

Reasonable Accommodations in State Examinations

Summary

Reasonable Accommodations (R.A.) in certified examinations refers to modifications in how a test is administered while not compromising the integrity of the examination system. Accommodations may include changes to presentation format, response format, test setting or test timing. In general terms, the provision aims to remove the impact of a disability so that candidates can demonstrate their full level of attainment, while not given any advantage. Please consult the following document for more detailed information (*'Reasonable Accommodations at the 2019 Certificate Examinations'*, published by the State Examinations Commission (SEC)).

There are a number of Reasonable Accommodations available to students who meet the criteria. Students are tested in the school and if they meet the criteria, an application is made. The State Examinations specifies that the following are the grounds upon which a R.A. application may be made:

1. Learning Difficulty,
2. Hearing Difficulty,
3. Visual Difficulty,
4. Physical Difficulty (*This category is taken to include medical, sensory, behavioural and mental health difficulties as well as physical difficulties*).

The accommodations available are:

- 1) Spelling and Grammar Waiver,
- 2) Individual reader/reading assistance/exam reading pen,
- 3) Word processor/recording device,
- 4) Scribe,
- 5) Hearing/Visual/Physical difficulties (test timing).

The granting of Reasonable Accommodations in the State Examinations will mean that an explanatory note will accompany the certificate to show that an accommodation was granted.

1) Spelling and Grammar Waiver

WAIVER FROM THE ASSESSMENT OF SPELLING, GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION IN LANGUAGE SUBJECTS

Appropriate evidence of the candidate's level of need as detailed in section 2 of
the application form

AND

*A standard score of **85 or less** on an approved test of spelling*

AND

*Spelling/grammar/punctuation error rate of **8% or more** in scripts written in the
language of the school under examination conditions*

Applications will be considered where it can be established that a candidate has a need for a waiver from the assessment of spelling, grammar and punctuation in language subjects because:

- a) The level of spelling attainment displayed by the candidate and their ability to write accurately under examination conditions is such that it would significantly affect the readability of their written work,
- b) The candidate has been identified as having difficulties with spelling, grammar and punctuation over time,
- c) These difficulties are persistent despite the candidate having had access to a continuum of support and to learning opportunities that are effective and appropriate for most other candidates.

For each State Examination the student will sit in the main examination centre when they have the Spelling and Grammar Waiver only.

2) Individual Reader/ Reading Assistant

INDIVIDUAL READER/READING ASSISTANCE/EXAM READING PEN

Appropriate evidence of the candidate's level of need as detailed in section 2 of the application form

AND

A standard score of 85 or less on a recommended test of word reading (i.e. reading accuracy not comprehension)

AND EITHER

*A reading accuracy error rate of 7% or more on examination papers at the appropriate level
(See below for guidance)*

OR

*A reading speed of 89 words or less per minute on examination papers at the appropriate level
(See below for guidance)*

An individual reader can read the entire paper or part of the paper as requested by the student. The student is given an individual centre or shared centre in which to complete his/her examination. The reader is only allowed to read from the examination paper.

A reading assistant will read occasional words or phrases as requested by the student. The student may share a centre with up to four students. A note to say that these accommodations that were granted will appear on the Leaving Certificate Results Certificate.

3) Word Processor / Recording Device

This accommodation can be granted in two cases:

- 1) Quality of written work - numerous errors in punctuation, grammar and spelling,
- 2) Speed of Writing.

1) Quality of written work:

WORD PROCESSOR/RECORDING DEVICE – QUALITY OF WRITTEN WORK

Appropriate evidence of the candidate's level of need as detailed in section 2 of the application form

AND

*A standard score of **85 or less** on an approved test of spelling*

AND

*Spelling/grammar/punctuation error rate of **20% or more** in scripts written in the language of the school under examination conditions*

2) Speed of writing:

WORD PROCESSOR/RECORDING DEVICE – SPEED OF WRITING

Appropriate evidence of the candidate's level of need as detailed in section 2 of the application form

AND

*A standard score of **85 or less** on an approved test of spelling*

AND

*Spelling/grammar/punctuation error rate of **8% or more** in scripts written in the language of the school under examination conditions
(See below and Appendix C for additional guidance)*

AND

Speed of writing of less than 12 words per minute

The granting of the above precludes the assessment of spelling, punctuation and written punctuation in English and spelling some grammatical elements in other languages. A note to say that these accommodation that were granted will be shown on the Leaving Certificate Results Certificate.

Applications will be considered where it can be established that a candidate has a need for the use of a word processor or a recording device because:

- a) The candidate has been identified as having difficulties with spelling, grammar and punctuation over time,
- b) The level of spelling attainment displayed by the candidate and his or her ability to write accurately and/or at a reasonable speed under examination conditions is such that the candidate would be significantly impaired in writing the answers or such that his or her written work would be effectively illegible and that an examiner would have difficulty in deciphering,
- c) These difficulties are persistent despite the candidate having had access to a continuum of support and to learning opportunities that are effective and appropriate for most other candidates.

Candidates who have been granted the use of assistive technology by the Department of Education and Skills must meet all the relevant criteria in the same way as all other candidates. They do not have an automatic right to use same in examinations.

4) Scribe

The SEC expects that candidates approved for a writing accommodation will use either a word processor or a recording device. There is a higher threshold of eligibility for access to a scribe. To be eligible for a scribe a candidate must firstly qualify for a writing accommodation by reference to the criteria. There must also be an impediment to the candidate making use of either the word processor or the recording device. The SEC must be satisfied that this impediment is valid. The default alternative for any candidate that is unable to make use of a word processor in examination conditions is to use a recording device. The reason for this distinction is because examination accommodations should reflect, as far as is possible, the candidate's normal way of working, and best practice is that candidates with such difficulties should be supported throughout their schooling to work independently. In addition to confirming that the candidate meets the eligibility criteria for either a word processor or a recording device, you will need to confirm that he or she also has a physical difficulty, such as motor difficulties and/or a speech impediment, which renders the other writing accommodations unsuitable. It is rarely in a candidate's best interests to recommend an accommodation that the candidate is not used to because it does not reflect his or her normal way of working in school.

Students may not choose to have a scribe – they must be eligible. They must qualify for a writing accommodation and there must be an impediment to the student making use of either the word processor or the recording device. Physical difficulties – motor difficulties and/or a speech impediment would need to be present. Applications will be considered where it can be established that a candidate has a need for the use of a scribe because:

**SCRIBE – WORD PROCESSOR/RECORDING DEVICE NOT SUITABLE DUE TO
PHYSICAL OR SPEECH DIFFICULTIES**

The candidate already meets the eligibility criteria for access to the use of a word processor or recording device as set out at Section 9.1.3 Category 1 or 2

AND

The candidate's physical and speech difficulties render the use of a recording device or word processor unsuitable

OR

**SCRIBE– WORD PROCESSOR/RECORDING DEVICE NOT SUITABLE IN CERTAIN
SUBJECTS**

The candidate already meets the eligibility criteria for access to the use of a word processor or recording device as set out at Section 9.1.3 Category 1 or 2

AND

The use of the device in question is not possible or is particularly difficult in the case of the specific examination (e.g. Mathematics)

Please consult the State Examination Commission's document 'Reasonable Accommodations at the 2019 Certificate Examinations: Instructions for Schools' for a more detailed account of the range of accommodations, eligibility criteria and more detailed information on each category that is considered grounds for making a RACE application.

Exemption from the Study of Irish

Please consult <https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/Irish-Exemption/FAQs.html> for more detailed information on the criteria to be met in order to be granted an exemption from the study of Irish.

A written application for an exemption is made by the parent or guardian to the school principal on behalf of their child. The application should state the reasons why the exemption is being sought. A child will only be considered for an exemption where his/her educational circumstances come within the provisions of the post primary circular (M10/94).

An exemption may be sought in the following circumstances, subject to the provisions contained in Department's post-primary circular.

- Children whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside Ireland.
- Children who were enrolled in a recognised primary or post-primary school and who are now re-enrolling again after having been abroad for at least 3 years. The child must also be at least 11 years of age on re-enrolment.
- Children from abroad who have no understanding of English, when enrolled, would be required to study one language, either English or Irish.
- Children of diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland.
- Children, in whose case the Minister is satisfied, that they are resident in this country as political refugees.
- Children assessed as having either a specific or general learning disability who meet the Department's specific criteria.
- Children with serious sensory disability.

Once granted, an exemption lasts for the duration of the child's attendance at primary and post-primary schools recognised by the Department of Education and Skills. Where a child transfers between recognised schools or moves from primary to post-primary a copy of the Certificate of Exemption and any supporting documentation should be provided to the new school. The exemption will continue to apply in the new recognised school once supported by evidence that it been granted previously.

Your child may be granted an exemption if s/he meets the criteria of paragraph 1(c) of the primary circular if your child attends a recognised primary school or the post primary circular where your child attends a recognised post primary school.

It is school management who make the decision to grant an exemption and to apply under paragraph 1 (c) you will need the following;

a. A written application to the school principal specifying the grounds on which the exemption is sought.

b. A qualified psychologists report dated not more than 2 years from the date of your application. '(The psychologist's report should be of a full psychological assessment carried out by a qualified psychologist not more than two years prior to the application for exemption' (*Circular M10/94, Par 6*).

A recommendation from a psychologist for an exemption to be granted by itself, is not sufficient grounds for a school to grant an exemption.

1. The second-level programme in Irish both current and planned has the capacity to cater for a wide diversity of ability. Nevertheless, provision exists in Rule 46 of the "Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools" for exemption from Irish in limited special circumstances.

The Minister for Education has reviewed the circumstances in which exemption from the study of Irish may be granted and has revised Rule 46 to read as follows:

" Pupils in the following circumstances may be allowed to substitute any other subject from the list of approved subjects for Irish for the purpose of Rule 21 (1) (a) and (b):-

- (a) *Pupils whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside Ireland;*
- (b) *Pupils who were previously enrolled as recognised pupils in a primary or second-level school who are being re-enrolled after a period spent abroad, provided that at least three years have elapsed since the previous enrolment in the State and the pupil is at least 11 years of age on re-enrolment;*
- (c) *Pupils*
 - (i) *who function intellectually at average or above average level but have a **Specific Learning Disability** of such a degree of severity that they fail to achieve expected levels of attainment in basic language skills in the mother tongue, or*
 - (ii) *who have been assessed as having a **general learning disability due to serious intellectual impairment [i.e. mental handicap]** and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.*
 - (iii) *who have been assessed as having a **general learning disability due to serious sensory impairment**, and are also failing to attain adequate levels in basic language skills in the mother tongue.*

The evidence of such a disability should be furnished by a qualified psychologist, supported in the case of (iii) by a report from an appropriate medical specialist. In addition, a full report on the pupil should be furnished by the school.
- (d) *Pupils from abroad, who have no understanding of English, when enrolled, would be required to study one language only, Irish or English."*

(Source: Circular M10/94)

In the case of applications based on specific learning disability, an exemption from the study of Irish can be granted where the child (a) has an average IQ score and (b) a word reading score at or below the 10th percentile AND a second attainment score in literacy/language at or below the 10th percentile.

For children with a general learning disability an exemption from the study of Irish can be granted where a child has (a) an IQ score indicating a general learning disability (79 and below) and (b) a word reading score at or below the 10th percentile AND a second attainment score in literacy/language at or below the 10th percentile.

Parents and students should consider the implications that not studying Irish has for entry to some third level universities and colleges and for some jobs in the public service.

2019 Reasonable Accommodations Key Dates

	AVAILABLE FROM	CLOSING DATE	DECISION TIMEFRAME
Leaving Certificate/Leaving Certificate Applied 2019 – Reactivation Form and New Accommodations Form	September 2018	26 th October 2018	January 2019
Leaving Certificate/LCA 2019 – Late Application Form	Jan 2019	12 th April 2019	May 2019
Junior Cycle 2019 – Standard Application Form	October 2018	21 st December 2018	March 2019
Junior Cycle 2019 – Late Application Form	February 2019	12 th April 2019	May 2019
Emergency Application Form - LC and JC	May 2019	June 2019	June 2019

4th October 2018