

C. Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs

Depending on the nature and severity of their disabilities, candidates with special needs (SEN) can be given special examination arrangements (SEAs) in the HKDSE. The SEAs are considered and approved by the Committee on Special Needs Candidates (CSNC) and/or the Committee on Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities (CSLD) in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Public Examinations Board. The provision of SEAs enables SEN candidates to be equitably assessed under suitable conditions without an unfair advantage over other candidates. Their answer scripts are marked according to the same marking criteria as for other candidates but with due consideration given to their disabilities as appropriate.

SEN candidates who are granted SEAs in the 2026 HKDSE should pay special attention to the arrangements below (if applicable) and abide by the regulations laid down in this Handbook for Candidates, where appropriate.

Important:

*Any super-late applications or additional requests for SEAs will **NOT** be accepted on or after **20 March 2026** (i.e. 10 working days before the start of the first written examination on 8 April 2026) unless there are extenuating circumstances (i.e. accidents or urgent medical conditions) and the applications are submitted with relevant medical proof at least **10 working days** before the subject examination date. For speaking examination, any super-late applications or additional requests for SEAs will **NOT** be accepted on or after **24 February 2026**. Requests for SEAs due to oversight of schools/candidates will **NOT** be entertained after **9 January 2026**. Requests for cancellation of SEAs in the 2026 HKDSE will **NOT** be processed after 31 January 2026.*

1. Extra Time Allowance and Breaks

- Extra time allowance (ETA) (including prolonged and/or additional pauses in the Listening components) will only be given where there is clear evidence to justify the need and substantiate the request for approval by the relevant committees. Candidates should check carefully the information printed on the **admission form** and report discrepancies (if any) prior to the commencement of written examinations.

Supervised Break

- Supervised break (e.g. a short break of 5 minutes per 45 minutes for examinations lasting 90 minutes or above) may be given to candidates with ETA. During the supervised break, candidates must turn over the question papers and stop working, and they are **NOT** allowed to take out any unauthorised articles (such as books, dictionaries, notes, papers and any electronic devices¹) or hold any stationery. **Otherwise, they might be suspected of cheating and are liable to severe penalties.**
[*Note: To facilitate the smooth conduct of examinations, candidates (other than those accommodated in a single room) are **NOT** allowed to withdraw from the approved supervised breaks in written examinations.*]

Sessional Break

- Where more than one examination session is scheduled on the same day, candidates with ETA at special centres will have the subsequent examination session started later than the commencing time at normal centres. Under such circumstances, the candidates are **NOT** allowed to leave the examination room or communicate (including the use of mobile phones) with any persons other than invigilation staff during the break so as to preserve the secrecy of the question papers. They should stay in the examination room under the supervision of the invigilator(s). **If they need to leave the examination room under special circumstances, they must seek permission from the Centre Supervisor (CS) and be accompanied by an invigilator.** Candidates attending a prolonged examination session are strongly advised to bring their own meal to the centre if deemed necessary.
- In case the sessional break starts before the examination commencing time of the subsequent session at normal centres, candidates may leave the examination room with the permission of the CS. However, they should return to the examination room before the examination commencing time at normal centres.
- **Candidates in breach of the above regulations during the sessional break may receive a mark penalty and are liable to severe penalties if cheating is suspected.**

¹ Electronic devices include, but are not limited to, tablets, mobile phones, multimedia players, electronic dictionaries, databank watches, smart watches, wireless earphones or other wearable technologies with communication or data storage functions, etc.

2. Special Arrangements for Question Papers and Answering Questions

- Depending on individual needs, candidates may be provided with question papers²/question-answer books in special format, specially-designed supplementary answer sheets/graph paper and special arrangements for answering multiple-choice (MC) questions³.
- Candidates with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may be provided with plain text labels/descriptions for questions that involve high level comprehension/interpretation of cartoons or complicated pictures, where appropriate. The provision of plain text labels/descriptions to questions that involve high level comprehension/interpretation of cartoons or complicated pictures is based on professional judgement with reference to the assessment objectives of the subjects concerned. If plain text labels/descriptions are provided, the candidates concerned will be given a set of special question paper with plain text labels/descriptions (normally printed double-sided on A3 white paper and output as A4 booklet) in addition to the normal question paper before the start of the examination session. If a candidate is also allowed to use question paper in special format (e.g. single-sided black and white enlarged), the plain text labels/descriptions will be provided on the relevant special question paper. If the questions do not require plain text labels/descriptions, the normal question paper or special question paper without plain text labels/descriptions will be provided as appropriate.
- Samples of question papers/question-answer books in special format, specially-designed supplementary answer sheets/graph paper/MC answer sheet and plain text labels/descriptions are available for viewing under ‘Services to Special Needs Candidates’ on the HKEAA website.
- Candidates who are allowed to use question papers in special format will also receive a copy of normal question papers before the start of the examination session. For candidates using question paper with question(s) exempted (including abridged version), the normal question paper will **NOT** be provided to avoid confusion. However, if the normal question paper contains colour printing, it will also be distributed to the candidates concerned for reference.
- Candidates should work on **either** the special question-answer book/answer book/supplementary answer sheet/graph paper/MC answer sheet provided **or** the normal one, and hand in **only one set of answer scripts** to the CS/invigilator at the end of the examination for submission to the HKEAA for marking.
- Candidates who are provided with question papers in special format are allowed to take away the question papers after the examination (except for question-answer books, electronic/braille version of question papers or question papers on which MC answers are marked/circled).
- HKEAA will strive to ensure the accuracy of the special question papers. With the exception of special question papers with modifications (e.g. Braille question paper, abridged version of question paper), if there are any discrepancies between the contents of the special question papers and the printed question papers, the printed version shall prevail.

3. Special Centres and Ancillary Aids

- Candidates who are given SEAs will be arranged to sit the examinations at special centres which are normally set up in secondary schools (mostly in classrooms and sometimes in school halls), and are usually accessible by lift. The examination procedures at special centres are the same as those at normal centres. However, extra invigilators are available to provide candidates with support if necessary. Depending on the supply of special centres in various districts, candidates may **NOT** be arranged to take the examinations in their chosen examination district.
- Candidates who arrive late at SEN centres should normally not be allowed to sit the examination if the examination session concerned has ended at normal centres.
- Candidates who are given non-standard SEAs (including but not limited to extra time allowance other than 25%, use of ancillary aids/equipment, prompters, and longer/more frequent supervised breaks), emotional disturbance, psychiatric problems, adjustment problems and medical illness are normally allocated to the special centres at their own schools (i.e. home centres). Other own school SEN candidates from the same school would also be accommodated at the home centre as far as possible.

² Question papers in single-sided black and white format are not applicable to English Language Paper 4 and Chinese Literature Paper 1 since the examination content of the question papers concerned is already printed on a single page.

³ (i) Candidates who are allowed to circle MC answers on the question paper will **NOT** be given an additional single-sided question paper. They should circle the MC answers on the question paper and stick a barcode label on the top right-hand corner of the first page for submission to the HKEAA for marking; and
(ii) only **one type** of enlarged MC answer sheet will be provided. Candidates who are approved to use an enlarged MC answer sheet will **NOT** be given a normal MC answer sheet. In Chinese Language Paper 1, English Language Paper 1, Citizenship and Social Development and Physics Paper 2 where a question-answer book is used, **no** MC answer sheets will be provided. Candidates who need bigger circles for answering MC questions should apply for an enlarged question-answer book instead. For details, please refer to Annex 4 of the Application Guide for SEAs (available for download under ‘Services to Special Needs Candidates’ from the HKEAA website).

- Candidates may be allowed to sit the examination in a single room, a room with fewer candidates or in a familiar examination environment due to their special needs (e.g. likely to create noise during the examination, very sensitive to noise, very difficult to adapt to an unfamiliar environment, or other medical conditions such as Tourette's Syndrome). However, candidates should not expect complete silence in the single room/room with fewer candidates as they may not be completely shielded from normal background noises (such as normal school activities and school bells). If needed, candidates may opt to wear earplugs in the examination but they should inform the CS before the start of the examination.
- The seat number of special centres (i.e. centre number ending with 'S') printed on the admission form is for reference only. On the day of the examination, candidates should follow the instructions of CSs and invigilators for seating arrangements. Besides, an examination timetable detailing the approved SEAs for individual candidates will be stuck on the desk of the candidates concerned in each examination session. Candidates should check carefully the information printed on the examination timetable and report discrepancies (if any) to the CS/invigilators prior to the commencement of the examination.
- The Examination Surveillance System (ESS) will be set up in written examinations held in the SEN hall/classroom centres. The examination proceedings at these centres will be video-recorded for record purposes. Only authorised persons of the HKEAA can view, store or handle the recordings. The recordings will be destroyed upon the closing of examination (i.e. 30 November 2026).
- Where justified, prompters will be provided to the candidates with special needs in the form of knocking on the desk every 30 minutes by the invigilator.
- Where justified, candidates with special needs may be allowed to use ancillary aids (e.g. Braille, magnifiers, hearing aids, screen reader, speech-to-text (STT) software, word processors) to be provided by the school/themselves for the examinations. They should follow the instructions given by the invigilation staff and use the ancillary aids properly for examination. **Candidates misusing allowable ancillary aids during the examination will receive a mark penalty and are liable to severe penalties if cheating is suspected.**
- The use of screen readers may be allowed in designated examinations to read out the question papers. For school candidates, the school should provide the computer facilities (including the designated text-to-speech software) for use in the examinations. Private candidates should provide their own notebook computer and the designated software. For details, please refer to Annex 5 of the Application Guide for SEAs (available for download under 'Services to Special Needs Candidates' from the HKEAA website) and the notification letter on the approved SEAs.
- Where justified, candidates with special needs may be allowed to use a word processor for typing answers. Besides, candidates with SLD who have severe writing difficulties may be allowed to use the STT software to answer questions in the examinations of Citizenship and Social Development and eight designated elective subjects (i.e. Chinese History, Ethics and Religious Studies, Geography, Health Management and Social Care, History, Literature in English, Tourism and Hospitality Studies, and Visual Arts (Papers 1A and 2A)). If an external writing pad is used, it should support MacBook Air (or MacBook Pro) and all assistive functions of external writing pads must be disabled, including but not limited to word association, predictive text, word learning, and homophone features. For details, please refer to Annex 7 of the Application Guide for SEAs.
 - For school candidates, the school should provide the computer facilities and examination venue while private candidates have to provide their own computer facilities including the relevant software. The word processor is to be used as a type-writer, not as a data-base, while the STT software is used for converting a candidate's speech into text. Other functions on the computer, including but not limited to access to the internet, calculation, predictive text, spell-check, grammar check, translation and thesauri, are **NOT** allowed.
 - Candidates are normally **NOT** allowed to withdraw from using the word processor/STT software after the start of the examination. In case they are seriously ill and unable to speak well enough for using the STT software or cannot use the word processor/STT software due to technical problems, they should work on the normal/special question-answer book and/or answer sheet in handwriting. If they are affected by the problem of data storage devices in the examination, they should **report it to the CS immediately**.
 - Candidates must use the electronic answer sheet provided by the HKEAA (Note: Answer books will NOT be distributed to candidates) and are strongly advised to practise using it before the public examination. A sample electronic answer sheet template is available for download under 'Services to Special Needs Candidates' from the HKEAA website.

- After the end of the examination, candidates should, under the instructions and supervision of the invigilation staff, print a hardcopy of the answers and affix their barcode label in the designated box on the first page. They are **NOT** allowed to work on the printed answer script after the end of the examination. If a candidate requests to edit/write on the printed answer script, he/she will be allowed to print the answers during the examination. However, he/she will **NOT** be allowed to use the word processor/STT software again and the time spent on printing will **NOT** be compensated.
- All candidates who are allowed to use the STT software will be granted supervised breaks in the examination (i.e. normally a 5-minute break for every 45 minutes of examination) (Note: No supervised breaks are provided for using the STT software in Visual Arts (Papers 1A and 2A)). The time of the breaks will be marked on the candidates' admission forms and the examination timetable on their desks on the day of the examination. If a candidate is accommodated in a single room and decides not to take the supervised breaks, he/she should inform the CS before the examination starts. If an examination room/hall accommodates more than 1 candidate, all the candidates are required to put on **BOTH** headphones with microphones (e.g. Apple EarPods) and noise-blocking earmuffs during the examination. They may take off the equipment temporarily when going to the toilet or during the supervised breaks.

4. Points to Note in the Listening Component and Speaking Examination of English Language

Listening Component

- Candidates taking the Listening component at special centres (including those taking the examination in their own school) are **NOT** required to bring their own radios to listen to the broadcast. Equipment [e.g. receivers of Infra-red Transmission (IR) System, playing device(s) for USB] and earphones (applicable to special centres using the IR system) for the Listening component will be provided by the HKEAA or the candidates' own school⁴. Candidates can check whether they are allocated to a special centre using the IR system on the admission form. They may choose to use their own earphones if they sit the Listening component at special centres using the IR system. For regulations on the use of earphones, please refer to **Section B Part 7(a)**.
- Requests made on the examination days for using another mode (e.g. own radios) to receive the broadcast of the Listening component will **NOT** be entertained since the radio reception at the special centres may not be satisfactory or the facilities requested by the candidates may not be available at the special centres. Candidates who need hearing aids are reminded to bring their own hearing aids to the special centres.

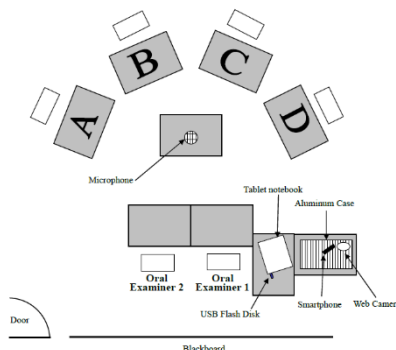
All candidates who sit the Listening component of English Language at special centres (including those taking the examination in their own school) will be given a 5-minute supervised break after completing Part 3A in order to synchronise the time for broadcasting the listening materials of Part 3B. Candidates should abide by the regulations on supervised breaks.

- Some candidates may be given prolonged pauses/additional pauses as appropriate. Such prolonged pauses/additional pauses (if applicable) and the above-mentioned 5-minute supervised break after completing Part 3A are embedded in the listening contents[#]. It should be noted that the examination time for the Listening component of English Language and the Listening examination of Music printed on the admission form and the examination timetable on the candidates' desks is only an approximation.
[[#] Music will be played during the prolonged pauses/additional pauses (if applicable) and the supervised break. Candidates (including those accommodated in a single room) are **NOT** allowed to withdraw from the above provision in the listening contents.]
- Candidates who are granted ETA and/or supervised breaks in the writing part of Part 3B should refer to the examination timetable stuck on their desk and follow the instructions of Centre Supervisors/invigilators for the end time of the examination with ETA and/or supervised breaks.
- No Special Room is set up at special centres (please refer to **Section B Part 7(a)** for information of the Special Room at normal centres).

⁴ Subject to the availability of IR system, candidates who need to take the examination in their own school may use playing device(s) for USB.

Speaking Examination

- Candidates taking the English Language Speaking examination at special centres should refer to the exact preparation and examination times as given in the notification letter on the approved SEAs. They will be given sufficient time to respond to the questions and the Oral Examiners (OEs) may repeat the questions or instructions where necessary and take into consideration the candidate's disabilities (e.g. hearing/speech impairment) when making the assessment.
- The English Language Speaking examination at special centres is scheduled for late March 2026 and will be conducted in groups of three or four. The seating plan for groups of three or four is identical to the one given below:



- The HKEAA will arrange two Oral Examination Assistants (OEAs) to facilitate the group interaction with an SEN candidate with physical, visual, aural, oral and/or other disabilities (i.e. in a group of three) where the SEN candidate is Candidate B and the two OEAs are Candidates A and C. Under special circumstances (e.g. SEN candidates with unilateral hearing loss), the Oral Examiner will make special seating arrangements for the group.
- Candidates with specific learning disabilities (SLD) will sit the Speaking examination with other SLD candidates in groups of three or four. Under special circumstances (e.g. fewer than three SLD candidates present in a group), the HKEAA will arrange an appropriate number of OEAs to facilitate the group interaction.
- Candidates applying for rescheduling of Speaking examination due to withdrawal from SEAs should follow the instructions and pay the supplementary fee as detailed in **Section A Part 3**.

5. Exemption from Part of an Examination

- Where a candidate has been exempted from component(s)/part(s) of an examination, his/her results for the affected component(s)/part(s) will be assessed by the HKEAA based on his/her performance in the other component(s)/part(s) of the examination sat. The component(s) exempted will be indicated on the candidate's certificate. However, the reasons for granting the exemption and the SEAs made will **NOT** be recorded.
- Chinese Language and English Language adopt profile reporting of component results in addition to the subject result. The School-based Assessment (SBA) result will be combined with the result of one of the papers to form a component. Component 1 (Reading and Integrated Skills) of Chinese Language comprises the result of Paper 1 and the SBA. Component 4 (Speaking) of English Language comprises the result of Paper 4 and the SBA. If a candidate is only exempted from the public examination paper but not the SBA, the component result will be made up of the assessed result of the exempted paper and the SBA result. If a candidate is exempted from both the public examination paper and SBA, the component result will be indicated as 'EXM' (denoting exemption).

6. School-based Assessment (SBA)

- Regarding the special arrangements in conducting SBA for SEN students, please visit the SBA section of the HKEAA website (www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/sba/info_corner/).

7. Candidates' Discipline

- Candidates with special needs have the sole responsibility to ensure that the requirements and regulations of the examinations written in this Handbook for Candidates are complied with. Candidates in breach of any requirements or regulations will be subject to the same level of penalty applicable to normal candidates.

8. Enquiries

SEN Hotline: 3628 8917 Email: dse@hkeaa.edu.hk
Website: www.hkeaa.edu.hk → Services to Special Needs Candidates → HKDSE
(www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/Candidates/special_needs_candidates/hkdse.html)
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