Assistive Technology Info sheet

Special Assessment Conditions

Special assessment conditions are entitlements given to students who need additional support to access to secondary school qualification assessments.

Can students use their assistive technology in formal assessments?

Assistive technology may be appropriate for some students in some circumstances. For example the use of a laptop may be appropriate for an assessment of science conceptual understanding but not for an assessment to test the ability to write with a pen.

To ensure that assistive technology use is appropriate in formal assessments such as NCEA, an application must be made for the student to have special assessment conditions.

Approval for all special assessment conditions is the responsibility of NZQA. More information is available on the [Ministry of Education website](https://education.govt.nz/school/student-support/special-education/special-assessment-conditions/).

Special assessment conditions are approved when they allow students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding, without providing unfair advantage over other candidates.

What are special assessment conditions?

Prior to seeking special assessment conditions the student’s team should ensure that each student should have an assessment programme that suits their individual needs and talents.

The following list of special assessment conditions shows the type of entitlements students can apply for if require them:

1. Reader: has content of the assessment read aloud to the student.
2. Writer: the student speaks their answers to a writer.
3. Alternative formats: Braille, large print or electronic format, signer (for deaf students).
4. Use of assistive technology (computers): use of the student’s usual technology to enable the student to complete the assessment.
5. Extra time (in special circumstances): for assessments over 150 minutes.
6. Other exceptional conditions: rest breaks, home supervision, special papers.

To be eligible for special assessment conditions students need to be able to achieve at Level 6 of the NZ Curriculum and they must have an identified specific learning disability or a medical/physical/sensory disability.

How do schools apply for a special assessment conditions?

Applications should be made direct to [NZQA](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/assessment-and-moderation/managing-national-assessment-in-schools/special-assessment-conditions-guidelines/preparing-an-application/). Details about the application process are available on the NZQA website**.** NZQA provides a [guideline summary and timeline](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/assessment-and-moderation/managing-national-assessment-in-schools/special-assessment-conditions-guidelines/timeline/) that is helpful if you are applying for the first time. Specific [documentation requirements to support applications](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/assessment-and-moderation/managing-national-assessment-in-schools/special-assessment-conditions-guidelines/documentation-requirements/#_msocom_1) are specified by NZQA. This includes required documentation for students with specific disabilities/conditions such as deafness, dyslexia or diabetes.

Approval of special assessment conditions in one year does not necessarily mean that approval will be given in subsequent years. Permanent or long-term medical or physical condition or disability

If the student has a significant physical, medical or sensory difficulty, school and medical records are supplied to support an application for special assessment conditions that cater for physical or sensory difficulties. For example Braille papers are provided for students who are legally blind and a writer is provided for a student who cannot write due to a physical disability.

**Learning disabilities**

There are two application pathways for students who have learning disabilities (which may be additional to a sensory or physical disability).

1. Alternative evidence pathway

Alternative evidence can be collected by the school.

A variety of evidence is acceptable but evidence of teacher professional judgement is required to show that there is a disparity between the student’s subject knowledge and their ability to express this in a specific format. For example, a student’s ability to verbally discuss an answer, and their ability to record that answer in writing. Please refer to our [Tips for gathering alternative evidence](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~/media/MinEdu/Files/EducationSectors/SpecialEducation/SpecialAssessmentConditions2014Tipsforpreparinganalternativeevidenceapplication.pdf)and Contact your School Relationship Manager (SRM) at NZQA for further guidance if required.

1. Independent report pathway

Schools may provide an up to date report by an independent registered professional, such as a New Zealand Council for Educational research (NZCER) level C assessor.

In addition, other reports from professionals, such as a speech/language therapist or medical professional, may be included to substantiate that the student's disability is a specific learning disability. For example, an assistive technology application form can be provided to support applications to NZQA.

Whose responsibility is it to make the application to NZQA?

Applications for special assessment conditions are made by schools on behalf of the student. Ministry of Education staff can support the process but are not responsible for it.

If you have any queries please contact [NZQA](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/about-us/contact-us/)

If you have any queries, please contact the assistive technology coordinator at your local Ministry of Education office.