Reasonable Accommodations at the 2017 Certificate Examinations

Instructions for Schools
**RACE 2017 – Instructions for Schools – Addendum**

The following additional information, provided by way of clarification following the information programmes with schools on changes to the RACE scheme, should be considered part of the 2017 RACE Instructions for Schools.

1. **Retention of Evidence for Quality Assurance Purposes** – Schools have been instructed to maintain records of the evidence used to assess eligibility for RACE and for this evidence to be available for inspection by the SEC as part of the quality assurance programme. The evidence of eligibility should be retained by the school until the student has completed their Leaving Certificate.

2. **Writing Accommodations** – In line with previous practice, a scribe will only be approved in line with the eligibility criteria detailed in the Instructions for Schools at section 8.1.4 and 8.4.1. c. School authorities have asked what rate of typing the SEC expects students to have achieved in order that they should be able to use a word processor in an examination. The SEC has not placed any threshold on this as a recording device is available as an alternative for any student who needs a writing accommodation but who may be unable to achieve sufficient typing speed.

3. **Dyspraxia/Developmental Co-Ordination Disorder and Motor Dysgraphia** – Under the broader category of Learning Difficulty, dyspraxia and dysgraphia are classified as learning difficulties for the purposes of RACE. The Instructions for Schools provides that candidates whose needs are as a result of these conditions must meet the eligibility criteria as set out in Section 8.1. Some students have co-attendant issues with spelling as well as issues with writing, letter formation, etc. and may qualify for reasonable accommodations in line with the stated criteria. However, it is recognised that, in the case of dyspraxia/DCD and motor dysgraphia, there may be no co-attendant issue with spelling and such students would not qualify for writing accommodations in line with the criteria. If this is the case, applications for writing accommodations for students whose needs are as a result of dyspraxia/DCD or motor dysgraphia can be assessed for eligibility for RACE on Physical Grounds as set out in Section 8.4 of the Instructions for Schools and applications for RACE can be made based on the appropriate evidence of need having been established by the school. It is expected in such cases that the learning needs of these students, as with all students on whose behalf RACE applications are being made, are being supported in schools with appropriate interventions. Evidence of their eligibility, including details of their history of support and intervention through their schooling should be retained in the school and may be sought by the SEC as part of the quality assurance of the school’s RACE applications.

4. **Reader V Reading Assistance** – Schools have sought further guidance about when it is appropriate to apply for reading assistance and when to apply for a full reader. There is one set of eligibility criteria for a reading accommodation which must be met whether the student needs a full reader or reading assistance. The SEC is asking schools to exercise their judgement as to whether a student, who meets the eligibility criteria for a reading accommodation, requires a full reader or reading assistance. Schools should make this judgement based on their knowledge of the student’s ability to read and the normal arrangements made in the school to support the student’s literacy. Some schools have been successfully operating this arrangement with their students for a number of years and find it particularly helpful to students who meet the eligibility criteria for a reading accommodation but who are just below the threshold for eligibility. The number of students sharing a reader in a special centre, established for this specific purpose, should be not more than 4.

SEC, October 2016
2017 Reasonable Accommodations Key Dates

These dates are specific to 2017 only. In futures years it is likely that earlier timeframes will apply

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There are significant changes to the administration of the RACE scheme for the 2017 examinations. It is essential that you familiarise yourself with the contents of this document before completing the appropriate RACE application form.
1. INTRODUCTION

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) is introducing changes to the scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE scheme). This scheme enables candidates with special educational needs to access the state examinations.

The purpose of the scheme is to allow candidates who have special educational needs that interfere with their capacity to engage with the standard examination arrangements to demonstrate what they know and can do, without compromising the integrity of the examination. This involves them being held to the same standard as other candidates with regard to what the examination is intended to measure.

While this basic purpose has not changed, the administration of the scheme has, and this new process is set out in this document.

2. ABOUT THESE INSTRUCTIONS

The intended audience for the RACE Instructions for Schools is school principals, learning-support teachers, resource teachers and other school staff who are involved in making applications for reasonable accommodations on behalf of candidates in their school. The Instructions apply to recognised second-level schools and to other settings entering candidates for the certificate examinations such as Back to Education and VTOS schemes and providers, and private schools and colleges.

The RACE Instructions for Schools, which covers all aspects of the RACE Scheme, is the definitive handbook on RACE. The previous circulars which underpinned the RACE Scheme (Department of Education Circulars 40/94, 11/00 and 70/00 and SEC Circular 24/12) are revoked and replaced by the information contained in this document. The scheme continues to be underpinned by the Report of the Expert Advisory Group 2000, but it should be noted that the Framework of Principles from that report has been updated to take account of developments in the use of language and terminology in the area of special educational needs. It has also been updated to standardise and simplify the language and terminology used in the previous Framework of Principles, and to state the Principles in more positive language. The revised Framework of Principles is at Appendix A and the Expert Advisory Group Report (2000) is at Appendix B.

The RACE Instructions for Schools will be amended and reissued each year. This version is relevant only to RACE applications made in respect of the 2017 certificate examinations. All questions arising in relation to RACE for candidates for the 2017 examinations must be considered by reference to the information contained in these Instructions.

Please familiarise yourself with the detail in this document before considering individual cases and completing any RACE application forms.
The purpose of the 2017 RACE Instructions for Schools is to:

- help you understand both the principles and the legislative and administrative framework that underpin the RACE scheme;
- explain the changes that have been made to the scheme this year
- provide details of the types of access arrangements that can be provided in line with the scheme
- guide you through the application process.

Information is also provided about a new oversight and quality assurance programme that is being introduced in line with the changes to the scheme. Further information will be issued later in the year to those schools selected for review under the quality assurance arrangements.

As well as making applications for RACE, school authorities also have a key role in upholding the integrity of the scheme and of the examinations, and in explaining the RACE scheme to students and their parents. This will at times include explaining to them why certain accommodations that they may be seeking are not necessary or appropriate. To assist schools in this task, the SEC has developed a companion Guide for Students about the RACE scheme. A supply of the Guide for Students is being provided to all schools and is available to download from www.examinations.ie
3. CONTEXT OF THE RACE SCHEME

Any organisation providing a service to the public has a duty to make the service equally available to as many people as possible. If a person with a disability is prevented from accessing the service in the normal way, the organisation providing the service has a duty to do all that is reasonable to accommodate that person in accessing it. Many (but not all) of the access arrangements available in the state examinations arise from our duty to provide reasonable accommodations to candidates.

Access to the state certificate examinations is facilitated by developing examination papers and other test instruments that are designed to be as accessible as possible to the broadest range of candidates, including those with special educational needs. All examination materials are reviewed in the course of their development with a view to eliminating inappropriate barriers, and careful consideration is given as to whether the means of assessment rely on a skill or competence that is not properly part of the focus of the assessment but which could exclude candidates with certain disabilities.

In addition, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) has for many years facilitated access to the certificate examinations by candidates who would have difficulty in accessing the examination or communicating what they know to an examiner because of a physical disability, including visual and hearing impairments, a medical or other condition or a specific learning difficulty. The access scheme is referred to as the scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations or RACE Scheme.

In brief, the purpose of the scheme, as stated in the introduction, is to allow candidates who have special educational needs that interfere with their capacity to engage with the standard examination arrangements to demonstrate what they know and can do, without compromising the integrity of the assessment. This involves them being held to the same standard as other candidates with regard to what the examination is intended to measure. This basic purpose is fleshed out in more detail in the Framework of Principles at Appendix A.

The SEC has an obligation to ensure that non-standard arrangements are only provided to those who need them, so that the examinations system continues to be fair to all candidates and to be operated with integrity. The provision of accommodations under the scheme must not put the status or reputation of the Certificate Examinations at risk.

The underlying principles of the examination accommodations scheme put in place by the Department of Education and Skills and operated by the State Examinations Commission are similar to those that underpin arrangements in other jurisdictions with broadly similar disability rights legislation to that of Ireland. All such schemes focus on the need to remove barriers to accessing the examinations, while retaining the need to assess the same underlying skills and competencies as are assessed for all other candidates, and to apply the same standards of achievement as apply to all other candidates.
The National Council for Special Education has pointed out the importance of understanding that a child can have a disability but not have any special educational needs arising from that disability which require additional supports in school.

In the same vein, the SEC must highlight that the existence of a learning or other difficulty does not automatically mean that a candidate requires accommodations to access the certificate examinations. Even though candidates may have some difficulty with reading, writing or spelling, they may not require the provision of any special facilities if they can read the examination papers at the required level and write legibly. Each case is considered on its merits in line with the eligibility criteria that apply to the specific accommodation sought.
4. KEY CHANGES TO THE 2017 RACE SCHEME

Following a review of the existing scheme by the SEC, two significant changes are being introduced for the 2017 examinations and until further notice. The changes have been discussed with stakeholders, including those in the education community and those who represent young people with disabilities and other special educational needs. These changes are designed to provide a better service to schools, parents, and ultimately, to candidates with physical, learning and other special needs who may require supports in order to enable them to access the Leaving and Junior Certificate examinations.

a) From this year on, **accommodations that were provided at Junior Certificate will be reactivated at Leaving Certificate subject to confirmation by the school authority of an identified and continuing need.** Schools will retain devolved authority for recommending the supports to be put in place at Junior Certificate and will now also have devolved authority to recommend the supports to be put in place at Leaving Certificate. It is expected that, in most cases, the school’s recommendation in the case of Leaving Certificate will be to reactivate the same supports as were provided to the candidate at Junior Certificate. In the case of reactivating arrangements that had been in place for Junior Certificate, the SEC will accept the recommendation of the school based on the school’s judgement that the need for supports persists and in general there will be no need for schools to undertake further testing. Unless some exceptional circumstance arises, the SEC will accept all such reactivation recommendations. This new model of decision making will give certainty from an earlier stage of students’ post-primary education as to the supports that they will have in the state examinations should they continue to be needed. **There is one exception to this, detailed at d) below.**

b) The category of **‘Specific Learning Difficulty’ will be broadened to a new category to be known as ‘Learning Difficulty’.** This will bring RACE into line with the overall needs-based approach to the provision of support to students with special educational needs, advocated by the National Council for Special Education (2014). There will no longer be a need for the school or candidate to provide cognitive ability scores or to otherwise confirm that a candidate has a specific learning difficulty in order to be eligible for RACE. Instead eligibility will be assessed based on level of need, without a requirement for a diagnosis of a specific condition. The change to a needs-based approach will enable greater access to the scheme by candidates with general learning disabilities and will bring RACE into line with the overall needs-based approach for the provision of support to students with special educational needs. There are no other changes to the eligibility criteria. Where testing is required as evidence of eligibility, at Junior Certificate or in the case of an application for new accommodations at Leaving Certificate, the testing arrangements are the same as before. So the need for a reader, for example, will continue to be evidenced by reference to the candidate’s attainment in a standardised reading test and error rates in reading examination papers.
Other key features of the RACE scheme for this year, which are set out in greater detail in the remainder of the document, can be summarised as follows:

c) The role of the National Educational Psychological Service in the new scheme is changing. Instead of being centrally involved in the review and processing of Leaving Certificate applications, the role of NEPS will be as follows:

- Delivering an initial information programme in conjunction with the SEC
- Providing advice, information and support to schools who are considering whether to make RACE applications, particularly in relation to complex applications
- Engaging with the SEC on a scheme of governance and quality assurance of RACE applications.

d) A candidate who had an individual special centre at Junior Certificate and who continues to require a special centre will be approved for a special centre at Leaving Certificate. However, depending on the nature of their need, this approval may be for a shared, rather than an individual, special centre. Candidates may previously have been placed in an individual special centre when a shared special centre might have been sufficient. In allowing Junior Certificate accommodations to be reactivated at Leaving Certificate, the SEC will work with schools to rationalise the numbers of individual examination centres. Section 5.5 deals with this in detail.

e) In order to ensure that the scheme is underpinned by good practice, schools will, as part of the application process for Junior Certificate, indicate that learning support and interventions have or will be made by the school to support learning. In order to have the same supports progressed to Leaving Certificate, schools will be required to confirm that the need that led to the granting of supports persists and that the supports provided to enable access at Junior Certificate are required to enable access to Leaving Certificate.

f) Applications will be subject to central quality assurance checks during and following the application process, and schools will have access to an SEC referral and advisory service to assist them in difficult decisions.

g) A separate application process will apply to Leaving Certificate candidates who did not have any accommodations at Junior Certificate or who are applying for a change to the accommodations provided at Junior Certificate.

h) An Independent Appeals process will continue to be offered. Those unhappy with the outcome of the Appeal will have recourse to the offices of the Ombudsman or Ombudsman for Children.

i) In order to better manage the scheme and to provide timely access, if necessary, to the Independent Appeals Committee and to the Offices of the Ombudsman and Ombudsman for Children, all closing dates will be strictly applied. The SEC will not accept applications on the regular Application Forms which are received after the closing date. There is a separate process
for dealing with late applications and again the closing date for receipt of the Late Application forms will be strictly adhered to.

j) In order to affirm system integrity, the SEC intends to arrange audio-recording in individual special examination centres in a number of schools at the 2017 Leaving Certificate.
5. SCOPE OF THE RACE SCHEME

5.1. Range of Accommodations
Applications for reasonable accommodations are considered in line with the published Framework of Principles and can only be approved in accordance with the principles and requirements of the scheme. The means by which a candidate normally studies or communicates, his or her eligibility in line with the published criteria and the range of supports available under the scheme will largely determine the access arrangements which can be provided. Applications for the 2017 RACE Scheme will continue to be made on one of four grounds as follows:

1) Learning Difficulty
2) Hearing Difficulty
3) Visual Difficulty
4) Physical Difficulty*

* this category is taken to include medical, sensory, mental health and behavioural difficulties as well as physical difficulties.

The SEC appreciate that schools may make applications for candidates with complex needs whose difficulties span a number of the grounds for making a RACE application. The range of accommodations available to candidates for the 2017 examinations under each of these categories is set out in the following section. Each accommodation is explained in more detail in Section 8, including eligibility criteria as appropriate.

5.1.1. Learning Difficulty (replacing previous category of Specific Learning Difficulty)
• A reader to read the examination papers, or to provide assistance with reading, without elaboration or explanation
• Word-processor or other writing accommodation (recording device or scribe)
• Waiver from the assessment of spelling, grammar and punctuation in language subjects

5.1.2. Hearing Difficulty
• Use of a personal CD player with a personal induction loop in the main examination centre for the aural examination
• A special examination centre for the aural examination
• Modified aural examination
• Exemption from the aural examination, if modified aural not possible
• Sign language interpreter, to sign an examination paper, without elaboration or explanation
• Support arrangements for the oral tests
• Exemption from the oral tests, if support arrangements are unsuitable
• Seating the student close to the superintendent and/or the CD player in the main examination centre can be arranged by the school (See Section 5.4)

5.1.3. Visual Difficulty
• Standard examination paper enlarged to A3 size
• Modified examination paper (visual elements removed or simplified), in standard or enlarged size
• Braille version of modified paper
• A reader to read the examination papers, or to provide assistance with reading, without elaboration or explanation
• Word processor (including with vision aids) or other writing accommodation (recording device or scribe)
• Use of drawing aids such as drafting machines, drawing boards, parallel motion boards and smaller drawing sheets in the subjects Technical Graphics, DCG, Construction Studies, Materials Technology (Wood) or Technology
• Colour identifier in Geography
• Low vision aids, magnifiers and reading lamps normally used in the classroom can be arranged by the school (See Section 5.4)

5.1.4. Physical Difficulty (including medical, sensory, behavioural and mental health difficulties)
• Standard word processor, voice activated word processor, or other writing accommodation (recording device or scribe)
• Helper in the practical examinations
• Use of drawing aids such as drafting machines, drawing boards, parallel motion boards and smaller drawing sheets in the subjects Technical Graphics, DCG, Construction Studies, Materials Technology (Wood) or Technology,
• Junior Certificate Home Economics only – exemption from the practical and/or project

5.2. Explanatory Notes on Statements of Results and Examination Certificates
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 will be indicated by the presence of an explanatory note on the candidate’s Statement of Provisional Results and Certificate of Results. In approving accommodations for a candidate, the letter of decision will inform the candidate of the content of any such Explanatory note in relation to the subject(s) concerned. Details of the types of Explanatory notes are given in Section 8 below.

5.3. Time in Examinations
The following section sets out the ways in which the timing of the examinations has been or can be modified to meet the needs of candidates.

5.3.1. Additional Time
Additional time in which to complete the written examinations (not to be confused with rest breaks) is not an accommodation that can be sanctioned in its own right under the RACE scheme. The following section describes the limited circumstances attached to the award of additional time in the examinations. Other than in Leaving Certificate Irish, English, History and Geography (see 5.3.2 below), additional time, at a rate of 10 extra minutes per scheduled hour, or part thereof, of each examination paper, may be provided to candidates in the following circumstances:
1. Candidates for whom the use of a scribe has been sanctioned - as there is a time overhead in dictation and otherwise in dealing with a scribe.
2. Candidates who meet the eligibility criteria for the use of a recording device or a word processor but who are unable to make use of these aids under examination conditions.

3. Candidates with a visual impairment.

Regardless of the circumstances or combination of circumstances, additional time is limited to a maximum of 10 minutes per scheduled hour, or part thereof, of examination to a maximum of 30 minutes per examination. For example, a candidate with a visual impairment, sitting a 2.5 hour examination, will be entitled to additional time of 30 minutes. A candidate with a visual impairment, sitting a 2.5 hour examination, and using a scribe, will also be entitled to additional time of 30 minutes in that examination.

In the Leaving Certificate subjects Irish, English, History and Geography additional time is limited to 10 minutes per examination over and above that shown on the published timetable. (See 5.3.2 below for details)

5.3.2. Adjustments to the Published Leaving Certificate Examination Timetable
Additional time of 20 minutes per examination paper was introduced in 2000 for all candidates in the Leaving Certificate subjects, Irish, English, History and Geography. This was introduced to meet the needs of candidates with special educational needs by making the time element of these examinations less critical. It remains the case that the examinations in these subjects are 20 minutes longer than the time they were designed to require. Therefore, any further additional time allowed in the examinations in these subjects is limited to 10 minutes over and above that shown on the published timetable.

5.3.3. Rest Breaks
Schools have discretion, to grant rest breaks or rest periods, not exceeding 20 minutes per examination, to candidates with physical and/or medical conditions. You do not need to apply to the SEC to allow individual candidates to take rest breaks, based on local knowledge of what is in the best interests of the candidate. The following rules apply:

- Candidates are not permitted to read, write or complete any other examination related activity during the rest break — rest breaks do not represent additional time in which to complete the examination
- Based on their needs candidates may take one or more rest breaks during each examination
- The total of the rest break(s) granted by the school must not exceed 20 minutes per examination
- The clock is effectively stopped and the time is added at the end of the examination
- The candidate will be accommodated in the main examination centre and should only be in a special examination centre if that has been approved for another reason
- Rest breaks must be supervised.

In very extreme cases the SEC will consider a request for rest breaks in excess of 20 minutes. (See 5.3.4 below)

5.3.4. Alterations to the Standard Timetable
The following is for information only as any change to the scheduled start of an examination must have prior approval from the SEC. In exceptional circumstances (illness, bereavement/funeral attendance, etc.), the SEC will consider requests to adjust the start time of an examination to a different time on the same day provided:

a.) the candidate has not had sight of the examination paper or knowledge of the examination paper contents

b) the candidate has not had contact with other candidates or any person who may have had sight of the examination paper or have knowledge of the examination paper contents

c) the candidate has been supervised by the school authorities from the start time of the examination as per the official timetable.

Where a candidate requires a break for medical attention; is taken ill during the examination; or, due to some other extreme circumstance, needs a rest break in excess of the 20 minutes that can be allowed by the school, (e.g. candidate undergoing a medical procedure), it may be possible to extend the examination time to compensate for loss of time provided the candidate is supervised by the school authority at all times. (This is outside the circumstances that give rise to rest breaks at 5.3.3 described above.) In such circumstances, you must contact the SEC for advice as to how to proceed.

No requests for an examination sitting on an alternative day will be considered.

In emergencies, you should contact the SEC at the earliest possible opportunity.

5.4. Accommodations that can be arranged by School Authorities

In addition to the arrangements for rest breaks detailed above, school authorities have discretion to make certain other arrangements, as set out below, based on their knowledge of what is in the best interests of the candidate. You do not need to apply to the SEC to put these arrangements in place. You simply provide a note to the examination centre Superintendent confirming the arrangements that are required. However, should any of these arrangements give rise to the need for a special examination centre or the potential for any alterations to the examinations timetable then you must contact the SEC.

The accommodations that can be arranged by the school are:

- Taking of medicine, food or drinks into the examination centre where this is required by the candidate for medical reasons
- Allowing the candidate to move within the centre
- Use of a special desk or chair normally used in the classroom
- Use of low vision aids, magnifiers and reading lamps used normally in the classroom by candidates with visual impairments
- Ensuring that a candidate with a hearing impairment is positioned close to the Superintendent and/or to the CD player in the main examination centre for the aural examination.
5.5. Special Examination Centres

There has been very significant growth in the provision of special centres in recent years, from some 1,800 in 2001 to over 10,600 in 2016. Managing this process creates a demand on schools to recruit and appoint suitable personnel to act as readers, scribes and superintendents in these centres as well as the obligation to provide sufficient suitable accommodation. The SEC appreciates the challenge that this level of provision of special centres poses for school authorities and is keen to ensure that this provision is manageable.

The purpose of this Section is to provide clear instructions on the establishment of special examination centres and the assignment of candidates to special examination centres. The most significant point to note is that approval for a special examination centre does not automatically mean that the candidate will be sitting in an examination centre on his or her own. This rule applies to all RACE applications, new applications and applications to have supports reactivated from Junior Certificate to Leaving Certificate.

Special centres are provided in the case of candidates who cannot be accommodated in ordinary examination centres for a variety of reasons, from needing the assistance of scribes and readers to having particular emotional and behavioural needs.

Some of the accommodations possible under the RACE Scheme do not require any special centre arrangements, e.g. Spelling/Grammar Waiver; Brailed/Modified Examination Papers; Colour Identifier; etc.

When the granting of reasonable accommodations gives rise to the need for access to a special examination centre, the general approach will be to approve access to a shared special examination centre. The SEC will only approve individual examination centres in very specific circumstances as follows:

- For candidates who are recording their answers (i.e. using a scribe or recording device)
- For candidates who need the full use of a reader (as opposed to reading assistance)
- For candidates who have a contagious medical condition.

If a candidate is approved for an individual special examination centre due to one of these specific circumstances and then does not use the accommodation that has been approved, he or she will lose access to the special centre. For example, if a candidate for whom the use of a scribe has been approved, does not use the scribe, he or she will be obliged to sit the examinations in the main examination centre.

All schools should, as a matter of course, establish a shared examination centre, or a small number of shared examination centres, to be used by candidates approved for reasonable accommodations for the following reasons:

1) Use of a word processor or other aids
2) Approved use of a reader, but only requiring limited reading assistance (occasional words or phrases to be read to them); in this scenario, it will be possible for a small number of candidates requiring reading assistance to share a reader in a shared special centre established for this specific purpose
3) Non-disruptive emotional or behavioural difficulties

4) Non-contagious medical conditions.

In allowing Junior Certificate accommodations to be reactivated at Leaving Certificate, the SEC will work with schools to rationalise the numbers of individual examination centres. Candidates may previously have been placed in an individual special centre when a shared special centre might have been sufficient. A candidate who had an individual special centre at Junior Certificate and who continues to require a special centre will be approved for a special centre at Leaving Certificate. However, depending on the nature of their need, this approval may be for a shared, rather than an individual, special centre.

**Colour Identifier in Geography:** Candidates approved for this accommodation should in general be accommodated in the main examination centre. It may be necessary for them to move to a shared special examination centre for the Geography examination if for some reason the colour identification cannot be carried out by the main centre superintendent.

Note that it is acceptable, where it is practicable at school level, to accommodate a mix of Junior and Leaving Certificate candidates in the same shared special centre.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, not more than 8 candidates should be accommodated in any one shared special centre.

All decisions in relation to special centres will be made by the SEC by reference to these instructions.

**5.6. Outside the Scope of RACE – Trauma and Adversity**

In the context of Section 5.3.4 above, schools should note that the SEC is severely constrained in what it can do to accommodate the life circumstances of individual candidates. Each year, the certificate examinations give rise to many situations where a real human factor must be balanced against the requirements of equity to the general body of students. While the SEC would wish to do all it can for candidates who have had to cope with adversity in their lives, there is also the need to apply uniform and objective criteria to the marking of candidates' examination work. At the certificate examinations each candidate’s work is marked according to the common marking scheme for the subject concerned. This is to ensure equitable, consistent and fair treatment for all candidates.

There may be a misconception that examiners can allow in some subjective way for the life circumstances of individual students. This is not the case. Examiners are confined to applying the marking scheme to the work actually produced at the examination. An examiner has no scope to deviate from the marking scheme.

That said, it is also important to point out that within the limitations of our examination system, every possible effort is made by the SEC to accommodate candidates who suffer illness, bereavement or other trauma either immediately before or during the examinations. Each year, arrangements are made to cater for a wide range of emergencies. These include alterations to the standard examination timetable and special sittings in venues such as hospitals. The National Educational
Psychological Service also assists schools and students in crisis situations during examinations.

As previously advised, schools should make contact with the SEC at the earliest opportunity when an emergency occurs to establish what, if any, arrangements are possible.
6. GENERAL PRINCIPLES IN ASSESSING ELIGIBILITY FOR ACCOMMODATIONS UNDER RACE

Learning supports teachers, resource teachers and other school staff working with students with special educational needs are best placed to identify students who may require accommodations to enable them to access the certificate examinations. The examinations system, which includes the RACE scheme, must be fair to all candidates and must be operated with integrity. The assessment of eligibility for Reasonable Accommodations will be based on appropriate evidence of need.

When it comes to the RACE scheme, there should be no surprises either for the school or for the candidate at the time of application.

- The expectation is that RACE applications will be made on behalf of candidates whose special needs have already been identified and who are being provided with appropriate learning interventions as part of a continuum of support in the school.
- The access arrangements made for the examinations should be reflective of the arrangements normally made by the school to support learning for students with an identified need.
- If you are considering recommending accommodations for a candidate who will need to “practise” or “get used to” such accommodations in advance of the examinations because he or she has not already been working that way, then you should question why you would make such an application.
- Likewise, if you are considering making an application for a student who did not have an identified special need prior to the RACE application process, then you must be convinced of the student’s need, and eligibility for accommodations under the RACE scheme, and be able to justify this.
- You must also consider what other interventions the school will put in place in order to support the learning of a student whose special need has been identified through the RACE application process. If the school does not consider that any interventions or learning supports are necessary, then you should also consider whether he or she is eligible for RACE.

6.1. Grounds for Making a RACE Application

Applications will be accepted on the following grounds:

1) Learning Difficulty (replacing Specific Learning Difficulty)
2) Hearing Difficulty
3) Visual Difficulty
4) Physical Difficulty*

* This category is taken to include medical, sensory, behavioural and mental health difficulties as well as physical difficulties.

The SEC appreciate that schools may make applications for candidates with complex needs whose difficulties span a number of the grounds for making a RACE application.
**All Grounds — Leaving Certificate—Application to Reactivate Supports**
The supports provided at Junior Certificate will be provided at Leaving Certificate, subject to confirmation by the school authority of an identified and continuing need. The SEC will accept the school authority’s judgement as the basis of the recommendation to provide the same supports again for Leaving Certificate and, other than in exceptional cases, does not expect schools will need to seek additional evidence or undertake further testing.

**Learning Difficulty Grounds— Junior Certificate Applications and Applications for New/Different Supports at Leaving Certificate**
The testing regimen required to assess eligibility for RACE is streamlined and simplified by the changes to the scheme this year as you are no longer required to distinguish between specific and general learning difficulties. There is therefore no longer any need to undertake tests of general cognitive ability for the purposes of the RACE scheme.

In considering whether to make an application on grounds of learning difficulty, you should identify candidates who, because of a difficulty with reading, writing or spelling, would have significant problems in accessing the examination papers and/or communicating what they know to an examiner. Before making an application in respect of such a candidate, you are required to undertake testing to assess eligibility in line with specific qualifying criteria, such as attainment scores and error rates. The specific criteria and the accepted tests are set out in Section 8 below and are unchanged for 2017.

In considering such applications, you should assess the nature of the disability, the impact of the disability on the candidate and the needs arising as a result. You will need to gather and retain evidence of need such as medical reports, other professional reports, etc.

*(A review of eligibility for applications made on Physical grounds is under consideration as part of a broader ongoing review of the RACE scheme, but there are no changes in this regard for the 2017 examinations.)*

In general, teachers (whether assigned to learning support or resource teaching or other roles) are best placed to advise on the impact of non-learning difficulties on individual candidates for examination and to recommend appropriate accommodations that best remediate this impact without compromising the integrity of the assessment. In the case of candidates with a visual and/or hearing impairment you should, as has always been the case, engage with the staff of the Visiting Teacher Service before making an application for supports.
6.2. School Assessment of Eligibility Process

- In general, only the accommodations listed in this document are available under the RACE Scheme. **(Note: See 6.3 regarding Assistive Technology)**
- Professional advice can be sought from special-needs professionals working in schools, such as NEPS psychologists and staff of the Visiting Teacher Service.
- Where evidence of eligibility is required to be assessed, there is no need to forward such evidence to the SEC. You should retain all such evidence carefully in the school, as it may be required for later quality assurance purposes.
- If your assessment is that the candidate is eligible, you should proceed with the relevant application as set out in Section 7.
- If your assessment is that the candidate is not eligible for RACE, then you should communicate your assessment to the candidate and his or her parents/guardians. Your communication with candidates and parents/guardians in this regard will be made easier if you have previously made available to them the SEC’s RACE *Guide for Students*. Your own familiarity with these *Instructions for Schools* and the *Guide for Students* should also help with this communication.
- The SEC can also offer advice and assistance in dealing with complex or difficult cases. See Section 7.3 below.

6.3. Note on Use of Assistive Technology

Schools do not have delegated authority to recommend any accommodations not listed among the range of available accommodations (see Sections 5 and 8). Within the Scheme, the only assistive technology option available is the use of a word processor. However, the SEC will consider applications for use of other assistive technology in the examinations provided, the assistive technology:

- is already being used by the candidate (and so there is no additional cost in its approval for the examinations)
- does not give rise to any examinations’ integrity concerns
- does not require any development work to be done by the SEC in respect of its examination papers.

The SEC will consider individual applications from schools on behalf of candidates seeking to use assistive technology. Such applications will be decided upon by the SEC in light of the constraints listed above; the overhead of providing individual special examination centres to meet the needs of candidate using assistive technology and the principles and requirements of the RACE scheme.

6.4. SEC Decision Making Process in all Cases

- SEC will review applications received from the school on an individual basis and will make a decision on eligibility for the scheme.
- In general, the SEC will confirm the school’s recommendation of eligibility for supports.
- The SEC may select some applications or all of the applications from selected schools as part of the quality assurance programme (See Section 10).
• If a special centre is required the SEC will determine whether the centre will be a shared or individual special centre in line with the criteria set out in Section 5.5 above.

• Decisions will be provided in writing to the school and you should ensure that all decisions are notified to candidates and their parents/guardians as soon as possible. To assist schools, the SEC will be providing two copies of all decision letters in future—one for the school’s records and one for the candidate.

• If for some reason the SEC does not agree with the school’s recommendation and the decision is to refuse the application, then the reason for the refusal will be provided.

• Access to an Independent Appeals Committee will continue to be a feature of the scheme. The Appeals Committee will also provide a reason if their decision is to refuse the RACE application.

• Those unhappy with the outcome of the Appeal will have recourse to the offices of the Ombudsman or Ombudsman for Children.
7. APPLICATION PROCESS

From this year, there are no longer separate forms for learning difficulties and physical/visual/hearing difficulties. Instead, all applications will be made using a common set of forms. However, within each form you will be asked to indicate the ground(s) on which the application is being made. There are separate sets of application forms for the Leaving Certificate and the Junior Certificate and different timelines apply.

The SEC will strictly adhere to deadlines and will not accept applications on the regular Applications Forms which are received after the closing date. There is a separate process for dealing with late applications and again the closing date for receipt of the Late Application forms will be strictly adhered to. Adherence to closing dates will assist schools and the SEC in managing the scheme and in providing timely access, if necessary, to the Independent Appeals Committee and to the Offices of the Ombudsman or Ombudsman for Children.

2017 Reasonable Accommodations Key Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>These dates are specific to 2017 only. In futures years it is likely than earlier timeframes will apply</th>
<th>AVAILABLE FROM</th>
<th>CLOSING DATE</th>
<th>DECISION TIMEFRAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Certificate/LCA 2017 – Late Application Form</td>
<td>Mid-December 2016</td>
<td>7th April 2017</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Certificate 2017 – Late Application Form</td>
<td>Mid-January 2017</td>
<td>7th April 2017</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Application Form - LC and JC</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7.1. Leaving Certificate

1. RACE Scheme Leaving Certificate Reactivation Form (Form RA1) – Use this form to apply to have accommodations carried over from Junior Certificate.

2. RACE Scheme Leaving Certificate New Accommodations Form (Form RA2) – Use this form to apply on behalf of candidates who:
   i. Did not have any accommodations at Junior Certificate, or
   ii. Had different accommodations at Junior Certificate or
   iii. Are seeking additional accommodations to those approved at Junior Certificate.
3. RACE Scheme Leaving Certificate Late Application Form (Form RA3) – Use this form to make a late application for a Leaving Certificate candidate.

4. RACE Scheme Leaving Certificate Emergency Application Form (Form RA4) – Use this form for emergencies such as broken limbs; hospitalisation, etc.

7.1.1. Leaving Certificate Application for Accommodations to be Reactivated

The standard RACE Scheme Leaving Certificate Reactivation Form (Form RA1) should be used when recommending to the SEC that the accommodations provided to the candidate at Junior Certificate be provided again on the basis that they continue to be required at Leaving Certificate. It is also acceptable to use this form to apply for a candidate, who had a Scribe at Junior Certificate, to have a Word Processor at Leaving Certificate. This is the only exception as any other changes need to be applied for on the New Accommodations Form (See Section 7.1.2)

Before making any application, you should assess eligibility in line with the general principles set out in Section 6. It is not necessary to undertake any further testing if recommending that supports be reactivated. In the case of reactivation applications the SEC consider the school authority’s judgement as the appropriate evidence of need. You are required to confirm on the form that the need that led to the granting of supports still persists. The new application form developed for this purpose is a simplified version of the Leaving Certificate forms that have been in use up to this point.

Subject to quality assurance, the SEC will, in general, approve all of the accommodations that were in place for Junior Certificate with the exception of an individual special examination centre. Special centres will be dealt with as described in Section 5.5. This may mean that a candidate who sat their Junior Certificate in an individual special examination centre may be sitting their Leaving Certificate in a shared special examination centre. You should inform candidates that the approval of special examination centres rests with the SEC.

Under no circumstances will the SEC accept any Leaving Certificate Reactivation Forms after the published closing date. You may submit these applications again using the Late Application process. However, you should take care to ensure that the Late Application process does not become the default application process in your school.

7.1.2. Leaving Certificate Application for New/Different Accommodations

The SEC will accept new applications from schools on behalf of candidates who did not have accommodations at Junior Certificate or where additional or different accommodations from those approved at Junior Certificate are being sought.

Use the RACE Scheme Leaving Certificate New Accommodations Form (Form RA2) for this type of application. This application form is similar to the standard application form, but additional information is requested explaining why the need for accommodations was not manifest when the candidate sat their Junior

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1 With one exception: A candidate who had a Scribe at Junior Certificate can apply to have this accommodation reactivated as a Word Processor at Leaving Certificate without having to make an application for different accommodations.
Certificate. You should assess eligibility in line with the general principles set out in Section 6 and the specific criteria in Section 8.

You are required to retain all of the evidence used to assess eligibility (test results; samples used to calculate error rates; medical and other reports; details of engagement with professionals e.g. National Educational Psychological Service; the Visiting Teaching Service; etc.). The evidence used in the assessment process may be requested for inspection by the SEC at any stage during or following the application process as part of quality assuring the RACE scheme.

Given the nature of learning support in schools, the SEC would expect to receive, if any, only a very small number of this type of application from any school in any year. These applications will be monitored as part of overall quality assurance and in the event that the number of new applications received from a particular school is higher than anticipated or that the SEC is not satisfied with the rationale provided by the school for the new application, then the SEC will pause the processing of applications from that school pending further engagement with the school authority.

Under no circumstances will the SEC accept Leaving Certificate New Accommodation Forms after the published closing date. You may submit these applications again using the Late Application process. However, the Late Application process must not become the default application process in your school.

7.1.3. Leaving Certificate Late Application
You will need to complete a RACE Scheme Leaving Certificate Late Application Form (Form RA3) in respect of any candidate for whom an application is being made after the relevant closing date. There is also a closing date for the late application process which will be strictly applied. The Late Application process requires the school to explain why the application is being made late.

As stated above, schools must ensure that the Late Application process does not become the default application process in the school. As part of overall quality assurance, the SEC will monitor receipt of applications in line with the published closing dates and will follow up with any schools with higher than expected numbers of late applications. Quality assurance interventions with schools during the application process may lead to delays in the approval timelines for that school and may lead to refusal of the accommodations sought.

After the Late Application closing date, the only applications that will be accepted are those relating to injuries or similar emergencies that have occurred after the late application closing date (e.g. broken bone, hospitalisation or other medical emergency).

7.1.4. Leaving Certificate Emergencies
The RACE Scheme Leaving Certificate Emergency Application Form (Form RA4) should be used to apply for RACE in the case of true emergencies which occur in the lead-up to the examinations after the closing date for receipt of Late Applications. This form will seek details of the circumstances leading to the application. The SEC will refuse any applications that it deems not to be genuine emergencies.
Recognising that emergency situations occur leading up to and over the course of the written examination in June, schools are advised to make contact with the SEC by phone as soon as an incident occurs.

7.2. Junior Certificate
In line with the changes to the scheme from 2017, applications approved for Junior Certificate will be capable of being reactivated at Leaving Certificate in the future subject to confirmation by the school authority of an identified and continuing need. Therefore the recommendations made by schools at Junior Certificate are extremely important. You must be absolutely sure that each candidate is eligible for RACE and that the accommodations being recommended are required in order for that candidate to access the examinations. You must assess eligibility in line with the general principles set out in Section 6 and the specific criteria in Section 8 of these Instructions. You are required to gather and retain appropriate evidence of need, including results of testing, as required, to ensure that the candidate is eligible for RACE. Such evidence must be available to the SEC when required under the quality assurance programme.

There are three Junior Certificate RACE forms as follows:

1. RACE Scheme Junior Certificate Application Form (Form RA5) – Use this form for standard applications for Junior Certificate examination accommodations
2. RACE Scheme Junior Certificate Late Application Form (Form RA6) – Use this form for any late applications
3. RACE Scheme Junior Certificate Emergency Application Form (Form RA7) – Use this form for emergencies such as broken limbs; hospitalisation, etc.

7.2.1. Junior Certificate Application Form
You should use the standard RACE Scheme Junior Certificate Application (Form RA5) to recommend to the SEC the accommodations to be provided at Junior Certificate. The new application form developed for this purpose is an expanded version of the Junior Certificate forms that have been in use up to this point. All of the evidence used to assess eligibility (test results; samples used to calculate error rates; medical and other reports; details of engagement with professionals e.g. NEPS, VTS, etc.) should be retained. The evidence used in the assessment process may be requested for inspection by the SEC at any stage during or following the application process as part of quality assuring the RACE scheme.

Special centres will be dealt with as described in Section 5.5. The default arrangement for a candidate who needs to be accommodated in a special centre will be to assign them to a shared special centre. Individual special centres will only be approved in specific circumstances, as outlined in Section 5.5. You should inform candidates that the approval of special examination centres rests with the SEC.

Under no circumstances will the SEC accept Junior Certificate Application Forms after the published closing date. You may submit these applications again using the Late Application process. However, you should take care to ensure that the Late Application process does not become the default application process in your school.
7.2.2. Junior Certificate Late Application
You will need to complete a RACE Scheme Junior Certificate Late Application Form (Form RA6) in respect of any candidate for whom an application is being made after the relevant closing date. There is also a closing date for the late application process which will be strictly applied. The late application process requires the school to explain why the application is being made late.

As stated above, schools must ensure that the Late Application process does not become the default application process in the school. As part of overall quality assurance, the SEC will monitor receipt of applications in line with the published closing date and will follow up with any schools with higher than expected numbers of late applications. Quality assurance interventions with schools during the application process may lead to delays in the approval timelines for that school and may lead to refusal of the accommodations sought.

After the Late Application closing date, the only applications that will be accepted are those relating to injuries or similar emergencies that have occurred after the late application closing date (e.g. broken bone, hospitalisation or other medical emergency).

7.2.3. Junior Certificate Emergencies
The RACE Scheme Junior Certificate Emergency Application Form should be used to apply for RACE in the case of true emergencies which occur in the lead-up to the examinations after the closing date for receipt of Late Applications. The form will seek details of the circumstances leading to the application. The SEC will refuse any applications that it deems not to be genuine emergencies.

Recognising that emergency situations occur leading up to and over the course of the written examination in June, schools are advised to make contact with the SEC by phone as soon as an incident occurs.

7.3. Advisory Service for Complex Cases
Schools will be provided with advice and support in dealing with difficult decisions in complex cases. This will be a multi-stage process as follows:

a. If there is any uncertainty about the eligibility of any candidate, the school can contact the SEC for advice. For example, if you consider that the candidate is ineligible but a parent or candidate is adamant that you make the application anyway, you can contact the SEC to discuss the application. The SEC will discuss the case with you and may suggest that you seek advice from, depending on the nature of the candidate’s special needs, the NEPS psychologist and/or the Visiting Teacher Service staff assigned to your school

b. Following consultation you should either proceed with an application or inform the parent or candidate concerned that the SEC has advised that the candidate is not eligible and that an application is not advised

c. If the school or parent or candidate is dissatisfied with the advice received from the SEC at this stage, then the school will, with parental/candidate
consent, forward all relevant documentation directly to the SEC who will examine the file and make a decision

d. It is expected that the referral of cases by schools to the SEC for decision in this manner will be exceptional matters. As part of overall quality assurance, the SEC will monitor receipt of applications and will follow up with any schools with higher than expected numbers of applications referred for decision. Quality assurance interventions with schools during the application process may lead to delays in the approval timelines for that school and may lead to refusal of the accommodations sought

e. Decisions made through this process will be open to appeal to an Independent Appeals Committee

f. Ultimately, there will be recourse to the offices of the Ombudsman or Ombudsman for Children.
8. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR SPECIFIC ACCOMMODATIONS

8.1. Learning Difficulty Grounds
For candidates with learning difficulties in Reading, Spelling and/or Writing (e.g. dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, general learning difficulty, etc.)

There is no longer any need to undertake tests of general cognitive ability for the purposes of the RACE scheme as you are no longer required to distinguish between specific and general learning difficulties.

The candidate’s eligibility for a particular accommodation continues to be dependent upon meeting specified criteria as detailed below.

Schools should ensure that candidates and parents are aware that a psychological report is not required for the RACE application process.

All of the required testing can be carried out in the school and the expectation is that any testing required to support an application for RACE will be carried out in the school.

The results from any attainment tests required (i.e. standardised tests in reading; spelling; writing speed) must be obtained within the 12 months prior to the date of application.

In the absence of school-conducted attainment tests, you may use results from psychological reports, obtained within 12 months of the date of application, which are already available to you.

The required counts of error rates in reading and spelling may only be obtained from the assessments carried out by the school. Error rates from non-school sources must not be allowed to override the school’s count of error rates when you are assessing eligibility in line with the criteria.

In all cases, you should bear in mind that it is rarely in a candidate’s best interest to recommend an accommodation to which they are not accustomed because it does not reflect the candidate’s normal way of working in school.

You should maintain records of all of the evidence used to assess eligibility for RACE accommodations. This evidence must be available to the SEC, during and following the RACE application process, for quality assurance purposes.
TESTS OF LITERACY RELATED SKILLS
For information on suitable tests please see “Tests for use by Guidance Counsellors and Support Teachers in Post-Primary Schools”. The most recent Department of Education and Skills publication on this matter is Circular Letter 0034/2015. This can be accessed through the Special Education Support Service (SESS) or online at www.sess.ie/resources/assessment

A. The following tests may be used by teachers 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 candidates. 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)
- The Hedderly Sentence Completion Test: www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk/pdffiles/Sentence.pdf

8.1.1. Access to a Reader
Applications will be considered where it can be established that a candidate has a need for a Reader in order to access the examination papers, because:

a. The candidate has been identified as having difficulties with reading accuracy over time

b. The level of word-reading attainment displayed by the candidate, their rate of reading and/or their ability to read examination papers accurately is such that they would be significantly ‘impaired in reading the questions’

c. These difficulties are persistent despite the candidate having had access to a continuum of support and to learning opportunities that are effective and appropriate for most other candidates.

In practice, these general conditions are implemented by means of the following specific eligibility criteria:
A standard score of 85 or less on a recommended test of word reading (i.e. reading accuracy not comprehension) AND EITHER

- A reading accuracy error rate of 7% or more on examination papers at the appropriate level (See below for guidance)
- A reading speed of 89 words or less per minute on examination papers at the appropriate level

When you are listening to a candidate read for the purpose of testing them against the above criteria, the following procedure should be used:

- The candidate should read aloud passages from two previous examination papers (at least 500 words in total)
- In English medium schools, one of the samples must be in the subject English and the other sample should be in a subject other than a language subject
- In Irish medium schools one of the samples must be in the subject Gaeilge and the other sample should be in a subject other than a language. The second sample should be through the language medium in which the candidate intends to take that subject in the final examination.
- Such passage(s) should be unfamiliar to the candidate
- Such passages should be at the appropriate level (i.e. if the candidate is entering for Ordinary Level English then the paper should be Ordinary Level; if entering for Higher Level Biology then read from a Higher Level paper, etc.).

You should retain all of the details of the reading test conducted with the candidate for future quality assurance purposes.

Candidates approved for this accommodation should be aware that the Reader will, on request, read the entire, or any part of, the examination paper to the candidate. The Reader can only read the questions as presented and is precluded from changing the meaning, interpreting, adding any additional information, providing an explanation as to what the questions require of the candidate or otherwise providing assistance to the candidate.

Access to a Reader precludes the assessment of reading in any language subjects. Accordingly the grades obtained in any language subject taken by the candidate 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”
8.1.2. Waiver from the assessment of Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation in the Language Subjects

Applications will be considered where it can be established that a candidate has a need for a Spelling, Grammar & Punctuation Waiver in language subjects because:

a. The level of spelling attainment displayed by the candidate and their ability to write accurately under examination conditions is such that it would significantly affect the readability of their written work

b. The candidate has been identified as having difficulties with spelling, grammar and punctuation over time

c. These difficulties are persistent despite the candidate having had access to a continuum of support and to learning opportunities that are effective and appropriate for most other candidates.

The waiver applies specifically to the curricular language subjects only. It is not necessary in subjects such as History, Geography, and Biology, etc. although a candidate’s written work in such subjects may well provide useful evidence of the level of difficulty experienced.

In the case of the language subjects in the Leaving Certificate Applied (English & Communication, Gaeilge Chumarsáideach, French, German, Spanish and Italian) spelling, grammar and punctuation is not under assessment. This means that it is not necessary for schools to make an application for this accommodation for Leaving Certificate Applied candidates.

In practice, these general conditions are implemented by means of the following specific eligibility criteria:

**WAIVER FROM SPELLING/GRAMMAR/PUNCTUATION**

*A standard score of 85 or less on an approved test of spelling*

*AND*

*Spelling/grammar/punctuation error rate of 8% or more in scripts written in the language of the school under examination conditions (See below and Appendix C for additional guidance)*

When you are assessing error rates in written scripts, the following practice should be adhered to:

- Two pieces of sample work should be used to assess eligibility
- There should be a minimum of 500 words between the two samples.
- The sample work must be from original scripts completed under examination conditions
- The samples should be essays, letters or other pieces of continuous script from a text rich examination
• In Irish medium schools one of the two samples, at a minimum, should be in an Irish language subject.
• In English medium schools both of the samples should be in English language subjects.

You should retain all of the evidence used when determining eligibility, including the work produced by the candidate and the counts of errors in that work.

Where a waiver from spelling/grammar/punctuation is granted, the grades obtained by the candidate in any language subject taken 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)

8.1.3. Use of a Word Processor (or Recording Device) – Learning Difficulty

Applications will be considered where it can be established that a candidate has a need for the use of a word processor (or a recording device) because:

a. The candidate has been identified as having difficulties with spelling, grammar and punctuation over time

b. The level of spelling attainment displayed by the candidate and his or her ability to write accurately and/or at a reasonable speed under examination conditions is such that the candidate would be significantly impaired in writing the answers or such that his or her written work would be effectively illegible and that an examiner would have difficulty in deciphering

c. These difficulties are persistent despite the candidate having had access to a continuum of support and to learning opportunities that are effective and appropriate for most other candidates.

Two separate eligibility categories exist for this accommodation:

1) Quality of Written Work
2) Speed of Writing.

To be eligible, candidates need only fall into one or other category.

1) Quality of Written Work

In the case of a candidate whose written work is effectively indecipherable due to the frequency of spelling, grammar and punctuation errors, the following criteria must be met:
**WORD PROCESSOR/RECORDING DEVICE – QUALITY OF WRITTEN WORK**

A standard score of **85 or less** on an approved test of spelling

**AND**

Spelling/grammar/punctuation error rate of **20% or more** in scripts written in the language of the school under examination conditions (See below and Appendix C for additional guidance)

**2) Speed of Writing**

In the case of a candidate whose ability to answer examination questions in writing is significantly impaired due to the speed of his or her writing, coupled with spelling, grammar and punctuation difficulties, the following criteria must be met:

**WORD PROCESSOR/RECORDING DEVICE – SPEED OF WRITING**

A standard score of **85 or less** on an approved test of spelling

**AND**

Spelling/grammar/punctuation error rate of **8% or more** in scripts written in the language of the school under examination conditions (See below and Appendix C for additional guidance)

**AND**

Speed of writing of less than 12 words per minute

When you are assessing error rates in written scripts, the following practice should be adhered to:

- Two pieces of sample work should be used to assess eligibility
- There should be a minimum of 500 words between the two samples.
- The sample work must be from original scripts completed under examination conditions
- The samples should be essays, letters or other pieces of continuous script from a text rich examination
- In Irish medium schools one of the two samples, at a minimum, should be in an Irish language subject.
- In English medium schools both of the samples should be in English language subjects.

You should retain all of the evidence used when determining eligibility, including the work produced by the candidate and the counts of errors in that work.

The use of a word processor or a recording device, on grounds of learning difficulty, will preclude the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical
elements in any language subjects. Accordingly, the grades obtained by the candidate in any language subject 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)

Schools should note that the SEC does not meet the costs associated with purchase or use of media (removable USBs; SD cards; CD-Rs; cassette tapes, etc.) for candidates using Word Processors or Recording Devices in the examinations.

8.1.4. Access to a Scribe

There are three writing accommodations available under the RACE scheme:
- Word Processor
- Recording Device
- Scribe.

In general, the SEC expects that candidates approved for a writing accommodation will use either a word processor or a recording device, particularly the former, and a higher threshold of eligibility applies to approval for a Scribe on grounds of learning difficulty. In addition to being eligible for a writing accommodation by reference to the criteria, the RACE Scheme also requires that to be eligible for a Scribe there must be an impediment to the candidate making use of either a word processor or recording device.

The reason for this distinction is because examination accommodations should reflect, as far as is possible, the candidate’s normal way of working, and best practice is that candidates with such difficulties should be supported throughout their schooling to work independently. Candidates using word processors are working independently, while those relying on a scribe are not. Since relying on a Scribe throughout one’s learning process is rare and would be considered a support of last resort when supports to work independently are not feasible, the same applies in an examination setting.

In recommending the award of a Scribe, you will need to confirm, in addition to confirming that the candidate meets the eligibility criteria for either a word processor or a recording device, that he or she also has a physical difficulty, such as motor difficulties and/or a speech impediment, which renders the other writing accommodations unsuitable. It may also be the case that, for example, the use of a word processor has not proved feasible for the candidate in one or more specific subjects, in which case it may be appropriate to recommend the use of a scribe for those subjects and the use of a word processor in the remaining subjects. In all cases, you should bear in mind that it is rarely in a candidate’s best interests to recommend an accommodation that the candidate is not used to — because it does not reflect his or her normal way of working in school.
Applications will be considered where it can be established that a candidate has a need for the use of a scribe because:

**SCRIBE – WORD PROCESSOR/RECORDING DEVICE NOT SUITABLE DUE TO PHYSICAL OR SPEECH DIFFICULTIES**

The candidate already meets the eligibility criteria for access to the use of a word processor or recording device as set out at Section 8.1.3 Category 1 or 2

AND

The candidate’s physical and speech difficulties render the use of a recording device or word processor unsuitable

**OR**

**SCRIBE – WORD PROCESSOR/RECORDING DEVICE NOT SUITABLE IN CERTAIN SUBJECTS**

The candidate already meets the eligibility criteria for access to the use of a word processor or recording device as set out at Section 8.1.3 Category 1 or 2

AND

The use of the device in question is not possible or is particularly difficult in the case of the specific examination (e.g. Mathematics)

Candidates approved for this accommodation should be aware that the Scribe can only write the answers dictated by the candidate and are precluded from changing the meaning, interpreting, adding any additional information or otherwise providing assistance to the candidate. Scribes must not give any advice, information or assistance to candidates in relation to the content of the examination papers, or the subject of the examination.

Access to a scribe will preclude the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements in any language subjects. Accordingly the grades obtained by the candidate in any language subject taken 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)
Limitations on Using a Scribe in Certain Subjects
In the Leaving Certificate subjects Technology, Engineering, Construction Studies and in Junior Certificate subjects Technology, Materials Technology (Wood) and Metalwork (Materials and Technology), candidates are only allowed to use the scribe for questions or parts of questions which require a written response. The scribe cannot under any circumstances produce sketches and/or drawings in any question in these examinations. Labelling and annotations are considered to be inherent parts of these diagrams and must also be the candidate’s own unaided work. A scribe is not permitted in the subjects Leaving Certificate Design and Communications Graphics (DCG) or Junior Certificate Technical Graphics. In the subject Leaving Certificate Japanese, a scribe can be used only for questions to be answered in English or Irish and NOT for questions to be answered in Japanese.

8.2. Hearing Difficulty Grounds
Without making an application to the SEC, schools have discretion to arrange for hearing impaired candidates to sit near the superintendent and/or the CD player in the main examination centre. See Section 5.4 for details.

You should seek the views of the Visiting Teacher Service before making an application for a candidate whose needs arise as a result of a hearing difficulty. Details of your engagement with the VTS should be recorded for future review. This is in addition to any professional/medical reports, etc., that you deem necessary to support the application. The following accommodations may be provided to candidates with hearing difficulties, based on their level of need:

8.2.1. Personal Stereo in Main Centre for the Aural Examination
During the Aural examination, the 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.

8.2.2. Special Centre for the Aural Examination
During the Aural examination, 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.

8.2.3. Modified Aural Examination
This examination will take the form of a face-to-face session with an examiner. The examiner reads from a script, allowing the candidate to lip-read as required. The candidates answer written questions in a booklet (and are not required to speak in the target language). The marks allocated to this special examination will be equivalent to the total marks for the standard aural examination (that is, the “Listening Comprehension” section of the examination). This modified aural will take place in the weeks leading up to the start of the examinations in June. Consequently, the candidate will not be required to take the Listening Comprehension section of the examination in June.

8.2.4. Exemption from the Aural Examination
If a modified aural is not appropriate due to the candidate’s level of need then an exemption from the aural may be granted. The results will be calculated on the components taken, regarding them as 100% for the purpose of calculating the grade. This exemption is only approved where it can be demonstrated that the candidate’s
disabilities preclude engagement with a modified aural examination (such as a
disability that significantly impairs the candidate’s ability to lip-read in the language
of schooling). The grades obtained by the candidate, in any language subject taken,
will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows:

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

8.2.5. Sign Language Interpreter
Access to a Sign Language Interpreter can be arranged for a hearing impaired
candidate during the written examinations. The Sign Language Interpreter will, on
request, sign to the candidate the entire, or any part, of the examination paper. The
role of the Sign language Interpreter is to present the questions (in sign language)
without changing the meaning, adding any additional information or providing an
explanation as what the questions require of the candidate. The grades obtained by
the candidate, in any language subject, taken 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”

8.2.6. Support Arrangement in the Oral Tests
The candidate will be examined in the orals tests in language subjects by an
examiner who has been briefed in dealing with candidates who have hearing
impairments. The oral tests will take place during the period in which all other
candidates will be examined.

8.2.7. Exemption from the Oral Tests
If support arrangement in the oral tests are not appropriate due to the candidate’s
level of need then an exemption from the Oral may be granted in any language
subjects that the candidate is taking. The results in these subjects will be calculated
on the components taken regarding them as 100% for assessment purposes.
Accordingly the grades obtained by the candidate in the relevant subjects will be
accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows:

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

8.3. Visual Difficulty Grounds
Without making an application to the SEC, schools have discretion to arrange for
visually impaired candidates to use low vision aids, magnifiers and reading lamps
that are used normally by the candidate in the classroom. See Section 5.4 for details.

You should seek the views of the Visiting Teacher Service before making an
application for a candidate whose needs arise as a result of a visual difficulty. Details
of your engagement with the VTS should be recorded for future review. This is in
addition to any professional/medical reports, etc., that you deem necessary to
support the application. The following accommodations may be provided to
candidates with visual difficulties, based on their level of need:
8.3.1. Enlarged Examination Papers
The candidate will be supplied with the enlarged versions (A4 to A3) of the standard examination papers. If requested, the candidate may be given a standard size version of the paper in addition to the enlarged version.

8.3.2. Modified Version of Examination Papers
The candidate will be supplied with a modified version of the examination papers in text (non-Braille) format. On this modified version, diagrams or other images may be simplified or removed. Tasks that involve drawing diagrams are replaced with other tasks of a similar demand. The modified version can be supplied in either standard A4 size; enlarged A3 size; or both. The candidate may not be given access to both the standard (unmodified) examination paper and this modified version. The grades obtained by the candidate in the relevant subjects will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows:

“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except for the testing of graphical skills in the written papers”

8.3.3. Braille Version of Modified Examination Papers
The candidate will be supplied with the modified paper presented in Braille format. Tactile diagrams with Braille labelling will also be supplied as necessary. The candidate may have access to both the Braille and text version of the modified examination papers if required. However, the candidate may not be given access to the standard examination paper and this modified version of the examination paper. The grades obtained by the candidate in the relevant subjects will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows:

“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except for the testing of graphical skills in the written papers”

8.3.4. Reader or Reading Assistance — Visual Difficulty
Applications will be considered where it can be established that a candidate, because of their visual impairment, has a need for a reader in order to access the examination papers. The Reader will, on request, read the entire, or any part of, the examination paper to the candidate. The Reader can only read the questions as presented and is precluded from changing the meaning, interpreting, adding any additional information, providing an explanation as to what the questions requires of the candidate or otherwise providing assistance to the candidate. As access to a reader precludes the assessment of reading in any language subjects, accordingly the grades obtained in any language subject taken by the candidate 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”
8.3.5. Writing Accommodations — Visual Difficulty
There are three writing accommodations available under the RACE scheme:

a. Word Processor (standard, with vision aids and/or voice activated) — Visual Difficulty
A candidate approved for the use of a Word Processor on visual difficulty grounds must have the spell-check and auto-correct turned off. Such candidates can still demonstrate proficiency in spelling, grammar, and punctuation, and accordingly no Explanatory note will apply.

b. Recording Device — Visual Difficulty
The use of a Recording Device precludes the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements in any language subjects. Accordingly, 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)

The SEC does not meet the costs associated with purchase or use of digital media (removable USBs; SD cards; CDs) or cassette tapes.

c. Scribe — Visual Difficulty
A candidate who is unable to write or effectively unable to write may be granted the assistance of a scribe where a visual difficulty combined with a speech difficulty makes the use of a Word Processor or Recording Device unsuitable. The use of a scribe may also be appropriate where a Word Processor or Recording Device would be impossible or very difficult in the case of a specific examination (e.g. Mathematics).

Access to a scribe will preclude the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements in any language subjects. Accordingly, the grades obtained by the candidate in any language subject 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)

NB. See “Limitations on using a Scribe in Certain Subjects” on page 35
8.3.6. Drawing Aids
Use of drafting machines, drawing boards, parallel motion boards and smaller
drawing sheets can be approved in the subjects Technical Graphics, DCG
Construction Studies, Materials Technology (Wood) and Technology.

8.3.7. Colour Identifier in Geography
This accommodation is appropriate for colour blind candidates in the subject
Geography only where interpretation of colour images is part of the assessment
objectives. In general, candidates approved for this accommodation should be
accommodated in the main examination centre. It may be necessary for them to
move to a shared special examination centre for the Geography examination if, for
some reason, the colour identification cannot be carried out by the main centre
superintendent.

8.4. Physical Difficulty Grounds
For the purposes of the RACE Scheme, the physical category is taken to include
medical, sensory and mental health difficulties; behavioural conditions as well as
physical difficulties. For the avoidance of doubt, dysgraphia and dyspraxia are, for
the purposes of the RACE Scheme, regarded as learning difficulties. Applicants for
the scheme presenting with either dysgraphia or dyspraxia are required to meet the
conditions of eligibility set out in Section 8.1 of these Instructions.

You should apply for the accommodations that best remove the impact of the
difficulty on the candidate’s capacity to demonstrate his or her level of achievement,
while leaving the integrity of the assessment intact. It may be necessary, particularly
in cases of candidates presenting with needs which were not known to the school
previously, to seek medical or other professional evidence in support of the RACE
application. The evidence used to assess eligibility should be retained by the school
for future quality assurance purposes.

The following accommodations may be provided to candidates with physical
difficulties based on their level of need.

8.4.1. Writing Accommodations — Physical Difficulty
There are three writing accommodations available under the RACE scheme:
   a) Word Processor
   b) Recording Device
   c) Scribe

If applying for a writing accommodation on grounds of Physical Difficulty you should
review and retain samples of written work representative of performance under
typical examination conditions which demonstrates that the candidate is unable to
write or effectively unable to write as a result of their disability. This is in addition to
any professional/medical reports, etc., that you deem necessary to support the
application.

Note on Poor Handwriting
Poor handwriting, in and of itself is not a disability or difficulty that requires
accommodation, under the RACE scheme. Schools should not apply for
accommodations to be made in individual cases where the concern relates to
difficulties that may arise in accessing the work of a candidate solely as a result of poor handwriting. Examiners engaged by the SEC are very skilled, from both their teaching and examining experience, at interpreting the handwriting of candidates and will make every effort to ensure that all work presented in the examinations is understood and marked fairly. In any case where they find themselves unable to read the script they are instructed to refer it to a senior, more experienced examiner who will, if necessary, engage with other experts in accessing the work.

a. Word Processor (standard or voice activated) — Physical Difficulty
A candidate approved for the use of a Word Processor on physical difficulty grounds must have the spell-check and auto-correct turned off. Such candidates can still demonstrate proficiency in spelling, grammar, and punctuation, and accordingly no Explanatory note will apply.

b. Recording Device — Physical Difficulty
The use of a Recording Device precludes the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements in any language subjects. Accordingly, 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)

NOTE: The SEC does not meet the costs associated with purchase or use of digital media (removable USBs; SD cards; CDs) or cassette tapes.

c. Scribe — Physical Difficulty
A candidate who is unable to write or effectively unable to write may be granted the assistance of a scribe where a physical difficulty combined with a speech difficulty makes the use of a Word Processor or Recording Device unsuitable. The use of a scribe may also be appropriate where a Word Processor or Recording Device would be impossible or very difficult in the case of a specific examination (e.g. Mathematics.)

Access to a scribe will preclude the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements in any language subjects. Accordingly, the grades obtained by the candidate in any language subject 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)

NB. See “Limitations on using a Scribe in Certain Subjects” on page 35
8.4.2. Helper in the Practical Subjects
Where a candidate is granted the assistance of a helper in the practical subject examinations, this person may carry out general ‘housekeeping’ 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. The helper is furthermore not permitted to carry out any task that is part of what is being assessed. For example, the helper may assist a candidate in clamping a piece of work, but may not assist them in applying any tool to the piece.

8.4.3. Exemption from Practical Test and/or Project in Junior Certificate Home Economics
In the Junior Certificate subject Home Economics, a candidate may be granted an exemption from the project; from the practical test; or form both. Depending on the exemption(s) granted, the grade obtained by a candidate in this subject will be accompanied by an explanatory note, or notes, as follows:

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

AND/OR

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

Please note that exemptions are not available from the practical components or projects in any other subject, nor are waivers from any of the practical elements within those components. Candidates who are not able to complete these will forfeit the relevant marks.

8.4.4. Drawing Aids
Use of drafting machines, drawing boards, parallel motion boards and smaller drawing sheets can be approved in the subjects Technical Graphics, DCG, Construction Studies Materials Technology (Wood) and Technology.
9. SPECIAL CENTRE SUPERINTENDENTS, READERS AND SCRIBES

Superintendents of special examination centres, including those acting as Readers or/and Scribes must not give any advice, information or assistance to candidates in relation to the content of the examination papers, or the subject of the examination.

In order to protect the integrity of the certificate examinations and to be fair to all candidates, the SEC will investigate all allegations or suspicions of malpractice in relation to the examinations, including inappropriate assistance in a special examination centre.

In general, a person acting as a special-centre Superintendent, Reader or Scribe should not be someone who has been involved in the candidate’s recent schooling or be personally known to them (such as a Special Needs Assistant that recently worked with them). However, it is recognised that the special educational needs of certain candidates are such that they would have a great difficulty making themselves understood by someone who is not used to communicating with them, or would for some other reason have a severe difficulty working with a person not previously known to them. If you are satisfied that such circumstances apply, then it is acceptable to appoint a person known to the candidate to act as reader, scribe or special-centre 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, nor are persons under the age of 18 years permitted to so act.

The SEC recognises that decisions with regard to the appointment of superintendents to examination centres and other situations which require a locally appointed superintendent are matters for the school authority, acting in the best interests of the candidates and having regard to the fairness and integrity of the examinations.

It is up to each school to appoint Superintendents, Readers and Scribes to the special examination centres in their schools. The SEC will not be involved in the appointment of personnel to special examination centres.

The SEC has a duty to safeguard the integrity of the examinations. At the 2017 written examinations, the SEC will arrange audio-recording in Leaving Certificate individual special examination centres in a randomly selected sample of schools. This represents a return, on a small scale, to a practice which was previously in place in all special examination centres. Further information on the arrangements for audio-recording will be provided, in advance of the written examinations, to the selected schools.

As has been the case in the past, a more detailed document will issue later which will include guidance for Superintendents, Readers and Scribes of special examination centres.
10. QUALITY ASSURANCE

The revised arrangements for dealing with RACE applications now involve a largely devolved model of decision making, in that the SEC will for the most part be approving the accommodations recommended by the school at both Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate. This means that schools now have a more critical role than heretofore in ensuring that the scheme operates fairly and with integrity.

All Junior and Leaving Certificate RACE applications will be subject to a quality assurance programme commencing with the 2017 application process. The quality assurance programme will be the cornerstone of the SEC’s governance of the RACE Scheme. The focus of the quality assurance programme will be on ensuring that applications for RACE have been made on behalf of candidates whose needs for reasonable accommodations have been appropriately identified. Schools will be selected for quality assurance using a number of factors including:

- school size and category
- prevalence of RACE applications including by comparison with previous years
- prevalence of Leaving Certificate applications for new accommodations
- compliance with closing dates
- prevalence of Late Applications
- prevalence of complex/difficult cases referred to SEC
- prevalence of individual special centres being recommended
- random selection

The quality assurance programme will operate on an ongoing basis commencing with the first set of applications and will continue throughout, and following the completion of, the RACE application cycle.

The focus of the quality assurance will be on assisting schools to comply with the demands of the RACE scheme. In the event that problems are identified, the SEC will provide schools with guidance and advice as to how they should improve their RACE application process.

However, the SEC may intervene more directly with a school at any stage during the application cycle if the actions of the school in relation to RACE are inappropriate and/or threaten the integrity of the examinations. In such cases, the quality assurance process may lead to the removal of accommodations for Leaving Certificate, or the refusal of RACE applications at both Leaving and Junior Certificate, if the evidence of need has not been correctly established.
11. APPEAL PROCEDURE

In cases where a parent or candidate is dissatisfied with any aspect of the SEC’s decision on a RACE application, they have access to a RACE Independent Appeals Committee (IAC). All members of the IAC are drawn from outside the SEC. The remit of the IAC covers appeals against all elements of decisions on RACE applications taken by the SEC. All appeals are considered in light of the published principles. An appeal can only deal with the information originally used to assess eligibility.

**Main Applications**

An appeal against a decision arising from a standard application must be based solely on the information originally used to assess eligibility. Where new information is to be relied on, a fresh application must be made. If the closing date for receipt of applications has passed then any fresh application must be through the Late Application process.

**Late Applications**

An appeal against a decision arising from a late application must be based solely on the information originally used to assess eligibility. No new information will be considered in processing such an appeal.

Appeal decisions will be notified to the candidate’s school. If an appeal is being denied then the reasons for the decision of the IAC will be provided. Schools in turn are required to communicate the outcome of the appeal to the candidate and their parents/guardians. To assist schools, the SEC will be providing two copies of all decision letters in future.

12. **FURTHER RECOUSE**

Following the completion of an appeal, any candidate, parent/guardian can make a complaint to the Ombudsman (if they are over 18) or to the Ombudsman for Children (if they are under 18).
**APPENDIX A. Updated Framework of Principles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Reasonable Accommodations will be made for candidates who have special educational and/or assessment needs to enable them to access the test instrument and to demonstrate their attainment in the examination.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The assessment of eligibility for Reasonable Accommodations will be based on appropriate evidence of need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reasonable Accommodations will be underpinned by, and uphold the integrity of the assessment principles, as published by the State Examinations Commission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reasonable Accommodations will be appropriate to the needs of the candidate, while at the same time, meeting the assessment objectives and requirements of the relevant syllabus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The particular needs of a candidate in each individual subject area will be considered. The Reasonable Accommodations made for an individual candidate may differ from subject to subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>There should be continuity between learning and assessment; accordingly Reasonable Accommodations should reflect a candidate’s normal way of working, as far as possible*.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Applications for, and decisions on Reasonable Accommodations will be made in a timely manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>If, as a result of a special need, a candidate cannot attain, or demonstrate attainment, in a particular element or elements of an examination, an alternative assessment may be specified. The alternative must assess the same construct as the original test item, and must not compromise the purpose of the examination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>If, as a result of a special need, a candidate cannot attain, or demonstrate attainment, in a particular element(s) of an examination, or in a particular component(s), and an alternative assessment is not possible, a waiver or exemption may be permitted, subject to Principle 10 below. Waivers or exemptions will not be permitted in the case of an element or component that is deemed core** to the syllabus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Prior to undertaking a course of study in a particular syllabus, information should be available to the candidate regarding the assessment conditions pertaining to that syllabus, including those elements of the syllabus that are core and in which no exemption is possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The certification process should accurately record the attainment of the candidate in the examination. Accordingly, when an element(s) or component(s) has been exempted, or where a particular accommodation changes the assessment construct, this should be recorded on the certificate of results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Exceptional circumstances that may affect a candidate’s performance (e.g., illness, trauma, accidents, bereavement) should, insofar as is possible, be addressed.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*A candidate requesting the use of, for example, assistive technology in the State Examinations should normally be accustomed to its use in his/her day to day learning and assessment environment

**Core in this context has two dimensions, as follows:

(a) an element of a syllabus could be core in that it constitutes such a significant proportion of the syllabus content that, in its absence, there is insufficient content remaining to validly assess the syllabus objectives

(b) an element of a syllabus could be core in that the element is so fundamental or integral to the study of the subject or domain and its assessment, that to exempt it from the assessment would fundamentally undermine the credibility and integrity of the assessment and certification processes.
APPENDIX B

Expert Advisory Group on Certificate Examinations

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF CANDIDATES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS

Report to the Minister for Education and Science

January 2000
Any consideration of arrangements for the examination of candidates with special needs has to recognise that the Leaving Certificate Examination is a key point in the lives of candidates. On the one hand, performance on the examination is taken to represent candidates’ achievements after 13 or 14 years of education. On the other, it is used to make important decisions about candidates’ future education which, in turn, seriously affects their life chances. The examination enjoys a high status and is regarded by most people as a fair means of making decisions about candidates’ educational achievements. It is essential that fairness to all candidates, and the perception of that fairness, be maintained in the administration of the examination.

The Junior Certificate Examination is obviously of less importance than the Leaving Certificate Examination for most candidates, though it is often regarded as a useful experience in preparation for the Leaving Certificate. Our discussion of special arrangements is framed for the most part by a consideration of the Leaving Certificate, and it should not be assumed that regulations should be applied with the same rigour to both certificate examinations. We do not consider how regulations might be applied differently at the two levels, taking the view that modification of the Junior Certificate for all candidates would be a more appropriate strategy than attempting to develop a subset of the regulations designed with Leaving Certificate candidates in mind. If the Junior Certificate Examination is developed so that there is less emphasis on terminal papers and greater consideration is given to school-based assessment, the potential to deal with special cases should be greatly enhanced.

It is recognised that in certain circumstances an examination may not adequately represent the achievements that it purports to measure. This is a particular problem when the scope of an examination is fairly limited, as is the case in the Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations. Although there is provision for other kinds of assessment (e.g., oral and practical competencies), these examinations rely heavily on performance on written papers which are administered under controlled conditions in a limited time frame at the end of a long period of study. Some candidates experience difficulty, or may even find it impossible, to communicate what they know in this situation. This is, perhaps, most obvious in the case of a physical disability, such as a visual or hearing impairment, but specific learning disabilities are also recognised as giving rise to difficulties.

The normal routine of examination administration, dedicated to the maintenance of universalistic standards (i.e, a system based on generally applicable rules and principles), when faced with particularistic considerations (i.e, concern with elements, which have a particular rather than a universal application, or to which no general standard is applicable), inevitably gives rise to conflict. The former involves the application of bureaucratic principles so that all candidates are treated in the same way; the latter attempts to take account of the circumstances of individual candidates. Resolution of the conflict is likely to be complex and difficult since a concession to the universalistic could be seen to be at the expense of the particularistic, while a concession to the particularistic could be interpreted as compromising the universalistic.

In late 1998, the Minister for Education and Science requested the Expert Advisory Group on Certificate Examinations (a body he had set up in December 1997 to provide independent advice and evaluation on the operation of examinations) to prepare a discussion paper on special arrangements at the examinations for candidates with special needs. The paper, which was prepared in April 1999, set out current arrangements for candidates with special needs in certificate examinations in this country and also provided descriptions of regulations followed by examining bodies in Great Britain. A number of principles were proposed, which it was suggested should underlie the provision of special arrangements, and a series of issues requiring discussion was outlined.

Responses to the paper were invited from interested parties in advertisements in national newspapers on May 17, 1999. The paper was also made available on the Internet.
Submissions were requested by June 30, 1999. Altogether, 210 submissions were received. These were considered by the Advisory Group, following which the present document was prepared.

The document outlines the present situation regarding special arrangements made before an examination and the situation regarding special consideration after an examination. This is followed by a summary of the main issues addressed in submissions. Principles governing the provision of special arrangements, based on the earlier document and on submissions, are then proposed. Finally, recommendations relating to modification of existing regulations are proposed.

In preparing the document, cognisance was taken of the Education Act, 1998, in which the need to provide for the education of every person in the state, including any person with a physical or learning disability or with other educational needs, is stated. It follows from this statement that the administration of examinations, which form part of that provision, should be sensitive to the needs of candidates with disabilities.

The need for flexibility in making decisions about individual candidates was also borne in mind in arriving at the principles and recommendations set out in the paper. Flexibility is needed in light of the complexity and individual nature of candidate needs for a number of fairly obvious reasons. First, the number of disability categories is considerable, and, within each, there is substantial variability. Second, the impact of accommodations in examination administration on the validity of an examination is usually unknown for different disability categories. And third, it is important that allowance be made for future developments, both in examinations and in the availability of technology, that may serve to improve the situation for candidates with special needs.

In light of these considerations, and in recognition of the fact that decisions about individual candidates have to be made in the light of the particular needs of candidates, the present paper sets out principles and a structure under which specific arrangements can be made, rather than rules and regulations that would describe how particular individuals should be treated. The principles were framed with the intention of facilitating the operation of a responsive and flexible system, which would enable all candidates to demonstrate their achievements, while preserving the integrity and fairness of an examination, in which special arrangements are operated in a transparent manner.

THE PRESENT SITUATION FOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS IN IRELAND

Under present regulations governing the administration of state examinations, special arrangements may be made for a candidate when it is indicated in advance of the examination that the candidate has difficulties which preclude him or her from displaying the achievements which are assessed in the examination. Special consideration is sometimes sought during or after an examination on the grounds that unforeseen circumstances arose during the course of, or around the time of, the examination which interfered with a candidate’s performance.

Special Arrangements Requested Before An Examination
Application for special examination arrangements on the grounds of a specific learning disability or of a physical disability is made by schools to the Department of Education and Science on prescribed forms to be completed by school authorities. The form requests information on the following:

(i) name of examinations for which special arrangements are being sought;
(ii) whether the candidate avails in school of any special facilities for studying or communicating;
(iii) reasons for applying for special arrangements;
(iv) the nature of the special arrangements that are being requested;
(v) particulars of previous Certificate examinations taken by the candidate;
(vi) details of assessment by a guidance or remedial teacher;
(vii) if the candidate had received remedial or special help at school;
(viii) the candidate’s attendance record;
(ix) the candidate’s general ability;
(x) the candidate’s application to studies;
(xi) a psychologist’s report if available over the past 12 months;
(xii) three samples of a candidate’s written work under examination conditions;
(xiii) a report of a psychologist or medical doctor supporting the case for special arrangements.

Special arrangements on the grounds of a specific learning disability will be approved only if the Department is satisfied on the basis of evidence put forward or adduced that the candidate’s ability is not below ‘the average range’ and that the candidate has a specific difficulty in reading or in writing that is of such a degree that he or she would be impaired in reading the questions or in writing the answers, or is such that a regular examiner would have difficulty in deciphering the candidate’s handwriting. Special arrangements are not approved for candidates who are ‘slow learners’ or for candidates with a ‘mental handicap’.

A parent/guardian is required to complete a form consenting to an interview/assessment by a psychologist from the Department of Education and Science (should the Department consider this necessary) and to the results of the interview/assessment being made available to the Department.

A closing date is specified for the submission of applications. However, it is not always possible to keep to this, and applications are received and processed up to and during the examination period.

A number of observations may be made about the operation of the scheme. First, there were about 3,200 applications in 1998. Second, the number of applications is growing (e.g., from about 2,300 in 1994). Third, there is considerable variation between schools in the operation of the scheme. Some schools produce multiple applications, others do not make any. In some cases, the reasons for this are obvious. A school which caters for candidates with disabilities would be expected to have an above-average application rate. However, this type of situation does not fully explain differential application rates. Finally, special arrangements for the vast majority of candidates involve no more than ensuring that every possible effort is made to decipher their answers and mark them reliably in accordance with the marking scheme, however difficult it may be to read their work because of misspellings, bad handwriting, poor grammar, etc. When the degree of impairment is severe, further arrangements (including the provision of a person who will read the questions or write the answers, or the use of a tape recorder, typewriter, or word processor) may be made.

There is provision for a range of special arrangements.

(i) **Time** (allowance of 10 minutes extra time per hour where a scribe or mechanical aid is used or a candidate is visually impaired).

(ii) **Means of Access to Questions**
(a) reading an examination paper, without elaboration or explanation, to the candidate;
(b) provision of modified questions, substituting alternative questions for those which refer to visual material, such as diagrams, photographs, and maps;
(c) provision of braille translations;
(d) provision of enlarged print in the examination papers;
(e) provision of low vision aids for reading questions.

(iii) Means of Presenting Responses
(a) recording of answers on tape or word processor;
(b) dictation of answers to a scribe;
(c) sending a script to a supervising examiner when the examiner encounters difficulty in reading it.

(iv) Alternative Accommodation/Time Arrangements
(a) taking the examination in a special room in a school or in a hospital;
(b) alteration in the time at which the examination is taken (e.g., to allow attendance at the funeral of a close relative).

There is no indication on a candidate’s certificate of results that special arrangements were in place for the examination.

Special Consideration During and After An Examination

Unforeseen circumstances (e.g., illness, death of a relative, accident, trauma) can arise during an examination. Examination superintendents are advised that the Department is prepared to accord candidates who become ill during the course of an examination every consideration to help them sit the examination. In exceptional circumstances, candidates may take an examination at a later time (but not on a later date) than the scheduled time. A further situation arises when examination authorities are notified after the examination has been completed that illness or trauma seriously interfered with a candidate’s performance. Several hundred items of correspondence are generated each year arising out of such situations.

There are two possible responses to situations in which unforeseen circumstances are claimed to have affected a candidate’s performance. One is to espouse the universalistic position and state that examiners can only work on the basis of what a candidate has presented. This is the situation at present. The other is to attempt to address the circumstances of the particular case and re-examine the candidate’s work, though this could involve departing from the marking scheme which should be applied to the work of all candidates. The latter approach is more feasible in examinations in other jurisdictions which rely less on terminal written performance. Flexibility to respond to unforeseen school or personal circumstances would improve in this country if examination procedures were less rigid.

REVIEW OF SUBMISSIONS

Submissions to the Discussion Paper of the Expert Advisory Group on Certificate Examinations (April 1999) were received up to 30 June 1999. Several of the 210 submissions highlighted inadequacies in the operation of the present system. Some raised very broad issues; some referred to perceived difficulties in schools; others to the operation of the system by the Department of Education and Science. Practically all addressed issues relating to special arrangements that are decided before an examination; very few dealt with the question of special consideration during or after an examination. Submissions dealt with special arrangements for candidates with physical disabilities and for candidates with learning disabilities. A number expressed a preference for practices in Britain (especially in Scotland), a description of which had been provided in the Discussion Paper. While these practices were considered by the Expert Group in arriving
at the recommendations in this document, the fact that they operated in the context of assessment systems which differed from the Irish system in their nature and traditions had to be kept in mind.

A summary of the main points of the submissions, categorised under four headings, follows. The points are not set out in any particular order, and no indication of the frequency with which points were made is provided. This course of action was adopted, partly because the rationale and appropriateness of points seem more important than their frequency of mention, and partly because a head-count based on multiple identical submissions would have resulted in a distorted picture.

**Issues With Implications for Examination Systems in General**

A number of submissions considered issues in the context of increasing participation rates in education and in examinations, pointing to the need to give greater prominence to the certification (as opposed to the selection) function of examinations. The point is particularly relevant in the case of the Junior Certificate Examination.

Submissions with implications for the examination system in general related to a role for a continuous assessment component in the examination process; the need for greater use of oral examining; a modular system of examinations; repeat examinations; a modified schedule for examinations; limiting the number of subjects which some candidates would be required to study; and the introduction of alternative curricular and assessment procedures for some candidates. While all these recommendations merit serious consideration, they raise issues that go well beyond the terms of reference of the Expert Group in its review of the operation of special arrangements at examinations for candidates with special needs.

**General Issues Relating to Special Arrangements**

Several of the recommendations in submissions were of a general nature: that special arrangements be available to all candidates with special needs (not just those of ‘average ability’); that the view of ‘disability’ as a pathological condition be abandoned; that the word ‘special’ be excluded from the description of arrangements; that the problematic nature of the use of terms such as dyslexia and Asperger Syndrome be recognised; that separate consideration be maintained for physical and learning disabilities; and that regulations and provision for the Junior Certificate Examination should differ from those for the Leaving Certificate Examination.

Recognising the difficulties in adapting general examination regulations to meet the needs of all candidates, it was pointed out that there was a danger that the scheme of special arrangements might be used as a means of making inappropriate methods of assessment seem appropriate for all candidates.

**Specific Comments/Proposals Regarding the Present Scheme (Before the Examination)**

Present arrangements in many schools for dealing with candidates with special needs were considered inadequate (especially by parents). It was stated that the identification of candidates was often late; that schools were not adequately resourced to deal with candidates with specific learning difficulties; and that schools did not always have the equipment to prepare candidates for examinations. More general problems identified in schools related to lack of awareness of candidate needs and lack of appropriate teaching and learning supports.

A series of recommendations relating to examinations were made: the need to provide clear guidelines for candidates, schools, and parents; the need for a standard
psychological assessment form (possibly in multiple-choice format); greater school involvement in the identification and preparation of candidates; assigning responsibility for administering and overseeing arrangements to an individual in the school; assigning a major role in assessment and in preparing applications for special arrangements to a guidance counsellor/remedial teacher; a mechanism for earlier candidate identification, certainly no later than second year in secondary school; decisions regarding arrangements and their nature to be provided earlier by the Department of Education and Science; the need to try out various options in schools to determine the most appropriate conditions for a candidate; the provision of opportunities for candidates in school to practice for special arrangements; the incorporation into school examinations of special arrangements (from first year in secondary school if possible); the provision of opportunities for a candidate to work with a reader/assistant/scribe under examination conditions before an examination; and access by parents to relevant correspondence and reports.

Specific Comments/Proposals Regarding the Present Scheme (During and After the Examination)

Many submissions saw the provision of extra time as an important factor in alleviating problems that candidates might face in an examination. It was felt that additional time would help candidates who tire quickly, who are restricted in physical movement, who take longer than most candidates to process material, or who have difficulty in concentrating on a limited range of topics for a long period. The proposals about extra time varied from 10/15 minutes for an examination to 10/15 minutes per hour. Some suggested that the extra time be provided before an examination, others that it be used to provide rest periods during an examination. The suggestion was also made that the provision of extra time should be at the discretion of the examination centre.

Some submissions addressed the issue of expanding the range of formats for accessing questions (e.g., the distribution of examinations on tape as well as on hard copy). Several submissions focused on the role of examiners/markers. Suggestions included the employment of special markers (with relevant experience/training); informing markers of the status of candidates and the nature of candidate difficulties; the provision of general guidelines and training for supervisors and examiners; and the provision of training/experience for markers of the scripts of candidates with special needs. It was recommended that the provision for seating candidates in a quiet area or separate room, where distraction would be minimised, should be extended.

Most, but not all, submissions were opposed to indicating on certificates that candidates had taken an examination under special arrangements.

PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE PROVISION OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR CANDIDATES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS MIGHT BE BASED

In this section, a number of principles on which the provision of arrangements for candidates with special needs might be based is presented. These are drawn from present practice in this country, practice elsewhere, and a consideration of submissions made in response to the Discussion Paper of April 1999.

In considering the principles, it is necessary to bear in mind the distinction between a candidate's achievements and his/her ability to display those achievements under examination conditions. There are cases where the nature of a subject, and consequently of an examination, preclude a candidate, because of a disability, from acquiring the competencies which the subject is designed to develop. For example, a candidate may not be physically able to produce an end product in subjects such as Construction Studies and
Engineering. Since the achievement of the candidate, rather than the assessment of the achievement, is at issue, the case for special arrangements does not arise.

There are other cases in which many elements of the achievements in a subject are accessible to a candidate but some, because of a particular disability, are not. For example, the aural component in a language may not be accessible to a hearing-impaired candidate. In this case, the issue is again one of achievement, rather than the nature of the examination. However, it is reasonable that the candidate sit for an examination in the components of the subject in which achievement was possible, and that he/she be exempted from the specific and identifiable component (e.g. the aural component) in which it was not.

There are other cases again in which all aspects of a subject are accessible to a candidate, but the nature of the examination adversely affects the candidate's ability to display what he/she had achieved in the subject. In these cases, modification of the examination procedure (e.g., the provision of enlarged print on the examination paper) is permissible so long as it does not affect the integrity of the examination.

With these conditions in mind, the following principles on which the provision of arrangements for candidates with special needs might be based are proposed.

1. Special arrangements 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. Special arrangements should not put the integrity, status, or reputation of the examination at risk.
4. Special arrangements 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. Special arrangements 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 special arrangements.
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., reading a test of reading comprehension to a candidate with a specific reading difficulty).
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 OF PRINCIPLES

While these principles may seem straightforward enough, they carry within them possible sources of conflict. Furthermore, it is not always obvious how the principles might be applied in practice. In this section, we consider issues that arise from the principles in terms of candidate identification, effective and equitable provision, and the treatment and reporting of candidate performance. Recommendations in relation to each are made. It is recognised that some of the recommendations have implications for resources, which obviously would have to be considered before implementation.

Candidate Identification

The identification of candidates in need of special arrangements at examinations involves a judgment about the difficulties a candidate would experience in an examination setting, having given due consideration to the candidate’s achievements and the extent to which the examination setting would prevent the candidate from demonstrating those achievements. Barriers to full participation in the examination may be physical or psychological. The former (e.g., motor, visual, auditory) are more obvious than the latter (e.g., specific reading disability, attention deficit disorder) and are probably more easily assessed. Key components of the present regulations relating to special arrangements on the grounds of a specific learning disability are that arrangements will be granted only if the candidate’s general ability is not below ‘the average range’ and if there is a discrepancy between that ability and achievement in at least one specified domain of achievement (e.g., reading comprehension). These conditions give rise to a number of problems. First, given the increase in participation rates in state examinations in recent years, many candidates are likely to fall below ‘the average range’ of ability. There is no reason why these should be excluded from consideration for special arrangements if they also have a more specific learning disability. Second, the available evidence indicates that poor readers who do not exhibit discrepancies between measures of their general ability and achievement appear to have the same kind of cognitive difficulties and achievement needs as poor readers who exhibit discrepancies. Third, there are technical problems in the use of a discrepancy score between ability and achievement. These arise from, among other things, regression to the mean and errors of measurement (which tend to be large when the correlation between measures is high). Fourth, even if a reliable discrepancy procedure were available, evidence of a discrepancy would not in itself mean that it was due to a particular disability. It could be that other factors (e.g., lack of motivation, failure to study) caused the discrepancy.

Recommendations on Candidate Identification

Present regulations covering the identification of candidates requiring special arrangements are in general acceptable to the Expert Advisory Group, though some modifications are suggested. In general, regulations and their implementation should be designed to ensure that all eligible candidates are facilitated; at the same time, it is important that the system should not be abused. The following recommendations, which are designed to improve the identification process and to increase the involvement of schools in the process, are made.

(i) The condition that a candidate’s general ability be not below ‘the average range’ for consideration for special arrangements should be discontinued.
(ii) Procedures should be established to increase awareness in schools of candidate needs.
(iii) Procedures should be established in schools to ensure identification at the earliest possible point.
(iv) Schools should have greater involvement in the identification and preparation of candidates.
(v) The Department of Education and Science should provide guidelines regarding identification for candidates, schools, and parents.
(vi) A guidance counsellor/remedial teacher, in collaboration with classroom teachers, resource teachers and occupational therapists, should have a role in assessment and in applying for special arrangements.
(vii) A standard diagnostic and assessment process should be developed by the Department.
(viii) The time period between applications and approval should be as short as possible. (ix) Parents should have access to all relevant correspondence and reports.
(x) Provision for appeals regarding the operation of the scheme should be continued

Effective and Equitable Provision

There are three aspects to effective and equitable provision: preparation of candidates, candidates' access to questions/tasks, and candidates' responses.

There would appear to be a lack of awareness in some schools about the needs of candidates requiring special arrangements, as well as inadequate facilities to prepare candidates for examinations. Schools need to be more proactive, not only in the identification of special needs, but also in providing for them. Improvement in this area will not be without its difficulties and will have resource implications.

In terms of access to questions/tasks in the actual examination, demand for extra time to address a variety of candidate difficulties appeared in many submissions, although provision of additional time does not always work to a candidate's advantages.

The issue of extending time for some candidates raises a broader question: Is timing primarily an administrative device and are examinations designed so that the great majority of candidates can complete an examination in the allotted time, or is speed of response one of the competencies being assessed? We may assume that the former is the case. It would, however, be worthwhile obtaining data on the proportion of candidates who finish examinations under standard conditions. A similar criterion could then be applied to candidates with disabilities. However, even this position would have to take cognisance of the fact that the amount of time required to complete an examination may vary substantially by disability category. For example, individuals with visual impairments, using Braille or recorded versions of tests, seem particularly disadvantaged as far as time is concerned.

The provision of extra time has the clear potential to allow a candidate to provide additional information in response to questions or to attempt additional questions. On the face of it, then, additional time could confer an unfair advantage on individual candidates. On the other hand, it can be argued that for some candidates, additional time would do no more than enable them to access the test instrument in a way available to all candidates. To ensure that extra time is restricted only to those who would achieve no advantage is well nigh impossible. It would require intensive screening of each individual applicant by professionals and, even then, given the variation in the nature and severity of special needs, it would be extremely difficult to decide how much time was required by a candidate and whether or not the additional time conferred an advantage in the examination.

A possible way forward that might meet the special needs of many candidates, while, at the same time, preserving the integrity of the examination system, would be to make the time element of examinations less critical. As adumbrated above, evidence on the role of time in examinations under present conditions is required. While awaiting this evidence,
all candidates might be given the option of availing of a limited increase in time (15 to 20 minutes). Obviously this option would not be available in all examinations. Constraints are imposed by timetables, which are complex, and, anyhow, extra time would not be required in all subjects.

Our proposal is that, on a pilot basis, in the Leaving Certificate Examinations in 2000, all candidates be offered the option of availing of an additional 15 to 20 minutes in a small number of subjects. The examinations to which this proposal would apply should be determined in consultation with Chief Examiners. It is recommended that the selected subjects should be ones taken by large numbers of candidates, in which time seems to be a critical issue, and for which there is a capacity in the timetable to grant additional time. A number of subjects in the humanities which involve extensive essay writing would seem to meet these criteria. If the proposal is adopted, its implementation should be monitored, and the situation should be reviewed in light of the experience gained in the pilot.

Other factors to be considered in deciding on special provision in the case of both access and response relate to whether special provision for a particular candidate is required for all examinations or only for some; the amount of time that the Department requires to provide special conditions (e.g., alternative versions of a printed paper); whether papers currently in use are at an appropriate level of readability, bearing in mind the competencies being assessed; and whether some assessment tasks which are unsuitable for some candidates could be changed while at the same time meeting the objectives of the assessment.

Recommendations on Effective and Equitable Provision
In general, the arrangements provided by the Department of Education and Science to facilitate candidates’ access to questions/tasks and their responses in the actual examination were found by the Expert Advisory Group to be satisfactory and generally similar to arrangements elsewhere. The following recommendations, several of which relate to the preparation of candidates in schools, are made.

(i) Examination instruments should be reviewed with the purpose of making them as accessible as possible to all candidates. Readability levels and the time required for completion should be ascertained.
(ii) Special arrangements should, insofar as it is possible, reflect the nature and complexity of the learning difficulties of each individual candidate.
(iii) Decisions on arrangements should be provided at an earlier date than at present by the Department.
(iv) Schools should, by trying out various options, ensure that the most appropriate conditions are recommended for a candidate.
(v) School examinations should incorporate the special arrangements (from first year in secondary school if possible).
(vi) Candidates should have the opportunity to practice in school for the special arrangements (e.g., in use of a typewriter, word processor).
(vii) Schools should be encouraged to give candidates the opportunity to work with a reader/assistant/scribe under examination conditions before the examination.
(viii) An additional 15 to 20 minutes time could be offered to all candidates in subject areas in the examination in which time constraints may be considered a problem. A pilot scheme in a small number of subjects is proposed for the 2000 Leaving Certificate Examination.
(ix) Further decisions regarding the granting of additional time or rest periods should be made by the Department having considered the needs of an individual candidate.
(x) Consideration should be given towards extending further the range of formats for accessing questions (e.g., tape as well as hard copy).
Treatment and Reporting of Candidate Performance

Among the questions that arise in considering the treatment and reporting of candidate performance are: Should the work of candidates conducted with special provision be processed in the same way as the products of other candidates? Or should the work be identified and scored under special arrangements? Is it appropriate for an examiner to take into consideration life circumstances of an individual, or should he/she confine him/herself to the assessment of material that is actually presented, and apply the specified marking scheme without modification? The present regulations specify that examiners are required to apply agreed marking schemes to the work that candidates (including ones with learning difficulties and/or special needs) produce in the examination.

Many submissions expressed the view that certificates should not carry an indication that special arrangements had been in place for a candidate while taking an examination. This position seems to be based on the view that annotation on a certificate always works to the disadvantage of a candidate. This, however, is not the case. A scheme in which annotation is applied to certificates can serve to expand the capacity for special arrangements. Furthermore, users of the certificate (e.g., universities) are often prepared to make special provision for candidates when they know that such provision is required.

A question regarding the appropriateness of examiners taking into consideration the life circumstances of an individual also arises when candidates, though not the subject of a particular physical or learning disability, and not availing of special arrangements, are unable, because of circumstances around the time of the examination, to take all or part of an examination, or are seriously upset while doing the examination. A number of considerations are relevant to the situation. First, it does not seem possible to produce guidelines that would anticipate all conditions or establish criteria that would successfully identify all cases that merit consideration. Second, any attempt, however well-meaning, to take account of difficulties would involve departing from agreed marking schemes. Third, criteria that would allow an examiner to estimate the extent to which circumstances affected an individual candidate or their impact on his/her examination performance would be very difficult to establish. In this context, it may be noted that the alternatives to sitting the examination for estimating a candidate's achievements that exist in other jurisdictions are not available in our external, time-bound, terminal examination system. Thus, even if candidates could be identified, there are difficulties in determining what compensation should be made. Finally, there is always the danger of abuse when special consideration is given to candidates that had experienced illness or trauma during the course of an examination.

Recommendations on Treatment and Reporting of Candidate Performance

The following recommendations are made regarding the treatment and reporting of candidates’ performance.

(i) Assistant examiners should continue to be advised to refer to their Advising Examiner material from candidates which they have difficulty in accessing.
(ii) It should be noted on certificates of results if an element or elements of an examination have been omitted or the method of examining has been altered in a substantial way.
(iii) The range of supports which at present are provided to candidates and schools in trauma situations should be reviewed and developed to enable the Department to consider the appropriate response in individual cases, in consultation with school authorities and with full professional input.

FOOTNOTES


Appendix C: 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.
Reasonable Accommodations at the 2017 Certificate Examinations

Instructions for Schools