Special Examination Arrangements for VCE external assessments

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Contents

[Introduction 1](#_Toc1631735)

[Eligibility for Special Examination Arrangements 2](#_Toc1631736)

[Early engagement and application 2](#_Toc1631737)

[Students enrolled in one or more VCE or scored VCE VET Unit 3-4 sequence in 2019 3](#_Toc1631738)

[Managing Special Examination Arrangements for students enrolled in one or more VCE or scored VCE VET Unit 3-4 sequences in 2019 3](#_Toc1631739)

[Appealing a decision 4](#_Toc1631740)

[Emergency Special Examination Arrangements 4](#_Toc1631741)

[Types of Special Examination Arrangements 4](#_Toc1631742)

[Sitting external assessments at home 5](#_Toc1631743)

[Instructions for supervision of Special Examination Arrangements 6](#_Toc1631744)

[Total duration of examinations 6](#_Toc1631745)

[Separate examination room 6](#_Toc1631746)

[Separate supervision 6](#_Toc1631747)

[Readers 7](#_Toc1631748)

[Electronic readers and software 7](#_Toc1631749)

[Scribes 8](#_Toc1631750)

[Clarifiers 9](#_Toc1631751)

[Use of computers and/or assistive technology 9](#_Toc1631752)

[Group Computer Room 10](#_Toc1631753)

[Special Provision categories and evidence requirements for Special Examination Arrangements applications 11](#_Toc1631754)

[Mental health conditions 11](#_Toc1631755)

[Appropriate provisions 11](#_Toc1631756)

[Requests for extra working time 12](#_Toc1631757)

[Health impairment or physical disability 13](#_Toc1631758)

[Specific Learning Disorders 15](#_Toc1631759)

[Cognitive Assessment (IQ tests) (mandatory requirement) 15](#_Toc1631760)

[Reading – requests for extra working time, reader and/or assistive technology 16](#_Toc1631761)

[Written expression – requests for extra working time, use of computer, scribe and/or assistive technology 16](#_Toc1631762)

[Mathematics – requests for extra working time, use of computer and/or assistive technology 18](#_Toc1631763)

[Language disorder 18](#_Toc1631764)

[Motor Coordination Disorder 19](#_Toc1631765)

[Hearing impairment 20](#_Toc1631766)

[Vision impairment 20](#_Toc1631767)

Introduction

Special Examination Arrangements may be approved to meet the needs of students with disabilities, illnesses or other circumstances that affect their ability to access a VCE external assessment.

Special Examination Arrangements applications are made to the VCAA through the student’s school and must be endorsed by the principal. Such applications will be considered by the VCAA in accordance with its policies.

The VCAA recognises that some students with a disability, as defined in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth), or illness may require Special Examination Arrangements to enable them to access the examination/test questions and communicate their responses in a timed external assessment.

In designing and approving Special Examination Arrangements, the VCAA is mindful of the need to balance the competing demands of providing students with the opportunity to perform at their optimum and the academic integrity of the assessment process.

The VCAA considers a large number of applications for Special Examination Arrangements every year. As it is the school that makes the application on behalf of students, and will ultimately administer their VCE external assessments, the VCAA’s consultation with a student and/or their representative will usually take place through their school.

Schools must not permit a student to receive Special Examination Arrangements without the VCAA’s approval. Failure to comply with these instructions may constitute a breach of the rules governing the conduct of VCE external assessments.

The VCAA considers each application for Special Examination Arrangements on the basis of independent professional and/or educational and academic assessments, any school-based evidence and recommendations provided with the application, and the VCAA’s assessment.

Disability and/or illness does not automatically entitle a student to Special Examination Arrangements. The prime consideration is the impact of a disability and/or illness on the student’s capacity to undertake their VCE external assessments and, if necessary, what reasonable adjustments can be made to enable the student to complete VCE external assessments on the same basis as students without a disability and/or illness.

The professional, educational and academic assessments, along with school-based evidence, will be considered by the VCAA on a case-by-case basis. The VCAA will make a decision based on all evidence received with an application.

Eligibility for Special Examination Arrangements

Students are eligible for Special Examination Arrangements if it can be demonstrated that their capacity to access a VCE external assessment is impaired due to one or more of the following:

* mental health condition
* health impairment
* physical disability
* specific learning disorder
* language disorder
* motor coordination disorder
* hearing impairment
* vision impairment.

Applications for Special Examination Arrangements for each student must be made through appropriate school staff, be endorsed by the principal and be supported by recent professional and/or other specialist reports and school-based evidence.

The VCAA will only accept an application from a school on the 2019 Special Examination Arrangements application form and only for students enrolled in one or more VCE or scored VCE VET Unit 3–4 sequence in 2019.

Early engagement and application

Schools can apply for Special Examination Arrangements from the year a student first enrols in a VCE or scored VCE VET Unit 3–4 sequence. The VCAA strongly encourages schools to engage with the VCAA as early as possible to discuss any issues relating to managing students completing secondary level studies (Years 7–12) that may be eligible for or require special provision.

Early engagement allows schools to discuss interventions and implement appropriate provisions for classroom learning and school-based assessments in the years preceding VCE consistent with what would be approved for Special Examination Arrangements for VCE external assessments.

For long term or permanent conditions, it may be appropriate for a school to submit a formal early application for Special Examination Arrangements from Year 9 onwards. Evidence requirements for early application will be consistent with applications submitted on behalf of students enrolled in one or more VCE or scored VCE VET Unit 3–4 sequences.

An early application that is approved by the VCAA will allow schools to implement provisions from Year 9 onwards. Any advice or decisions made by the VCAA in relation to early engagement or formal early application will need to consider the National Protocols for Test Administration (NPTA) which cover rules and requirements for NAPLAN special provision (referred to as disability adjustments).

Once an early application has been assessed by the VCAA, the responsibility will rest with the school to contact the VCAA in the period leading up to and including the year in which a student enrols in their first VCE or scored VCE VET Unit 3–4 sequence to discuss variations to a student’s provisions as a result of any change in their existing circumstance(s) or due to the onset of a new condition.

In some cases, such as a condition that presents episodic symptoms, the VCAA may require updated and timely evidence at particular stages during the student’s secondary schooling. At the same time, other evidence/cognitive assessments will not be required to be submitted again.

Schools should contact VCAA Special Provision on (03) 9225 2219 or 1800 205 455 to discuss procedures associated with submitting a formal early application.

Students enrolled in one or more VCE or scored VCE VET Unit 3-4 sequence in 2019

Schools can still apply for Special Examination Arrangements early in the year the student first enrols in a VCE or scored VCE VET Unit 3–4 sequence. However, the VCAA strongly encourages schools to engage with the VCAA as early as possible to discuss issues relating to appropriate provisions and evidence requirements.

Students who are approved Special Examination Arrangements can generally expect that these arrangements will be replicated for any additional VCE Units 3 and 4 sequences undertaken in subsequent years. The VCAA reserves the right to request additional and/or updated evidence when it is deemed necessary. Students with health impairments or a mental health condition may be required to submit current medical evidence pertinent to each assessment period.

To enable an informed professional judgment, the VCAA will not process an application until all the relevant evidence has been supplied. If necessary, the VCAA will contact schools to request additional information.

In processing Special Examination Arrangements applications, the VCAA will establish an expert Special Examination Arrangements panel, comprised of educational psychologists, medical practitioners, senior examination assessors and other relevant professionals, to assist VCAA staff with decisions. The VCAA reserves the right to seek additional information from any of the professionals named in an application.

The VCAA recommends that special provisions at the school level are consistent with those approved by the VCAA. Special provisions approved by the school may not necessarily meet the eligibility criteria established by the VCAA for Special Examination Arrangements. The fact that a school has approved special provisions for a student’s classroom learning and/or School-based Assessments is insufficient grounds for seeking such arrangements for VCE external assessments without the appropriate supporting evidence.

Schools should consult the VCAA if they are unsure about appropriate arrangements.

Managing Special Examination Arrangements for students enrolled in one or more VCE or scored VCE VET Unit 3-4 sequences in 2019

Students must:

* submit a timely request to their school’s VCE coordinator
* provide appropriate documentation and evidence.

Schools must:

* determine if a student’s request for Special Examination Arrangements is appropriate and consistent with the eligibility requirements, and consult the VCAA if in doubt
* ensure the relevant tests and/or essays are administered, if required
* complete the application for Special Examination Arrangements, as required, and submit it to the VCAA by the closing date
* ensure the information provided on the application form is accurate, and that no alterations have been made to the evidence supplied
* advise the student and the chief supervisor of any VCAA-approved arrangements
* ensure approved provisions are printed by the VASS coordinator and distributed to the student, chief supervisor and VCE coordinator.

The VCAA will:

* make a decision for each of the external assessments on the application
* advise the school of the outcome of the application.

Appealing a decision

Schools may appeal a VCAA decision. Appeals must be submitted in writing within 14 days of receiving a decision email. The appeal must state why the VCAA decision is being challenged and reference the evidence supplied in the original application. Appeals should include any supporting new evidence, including any other professional’s letter of support, educational and academic tests not previously submitted, and/or school-based evidence and observations.

The VCAA will establish an independent panel to review any new evidence submitted with the original application. The VCAA will process all appeals within 21 days of receipt of an appeal. The outcome will be communicated to schools via email. The school is responsible for communicating an appeal decision to the student.

In addition, new evidence may also be submitted to support an application if there is a new diagnosis or deterioration in an existing condition.

Emergency Special Examination Arrangements

Schools must submit an emergency application if a student experiences a sudden illness, accident or personal trauma immediately before or during the assessment period.

Medical evidence for emergency applications must contain:

* a diagnosis
* the date of diagnosis
* the date of onset
* an outline of symptoms and treatment
* comments on the likely effect of the illness or condition on the student’s capacity to complete VCE external assessments
* any medical recommendations for particular Special Examination Arrangements.

As it does with all its Special Examination Arrangements decisions, the VCAA will apply consistent criteria when assessing emergency applications.

For situations that arise just before an assessment period, schools should use the Emergency Special Examination Arrangements application form. This form will be available as a VASS download two weeks before the commencement of each period for VCE external assessments.

If a student is ill on the day of, or during, an external assessment, the school should contact VCAA Special Provision to request and seek approval for immediate Emergency Special Examination Arrangements. Follow-up medical documentation must still be provided.

Any attempt by a student to falsely claim to an examination supervisor to have Special Examination Arrangements when these have not been approved by the VCAA constitutes a breach of examination rules and must be reported to the VCAA.

Types of Special Examination Arrangements

Special Examination Arrangements may take the form of:

* extra working time (extra reading and/or writing time, where approved, will be represented as ‘extra working time’ on the VASS Special Examination Arrangements Advice Slip) not exceeding 10 minutes per hour and to be used in addition to the ‘scheduled writing time’ of the VCE external assessment. In specific circumstances, the VCAA may approve ‘extra working time’ in excess of 10 minutes per hour
* rest breaks not exceeding 10 minutes per hour of the ‘total examination writing time’ (is the scheduled writing time plus any ‘extra working time’ approved for the VCE external assessment). In specific circumstances, the VCAA may approve ‘unlimited rest breaks’ to facilitate management of a significant medical or physical condition. Students may decide how to manage their allocation, and decide when and how long each break will be, with the supervisor noting the start and end times on the Special Examination Arrangements Rest Break Log Sheet. The rest break allocation displayed on the VASS Special Examination Arrangements Advice Slip should not be exceeded. Students must be offered the full allocation of writing time, in addition to the time taken for rest breaks
* alternative format examination papers, such as enlarged print, electronic text and Braille (students with vision impairment may be eligible to apply for an exemption from the GAT because Braille and some other alternative format papers are unavailable for that external assessment)
* permission to use assistive technology and technological aids, such as a computer, specific software or assistive hearing technology for a student with a hearing impairment
* a reader or electronic reader and/or a scribe
* a clarifier, if the student has hearing impairment or language disorder
* an alternative examination venue, such as a separate room, home or hospital.

Applications for all these Special Examination Arrangements must meet the VCAA eligibility criteria. If approval has been granted for the use of a reader, scribe, clarifier, computer and/or assistive technology, students are required to sit their VCE external assessments in a separate room. The principal of the home school is responsible for appointing both a suitable independent person to act as a supervisor and a suitable independent person to act as a reader, scribe and/or clarifier.

The principal can engage a person to be a supervisor, reader, scribe and/clarifier only when it is certain that the candidate meets the requirements of the Supervisor Relationships Statutory Declaration.

Any person who has worked with the student on previous occasions, other than during VCE external assessments, or who has been closely associated with the student as a teacher, a tutor, an integration aide or a visiting teacher or staff member in a deaf facility during the student’s VCE studies is not permitted to act as a reader, scribe or clarifier. The appointee may work with the student during any practice examinations.

Any person appointed as a reader, scribe and/or clarifier must not have a close relationship or association with:

* any student undertaking a VCE Unit 3–4 sequence at the school at which they are employed
* a VCE teacher of any student in a VCE Unit 3–4 sequence
* a tutor, integration aide, visiting teacher or staff member in a deaf facility who has a close relationship with any student undertaking a VCE Unit 3–4 sequence at the school at which they are employed.

The school should ensure that a student approved for Special Examinations Arrangements has a copy of the VASS confirmation of Special Examination Arrangements when attending their VCE external assessments, either at their home school or at another location.

If a school has combined with another school for any VCE external assessments, the host school must be advised in advance of any approved Special Examination Arrangements.

If a school has combined with another school for any VCE external assessments and a student is approved for Special Examination Arrangements that will involve supervision in a separate room, it is advisable not to transfer the student to another location for their external assessments. These Special Examination Arrangements should be discussed in advance with VCAA Special Provision.

Sitting external assessments at home

Only in exceptional circumstances will the VCAA give approval for a student to sit an external assessment at home. Such circumstances would include cases of infectious disease or serious physical or psychological incapacity. All applications must be supported with an appropriate medical recommendation. Schools should contact VCAA Special Provision for advice before seeking this arrangement.

Instructions for supervision of Special Examination Arrangements

The following information should be read by the appropriate school personnel and persons appointed as Special Examination Arrangements supervisors, readers, scribes and clarifiers in conjunction with the current VCE Examination Manual.

It is the responsibility of the student’s home school to appoint appropriate individuals to fill the roles of Special Examination Arrangements supervisor, reader, scribe and clarifier.

The information contained in these instructions must be conveyed to the student before the relevant assessment period and repeated immediately before the commencement of each external assessment. If the supervisor, reader, scribe or clarifier is concerned about any aspect of the general conduct of the external assessment (such as a disruption to the room environment, or the student’s condition in the case of illness), VCAA Special Provision should be contacted immediately. Supervisors should use the 2019 Incident report for VCE external assessments form to notify the VCAA.

All supervisors, readers, scribes and clarifiers are required to complete the Supervisor Relationships Statutory Declaration found in the VCE Examination Document Register folder. This form must be retained at the school.

Queries should be directed to VCAA Special Provision on (03) 9225 2219 or 1800 205 455.

Total duration of examinations

Reading time is the scheduled reading time.

Writing time is the scheduled writing time of the external assessment plus any extra working time approved by the VCAA.

Rest breaks are in addition to all reading or writing time.

Students:

* are not permitted to leave their table or leave the examination room during rest breaks, except in special circumstances as approved by the VCAA
* are not permitted to read or write or access the examination/test questions or their responses during a rest break; papers should be turned face down during a rest break
* may use their rest break to relax, rehearse previously learned coping strategies, focus their thoughts or reflect on their responses.

Separate examination room

If the use of a scribe, reader, clarifier or computer has been approved by the VCAA, a student must complete their external assessment in a separate room.

Separate supervision

A supervisor must be present where a student has been approved the use of a:

* separate room
* scribe, reader and/or clarifier.

It is the responsibility of the student’s home school to appoint appropriate individuals to fill the above roles.

If a student requires separate supervision, it is advisable for the student’s examination to be supervised at the home school rather than an external location.

Readers

The function of a reader is to read the examination paper and/or the student’s responses as often as requested by the student. A person appointed as a reader should have:

* a facility for English and familiarity with the VCE study being examined
* patience and sensitivity to the student’s special needs
* an understanding of the need to maintain confidentiality.

The appointed reader may work with the student in any practice examinations.

A supervisor, in addition to the reader, must be present in the examination room and monitor all interactions between the reader and the student.

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| This table outlines what a reader can or cannot do | |
| **Readers can:** | **Readers cannot:** |
| read the examination/test questions and any incorporated stimulus or resource material as many times as the student asks them to  read the student’s answers back to them  operate a calculator at the student’s direction. | assist and/or interpret any question/s for the student  advise the student in any way, either by prompting or discussing the answers. |

Electronic readers and software

If a student is approved the use of an electronic reader or reader software they must be supervised in a separate room.

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| This table outlines what supervisors and students must do | |
| **Supervisors must:** | **Students must:** |
| allow a student the use of a computer with assistive technology if the VCAA has approved such provision for their external assessment  monitor that the student has access to an approved electronic reader or software only  not allow the student to use word predictive software or functions  not allow students to access dictionary functions in examinations where a dictionary is not allowed  not allow the student to access the internet during the examination. | only use the approved computer and reader software as required during their external assessment. Any use of other programs, files or data constitutes a breach of VCAA rules and will be subject to appropriate disciplinary procedures  not access the internet during the external assessment  not use word predictive software or functions during the external assessment  only use the electronic dictionary in examinations where a dictionary is allowed. |

Scribes

The function of a scribe is to record, on the appropriate response material, the verbal responses and directions made by the student in the process of answering the question/s.

A person appointed as a scribe should have:

* a facility for English and familiarity with the VCE study being examined
* clear and legible handwriting
* patience and sensitivity to the student’s needs
* an understanding of the need to maintain confidentiality.

The appointed scribe may work with the student in any practice examinations. On behalf of the student the scribe will:

* complete all written details associated with the examination on the response materials, such as the student number, study title, the numbers of all questions and/or tasks answered and the number of answer books used
* record the student’s responses, as dictated by the student
* re-read the student responses for editing purposes, if requested by the student.

These tasks are to be completed within the total approved writing time.

The supervisor, in addition to the scribe, must be present in the examination room and monitor all interactions between the scribe and the student.

Before the commencement of the external assessment, the student should advise the scribe how they propose to answer the examination questions. Fifteen minutes before the end of the examination, the supervisor must announce to both the student and the scribe the time remaining. At the conclusion of the external assessment, the supervisor must inform both the student and the scribe that writing should cease.

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| This table outlines what a scribe and a student can or cannot do | |
| **Scribes can:** | **Scribes cannot:** |
| * ask the student to repeat a word or sentence * ask the student to spell difficult or obscure words * punctuate and use capital letters without the specific direction of the student * operate a calculator at the student’s direction * re-read a paragraph that has been written, to enable the student to regain their place in their work * plot or draw graphs with the specific direction of the student. | interpret the question/s for the student  advise the student in any way  make comments on the student’s work  alter the student’s work or write words that the student has not dictated  rewrite a student’s written work (that is, a student cannot write out their examination answers and then have the scribe rewrite them)  type for the student (unless specific VCAA approval has been granted)  draw (if the student cannot draw, contact Special Provision). |
| **Students can:** | **Students cannot:** |
| dictate their answers exactly as they wish them to be written down  advise the scribe when to start a new paragraph, when to put something in brackets or inverted commas, and when to underline something  regularly read over what the scribe has written. | ask to have a question interpreted. |

Clarifiers

The function of a clarifier is to clarify words contained within examination/test questions. The appointed clarifier may work with the student during any practice examinations.

Clarification can occur during reading and writing time.

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| This table outlines what clarification means for students with a language disorder or hearing impairment | |
| **For students with a language disorder, clarification includes** | **For students with hearing impairment, clarification includes** |
| definition of one or more words in a question. However, the clarifier must not define any words or terms that are ‘study specific’ or subject-related  provision of alternative words to those words in the question that are likely to be unfamiliar to students with a severe language disorder. Again, the clarifier must not offer alternatives for ‘study specific’ words or terms. | definition of one or more words in a question. However the clarifier must not define any words or terms that are ‘study specific’ or subject-related  provision of alternative words to those words in the question that are likely to be unfamiliar to students with a hearing impairment. Again, the clarifier must not offer alternatives for ‘study specific’ words or terms  breaking complex sentences down into more manageable parts. |

The student and the clarifier are permitted to write the clarification on the examination question/task book.

Discussion about answers, or prompting, must not occur.

Strict conditions apply for the use of a clarifier in any VCE external assessment. If a student is granted permission by the VCAA to use a clarifier, their school must ensure a copy of the clarifier instruction document (available on VASS) relevant to the impairment/disorder is given to the supervisor and the clarifier. It is the supervisor’s responsibility to ensure that the instructions are followed.

The supervisor, in addition to the clarifier, must be present in the examination room and monitor all interactions between the clarifier and the student.

Use of computers and/or assistive technology

The following table outlines the responsibilities and actions required to be undertaken by schools, supervisors and students when the use of a computer and/or assistive technology (that is, specific text-to-voice or voice-to-text software) has been approved.

| This table outlines what a school, supervisor and student must do | |
| --- | --- |
| **The school must:** | only allow a student the use of a computer and/or assistive technology if the VCAA has approved such provision for their external assessment  supply a stand-alone computer that only has access to a word-processing package and approved software  not allow students to use predictive software or functions  not allow students to access dictionary functions in examinations where a dictionary is not allowed  not allow the student to access the internet during the examination  check that the computer and any other equipment to be used on the day of the external assessment are functioning properly  supply one memory device per external assessment. Please ensure that no other information is contained on the memory device  clearly label the memory device (this can be a USB stick or CD ) with the following:  name of the external assessment  student number  centre number. |
| **The supervisor must:** | watch the computer screen at all times to check that the student is not accessing any other programs or documents  remind the student at the commencement of the external assessment that they must save their work at regular intervals  stop the external assessment if problems are experienced with the computer or other software and equipment. Seek appropriate assistance and then resume the external assessment, ensuring no time loss to the student. An Incident Report about the circumstances should be completed and returned to the VCAA with the student’s response materials  print the final version of the student’s responses (single-sided). Students must be present at the time of printing (this must be done when the assessment is completed. The VCAA will not print student work)  place the printed work inside the front cover of the response materials  if necessary, complete all written details on the front cover of the response materials  ensure that the memory device used and the response materials are returned inside the gold envelope  clearly label the memory device with the student number and external assessment. |
| **Students:** | must use a stand-alone computer that has access to a word-processing package and approved software only  must not access any other programs, files, or data. **Any use of other programs, files or data constitutes a breach of VCAA rules and will be subject to appropriate disciplinary procedures**  may access the spell-checker facility in the word-processing package only. Use of predictive text or predictive software is not allowed  must save their work regularly during the external assessment  must include their VCAA student number at the beginning of every page  must include the number of each question or task answered at the beginning of every page, ensuring that it correlates with the examination question or task book  must be present to witness the printing of their work from the memory device. This must be done when the assessment is completed. The VCAA will not print student work. |

Group Computer Room

Where a school has two or more students requiring the use of a computer in the same examination session, a request can be made to seat students together in the same room.

This request should be made in the Special Examination Arrangements application.

The request will only be considered for students who have been assessed as having a specific learning disorder, motor coordination disorder or a physical injury/impairment.

Consent must be attained from both the parent/guardian and student before requesting this provision.

Special Provision categories and evidence requirements for Special Examination Arrangements applications

Mental health conditions

The VCAA has adopted the following operational definition of a Mental Health Condition for the purposes of granting Special Examination Arrangements:

A mental health condition is a disorder or illness that affects a student’s thought processes, judgement, perception of reality, or emotional and social wellbeing. The symptoms significantly impact on a student’s cognitive functioning. The current presenting symptoms must be supported by evidence from a range of sources including a student’s history, school observations and appropriate health professionals.

An application for Special Examination Arrangements for a mental health condition must be substantiated with evidence from the primary treating health professional working within a relevant area of mental health, who has made a comprehensive assessment of the student, seen the student recently for their condition, and is not related to them.

The professional evidence must be completed in the year of the application and be signed and dated by the treating professional, and contain the following details:

* clinical assessments, diagnosis (if available), date of diagnosis
* consultation history, presenting symptoms
* treatment period and plan (if available)
* description of severity; the impact of the student’s mental health condition on learning and assessment.

The VCAA reserves the right to request additional evidence, if necessary.

A detailed history of special arrangements approved by the school over the period of the condition will also be required.

Appropriate provisions

The overwhelming consensus amongst professionals that work with students with Mental Health conditions is that in most circumstances rest breaks are considered the most appropriate provision to manage symptoms that significantly impact on cognitive functioning.

Mental health conditions impact directly on mood, thinking and behaviour and, in an examination environment, may impact on a student’s ability to concentrate.

Rest breaks provide students with an opportunity to use taught techniques to manage their thoughts, emotions and feelings.

An application for the use of a separate room will only be considered where strongly supported by appropriate professional and school-based evidence.

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| This table outlines details of the possible Special Examination Arrangements available for a range of mental health conditions. | | |
| **Condition** | **Possible difficulties under test conditions** | **Possible arrangements** |
| Anxiety disorders | Concentration difficulties, anxiety preventing performance in group situations | Rest breaks, permission to take medication, separate room |
| Attention-deficit and disruptive behaviour disorders | Concentration and difficulty with impulse control | Rest breaks, permission to take medication, separate room |
| Eating disorder (Anorexia nervosa, Bulimia nervosa) | Fatigue, concentration difficulties, need to accommodate eating plans | Rest breaks, permission to take medication, separate room |
| Depression | Concentration difficulties, difficulties remembering and making decisions, fatigue and tiredness | Rest breaks |
| Bipolar disorder | Fatigue, restlessness, irritability, disorganised behaviour, difficulty with memory and concentration | Rest breaks, separate room, extra working time |
| Schizophrenia | Memory loss, mental confusion, slowness in activity, fatigue | Rest breaks, extra working time, separate room |
| Obsessive Compulsive Disorder | Recurrent unwanted thoughts and/or repetitive behaviours | Rest breaks |

Requests for extra working time

Requests for extra working time must provide compelling evidence from the treating health professional and the school that demonstrates significant impact of a student’s executive functioning and a decline in academic performance. The evidence may include:

* the results of any psychological testing previously administered, such as Conners 3, Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF – prior to 2018 or BRIEF2), NEPSY II: A Developmental Neuropsychological Assessment, second edition
* a health professional statement outlining the symptoms and why extra writing time is required
* school-based evidence that demonstrates a decline in the student’s performance as a result of the condition. This may include the student’s work before and after the onset of the mental health condition
* school observations and history of other provisions (namely rest breaks) being trialed unsuccessfully.

Schools are encouraged to contact VCAA Special Provision to discuss specific student cases before applying for extra working time.

Health impairment or physical disability

An application for Special Examination Arrangements based on either health impairment or a physical disability must be substantiated with evidence from an appropriate health professional who has treated the student for the condition.

Professional evidence must be completed in the year of the application, be signed and dated by the treating professional, and contain the following details:

* a diagnosis
* the date of diagnosis
* a brief history
* comments on the how the illness or condition would impact on the student’s day-to-day functioning in the classroom and learning
* comments on the likely effect of the illness or condition on the student’s capacity to complete VCE external assessments.

The VCAA reserves the right to request additional evidence if it is deemed necessary by VCAA staff.

A history of any special arrangements approved by the school over the period of the condition will also be required.

Note that in the following table:

* an application for the use of a separate room will only be considered where strongly supported by appropriate professional evidence
* If the application is for extra working time, a scribe or the use of computer and/or assistive technology, students will be required to complete the required essays as outlined in Written expression – requests for extra working time, use of computer, scribe and/or assistive technology.

| This table outlines details of the possible Special Examination Arrangements available for a range of health impairments or physical disabilities. | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Condition** | **Possible difficulties under test conditions** | **Possible arrangements** |
| Autism spectrum disorder | Concentration difficulties | Rest breaks, separate room, permission to leave examination room under supervision |
| Back injury/chronic pain | Pain and/or discomfort due to injury, problems with prolonged sitting | Rest breaks, permission to take medication, permission to stand and stretch |
| Crohn’s disease | Pain and/or discomfort | Rest breaks, permission to leave room under supervision |
| Chronic fatigue syndrome (for example, post-viral fatigue syndrome), myalgic encephalomyelitis, glandular fever | Tiredness/inability to concentrate due to illness | Rest breaks, permission to take medication |
| Diabetes | Need to check blood sugar levels | Permission to take food and/or drink into the examination, permission to take medication, permission to leave examination room under supervision, rest breaks |
| Epilepsy | May suffer from epileptic seizure during examinations | Permission to take medication, separate room |
| Hand/wrist/arm/shoulder injury | Difficulty writing due to pain or discomfort in the hand and/or arm, excessive fatigue in the hand | Rest breaks, extra working time, a computer or a scribe |
| Acquired brain injuries | Mental processing difficulty or slowness | Rest breaks, permission to take medication |
| Pregnancy or early infant care | In hospital for birth, breastfeeding | Rest breaks, feeding breaks, separate room, hospital supervision |
| Muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, etc | Muscle weakness, restrictive use of limbs, communication difficulties | Permission to stand and/or stretch, permission to take medication, separate room, extra working time, computer, assistive technology, use of an scribe/aide, alternative examination paper |

Specific Learning Disorders

The VCAA has adopted the following operational definition of a Specific Learning Disorder for the purposes of granting Special Examination Arrangements:

Specific Learning Disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder with a biological origin. Students with this disorder possess specific cognitive processing deficits that cause difficulties with learning and using academic skills and manifest in persistent problems with one or more of the following:

* inaccurate or slow and effortful word reading
* understanding the meaning of what is read
* spelling
* written expression
* mastering number sense, number facts or calculations
* mathematical reasoning.

The affected academic skills are substantially and quantifiably below those expected for the student’s grade and/or cause significant interference with academic performance. The learning difficulties are not better accounted for by intellectual disabilities, hearing or vision disorders, motor impairment, mental health disorders or external factors such as environmental disadvantage, chronic absenteeism or lack of appropriate educational experience.

The diagnosis of a learning disorder must be based on the integration of comprehensive clinical evidence from a range of sources including a student’s history (developmental, medical, family and educational) and appropriate diagnostic assessment results.

Schools are encouraged to contact VCAA Special Provisions to discuss individual applications.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| This table provides a guide to appropriate provisions available to students with specific learning disorders. | | |
| **Impairment in Reading (includes Dyslexia)** | **Impairment in Written Expression** | **Impairment in Mathematics (includes Dyscalculia)** |
| Extra working time  Reader  Use of assistive technology (e.g. text to voice software, electronic readers) | Extra working time  Use of a computer  Permission to use a Scribe  Use of assistive technology (e.g. voice to text software) | Extra working time  Use of a computer  Use of assistive technology |

The VCAA has assessed and approved the following tests for determining eligibility for Special Examination Arrangements.

Cognitive Assessment (IQ tests) (mandatory requirement)

A cognitive assessment, administered no earlier than the student’s last year of primary schooling, (that is Year 6), is required. The test must be administered by a registered psychologist. The VCAA will accept any of the following cognitive assessments for determining eligibility for Special Examination Arrangements:

* Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) V or IV
* Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) IV
* Woodcock Johnson (WJ) IV or III
* Stanford Binet V or IV (if test administered in 2017 or earlier).

A copy of the cognitive assessment report administered by an appropriately qualified professional registered by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) is required. The report should include subtest scaled scores, along with an interpretation of assessment results.

Reading – requests for extra working time, reader and/or assistive technology

The VCAA has adopted the following criteria to determine the suitability of tests to measure reading ability. The test should be:

* silent-reading comprehension (this reflects the silent reading conditions of an examination)
* timed
* published with Australian norms.

The VCAA must be able to access the test and its normative data.

The purpose of such a reading test is to establish if a student’s reading level is significantly below what is expected of an average Year-12 student.

The current prescribed reading test is the Progressive Achievement Test in Reading (PAT-R), published by ACER. The VCAA will accept results from Comprehension Booklet 10 (fourth edition, 2008).

Evidence of a student’s reading comprehension skills must be based on a test administered either in the year the student commences the VCE or in Term 4 of the previous year.

The results of the York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC) or other reading tests administered, if available, can be submitted by schools as additional evidence.

A student with a reading disability may be approved extra working time (up to a maximum 10 minutes per hour). The VCAA will consider requests for additional time in excess of the default where it can be clearly demonstrated, through professional and/or school-based evidence, there is a compelling need for the additional time.

Extra working time approved by the VCAA is to be used in addition to the ‘scheduled writing time’ of the VCE external assessment.

A student with a severe reading disability may be allowed to use a reader or electronic reader.

Written expression – requests for extra working time, use of computer, scribe and/or assistive technology

Assessment of a student’s level of written expression involves an assessment of several variables, including the following:

* thought and content
* structure and organisation
* expression and/or language
* handwriting
* productivity
* spelling
* punctuation.

The following evidence is required in support of applications for Special Examination Arrangements for a disorder of written expression:

* two handwritten essays (if the application is for extra working time, computer or scribe and/or assistive technology) administered at the school under test conditions

and

* one typed essay (if the application is for the use of a computer)

or

* one scribed essay (if the application is for the use of a scribe)

and/or

* assistive technology administered at the school under test conditions.

Essay One

The topic for this essay will be supplied by the VCAA and must be completed according to the following conditions:

* Strictly five minutes’ reading time and 30 minutes’ writing time are to be provided.
* No Special Examination Arrangements are to be used for this essay.

Essay Two

This essay should be a copy of a handwritten English or Literature essay from an assessment that the student has recently completed (within six months) at school. It must have been for either a School-based Assessment or a school examination, have had a writing time of at least one hour and permitted Special Examination Arrangements.

Essay Two must have been marked with teacher comments and observations, and the teacher’s grading should be indicated.

The essay topic, the time taken for this essay, the date of the assessment and details of any approved Special Examination Arrangements used by the student should be recorded on the Essay Two Cover Sheet.

The essay must not be a short-answer response or have been written in another language. If the student is completing a Unit 3–4 sequence that does not involve extended responses or essays, the VCAA will accept an English examination or similar assessment from Term 4 of the previous year.

Typed essay or use of assistive technology

The topic for the typed essay will be supplied by the VCAA and must be completed according to the following conditions:

* strictly five minutes’ reading time and 30 minutes’ typing time should be provided
* apart from the computer and/or assistive technology, no additional Special Examination Arrangements (for example, extra time) should be used for this essay.

Scribed Essay

The topic for the scribed essay will be supplied by the VCAA and must be completed according to the following conditions:

* strictly five minutes’ reading time and 35 minutes’ scribing time should be provided. Student and scribe should be supervised according to VCAA examination rules
* apart from the use of a scribe, no additional Special Examination Arrangements should be used for this essay.

The relevant section of the Special Examination Arrangements application form has further details of the specific requirements for essay completion and must be noted by the school.

Note that essays should be completed at school and supervised by school staff. The supervising teacher must remain with the student for the duration of the writing to observe the student’s performance and ensure that the time restrictions are observed. All essays are to be completed under examination conditions (no assistance or prompting from the supervising teacher). The supervising teacher should complete all relevant information on the essay cover sheet, including if the essay and result is reflective of the student’s normal working level.

The VCAA will consider requests for additional time in excess of the default 10 minutes per hour, where it can be clearly demonstrated, through professional and/or school-based evidence, there is a compelling need for the additional time.

Mathematics – requests for extra working time, use of computer and/or assistive technology

The following evidence is required in support of applications for Special Examination Arrangements for an impairment in mathematics or requests for extra writing time for mathematics examinations on the basis of a deficit in written expression:

* examples of mathematics-specific school-based assessment completed by the student (detailing any provisions used by the student)
* study specific teacher observations of student difficulties in class and during assessments.

Language disorder

The VCAA has adopted the following operational definition of a language disorder for the purpose of assessing Special Examination Arrangements applications:

Language Disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder impacting on a student’s acquisition and use of language across a range of modalities (i.e. spoken, written, sign language). Difficulties are evident in one or more of the following:

* Reduced vocabulary – the student struggles with understanding and expression of words.
* Limited sentence structure – the student struggles to formulate sentence that are both structurally sound and convey meaning.
* Impairments in discourse – the student struggles with providing adequate information, sequencing it appropriately and conveying intended meaning in connected speech.

The onset of difficulties is evident in a student’s early language development. lt is necessary that these difficulties cannot be better attributed to hearing or another sensory impairment, motor dysfunction and another medical or neurological condition. Likewise it is important to consider that the language difficulties are not better explained by intellectual disability or global developmental delay.

The difficulties identified are substantially and quantifiably below those for the student’s grade level and cause significant interference with academic performance.

The diagnosis of a Language Disorder needs to have a solid basis in comprehensive clinical evidence from a range of sources including a student’s history (developmental, medical, familial and educational) in addition to appropriate diagnostic assessment results.

Schools are encouraged to contact VCAA Special Provision to discuss individual cases, if necessary.

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| This table provides a guide to appropriate provisions available to students with a language disorder. |
| **Language Disorder (possible provisions based on functional impact on the student)** |
| Extra working time  Reader  Clarifier  Use of assistive technology (such as text to voice software, electronic reader) |

The following evidence is required to support an application for Special Examination Arrangements for a student with a language disorder:

* a VCAA mandated cognitive assessment, with at least the non-verbal/performance scale IQ within the average range or above
* a Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF) fourth- or fifth-edition assessment administered in either the year the student commences the VCE or in Term 4 of the previous year.
* \*Note that 2019 will be the last year the VCAA will accept the (CELF) fourth-edition assessment.

Requests for use of a clarifier require:

* a reading comprehension assessment
* Essay One and Essay Two
* information outlining the history of the student’s use of and need for a clarifier.

Motor Coordination Disorder

The VCAA has adopted the following operational definition of a motor coordination disorder for the purpose of assessing Special Examination Arrangements applications:

Students with a Motor Coordination Disorder possess motor skills which can cause significant difficulties with slowness and/or inaccuracy of handwriting.

The diagnosis of a Motor Coordination Disorder must be supported by evidence from a range of sources including a student’s history, school observations and appropriate diagnostic assessment results from a qualified individual.

The motor skills deficits are not better explained by intellectual disability, visual impairment or are attributable to a neurological condition affecting movement (e.g., cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, degenerative disorder).

Requests for Special Examination Arrangements for students experiencing major handwriting difficulties (which arise from long-term developmental, fine-motor coordination problems and not from a severe health impairment or significant physical disability or injury) must be supported by at least one of the Motor Coordination Assessments listed below, administered no earlier than the student’s last year of primary schooling, (i.e., Grade 6).

A copy of the motor coordination report administered by an appropriately qualified professional registered by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) must be attached.

* Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting 9–16 years (DASH), Pearson, 2007
* DASH 17 years, Pearson, 2010.

While not mandatory, the VCAA will consider other motor coordination assessments, in addition to school observations, as supplementary evidence where there is a request for extra working time, use of a computer, scribe and/or assistive technology on the basis of handwriting difficulties. Examples include:

* The Handwriting Speed Test, Wallen, Bonney and Lennox, 2006
* The Beery Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual Motor Integration, sixth edition (Beery VMI), Pearson, 2010.

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| This table provides a guide to appropriate provisions available to students with motor coordination disorder |
| **Motor Coordination Disorder (possible provisions based on functional impact on the student)** |
| Rest breaks  Extra working time  Use of a computer  Permission to use a Scribe  Use of assistive technology, such as voice-to-text software |

Hearing impairment

The VCAA requires the following evidence to support an application for Special Examination Arrangements for a student with hearing impairment:

* a recent unaided audiogram and report from a qualified practitioner (for example, an ear, nose and throat specialist or audiologist) indicating a bilateral sensorineural hearing loss and/or conductive hearing loss that is moderate, severe or profound
* a support statement with comments and recommendations from a specialist teacher, along with confirmation of the student’s enrolment in either the Visiting Teacher Service or a hearing-impaired facility or school.

If this evidence is not available, the VCAA may contact the student’s school to request other educational and testing information.

Students with a hearing impairment may be eligible for a clarifier to assist with their external assessments. A request for a clarifier for a student with a hearing impairment is unlikely to be approved if the student does not regularly use a clarifier or is not enrolled with the Visiting Teacher Service or a hearing-impaired facility or school.

It is the school’s responsibility to plan appropriate seating arrangements in an external assessment so a student with a hearing impairment can clearly see the chief supervisor and follow any communications and messages during an external assessment. If specific technological devices, such as Microlink assistive technology, are required, these should be requested in the application.

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| This table provides a guide to appropriate provisions available to students with a hearing impairment. |
| **Hearing Impairment (possible provisions based on functional impact on the student)** |
| * Extra working time * Use of a clarifier * Microlink assistive technology * Access to audio-video stimulus (e.g. English as an Additional Language written examination Listening to texts section) |

Vision impairment

The VCAA requires the following evidence to support an application for Special Examination Arrangements for a student with vision impairment:

* evidence of a moderate or severe vision impairment from either an ophthalmologist or the Educational Vision Assessment Clinic (EVAC)
* a supporting statement with comments and recommendations from a specialist teacher, along with confirmation of the student’s enrolment with the Visiting Teacher Service.

If this evidence is not available, the VCAA may contact the student’s school to request other educational and testing information.

If an alternative format examination paper is required (for example, enlarged print, Braille, electronic examination), a specific request with details of font type, font sizes, format and any other recommendations from specialists should be clearly outlined for each external assessment in the application.