



# Schools' Guide to Special Provisions in ATAR Course Examinations 2020

## Information for Case Coordinators

### (Includes Special Examination Arrangements and Sickness/Misadventure Consideration)

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## Guidelines

Please refer to the document *Guidelines for disability adjustments for timed assessments* for the School Curriculum and Standards Authority's (the Authority's) policy and guidelines on making special examination arrangements in the ATAR course examinations. The information provided in this document is specifically tailored to the ATAR course examinations and supplements that more general information.

This document also contains a section on sickness/misadventure provisions for the ATAR course examinations. While application for this consideration is a candidate's responsibility, they will often seek advice from a relevant person at school.

## Principles

The principles that underpin these special provisions are:

1. Candidates whose capacity to participate in a timed assessment is adversely affected in a significant way by illness, impairment or personal circumstances may be eligible to access appropriate, fair and reasonable alternative arrangements.
2. All ATAR course examination candidates undertake assessment under comparable conditions. Any special provision must provide equivalent, alternative arrangements for students.
3. The same knowledge, understandings and skill requirements, and performance standards are applied to all students whether or not they are granted special provisions.
4. Special provisions do not confer an advantage to any candidate over other candidates.
5. Decisions about a candidate's eligibility to be granted special provisions will be evidence-based.

## Types of special provisions

There are two types of special provisions for the ATAR course examinations:

- Special examination arrangements
- Sickness/misadventure provisions.

Specific eligibility criteria apply for each form of special provision.

## Special examination arrangements

Candidates who have a temporary or permanent disability, illness and/or specific learning disability that could disadvantage them in timed assessments may have their school apply for them to sit an ATAR course examination under special conditions. Application is made prior to the examinations. Application can be for the written or practical ATAR course examinations.

There is an application form for special examination arrangements, which should be completed by the school and returned along with supporting documentation to the Authority by the specified date in April. Late applications will only be considered in extenuating circumstances if the diagnosis of a new disability/illness occurs after this date.

The Authority does not automatically adopt a medical/psychological provider's advice or replicate the special arrangements that a school may have put in place for school-based assessment. The fact that a candidate has a disability/illness does not automatically entitle that candidate to special examination arrangements. Each application is considered individually and arrangements provided depend upon the functional impact of the disability during timed assessments.

Eligibility criteria and possible arrangements are detailed in the special examination arrangements section.

Students with pre-existing conditions are expected to manage the condition in a suitable manner to improve their access to the examinations. This can include remediation or therapy designed to reduce the impact of the condition. When such action is not sufficient to provide reasonable access to the examination, the student may need to be supported through special examination arrangements. Students with pre-existing or chronic conditions, including long term mental illnesses, do not have access to sickness/misadventure consideration, unless every attempt has been made to minimise the impact of the condition during the examination and there has been an unexpected acute episode unrelated to the examinations. Failure to apply for special examination arrangements does not automatically entitle the student to sickness/misadventure consideration.

## Sickness/misadventure provisions

Candidates who suffer from a temporary sickness, non-permanent disability or an unforeseen event close to or during the examinations which they believe may have resulted in performance below expectations or non-attendance in particular examinations are to be given the opportunity to apply for assessment consideration. Application is made by the candidate after the examinations.

Eligible candidates should make application on the sickness/misadventure form which must be submitted direct to the Authority by the published due date, usually within one week of the last examination. Electronic applications are not accepted. No late applications can be accepted. Forms are not to be returned to schools or examination centres.

If the application is approved, then the Authority will calculate an examination mark using the applicant's school assessment as a basis.

Sickness/misadventure provisions are not available to non-school candidates.

Eligibility criteria are detailed in the sickness/misadventure section.

## Special Examination Arrangements

Special examination arrangements for ATAR course examinations can only be made on the understanding that the aims of these examinations are to:

- statistically moderate numerical school assessments
- contribute to a score that is used to rank students for university entrance
- assist in the selection of students for Authority exhibitions and awards
- support public confidence in senior secondary schooling.

No candidate should be able to obtain an advantage over another candidate in the examinations except by having more knowledge, understanding, skill or ability relating to the course being examined.

### Eligibility for special examination arrangements

Candidates are eligible for special examination arrangements if it can be demonstrated that their capacity to access the examination is impaired due to:

- severe health impairment
- significant physical disability
- sensory impairment
- specific learning disability
- psychological impairment.

### The application process

Application forms are available to the school/college in February. A candidate's application for special examination arrangements should be completed and lodged by his/her school. Forms are not to be sent home for completion. Non-school candidates may lodge their application directly with the Authority.

The form requires statements from the candidate's medical practitioner, psychologist or other relevant health professional to gauge the nature and extent of the candidate's disability/illness and its impact on their performance in timed assessments. The medical and educational assessments and recommendations are neither conclusive nor binding on the Authority and the Authority will consider the weight to be given to them on a case-by-case basis. The fact that a candidate has a disability/illness does not automatically entitle that candidate to special examination arrangements.

A statement is also required from the school principal in relation to special assessment arrangements that have been made in the school to cater for the student's disabilities and/or specific learning disabilities.

The Authority will not process an application until all the relevant evidence has been supplied to enable an informed professional judgement. If necessary, the Authority will contact schools requesting additional information to be submitted, or may return applications which are incomplete.

Special examination arrangement applications will be considered under disability categories. Where necessary, applications will be referred to appropriate experts for recommendations.

In processing special examination arrangement applications related to specific learning disabilities, ADD/ADHD and psychological categories, or fine motor and physical categories, the Authority will employ expert assessment personnel. These people will work in pairs, with one person to have school management experience with disabilities and the other to be a registered psychologist or occupational therapist as relevant. Sensory applications will be assessed by teams of experts experienced in the relevant impairment. It will be the role of these experts to assess each application. Assessment personnel will be trained to ensure consistency of criteria used to assess each application. In the case of an application being declined, it may be reviewed by a specially convened committee that includes relevant experts.

Schools will have the opportunity to appeal the decision. The appeals committee will comprise an independent registered psychologist, an independent occupational therapist, the manager of examination logistics and a school management person. Independent experts will be consulted where necessary.

## Lodging the application

The completed application form and all supporting documentation should be lodged by the candidate's school by the specified date in April. Late applications will only be considered in extenuating circumstances if the diagnosis of a new disability/illness occurs after this date. Non-school candidates may lodge their application directly with the Authority.

## Managing special examination arrangements

What the student must do:

- submit a timely request to the school for special examination arrangements
- provide appropriate documentation and evidence.

What the school must do:

- determine whether the student's request for special examination arrangements is appropriate and consistent with the eligibility requirements
- administer tests/essays where required
- complete the application form for special examination arrangements and submit it to the Authority along with all supporting documentation by the due date
- discuss the approved arrangements with student and implement these in school assessments.

What the Authority will do:

- make a decision for each of the examinations on the application, based on evidence provided
- inform the school of all approved arrangements
- provide the special arrangements during the ATAR course examinations.

## Replication of school arrangements

The Authority recommends that schools implement at school level only special arrangements consistent with those provided by the Authority for the ATAR course examinations. It should be stressed that if special arrangements implemented by the school for students do not meet the

eligibility criteria established by the Authority for special examination arrangements for the ATAR course examinations, they will not be approved. After examining all evidence presented in respect of a student's situation, it is possible that the student may be offered arrangements that differ from those that the school was providing.

The Authority does not automatically adopt a medical/psychological provider's advice or replicate the special arrangements that a school may have put in place for school-based assessment. The reasons for this are:

- medical/psychological providers vary in their recommendations as to the special arrangements required for a given disability/illness. It would be inconsistent and potentially unfair to other candidates with a similar disability/illness for the Authority to simply follow each specialist's recommendations. The Authority considers each candidate's disability/illness and its effects on their ability to undertake an examination under the same conditions as candidates without that disability/illness. The Authority makes every effort to ensure equitable and consistent modifications are made to the standard conditions
- medical/psychological providers are often not aware of the Authority's special provisions guidelines and/or what types of special examination arrangements are available
- each school applies its own policies for school assessments. These policies vary from school to school, cannot be controlled by the Authority and may be affected by a number of factors not directly related to the level of disability of the student. It would be unfair if the arrangements provided at school level were automatically replicated for ATAR course examinations because there would be inconsistency in the special arrangements approved to students with similar disabilities/illnesses from different schools.

## Details of arrangements provided

**Extra reading time** may be granted for candidates who have vision impairment or hearing loss. The amount of additional time given will depend on the degree of impairment and the nature of the course. The maximum amount of additional reading time is ten minutes.

**Rest breaks (non-working time)** may be provided for candidates who are unable to sustain a sitting position or work uninterrupted for the duration of the examination, usually three hours. This could allow candidates to receive medical treatment, relax, stretch injured backs, refocus on the examination and so on. Rest time is calculated at the rate of five minutes per half hour, to a maximum of 25 minutes. No allowance is calculated for the last half hour. Rest breaks can be taken at the candidate's discretion, usually in blocks of no more than 10 minutes. Candidates granted rest breaks are required to sit their examinations at a venue designated by the Authority.

**Extra working time** may be granted for a candidate to complete the examination. In general, a maximum of 30 minutes for three-hour examinations (or the proportionate equivalent for shorter examinations) is granted, except for candidates with severe vision impairment or severe multiple physical disabilities, who may receive a further allowance of working time. Candidates granted extra working time are required to sit their examinations at a venue designated by the Authority.

**Extra time at discretion** may be granted where the candidate's need is demonstrated not to be reasonably met by rest breaks, requires more flexibility than working time, or requires a

combination of working and non-working time. Candidates granted extra time at discretion are required to sit their examinations at a venue designated by the Authority.

**Paper modifications** can be made to enlarge, translate into Braille or vary the colour for candidates with vision impairment. Other adjustments to the paper layout may be made to accommodate the impact of significant physical/fine motor disabilities or colour blindness.

**Scribes** may be appointed in cases of severe writing disability or physical disability. Where scribes are provided, extra working time is granted to allow for the dictation process. The role of the scribe is to record, in handwriting, the verbal responses as dictated by the candidate.

**Computers** may be granted for candidates with a permanent disability such as muscular dystrophy, and who have been using computers as part of their mode of assessment over several years. The use of spelling and grammar checkers is not allowed. Extra working time is not usually allowed. Poor handwriting is not considered a disability that necessitates a computer unless it results from a diagnosed disabling condition. Candidates granted use of a computer are required to sit their examinations at a venue designated by the Authority.

**Specialised supervision** may be provided for a candidate who needs to sit in a separate room, at home or in hospital due to illness, injury or pregnancy.

**Out-of-order seating** may be granted for candidates who for medical reasons may need to leave the room frequently, sit near a window, at the front or rear of the room. This will rarely be necessary when allocated to a special examination centre.

**Food and/or additional drink** needed because of a medical condition may be granted to be taken into an examination room. The food or drink must be in a clear wrapping or container.

**Medication** may be granted for candidates for the ongoing treatment of medical conditions such as diabetes or ADD/ADHD.

**Specialised equipment** such as a special desk, ergonomic chair, foot rest or cushion may be approved for candidates with special needs. All variations to standard examination equipment or furniture must be applied for. It is the candidate's responsibility to provide this equipment.

**Recorded examinations** may be granted for candidates with a severe reading disability or vision impairment. These will be provided in MP3 format on compact disk. Candidates who are granted recorded examinations are required to sit their examinations at a venue designated by the Authority.

**C-Pen Exam Reader** may be granted for candidates needing reading support.

**Supervisor's instructions in writing** can be provided for candidates with hearing loss.

**Alternative format practical examinations** can be provided for candidates with a long-term injury/illness preventing participation in a standard format performance or interview practical examination. The alternative format in Physical Education Studies will consist of video clips that will be analysed by the candidate then discussed with the markers. The alternative format in Dance will consist of choreography of an original solo composition in the contemporary genre which is taught to another dancer.

Note: no allowance or special examination arrangement is made for spelling difficulties.

## Evidence required to support applications

Evidence is required firstly to establish eligibility to apply for special arrangements; and then to determine the most appropriate alternative arrangements for the candidate.

### Specialist reports

Applications for special examination arrangements must be accompanied by appropriate recent supporting medical, psychological or other relevant specialist reports. Specialist reports should confirm the diagnosis of the disability and describe the problems the candidate experiences in accessing the written and/or practical examination. The reports must be written by a suitably qualified, independent professional who has been involved in the management of the candidate's disability and who is not related to the candidate. Diagnosis of a disability in itself may not be sufficient to support an application for special examination arrangements. The Authority reserves the right to request additional/updated evidence when it is deemed necessary by Authority officers.

For updated information related to Irlen Syndrome, case coordinators should read the *RANZCO Position Statement: Irlen Syndrome – 24 April 2018*. The paper produced by The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) confirms that this condition is neither a vision impairment nor learning disability. Therefore, support should be limited to use of a colour overlay or colour paper. The statement can be found on the RANZCO website at <https://ranzco.edu/news/no-scientific-evidence-that-irlen-syndrome-exists-say-ophthalmologists/>.

### Case management history

Evidence of case management by the student's school is essential to support any claim for special examination arrangements. This should confirm the problems experienced by the student in accessing the written and/or practical examinations, outline the arrangements allowed in school examinations and comment on the effect of these arrangements on the student's achievement.

Be aware that many disabilities will require at least six months' evidence-based specifically targeted intervention to be demonstrated prior to the official diagnosis. In many instances this intervention will reduce the functional impact of the initial condition observed in the student, and remove the need to apply for special examination arrangements. A student's failure to complete this targeted intervention may jeopardise a special examination arrangements application.

The role of special equipment (ergonomic furniture, hand supports, special pens etc.) and therapy is important in assisting students with physical and fine motor disabilities. Case management should only move to higher levels of support after it is proven that lower forms of support, including rest breaks, are not providing reasonable access to the tasks required in the examination.

The role of therapy is important in assisting students with mental health disorders. Applications will require a detailed statement from the managing clinical psychologist.

Applications will only be accepted from the principal (or nominee) of the student's school on the specific application form. The Authority will not accept direct applications from students, their families or independent professionals. All communication will be through the case coordinator at the student's school.

Non-school candidates may make direct application.

## Evidence for learning disabilities

Candidates seeking additional working time on the basis of a specific learning disability are required to provide the results and analysis of psychometric assessments conducted by a registered psychologist, along with essays and other evidence conducted at the school. If the learning disability relates to reading, additional evidence of reading comprehension ability is required.

For the purpose of special examination arrangements, the following definition of learning disability is used:

*Students with a learning disability will have reading, written expression or mathematics skills significantly below expectation in relation to their present year level. Evidence of a processing impairment, frequently phonological in nature, will be present. Learning disabilities are presumed to be intrinsic to the individual and long term, with the student failing to respond as expected to evidence-based targeted intervention. A psychologist has determined that these difficulties are not considered to be the direct result of intellectual disability, physical disability, sensory impairment, or a primary emotional difficulty. Neither do they appear to derive directly from inadequate environmental influences, or from the lack of an appropriate educational experience.*

Psychologists may make professional judgements on the tools to be used to assist in the assessment of a student's learning disabilities. The following, however, are the assessments recommended:

- cognitive ability: WISC V, WAIS IV, WJ III
- phonological processing – CTOPP
- standardised academic achievement tests in reading and/or writing (with Australian norms)
- other assessments: Other assessment tools may also be appropriate for analysing learning disabilities. Results must be fully explained.

Where a student is applying on the basis of a reading disability, the *Progressive Achievement Test in Reading (PAT-R) Comprehension 4<sup>th</sup> Edition* (ACER Press, 2008) must be administered **by the school** in the year of application. Online and outdated test versions are not suitable. The results of the York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC) or other reading tests administered, if available, can also be submitted as additional evidence and will be considered by the assessing panel.

The provision of special examination arrangements on the grounds of writing problems within the context of specific learning disabilities will only be considered where such disabilities can be documented and substantiated.

## Essays

All students applying for extra working time, a scribe or a personal computer on the basis of a learning disability, a fine motor or physical disability, language disorder, severe health or other impairment must provide essay evidence completed during the year of application. All essays are to be administered under test conditions as described in detail on the application form.

**Essay one** is handwritten under controlled conditions, using the topic provided by the Authority. Strictly five minutes reading time and 35 minutes writing time are to be provided. The candidate is to change ink colour after working for 30 minutes. No special arrangements are to be used.



**Essay two** is a photocopy of an essay (usually handwritten) from an assessment that the student has recently completed in a class test or examination. Special arrangements may be used. The essay must be marked with comments and grading indicated. Essay details (including topic, time taken, number of words written, date, special arrangements used) are to be recorded on the cover sheet. Short answer tasks are not suitable.

**A typed or scribed essay** is required (in addition to the handwritten essays) if a candidate is applying for the use of a computer or scribe. The topic will be provided by the Authority and strictly five minutes reading time and 30 minutes typing time are to be provided (for a scribed essay 35 minutes scribing time is allowed). The computer is to have spelling and grammar checks disabled. No other special arrangements (e.g. extra time) are to be used.

Schools must request the confidential essay topics from the examination logistics section of the Authority. Essays must be completed at school under examination conditions. The supervising teacher must remain with the student for the duration of the essay to observe and record the student's performance on the relevant coversheet.

## Procedures for special examination arrangements

1. **Submission of applications.** The closing date in April is specified on the application form. The application form and supporting documentation is received by the Principal Consultant – Special Provisions. Late applications will be considered only under extenuating circumstances. This includes emergency provisions for candidates who have an accident just prior to the examinations. Arrangements can be made if time allows.
2. **Categorisation of applications.** To facilitate equitable decision making, the applications will be sorted by disability type. The forms are confidential and will be retained securely.
3. **Assessment by specialists.** The forms will be assessed within disability type by a pair of specialists.
4. **Determination of special examination arrangements.** Each application is considered on an individual basis. The assessors will consider the impact of the disability on the student's performance in an external examination. In making their decision, the assessors will follow the principle of making allowance for the disability without providing advantage over other students.
5. **Statement of approval.** The school and chief supervisor of the candidate's examination centre will be informed of the approved arrangements. It is the school's responsibility to discuss these with the candidate. Students can access the Notification of Approved Special Examination Arrangements from the Student Portal.
6. **Review of arrangements.** Any request for a change to the approved special examination arrangements must be submitted via email by the student's school. A review can be requested if additional evidence has become available that could not have been provided with the application, there is a significant change in the student's condition or the student wishes to reduce arrangements.
7. **Appeal.** A school can appeal against the decision made by the assessing panels. Appeals will be considered by an independent group. The decision of this group is final.
8. **Arrangements put into place.** The candidate will sit the ATAR course examination under the approved conditions.

## Hints for Completing an Application for Special Examination Arrangements

The following suggestions are made to assist case coordinators at schools with completing an application for special examination arrangements. Applications are required for **any** candidate who needs to sit the ATAR course examinations under **any non-standard arrangement**. This includes access to any special equipment, seating or examination conditions, for the **practical** or **written** examination. Standard examination conditions and approved equipment are explained in the *Year 12 Information Handbooks*. Application forms should **not** be sent home for completion.

Note: as changes are made to the application form and some processes each year, ensure you understand and follow the process in place for the **current** year.

### General hints

#### Start early

Case management is a vital part of managing the education for a student with a disability. The school, student and parents should work together to implement appropriate remedial strategies or therapy while there is time for success. In most circumstances, at least six months evidence-based targeted intervention should be demonstrated. Many of these students will then not need special examination arrangements. Year 10 is a good time to implement specific training in examination technique strategies. For many students, these need to be specifically taught.

Remember that not all students with a disability (past or current) will need special examination arrangements or meet the eligibility requirements for them. Make this clear to students and parents right from the start. Do not simply replicate what has occurred in the past or accept hearsay evidence – this has been a basis for disappointment in many cases. Assess the situation in line with current documentation and current policy, then case-manage from a point of fact. What may have been approved for a sibling or other students in the past may no longer be appropriate.

#### Start with a diagnosis

The diagnosis of a disability must be clear and current. It must be made by a person with professional credentials relevant to the disability and not related to the student. Where relevant, the diagnosis must meet with appropriate professional standards, e.g. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* (DSM-V) criteria. The impact of the disability in an examination situation must be clearly explained, and relate to the individual courses being undertaken. The disability may affect only the written examination, only the practical examination, or both. Be clear about the difference between a learning disability (rare) and a learning difficulty (much more common). Students experiencing **difficulties** do not meet the eligibility criteria for special examination arrangements. While a written diagnosis is essential to enter the process, no special arrangements will be approved on the basis of a diagnosis alone. Assessment conditions should not be altered unless the school has proof of the diagnosis to support the trial of special arrangements.

## Gather evidence

Start early in organising assessments and collecting professional reports. Remember specialists do take annual leave. The Authority's decision will be made on evidence presented at the time of application. The final decision will be made by looking at the **current functional impact** of the disability on the student in an examination situation. Evidence will include standardised testing and academic information gathered by the school (e.g. PAT-R comprehension, essays).

## Be realistic

When making arrangements at school level, examine the evidence and recommendations provided by external consultants and compare it with the Authority's **special provisions policy**. If there is a discrepancy, investigate, communicate and negotiate. Remember the Authority does not replicate arrangements made by a school if the student does not meet eligibility criteria. Check the documents on the website to guide your decision making. Few students qualify for multiple accommodations. You may need to trial a number of accommodations (commencing with the lowest level of support), then decide on which is the most reasonable for each course. Make it clear to the student and parents that, until an arrangement has been approved by the Authority, any accommodations are interim arrangements and subject to change. Many schools do this in writing to avoid any false expectations. Arrangements are not provided to maximise a student's performance.

## Check currency of evidence

The definition of 'current' will vary with the type of disability. For example, a hand injury during Year 11 may be recovered by Year 12, so its diagnosis will no longer be current. However, a specific learning disability diagnosed in Year 10 or autism diagnosed as a child will still be current – but the information related to **functional impact** will need to be updated. Generally, functional impact evidence should be collected in the year of application. Results of psychometric assessments may be considered if done in the two years prior to application. If the disability results from a degenerative condition, it is in the student's best interest to ensure the medical evidence is as recent as practical, i.e. usually in the year of application. If the disability is of a variable nature, or was reported to be improving, no arrangements can be made without recent medical evidence of its severity and impact.

## Present a complete case

Make it easy for the assessors to say yes. Applications are made by the school, but often the evidence is held by the family. Ensure the parents have provided **all** the relevant information. Parents withholding pieces of information has been a common cause for applications to be declined when submitted to the Authority. Reassure parents that all information is treated with the utmost confidentiality, and is not provided to examination centres or third parties. Nothing should be held 'in reserve' – i.e. intended for use only if the first request is denied. Also be sure to present a true picture, including the strengths of the student. Candidates will not always need support in every course examination. Application forms should **not** be sent home to be completed.

## Respect deadlines

These exist for the benefit of the students. It is in your student's interest to get a decision as early as possible; however, as every application is assessed individually, this takes time. Your completed applications cannot be processed until after the school has uploaded its enrolments. Ensure any

non-Year 12 students and non-school candidates for whom you are applying are enrolled correctly before applying for them. Check the *Activities Schedule* on the Authority website for the last date for the various categories of enrolments. Applications (if complete) are processed in order of receipt, so it pays to be in the top of the stack for a prompt response. Incomplete applications cannot be assessed, so please do not send them until missing information is available; they will be returned or go to the bottom of the stack while awaiting information. The closing date for applications is stated on the application form. All applications relating to pre-existing conditions need to be submitted before the specified closing date. After this date applications are only accepted where there are extenuating circumstances, e.g. a newly diagnosed medical condition. (Failure to diagnose a learning disability until after the deadline is not generally an extenuating circumstance. Neither is changing one's mind about wanting support.) From the end of Term 2, applications can be considered **only** for emergency provisions, such as for candidates who have been injured just before the examinations.

If the application is for extra working time or the use of a scribe or computer, you will need to request essay topics using the phone number provided on the form. Ensure you allow enough time for this process, and for the student to complete the essays. You do not need to mark the essays we set. Check page 7 of the application form to confirm the requirements for the essays. Remember to provide an accurate word count for each essay.

#### *Students with a long-term injury or illness preventing participation in standard practical (performance) examinations*

This situation is most likely to affect candidates of Physical Education Studies or Dance, but could potentially affect candidates of other performance-based practical examinations. If the student has an injury or illness that exists at the start of Term 3, and that illness/injury will prevent him/her taking part in the standard practical examination, an application for a special format practical examination **MUST** be submitted. **This is not discretionary**. These students are **not** covered under sickness/misadventure provisions. Failure to apply for a special format practical examination could jeopardise their achievement of a WACE and impact on their ATAR. Applications can be accepted up to 29 July, but earlier application should be made where the situation is known sooner, e.g. for reconstructive surgery early in the year. Do not apply 'just in case'! Be sure of your facts and seek medical substantiation for the condition. There can be no changes to the form of practical examination the candidate is to undertake after 29 July.

### Remember diabetic students and those with medical conditions

While not strictly having a disability, we need to receive applications for all diabetic students so we can ensure they have access to what they need to maintain their health during the examinations. This also applies to students with other illnesses needing medication (such as ADHD or migraine), or conditions needing special equipment or out-of-order seating. If a diabetic student needs to monitor blood glucose levels, the application will need to specify if this is done manually or through a continuous glucose monitor (CGM).

### Who should complete the application form?

Most information relates to the student's performance in an examination situation, therefore someone from the school must complete the form. The person responsible will vary from school to school, but is most often the deputy principal, Year 12 coordinator, special needs coordinator, counsellor or school psychologist. The Authority refers to this person as the **case coordinator**. All

communication from the Authority will be via the case coordinator. **It is the case coordinator's responsibility to discuss the outcome of the application with the student.** The case coordinator will need access to SIRS to obtain details of decisions made by the Authority.

While the case coordinator will coordinate the completion of the form, information may come from the English teacher (essays) and other staff as needed and also from external consultants or doctors. Where possible, enter all information directly onto the form. The student will need to independently complete his/her comment and sign the form. Get them to do this at school and limit their statement to the space provided. Ultimately, the school principal is responsible for the application and will sign the declaration, but he/she may delegate this responsibility. The form should **not** be sent home for completion.

Only **non-school** candidates may submit their application or supporting evidence directly with the Authority.

Where possible, please use the apricot coloured application form that was distributed to schools in February. This is easier to use than other formats of the form. The application form is available on the Authority website for emergency and reference use.

Please do not return Section G (pages 11 and 12) when submitting an application. Keep these for your reference.

### Keep a copy

Remember to keep a full copy of the completed application form and all associated attachments. Applications cannot be returned or copies provided after submission. Students often require a copy of their documents for university/TAFE purposes, so please ensure they have ready access to these, along with their approval notification. Ensure all students can access the Student Portal to obtain special examination arrangements notifications and other documents.

Students will also require a copy of their *Personalised examination timetable* for the written and practical examinations. These will be available from the Student Portal in September. Refer to the *Activities Schedule* for exact date of release.

## Specific hints for completing the application form

Complete all relevant sections for the disability type pertaining to the student. Other pages can be left blank. If printing the form from the Authority website, only print off the relevant pages.

### Section A – Student details

Check the student number before entry. Use only the Authority's WA student number (WASN) allocated to the student.

Mark only those courses for which special arrangements are requested. For many students this is **not** all that they are enrolled in. Do **not** include General courses.

Reason for application – more than one disability may be selected. (Indicate which one is the major disability.)

## Section B – Provisions requested

Select only from the section related to the student’s disability type. This is to be completed at school and must **not** be sent home for completion.

Ensure requested provisions meet with eligibility criteria and are supported by professional diagnoses and functional impact evidence.

If a request does not apply to all courses listed in Section A, then name the course for which it is needed.

Be discriminating when selecting provisions – this is not a ‘wish list’. Read Section G on pages 11 and 12 of the form **before** selecting the provisions in Section B. **If you request provisions that cannot be approved, this will significantly delay the response to your application.**

## Section C – School case coordination

This section is essential to build a picture of the functional impact of the disability on the student in examination situations. Student’s comments must be written (or dictated) by the student. Restrict these comments to the space provided – an attachment is not required, and focus on timed assessments.

The school provisions section must reflect the need for those provisions being requested in each course for which it is sought. Restrict your comments to the examination situation. The format of different examinations will vary, and therefore the difficulties experienced by some students to access the examination may vary. You may need to attach an additional statement to clearly demonstrate the student’s needs in individual courses.

As all communication from the Authority will be via the case coordinator, **ensure your email address is clear and accurate.** Authority staff also often need to discuss a student’s needs, so case coordinator contact details will assist this to be done efficiently. A direct line or mobile phone number is best, along with details of any restrictions to availability. Emails work well for those with restricted phone access.

Intervention history will strengthen the case, especially for a specific learning disability or other condition likely to respond to therapy. Applications where there has been no attempt at targeted remediation for a specific learning disability or fine motor disability are rarely successful. It is also important to show if particular strategies were unsuccessful and why. Do **not** include details of meetings, or strategies used for your whole cohort. Individual education plans are not necessary, nor are school reports.

## Section D – Supporting information

### Psychometric testing

Psychometric test results are vital for applications related to a specific learning disability. Page 5 must contain the requested information.

Psychologist’s reports are sometimes lengthy, with the important information difficult to identify. Where possible, psychologists should keep reports succinct as they are read by fellow psychologists. Make it easy for the assessors to approve the application by presenting the requested information where they can see it at a glance. The assessors will read the report too, but the summary table will assist them to do that easily. Diagnosis of a specific learning disability cannot be made on a cognitive

ability assessment alone. The academic skills test results, and other information, is equally important. For many students, the CTOPP is vital to show the nature and level of disability. For a list of frequently provided tests, please see the end of this document.

Psychometric results are not generally necessary for students with other disabilities. If in doubt phone the Principal Consultant – Special Provisions, as such tests are expensive and families do not appreciate being put to unnecessary effort or expense.

### Reading

Reading results are important if the student is applying for extra time or other supports on the basis of a reading disability. The school must conduct the comprehension test of the *PAT-R 4<sup>th</sup> edition* (ACER 2008) and complete this section of the form. This edition has Australian norms to Year 10 level. As the new version of this test has been in use since 2008, earlier versions are no longer accepted. The onscreen version should **not** be used as it does not replicate the demands of the paper-based ATAR course examinations. The *PAT-R* is best administered by a teacher; it does not need a registered psychologist.

Information about accuracy, comprehension and rate of passage reading in a timed situation is also useful.

### Writing

Handwriting results are important if the student is applying for any provision on the basis of a handwriting disability, whether resulting from either a physical or fine-motor disability, medical condition or other impairment. This is usually completed by an occupational therapist, but in certain situations may be completed by a psychologist. An assessment of handwriting speed under cognitive load is essential. Typing results are vital if the student is seeking the use of a computer. An occupational therapist's report written in the year of application should contain information related to diagnosing the disability and describing the functional limitations of the disability in an examination situation.

Note: in an examination situation, students put considerable time and effort into interpreting, planning, editing etc. Therefore, their expected written output is significantly less than a clinically administered writing task such as the DASH.

Poor handwriting is not considered a disability that necessitates a personal computer; neither does a student's preference for the use of a computer.

### Essays

These provide a picture of the student's ability to write in a timed situation. Remember to request the topics in sufficient time to complete this requirement. Instructions are on the application form, and additional information is provided on the essay topic cover sheet. Teacher feedback recorded on the cover sheet is very useful to the assessors. The word count, including words crossed out, must be accurate (not an estimate). For consistency, all essays will be assessed by a trained marker.

## Section E – Medical evidence – hearing and vision provisions

The impact of the impairment on the student in an examination situation is important. If the student's condition is particularly rare, inclusion of a fact sheet is a good idea. Remember to specify

whether the student is also seeking special arrangements for a practical examination and be specific about the adjustment required.

### Section E – Specialist evidence – special paper requirements

This section is ONLY required for students needing modifications to the printed format of any written or practical examination. This is usually students with a physical disability or vision impairment. It is usually completed by the relevant specialists. For students with vision impairment this will be the visiting teacher from the School of Special Education Needs: Sensory. Please check to see if the student is completing an examination with optional sections or specified contexts, such as Modern History or Music. Specify clearly which sections or contexts the student will complete as only those sections will be modified. Samples of some modifications are required – refer to page 9 of the form for details. Remember to specify if the candidate is also seeking special arrangements for stimulus materials used in a practical examination.

### Section E – Medical evidence – other than vision and hearing

To facilitate prompt completion of the form it is easiest to provide a medical practitioner with a **copy** of this page. Affix the completed section when it is returned. The impact of the illness on the student in an examination situation is important. If the student's condition is particularly rare, inclusion of a fact sheet is helpful. If any prescribed medications have side effects likely to impact on the student during the examination, this should be mentioned. If access to medication is requested during an examination, it must be supported here by the medical practitioner.

### Section F – Student and principal declarations

This section is essential and the form will not be processed without both signatures. (A non-school candidate will need only their own signature.)

If the school principal cannot agree to the full application, the relevant clause may be deleted and initialled or a note of explanation attached. The Authority is mindful of the need to make adequate arrangements for a student, without providing advantage.

## What happens next?

The case coordinator will receive email confirmation of the applications received. Receipt of the application will not be acknowledged until the application is ready for assessment. If the application is incomplete, it will be returned to the school or the case coordinator contacted prior to acknowledgement.

If essays have been submitted as part of the application, these will be sent to a specially trained assessor.

Applications will be sorted and assessed according to the category of disability.

Each application will be considered individually. Only complete applications will be assessed. If there is missing information, the application will be returned or held until all information is received. This can cause a significant delay in receiving a decision. If the requested information is not received within the specified timeframe, the application will be declined.

The case coordinator will receive an email notification when a decision is available from SIRS. The case coordinator must discuss the outcome with the student and ensure they understand the full



implications of the approved arrangements. It will also be their responsibility to inform students how to access their notifications and supporting documents from the student portal.

If the student does not agree with the special arrangements approved, they should discuss the matter with their case coordinator. The Authority is not able to discuss details of applications with parents or external contributors.

If the case coordinator at the school does not agree with the special arrangements approved, they should discuss the issue with the Principal Consultant – Special Provisions. If there is additional evidence to support a change of arrangements, the school may request a **review** of the application. There should be a valid reason why the additional evidence was **not** presented at the time of the application. This is not an open invitation to seek additional information from new sources, nor to object to the decision made for every unsuccessful application. The early deadline for applications is at the request of schools to allow students more time to adjust to any changes in their approved special arrangements.

If the school objects to the original decision made by the assessors, they may appeal the decision. The role of the independent appeals committee is to consider cases without additional evidence or requests falling outside special provisions policy. The decision of the appeals committee is final. Appeals should be submitted in writing (email is acceptable) to the Principal Consultant – Special Provisions by the date specified in the original email to schools.

The student will sit all school-based assessments under the approved conditions. It is essential that this occur immediately on receipt of the Authority's decision. Any delay in changing the conditions may cause disadvantage to the candidate.

Towards the end of Term 3 the student will download a *Personalised examination timetable* showing the centre at which each examination will be sat. This should be **checked carefully** on receipt. If there is any discrepancy between the centre appearing on the timetable and that specified in the approval notification this should be discussed **immediately** with the Principal Consultant – Special Provisions. Changes to examination centres or conditions cannot be made after the date specified on the application form. Candidates presenting at the wrong examination centre may not be able to receive their approved arrangements.

The ATAR course examination is sat under the approved conditions. Candidates should present their approval notification to the supervisor at the examination centre for each examination in addition to their *Personalised examination timetable*.

Students should **keep** their approval notification as it may be required when enrolling at TAFE, university or for the STAT test through TISC. It is recommended that students make copies to ensure the availability of the document for later purposes as the student portal will remain accessible for a limited period. Copies may not be available from the Authority at short notice.

## Frequently used tests

### Specific Learning Disorders

Note: appropriate tools should be chosen by the educational psychologist according to the student's suspected disability, age and weaknesses identified in prior testing. The following is a list of tests the Authority assessors most often see in supporting the case for a specific learning disability.

**Cognitive ability**

The preferred assessments are WISC V or WAIS IV. If alternative tests are used, such as WJ III, the results must be fully explained, and results be recorded on the summary table of page 5. Tests should be administered according to standard protocols. Where alternative sub-tests are used, their choice should be explained.

**Phonological processing**

CTOPP (Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing)

CELF-5 supplementary tests PA/RAN (Often done by a speech pathologist)

**Standardised achievement tests – in reading, written expression, spelling, handwriting, as needed****Reading**

TOWRE (Test of Word Reading Efficiency)

GORT 4 (Gray Oral Reading Test 4)

Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests – Revised

WIAT III (Wechsler Individual Achievement Test 2nd Edition)

YARC (York Assessment of Reading Comprehension)

**Written Expression**

OWLS (Oral and Written Language Scales)

WIAT III

TILLS (Test of Integrated Language and Literacy Skills)

**Spelling**

WIAT III

South Australian Spelling Test (revised)

Note: no special examination arrangements are provided for spelling difficulties.

**Handwriting**

Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH) or (DASH17+)

The Handwriting speed test (HST) by Wallen, Bonney & Lennox (Often done by an OT if the student also has a physical disability. Otherwise of limited use.)

**Developmental Coordination Disorder/Motor Dysgraphia**

Note: appropriate tools should be chosen by the occupational therapist according to the student's suspected disability, age and weaknesses identified in prior testing. The use of standardised assessments is recommended. The following is a list of tests the Authority assessors often see in supporting the case for a fine motor disorder. The choice of optional assessments will assist in identification, intervention and remediation of skill deficiencies.

**Essential**

Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting (DASH) or (DASH17+)

The Handwriting Speed Test (HST) by Wallen, Bonney & Lennox

Typing speed test (if requesting a computer)

Clinical Observations (Jean Ayres, 1972)

Samples of written work completed in class, preferably under timed conditions

**Optional**

The Beery-Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual Motor Integration – 6<sup>th</sup> Ed (VMI)

The Beery VMI Developmental Test of Visual Coordination – 6<sup>th</sup> Ed

The Developmental Test of Visual Perception – 6<sup>th</sup> Ed

Developmental Test of Visual Perception – 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed (DTVP-2) or (DTVP-A)

Test of Visual Perceptual Skills – 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed (TVPS-3)

Movement ABC-2 (MABC-2)

Bruininks-Oseretsky Test of Motor Proficiency – 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed (BOT-2)

Pain Scale

Jamar dynamometer

Pinch strength tests

## Language Disorder

Note: appropriate tools should be chosen by the speech pathologist according to the student's suspected disability, age and weaknesses identified in prior testing. The following is a list of tests the Authority assessors often see in supporting the case for a language disorder.

**Cognitive ability (assessed by a psychologist)**

The preferred assessments are WISC V or WAIS IV. If alternative tests are used, such as WJ III, the results must be fully explained, and results be recorded on the summary table of page 5. Tests should be administered according to standard protocols. Where alternative sub-tests are used, their choice should be explained.

**Language processing**

Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF) 5

Test of Integrated Language and Literacy Skills (TILLS)

## Mental Health Conditions

Note: appropriate tools should be chosen by the mental health practitioner according to the student's suspected disability, age and presentation identified in prior consultations. The following is a list of tests the Authority assessors might consider in supporting the case for diminished executive functioning that cannot be reasonably assisted by rest breaks. The evidence may include:

Results of a Developmental Neuropsychological Assessment (NEPSY) administered by a suitably qualified health professional (students aged 3–16); and/or

Results of a Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF) administered by a suitably qualified health professional (students aged 5–18); and/or

Evidence of student's decline in performance from the school providing student results or essays pre- and post- the onset of the mental health conditions; school observations and history of other provisions (specifically rest breaks) being trialled unsuccessfully for a reasonable period (usually six months).

## Guidelines for Sickness/Misadventure Provisions

Candidates who believe their performance may have been affected by a temporary sickness, non-permanent disability, or an unforeseen event occurring during or just before an examination, may apply for special consideration to be given to their examination marks.

In general, students should sit examinations if possible, although not against specific medical advice given within two weeks of the examination. Attendance at an examination will not prejudice any application. However, non-attendance at an examination where the sickness/misadventure claim is declined may have a detrimental impact on the student's achievement of the WACE requirements.

### Eligibility

Applications must relate to sickness or misadventure that occurred during the examinations, or up to two weeks before the commencement of the student's first written examination, and must have affected their performance in an examination or caused their non-attendance at an examination. For candidates undertaking practical performance examinations, such as Physical Education Studies or Dance, this includes a severe injury sustained after the start of Term 3, but still existing during the practical examinations. This will typically be for candidates who have completed at least the first semester of the course and for whom the school has a practical mark.

Submission of applications for sickness/misadventure consideration is a candidate responsibility.

Applications may be made in respect of:

- sickness or physical injuries suffered directly by the candidate, e.g. influenza, an asthma attack, or a lacerated hand
- accidents or other events beyond the candidate's control, e.g. the death of a close family member during the current year, significant disruption at the examination centre, or a faulty examination paper
- competing or umpiring in a recognised sport or cultural event at national or international level that conflicts with a practical examination only.

The provisions of the policy do not apply to:

- matters relating to long-term loss of preparation time and claimed inadequacies of teaching
- matters that could have been avoided by the candidate, e.g. misreading of the timetable
- long-term illnesses such as asthma, epilepsy and mental illness, unless there is evidence of an acute episode of the illness during the examination caused by an event not related to the examination (chronic illness itself will not be approved)
- long-term injuries or illnesses where the candidate was required to submit an application for a special format practical examination
- the same grounds for which special examination arrangements have been made, unless there is evidence of additional difficulties during an examination
- matters relating to the school assessment in a course
- attendance at a sporting or cultural event during written examinations
- adverse weather conditions during a Physical Education Studies practical examination
- non-school candidates.

## The application process

The application forms are available at the time of the ATAR course examinations from examination centres, the Authority's office and the Authority website.

The application form for sickness/misadventure consideration should be completed by the candidate and returned along with supporting documentation direct to the Authority by the published deadline, usually within one week of the last examination. Applications relating to a practical or oral examination that are initiated by an event unlikely to occur during the written examinations (e.g. a voice problem, car accident on the way to the examination, physical injury only affecting the practical performance) **must** be submitted immediately following the practical examination.

Candidates are responsible for the lodgement of their application to the Authority by the due date. Completed forms are **not** to be returned to schools or examination centres. Late applications and electronic applications cannot be accepted. Applications cannot be lodged on behalf of a student without the student's consent. The application is to include the candidate's personal details, list the examinations being requested for consideration, and give reasons for their application. Non-school candidates cannot make an application.

## Evidence

Candidates are responsible for providing evidence that identifies clearly the unexpected disadvantage they suffered at the time of attempting the examinations. Supporting evidence from a relevant independent source is acceptable, but it must include all details requested on the application form.

**Medical evidence:** For applications based on illness or injury, information is to be provided by a doctor or other registered health professional, not related to the candidate. For short-term illnesses it is advisable to seek medical evidence as close to the examination day as possible, preferably the day of or day before the examination.

Candidates with long term mental illness must demonstrate that ongoing management strategies of a previously well-controlled condition along with special examination provisions have unexpectedly failed to manage the condition, and that any acute episode is unrelated to the examination.

**Misadventure evidence:** Misadventure applications must be supported by a statement from a relevant person (e.g. mechanic, police officer) who is not related to the applicant. The psychological impact of a misadventure should be evident in the application.

## The Sickness/Misadventure Committee

In its composition, the committee takes into account gender balance and is to comprise representatives of the secondary education sectors and medical practitioners, as outlined below.

Chairperson	Nominated by the Executive Director
Manager – Examination logistics	School Curriculum and Standards Authority
Medical practitioner	Appointed by the Executive Director

Clinical psychologist	Appointed by the Executive Director
Department of Education	Nominated by the Director General
Non-government schools	Catholic Education WA or AISWA on a rotational basis
Executive officer	Principal Consultant – Special Provisions (non-voting)

## Procedures for assessment of applications

9. **Submission of applications.** The application form and supporting documentation is received by the executive officer for the committee. Late applications and electronic applications cannot be accepted.
10. **Categorisation of applications.** To facilitate equitable decision-making, the applications will be sorted by category. The forms are confidential and will be retained securely.
11. **Assessment by medical personnel.** The forms will initially be assessed within medical categories by medical personnel and be divided into two groups. Those that:
  - ‘read okay’ and clearly meet the guidelines and are recommended for approval by the sickness/misadventure committee, or
  - require ‘further consideration’ by the sickness/misadventure committee.
12. **Determination by committee.** Each application is considered on an examination-by-examination basis. It is possible that different determinations might be made for different examinations. All decisions will be evidence-based and use approved guidelines.
13. **Calculation of the derived examination mark.** For approved applications, this is done using the candidate’s moderated school assessment and a statistical process using a regression formula. The candidate is awarded the higher of the actual examination mark and the calculated mark. Practical and written marks are calculated separately.
14. **Informing of the outcome.** Notification will be via the student portal at the same time as the candidate’s results.
15. **Final Determination.** As a sickness/misadventure application is considered an appeal against a candidate’s performance, the decision of the committee is considered final. If applicants consider that there was a breach in the process followed by the committee, they can make a written statement to the Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards. Where the Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards does not endorse the decision made (s)he will establish a group comprising the Chair of the Board, another Board member, the relevant Executive Director and another individual with relevant expertise. The Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards will make a final determination. The candidate will be informed of the decision.