

# Exams for children and adults with dyslexia

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the awarding body for the majority of examinations undertaken in secondary schools and colleges in Scotland. The SQA has a sympathetic and forward-thinking policy towards candidates with dyslexia.

If a candidate has dyslexia and additional support needs they may need an assessment arrangement. An identification of dyslexia is not needed in order to request assessment arrangements. Schools and colleges are responsible for addressing the additional support needs of children and adults who face a barrier to learning and they will liaise with the SQA to:

- Identify and verify the need for an assessment arrangement.
- Select an appropriate form of assessment arrangement.
- Authorise the request.

It is essential that the candidate is involved in the assessment arrangement and has agreed to it; evidence of this is required by the SQA, as is evidence that the candidate requires the particular assessment arrangement. Parents should also be aware of what assessment needs their child has. If the candidate is under 16, the SQA requires the consent of their parent/carer.

## SQA's principles of assessment arrangements are:

- Assessment arrangements are intended to enable candidates to demonstrate (and not compensate for a lack of) attainment.
- The integrity of the qualification must be maintained.
- Any assessment should reflect, as far as possible, the candidate's way of working in teaching and learning.

## Assessment arrangements

These can take the form of:

- Digital exams.
- Extra time (usually 25%). This is the most common assessment arrangement.
- An electronic/human reader and/or scribe.
- Use of a word processor and spell check.
- Use of a calculator in a non-calculator paper.
- Transcription with or without correction.
- Candidate's preferred text size, font and paper size.
- Coloured paper and/or use of coloured overlays.
- A prompter.

Assessment arrangements will be specific to each candidate and it is important that the candidate is familiar with their agreed strategies. This means that they should be given an opportunity to practise their strategies prior to sitting exams and in most cases assessment arrangements should reflect classroom practice. For example, a candidate intending to use digital examination papers can practise using them by downloading past papers from the SQA website. Some candidates might find that one strategy works for all of their subjects; others will need to use different support measures in different circumstances.

The exploration of strategies is most effective if it begins as early as possible, ideally by first year of secondary, if not already in place. Schools and colleges are also required to confirm each year that any assessment arrangements previously provided are still suitable for the candidate in the next academic year. (This does not mean re-assessing the candidate's need for assessment arrangements). If there are difficulties in putting arrangements into place, contact should be made with either the school Head Teacher, college Principal or local education authority. It is always better to establish and maintain a good working relationship with the academic establishment. If this is unsuccessful, parents/carers can contact the SQA at [customer@sqa.org.uk](mailto:customer@sqa.org.uk) for support.

Dyslexia Scotland has written a short leaflet about SQA's assessment arrangements for the National Literacy Units. It outlines a new arrangement around the use of human readers and scribes in the units. You can see this and all of our leaflets at [www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/leaflets](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/leaflets)

## Further information

- There is detailed information about assessment arrangements and a range of past examination papers including digital examination papers at the Scottish Qualifications Authority website [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)
- Dyslexia Scotland Helpline 0344 800 8484 [helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk](mailto:helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk)



**Dyslexia Scotland**

Charity No: SC 000951

Registered No: SC 153321

Dyslexia Scotland © 10/23