

Title: Stage 6 Disability Provisions Policy

Summary:

Intended Audience: Students

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Stage 6 Disability Provisions Policy

Background

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and the *Disability Standards for Education (2005)* require NESA to ensure that students with a disability are able to access and respond to an examination.

HSC examinations and school-based assessment tasks

NESA may approve disability provisions for the Higher School Certificate examinations if a student has a permanent or temporary disability that would, in a normal examination situation, prevent him or her from:

1. reading the examination questions; and/or
2. communicating his or her responses.

Disability provisions are approved by NESA to provide students who have a permanent or temporary disability with practical support in the Higher School Certificate examinations.

Regardless of the nature of the disability, the provisions granted will be solely determined by the implications for the student's functioning in an examination situation.

Provisions may include Braille papers, large print papers, use of a writer, use of a reader, extension of examination time, rest breaks, small group supervision, individual supervision, permission to take medication, or other provisions as judged appropriate.

Students and/or parents are to make contact with the Director of Studies as soon as possible to commence the process of applying for disability provisions for the HSC exams. If they are successful then the disability provisions for school-based assessment tasks including examinations will be implemented. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the Learning Support Coordinator as soon as notification has been given that they will need to access their provisions for an in-class task.

Students and/or parents can request temporary disability provisions for an assessment task if accompanied by appropriate medical documentation. The final decision as to whether a provision is granted lies with the Director of Studies. An example, where a temporary provision may be granted is:

- a broken arm for the mid-course exams (a writer can be accessed)
- an injured back (alternative seating arrangements and/or rest breaks)

Disability provisions: areas outside NESA guidelines

NESA will not compensate students for difficulties in undertaking courses and preparing for the Higher School Certificate examinations.

NESA can offer no guarantee that school-determined provisions will apply in the Higher School Certificate examinations, as each application is individually assessed to ensure consistency and equity.

NESA does not consider the lack of familiarity with the English language to be a disability in this context. Therefore, provisions such as the use of an English/foreign language dictionary will not be approved for students disadvantaged solely because of lack of familiarity with the English language.

Where a student has a condition that might manifest itself during an examination session (eg epilepsy or asthma), the occurrence of an episode during the examination will be covered by the illness/misadventure provisions.

Students for whom disability provisions are approved may not be eligible for illness/misadventure consideration for the same condition unless they experience a deterioration or variation in their condition during the actual examinations.

Disability provisions - application procedures

All applications for disability provisions and subsequent appeals must be submitted online by the Director of Studies.

Applications are lodged and decisions reported through Schools Online. Schools should note the due date for applications is the last day of Term 1. The late submission of a disability provisions application may disadvantage the student.

Emergency applications during the HSC Examination period

During the examination period, emergency applications may be made by the Learning Support Coordinator or the Director of Studies telephoning the Student Support Services branch at NESA. An application supported by documentary evidence should be submitted immediately afterwards by the school.

Applications will be considered by NESA on the basis of individual need.

NESA decisions

The decision on each application will be advised to the school through Schools Online , to the student (via the school) and to the presiding officer.

If a request for disability provisions is declined, the Director of Studies may appeal on behalf of the student(s). Appeals should be made within 14 days of receiving the NESA decision.

Disability provisions - evidence

When an application is submitted, evidence must be included indicating the precise nature of the disability and the consequent effect on examination performance.

A student with a disability may be affected in a variety of ways in an examination. For example:

1. difficulty in reading and comprehending written questions
2. severe spelling difficulty which impedes communication
3. difficulty expressing thoughts in writing
4. illegible or extremely slow writing.

Some disability provisions may require the student to sit the examination separately from the main group. In these cases, small group supervision in a separate room will be approved. In other cases, individual supervision may be approved to address the student's examination needs.

The following arrangements, where considered appropriate, may be followed for the supervision of such students.

1. Students approved extra time or rest breaks may be seated together in the same room. This would be appropriate where students have been approved similar amounts of additional time. Small group supervision will be approved for these students.

Rest breaks are breaks in the examination time in which students:

- must turn over or close their examination questions and answers
- must *not* read, write or make notes
- may stretch, move, rest or refocus in their seat.

The maximum amount of time granted is given as a rate of minutes per half hour of examination time, usually 5 minutes per half hour of examination time. The total amount of time allowable for breaks is calculated by multiplying this rate by the number of half-hour intervals.

All students, even those without rest breaks, take short moments to stretch or refocus during their allocated examination time. Rest breaks are designed for students with disabilities that cannot be reasonably addressed in this manner. Therefore, each rest break must be taken for a minimum of 5 minutes.

If a student's remaining rest break allowance falls below 5 minutes, no further rest breaks may be taken. The student can determine the times at which rest breaks are to be taken and must advise the supervisor whenever they wish to take a rest break.

2. Students approved rest breaks are automatically granted small group supervision. Most students choose to use small group supervision but some students may elect to sit with the main body of students and be placed at the front or back of the examination room. Either option is permitted, but students should be aware that if they elect to sit with the main body of students, they may still be doing their examination when other students have finished and are leaving the room. The placement of the student in the room is at the discretion of the supervisor and will be based on the best place to minimise disruption for all students.
3. Students approved a reader and/or a writer should be accommodated together. The room must be large enough, however, to ensure that discussions between the reader/writer and the student cannot be heard by the other student(s) undertaking the examination in that room.

These students will be approved small group supervision.

4. Students approved the use of a personal computer should be seated in one room, providing the room size allows each student to be seated in an isolated area.