



# Providing Services to Candidates with Special Needs

August 2023

The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) is dedicated to providing equitable, reliable and valid examination and assessment services. Special examination arrangements (SEAs) can be made for candidates with special needs (such as candidates with disabilities). The provision of such services allows these candidates to be equitably assessed under suitable conditions without having an unfair advantage over other candidates.

Candidates' disabilities can roughly be categorised into physical, visual, aural, oral, specific learning disabilities (SLD) and others [e.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)]. Depending on the nature and severity of their disabilities, candidates are given SEAs in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE), including exemption from part of an examination. For details of the SEAs on individual disability types, please refer to the *Application Guide*.

Applications for SEAs are considered by the Committee on Special Needs Candidates and the Committee on Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Public Examinations Board.

## When to Apply

### School Candidates

- Candidates should submit applications in September two years before the examination year via their schools (i.e. in September of the S5 school year). Candidates whose conditions of disabilities are unstable may submit applications in September in the year preceding the examination.
- Candidates studying S6 in the examination year who have not submitted applications before should do so in September of the S6 school year via their schools.

### Private Candidates

- Private candidates should submit applications during the examination registration period.

Applications submitted after the application deadline will normally **NOT** be accepted. The application deadline is indicated in the *Application Guide*. If special circumstances warranting SEAs for the candidate arise after the application deadline, such request and relevant documentary evidence should be submitted immediately (or at least **10** working days before the start of written or speaking examinations) for HKEAA's consideration on a case-by-case basis. Please refer to the *Application Guide* for details.

## Documentation Requirements

- All applications should be supported by an up-to-date medical/assessment report, valid throughout the examination period, issued by the Hospital Authority, Department of Health, Education Bureau, a registered medical practitioner or a professional (e.g. audiologist, speech therapist, or psychologist) in accordance with the requirements stated in the *Application Guide*.
- Schools should provide information on the special arrangements made for the candidates in the school internal examinations. Recommendations on the special arrangements in the public examinations should also be stated on the application forms.



## Processing Procedures

- Applications from candidates with specific learning disabilities are considered by the Committee on Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities; other applications are processed by the Committee on Special Needs Candidates.
- Candidates should indicate the SEAs they require in the application form. Subsequent amendments are normally not processed. In considering the SEAs, the type of special needs, severity of the disabilities and the requests of the candidates will be given due consideration.
- The HKEAA will issue an acknowledgement to schools/private candidates via an auto reply email on receipt of an application.
- Candidates asking for extra time allowance (ETA) and/or the use of computers (word processors) due to difficulties in handwriting arising from motor function problems may be required to take a speed test (handwriting and/or typing) administered by the HKEAA for consideration of their applications.



## Notification of Results

The results of applications will be released to the schools and the candidates via the online system by batches from late December to early January of the school year of application.



## Appeal

- Candidates who are not satisfied with the results of their applications may apply for review within four weeks after the release of application results. Applications for review must be made in writing and supported with additional justifications and/or documentary evidence.
- Applications for review are considered by an independent Appeal Committee for Special Needs Candidates. Appellants will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review from late February to early March of the same year.

## Special Examination Arrangements

Depending on the nature and severity of their disabilities, candidates may be given the following SEAs:



### Extra time allowance

- Extra time allowance may be given for answering questions.
- One or more short breaks may be provided during an examination.
- Prolonged and/or additional pauses may be given during listening tests.
- Preparation and/or examination time may be extended for speaking examinations.



### Ancillary aids

- Candidates with visual disabilities may be allowed to use their own ancillary aids (e.g. Brailers, magnifiers).
- Candidates with aural disabilities may use their own hearing aids.
- Some candidates, depending on the severity of their disabilities, may be allowed to use a computer (word processor) in typing the answers. Candidates must provide evidence to support this need. The school should provide the examination venue and the computer facilities for the candidates in the public examination. Private candidates have to provide their own computer including the relevant software. Please refer to the *Application Guide* for details.



### Special arrangements for question papers and answering questions

- Depending on individual needs, candidates may be provided with Braille, single-sided, enlarged (black and white), ivory-coloured, PDF format or specific font-size, word- and line- spacing question papers.
- If candidates who apply for special question paper also need to use specially-designed answer sheet, they should submit the request in the application for SEAs. Please refer to Annex 4 of the *Application Guide* for details.
- For multiple-choice (MC) papers, candidates may be allowed to write their answers on the MC answer sheets, or circle the MC answers on the question papers, or fill in larger boxes on MC answer sheets.
- Some candidates, depending on the severity of their disabilities, may be allowed to use screen readers in designated examinations to read out the question papers. Candidates must provide evidence to support this need. The school should provide the examination venue and computer facilities (including the text-to-speech software) for the candidates in the public examination. Private candidates have to provide their own computer including the relevant software. Please refer to the *Application Guide* for details.



### Special assistance in examination centres

- For candidates with aural disabilities, a teacher from their school may be allowed to be present at the examination centre to assist in the verbal communication between invigilators and candidates.
- In speaking examinations, the candidates concerned are given sufficient time to respond to questions. Examiners may repeat the questions or instructions where necessary and take into consideration the candidates' oral disabilities when making the assessment. In general, the candidates concerned (except for SLD candidates) may be arranged to sit the speaking examinations with Oral Examination Assistants to facilitate the conduct of group discussion.

**Candidates being given special arrangements in school internal examinations will NOT automatically be given similar SEAs in the public examination. If candidates do not receive special arrangements in school internal examinations due to extenuating circumstances, they should provide documentary evidence for consideration by the Committee on Special Needs Candidates.**

## Special Examination Centres

- Candidates who are given SEAs (e.g. ETA, prolonged and/or additional pauses in the listening tests, supervised breaks, Braille/special question papers, special answer sheets/books, ancillary aids/equipment) will be arranged to sit the examinations at special examination centres.
- Special examination centres are normally set up in secondary schools (mostly classrooms with a few school halls). Examination procedures in special examination centres are the same as those in other centres. However, extra invigilators are available to offer assistance to candidates if necessary.
- Examination rooms in a special examination centre are usually accessible by lift or on the same floor as the main entrance. Depending on the supply of special centres in various districts, candidates may not be arranged to take the examinations in their chosen examination district.

## Exemption from Part of an Examination

If a candidate is exempted from component(s)/part(s) of an examination, his/her results for the affected component(s)/part(s) will be assessed based on his/her performance in the other component(s)/part(s) of the examination sat. Details of the component(s) exempted will be indicated on the candidate's certificate. However, the reason for granting the exemption and the SEAs made will not be recorded.

## Other Special Examination Arrangements

The Authority will provide other necessary arrangements to meet the special needs of candidates (e.g. hospitalisation). Hospitalised candidates applying to take the examination in hospital must obtain their doctor's written permission, certifying that they are physically fit to take the examination. The application must be submitted with the necessary documents at least one working day (Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays) before the examination.

## Repeaters

**If a candidate was given SEAs/exemption from component(s)/part(s) of an examination in a previous examination and wishes to have special arrangements in the current examination, he/she has to submit a fresh application.** The same arrangements/exemption will normally be granted when he/she repeats the examination, provided that the candidate's condition of disabilities remains unchanged.

For the *Application Guide* and application methods, please visit the Authority's website at [www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/Candidates/special\\_needs\\_candidates/hkdse.html](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/Candidates/special_needs_candidates/hkdse.html)

### Enquiries

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