

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. 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.

SQA's principles of assessment arrangements are:

- Candidates for whom arrangements are requested should potentially have the ability to achieve the national standard (but are unable to do so using the published usual assessment arrangements).
- The integrity of the qualification must be maintained.
- Any assessment should reflect, as far as possible, the candidate's normal way of learning and working.

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 with or without extra time and spell check.
- Use of a calculator including in a non-calculator paper.
- Transcription with or without correction.
- Large print text.
- Coloured paper, including graph 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 chosen 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. 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 breaks down, however, persistence might be needed in order to find solutions to the candidate's difficulties.

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/our-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
- Dyslexia Scotland Helpline 0344 800 8484 helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk



Dyslexia Scotland

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