

Quality Assurance Handbook: Appendix B.4.4

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Extra Provision for Specific Disabilities and Additional Needs

Outlined below are some of the main areas where arrangements and procedures have been identified.

Hearing Impairment

The extent of the challenges faced by a learner with a hearing impairment will vary depending on the degree of impairment and also the first language of the learner.

Support arrangements should allow for appropriate means of ensuring effective communication. This may include the provision of information in written form, use of amplified sound or arrangements for seating the learner at the front of the class for example.

Within an assessment setting, arrangements may or may not be required. The assessment procedures should allow for extra time during which instructions may be given so that any misunderstandings with regard to the phrasing or vocabulary of the questions can be clarified, if necessary, via a sign language interpreter. A learner is reasonably expected to understand the technical language of the subject but not necessarily the language or phrasing of the question itself. Partially/profoundly deaf learners may lip-read or require amplified sound during the instructions being given by the invigilator in an examination. It is essential that the invigilator is aware of the need for clear speech and arrangements are made to seat a learner who lip-reads at the front of the examination room. Alternatively, any instructions may be made available in written format. Where necessary a separate room should be provided.

Visual Impairment

Arrangements for visually impaired learners will vary according to their level of vision, the subject under assessment, the nature of the programme or the assessment and the learner's chosen work methods. Accommodations made for visually impaired learners may include:

- Providing written materials in a medium appropriate to the learner's needs, for example, increased font size or audio recording.
- Avoiding the use of diagrams in questions and answers or providing a clear means of presenting these that will be visible to the learner or clearly describing them in words in a manner that will be understandable and not inhibit the learner from completing the question to their full potential.

In addition to the above, provision of a reader and scribe during assessment activities may be required and will involve the need for a separate room and invigilation, where examinations are held on-site.

Physical Disability

Learners with physical disabilities may require specific supports related to the physical access of the learning environment. Additionally, consideration may need to be given to the nature and format of teaching and learning activities.

Many physically disabled learners may need use of a laptop, to use a scribe or require extra time when undertaking examinations or in-class tests. Where the assessment relates to the completion of physical activities, alternative arrangements should be made to accommodate the needs of the learner. Again, the learner should not be disadvantaged or advantaged as a result of any such accommodations.

Dyslexia

Learners with dyslexia may require support relating to the format in which information is provided. This may include changing the font size and type, changing the colour of the paper or using strategies that are not text dependent.

Appropriate arrangements should be made so as to minimise the effects of dyslexia in assessment arrangements in a way that enables the learner to demonstrate attainment of minimum learning outcomes without being disadvantaged or advantaged.

NEP arrangements may differ from learner to learner and should be based on the specified recommendations of an appropriately qualified specialist's report and may include:

- Application of a spelling and grammar waiver in all assessments.
- Extra time to allow the learner to read and understand the question and to plan, structure and check the answer, or a scribe to write on behalf of the learner.
- Use of particular fonts, font size, background paper colour, use of a reader and so on.
- Opportunity for the learner to sit an exam in a separate room (where examinations are held on-site) if the extent of their anxiety in a shared environment is likely to significantly exacerbate the effects of their dyslexia and prevent them from presenting an accurate reflection of their knowledge.

Other Disabilities

Learners with other disabilities will be accommodated according to their particular situation. This may require special arrangements regarding the use of electronic equipment, breaks during class time, recovery time, arrangements for self-administering medication, etc.

Learners with non-visible disabilities should have the option of taking their examinations in separate, appropriate accommodation if there is a possibility that a symptom of the illness may interrupt the examination sitting.

Where a medical recommendation is that a significant break is provided for a learner, this should be accommodated, and arrangements made for the learner to sit the examination (where examinations are held on-site) in a separate room with individual invigilation.

Mental Health

Where evidence of a long-term mental health condition is provided, appropriate adjustments should be made in line with those recommendations received from the qualified specialist. This may include:

- Provision of a separate room and invigilator, where examinations are held on-site.
- Provision of additional time to complete exams or continuous assessments.

This does not apply to short-term mental health issues where the regulations relating to extenuating circumstances (PMC Policy) should be referred to.

Practical NEP Arrangements

Extra Time for Examinations and In Class Tests

Where an expert recommendation identifies the requirement, extra time is given at a rate of 10 minutes per hour.

Dedicated Rooms

Learners granted additional time for an Assessment must attend a dedicated examination room, where examinations are held on-site. The Examinations Team will contact learners by e-mail with the room location and the dedicated room will also be shown on the examination timetable. Some learners in the dedicated examination room will be using laptops to write their examinations and so it is acceptable for a learner to bring ear plugs into the exam room where that learner is sensitive to noise.

Extra Time in In-Class Tests

Where exams are hosted on-site, learners will either sit the test in a separate room with an invigilator along with any other class members entitled to additional time, or alternatively they will be accommodated in the same room as the rest of the class and given the additional time after the other learners have left the class.

Where exams are hosted online, the additional time will be provided through the online exam platform.

To avail of the additional time for an in-class test, learners must notify the lecturer **at least 3 weeks in advance**. On the day of the class test, learners must introduce themselves to the lecturer at the start of the class test to let them know that they are to receive additional time.

Rest Breaks during Exams and In-Class Tests

Where an expert recommendation identifies the requirement, extra time is allocated to the learner to be used for rest breaks at a rate of:

- 1 hour test 10 minutes
- 90 minute test 15 minutes
- 2 hours or longer 30 minutes

Learners may choose when to take their breaks. During rest breaks learners may move around the room as they wish. Should they wish to leave the exam room to access toilet facilities or any other facilities they must be accompanied by an invigilator, where the examination is held on-site.

During rest breaks learners may not read the exam paper, read their answers or write or prepare answers.

Spelling and Grammar Waiver

Learners who are entitled to a spelling and grammar waiver will be given 'S&G' stickers to stick onto their submitted work and exam papers. They will also be given an electronic version to attach to work submitted online. The onus is on the learner to ensure that they have enough stickers for all of their exams and coursework. Stickers can be collected from the Disability and Inclusion Officer at any time during working hours.

The 'S&G' sticker should be placed on either the first or second page of a piece of coursework or exam paper. The stickers will alert lecturers marking the work that they must apply the spelling and grammar waiver. Please note that lecturers double check the learner's eligibility before applying the waiver. Anyone found to be passing stickers to other learners or using stickers without permission from the Disability and Inclusion Officer will face disciplinary procedures.

Alternate Exam Papers Format

Where an expert recommendation requires that a learner receive their assessment paper in a different font, with differing font sizing, on different coloured paper or with the use of a coloured overlay, learners will sit the exam/in-class test in the same exam room as the rest of the class.

Learners should make themselves known to the lecturer or invigilator at the start of the examination/ in-class test, so that the lecturer or invigilator knows who is to receive the adapted examination paper/ in-class test paper.

Where examinations are hosted on-site, learners who have been assessed as entitled to use assistive technology for assessments will have examination papers/ in-class tests provided as a Microsoft Word document on a memory stick. They will sit the exam in a dedicated examination room with up to 15 learners who are also having special assessment arrangements. An Exams Office representative will contact learners by e-mail with the room location and the dedicated room will also be shown on the exam timetable.

Provision of a Reader

DBS does not at this time use text to speech technology or recordings. Where learners are entitled to use a reader for exams and in-class tests, and examinations are hosted on-site, they will be working with a human reader. The learner will be given a private room for the exam/in-class test. Present in the room will be the learner, the reader and an invigilator. Alternatively, the reader may also be the invigilator so only the learner and the reader will be present.

The reader will read the questions, as written on the exam paper, to the learner. They will not explain or paraphrase the question or give the learner any other information. The reader will read the questions in any order that the learner chooses, allowing the learner to attempt the questions in their preferred order, and can re-read the questions as often as the learner wishes. The reader can also read back the answers that the learner has written if requested by the learner.

Using a Reader for In-Class Tests

Where an individual reader has been approved for use in an in-class test, learners will be accommodated in a separate room. Importantly, again the learner must make contact with the lecturer at least 3 weeks in advance to allow for the Reader arrangements to be made.

Provision of a Scribe

DBS does not use text-to-speech technology nor recordings. Where a learner has been assessed as entitled to a scribe for examinations and in-class tests, and the assessments are hosted on-site, they will be working with a human scribe. The learner will be given a private room for the examination/in-class test. Present in the room will be the learner, the scribe and an invigilator. Alternatively, the scribe may also be the invigilator and so only the learner and the scribe will be present.

The scribe will transcribe the learner's dictation of answers by hand or using a computer, depending on the scribe's own preference. If separate marks are given for spelling or punctuation, these will not be credited to a learner using a scribe.

The learner will be assessed on the content of their answer only.

The scribe will not advise, explain or discuss answers with the learner. They will write the learner's answers accurately without paraphrasing the content. Scribes can, at the learner's request, read back what has been written.

Additional paper will be available for the learner to use for any rough work, for planning their answer or in case they wish to submit handwritten material in support of their answer, in addition to the work produced by the scribe.

Scribe for In-Class Tests

Where a learner has been assessed as entitled to the use of a scribe, to avail of the scribe for an in-class test the learner must make contact with the lecturer to arrange this at least 3 weeks in advance. Learners will be accommodated in a separate room for the in-class test.

Using a Reader and a Scribe

Where a learner has been assessed as entitled to the use of both a reader and a scribe, the same person may perform both functions. In this case present in the exam room would be the learner, the Scribe/Reader and possibly a separate invigilator.

Provision of a Laptop

Where learners have been assessed as entitled to use of a laptop for exams and in-class tests, where examinations are hosted on-site, a laptop will be provided for the learner's use on the day. The learner will be given a memory stick to save their answers on and submit both the laptop and the memory stick at the end of the exam. Exam answers will be written in MS Word. It is the responsibility of the learner to be proficient in the use of the computer and the appropriate software.

Learners who use an assistive technology for exams may be given permission to use their own equipment in exams if it is not practical to transfer the technology to a College laptop.

Using a Laptop in Exams

Where examinations are hosted on-site, learners will go to a dedicated exam room with other learners using laptops. The Examinations Team will contact learners by e-mail with the room location and the dedicated room will also be shown on the exam timetable.

Using a Laptop in In-Class Tests

Learners will either be given the test in a separate room with an invigilator along with any other class members entitled to use a laptop or alternatively they will be accommodated in the same room as the rest of the class.

To avail of the laptop for an in-class test learners must contact the lecturer 3 weeks in advance. On the day, learners must introduce themselves to the lecturer at the start of the class to let them know that they are the learner who will be using a laptop.

Alternative Assessment Methodology

Where the assessment methodology itself is deemed to be the barrier, this should be discussed between the lecturer and the Disability and Inclusion Officer. An alternative assessment methodology may be approved in such cases where it is possible to assess the attainment of learning outcomes through another means and where an unfair advantage is not being provided. DBS encourages lecturers to consider automatic use of assessment methodology that is as inclusive as possible. Where recurring barriers to assessment are identified as a result of the chosen methodology it is reasonably expected that the methodology will be revised and replaced with a more inclusive one.

Additional Information

The learner support page on the DBS website provides further information:

<https://students.dbs.ie/dbs-student-services/disabilities-support>