



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

Corr na Madadh, Baile Átha Luain, Co. na hIarmhí
Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

Reasonable Accommodations for Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations 2014

Socruithe Réasúnta 2014

Junior Certificate Teastas Sóisearach

**and
agus**

Leaving Certificate Scrúdú na hÁrdteistiméireachta

**It is important that you familiarise yourself with the detail in this
document before completing an application for Reasonable
Accommodations.**

General Information

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CANDIDATES WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES AND SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

To the authorities of second level schools

2. A supply of application forms in relation to the provision of Reasonable Accommodation(s) for candidates with special needs at the Junior Certificate examination 2014 is enclosed. If you require additional application forms please photocopy the original application form or download the application form on www.examinations.ie following the route of schools/reasonable accommodations. Alternatively please email sec.specialneeds@examinations.ie with your request.
3. These forms should be completed only in respect of candidates who will be sitting the Junior Certificate examinations in 2014. The application forms must be returned to the State Examinations Commission, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath no later than **19th November 2013**. Please write 'REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS 2014' along with the name of your **county** on the top left hand corner of the envelope.
4. Please refer to S40/94, S11/2000, S70/00 and S24/12 before completing the application form. These circulars can also be viewed on www.examinations.ie.
5. Applications which are completed in full and received by the closing date will have a reply issued to them by the end of April, 2014.
6. **It is of the utmost importance that all applications are signed by the Principal, parent/guardian and candidate. Unsigned forms will not be accepted and will be returned to the school.**
7. Late applications

Applications **WILL NOT** be accepted after the closing date unless it is an application where a disability has arisen or come to light after the closing date. In that case, the application should be made without delay. Similarly, where a change in a candidate's condition arises after the closing date, for better or worse, the State Examinations Commission should be notified immediately.

Helen Martin

October 2013

Guidelines for the completion of Junior Certificate Reasonable Accommodations applications

The State Examinations Commission operates a simplified devolved application model in relation to the Reasonable Accommodation Scheme at the Junior Certificate Examinations. Essentially, the Commission accepts the school's confirmation on the application form as sufficient evidence to enable the Commission to confirm an accommodation.

Please take particular note that any confirmation is given on the basis of the devolved model of the scheme in place for the Junior Certificate examinations only. An accommodation approved at Junior Certificate **DOES NOT** automatically guarantee that approval will be given at Leaving Certificate examinations. A fresh application will be required in respect of the Leaving Certificate which will be considered on its own merits.

All requests for reasonable accommodations should be in line with the principles set out hereunder. These are the principles under which the State Examinations Commission approves applications and ultimately any case referred by way of appeal to the Appeal Group will be determined by the Independent Appeal Group under the same set of principles.

Contact Details:

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

Direct Phone: 090 644 2781 / 2782 / 2783 / 2784 / 2785 / 2786
Fax: 090 644 2744
Email: sec.specialneeds@examinations.ie
Web: www.examinations.ie

Principles on which the provision of arrangements for candidates with special needs are based

(Expert Advisory Group on Examinations January 2000)

1. Reasonable Accommodations should be made for candidates who, because of a temporary, permanent or long-term disability, have special assessment needs in examinations.
2. Provision should be made for both physical and learning disabilities.
3. Reasonable Accommodations should not put the integrity, status, or reputation of the examination at risk.
4. Reasonable Accommodations should be designed to remove as far as possible the impact of a disability on a candidate's performance, so that he or she can demonstrate in the examination his or her level of achievement.
5. Reasonable Accommodations are designed to assist a candidate in demonstrating his or her achievements in an examination setting. They are not designed to compensate for a possible lack of achievement arising from a disability.
6. Since a core principle of the Certificate examinations is to ensure equitable treatment for all candidates, arrangements should not give the candidate for whom they are made an advantage over other candidates.
7. Independent evidence of a disability and support needs should be required before allowing reasonable accommodations.
8. The precise arrangements to be made should be determined on the basis of the disability or impairment established in each individual case and of the particular needs of the candidate in each individual subject area. Different subjects and different methods of assessment may make different demands on candidates.
9. A candidate's disability may be such that it is not possible for him or her to participate in a particular mode of assessment (an aural examination for a candidate with severe hearing impairment), in which case it should be open to the candidate to apply for exemption from part of the assessment procedure.
10. Where it is not possible for a candidate to participate in a particular mode of assessment, an alternative assessment procedure may be specified.
11. An alternative procedure is not acceptable where the purpose of an examination would be compromised by its use (e.g., providing a scribe to draw for a candidate in an Art examination).
12. When an element or elements of an examination have been waived, so that the purpose of the examination regarding that element or elements has not been met, or the method of examining has been significantly altered, this should be indicated by the presence of an explanatory note on the candidate's certificate of results.
13. Circumstances that may affect a candidate's performance (e.g., illness, trauma, bereavement) should, insofar as is possible, be addressed during the examination period.

Application on the Grounds of a Specific Learning Difficulty

Reasonable Accommodations for students sitting State Examinations are provided under the terms of Circulars S40/94, S11/00, S70/00 and S24/12 which state

“...that the existence of a specific learning difficulty does not automatically entitle a candidate to special arrangements in examinations. Even though candidates may have a specific difficulty with reading, writing or spelling, they may not require the provision of any special facilities provided they can read the question papers of the required level and write legibly. Each case is considered on its merits...”

The State Examinations Commission may request the school to provide the evidence demonstrating that a candidate has a Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD) /Dyslexia of a degree that makes accommodations in examinations necessary. As not all candidates with SLD will need accommodations, application rates from individual schools would be expected to amount to no more than six candidates in a Junior/Leaving Certificate cohort of (e.g.) three to four classes or 100 candidates. This is on the basis of prevalence rates of approximately 6.5 to 8%, referred to in the Dyslexia Task Force Report and on the Dyslexia Association of Ireland website.

Identification

A specific learning difficulty may be indicated where there is

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

Students whose general intellectual ability is below the average range

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

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

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

A list of tests¹ suggested by NEPS for use by schools when considering applications for reasonable accommodations at the 2014 examinations is listed below. There are two types of test are included –

- Tests that provide estimates of abilities
- Tests of literacy-related skills

¹ For additional information on suitable tests please see “Tests for use by Guidance Counsellors and Support Teachers in Post-Primary Schools”. This can be accessed through the Special Education Support Service (SESS) **website: www.sess.ie/resources/assessment**

TESTS THAT PROVIDE ESTIMATES OF ABILITIES:

Consideration of group ability tests administered at the time of second-level school entry may also provide useful information. Examples of tests that may have been used by schools at that point are:

- NRIT (NonReading Intelligence Test -)
- CAT- 3 / CAT -4 – (Cognitive Abilities Test) (adapted by nferNelson with Irish norms)

Differential Aptitude Tests (DATs)

- These also include subtests on Spelling, Language Usage and Clerical Speed and Accuracy, which provide a basis for comparison to other aptitude and ability scores on the test.

Informal Dictation

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

TESTS OF LITERACY-RELATED SKILLS:

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

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

The following two tests are useful for identifying dyslexic tendencies. They do not, however, provide standardised literacy scores.

- Dyslexia Screening Test
- Dyslexia Adult Screening Test

NB: *For weaker readers only*, the **Neale Analysis** can be helpful for teachers as it will give a reading age, a reading comprehension age, and a reading rate age.

However, for this test it is essential to take note that even the best readers cannot score above a reading age of 12:11 to 13 years – no matter what their actual age. Accordingly, it is of value **ONLY** to those who score below the age-ceiling.

Access to a Reader

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

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

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

- a score well below average on a reading test (See Table)
- reading speed is well below average e.g. significantly less than 90 words per minute
- The observed score and misreadings are inconsistent with the candidate's ability as demonstrated in knowledge of course content and knowledge of other areas of the curriculum

Range of test scores for access to a reader

(The degree of severity of a specific learning disability will determine the nature of the accommodation for which an individual candidate may be eligible – if any. All available information should be taken into account as standard scores alone are unlikely to be sufficient for this purpose)

Candidates whose scores on age-appropriate reading tests are:

- **86 + are likely to be of average reading ability and hence are not likely to be eligible for access to a reader. In general, no test of general cognitive ability is necessary for such RACE applicants.**
- **= or < 85 are likely to be eligible providing that they also meet the AND criteria, i.e. evidence of an SLD AND word reading SS less than or equal to 85 AND reading accuracy error rate of more than 7% (candidates should read from two papers at the appropriate level in relevant subjects, total number of words should not be less than 500 and one must be in the language of schooling).**

Or If a candidate's rate of word reading (words per minute) is an issue. They must be reading at less than 90 words per minute.

- **In general, candidates who have an SLD and whose abilities are in the Average range or above and whose attainment test standardised scores are at or below 85, along with evidence from additional data, are eligible for RACE.**

Evidence of ability and of a significant discrepancy between ability and attainment must be clearly available to determine that these candidates are eligible for access to a reader.

Access to a reader will alter the assessment methods in language subjects and consequently the grades obtained by a candidate in any language subjects taken by him/her will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows;

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

Waiver from the assessment of spelling, grammar and punctuation in the language subjects

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

- good oral ability
- good knowledge of course content
- a score well below average on a spelling test (See Table)
- The observed score and misspellings are inconsistent with the candidate’s ability as demonstrated in knowledge of course content and knowledge of other areas of the curriculum.

Please refer to following table to determine eligibility for the waiver from spelling, grammar and punctuation. (Guidance for calculating errors in spelling and grammar are available at the end of this document).

Candidates whose standardised scores on spelling tests are :

- **> 85 are likely to be of average spelling ability and hence not likely to be eligible for spelling and grammar/writing accommodations.**
- **= or < 85 are likely to be eligible providing that they also have evidence of SLD and spelling/grammar/punctuation error rate of 8% or more (where errors are calculated as follows: a word misspelled in more than one way each misspelling is an error, same word misspelled the same way multiple times is considered as one error.**

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

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

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

Use of a Tape Recorder or Word Processor

(Specific Learning Disability not Physical Disability)

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

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

1. **Illegible writing:** (which renders a script unintelligible due to the frequency of spelling/grammar/punctuation errors).
2. **Slow Writing:** (a rate of writing so slow that it renders the student unable to complete exams).

A decision may be made by the school to recommend use of a mechanical aid such as a tape recorder or word processor, on the grounds of a specific learning difficulty, where it can be established that the candidate has;

- good oral ability
- good knowledge of course content
- a score well below average on a spelling test (See Table)
- significant errors (see table) in target words so as to make them **UNRECOGNISABLE** under test and on written samples.
- Illegible handwriting or handwriting speed at or below 12 words per minute.
- The observed score and mis-spellings are inconsistent with the candidate's ability as demonstrated in knowledge of course content and knowledge of other areas of the curriculum.

Criteria for eligibility for writing accommodations of some sort:

(The degree of severity of a specific learning disability will determine the nature of the writing accommodation – if any – for which an individual candidate may be eligible – if any. All available information should be taken into account as standard scores alone are unlikely to be sufficient for this purpose)

Illegible Writing: criteria <i>A & B & C</i> must be met.	Slow Writing: criteria <i>A & B & C & D</i> must be met.
A. Evidence of a Specific Learning Disability B. A Standard Score in spelling less than or equal to 85 C. Written sample has spelling/grammar/punctuation errors of at least 20%.	A. Evidence of a Specific Learning Disability B. A Standard Score in spelling less than or equal to 85 C. Written sample has spelling/grammar/punctuation errors of at least 8%. D. Writing is significantly slower: less than 12 words a minute on a piece of dictation.

Please note: Evidence of ability and of a significant discrepancy between ability and attainment must be clearly available to determine that these candidates are eligible for access to writing accommodations.

Spelling SS > 85 are likely to be of average spelling ability and hence not likely to be eligible for spelling/grammar or writing accommodations.

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

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

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

Access to a Scribe

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

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

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

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

Application on the grounds of a Hearing Difficulty

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

Special Centre for Aural Examination

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

Modified Aural Examination

This examination will take the form of a face to face interview with an examiner. The marks allocated to this special examination will be equivalent to the total marks

applying to the standard Aural examinations. This modified Aural will take place in the weeks prior to the commencement of the examinations in June. Consequently, the candidate will not be required to take the Listening Comprehension tests in June.

Personal Stereo in Main Centre for Aural Examination

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

Exemption from the Aural Examinations

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

Application on the grounds of a Visual Difficulty

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

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

Enlarged Examination Papers

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

Braille Version of Examination Papers

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

Modified Version of Examination Papers

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

Application on the grounds of a Physical Difficulty

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

Use of a Tape Recorder

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

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

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

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

Use of a Word Processor

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

Access to a Scribe

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

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

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

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

Helper in the Practical Subjects

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

Exemption from Practical Test in Home Economics

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

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

Exemption from Project in Home Economics

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

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

The Examining Process and Difficulty Accessing Material

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

Appointment of Superintendent/Scribe/Reader

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

Appeal Procedure

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

Appendix 1: Guidance for the calculation of errors in: Spelling & Grammar²

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.

² Adapted from the: Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – Second UK Edition. Harcourt Assessment, (2005).