

# Frequently Asked Questions on Special Examination Arrangements for Students with Special Educational Needs

## (I) General matters

**Q 1: What guidelines has the Education Bureau (EDB) drawn up for schools in providing special examination arrangements (SEAs) for students with special educational needs (SEN)?**

A 1: When students with SEN manifest functional impairments, which substantially affect their ability to demonstrate the subject knowledge and skills they have mastered during examinations, schools should consider providing them with SEAs to ensure that they are equitably assessed. The Guide on *Special Arrangements for Internal Examinations for Students with Special Educational Needs* (SEA Guide), which elucidates the principles and points to note when providing SEAs for students with SEN, has been uploaded onto the EDB website:

[https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/guidelines/sea\\_guide\\_e.pdf](https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/guidelines/sea_guide_e.pdf)

**Q 2: How can one access information about application for SEAs for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination?**

A 2: Relevant information can be found on the website of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) *Providing Services to Candidates with Special Needs* under the HKDSE section

([https://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/Candidates/special\\_needs\\_candidates/hkdse.html](https://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/Candidates/special_needs_candidates/hkdse.html)), which includes:

- *Application Guide for SEAs*
  - *Frequently Asked Questions (SEAs)*
  - *Frequently Asked Questions (Application for SEAs)*
- *Information leaflet – Providing Services to Candidates with Special Needs*
- *Information leaflet – Providing Services to Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities*
- *HKDSE Handbook for Candidates – Section C: SEAs for Candidates with Special Needs*

## (II) School measures related to provision of SEAs

**Q 1: What SEAs can be provided by schools for students with SEN?**

A 1: In general, schools may consider providing SEAs to individual students with SEN according to their genuine needs, such as:

- Modifications in presentation format (e.g. enlarged question papers)
- Modifications in response format (e.g. allowing students to write answers on alternate

lines)

- Additional assistance in examination centres (e.g. prompting students to concentrate on answering questions)
- Extra time allowance
- Use of assistive aids (e.g. speech-to-text software / screen readers) etc.

Appropriate arrangements for the students are detailed in Chapter VI of the SEA Guide, which is available on the EDB website.

**Q 2: When formulating school-based examination policies, can schools choose to provide certain SEAs in light of their schools' specific circumstances?**

A 2: The EDB has provided schools with resources to cater for students with SEN, and schools are obliged to provide appropriate support, including SEAs, for these students. Generally speaking, schools should provide SEAs to students according to their needs, unless the arrangement will bring about unjustifiable hardship to the school or compromise the assessment objectives. If in doubt, schools may visit the website of the Equal Opportunities Commission on the *Disability Discrimination Ordinance – Code of Practice on Education*:

[https://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/Upload/cop/ddo/cop\\_edu\\_e.htm](https://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/Upload/cop/ddo/cop_edu_e.htm).

Concerning SEAs for individual students, schools may contact relevant professionals e.g. school-based educational psychologists, school-based speech therapists and occupational therapists, or consult inspectors of the Special Education Support Sections of the EDB.

**Q 3: Can schools provide alternate examination papers for individual students with SEN?**

A 3: Having regard to individual students' learning condition (e.g. when school has extensively tailored the curriculum for the students), schools may design examination papers that are easier so as to evaluate their learning progress more accurately. As alternate examination papers involve altering the assessment objectives and content, such arrangement is not applicable to the internal assessments for Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA). Schools should clearly explain the rationale to the parents concerned.

**Q 4: In internal examinations, can schools provide SEAs for students, which may not be applicable to the SSPA or the HKDSE Examination?**

A 4: In consideration of individual students' special conditions (e.g. the need to sustain their learning motivation or assess their learning progress under a tailored curriculum), schools may provide students with SEAs in internal examinations that may not be applicable to public examinations. Schools should facilitate parents and students to understand the principle and arrangements. Before students sit for public examination/assessments, schools should gradually adjust the modes of internal assessment accommodations so as to be close to those allowed in public examinations, so that students gradually get used to special arrangement in public examination.

**Q 5: For a student assessed as having SEN at lower primary level, is it necessary for him/her to undergo another assessment at upper primary level so that arrangements for assessment accommodation can be made in examinations for the SSPA (i.e. the three school-based assessments for the SSPA purpose)?**

A 5: Generally speaking, schools do not have to arrange another assessment for students at upper primary level to reconfirm their type of SEN. However, since the genuine support needs of the students may vary over time with the improvement made by the students and changes in examination requirements, schools are advised to review students' support needs, including the need for SEAs, on an annual basis. Special arrangement in internal assessment for the SSPA should be provided in accordance with the principles of fairness, impartiality, appropriateness and legitimacy.

**Q 6: A student was assessed as having the need for SEAs at lower primary level. After a review at upper primary level, he/she no longer shows the need for such arrangements. However, in view of some special circumstances, the school continues the provision of SEAs until the student completes primary education. When the student is promoted to secondary school, how should the primary school advise the secondary school on provision of SEAs?**

A 6: Basically, if a student no longer needs a particular SEA, the school can cease the provision. For example, a student with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) was given extra time allowance at lower primary level may no longer require the arrangement after receiving relevant training. A student with Dyslexia in need of the read aloud provision due to severe reading difficulties at lower primary level may later read the examination papers on his/her own, after having made significant improvement in reading ability. If the primary school continues to provide the SEA for individual students under special circumstances, they should help parents and students understand that such arrangement is transitional and inform the secondary school concerned. The primary school can specify the reasons for providing the transitional arrangement in the student's summary of learning and assessment support or related documents of school transition, so that the secondary school concerned can follow up and decide whether to continue such arrangement and/or when and how to stop the arrangement.

**Q 7: How should secondary schools follow up on the SEAs for their newly admitted Secondary One students, including special arrangements in the Pre-S1 Hong Kong Attainment Test (HKAT) and internal examinations?**

A 7: Primary schools will complete the proforma on *Special Arrangements for Students at Pre-S1 HKAT* for students with SEN and pass it to the parents concerned on or before the date of announcement of the SSPA results, so that parents can submit the proforma to the secondary schools allocated. In principle, secondary schools should refer to the primary schools' suggestions and provide the necessary SEAs for these students in the Pre-S1 HKAT wherever possible. For details, please refer to Appendix 8 (iii) of the *Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education (English Version)*. As for the students' SEAs in internal assessment after promoting to secondary education, the secondary schools should discuss with different stakeholders, evaluate the students' genuine needs and review such needs on a regular basis.

**Q 8: What actions should schools take if their views over the assessment accommodations for students are different from those of the parents’?**

A 8: Assessment accommodations are meant to meet the genuine needs of students with SEN and should be based on the consensus between the schools and parents. In deciding the SEAs required for individual students, schools should make reference to the views of various parties, including the recommendations/ reports from professionals, letters from doctors, observations and suggestions from the class teachers or subject teachers, opinions of the parents and the students etc. As the support needs of students will vary over time with their progress, schools are advised to review students’ needs on an annual basis.

Should parents disagree with the assessment accommodations proposed by the school, the school should understand the concerns of parents and explain to them the purpose of such arrangements, so as to clarify misunderstandings and dispel their worries. If parents insist that students do not need any assessment accommodations, their wish should be respected. The discussion outcomes and views of the parents should be kept on record as reference for future review of the student’s progress.

If the SEAs requested by parents would compromise the content or criteria of assessment, or do not match with the student’s genuine needs, the school should explain to the parents why such arrangements are not applicable, while reiterating the principles of fairness, impartiality, appropriateness and legitimacy in the provision of SEA. The school should keep the support needs of the student under regular review.

### **(III) Score calculation in relation to SEAs**

**Q 1: If schools provide dictation accommodation to individual students and hence exempt their dictation marks in the language papers, how should schools calculate the score for the subject concerned?**

A 1: If the dictation scores are exempted, schools should add up the total marks obtained by the students in all the remaining papers and then derive the total score of the language subject on a pro rata basis.

$$\frac{\text{Total marks obtained in the papers counted}}{\text{Full marks of the papers counted}} \times \text{Full marks of all papers}$$

For details of the suggested method for score calculation in case of exemption of a subject/paper, please refer to Chapter V of the SEA Guide. Students granted exemption from calculation of dictation marks may still take part in dictation to obtain learning experiences similar to those of their peers.

**Q 2: If schools provide accommodations in assessment for individual students and/or accommodation in dictation by exempting the calculation of dictation marks in the examinations for the SSPA, can schools indicate students' ranking on their report cards?**

A 2: When calculating the total score of a language paper, if schools have provided accommodation by exempting the calculation of dictation marks and derived a pro-rated score, the score of the students concerned should generally be comparable to those of their peers. In such cases, schools may continue to indicate the ranking of the students.

**Q 3: If students are provided with assessment accommodations or exempted from taking certain subject/paper in examinations (including alternate examination papers), are schools required to indicate these arrangements on students' report cards?**

A 3: For assessment accommodations such as extra time allowance and enlarged question papers which do not change the nature or content of assessment, schools do not have to indicate these assessment accommodations on the report cards.

If students are exempted from taking certain subject/paper in examinations or provided with alternate examination papers, schools should indicate these arrangements on the report cards so that parents and other stakeholders can have a clear picture of the subjects and papers attempted by the students. For instance, if schools have provided students with accommodation in dictation and exempted the calculation of dictation score from the total score of a language paper, the dictation score on the report cards could be left blank, indicating that no score is available. If students are exempted from taking examination of a major subject or its essential component, schools should make deliberate decision on whether it is appropriate to compare their scores with those of their peers, and to indicate their class/ grade ranking based on their examination results.

If individual students are provided with alternate examination papers, schools should explain to parents the rationale and details of the arrangement and obtain parents' prior approval. These records should be archived by the Student Support Team. Should schools consider exemption from calculation of scores when providing alternate examination papers, they may refer to relevant parts in Chapters V and VI of the SEA Guide.

#### **(IV) SEAs and review arrangements for students with Dyslexia (Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing)**

**Q 1: If a student displays satisfactory performance in the Chinese Language subject but notably weaker performance in the English Language subject, should an assessment of "English" Dyslexia be arranged for him/her?**

A 1: In academia, Dyslexia is commonly referred to the difficulty in learning one's first language. As such, assessment of Dyslexia is usually conducted in one's mother language. In Hong Kong, Chinese is adopted as the medium in the assessment of Dyslexia. If a student performs well in the Chinese Language subject but fails to catch up with his/her peers in learning the English Language, this may suggest that he/she has difficulty in

learning a foreign language. Such a case is not classified as Dyslexia. The school should provide the student with support in English learning to improve his/her performance in the subject, and consult the school-based educational psychologist if necessary to jointly devise appropriate support measures and review methods.

**Q 2: Students with Dyslexia are usually given extra time allowance in examinations. If teachers or parents hold the view that an individual student with Dyslexia does not need extra time allowance for the time being, can the school withhold the arrangement?**

A 2: Assessment accommodations are meant to meet the genuine needs of students. If a consensus has been reached between teachers and parents after discussion that the student can usually finish the examination papers within the standard time, school can withhold the provision of extra time allowance for the time being. However, the school should keep the discussion outcomes on record as reference for future review of the student's progress. Since the genuine support needs of students may vary over time with their progress and examination requirements, schools are advised to review the SEAs required for students on an annual basis.

**Q 3: If a student assessed as having Dyslexia at lower primary level is found to be comparable with his/her peers in terms of word reading and dictation in a subsequent assessment, should the school keep him/her on the list of students with support needs?**

A 3: It depends on the situation. The above scenario shows that the student concerned could have benefited from the support (including assessment accommodations) provided by the school. Some students with Dyslexia may show improvements in word reading and dictation, but they may still have difficulties with reading comprehension and composition.

Unless all stakeholders have unanimously agreed at the Student Support Team meeting that the student concerned no longer needs any support, the school and the parents should take into account the discussion outcomes to adjust the support measure, so as to help the student overcome difficulties in other aspects of language learning.

**Q 4: If the pre-school assessment reports of individual Primary One students indicate that they display “early signs of Dyslexia” or “weakness in dictation”, are schools required to provide accommodations for them in tests, examinations or dictation?**

A 4: Schools usually adopt a more flexible approach in assessing the learning performance of Primary One students so as to help them adapt to primary school life. Schools may, for example, read aloud questions to all Primary One students in examinations, use formative assessment instead of uniform tests, or arrange other learning activities as substitutes for dictation. It is not a must for schools to arrange accommodations for these students in tests, examinations or dictation. Instead, they can make appropriate arrangements according to the needs of individual students (including those who have not been assessed as having SEN). Schools should inform parents and students of the arrangements and the rationales, remind parents that such arrangement may be transitional, and keep students' need for SEAs under regular review. If subsequent assessment results indicate that the students concerned do not require such arrangements, schools should gradually adjust arrangements in line with those for examinations for the SSPA/ public examinations, so

that the students gradually get used to public examination requirements.

**Q 5: In examinations for the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA), what SEAs can schools provide for students with Dyslexia?**

A 5: The purpose of assessment accommodations is to provide students with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their learning outcomes. Accommodations should not alter the objectives, criteria, content and level of difficulty of assessment, or cause unfair advantage over other students, and should cater for the genuine needs of students. Schools could make these arrangements for students with Dyslexia in the examinations for the SSPA after reaching a consensus with parents. In general, accommodations that do not alter the assessment objectives and criteria, such as provision of special examination venue, special seating, short supervised breaks, enlarged print, answer sheets with wider line spacing or larger grids, and extra time allowance, can be adopted in the examinations for the SSPA according to the needs of individual students. For students with Dyslexia who have severe difficulties in reading, schools may, in consultation with educational psychologists, arrange to have the question papers read out to students, or allow them to ask for pronunciation of words or even use screen readers for reading question papers in examinations for the SSPA (only applicable to non-language papers, and in language papers, test instructions and the sections on writing and listening).

**Q 6: In examinations for the SSPA, can schools reduce the scope or adjust the difficulty level of the dictation content for students with Dyslexia?**

A 6: Accommodations, such as reducing the scope of dictation content, dictating only part of the chosen vocabulary or words that are easier, and adopting a different marking scheme for individual students, may help sustain students' learning motivation or consolidate the effectiveness of vocabulary learning. However, such arrangement is an alteration to the assessment criteria, objectives, content and level of difficulty, which makes it difficult to draw a fair and meaningful comparison between the scores of these students and their peers. Should these accommodations be adopted, it is more appropriate for schools to exempt the calculation of dictation marks from the subject scores.

**Q 7: Should examination papers be read out to all students with Dyslexia?**

A 7: No. Such an arrangement is only applicable to those students with Dyslexia who have been assessed with severe difficulties in reading. Schools can consult school-based educational psychologists about these students' need for SEAs.

**Q 8: How should examination papers be read out to the students with Dyslexia who are presented with severe difficulties in word reading?**

A 8: Schools should make this arrangement for students in need on condition that the assessment objectives and content would not be compromised. At present, for local public examinations, the students concerned can use screen readers to convert text to speech in designated papers. Since most of the primary school students may not be familiar with operating such software, schools can arrange teaching staff to read out the papers to

students, or allow students to ask for pronunciation of words instead.

Generally speaking, arrangements of reading out the papers/ using screen readers/ asking for pronunciation of words are applicable to non-language papers (such as Mathematics) and in language papers, test instructions and the sections on writing and listening. Read-out and related arrangements should not be adopted for papers that seek to test the abilities in reading comprehension, pinyin or pronunciation. If the test is intended for assessing students' reading ability, the usual practice is to read out the general instructions only but not the content of the passages in the papers, lest the assessment content and objectives would be affected. For those sections in a language paper that seek to test the abilities in writing and listening comprehension, read-out arrangement can be made for students with severe difficulties in word reading, as the assessment objectives are to test the abilities in writing and listening instead of reading. For details of read-out and related arrangements, please refer to Section 4 in Chapter IV and Section 8 in Chapter VI of the SEA Guide.

**Q 9: Can students with Dyslexia use computer instead of writing in examinations (not including speech-to-text software)?**

A 9: In general, for present local public examinations, the use of computer instead of writing is only applicable to students with severe difficulties in writing or whose handwriting is illegible. If schools and parents consider that such an arrangement may be necessary for the students, they are advised to refer the students to relevant professionals, such as occupational therapists, in a timely manner to ascertain whether the students require such an arrangement and which subjects are applicable.

**Q 10: Can students with Dyslexia use speech-to-text software in the HKDSE Examination?**

A 10: Candidates with Dyslexia who are assessed to have severe writing difficulties can apply for the use of speech-to-text software to input answers in the Citizenship and Social Development papers and elective subjects designated by the HKEAA in the HKDSE Examination. For details, please refer to the *HKDSE Application Guide for SEAs for Candidates with Special Needs*.

**Q 11: Can schools allow students with Dyslexia who are presented with severe difficulties in writing to use speech-to-text software to input answers at junior secondary level?**

A 11: Currently, students with Dyslexia who are presented with severe difficulties in writing are allowed to input answers by using speech-to-text software in designated subjects when they sit for the HKDSE Examination. Junior secondary students may use the software as an assistive device in learning but both students and parents should be reminded that its use in the HKDSE Examination is subject to re-assessment in the future.

**Q 12: Can schools allow students with Dyslexia who are presented with severe difficulties in writing to give verbal answers in examinations?**

A 12: Giving verbal instead of written answers in language papers basically alters the assessment criteria and objectives and is thus generally not applicable to examinations for the SSPA. Schools may consider allowing students with Dyslexia who are presented with severe



difficulties in writing to use speech-to-text software if necessary. However, since primary school students may not be familiar with operating the speech-to-text software, schools may, on account of special considerations (e.g. the need to encourage learning), allow students to give verbal answers, provided that this will not compromise the assessment objectives and content. If special arrangements not applicable to examinations for the SSPA/ public examinations are provided for individual students in internal examinations in light of their special circumstances under school-based policies, schools should refer to Q4 of this FAQ Section (II): School measures related to provision of SEAs.

**Q 13: How could schools prepare students to use speech-to-text software for answering in public examinations?**

A 13: Schools could provide students with the necessary facilities and sufficient training, and help them to practise using speech-to-text software in everyday learning and internal examinations, so that they can use it effectively for answering papers in public examinations. The EDB has distributed to secondary schools a CD-ROM on training students to use the Chinese speech-to-text software for reference. Schools may make use of it for providing relevant training for students in need. The EDB has also uploaded the “Training Programme on Using Speech-to-Text Software (STT)” on its SENSE website, to assist students in using speech-to-text software for learning support and assessment purposes. (website: <https://sense.edb.gov.hk/tc/types-of-special-educational-needs/specific-learning-difficulties/resources/teaching-resources/for-secondary-schools/42.html>)

**Q14: For Dyslexic students having severe difficulties in writing and at the same time having Speech and Language Difficulties, how can schools help them use the speech-to-text software more effectively?**

A14: The speech-to-text software only serves as an ancillary aid to students in presenting their answers, and students should note the limitations of using the software in examinations. The speech recognition of the software is not 100% accurate and the efficacy of the software will be affected by the speech and language abilities of the users (e.g. pronunciation and fluency).

If the speech and language difficulties of a student affect the speech-to-text software in recognising the verbal input of the student, the school may consult the school-based speech therapist to provide timely and appropriate training and suggestions for the student.

For senior secondary students with Dyslexia who are eligible for the use of speech-to-text software, schools should provide them with relevant training as soon as possible and allow them to use the software in everyday assignment and internal examinations, such that the students can have a more accurate understanding of the functions and limitations of the software and decide whether to use the software in the HKDSE Examination. The EDB has uploaded the “Training Programme on Using Speech-to-Text Software (STT)” on its SENSE website, to assist students in using speech-to-text software for learning support and assessment purposes. (website: <https://sense.edb.gov.hk/tc/types-of-special-educational-needs/specific-learning-difficulties/resources/teaching-resources/for-secondary-schools/42.html>)

**Q 15: Under what circumstances can schools apply for the Top-up Fund for procuring computer equipment with speech-to-text software?**

A 15: Schools should first flexibly deploy internal resources, including the Composite Furniture and Equipment Grant (CFEG), Operating Expenses Block Grant (OEBG)/ Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant (EOEBG) for aided schools, or the annual provision for government schools, to improve or procure the necessary equipment. For schools that have secured resources under the Top-up Fund for procurement of MacBook Air, they should make good use of the equipment available to support eligible school students. A fresh application is not recommended if there is already sufficient equipment. But schools may apply for the Top-up Fund if the resources available are insufficient for the procurement of equipment. For details of application, please refer to EDB Circular No. 8/2015. The Top-up Fund for Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools has been subsumed in the DSS unit subsidy, thus these schools do not have to make a separate application. Should there be any queries about the application for the Top-up Fund, schools may contact the Special Education Support 4 Section of the EDB on 2307 0265.

When applying for the Top-up Fund for the aforesaid purpose, schools should submit relevant documents to prove that their students are eligible to use Chinese speech-to-text software in the HKDSE Examination, including: (i) the acceptance letter for SEAs issued by the Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities of the HKEAA, or (ii) an assessment summary or report completed by a qualified educational/ clinical psychologist with professional practice training within four years prior to the public examination, with recommendation on the use of speech-to-text software as an SEA for designated subject(s) in the HKDSE Examination. (Note: The candidate must meet the eligibility criteria set by the HKEAA for the use of speech-to-text software in the HKDSE Examination.)

**Q 16: For a student assessed by an educational/ clinical psychologist and diagnosed with Dyslexia at the primary or junior secondary level, is it necessary for the student to be assessed again at senior secondary level for the purpose of applying for SEAs in HKDSE?**

A 16: It is required by the HKEAA that an assessment report, issued by an educational/ clinical psychologist with assessment conducted within four years prior to the public examination or not earlier than Secondary Three, should be submitted at the time of application for SEAs. The report should conclude whether the candidate is a case of Dyslexia and make recommendations on the need for and possible types of SEAs.

If an assessment report completed by an educational/ clinical psychologist within four years prior to the public examination is already available, and the information therein is still valid, the student concerned does not have to undergo another assessment when applying for SEAs. Otherwise, a review by an educational/ clinical psychologist is necessary for ascertaining his/her progress and support needs.

**Q 17: Why students previously assessed as having Dyslexia need to have their progress reviewed by an educational/ clinical psychologist when applying for SEAs in public**

## **examinations?**

A 17: Students' learning and support needs may vary with their own progress. Depending on the development of students' individual abilities and the progress made upon intervention, students previously assessed as having Dyslexia may have different support needs when they proceed to higher grades. Their need for accommodations in learning and assessment may change as well. Therefore, students with Dyslexia may need to have their progress reviewed by an educational/ clinical psychologist when they apply for SEAs in public examinations. The purpose of the review is not to redefine the SEN type of the students, but to evaluate their progress and support needs, including the need for learning and assessment accommodations. If the accommodations are applicable to public examinations, educational/ clinical psychologists will make recommendations accordingly, so as to help schools submit timely applications to the HKEAA.

**Q 18: When is the appropriate time for students to have their progress reviewed by an educational/ clinical psychologist if they need to apply to the HKEAA for SEAs?**

A 18: Since schools need to submit applications for SEAs for their Secondary Five HKDSE candidates at the beginning of the school year, they are advised to discuss with educational/ clinical psychologists well in advance and work out a suitable timetable for review of students' needs, so that parents, teachers and educational/ clinical psychologists will have sufficient time to gather adequate information and discuss students' progress. In general, if a student is assessed as having Dyslexia at primary level, a review in the school year of Secondary Three or Secondary Four can be considered.

**Q19: When students with Dyslexia apply for SEAs in public examination, do they have to submit the assessment reports that were issued at an earlier stage? Before transferring these reports, what should schools pay attention to?**

Q 19: Generally speaking, when schools submit applications for SEAs in HKDSE for students with Dyslexia, they have to submit to the HKEAA the assessment reports issued by educational/ clinical psychologists with assessment conducted within four years prior to the public examination or not earlier than Secondary 3. If the past assessment information (including assessment date, assessment tools, assessment findings and diagnosis, etc.) has been summarised in the above-mentioned reports, schools do not have to submit other reports that were issued at an earlier stage. In case schools have to submit previous assessment reports to the HKEAA owing to students' individual circumstances, consent from respective stakeholders should be obtained.

## **(V) SEAs for students with other types of SEN**

**Q 1: In general, what SEAs are needed for students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?**

A 1: Students with AD/HD may get distracted or have difficulty in sustaining attention when working on examination papers, while students with ASD may have certain special reactions triggered by their sensory sensitivity or their uneasiness in an unfamiliar

examination venue. As such, schools may, in general, consider arranging them a seat away from distractions, allowing them to have short supervised breaks or giving them timely prompts, such as a verbal reminder or a gentle tap on the desk, to help them stay focused. Moreover, as these students may have a poorer sense of time, it is desirable to remind students of the remaining time at regular intervals during an examination.

If the communication problems or rigid behaviour of a student with ASD is likely to affect his/her own performance or that of other group members in a group discussion, schools can arrange the student to have the group discussion with familiar classmates or non-candidates. Besides, as some students with ASD may misinterpret complicated cartoons or pictures in the questions and over-focus on the minor details, plain text label/ descriptions can be added to prevent them from giving irrelevant answers.

**Q 2: Are schools required to give all students with AD/HD or ASD extra time allowance in examinations?**

A 2: No. In general, arranging a seat away from distractions for students with AD/HD or ASD, allowing them to have short supervised breaks, or giving them timely prompts can appropriately reduce or remove the impact of their functional impairments in examinations. Schools should review how students avail themselves of these accommodations from time to time. If a student's performance in answering questions is persistently and notably affected by a slow working speed, the Student Support Team (SST) has to review the needs of the student in a more comprehensive manner. For example, the SST should find out whether the student was able to complete an examination paper within the time allowed in the past, compare the student's performance within normal and extended examination time, and collect teachers' observation about the performance of the student such as his/her ability to concentrate in class and his/her speed of completing classwork. The SST should also consult other relevant professionals, such as educational/ clinical psychologists, or occupational therapists (for students who display problems in fine motor coordination and control), and, on need basis, discuss with the student and his/her parents in the process to collect objective evidence of the student's needs. On the premise that the fairness of examination will not be compromised, consideration could be given to whether extra time allowance would be an appropriate arrangement.

**Q 3: If a school receives from a parent a psychiatrist's letter recommending that extra time allowance be given to a student with AD/HD or ASD, what actions should be taken?**

A 3: Before providing specific SEAs, the SST should take into account various information collectively, including the views of all stakeholders (e.g. teachers, parents and the student) and relevant professionals (e.g. educational/ clinical psychologists or occupational therapists) when necessary, the objectives of the examination and the fairness of the accommodations. If the student needs SEAs, the school should first consider arrangements that will not compromise the fairness of the examination, such as giving the student short supervised breaks or timely prompts. If such arrangements cannot effectively alleviate the impact on a student owing to his/her AD/HD or ASD, the

school should reconsider ways to enable the student's fair participation in examination, including whether extra time allowance in the examination should be considered. If needed, school-based educational psychologist can be consulted and objective evidence can be collected. The school should communicate with the parents in respect of the student's condition and keep the parents informed of various arrangements and the student's progress. In fact, the Application Guide issued by the HKEAA states that psychiatrists only need to issue diagnostic reports for students with AD/HD or ASD. Their suggestions for SEAs, if any, should be supported by evidence provided by the school as stated above when an application for the SEAs is made.

**Q 4: Can schools provide SEAs for students with mental illness (such as Anxiety Disorders and Depression) if necessary?**

A 4: Yes. There are many types of mental illness, each of which has different symptoms and shows problems in different aspects. To provide appropriate SEAs for the students concerned, the SST should consult relevant professionals (e.g. psychiatrists, educational/clinical psychologists), and understand the mental condition, thinking, social interaction, emotion and behaviour of the students with mental illness and their need for examination accommodations by different means, such as convening meetings to collect views of teachers, parents and students.

**Q 5: Can schools provide SEAs for students with limited intelligence?**

A 5: Students with limited intelligence normally need learning support from schools, including accommodations in learning and teaching. In determining the difficulty level of examination papers, schools will seek to cater for students' individual differences so that students with different levels of ability can take part in the assessment. Arrangements such as allowing extra time allowance or reading out examination papers are normally not effective in helping these students demonstrate their learning outcomes in tests or examinations. Yet if students with limited intelligence also have other SEN, such as Speech and Language Impairment or Developmental Coordination Disorder, schools should make appropriate SEAs for them according to their functional impairments.

If these students' academic performance is far behind peers of the same grade, schools may, under school-based policies and consideration of students' special circumstances (e.g. the need to sustain their learning motivation or to assess their learning progress upon curriculum adaptation), provide individual students with certain special arrangements in internal examinations that may not be applicable to examinations for the SSPA/ public examinations. Such arrangements may include designing alternate examination papers that are easier. Should such arrangements be necessary, schools may refer to this FAQ Q4 of Section (II): School measures related to provision of SEAs. Details of the arrangements should be clearly explained to parents.