

Record Keeping for Special Assessment Conditions

The following guidelines are intended to assist schools establish systems surrounding the provision of Special Assessment Conditions.

Administration

It is recommended that schools establish folders for each applicant or potential applicant to record the details of their manifest or non manifest condition. The folder should contain a cover sheet for each candidate indicating the current status of testing, what special assessment they are receiving and when the application was completed. There should also be a record of the ongoing supported learning that the candidates receive in the form of extra tuition to assist them to overcome their disabilities. Comments from staff and exam assistants about the performance of the candidate in internal assessments with and without assistance should also be recorded.

Independent assessment

For Specific Learning Disability applications (non manifest conditions) The independent assessors used by schools or from whom parents and caregivers request reports, need to be suitably qualified and registered, for example either a registered educational psychologist or registered NZCER level C assessor. Some schools may use a Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour (RTL B) if that person is correctly qualified. Independent testing should occur in the year prior to a candidate's first entry into external assessment for national qualifications for which special assessment conditions are sought so that schools have a complete list of the candidates who may be potential applicants.

Testing by schools and psychologists needs to establish that a candidate has the intellectual capacity to be able to perform in assessments, but is held back by a significant learning disability. Such an assessment must detail the extent of the learning problem and clearly indicate that the candidate will fail to perform without assistance because of this. Any independent non-professional audit of the report (such as a Principal's Nominee might perform prior to making online applications) must be able to clearly determine the reasoning behind any recommendations for special assessment conditions.

The independent reports must clearly note if a candidate qualifies for reader assistance, writer assistance or reader/writer assistance, or separate accommodation or extra time or computer use and specify the reasons for arriving at such a conclusion based on the testing conducted. Independent assessors and schools should define the nature of the significant learning problem that the candidate exhibits and describe the impact of this learning problem on the applicant's ability to complete assessments without the special assessment conditions applied for.

Evidence

The evidence for the provision of reader/writer or reader or writer assistance needs to be examined carefully. It is important for the school to be able to identify that the candidate has 'a significant learning problem'. A description of 'spelling at age 8.9' or 'reading age of 10.4' is insufficient to support the need for special assistance, particularly where this is contained in a report completed up to three years earlier. While this candidate may not appear to read well this is not "a significant learning problem" but a surface feature that may indicate the need for further investigation. The school, with reference to the report and other evidence, has to be able to demonstrate why this is so.

Similarly, demonstration of an inability to write well or at speed needs to be explained. There is no issue with any student having writer assistance because of a physical disability but in all other cases, legibility and speed of writing needs to be objectively assessed. One explanation may be lack of practice of the skills of reading and/or writing, and this may be signalled in the report. It is expected that schools adopt and adapt the suggested interventions as appropriate. Much of the evidence for candidates needing writer assistance relates to their poor spelling. Candidates who are spelling at a 11 or 12 year old level may not appear to spell well because they cannot spell words that they verbalise. The school has to be able to demonstrate why they cannot spell and describe how it is 'a significant learning problem'. Once again, it is likely that a report would suggest interventions, such as intensive practice in spelling course-specific vocabulary for the candidate. Although their spelling of words may not be exact, many candidates spell phonetically and the words are recognisable. There are very few standards where correct spelling is crucial to the achievement of the standard, and in those where it is, writer assistance may invalidate a candidate's results so the provision of a writer is not required in most cases where poor spelling alone is the only factor identified.

Educational psychologist reports often allude to the poor spelling of a student and how this detracts from their work and impacts on their performance because the student spends an inordinate amount of time trying to spell a word. Poor spelling is often used by a psychologist to support the recommendation of writer assistance for a candidate. Writer assistance will not be approved by NZQA just because someone is a poor speller. Schools should ensure that candidates practise writing to improve their speed in writing and to improve their spelling.

Reports citing Irlen syndrome alone are insufficient evidence upon which to provide reader, writer or reader/writer assistance to a candidate. Other testing needs to have established the candidate's intellectual level and his or her abilities before any special assistance is provided. Such candidates may be best assisted by the provision of extra time.

Candidates whose reports indicate 'low ability' are not approved for special assessment conditions. Special assessment conditions are to ameliorate 'a significant learning problem' not to provide them with an advantage in their performance in assessments. Candidates in such situations can be awarded credits from their demonstrated performance in internal assessments. The evidence of their learning can perhaps be proven by an oral demonstration rather than having to produce written evidence within the constraints of time.

Processing Applications

Schools should know who their candidates for special assessment conditions are at the start of the year. The school will know at that time who is under the guidance of the Special Needs department and can ensure that entries for externals are correct. All independent testing for candidates making their first entry into external assessment for national qualifications should have been completed in the previous year and copies provided to the school before the end of March in the year of assessment.

The 'Reason for application' produced online should be a summary of their learning or physical problems rather than a biographical study of each candidate.

The approval by NZQA of special assessment in one year does not necessarily mean that approval will be given in subsequent years. A review of the results of students for whom assistance has previously been provided may indicate the need to modify the nature of the assistance provided over time. Ongoing extra teaching and programmes of special learning will assist most candidates become more independent in their assessments.

In addition, the school should conduct an annual needs analysis to determine the efficacy of the special assessment conditions provided. For example, it may be appropriate for some candidates to complete more internal assessment, perhaps with the use of a computer, or for candidates entering standards requiring computation or manipulation of formulae to write for themselves.

Alternative evidence

Where schools are unable to provide the required current assessment from a suitably qualified independent professional the school must contact NZQA no later than **the end of May**.

To make an application using 'alternative evidence' the school must therefore assure NZQA that either the school does not have access to a suitably qualified independent registered professional such as a Level C assessor in their region or that the student's family can not afford to pay for such a professional assessor's report and that financial assistance is not available from the school or other agencies.

If NZQA gives initial approval to submit an application for special assessment conditions based on 'alternative evidence' then the school must submit evidence of each of the following:

- (i) That the school does not have access to a suitably qualified independent registered professional such as a Level C assessor in their region or that the student's family can not afford to pay for such a professional assessor's report and that financial assistance is not available from the school or other agencies
- (ii) Of an appropriate testing tool being used to assess the student's learning during the previous two years to identify their learning problem **and** the need for appropriate special assistance
- (iii) That the student can demonstrate competence at a higher level with reader, writer or special assistance than without, comparative evidence will be required
- (iv) That the student is receiving ongoing support to manage their learning problem and that the school has a specific programme of learning support that they have provided and continue to provide for the student
- (v) That the student is receiving the same special assessment conditions, as that requested, in their current year of learning for school based assessments.

Further detail about 'alternative evidence' should be discussed with the School Relationship Manager before making applications. These applications will be considered by a review panel which will include Level C assessors. As there may be no opportunity to engage in further feedback schools need to ensure that they have addressed all of the criteria above, in full, when making their application.

Students new to the school with no 'alternative evidence' available to the school will need to provide a current assessment from a suitably qualified independent registered professional, as outlined above.

All applications for 'alternative evidence' must be signed off by the school Principal as representing a genuine need and attesting to the authenticity of the evidence and submitted no later than the **end of July**.

Record Keeping

All applications will be subject to audit by NZQA so schools must keep on file all evidence used to support applications for special assessment conditions. They need to be kept for at least one year after applications are submitted and until they are no longer required to support further applications by this student.

All independent evidence in support of an application must have been recorded within three years of the year of examination. This is because the recommendations are age and stage appropriate. Applicants must have been receiving ongoing support to manage their learning difficulties during their time at secondary school, and schools must be able to detail the specific programmes of learning support that they have provided and continue to provide for students.

Special assessment conditions

Extra time: Applications should reflect the amount of time that a candidate will take to complete the standards in the exam. Candidates with applications for 'extra time' must use this extra time at the end of the three-hour examination. They are not to be started 30 minutes before the start of the examination.

In many cases, extra time will not be needed for a candidate who is working with a reader and or writer. For example, an application for 30 minutes extra time for a candidate who is sitting one standard in 3 hours will be declined.

Candidates with extra time will be provided separate accommodation only if they have a medical reason in support of this extra provision. Schools need to decide if the candidate's 'significant learning problem' can be best managed by entry into fewer external standards and/or an increased programme of internal assessment.

Reader Assistance: Applications should be supported by an appropriate independent report and school- based observations of the need for reader assistance.

Writer Assistance: Applications should be supported by an appropriate independent report and school- based observations of the need for writer assistance. Writer assistance may risk invalidating a candidate's responses in some standards and for others it is too difficult to work with a writer. For example, some English standards require the student to have an independent command of language features which may require the candidate to dictate spelling and punctuation features. In mathematics and other standards requiring calculations it is very difficult for a candidate to work with a writer and this provision is often declined. The use of computers may be more appropriate for some students.

Computer Assistance: Applications should be supported by an appropriate independent report and school-based observations of the need for computer assistance. This must be the normal means of communication by the candidate for their work.

Separate Accommodation: Schools must note in any application why they have requested this assistance. Applications without this supporting detail will not have separate accommodation approved.

Information required for SAC audit

Background

For a student to qualify for Special Assessment Conditions, a clear need must first be identified. Students qualifying will have been identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). It must be shown that the student is of **at least average** intelligence and that the learning disability is not the result of:

- visual, hearing or intellectual impairment.
- absenteeism or lack of educational opportunity.
- cultural, economic or factors of ethnicity.
- lack of motivation.

To assist you identify whether the student has SLD, please document the following:

General Information

- A clear statement of learning disabilities.
- When the learning disability was first identified
- Whether the student has strengths in some areas and weaknesses in others? If 'yes', which.
- Whether the student takes longer to complete written work than his/her peers
- What intervention/support procedures have been put in place in school
- The student's response to intervention (RTI)
- Whether the student previously had a reader/writer or other special assessment conditions
- Any assessments which have been carried out (e.g. vision, hearing, psychological assessment, SPELD). Retain a copy of any such reports.
- Whether learning support outside of school been accessed (e.g. SPELD, Kip McGrath, Numberworks). If 'yes', which.
- Whether the student has other conditions that may be impacting on learning e.g. ADHD (on medication?), dyspraxia, dyscalculia, Asperger's Syndrome, depression.
- Whether the student has a visual or hearing impairment

Written Language

- Burt Word Reading Test.
- Spelling age: (e.g. Schonell, Peters, PRETOS, Burt Spelling).
- Current sample of unedited unassisted writing.
- Summary of NCEA results (where applicable).

Reading

- Reading speed
- Reading comprehension (e.g. PROBE, Flesch).

Student self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses

Independent evidence supporting Special Assessment applications

Checklist

Name:

Year:

Class:

- Evidence that candidate needs special assessment conditions (detailed above)
- Evidence from:
- Latest evidence or report datedNew test needed
- Evidence must be related to candidate's time at secondary school
- Evidence is related to a medical condition
- Evidence notes candidate's intellectual capacity
- Candidate is not described as 'low ability' or 'below average'
- Evidence notes the 'significant learning problem'
(significant means performing at a level 4 – 5 years below the year level of the exam entered)

Report recommends

- Extra time
- Separate accommodation
- Reader
- Writer
- Reader/writer
- Computer use
- Other:

Can the 'significant learning problem' be managed by entry into fewer standards and /or an increased emphasis on internal assessment?

Yes

No

Student Name:

Year:

Class:

Candidate's Response to Special Assessment Conditions provided by the school/ externals

(also note the name of the reader or the writer used with this candidate)

Date	Special assistance provided & by whom	Effectiveness / Student Response	Further Action Eg Change nature of assessment

Student Name:
Year:
Class:

Annual Needs Analysis

Special Needs Department Feedback	Student Feedback	Parent/ Guardian Feedback

Outcomes

Review indicates a need to:.....

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