

Special Arrangements for Internal Examinations for Students with Special Educational Needs

Education Bureau

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

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Major Updates (in 2024)

Chapter	Section	Major Updates
IV. Assessment Accommodations	⑤ The use of speech-to-text software and other assistive aids	Amend the subjects in which speech-to-text software could be used in HKDSE.
VI. Special Examination Arrangements for Students with Different Special Educational Needs	⑥ Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delete the part on School-based Assessment for Liberal Studies subject ● Amend the subjects in which plain text labels/descriptions can be given for questions with cartoons or complicated pictures
	⑧ Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)	Amend the subjects in which speech-to-text software could be used in the HKDSE.

I. Purpose of the Guideline

According to the principle of equal opportunities, schools should ensure that their assessment mechanism is fair to all students, including students with special educational needs (SEN). In Hong Kong, the major SEN types include Hearing Impairment, Visual Impairment, Physical Disabilities, Intellectual Disability, Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Speech and Language Impairment, Specific Learning Difficulties as well as Mental Illness. Compared to other students, students with SEN, due to their functional impairments, are affected to a certain extent in demonstrating their abilities during examinations. Under these circumstances, schools need to provide them with special examination arrangements to ensure that they are equitably assessed.

The purpose of this guideline is to elucidate the principles schools should observe and the points to note when providing special arrangements for students in internal examinations. In most cases, the rationale and principles of these special arrangements are also applicable to public examinations, including the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) and its School-based Assessment (SBA) component, the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA), and the three Internal Assessments (IA) in Primary five and six that are to be submitted to the Education Bureau as part of the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) system.

The purpose of public examinations is to assess students' academic attainment through equitable, reliable and valid examinations. In general, the assessing organizations can arrange special examination arrangement for students with SEN, in circumstances where unfair advantages are avoided and the examination contents remain unchanged, to allow them to take the examination in a fair and appropriate setting. However, the purpose and nature of internal examinations and public examinations are not completely the same. Subject to different considerations, some arrangements provided by schools for individual students in internal examinations may not be applicable to public examinations. For example, when the purpose of an internal assessment is to sustain the learning motivation of students, or to assess the learning progress of students under a tailored curriculum, schools may consider providing special arrangements different from that of public examinations.

However, when schools provide special arrangements that are not applicable to public examinations/ TSA/ IA for SSPA purpose, they should facilitate parents and students to understand the principles and arrangements. Before students sit for public examinations/assessments, schools should gradually adjust the modes of internal assessment accommodations so as to be close to those allowed in public examinations, so that students gradually get used to special arrangements in public examinations.

Other than this guideline, schools should also refer to the following relevant documents in order to get a clear understanding of the purposes and requirements of different examinations and obtain the latest information on individual examinations:

- The Resource CD on “Providing Special Examination Arrangement for Students with Special Educational Needs” (in Chinese language) published by Education Bureau (Secondary schools which have not collected the CD can contact 35472228 for enquiry)
- The “FAQ: Providing Special Examination Arrangement for Students with Special Educational Needs”
(https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/learning-and-teaching/sea_faq_e.pdf)
- The circular memoranda and letters on TSA and the SSPA System issued to schools by the Education Bureau annually
- Leaflets and online information on Services to Special Needs Candidates published by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA)
(https://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/candidates/special_needs_candidates/)

Code of Practice on Education, Disability Discrimination Ordinance

Which parts of the "Code of Practice on Education" under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance are relevant to assessment accommodations?

The "Code of Practice on Education" stipulates that schools should review their assessment mechanisms in order to provide an equitable assessment for all students, including students with SEN and ordinary students.

- ♦ Paragraph 17.1 states that "Educational establishments should ensure that their assessment mechanisms do not discriminate against students with disabilities. Teachers are advised to use a number of assessment methods in order to allow students, including those with disabilities, to display their competencies."
- ♦ Paragraph 17.3 mentions that "Educational establishments should critically review their assessment methods adopted to ensure that they serve the purpose of the assessment."
- ♦ Paragraph 17.4 points out that "Sometimes the curriculum for students with disabilities is tailored in order to meet their individual needs; the content as well as the method of assessment should also be adjusted having regard to the tailored curriculum."

The website of the Equal Opportunities Commission "Disability Discrimination Ordinance - Code of Practice on Education" is:

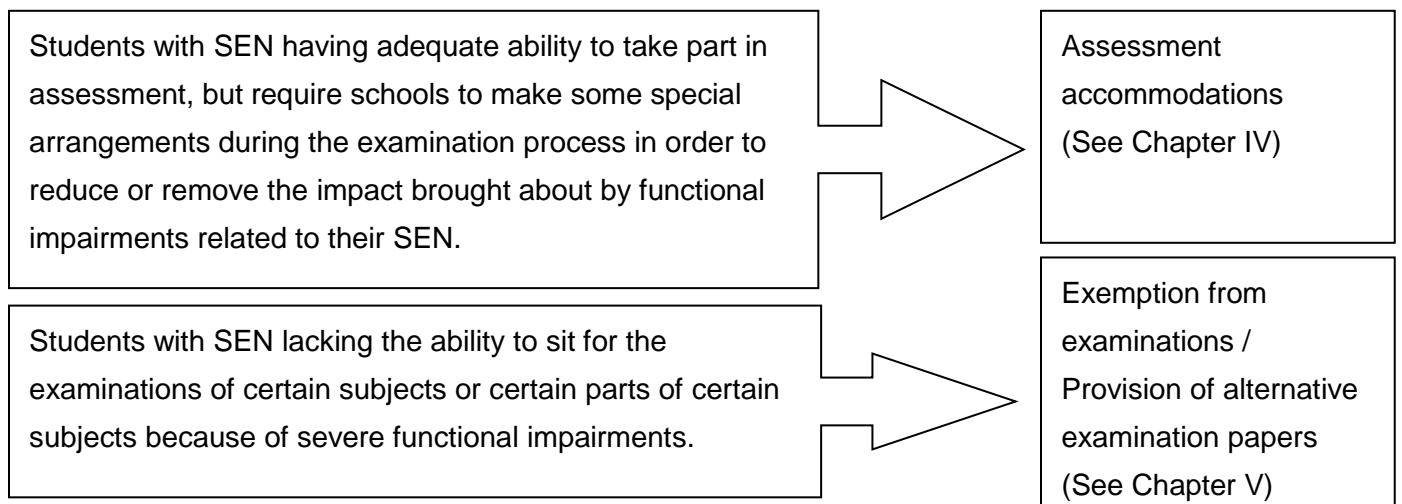
https://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/Upload/cop/ddo/cop_edu_e.htm

II. Special Examination Arrangements: Assessment Accommodations and Exemption from Examinations

Special examination arrangements include assessment accommodations and exemption. In general, all students, including students with SEN, should participate in assessment as far as possible, so that teachers can understand their learning progress and adjust the teaching accordingly. Providing appropriate assessment accommodations for students with SEN can help alleviate or remove the impact during examination process brought about by their functional impairments, so as to provide them equal opportunities to demonstrate their subject knowledge or abilities without changing the nature or content of the assessment, or creating an unfair advantage over other students.

Unless necessary, schools should not exempt students from participating in assessment. For students who cannot participate in examinations of certain subjects or parts of certain subjects due to severe functional impairment, schools should consider exempting them from taking part in these parts of examination. When deciding whether exemption should be granted, schools should make reference to professional advice and the decision should be made by teachers, students and parents during case conferences or Individual Education Plan meetings. Schools should record and file the decisions made.

All in all, when schools provide special examination arrangements for students, thorough decisions should be based on the functional impairments presented by the students as related to the SEN, and their actual needs, rather than merely the special need categories they belong to:



III. School Policies and Measures

Formulation of Assessment Policies

- ◆ Schools should formulate appropriate assessment and assessment accommodation policies to achieve the target of facilitating learning through assessment.
- ◆ Schools should assess students in an equitable situation, avoiding individual students being placed in a disadvantaged position during assessment due to their SEN, and ensure that they will have no unfair advantage over other students.
- ◆ Students with SEN are in need of all around support, and providing special examination arrangement is only one among other support policies and strategies from the schools.

Proper Assessment Measures

- ◆ Schools should adopt various modes of assessment in order to understand the progress of students in various aspects. Individual differences among students should be taken into account when designing the difficulty levels, types and quantity of questions.
- ◆ Schools should consider the abilities of students when deciding the number of assessments. For the less able students, schools can divide the learning content into smaller units and conduct assessment right after the completion of a single unit. This will help students consolidate the learning content, as well as enable teachers to understand students' progress and arrange early intervention.
- ◆ The scoring criteria should link closely to the assessment objectives.
- ◆ Schools should train up students' examination-taking skills and behaviours.

Proper Design of Question Papers

How to design question papers that can reflect more accurately the abilities of students in assessment?

- ◆ Content – content of the examinations should match with the teaching content, covering questions of different difficulty levels and types.
- ◆ Length – if the purpose of the assessment is not to test a student’s speed of writing, computation or reading, the length of the question papers should be such that the majority of students can complete within the time limit.
- ◆ Wording – use simple words in concise sentences, so that students will not fail to answer due to difficulty in understanding the questions.
- ◆ Layout of question papers –
 - Clear instructions, printing in appropriate font size and providing sufficient space for answering are recommended practices, so that a student’s performance will not be affected due to difficulties in reading, writing or sustaining attention.
 - For junior grade students, examples should be provided so that they can easily understand the question requirements and answering format required.
 - For questions which require students to read a substantial amount of text before answering, the text and the answering section should preferably be put on the same page. Alternatively, schools should consider placing the two parts on adjacent pages to facilitate students referring to the text when answering the questions.
- ◆ Mode of answering – In circumstances when the assessment criteria are not affected, allow students to demonstrate their learning outcomes in different ways, such as in writing, oral presentation or visual presentation.

Setting Suitable Marking Criteria

How to set marking criteria for valid assessment of students' abilities?

- ◆ If the assessment objective is to test a student's mastery of learning content or skills, but the marking criteria over-emphasize the quality or accuracy of the format of answers or handwriting, the assessment objective has been changed.
- ◆ If the assessment objective is to test a student's problem-solving ability on mathematical applications, some marks should be granted if the student demonstrated the use of appropriate steps, even if there are computation errors.
- ◆ If the assessment objective is not to test whether a student can dictate words accurately (e.g. in non-language subjects, as well as in the sentence scramble and reading comprehension sections in language papers), schools may consider setting a ceiling for deduction of marks for wrongly written words.
- ◆ For the 'content assessment' part of an oral examination, marks should not be deducted for a student's inaccurate articulation/pronunciation.

Examination-taking Skills and Behaviours

For students with SEN, what examination-taking skills and behaviours do they particularly need to learn?

- ◆ Have a clear understanding of the format and requirements of the assessment in advance, such as the type of questions, mode of answering, time limit.
- ◆ Mark on the question papers to facilitate grasping of the main points
- ◆ Understand the vocabulary commonly used in questions
- ◆ Be on seat and work with good concentration
- ◆ Manage the time well to finish answering
- ◆ Follow the invigilators' instructions
- ◆ Ask for help from the invigilators when necessary

School Measures in Connection with Special Examination Arrangements

- ◆ Schools should develop school-based support policies and include the internal special examination arrangements in the school policy papers. Keep a register of students requiring support. Deploy resources to implement various arrangements, and review the relevant policies on a regular basis.
- ◆ In developing school-based policies on special examination arrangements, schools should involve members of the Student Support Team, teachers in charge of examination affairs and subject teachers in order that the policies can be implemented smoothly.
- ◆ In order to implement the relevant policies smoothly, schools should facilitate different stakeholders, including teachers, parents and students to understand these arrangements in various platforms. For example:
 - Arrange appropriate professional training for teachers during staff meetings or on staff development days to familiarize teachers with the concepts, principles, and relevant measures associated with special examination arrangements, fostering a shared understanding and consensus among the teaching staff.
 - By means of various channels, such as the school website, parent newsletters, seminars and activities of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), let all parents, including parents of students with SEN and parents of other students, understand the related arrangements.
 - Schools should enhance the general awareness and acceptance of special educational needs among all students to reduce misunderstanding and labelling, and alleviates the concerns of students with SEN about receiving special examination arrangements.
- ◆ Schools should deploy sufficient manpower to implement various special examination arrangements, including preparation work such as liaison with parents and relevant professionals within and outside school, documentation, invigilation, and arrangements of the venue or assistive aids for examinations.
- ◆ Schools should have formulated appropriate procedures to determine the special examination arrangements needed for individual students. For example:

- The Student Support Team should conduct case conferences and invite school parents, as well as professionals, and teachers of the students to participate. Decide various arrangements with reference to objectives and nature of assessment, as well as the views from all parties, including:
 - Recommendations from professionals / reports / medical certificates
 - Observations and recommendations from the class teacher or subject teachers
 - Opinions of the parents
 - Opinions of the students
- Record the decision, file the relevant documents, and notify the students and their parents.
- In case the special examination arrangements given to individual students may not be applicable to the public examinations, schools should let the students and parents understand the situation.
- ◆ Schools should conduct regular reviews on the special examination arrangements for individual students:
 - Review the effectiveness of the special examination arrangements in different ways, such as:
 - Observing the students' performance in examinations by the invigilating teachers;
 - Obtaining comments from teachers / parents / students; and
 - Reviewing the academic progress/ learning motivation of the students
 - To adjust the accommodation measures and arrangement according to the actual needs of students during different stages, e.g. a Primary one student who needs to have the questions read out to him/ her to facilitate his/ her answering may not necessarily need the same arrangement when he/ she has improved word reading ability in higher grade levels. Another example is that a student with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing who can finish answering the examination papers within the time limit in primary school may need extra time allowance in secondary school as he/ she has to process a greater amount of reading materials.

- ◆ Transfer of information when a student changes school:

When a student is promoted to secondary school or changes school, subject to parental written consent, the school should transfer the assessment report and records on the support and assessment accommodations to the new school.

IV. Assessment Accommodations

Arranging assessment accommodations for students with SEN refers to making special arrangements for them, allowing them an equal opportunity to demonstrate their learning outcomes during the examination process.

Principle

Appropriate assessment accommodations should help students with SEN reduce or remove the impact brought about by the functional impairments during the assessment process, without changing the nature or content of the assessment, or creating an unfair advantage over other students. Assessment accommodation implemented without changing the nature and content of the assessment should yield results for cross comparison among students, and it is not advisable to indicate any special arrangements on the students' report cards. These appropriate assessment accommodation can be applied across all grade levels.

Types

Generally speaking, assessment accommodations include:

- ① Extra time allowance
- ② Modifications in response format
- ③ Modification in presentation format of question papers
- ④ Reading aloud of papers / Use of screen readers / Asking for pronunciation of words
- ⑤ Speech-to-text software and other assistive aids
- ⑥ Supervised breaks during examination
- ⑦ Additional assistance in examination centres
- ⑧ Abridged question papers

Modes of Assessment Accommodations and Points to Note

① Extra time allowance

Mode

- ◆ For written papers, normally a 25% extra time allowance will be granted. The percentage can be adjusted upward or downward according to professional advice. The extra time allowance required by students with Visual Impairment or Physical Disabilities will depend on the severity of their disabilities and professional advice such as that of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, ophthalmologists, etc.
- ◆ Speaking examinations: students who are granted extended time allowance in written examinations may be provided with extended preparation and/or examination time in the speaking examination. Students with communication difficulties would be granted extra time for making responses.
- ◆ For listening examinations, students who are granted extra time allowance in written examinations or students with Hearing Impairment may be provided with prolonged pauses and/or more pauses in the audiotape.

Points to note

- ◆ Schools should arrange students who require extra time allowance to sit for examinations in a separate room. This practice is considered more appropriate. If schools arrange the students taking examinations with other students in the same venue, the operation of different starting or finishing examination time may cause confusion.

Students granted with extra time allowance can be given supervised breaks during examinations.

② Modifications in response format

Mode

- ◆ Allowing students to write answers on alternate lines
- ◆ Providing answer sheets with wider spaced lines / larger grids
- ◆ Allowing students to circle multiple-choice answers or fill in the answers directly on question papers instead of using answer sheets
- ◆ For primary schools: allow students to present the answers in other ways, e.g. when doing sentence scramble, students can use numbers to show the sequence of words instead of copying the whole sentence

Points to Note

- ◆ Schools should note that modifications in response format may not be applicable to public examination. For modifications in response format that can be arranged in public examinations, please refer to the relevant information of HKEAA.

③ Modification in presentation format of question papers

Mode

- ◆ Enlarged question papers
- ◆ Question papers with enlarged print on a normal-sized paper
- ◆ Question papers with one-side printing
- ◆ Allowing students to undo the binding of question papers
- ◆ Question printed on papers of other colours (such as ivory) for easy reading.
- ◆ Allowing students to use the Braille version / soft copy of question papers

Points to note

- ◆ If schools use enlarged question papers / Braille question papers / soft copy of question papers, there is a need to provide students and invigilators with a copy of the normal question papers used by other students for reference. This is of particular importance if there are questions involving measurement of shapes in the papers.
- ◆ If schools use enlarged question papers / Braille question papers, the students should be provided with a larger desk.
- ◆ Using a normal-sized question paper with enlarged print may be a more convenient arrangement for students as they do not need to use a larger desk. However, schools should note whether the use of large font / Braille question papers has affected the layout of the question papers. For example, if the reading comprehension passage and its corresponding questions cannot be printed on the same page due to enlarged font size, it is advisable to print them on two adjacent pages instead of both sides of a same page; another example would be printing the test instructions, the relevant parts of the questions and examples on the same page so that it is easy for students to answer.
- ◆ Schools should note that the above arrangements may vary from the special arrangements in public examinations. For the special format of question papers that can be arranged in public examinations, please refer to the related information of the HKEAA.

④ Reading aloud of papers / Use of screen readers / Asking for pronunciation of words

Mode

- ◆ Students with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing and having severe difficulties in reading/, and students who cannot read the papers in any other ways because of blindness / severe visual impairment / significantly low Braille reading speed due to poor finger touch assessed by an occupational therapist / loss of vision recently and thus cannot read Braille / neurological impairment, without affecting the objectives and content of assessment,
 - can be allowed to use screen readers during examinations
 - can have teachers arranged to read out question papers for them
 - can ask invigilators the pronunciation of words in non-language examination papers

(Please refer to relevant sections on Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing, Visual Impairment and Physical Disabilities in Chapter VI.)

Points to note

- ◆ Ways of implementation:
 - In situations where teachers are to read out the question papers to students, the examination should be conducted on a one-to-one basis or in small groups.
 - If students are allowed to ask the invigilators the pronunciation of words on the question papers, the examination can be conducted in small groups. In addition, there should be an appropriate invigilator-candidate ratio to shorten students' waiting time.
- ◆ Arrangement of readers:
 - Schools may arrange school personnel such as teachers, student guidance personnel or teaching assistants to read out question papers to students.
 - Since readers have to abide by certain codes of practice, it is not appropriate to arrange students' parents or senior students to read out the papers.

- ◆ Schools should develop a code of practice on reading question papers for readers, for example:
 - They should only read out the content accurately, without giving any explanation.
 - They should not finish reading the entire question paper in one go. While reading, they should take note of the students' answering speed and whether students can remember the information.
 - They may repeat certain parts of the question paper upon students' request, but not deliberately repeating the parts where students have made mistakes.
 - No hints should be given. For instance, they should not stress the main points or key words of the questions, or read out the mathematical formulae or the names of the geometrical shapes. Otherwise, they would have unfair advantage over other students.
- ◆ Use of screen readers:
 - Teachers setting the examination papers should be clear about the functions and limitations of the screen readers students are using in examinations, so as to avoid creating inconvenience or giving them unnecessary hints. For example, screen readers cannot read out information saved as an image, as well as most mathematical formulae and special symbols, but can read out text hidden under images (answers).
 - Before examinations, schools must provide sufficient training for students to enable them to smoothly and effectively operate the device.
 - Schools should provide students using screen readers with the soft copy of the question papers, so that they use the voice-output function of the screen-reader to read out the text appearing on the screen. Schools should also provide students with the printed version of the question papers for their reference. The Braille version of the question papers should also be provided for students with visual impairment using the screen readers.
 - Before examinations, schools should ensure that the text file of the screen reader is the same as the printed version or Braille version. For students answering in handwritten form, schools must remind students that if the content of the question papers

read out by the screen reader is different from that of the printed version, the latter version shall prevail. For students with visual impairment answering with computer input method, the soft copy of the question papers should prevail while the Braille version only serves as a reference or for backup purpose.

- Before examinations, schools should remove from the computers functions that may affect the fairness of the assessment, such as spell-check, grammar-check, translation, thesauri, “displaying related terms” in Chinese character input and internet access, etc. However, as students with visual impairment using Braille as the learning medium do not have visual memory of the Chinese Orthography, schools should enable the “displaying related terms” function to help them distinguish homophones.
- On the examination day, schools should ensure that the computers are functioning properly, and arrange backup computers. Before the start of the examination, schools should provide sufficient time for students to practise using the device provided for him/her.
- For papers in public examinations where various categories of students with SEN are NOT allowed to use screen readers, please refer to the related information of the HKEAA.

Computer facilities and suitable software for screen readers

The screen reader refers to computers installed with text-to-speech software with voice output function to read out the text information on the computer screen. The computer facilities required for using screen readers include: computer with text-to-speech software installed, sound card and headphone. Schools should provide soft copies of the question papers saved in commonly used word processing formats such as MS Word format for use in the examination.

The text-to-speech software that students can use must have voice output functions in Cantonese and English. At present, some text-to-speech software distributed by non-government organizations includes the following:

1. NVDA Text-to-speech Software (Hong Kong version)– for persons with visual impairment (distributed by Hong Kong Blind Union);
2. Windows Light Screen Reading Software – for persons with visual impairment (distributed by Retina Hong Kong); and
3. Windows Light Screen Reading Software (Read Assist) -- designed especially for persons with Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing (distributed by Retina Hong Kong).

Other than these, students can also select screen readers permitted by the HKEAA for use for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination. For details please refer to the information put on the HKEAA website

(https://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/candidates/special_needs_candidates/)

⑤ Speech-to-text software and other assistive aids

Mode

Speech-to-text software

- ◆ Use of speech-to-text software to input answers in particular subject for students with specific learning difficulties in reading and writing, who show severe difficulties in dictation and writing.
- ◆ Eligible students with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing can apply for the use of speech-to-text software to input answers in Citizenship and Social Development subject and elective subjects as designated by HKEAA. For details please refer to the related information issued by HKEAA.
- ◆ To facilitate students to make use of speech-to-text software in learning and assessment, schools can refer to “Writing Made Easy: Self-learning Materials on Using the Chinese Speech-to-text Software” (Chinese version only) uploaded onto the SENSE website. (<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/tc/types-of-special-educational-needs/specific-learning-difficulties/resources/teaching-resources/for-secondary-schools/46.html>)

Other Assistive Aids

- ◆ Use of Perkins Brailers / magnifiers / Braille display, etc. for students with Visual Impairment
- ◆ Use of hearing aids / assistive listening devices for students with Hearing Impairment
- ◆ Use of computers (as word processors) to input the answers for students with Visual Impairment, Physical Disabilities or those having severe Developmental Coordination Disorder

Points to note

- ◆ Schools should encourage and coach students to use the assistive software/ aids properly in daily learning.

- ◆ If the sound emitted when using these assistive software/ aids will disturb other students, schools should arrange students in need to have assessment conducted in a separate examination room or arrange for noise reduction devices, such as earphones.
- ◆ Schools should pay attention to the size of desks and the distance between seats to ensure adequate spacing and avoid interference among students. Schools should ensure that the related assistive software/ aids can function properly in the examination rooms.
- ◆ Before the examination, schools should allow students to check whether the relevant assistive software/ aids is functioning properly.
- ◆ Students should only be allowed to input words/numbers to the computers. They are not allowed to use functions such as spell-check, grammar-check, translation, thesauri, “displaying related terms” in Chinese character input or internet access.

⑥ Supervised breaks during examination

Mode

- ◆ Schools can give students a short supervised break during an assessment.

Points to Note

- ◆ During the supervised breaks, students should stop answering or reading the question papers and be accompanied by staff arranged by schools.
- ◆ As the supervised breaks required by different students vary, schools should first try the supervised breaks in circumstances other than examinations to let students familiarise themselves with the arrangements and review the effectiveness.
- ◆ If students need to perform specific activities during the supervised breaks, for instance, drinking water, stretching limbs, or leaving the classrooms, schools should list those activities in the instructions and let invigilators familiarise themselves with the procedures before the examinations.

⑦ Additional assistance in examination centres

Mode

- ◆ Without affecting the assessment criteria, schools can render assistance to students with SEN, such as:
 - Special seating arrangements
 - Prompting students to concentrate on answering by using gestures, verbal reminders or cue cards
 - Repeating verbal instructions
 - Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder may have communication problems or rigid behaviours that may affect their performance or that of other students during group discussion. Schools may arrange classmates familiar to them or non-candidates to participate in the group discussion.

Points to Note

- ◆ Relating to prompting students to concentrate on answering:
 - Prompting should be provided by school personnel, but not students' relatives, peers or parents of other students.
 - Regardless of the form of prompts, they should not be related to or affect the content or objectives of the assessment.
 - Since different students need different prompts, schools should first try out the prompts in circumstance other than examinations to let students get familiarised with the prompts and assure their effectiveness.
 - Schools should specify clearly in the invigilation instructions the types of prompts that the students need under specific circumstances (e.g. When the student ceases answering for three minutes, tap the student's desktop twice and prompt the student to continue answering.) and let invigilators familiarise themselves with the procedures before the examinations.

- Schools are advised to record the number of prompts given in each assessment and the students' responses to the prompts so as to help review if such arrangements are useful for the students.
- ◆ Relating to special arrangements in group discussion:
 - To identify appropriate peers, teachers should pay attention to whom the student is more familiar with, which classmates are friendly and helpful, and the performance of the student in group discussions with different classmates.
 - If the behaviours of the student will affect the performance of other group members in a group discussion, it is more appropriate to arrange peers to join the group discussion in the capacity of non-candidates.

⑧ Abridged question papers

Mode

- ◆ In cases when students with very severe Physical Disabilities or very severe Visual Impairment need to take more than 9 hours of examination (including extra time allowance) on the same day, the students will be given an abridged version of the question paper with content which is approximately 50% of the original paper. Please refer to related information of the HKEAA for details.

Points to note

- ◆ The difficulty level of the abridged question papers should be similar as the original version.

Choosing Special Examination Arrangements

In general, we should avoid compromising the assessment objectives and criteria when providing special examination arrangements. Schools should take into consideration the nature and objectives of assessment when providing students with appropriate special examination arrangements. Some common examples are listed below:

A. Arrangements listed below aim to reduce or remove the effects brought about by the functional impairments of these students while taking examinations, without compromising the assessment objectives/criteria.

- Allowing students to write their answers directly onto question papers.
- Slowing down of the teacher's reading speed according to the response speed of students during dictations.
- Arranging students with Hearing Impairment to sit near the teacher or broadcasting equipment during listening tests; and increasing the intensity of rhythmic beats and repeating them where appropriate during Music examinations.
- Allowing students with handwriting difficulties to write on alternate lines, and use answering sheets with wider-spaced lines. During the examination, prompting students to concentrate on answering.

B. Whether the arrangements below result in a change of the assessment objectives/criteria will depend on the assessment objectives set by schools. If schools allow all students to answer in multiple formats, the assessment objectives/ criteria are not compromised.

- Allowing students to answer in short phrases or diagrams instead of writing complete sentences in non-language subjects like Science or Religious Studies.
- Allowing students to draw pictures in lieu of words that they do not know when taking the Writing papers.

Choosing Special Examination Arrangements (cont.)

- C. Arrangements listed below involve altering the content of assessment and affecting the assessment objectives/criteria. When the main aim of internal examinations is to assess students' academic achievement and to understand students' academic progress after a period of learning, or to compare the differences in performance among students, it may not be appropriate to have these arrangements. Should schools provide such arrangements to individual students, their assessment results should be treated in the same way as provision of alternate question papers.**
- Some students bring their vocabulary books/ notebooks to sit for the Chinese writing examination.
 - Some students are asked to do sentence scramble with fewer parts, such as three parts instead of five.
 - Deleting, for some students, the parts in reading comprehension that do not affect the answers to questions in order to shorten the length of passages.
 - Deleting, for some students, the non-answer choices for "fill in the blanks" questions.
 - Adopting different marking schemes for dictation, with some students given marks for words correctly written, and others on the mark deduction system.
 - Preparing easier question papers for students with Intellectual Disability.
 - Setting up different assessment tasks for students with Physical Disabilities in Physical Education.
 - Exempting students with Intellectual Disability from answering long questions and setting multiple-choice questions instead.

V. Exemption from Examinations/ Provision of Alternate Examination Papers

Exemption refers to exempting of individual students from taking certain subjects or parts of a certain subject in the internal assessments.

Principle

Assessment is an indispensable part of the learning and teaching process. Through assessment, teachers could get an understanding of students' (including students with SEN) learning progress, so as to adjust their teaching in order to enhance students' learning. Unless necessary, schools should not exempt students from participating in assessment. If students with SEN cannot sit for examinations of certain subjects or parts of a certain subject because of the severe functional impairments, schools should make reference to advice from professionals and involve teachers, students and parents to make a decision on exemption during case conferences or Individual Education Plan meetings. The decision should be properly documented.

Format

- ◆ Schools may exempt students from taking certain subjects or parts of a certain subject.
- ◆ Schools may modify the content of the question papers or assessment criteria for individual students.
- ◆ Schools may consider preparing an alternate examination paper / progress report for the students to reflect on their learning progress.

Scoring Method

- ◆ If a student is exempted from parts of a certain subject, the school can derive his/her total score in that subject from the papers he/ she has taken on a pro rata basis. If a student is exempted from certain subjects, the school can work out his/her total scores in that examination on a pro rata basis.

Points to note

- ◆ If individual students are exempted from taking certain subjects or parts of certain subjects in the internal assessments, or have modified the content of the question papers or the assessment criteria, schools should indicate in the Student Report Card the parts that are modified and the percentage of the scores involved.
- ◆ If a student is exempted from the examinations of major subjects or essential parts of major subjects, schools should seriously consider whether it is appropriate to compare his/ her scores with those of other students.

Example of the calculation of scores with exemption from part of a subject

Student A is an ordinary student while student B has severe hearing impairment. Student B is exempted from the listening and speaking papers of English Language mid-term examination.

Subject	Papers	Full marks	Scores of Student A	Scores of Student B
English Language	Reading Comprehension	100	60	60
	General English	100	60	60
	Writing	100	50	50
	Listening	50	30	Exempted
	Speaking	50	25	Exempted
	Total score		400	225

The school can calculate the total score of Student B based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Total score obtained by the student in the papers taken}}{\text{Full marks of the papers taken by the student}} \times \text{Full marks of all papers}$$

Student B's score in English Language is:

$$\frac{170}{300} \times 400 = 227$$

VI. Special Examination Arrangements for Students with Different Special Educational Needs

① Hearing Impairment

Students with Hearing Impairment have difficulties not only in listening, oral and dictation of Chinese and English, but also in Putonghua and Music. Generally speaking, the assessment accommodations or special examination arrangements for students with Hearing Impairment must take into account the severity of their hearing impairment, their communication abilities, and the use of hearing aids.

- ◆ Assessment should be conducted in a quiet room without reverberations. Students with hearing impairment should be seated far away from noises and close to the teacher or the source of sound for better reception of sound.
- ◆ Teachers should encourage students with hearing impairment to use their amplification devices during assessments. If necessary, schools should make arrangement for them to use their devices together with assistive listening devices such as audio equipment, loop systems or FM systems, etc. Students should try out the devices before assessments and get to understand the operation and reception condition of the devices.
- ◆ Should there be any special announcements during the examination or test, teachers should write the main points on the blackboard to ensure that students with hearing impairment fully understand all the arrangements and adjustments.
- ◆ During assessment, teachers should allow sufficient time for students to understand clearly questions or instructions given verbally. Teachers can adjust the time required for assessments on a discretionary basis so as to allow sufficient time for them to figure out the requirements of the questions before answering.
- ◆ If students encounter difficulties in receiving instructions or understanding the content of the examination, teachers should repeat the questions or instructions in simpler wordings to avoid misunderstanding of the questions or instructions, which would affect the students' performance in assessments. During assessments, teachers should preferably

use short sentences to brief students with Hearing Impairment the key points of the instructions, or repeat the instructions to the students face to face.

- ◆ During listening tests, appropriate pauses such as prolonged pauses and/or more frequent pauses in the audiotape can be arranged upon the needs of those students with Hearing Impairment. If students with Hearing Impairment cannot listen clearly from better located seats, they can use assistive listening devices to enhance the effectiveness of reception. If the situation allows, teachers can stay in front of the students with Hearing Impairment and read aloud the listening materials so as to let them grasp the content by lip reading.
- ◆ During oral examination, teachers should sit in front of the students with Hearing Impairment, so as to facilitate the use of lip reading in understanding the conversation.
- ◆ During dictation, teachers should stay in front of the students with Hearing Impairment, thus facilitating their use of lip reading to grasp the content of the dictation. Teachers can also adjust, on a discretionary basis, the number of times of reading aloud and the duration of the dictation. This is to allow the students sufficient time to grasp the content and write the words. If necessary, teachers should let the students know clearly the scope of dictation at the earliest time possible for better preparation. Teachers can replace lengthy dictations with other assessment formats, such as dictation by recitation or by fill in the blanks with key words/ terms. If results of these students and other students are incompatible as the contents of dictation are different, schools can consider exempting the dictation scores.
- ◆ For assessment conducted in small groups, schools should arrange appropriate seats for the students with Hearing Impairment so that they can face other students of the discussion group with their better ears or the ears prescribed with hearing aids, and ensure that they have adequate opportunities to communicate and fair chances to express.

Schools should note that the above arrangements aim to encourage students to participate in internal examinations as far as possible and these arrangements are not exactly the same as special arrangements in public examinations. Regarding the current special examination arrangements in public examinations for students with different levels of Hearing Impairment, please refer to the related information of the HKEAA.

There may be individual students with Hearing Impairment having substantial severity of functional impairments to attempt the parts of examination requiring listening or speaking. For example, some students with moderately severe Hearing Impairment or above may be unable to attempt dictation and the listening part of Putonghua and Music, etc.; and some students with severe or profound Hearing Impairment may find it difficult to attempt oral examinations. Hence, teachers may consider granting exemption to students with Hearing Impairment from parts of the examinations in view of their functional impairments

② Visual Impairment

◆ **Extra time allowance**

- Extra time allowance should be given to students with Visual Impairment in accordance with the nature/severity of their disabilities and the amount of reading/writing required in the assessment. For example, 33.3% to 75% extra time is to be given to students who are totally blind or having severe Visual Impairment, and 25% to 33.3% extra time for students with moderate Visual Impairment.
- For students with Visual Impairment with multiple disabilities, appropriate amount of additional time should be added on top of the above arrangements in accordance with the recommendations made by an ophthalmologist, an optometrist of the Hong Kong Society for the Blind or the Resource Support Programme (RSP) teacher from Ebenezer School.

◆ **Exemption**

- Senior secondary students who are totally blind or with severe Visual Impairment should be allowed to choose, depending on individual competency, to be exempted from taking the questions involving complicated diagrams / graphics.
- Senior secondary students who are totally blind or with severe Visual Impairment should be allowed to choose to be exempted from taking the questions on map reading in Geography, the questions on drawing description in Visual Arts and the part on sight playing / sight reading in Music. If students choose to sit for the part on sight playing / sight reading in Music, schools should give them longer preparation time.

◆ **Supervised breaks during assessment**

- A 5-minute supervised break for every 45 minutes during assessment should be given to secondary school students who are totally blind or with severe Visual Impairment.
- A 5-10 minute supervised break for every 30 minutes during assessment should be given to primary school students who are totally blind or with severe Visual Impairment.

◆ **Modification in presentation format of question papers**

- Students should be provided with Braille question papers. Question papers in soft copy or enlarged print in accordance with the severity of their Visual Impairment. Question papers in enlarged print are usually no bigger than A3 size, with font size adjusted in accordance with the severity of the students' Visual Impairment. To minimize the possibility of jumping lines during reading, it is better for schools to print the questions on normal-sized paper using larger font size.
- Diagrams or charts in the question papers should be adapted or transformed into Braille form according to the needs of students. The lines of the diagrams must be clear and duly simplified. There should also be adequate space between two diagrams with appropriate legends as needed.
- For Braille examination papers, where appropriate, text labels/ descriptions can be provided or questions with the same level of difficulty should replace those that cannot be represented in Braille form (e.g. questions containing photos, complex charts, maps, diagrams and drawings that are difficult to read tactilely, or questions that require students to answer with complex drawings/charts).
- Students should be allowed to use alternate ways to present their answers. For example, for multiple-choice (MC) questions, writing down the English letters that stand for the answers instead of circling them or filling in the MC answer sheets; for sentence scramble, allowing students to write down the numbers representing different parts of the sentence instead of rewriting the whole sentence.
- If necessary, schools should provide students with special answer sheets, such as those with larger grids or wider-spaced lines or Braille answer sheets.

◆ **Oral examinations**

- Extra preparation time should be given to students with Visual Impairment in accordance with the severity of their Visual Impairment and the amount of reading required: 50% to 70% additional time for totally blind students or students with severe Visual Impairment; and 30% to 66% additional time for students with moderate Visual Impairment.

◆ **Assistive aids**

- These include optical magnifiers, CCTV (closed circuit television), magnification system, Braille display, computers, screen readers and talking scientific calculators etc.
- Schools may allow students with Visual Impairment who need to use computers and Braille display to use screen readers during examinations.
- Regarding the points to note on reading aloud of papers and using screen readers, please refer to Section 4 of Chapter IV.

◆ **Practical tests**

- Exempt students from taking practical tests on measurement of distance and judgment on space.
- Provide colour discrimination assistance to students with Visual Impairment who have colour blindness or colour deficiency.
- Consider the nature of experiment, exempt students who are total blind from taking the whole or parts of the practical tests

◆ **Listening tests**

- Longer pauses (approximately double the length of a normal pause) should be given.

◆ **Recommendations on marking**

- When marking questions that involve using measuring instruments, drawing charts/shapes or judgment of space, emphasis should be on the students' mastery of the concepts.
- For students using the Chinese Braille input system or Chinese character input methods for answering, discretion should be exercised for homophone prints.
- If students handwrite their answers, it is acceptable if the fonts are readable

Regarding the classification of Visual Impairment, the extent of extra time allowance and the principles for various special arrangements in public examinations, please refer to the related information of the HKEAA.

③ Physical Disability

Physical disability refers to the disability caused by diseases of the central and peripheral neurological systems, traumas or other congenital diseases of the musculoskeletal systems. These conditions might affect a student's motor co-ordination, speech, writing and daily activities, as well as their performance in Physical Education, Music, Visual Arts, Design and Technology, and subjects with laboratory experiments. Cerebral palsy, spina bifida, spinal muscular atrophy, muscular dystrophy, amputation, osteogenesis imperfecta, and juvenile idiopathic arthritis are the main categories of Physical Disability in Hong Kong.

- ◆ **Solicitation of professional advice:** Schools should consult the opinions of students, parents, teachers and professionals such as doctors, physiotherapists or occupational therapists for understanding the physical conditions of the students, their writing abilities and speed, etc. in order to provide them with appropriate arrangements in learning and examinations.

- ◆ **Examination venue and additional assistance:** Schools should arrange students with mobility problems to sit near the exit to facilitate their getting in and out. They should also arrange students using wheelchairs or other mobility aids to have single-file seats so that they have enough space to move around with the wheelchairs or place their mobility aids. Subject to the needs of individual students, schools should provide the students with necessary assistive aids and facilities such as computers and purpose-built desks and chairs. Schools should also arrange invigilators to provide assistance, e.g. helping students to handle laboratory equipment when they are doing practical assessments.

- ◆ **Extra time allowance:** Depending on the severity of disabilities of students and making reference to the recommendations of the professionals, and also taking into consideration the answering modes and writing requirements of different subjects, schools should provide appropriate extra time allowance. Generally speaking, students who are granted extra time allowance in written examinations will be given longer pauses in listening tests and longer preparation time in oral tests. Students with limitations in hand movements or those with weaker physique should also be allowed to take short supervised breaks during examinations.

- ◆ **Special arrangements in answering mode:** Subject to circumstances, schools can allow students to use computer input method instead of handwriting during examinations. Students who have a confirmed diagnosis of neurological impairment such as cerebral palsy and assessed by professionals as having severe difficulties in reading may use screen readers during examinations. (Regarding the points to note in reading aloud of papers and using screen readers, please refer to Section 4 of Chapter IV). Some students with severe cerebral palsy may need an amanuensis to write down the answers during the assessment.

- ◆ **Discretion in marking:** Teachers should consider the abilities and limitations of the students with Physical Disabilities when marking their papers. For example, for students with relatively poor hand coordination who cannot use the drawing instrument flexibly, no points should be deducted for lack of neatness in the drawings.

- ◆ **Exemption:** If a school has to modify the content or criteria of an assessment due to the disabilities of the students, e.g. for students with Physical Disabilities who cannot participate in sports skills or physical fitness tests of Physical Education, they can be exempted from these assessments and be only assessed on their knowledge and attitude.

④ Intellectual Disability

The intellectual development of students with Intellectual Disability is significantly delayed in comparison with students of the same age. They have notable difficulties in thinking, memory, attention, language abilities, sensory motor skills, temporal and spatial organization as well as adaptive skills in daily life. Generally speaking, students with Intellectual Disability attending ordinary schools require curriculum tailoring.

Alternate Examination Papers

If teachers have tailored extensively the curriculum for individual students with Intellectual Disability, schools may consider designing alternate examination papers for them so that the content of assessment is commensurate with the curriculum they pursue. If schools set alternate examination papers, the following points should be noted:

- ◆ Design questions that match with the objectives and content of the curriculum pursued by the students.
- ◆ Use simple words and sentence structures as far as possible.
- ◆ Introduce more daily life scenarios or insert graphic illustrations so that students can easily grasp the questions.
- ◆ Apply visual strategies (such as highlighting key words) in the examination papers to prompt the students.
- ◆ Provide different modes of answering to reduce writing, e.g. use multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank questions, etc. to assess students' ability in reading comprehension, and allow students to circle diagrams to express their feelings towards a particular story.
- ◆ Schools should note that arranging alternate examination papers for students with Intellectual Disability does not apply to public examinations (including the SBA), the IA for SSPA purpose and the TSA. Schools should make sure that parents have a clear understanding of the arrangement.

Assessment Accommodations:

If schools do not provide alternate examination papers for students with Intellectual Disability and arrange them to take the same examination papers as other students, the school should offer assessment accommodations based on the individual needs of students with Intellectual Disability, whose performance may be affected due to their functional impairments.

Schools should refer to the recommendations of teachers and professionals such as educational psychologists, speech therapists or occupational therapists, and decide on the assessment accommodations during Individual Education Plan meetings. Schools should properly file the records on the assessment accommodations provided, as well as the review on the effectiveness of the accommodations and the needs for support.

Generally speaking, the following assessment accommodations can be considered in order to meet the functional impairments of the students with Intellectual Disability:

- ◆ Additional assistance in examination centres, e.g. special seating arrangement, prompting to promote on-task concentration, etc.
- ◆ Special format of examination papers, e.g. enlarging the entire question papers.
- ◆ Special arrangements for answering questions, e.g. allowing students to answer directly on the test paper without the need for answering on an answer sheet, etc.

There may be individual students with Intellectual Disability having substantial severity of functional impairments, such as:

- ◆ Very weak fine motor coordination and control abilities that may cause hand fatigue, extremely slow handwriting speed or low legibility of handwriting.
- ◆ Substantial difficulty in language and communication skills that may inhibit group discussion during oral examinations.
- ◆ Very short attention span and high distractibility that makes it difficult to sustain attention in examinations, especially when sitting for lengthy examinations; or markedly delayed speed of answering, despite frequent prompts.
- ◆ Substantial difficulty in thinking and information processing that may markedly delay the speed of information retrieval and answering.

In order to assist individual students with Intellectual Disability who have substantial severity of functional impairments to participate in the examination process, schools should refer to the recommendations of teachers and professionals, such as educational psychologists, speech therapists or occupational therapists, and consider assessment accommodations as suggested below during the Individual Education Plan meetings:

- ◆ Short breaks during examination
- ◆ Use of computer input instead of writing for answers
- ◆ Extra time allowance for oral examination preparation
- ◆ Arrangement for familiar classmates or dummies in oral group discussion
- ◆ Extra time allowance

As with other students with SEN, for individual students with Intellectual Disability requiring special arrangements in public examinations, schools must submit an application to the HKEAA.

⑤ Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder

Students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder are more easily distracted by changes in the environment. They may have difficulty staying on-seat when sitting for examination, have difficulty in sustaining attention, easily make careless mistakes which require extra time to correct, and may have weaker planning and organisation abilities as well. Schools can consider the suitable accommodations to cater for the special educational needs of these individual students in internal examinations, so that the assessment reflects their true ability and level of competency.

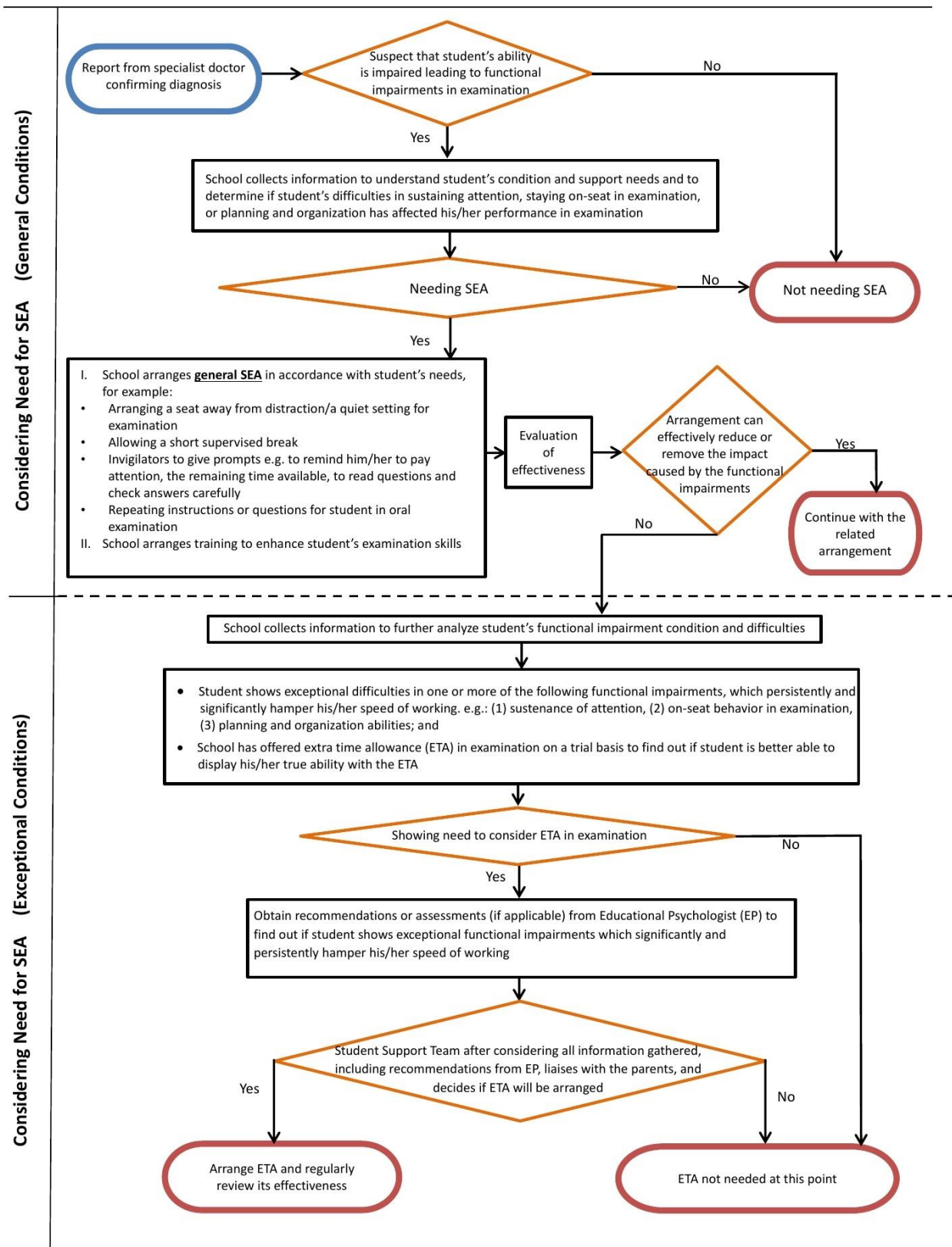
In accordance to the common functional impairments of students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, schools can consider the following accommodations:

- ◆ Arrange a seat away from distractions or a quiet setting for examination.
- ◆ Give prompts to remind the students to pay attention, e.g. provide oral reminders or mildly tap on the desk to remind them to focus on their work.
- ◆ Remind the students the remaining time at regular intervals during an examination.
- ◆ For oral examinations, repeat the instructions or questions to the students.
- ◆ Allow the students to have short supervised breaks for examinations with longer duration.
- ◆ Remind the students to read the questions and check the answers carefully.

For individual students with exceptional difficulties in sustaining attention and/or moderating activity level, which significantly and persistently hamper the speed of working or quality of answers, schools can consider extra time allowance. The school student support team should take into consideration the students' performance with and without extra time allowance, and consult relevant professionals (for example educational psychologists) when necessary.

In considering the need for special examination arrangement for students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, please refer to the flowchart and case illustration.

Work Flow on Considering the Need for Special Examination Arrangement (SEA) for Students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder



Considering the need for special examination arrangement for students with Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder Case Illustration

Case 1:

The student is a Secondary three repeater. He was diagnosed with Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder by a psychiatrist when he was in Primary three. With medication, the student is attentive in lessons and during examinations. He is generally able to finish all work in class within standard time, but he is reported to work slowly and show difficulty in completing examination papers within standard time in individual subjects. The school tried to provide extra time allowance for the student during examinations. However, the arrangement did not help much to improve the student's performance and this observation was shared with the parents by the teachers.

Comparing the student's examination performance of the current year and that of the last year, teachers analysed that the student is able to work faster and finish the examination papers on subjects which he performs better in daily learning. His examination results in those subjects are also better. On the other hand, his failure to complete some examination papers within standard time can be attributed to his lack of knowledge on the questions. The student also reflects to the teachers that he does not require additional time for answering. Teachers discuss the observation and information with the parents and they agree that it is not necessary to arrange extra time allowance for the student.

Case 2:

The student was diagnosed with Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder by a psychiatrist when he was in primary school. His academic results were average all along, but they deteriorated significantly after he was promoted to Secondary four. From teachers' daily observations, the student has difficulty sustaining attention and he is easily distracted in double lessons. He needs more time than his classmates in completing work in class, and he fails to submit homework frequently, which is not consistent with his above average ability in the subjects. Parents share that the student is very slow in completing his assignments, especially the ones requiring extended reading and writing. During examinations, the student is often not able to complete the examination papers within standard time. Prompting has been provided to help him stay on task but the student is still unable to complete the examination paper within the time limit. When given extended time, the student's performance seems to be more reflective of his actual ability.

The educational psychologist further assesses the student. The student's word reading speed is slower than his average peers. He is observed to have longer pauses when attempting a task of reading comprehension. Despite that his ability on the task is comparable to his peers, he needs longer time than average students to complete the test. When he is interviewed after the test, the student shares that he has difficulty sustaining his

attention when reading the passages and thus he has to repeat reading some of the content of the passages.

Integrating the information above, the student has exceptional difficulty in sustaining attention which significantly and persistently hampers the speed of working. Providing extra time allowance can reduce his functional impairments.

⑥ Autism Spectrum Disorder

The performance of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in examination may be affected by their obstinacy and difficulty to adjust to changes. They may attend to or even obsess with details, to the extent of ignoring the essential parts of things and events. They have difficulties to comprehend events from a global perspective or grasp the big picture. Due to their social and communication problems, their performance or that of other group members may be affected in oral examinations. A number of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder have other functional impairments, such as sensory hypersensitivity to external stimuli, weaknesses in attention control, thinking fluency, planning ability and fine motor coordination and control, which would affect their performance. In internal assessment, schools can make accommodations in accordance with the special educational needs of individual students, so as to reflect their true ability and level of competency:

To address the functional impairments of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, schools can generally arrange the following assessment accommodations:

- ◆ Without compromising the assessment criteria, invigilating teachers can provide appropriate assistance to students according to their individual needs:
 - Repeat the instructions to individual students in a simple, direct and clear way.
 - Remind students to concentrate on answering.
 - If the rigid behaviour of the students adversely affects their performance, such as pausing at the question which they do not know, or insisting on neat handwriting and repeatedly erasing and rewriting the answers, thus failing to complete the examination papers within the set time limit, the invigilating teachers should guide them with patience.
 - Under exceptional circumstances, teachers familiar with the students with Autism Spectrum Disorder can be arranged to act as invigilators.

- ◆ Provide special arrangement in examination venue, for example, arranging a seat location with less sensory stimulation/ interference or allowing students to take the examination in a separate room
- ◆ Grant a short supervised break in the course of examination.
- ◆ If the communication problems or rigid behaviour of a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder is affecting his/her own performance or that of other group members in a group discussion, schools can arrange the student to have the group discussion with familiar classmates or non-candidates.
- ◆ Provide reasonable accommodations in SBA of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination. For example, flexibly arrange the frequency of submitting assignments based on the needs of individual students (such as by increasing the frequency so that students can focus on a smaller scope each time) or allowing a choice of submission methods, other than written forms, in suitable school-based assessment items.
- ◆ In the HKDSE, for questions with cartoons or complicated pictures in Citizenship and Social Development History/Chinese History papers, plain text /descriptions can be given, describing the layout of the cartoons or complicated pictures in a text format without giving any interpretations or revealing the underlying meaning of these cartoons or pictures, which would otherwise compromise the assessment objectives of the subjects concerned if additional hints are provided.

Individual students with Autism Spectrum Disorder may have relatively more serious functional limitations. When the school has arranged the aforesaid accommodations for a student but the effect is not as expected, the student support team can gather the opinions of the teachers, the student and the parents, as well as make reference to the recommendations from professionals, such as educational psychologists, speech therapists or occupational therapists to consider the assessment accommodations suggested below so as to address the difficulties of the student:

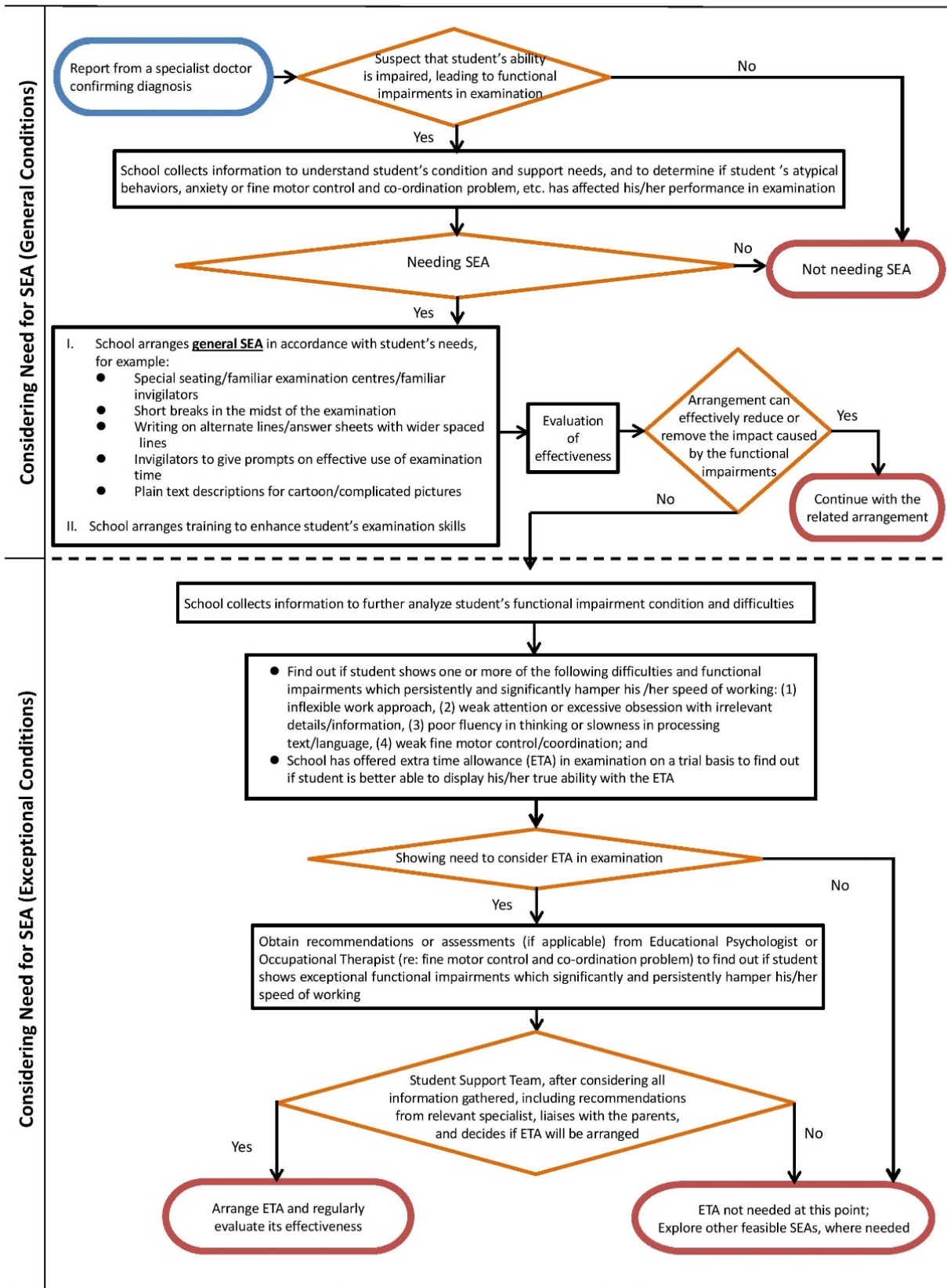
- ◆ Extra time allowance for answering
- ◆ Extra time in preparing for oral examination

For individual students with serious communication difficulties, schools can consider exempting them from taking the whole or part of the oral examination (see Chapter V). However, schools should continue to arrange learning opportunities for these students. Schools are advised to arrange the students to take part in the oral examination and daily training, but not collating their results on the report card.

Many students with Autism Spectrum Disorder also have speech problems (especially pragmatic disorders). Schools may refer to Chapter VI Section 7 'Pragmatic Disorders' under Speech and Language Impairment for the related information.

In considering the need for special examination arrangement for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, please refer to the flowchart and case illustration in the next page.

Work Flow on Considering the Need for Special Examination Arrangement (SEA) for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder



Considering the need for special examination arrangement for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Case Illustrations

Case 1:

The Primary three student who was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder in early childhood is obstinate. When a part of the word he produces does not look neat to him in an examination, he invariably rubs off the whole word and rewrites it. He insists answering the questions in the sequence they are presented in the question book. When he does not know the answer to a question, he is at a loss and will not move on to the other questions. He often fails to finish his examination papers in the time allowed because of his inflexible work approach.

His teachers note that even when given more time to complete his classwork, he still fails to complete the task because he constantly rectifies his words. He may lose his temper at times as a result. If the teachers prompt him to continue with the task at hand and not to focus on the neatness of his handwriting, he responds accordingly and is able to finish the task within more reasonable time limits. The student support team (SST) therefore decides to arrange a teacher to prompt him in examination to ignore the neatness of his handwriting and skip questions which are beyond him. He follows the advice and successfully answers more questions. As he remains unable to finish his papers, the SST decides to let him attempt those parts he has not finished after the examination. The SST notices that he does not answer more questions. The student also remarks that he, in fact, does not know how to do the remaining questions. The SST has all along maintained communication with the parents on the case development.

After reviewing the collateral information, the SST deduces that arranging general special examination arrangement can reduce the impact of the student's inflexible work approach on examination but extra time allowance does not have the efficacy to help the student display his knowledge and ability. The SST decides to continue to offer the student prompting in examination, and everyday training to enhance his flexibility in approaching tasks and examination skills. Parents understand and agree to the arrangement.

Case 2:

A Secondary two student has a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder in early primary school. Different subject teachers notice that she is unable to finish her papers in every test or examination. Her parents and teachers both remark that her response is always slow. Compared with her age peers, she needs more time to think in everyday conversation. She has difficulty processing text materials and has a slow reading speed. When she reads a question or a passage, she needs more time to reread in order to comprehend it. Her

teachers notice that when she has more time to do her work, she is able to perform just as well as her age peers.

The SST lets the student take her examination in a special room where she can read aloud the questions, but this arrangement does not enable her to finish her papers in the time allowed. When she is asked to finish the remaining questions after the examination, she is able to answer more questions and gain more marks.

The school refers the student to the educational psychologist for professional recommendations. The educational psychologist finds that the student has significantly slow processing speed on a standardized test. Having considered all the information, the SST liaises with parents on the special examination arrangement that the student needs and decides that the student should receive extra time allowance in examination for her difficulty in speed of processing.

⑦ Speech and Language Impairment

For Articulation Disorders

Articulation Disorders refer to students not being able to pronounce accurately due to various reasons. They may have some general articulation disorders, different levels of hearing impairment, oral structural problems or control mechanism difficulties, physical or functional disorders, etc.

For oral examination accommodations, the followings are recommended for consideration:

- ◆ The focus of marking should be on the main content and key points that the students express. Do not deduct marks simply because of unclear pronunciation.
- ◆ Give time allowance, so that the students have sufficient time to finish what they want to express.
- ◆ Allow students to use various methods to help them express, such as using texts, diagrams or key note cards, etc.
- ◆ Arrange students to have the assessment conducted in a quieter environment.

For Language Disorders

Language Disorders include difficulties in comprehension and expression. Students with comprehension difficulties can only master part of the meaning of the sentences and vocabulary when receiving relatively extended and structurally more complex sentences. Therefore they may misinterpret the questions due to the inability to comprehend all the messages and hence give irrelevant answers. Students with expression difficulties, because of weaker abilities in forming sentences or inappropriate use of vocabulary, have difficulties in expressing their ideas verbally, making it difficult for others to understand. The reading and writing abilities of the students are also affected.

For written examination accommodations, the followings are recommended for consideration:

- ◆ Give time allowance, so that the students have sufficient time to finish what they want to express.

- ◆ In designing the questions for formative assessments, insert visual diagrams or various images, adopt multiple-choice questions or highlight the key points (such as underlining or adopting bold type), etc.
- ◆ Allow students to answer in key points or short sentences rather than in essays.

For oral examination accommodations, the followings are recommended for consideration:

- ◆ Extend the preparation time for oral examination or short speech.
- ◆ Give time allowance, so that the students have sufficient time to finish what they want to express.
- ◆ Allow students to use various methods to help organize their thoughts before expressing them verbally, such as using texts, diagrams or key note cards, etc.

For Voice Disorders

Voice Disorders refer to students' difficulties in expression because of hoarseness in voice, hyper or hyponasality, pitch disorders, even phonation break due to various reasons. Their verbal expressions are unclear, and communication is affected.

For oral examination accommodations, the followings are recommended for consideration:

- ◆ Give time allowance, so that the students have sufficient time to finish what they want to express.
- ◆ Teachers should pay attention to the content and main points of the students' speech. Do not deduct marks simply because of hoarse voice, pitch disorders, phonation break, etc.
- ◆ Allow students to use various methods to help them express, such as using texts, diagrams or key note cards, etc.
- ◆ Arrange students to have the assessment conducted in a quieter environment.

For Fluency Disorders

Fluency Disorders (commonly known as stuttering) refer to students' non-fluency in expression due to various reasons. They will repeat certain syllables, single words, vocabularies, beginning or parts of an utterance, insert too many "fillers" or "fidgeting / unusual mannerism" when talking, or even have prolonged pauses during speech. Their verbal expressions are difficult to understand and communication is affected.

For oral examination accommodations, the followings are recommended for consideration:

- ◆ Give time allowance, so that the students have sufficient time to finish what they want to express.
- ◆ Extend the preparation time for oral examination or short speech.
- ◆ Arrange students to have the assessment conducted in a quieter environment.
- ◆ The focus of marking should be on the content and main points that the students express. Do not deduct marks simply because of non-fluent speech.
- ◆ Allow students to use various methods to help them express, such as using texts, diagrams or key note cards, etc.
- ◆ If the assessment is conducted in groups, make sure that the students have equal and adequate opportunities to express.

For Pragmatic Disorders

Pragmatic Disorders refer to students' failure to use language to communicate effectively with others due to various reasons. Such students can usually master the content or concepts they want to express. They can also use basic vocabulary or sentence patterns in expression. Yet occasionally, they fail to, understand underlying meanings of speech, or maintain appropriate social conversations, manage different speech tones, maintain appropriate eye contacts, or use proper body languages, etc. Students may have different levels of social difficulties or Autism Spectrum Disorder.

For oral examination accommodations, the followings are recommended for consideration:

- ◆ When granting marks, attention should be paid to the main content and key points that the student wants to express.

- ◆ Give time allowance, so that the students have sufficient time to finish what they want to express.
- ◆ Allow students to use various methods to help organize their thoughts, before expressing them verbally, such as using texts, diagrams or key note cards, etc.
- ◆ Allow occasional distractible behaviours, such as fidgeting, inappropriate or unusual mannerism, mumbling, irrelevant talking, etc.
- ◆ Give occasional reminders to signal the students to answer or respond.
- ◆ Avoid arranging students to have the assessment conducted in a distractible environment.
- ◆ If the assessment is conducted in groups, make sure that the students have equal and adequate opportunities to express.

The above internal examination arrangements can encourage students to participate in oral examinations as far as possible. However, schools should note that these arrangements may not be exactly the same as the special arrangements in public examinations. Regarding the current special examinations arrangements in public examinations granted to students of different levels of Speech and Language Impairments, please refer to the related information of the HKEAA.

Students assessed to have severe Speech and Language Impairments could be exempted from taking oral examinations.

⑧ Specific Learning Difficulties

Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing (Dyslexia)

Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing, also known as Dyslexia, is the most common type of Specific Learning Difficulties. Students with Specific Learning Difficulties have weak reading accuracy, which affect their understanding of what they have read. Their reading speed may be slower, which may make them lose sense of what they have read and affecting their work pace. As students with Specific Learning Difficulties are weak in spelling or dictation, they may have difficulty in word writing, which affect their answering speed, as well as difficulties in demonstrating their knowledge in writing. Some students with Specific Learning Difficulties might also have difficulties in their handwriting speed and neatness in writing.

Regarding the functional impairments of students with Specific Learning Difficulties, schools can consider providing the following arrangements:

- ◆ Dictation accommodations – students with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing may encounter significant difficulties in dictation. Schools can provide them with different levels of accommodation according to their difficulty level:
 - Schools can adopt a flexible marking scheme for dictation, such as giving marks for words correctly written instead of deducting marks for writing errors, and setting a ceiling for the marks to be deducted for each part.
 - Schools should let students or their parents know well in advance the coverage of dictation so that they have more time to do the preparation.
 - Teachers can adjust the frequency of reading aloud and the pace of dictation according to the needs of students, thus allowing them sufficient time to grasp the content and write accordingly.
 - For students with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing who cannot cope with regular dictations as other students do, schools may consider reducing the scope that the students have to prepare so that they can focus on the foundation areas.

- Reduce the amount of dictation for students. For instance, average students can have dictation on the whole passage while students with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing can have dictation on two of the paragraphs. When providing such an arrangement, schools must also reduce the scope that the students have to do revision correspondingly so that the students can consolidate what they have learned.
- If schools have to reduce the scope and amount of dictation, they can consider designing special dictation sheet for the students. For instance, students are only required to fill in some words or sentences and they can do the dictation along with other students.
- If the scope of dictation for individual students is reduced, their dictation content will not be the same as other students'. As it would not be meaningful to compare the scores of these students with those of other students, schools can consider the practice of exempting their dictation marks in the language papers. Some schools do not count the dictation marks when calculating the aggregate scores of Chinese Language and can have greater flexibility in providing for accommodations.
- ◆ Extra time allowance: In general, students with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing can be given 25% extra time in written and multiple choice examinations, longer preparation time to read the information in oral examinations, and longer pauses to jot down the main points in listening tests.
- ◆ Modification in presentation format of question papers: In order to facilitate students with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing to read the question papers, schools can consider special arrangements according to their needs, namely:
 - Enlarging the printing of the entire question papers
 - Enlarging the font size and printing the questions on normal size paper
 - Single-sided printing
 - Allowing students to undo the binding of the examination papers
 - For the ease of student's reading, using specific colour paper (e.g. ivory) to print the questions papers.
 - Put the text, questions and space for writing answers, on the same page or adjacent pages as far as possible. This will help the students with Specific Learning

Difficulties in reading and writing to avoid making mistakes when turning the pages to look for answers due to weak working memory.

- ◆ Modification in response format: Based on students' difficulties in reading and writing, schools can consider allowances such as:
 - Allow students to write in alternate lines
 - Provide answer sheets with wider spacing
 - Permit students to circle or write the answers directly on the examination papers
 - For primary school students, schools can flexibly adopt an answering mode that minimizes writing, e.g. number the parts of the sentence scramble, circle or underline the appropriate parts of an essay instead of writing the text when answering reading comprehension questions.
- ◆ Reading out the papers/ using screen readers/ asking for pronunciation of words
 - In general, many schools would read out the examination papers of various subjects for Primary one and two students. Since this practice is applicable to all students, it is not a special examination arrangement and schools can do so according to the needs of the students.
 - For students of other class levels, arrangements of reading out the papers/ using screen readers/ asking for pronunciations of words are only applicable to students assessed with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing and having severe difficulties in word reading (e.g. those whose reading performance is two standard deviations or more below mean in a standardized test).
 - Arrangements of reading out the papers/ using screen readers/ asking for pronunciation of words are not allowed in papers in which reading comprehension skills, pinyin or pronunciation is/ are tested. Schools should not provide such arrangements for students in language papers, the assessment objectives of which generally include testing the reading ability of students, so as to avoid changing the content and objectives of the assessment. Of the language subjects, such arrangements are permitted in papers where the objectives of assessment are on writing and listening comprehension.
 - All in all, the use of screen reader is applicable for non-language papers and the writing and listening parts of language papers. Arrangements such as reading out

the papers for students/ allowing them to ask for pronunciation of words are applicable to non-language papers and, in language papers, instructions and the sections on writing and listening.

- For senior grade students who are competent enough to learn to use screen readers, schools should provide them with the software and relevant training so that they can use the device in learning and assessment.
 - For students who do not know how to use screen readers but require reading aloud of papers, schools can allow them to ask the invigilators about the pronunciation of words on the examination papers. If schools are to make such an arrangement, it is better to conduct the examination in small groups. Besides, schools should take note of the ratio between invigilators and candidates to shorten students' waiting time.
 - Concerning the points to note in reading aloud of papers and the use of screen readers, please refer to Section 4 in Chapter IV.
 - Regarding those papers in public examinations where screen readers are NOT allowed for students with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing, please refer to the related information of the HKEAA.
- ◆ Use of speech-to-text software (e.g. the built-in speech-to-text software on MacBook Air) to input answers.
- Eligible students with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing can apply for the use of speech-to-text software in the HKDSE's Citizenship and Social Development, and elective subjects as designated by HKEAA.
 - For details please refer to the related information issued by HKEAA.
 - For details on the use of speech-to-text software, please refer to Chapter IV, no. ⑤
 - Schools should provide eligible students with the necessary device and equipment, as well as appropriate training, so that they can use the device in daily learning and examinations.
- ◆ Using computer input method instead of writing

If students with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing also have motor coordination disorders and their writing speed is extremely slow or their handwriting is illegible, when supported by documentation issued by occupational therapists/ specialists, schools may consider allowing them to use computer input method instead of writing.

Generally, schools should review the internal assessment methods to ensure that assessment objectives are met, and students with Specific Learning Difficulties in reading and writing are able to show their learning outcomes at the same time:

- Avoid relying too much on factual recitation to assess mastery of the subject content, or focusing on reading or writing as the means of assessment.
- Other than using reading and writing assessment methods, schools can consider other assessment methods, for example oral presentations.
- Marks should not be deducted for untidy handwriting.
- If the assessment objective is not to test whether a student can do dictation on certain words accurately, e.g. in non-language question papers, as well as the sentence scramble and reading comprehension sections, etc. in the language papers, schools may consider setting a ceiling of marks deduction for word-writing errors.

Developmental Coordination Disorder

Developmental Coordination Disorder is another type of Specific Learning Difficulties. Developmental Coordination Disorder may affect students' movements, speech, handwriting and daily activities, as well as their performance in Physical Education, Music, Visual Arts, Design and Technology and practical subjects.

Schools should seek the views of teachers and professionals such as doctors, physiotherapists or occupational therapists, in order to understand the students' physical condition, handwriting ability and speed, etc. and discuss with the students and their parents appropriate arrangements in learning and tests/ examinations.

- ◆ Discretion in marking: teachers should consider these students' abilities and limitations when they mark their work. For example, as students with poor upper limb coordination

cannot manipulate drawing instruments adequately, marks should not be deducted for poorly drawn diagrams.

- ◆ Extra time allowance: schools should make reference to the students' degree of disability and professionals' recommendations, and consider different modes of answering and the amount of writing required when deciding on the extra time arrangement. In general, students given extra time allowance in written examinations will be granted longer pauses in listening tests to facilitate their answering, and longer preparation time in oral examinations. Schools can also arrange for students with significant difficulties in fine motor skills to have short supervised breaks during examinations
- ◆ Using computer input method instead of writing: students with Developmental Coordination Disorder who have extremely slow writing speed or whose handwriting is low in legibility, when supported by documentation issued by occupational therapists / specialists, can be allowed to use computer input method instead of writing.

⑨ Other Special Educational Needs

Mental Illness

There are many types of mental illness, which affects students' mental condition, thinking, social interaction, emotion and behaviour. The mental conditions and cognitive functioning of students with mental illness might be affected by their health condition or the side effects of the medication. Hence their learning and examination ability may regress during recovery. Difficulties that students with mental illness may encounter include:

- ◆ feeling fatigue, sleepy, having blurred vision, feeling dizzy, becoming tardy, getting agitated, etc.
- ◆ requiring longer time to process information, leading to a lower work efficiency
- ◆ having difficulties in remaining attentive so as to finish tasks and concentrating for a long time
- ◆ having difficulties in retrieving or retaining information in memory, remembering instructions or following complex instructions
- ◆ having difficulties in meeting learning requirement systematically
- ◆ having difficulties in expressing and communicating verbally, retrieving and processing verbal information, or verbally expressing views with clarity
- ◆ having difficulties in organising and retaining verbally-transmitted information; and
- ◆ having weaker memory for written and graphic information, and easily forgetting newly received visual information

Schools need to accept the students' difficulties associated with the condition of their mental illness and provide them with special examination arrangements according to their support needs and the functional impairments presented by the students as related to the illness. Student Support Team can make reference to the professional diagnosis, the opinions of the teachers, the student and the parents as well as the recommendations from professionals (e.g. psychiatrists, educational/clinical psychologists) to provide appropriate special examination arrangement such as arranging the invigilator to remind them to focus on their work, allowing examinations in special rooms, providing special seating arrangement and short supervised breaks.

Others

If students require special examination arrangements due to other special circumstances, schools can act at their discretion in line with the principles of special examination arrangements. For example, if a student has injury to his/her hand(s) close to or during the examination and cannot participate in written examinations, schools can provide assessment accommodations to the student or exempt him/her from that particular examination.

VII. Reporting the Special Examination Arrangements Required by Students

Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System

- ◆ Primary schools participating in the SSPA system have to submit the students' scores in the three internal assessments in Primary Five and Six to the School Places Allocation Section for the purpose of secondary school places allocation.
- ◆ Primary schools must use the same question papers to test all students of the same grade level to ensure that the internal assessments for SSPA purpose are conducted according to the principles of fairness, impartiality and consistency.
- ◆ If schools wish to apply for exemption from score submission for individual students with SEN whose difficulties are so substantial that they cannot take part in certain subjects or parts of a certain subject in the internal assessments, schools should consult the advice of relevant professionals and seek parental consent for doing so. The consultation records and relevant documents must be properly kept and filed by the schools.
- ◆ Schools should report the students' SEN and its degree of severity, and the proposed subjects (or parts of certain subjects) to be exempted from score submission to the SSPA for processing. There is no need for the schools to report the various arrangements for assessment accommodations. If a student is exempted from score submission for parts of a certain subject, his/her total score in that subject will be calculated on a pro-rata basis according to the scores obtained in the papers taken. For details, please refer to relevant documents issued by the School Places Allocation Section of EDB.

Pre-S1 Hong Kong Academic Test (HKAT)

- ◆ Primary schools - schools should fill in the prescribed form for the Pre-S1 HKAT attached to the circular memorandum distributed to schools for Primary Six students with SEN who requires special examination arrangements, and hand the forms to the parents concerned timely for onward submission to secondary schools. The secondary schools can then make appropriate examination arrangements for these students in the Pre-S1 HKAT.

- ◆ Secondary schools - Schools should prepare to have enough invigilators and examination venues in order to provide appropriate special examination arrangements for Secondary One students sitting for the Pre-S1 HKAT.

Territory-Wide System Assessment (TSA)

- ◆ Schools can, with the endorsement of the principals, select special arrangements for students with SEN who requires special examination arrangements in accordance with the information provided by professionals and the decisions of the Student Support Team. For details, please refer to relevant documents issued by HKEAA.

VIII. Application for Special Examination Arrangements in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination

Schools should note the Special Examination Arrangements Application Guide disseminated each year by the HKEAA. Such Application Guide and the leaflets on “Providing Services to Candidates with Special Needs” and “Providing Services to Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities” are accessible from the HKEAA website for download by schools whenever necessary.

[\(https://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/candidates/special_needs_candidates/\)](https://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/candidates/special_needs_candidates/)

- ◆ Schools should establish an effective channel for all parents and candidates to timely access the information on special examination arrangements provided by the HKEAA.
- ◆ If there are candidates who require special examination arrangements in public examinations, schools should note the followings:
 - Relate the information on special examination arrangements provided by the HKEAA to candidates and their parents in a timely manner.
 - Understand whether the students would like to have special examination arrangements.
 - If the assessment is to be done by the professionals from Education Bureau / school, they should set a suitable timetable for assessment/ review in consultation with the relevant personnel, and allow the relevant personnel sufficient time to prepare for the relevant reports/ documents
 - If the assessment is to be done by professionals other than from the Education Bureau/ school, remind parents to reserve sufficient time to collect all the necessary documents, and to seek for the relevant assessment (e.g. if a candidate has Developmental Coordination Disorder, parents should submit a report by an occupational therapist).
 - The relevant professionals should provide sufficient evidence in the report/ document to prove that the candidate has SEN, and explain the reasons for the types of special arrangements necessary for the student.

- Make corresponding arrangements for those candidates in internal examinations, and document the arrangements and their effectiveness.
- Submit applications to the HKEAA on time.

School-based Assessment in Public Examinations (hereinafter called the "SBA")

When conducting SBA tasks, if there are candidates whose performance is substantially affected due to the functional impairments related to their SEN, schools can provide special arrangements for them, so that they could be equitably assessed. Schools can consider the following factors:

- Does the candidate have the ability to take part in the assessment?
 - Does the candidate need assistive aids?
 - Does the candidate need to demonstrate his/ her learning by different means?
 - When the candidate participates in group activities, do special arrangements need to be made on the composition of the group?
- ◆ Schools need not apply to the HKEAA for the special arrangements granted to candidates in SBA. However, such arrangements should be noted down in the assessment records.
 - ◆ If a school cannot provide specific assessment arrangements to individual candidate and subsequently the candidate cannot participate adequately in the SBA, the school may consider whether the candidate needs to be exempted from the part or whole of the SBA tasks. In the event that application for exemption is necessary, the school principal should file a written application to the HKEAA at the beginning of the school year for special consideration.

IX. Enquiries

Regarding the special examination arrangements for individual students, schools may contact relevant professionals such as educational psychologists, speech therapists, audiologists, etc. or consult the inspectors of the special education support sections of the Education Bureau.

For enquiries about the content of this guideline, schools can contact:

Education Bureau

Secondary School Places Allocation	2832 7740
Pre-S1 Hong Kong Attainment Test	2892 6618
Educational Psychology Service (New Territories East) Section	3547 2228

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Territory-wide System Assessment (Primary)	3628 8181
Territory-wide System Assessment (Secondary)	3628 8191
Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education	3628 8917