Providing Services to Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities

Revised in Jun 2009
The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) may make special examination arrangements for candidates with special needs. A leaflet Providing Services to Candidates with Special Needs has been published to set out the general application guidelines and procedures, as well as the special examination arrangements available in the HKCEE and HKALE.

The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination will be held for the first time in 2012. The HKEAA will make special examination arrangements for HKDSE candidates with special needs. The details will be announced in the 2009-10 school year.

Specific learning disabilities (SLD) refers to severe problems in reading and writing (i.e. Dyslexia). The HKEAA has set up the Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with SLD (Task Group) to oversee the applications from candidates with SLD. Members of the Task Group come from the Education Bureau, Department of Health, schools, tertiary institutions, parent representatives and the HKEAA Secretariat. This leaflet aims to provide some guidelines to assist candidates with SLD and their schools in their applications for special examination arrangements.

The following information/documents should be attached to the application:

- An Assessment Report form, duly completed by a qualified educational/clinical psychologist with professional practice training and the applicant's school head (the candidate and his/her parent should also sign on the Assessment Report form). The Assessment Report form serves to provide information on the severity of the candidate’s specific learning disabilities and provide evidence of the extent to which the candidate is disadvantaged because of his/her disability.

- A psychological assessment report, issued within 3 years before the public examination, giving assessment on the candidate's reading and writing abilities. The assessment tool used by the psychologist should preferably be one with Hong Kong norms to substantiate the diagnosis of SLD (please refer to the Application Guide for details).

- Record of provisions made by the candidate’s school in internal examinations.

HKALE candidates who have been given special examination arrangements in a previous HKCEE due to SLD will not be required to submit psychological assessment reports in their applications in the HKALE if they apply for the same special examination arrangements.

For candidates with confirmed diagnosis of SLD [Dyslexia], depending on the nature and severity of their disabilities, history of special provisions in schools and the schools’ recommendations, special examination arrangements may be made as appropriate.

Special examination arrangements for candidates with SLD may include:

**Time allowance**
Additional examination time may be allowed if supporting evidence is provided. Normally, a 25% extended time allowance will be granted for written papers and 15% for multiple-choice papers. Longer time allowance may be permitted only in exceptional cases with justifications.

**Supervised breaks**
Supervised breaks will be given to candidates with time allowance. Depending on individual needs, schools/candidates may choose whether or not to have breaks. Supervised breaks are only applicable to examinations lasting 90 minutes or more. Normally, a 5-minute break for every 45 minutes of examination will be given. Additional breaks may be permitted only in exceptional cases with justifications.

**Special format of question papers**
Question papers with one-side printing or enlarged print, or coloured (ivory) question papers may be provided for candidates.

**Special answer books/sheets**
Candidates may be permitted to present their answers in a special manner, such as writing on alternate lines or pages of an answer book, circling multiple-choice answers on a question paper instead of filling in the boxes on an answer sheet. Special answer sheets with wider line spacing may be provided upon request at special centres.
Special arrangements in examination centres
Candidate with special examination arrangements will be allocated to special centres. Depending on the special needs of the candidate, he/she may be arranged to take the examination in a classroom centre instead of a hall centre or be allocated special seating (e.g. near the front or back of the examination centre).

Other special arrangements
Use of computer instead of handwriting may be considered for the following candidates:

- candidates with illegible handwriting – schools should provide at least a copy of the candidates’ handwritten Chinese and English composition work in a recent internal test or examination for the consideration of the HKEAA.
- candidates with extremely slow handwriting speed - reports from occupational therapists/medical practitioners should be submitted as supporting evidence. The HKEAA will conduct speed tests for the candidates in connection with such a request.

If a candidate requires the use of computer due to other reasons, the reasons should be specified on the application form with supporting documents provided.

If a candidate is allowed to use computer in answering questions, the computer should only be used as a type-writer. Access to the Internet or functions such as calculation, spell-check, grammar-check, translation, thesauri and “displaying related terms” in Chinese character input are not allowed. The school should provide the computer facilities for the candidate in public examinations.

- If the word reading ability, in the first language, of a candidate with SLD has been assessed on a standardized test with relevant norm by a qualified educational/clinical psychologist with professional practice training and the test results indicate that he/she has severe word reading difficulties, he/she may be allowed to use screen/machine readers in designated examinations to read out the question papers. This arrangement is not applicable to examinations testing candidates’ reading comprehension skills, pinyin knowledge or correct pronunciation. The school should provide the computer facilities (including the text-to-speech software) for the candidate in public examinations. Please refer to the Application Guide for details.

- Other special arrangements may be considered on an individual basis, provided that sufficient evidence in support of the candidate’s request is submitted, and the requested arrangements are practicable in a public examination setting without any undue advantage over other candidates or violation of the assessment objectives.

Special arrangements in public examinations will only be made for candidates with confirmed diagnosis of SLD. Candidates being given special arrangements in school internal examinations will NOT automatically be given special examination arrangements or similar arrangements in public examinations.

If a candidate was given special examination arrangements in a previous HKCEE/HKALE, the same arrangements will normally be applicable to the candidate when he/she repeats the examination as a private candidate. He/She must submit a fresh application for special examination arrangements when repeating the examination.

Application forms and Application Guide are distributed to all HKCEE/HKALE participating schools every year. The documents are also available at the HKEAA office and on its website.

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Application forms and Application Guide can be downloaded from the Authority’s website at www.hkeaa.edu.hk.