

GOVERNMENT GAZETTE, No. 37652, 16 MAY 2014

DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION 2014

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ACT, 1996 (ACT NO. 27 OF 1996)

**APPROVAL OF THE AMENDMENTS TO THE POLICY DOCUMENT,
NATIONAL POLICY PERTAINING TO THE CONDUCT,
ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF EXAMINATIONS AND
ASSESSMENT FOR THE NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE**

ANNEXURE C1

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

1. PRINCIPLES GUIDING ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

The following principles are applied in using differentiated methods of assessment to support learners who experience barriers to assessment:-

- (1) Reasonable accommodation and effective individualised support measures should be provided in environments that maximize the academic development of these learners on an equal basis with others (*Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 24*);
- (2) Differentiation in assessment and accommodations are designed to equalise opportunities for all learners by addressing barriers which learners may experience;
- (3) Support for learners is to enable them to give a true account of their knowledge and/or skills;
- (4) The standard of assessment must not be compromised, nor should the learner be given an unfair advantage over his or her peers;
- (5) There should be high expectations of all learners;
- (6) It is important that differentiated assessment and/or accommodations are put into practice early and throughout learners' school career to give them the opportunity to realise their potential.
- (7) Learners in need of accommodations should be identified as early as possible in order to put the necessary mechanisms in place and to accustom learners to the assessment method concerned before they are externally assessed.

2. ELIGIBILITY FOR ACCOMMODATIONS OR CONCESSIONS FOR LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- (1) Learners who are eligible for accommodations or concessions are:
 - (a) Those who have special educational needs arising from a disability, learning difficulty, learning disability, or behaviour and/or psycho-social disorder which creates a barrier to the learner achieving his/her potential in the assessment;
or
 - (b) Those who during the assessment or examination period, experience medical, social, emotional or domestic challenges and who have addressed a direct submission to the Provincial Education Department Assessment Committee.
- (2) Accommodations or concessions are not granted where the primary area of difficulty is with the language of learning, teaching and assessment due to the fact that this is not the home language of the learner.
- (3) Determination of learners who are eligible for differentiated assessment and accommodations in Grades 10 to 12 should have been done as early as the Foundation Phase or at least by October of their Grade 10 year, except in a situation where the need arises at a later stage.
- (4) Cognisant of the fact that a learner's accommodation needs may change over time, the accommodations must be progressively re-evaluated.
- (5) The initial assessment will be conducted, in the case of public assessment bodies, by the Accommodation/Concessions Committee by using a system of screening, identification, assessment of barriers that has been approved by the Department of Basic Education.
- (6) The assessment of the learner must be verified and confirmed by the District-Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee. Together, the School-Based and the District Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee will determine the form and level of support required. The information on the prescribed forms plus the necessary documentation must be submitted to the Provincial Accommodation/Concessions Committee where, if approved, the necessary support will be captured on the Assessment and Examinations IT System.

- (7) The Provincial Accommodation/Concessions Committee will consider in its absolute discretion applications from learners who experience barriers to learning. In terms of the policy the decision as to whether an accommodation will be granted lies with the Provincial Education Department and its Accommodation/Concessions Committee and not with the practitioner who conducted the assessments or with the school.
- (8) An accommodation/concession decision may be appealed only once within two months of receipt of the original decision. Only the original application will be considered on appeal. No additional information will be considered. The Department reserves the right to request further assessment.
- (9) The barrier experienced and the accommodation awarded must be clearly indicated on the candidate's registration form.

3. THE VARIOUS BARRIERS THAT MAY REQUIRE DIFFERENTIATED ASSESSMENT AND ACCOMMODATIONS

(1) **Sensory Impairments**

- (a) **Visual Impairment** which includes blindness and partial sightedness or low vision requiring adaptation of content, accommodations with regard to the format of the assessment as well as use of assistive technology. Colour blindness may pose a barrier that needs to be addressed through accommodations in this category.
- (b) **Deaf and Hard of Hearing** which can be measured on a continuum of intensity and can present barriers in terms of the acquisition of both receptive as well as expressive language competencies.
 - (i) In the case of **deaf learners**, their first language is Sign Language and assessment must make accommodations for the mode of examination as well as for certain adaptations in structure and content.
 - (ii) In the case of learners who are **hard of hearing**, depending on the extent of hearing loss, accommodations should make provision for both the mode of examination as well as for differentiated structure and content

- (c) **Deaf-blindness** is a condition in which the combination of hearing and visual loss in learners could cause severe communication and other developmental and educational needs. The accommodations for these learners must be determined on a case by case basis and should include multiple approaches.
- (2) **Physical Impairments** may result in barriers to assessment because of impaired functioning of the hands, arms, legs, upper body and/or neck. Differentiation and accommodations must make provision for time allocations as well as the use of assistive technology or personal assistance.
- (3) **Speech or Communication Impairment** which involves an inability to speak and difficulty in expressing oneself can create barriers for some learners with physical or sensory disability. Aphasia is such a condition which can impair both receptive and expressive speech. Accommodations need to be applied in oral assessments.
- (4) **Learning Difficulties** refer to a range of barriers experienced in receiving, processing, expressing or retrieving information, any of which may affect the person's ability to function effectively in one or more areas (such as understanding, interpreting, transferring knowledge or skills, receptive or expressive language, spelling, grammar, following directions, spatial relations, numbers, etc.). Grade 10-12 learners who experience learning difficulties may either offer the National Senior Certificate programme as stipulated in *paragraphs 26 to 32 and 35 to 38 of the policy document, National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12, or the National Senior Certificate with Endorsement* as contemplated in *subparagraphs 5, 6 and 8 of the said document*.
- (5) **Expressing own knowledge in written form, particularly difficulty with spelling and/or grammar** - functional difficulties that can present themselves in various degrees but may be such that it is almost impossible to evaluate the learner's written work. The difficulties may involve spelling which is so poor that it is impossible for the assessor to understand the work presented by the candidate or the way the candidate may express him/herself by using phonetic spelling (particularly in English), which however, can still be deciphered. These learners include those who have been diagnosed with dyslexia.

- (6) **Difficulties with numbers and numerical concepts** that manifest as: mathematics anxiety and dyscalculia and is as a dysfunction in the reception, comprehension, or production of quantitative and spatial information.
- (7) **Behaviour and Psycho-Social Barriers** can become a barrier in assessment when it has been diagnosed as either a mild or a severe behaviour or psycho-social disorder where the learner needs support to mediate the barriers that they experience in assessment. These difficulties may be temporary (e.g. responding to a recent traumatic experience) or long-lasting. Learners on prescribed medication may be affected by drowsiness, thirst, visual and/or coordination difficulties.
- (8) **Autistic Spectrum, Anxiety and Attention Deficit Disorders are conditions where** learners may become disorientated during assessment and/or examinations, thus preventing them from answering the question paper to the best of their ability. Accommodations include assistance either with planning or through consistent encouragement and monitoring to prevent them from giving up and handing in incomplete assessment work or examination scripts.
- (9) **Specific Medical Conditions** might also require differentiation or accommodations, for example severe diabetes, epilepsy, chronic pain, back injury and HIV and AIDS.

4. MECHANISMS FOR DIFFERENTIATION AND/OR ACCOMMODATIONS

Depending on the severity of barriers experienced, the following options can be available at the discretion of the Provincial Assessment Committee:

Differentiation Strategy or Accommodations	Visual impairment/c olour blindness	Deaf/ Hard of Hearing/ Deaf Blind	Physical Barriers	Learning Difficulty	Behaviour, Anxiety, ADD/ ADHD/ Autism/ Psycho Social Disorders	Limited Functional Speech	Other Medical Condition s
Adaptation of questions	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Additional Time	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital Player/Recorder	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	

Differentiation Strategy or Accommodations	Visual impairment/colour blindness	Deaf/ Hard of Hearing/ Deaf Blind	Physical Barriers	Learning Difficulty	Behaviour, Anxiety, ADD/ ADHD/ Autism/ Psycho Social Disorders	Limited Functional Speech	Other Medical Conditions
Braille	✓						
Computer/ voice to text/ text to voice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enlarged Print	✓		✓				
Handwriting	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Medication/food intake	✓		✓				✓
Oral examination	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Personal assistant			✓				✓
Prompter				✓	✓		
Reader	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Rest Breaks	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Scribe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Separate Venue	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sign Language Interpreter		✓					
Spelling		✓		✓		✓	
Transcription of Braille	✓						
Video/DVD recorder/Webcam		✓				✓	

Please note that all separate venue accommodations require an invigilator and a recording of the examination session to be made and submitted with the examination script

(1) Additional time will be granted as follows:

- (a) Physical Disability/Repetitive Strain Injury – 5 to 10 minutes per hour to accommodate slower writing speed.
- (b) Learning Disability - 20 minutes per hour for perusal / formulating/ writing/ checking answers.
- (c) Chronic Pain - 15 minutes per hour for standing and/or moving around.
- (d) Vision Impairment - Double time for learners who are blind, and time and a half for learners who have low vision.

- (e) Hearing Loss - 20 minutes per hour for perusal/ formulating/ writing/ checking answers.
- (f) Any other disability not identified in the above list, may use the above-mentioned time allocation, not exceeding 20 minutes per hour.

(2) Use of a person as additional support during assessment

(a) Use of a Reader

- (i) A reader refers to a person who reads all text in an examination paper to a learner. This method is used with candidates with poor reading skills causing tension and loss of time.
- (ii) The learner may request sections of text to be reread.
- (iii) The reader should preferably be a qualified teacher, but not necessarily from the same centre and could be drawn from a panel of readers identified and trained by the Provincial Education Department. The reader remains neutral and impartial when reading the question paper.
- (iv) The reader can read the text to one or more candidates simultaneously. Both the reader and the candidates have question papers.
- (v) A separate room or venue is required for this accommodation.
- (vi) A rest break not exceeding 20 minutes after two hours may be considered and a ten minute rest break for every hour exceeding a two hour paper.

(b) Use of a Scribe

- (i) A scribe writes down verbatim the responses that the learner dictates orally or through a sign language interpreter. This will happen in cases where the learner's reading/writing ability prevents him or her from giving a true account of his or her knowledge and/or competence or where the learner cannot write the examination question paper due to the severity of a disability.

- (ii) A scribe should be an educator, but should not be a member of staff of the centre concerned, nor may the scribe be related to the candidate.
- (iii) A scribe could be drawn from a panel of readers identified and trained by the Province.
- (iv) A separate room or venue is required for this accommodation.
- (v) A rest break not exceeding 20 minutes after two hours may be considered and a ten minute rest break for every hour exceeding a two hour paper.

(c) Use of a Personal Assistant

- (i) A learner who requires assistance in personal and/or practical ways during the course of an examination may require a personal assistant. The personal assistant may be required to provide assistance with manual tasks at the learner's instruction, e.g. turning pages, inserting a disk into the computer, removing the learner's jacket as well as with personal care tasks during rest breaks.
- (ii) The personal assistant may be familiar with the learner, but must not teach the subject.
- (iii) The personal assistant should not discuss any matters with the learner during the assessment session or examination unless it relates to the learner's need for personal care or assistance with manual tasks.
- (iv) A separate venue is required for this accommodation.

(d) Use of a Prompter

- (i) The function of a prompter is to refocus a learner who is easily distracted. This may be done using a verbal or physical cue.
- (ii) The prompter may not interfere with the learner's answers to the examination
- (iii) A separate venue is required for this accommodation.

(3) Use of Computers/Word Processors in Non-IT Assessments

- (a) Learners may be given approval to utilise a computer to present their answers in typed form.
 - (b) Standard formatting is acceptable but the computer may not contain any stored information, nor may a database be utilised. A learner may not utilise predictive text software, grammar check, spell check or a thesaurus. Where there is more than one learner in a venue using a computer, the computers may not be connected to each other or to the intranet or internet.
 - (c) The work must be printed out at the end of the assessment and the learner must verify that it is his or her work. Access to a printer is therefore essential.
 - (d) A separate venue is required for this accommodation.
- (4) Accommodations that require **alternate formats, differentiated content, accommodations in marking and ad hoc arrangements**
- (a) Braille
 - (i) When the learner has been educated using Braille, examination papers must be provided in the appropriate Braille code.
 - (ii) Prior to translation into braille, the examination papers must be adapted by examiners working in collaboration with experts in education for learners with visual impairment.
 - (iii) Debrailleing must be done under controlled circumstances.
 - (iv) During the marking process, the adapted memoranda as well as braille experts must be available.
 - (b) Enlarged Print
 - (i) Papers in enlarged print must be made available on hard or in electronic copy for learners who require this.
 - (c) Handwriting

A handwriting accommodation means that a sticker is placed on the answer script of each learner who has been granted this

accommodation. This indicates to the marker that untidy writing must be accommodated.

(d) Spelling

- (i) A spelling accommodation is awarded when there is a significant discrepancy between the chronological age and spelling age of the learner and the learner's ability to express thoughts adequately is thus compromised.
- (ii) A spelling sticker is placed on the answer books of each learner who has been granted this accommodation. The marker must ignore the spelling as long as what is written is phonetically correct.
- (iii) Please note that in the languages Paper 1 where textual editing is examined and spelling is part of content knowledge required at Grade 12 level, spelling will count.

(e) Medication / food intake

Learners may require an opportunity to take medication during an examination and/or have access to food and beverages used to maintain sugar levels and treat low blood sugars. Rest breaks should also be applied for in conjunction with this accommodation. A separate venue is usually required when this accommodation is granted.

(f) Rest breaks

A rest break is a period of time when the learner is not required to be at his/her desk but must remain in the examination venue. Rest break time does not count as extra writing time. The rest break time used will be added to the examination session. A separate venue with invigilation may be required for this accommodation.

(g) Specific Equipment

The Head of the assessment body or his or her representative must be notified of any specific equipment required. In circumstances where the use of specific equipment may distract others, a separate venue may be requested

(h) *Ad hoc* support

- (i) *This* applies in cases of pregnancy or in cases of injury, trauma, hospitalisation and imprisonment just before or during assessment or external assessment.
- (ii) Should it become necessary for a learner to have access to an adaptive or alternative assessment procedure due to one or more of reasons contemplated in *subregulation (3)*, an *ad-hoc* decision should be taken by the Head of the assessment body or his or her representative at that time.
- (iii) Support will include arrangements for learners to write in a venue other than the assessment centre at which the learner is registered or the postponement of assessment until the supplementary or following examination/ assessment period.
- (iv) In emergency cases, documents may be delivered three (3) days after the decision has been taken.
- (v) The Head of the assessment body or his or her representative may change the original decision within three (3) working days if no valid documents have been presented.

5. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENSURING FAIR ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO ASSESSMENT

(1) Responsibilities of School

- (a) The principal of the school is responsible for the overall management of support for learners in need of differentiated assessment and accommodations.
- (b) The School-Based Committee is responsible for identifying the learners, completing the application forms, attaching all the relevant supporting documents, forwarding the documentation to the District-Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee and implementing the decision of the District-Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee.

(2) Responsibilities of the District/Region

- (a) The District-Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee must review the applications and forward it to the relevant sub-structure of the District-Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee viz. the sub structure that deals with differentiated assessments and accommodations, evaluate the recommendations by the sub structure, and forward the decision to the Provincial Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee.
- (b) The District-Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee must identify a panel of scribes and readers or any other persons required to assist the learners during the assessment and the examinations.

(3) Responsibilities of the Provincial Structure

- (a) The Provincial Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee must review the applications and forward the applications for differentiated assessment and accommodations to the sub-structure of the Provincial Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee for a thorough evaluation and recommendations.
- (b) The Provincial Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee must make a final decision and submit recommendations per learner to the Director: Assessment and Examinations indicating the specific differentiated assessment and accommodations required.
- (c) The Provincial Based Accommodation/Concessions Committee must ensure that the panel of readers and scribes are trained annually prior to the writing of the examinations.
- (d) Scribes and readers or any other persons required to assist the learners during the assessment and the examinations must be remunerated in terms of the tariff as stipulated in the PAM.

(4) Responsibilities of the Director: Assessment and Examinations

The Director: Assessment and Examinations must ensure that all the decisions regarding differentiated assessment and accommodations are implemented.

(5) Procedural Arrangements, Applications and Data Management

- (a) Accommodations/support mechanisms must as far as reasonably practical be introduced as early as possible in the learner's school career and not only during end of year examinations. Accommodations/Concessions Committees must include the following officials: Curriculum, Assessment and Examinations, Inclusive Education and a Legal representative.
- (b) Accommodation applications require a holistic profile of the candidate. To ensure prompt processing of the application please refer to the table below and submit all of the required documentation

Barrier to Learning	Support Needs Assessment Forms (SIAS)	Psycho-educational assessment	Medical Report	Supporting historical evidence	Teacher comments	School Report	School Samples
Visual impairment/colour blindness	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Deaf/ Hard of Hearing/ Deaf Blind	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Physical Barriers	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Learning Difficulty	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Behaviour, Anxiety, ADD/ ADHD/ Autism/ Psycho Social Disorders	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Limited Functional Speech	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other Medical Conditions	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	

- (b) Parents should be informed of the support or accommodations in assessment planned for the learner.
- (c) Application for accommodations must be made on the prescribed forms by the school as determined by the province.
- (d) The assessment directorate must respond within three months of the application being received by the Department of Basic Education.

- (e) Braille of documents and examination question papers will be managed timeously by the school in the grades below Grade 12 or the Department of Basic Education in the case of Grade 12.
- (f) Security arrangements to secure the end-of-year examination papers must apply during the adaptation process and all persons involved must sign confidentiality forms.
- (g) The personal profile of learners on the IT system may include the barrier experienced and the accommodations required by learners.
- (h) An independent assessment body may determine its own procedural arrangements, applications and data management.