing, handwriting legibility, listening skills and spelling skills. While this will not give standardised results, an experienced teacher should be able to identify students who have significantly weaker skills in key areas. These students may then need further standardised and diagnostic testing.

**TESTS THAT PROVIDE ESTIMATES OF ABILITIES:**

Consideration of group ability tests administered at the time of second-level school entry may also provide useful information. An example of a test that explores a student’s abilities and is age appropriate is:


For additional information on suitable tests please see “Tests for use by Guidance Counsellors and Support Teachers in Post-Primary Schools”.

This can be accessed through the Special Education Support Service (SESS)

**Website:** [www.sess.ie/resources/assessment](http://www.sess.ie/resources/assessment)
TESTS OF LITERACY-RELATED SKILLS:

A. The following tests may be used by teachers trained in test use to establish a candidate’s **standard score** in reading or spelling:

- Wide Range Achievement Test 4 (WRAT- 4) — Word Reading and Spelling
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test - Second UK Edition for Teachers (WIAT-II UK -T)
- The **Diagnostic Reading Analysis (2006)** published by Hodder covers the age range 7 to 16 years and is particularly suitable for testing less able students. It is individually administered and covers reading accuracy, fluency and rate of reading.

B. The following standardised tests may be used, where applicable, by schools to explore a candidate’s writing speed:

- Group and Individual Assessment of Handwriting Speed (www.patoss-dyslexia.org)
- The Irish Adaptation of the Handwriting Speed Test (Occupational Therapist, Ireland).

In relation to the Reasonable Accommodation Scheme, Standardised Test Results from psychological reports will be accepted. However a psychological report is no longer essential to the process. The results from attainment tests must be obtained within 12 months prior to the application being made. The candidate’s eligibility for a particular accommodation will still be dependent upon meeting the specified criteria. In the case of an incomplete application additional information may be sought from the school. However unrequested test results will **not be accepted** once the application has been submitted.
Access to a Reader

Access to a reader is appropriate where it can be established that the candidate’s inability to read a question paper is attributable to a specific learning difficulty as distinct from his/her general intellectual ability.

Please refer to Table below to determine eligibility for the assistance of a reader.

A reader should only be granted where a candidate is unable to read the paper. This means that the candidate must have a reading difficulty and that in the absence of access to a reader, the candidate would be unable to take the examination.

To be eligible for a Reader the candidate **must** meet criteria: A & B & C

A. Evidence of a Specific Learning Disability.
B. A standard score of 85 or less on a recommended test of word reading (i.e. reading accuracy not comprehension).
C. A reading (accuracy) error rate of 7% or more on sample papers.

**Alternatively:**

If rate of reading is an issue: **less than 90 words a minute on sample paper(s)** then the criteria below can be used:

A. Evidence of a Specific Learning Disability.
B. A standard score of 85 or less on a recommended test of word reading.
C. A Reading Speed of less than 90 words a minute on sample paper(s)

**Additional notes:**

1. For the purposes of the RACE Scheme *Sample Papers* refers to: passage(s) from two previous examination papers, one of which should be in the language of the school (at least 500 words in total) should be read aloud. Where possible, passages should be unfamiliar to the candidate and should be at an appropriate level (i.e. if the candidate is sitting Ordinary English then the paper should be Ordinary English).
2. The implementation of an alternate A & B & C criteria for access to a reader has been made in recognition of students who may have received and benefited from learning support in schools to the extent that their reading accuracy has improved in relation to their ability to read exam papers but at a cost to their rate of reading. The alternate criteria is an effort to recognise the efforts of the students while acknowledging that they continue to have reading difficulties.
3. Evidence of a discrepancy between ability and attainment must be clearly available to determine that these candidates are eligible for access to a reader.
4. Access to a reader will alter the assessment methods in language subjects and consequently the grades obtained by a candidate in any language subjects taken by him/her will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows; “all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except the reading element”
5. **Schools should** consult their allocated NEPS psychologist for advice, if required.
Waiver from the assessment of spelling, grammar and punctuation in the language subjects

Such an exemption for a candidate with a specific learning difficulty is appropriate where it can be established that the candidate has significant difficulties with spelling that are attributable to a specific learning difficulty as distinct from his/her general intellectual functioning, and where the level of difficulty does not require mechanical aids.

Please refer to following table to determine eligibility for the waiver from spelling, grammar and punctuation.

| To be eligible for a Waiver the candidate must meet criteria: A & B & C |
|---|---|---|
| **A.** | Evidence of a Specific Learning Disability. |
| **B.** | A standard score of 85 or less on a recommended spelling test. |
| **C.** | Spelling/grammar/punctuation error rate of 8% or more in written samples. |

Additional notes:

1. When applying for accommodations at Leaving Certificate it is compulsory that two original samples of the pupil’s answer papers from 5th Year examinations are included with the application. They must include work written in English. If the language of the schooling is through Irish only, then a sample in Irish should also be included. Sample(s) should be an essay or piece of continuous script of at least one A4 page in length.

2. Guidance on determining errors in the written samples can be found at the end of this document.

3. Where such an exemption is granted, the grades obtained by a candidate in any language subject taken by him/her will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows;

   "all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and written punctuation elements" (This will apply in the case of English)

   "all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and some grammatical elements" (This will apply in the case of all other language subjects)

4. Schools should consult their allocated NEPS psychologist for advice, if required
Use of a Tape Recorder or Word Processor

(Specific Learning Disability not Physical Disability)

The use of a mechanical aid such as a tape recorder or word processor is appropriate where it can be established that the candidate’s inability to produce a legible script is attributable to a specific learning difficulty as distinct from his/her general intellectual functioning.

The degree of severity of a specific learning disability will determine the nature of the writing accommodation for which an individual candidate may be eligible. Information obtained from the samples of written work etc. must be taken into account as standard scores alone are not sufficient for the purpose of these accommodations.

Two separate categories exist under which a student may be eligible to use a Tape/Word Processor.

1. **Illegible writing**: (which renders a script unintelligible due to the frequency of spelling/grammar/punctuation errors).
2. **Slow Writing**: (the candidate has more accurate spelling but as a consequence their rate of writing may render them unable to complete exams).

**Criteria for eligibility for writing accommodations:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illegible Writing: criteria A &amp; B &amp; C must be met.</th>
<th>Slow Writing: criteria A &amp; B &amp; C &amp; D must be met.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Evidence of a Specific Learning Disability</td>
<td>A. Evidence of a Specific Learning Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Standardised score on an approved spelling test is <strong>85 or less</strong></td>
<td>B. Standardised score on an approved spelling test is <strong>85 or less</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Written sample have spelling/grammar/punctuation errors of <strong>20% or more.</strong></td>
<td>C. Written sample have spelling/grammar/punctuation errors of <strong>8% or more.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Writing is significantly slower: <strong>less than 12 words a minute on a piece of dictation.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional notes:**

1. Evidence of a discrepancy between ability and attainment must be clearly available to determine that these candidates are eligible for access to writing accommodations.
2. The use of a tape recorder or word processor will preclude the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements in any language subjects. Subsequently, the grades obtained by a candidate in any language subject taken by him/her will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows; “all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and written punctuation elements” (This will apply in the case of English)
“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and some grammatical elements” (This will apply in the case of all other language subjects)

3. Schools should consult their allocated NEPS psychologist for advice, if required

**Access to a Scribe**

A candidate who is unable to write or effectively unable to write may be granted the assistance of a scribe where a physical difficulty and/or a speech difficulty makes the use of a tape recorder or computer unsuitable. The use of a scribe may also be appropriate where a tape recorder or computer does not meet the requirements of the examination (e.g. Mathematics.)

Access to a scribe will preclude the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements in any language subjects and subsequently the grades obtained by a candidate in any language subject taken by him/her will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows;

“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and written punctuation elements” (This will apply in the case of English)

“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and some grammatical elements” (This will apply in the case of all other language subjects)

**Application on the grounds of a Hearing Difficulty**

Schools should seek the views of the visiting teacher service before making application for an exemption from aural examinations or when applying for an alternative aural examination in the form of a face to face interview.

**Special Centre for Aural Examination**

During the Aural examinations, the candidate is allowed to sit in a room on his/her own and have the use of headphones linked to the compact disc player.

**Modified Aural Examination**

This examination will take the form of a face to face interview with an examiner. The marks allocated to this special examination will be equivalent to the total marks applying to the standard Aural examinations. This modified Aural will take place in the weeks prior to the commencement of the examinations in June. Consequently, the candidate will not be required to take the Listening Comprehension tests in June.

**Personal Stereo in Main Centre for Aural Examination**

During the Aural examinations, this candidate may be allowed to use a personal stereo player with personal induction loop in the main centre. Please note that the school must have an induction loop system in place to avail of this option.

**Exemption from the Aural Examinations**

This candidate is not required to present for the Aural component in language subjects that he/she is taking. The results will be calculated on the components taken regarding them as 100% for assessment purposes.
Application on the grounds of a Visual Difficulty

Schools are advised to seek the views of the visiting teacher service before making application for accommodations under this heading.

In relation to the option for the Modified Version of Examination Papers detailed below, certain question papers containing visual or graphics material are adjusted by the State Examinations Commission to facilitate production in Braille format. The adjusted version in non-Braille format will be made available on request to candidates with severe visual difficulties who do not make use of Braille. This improvement should help such candidates to overcome the difficulties presented by visual or graphics material.

Enlarged Examination Papers
The candidate will be supplied with the enlarged versions (A4 to A3) of the question papers. If requested the candidate may be given a standard version of the paper in addition to the enlarged version.

Braille Version of Examination Papers
The candidate will be supplied with the Braille versions of the question papers. In addition, Braille versions of question papers in text format will also be made available. The candidate may have access to both the Braille and text version of the question papers if required. However, the candidate may not be given access to the standard question paper and this Braille / Braille text format version of the question paper.

Modified Version of Examination Papers
The candidate will be supplied with the Braille version of the examination papers in text format. The candidate may not be given access to both the standard question paper and this modified version.

Application on the grounds of a Physical Difficulty

Schools should select the option(s) that remove as far as possible the impact of a difficulty on a candidate’s performance, so as he/she can demonstrate in the examination his or her level of achievement.

Use of a Tape Recorder

A candidate who is unable to write or effectively unable to write may be granted the use of a tape recorder.

The use of a tape recorder will preclude the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements in any language subjects and subsequently the grades obtained by a candidate in any language subject taken by him/her will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows;

“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and written punctuation elements” (This will apply in the case of English)

“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and some grammatical elements” (This will apply in the case of all other language subjects).
Use of a Word Processor

A candidate who is unable to write or effectively unable to write may be granted the use of a word processor (with spell-check and autocorrect turned off).

Access to a Scribe

A candidate who is unable to write or effectively unable to write may be granted the assistance of a scribe where a physical difficulty and a speech difficulty makes the use of a tape recorder or computer unsuitable, the use of a scribe may also be appropriate where a tape recorder or computer does not meet the requirements of the examination (e.g. Mathematics.) Access to a scribe will preclude the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements in any language subjects and subsequently the grades obtained by a candidate in any language subject taken by him/her will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows;

“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and written punctuation elements” (This will apply in the case of English)

“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and some grammatical elements” (This will apply in the case of all other language subjects).

Helper in the Practical Subjects

Please note that where a candidate is granted the assistance of a helper in the practical subject examinations, this person may carry out general ‘housekeeper’ type duties e.g. lifting and carrying utensils and equipment. The helper must not give factual help to the candidate or offer any suggestion regarding what has to be undertaken and must carry out instructions exactly as they are given unless to do so will cause a health and safety hazard.

Exemption from Practical Test in Home Economics

Where this exemption is granted the grade obtained by a candidate in this subject will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows;

“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except the practical element”

Exemption from Project in Home Economics

Where this exemption is granted the grade obtained by a candidate in this subject will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows;

“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except the project element”
The Examining Process and Difficulty Accessing Material

As recommended by the Advisory Group assistant examiners will continue to be advised to refer to their advising examiner material from candidates which they have difficulty in accessing. This means that it is not necessary for schools to apply in individual cases where the concern relates to difficulties that may arise in accessing the work of a candidate.

Appointment of Superintendent/Scribe/Reader

The Commission recognises a candidate may have worked with a particular person during his/her course of study for example, the Learning Support Teacher or approved Special Needs Assistant. In the interests of the candidate the Commission accepts that the school may wish to nominate as Reader or Scribe such a person, or some other person from the school locality. In those circumstances, it is acceptable that this person also acts as Superintendent. To ensure the integrity of the examination is upheld, relatives and friends of the candidate are not permitted to act as the Superintendent, Reader or Scribe.

Appeal Procedure

Arrangements will be put in place to have appeals against decisions on applications adjudicated by a small group. All members of this group will be drawn from outside the State Examinations Commission. The remit of the independent appeal group will cover appeals against all elements of a decision regarding reasonable accommodations including any proposed inclusion of an explanatory note on an examination certificate. The appeal group will be required to consider all cases in light of the principles set out by the Expert Advisory Group.
Appendix 1: Guidance for the calculation of errors in: Spelling & Grammar

**Spelling Errors:**

- When there are various misspellings of a particular word, count each misspelling as an error. If the same word is misspelled the same way, count the error only once, even if it occurs multiple times.
- In relation to proper names do not count incorrect spellings.
- Incorrect use of a homonym is an error (e.g. *their going to the cinema*).

**Punctuation Errors:**

Count each punctuation error:

- Missing capitalisation for a proper noun or the first word of a sentence or the personal pronoun ‘I’.
- Missing or incorrect punctuation at the end of a sentence, e.g. full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.
- Missing apostrophe in the possessive e.g. *Mikes chair*.
- Using the apostrophe in the plural form e.g. *lots of thing’s, new chair’s*.
- Improper use of commas (see below)

**Grammar:**

- Every sentence is a complete sentence. Count every incomplete sentence as one error.

  **Capitalisation:**
  - Missing capitalisation, including title, rank, honour or respect (e.g. *Professor Murphy* or *Dear Editor*)
  - Formal government agencies/bodies etc.
  - Or for School or University, when used as part of a proper noun (e.g. *Trinity College*)
  - Missing capitalisation for titles of books, magazines or other published works

  **Missing commas:**
  - Missing commas in dates or addresses, or after a greeting or closing in a letter
  - Missing commas before conjunctions, including and, but, or, not, yet when they join independent clauses.
  - Missing commas that should separate expressions that introduce (e.g. *Finally, I would like ...*) or interrupt (e.g., *We would be better without uniforms, unless you enjoy looking alike, because ...*) the sentence.

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