



## **Summary of the Reasonable Accommodations to Certificate Exams (RACE) for students with Developmental Coordination Disorder / Dyspraxia**

Dr Dorothy Armstrong MSc PhD Occupational Therapist  
Achieve Occupational Therapy

Reasonable accommodations (RACE) are given to certain students sitting the state exams in order to enable them to achieve their potential, by alleviating the impact of a disability. The following summary is designed to help parents of students with Developmental Coordination Disorder (Dyspraxia) understand these guidelines. It is important for parents to be aware that the updated version of the RACE guidelines come with an addendum as this has confused many parents. As per the guidelines, and the addendum to those guidelines, reasonable accommodations for students with Developmental Coordination Disorder may now be applied for on the grounds of one of the following two routes:

- a) Physical Difficulty: includes students with dyspraxia/DCD or motor dysgraphia and the application is applied for under section 8.4 of the RACE guidelines
- b) Learning Difficulty (for students with a co-existing Specific Learning Disability such as Dyslexia - must meet the eligibility criteria as set out in Section 8.1 of the RACE guidelines)

(A physical difficulty is taken to include medical, sensory, mental health and behavioural difficulties as well as physical difficulties).

If your child is applying on the grounds of a Physical Difficulty, they may be eligible for the following accommodations:

- a) Standard word processor, voice activated word processor, or other writing accommodation (recording device or scribe)
- b) Helper in the practical examinations
- c) Use of drawing aids such as drafting machines, drawing boards, parallel motion boards and smaller drawing sheets in the subjects Technical Graphics, DCG, Construction Studies, Materials Technology (Wood) or Technology,
- d) Junior Certificate Home Economics only – exemption from the practical and/or project

If your child is applying on the grounds of the learning difficulty, they may be eligible for the following accommodations:

- a) A reader to read the examination papers, or to provide assistance with reading, without elaboration or explanation
- b) Word-processor or other writing accommodation (recording device or scribe)
- c) Waiver from the assessment of spelling, grammar and punctuation in language subjects

When an element or elements of an examination have been waived, so that the purpose of the examination regarding that element or elements has not been met, or the method of examining has been significantly altered, this will be indicated by the presence of an explanatory note on the candidate's Statement of Provisional Results and Certificate of Results. In approving accommodations for a candidate, the letter of decision will inform the candidate of the content of any such Explanatory note in relation to the subject(s) concerned.

### **Criteria for an application for RACE on the basis of a physical difficulty:**

For the purposes of the RACE Scheme, the physical category is taken to include medical, sensory and mental health difficulties; behavioural conditions as well as physical difficulties. The addendum to the guidelines clarifies the fact that accommodations for students with Developmental Coordination Disorder (Dyspraxia) can be granted under the physical difficulty category.

### **Application for use of a word processor on the basis of a physical difficulty:**

- The school will need evidence that the candidate is unable to write or effectively unable to write as a result of their disability. This evidence needs to come from professional/ medical reports and from samples of written work taken by the school.
- A candidate approved for the use of a Word Processor on physical difficulty grounds must have the spell-check and auto-correct turned off. Such candidates can still demonstrate proficiency in spelling, grammar, and punctuation, and accordingly no explanatory note will apply.

### **Application for use of a recording device on the basis of a physical difficulty:**

- The use of a Recording Device precludes the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements in any language subjects.
- The grades obtained by a candidate in any language subject taken by him/her will be accompanied by an explanatory note, which will read as follows; *“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and written punctuation elements” (This will apply in the case of English)*  
*“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except spelling and some grammatical elements” (This will apply in the case of all other language subjects)*

- The State Exams Commission (SEC) does not meet the costs associated with purchase or use of digital media (removable USBs; SD cards; CDs) or cassette tapes.

**Application for use of a scribe on the basis of a physical difficulty:**

- A candidate who is unable to write or effectively unable to write may be granted the assistance of a scribe where a physical difficulty combined with a speech difficulty makes the use of a Word Processor or Recording Device unsuitable.
- The use of a scribe may also be appropriate where a Word Processor or Recording Device would be impossible or very difficult in the case of a specific examination (e.g. Mathematics.)
- Access to a scribe will preclude the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements in any language subjects. Accordingly, the grades obtained by the candidate in any language subject will be accompanied by the same explanatory note as used in the case of the recording device

**Application for use of a helper for practical subjects on the basis of a physical difficulty:**

- Where a candidate is granted the assistance of a helper in the practical subject examinations, this person may carry out general 'housekeeping' type duties e.g. lifting and carrying utensils and equipment.
- The helper must not give factual help to the candidate or offer any suggestion regarding what has to be undertaken and must carry out instructions exactly as they are given unless to do so will cause a health and safety hazard.
- The helper is furthermore not permitted to carry out any task that is part of what is being assessed. For example, the helper may assist a candidate in clamping a piece of work, but may not assist them in applying any tool to the piece.

**Application for exemption from a practical test and/or project in Junior Certificate Home Economics on the basis of a physical difficulty:**

- In the Junior Certificate subject Home Economics, a candidate may be granted an exemption from the project; from the practical test; or from both. Depending on the exemption(s) granted, the grade obtained by a candidate in this subject will be accompanied by an explanatory note, or notes, as follows: *“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except the project element”* AND/OR *“all parts of the examination in this subject were assessed except the practical element”*
- Exemptions are not available from the practical components or projects in any other subject, nor are waivers from any of the practical elements within those components. Candidates who are not able to complete these will forfeit the relevant marks.

**Application for use of a Drawing Aids on the basis of a physical difficulty**

- Use of drafting machines, drawing boards, parallel motion boards and smaller drawing sheets can be approved in the subjects Technical Graphics, DCG, Construction Studies Materials Technology (Wood) and Technology.

### **Criteria for an application for RACE on the basis of a learning difficulty:**

*(This summary is targeted at accommodations for students with difficulties related to writing, please consult the RACE guidelines relating to 'readers' should you need more information in this area)*

Applications for assistive technology are different when applying under this route and this route is only applicable to students who have other difficulties co-existing with the physical problems inherent in Developmental Coordination Disorder (Dyspraxia) i.e. if they also have a learning difficulty such as Dyslexia. There is no longer a need for a psychological report in order to meet the 'learning difficulty' criteria of the RACE application process. All of the required testing to establish a 'learning difficulty' can be carried out in the school. The results from any attainment tests required (i.e. standardised tests in reading; spelling; writing speed) must be obtained within the 12 months prior to the date of application, if applying in this route but this does not apply for the physical disability route. The required counts of error rates in reading and spelling may only be obtained from assessments carried out by the school. Error rates from non-school sources can't be allowed to override the school's count of error rates when you are assessing eligibility in line with the 'learning difficulty' criteria.

### **Application for use of a word processor on the basis of a learning difficulty:**

In the case of a candidate whose ability to answer examination questions in writing is significantly impaired due to the speed of his or her writing, coupled with spelling, grammar and punctuation difficulties, the following criteria must be met:

- A standard score of 85 or less on an approved test of spelling

AND

- Spelling/grammar/punctuation error rate of 8% or more in scripts written in the language of the school under examination conditions

AND

- Speed of writing of less than 12 words per minute

### **Application for use of a scribe on the basis of a learning difficulty:**

- In general, the SEC expects that candidates approved for a writing accommodation will use either a word processor, or if this isn't possible, a recording device.
- In addition to being eligible for a writing accommodation by reference to the criteria, the RACE Scheme also requires that to be eligible for a Scribe there must be an impediment to the candidate making use of either a word processor or recording device i.e. that he or she also has a physical difficulty, such as motor difficulties

and/or a speech impediment, which renders the other writing accommodations unsuitable.

- It may also be the case that, for example, the use of a word processor has not proved feasible for the candidate in one or more specific subjects, in which case it may be appropriate to recommend the use of a scribe for those subjects and the use of a word processor in the remaining subjects.

## **General Guidelines to RACE for students with Developmental Coordination (Dyspraxia)**

One of the most helpful aspects of the new guidelines is that from this year on, accommodations that were provided at Junior Certificate will be provided again at Leaving Certificate subject to confirmation by the school authority of an identified and continuing need. The school will keep all reports and evidence of your child's disability /difficulties and these will be available for inspection by the State Exams Commission should they be required. Evidence of a student's eligibility for accommodations to exams will also include details of their history of support and intervention provided through their schooling e.g. learning support and resource hours. An Independent Appeals process will continue to be offered. Those unhappy with the outcome of the Appeal will have recourse to the offices of the Ombudsman or Ombudsman for Children.

### **Limitations on Using a Scribe in Certain Subjects**

In the Leaving Certificate subjects Technology, Engineering, Construction Studies and in Junior Certificate subjects Technology, Materials Technology (Wood) and Metalwork (Materials and Technology), candidates are only allowed to use the scribe for questions or parts of questions which require a written response. The scribe cannot under any circumstances produce sketches and/or drawings in any question in these examinations. Labelling and annotations are considered to be inherent parts of these diagrams and must also be the candidate's own unaided work. A scribe is not permitted in the subjects Leaving Certificate Design and Communications Graphics (DCG) or Junior Certificate Technical Graphics. In the subject Leaving Certificate Japanese, a scribe can be used only for questions to be answered in English or Irish and NOT for questions to be answered in Japanese.

### **Additional Time in exams**

Additional time in which to complete the written examinations (not to be confused with rest breaks) is not an accommodation that can be sanctioned in its own right under the RACE scheme. The following section describes the limited circumstances attached to the award of additional time in the examinations. Other than in Leaving Certificate Irish, English, History and Geography, additional time, at a rate of 10 extra minutes per scheduled hour, or part

thereof, of each examination paper, may be provided to candidates in the following circumstances:

- Candidates for whom the use of a scribe has been sanctioned - as there is a time overhead in dictation and otherwise in dealing with a scribe.
- Candidates who meet the eligibility criteria for the use of a recording device or a word processor but who are unable to make use of these aids under examination conditions.
- Candidates with a visual impairment.

Regardless of the circumstances or combination of circumstances, additional time is limited to a maximum of 10 minutes per scheduled hour, or part thereof, of examination to a maximum of 30 minutes per examination.

In the Leaving Certificate subjects Irish, English, History and Geography additional time is limited to 10 minutes per examination.

### **Rest Breaks**

Schools have discretion, to grant rest breaks or rest periods, not exceeding 20 minutes per examination, to candidates with physical and/or medical conditions. The following rules apply:

- Candidates are not permitted to read, write or complete any other examination related activity during the rest break — rest breaks do not represent additional time in which to complete the examination.
- Based on their needs candidates may take one or more rest breaks during each examination.
- The total of the rest break(s) granted by the school must not exceed 20 minutes per examination.
- The clock is effectively stopped and the time is added at the end of the examination.
- The candidate will be accommodated in the main examination centre and should only be in a special examination centre if that has been approved for another reason.
- Rest breaks must be supervised.

**Special Examinations Centre** – (doing the exam in a room in the school other than the larger room where the other students do the exams)

The SEC will only approve **individual** examination centres in very specific circumstances as follows:

- For candidates who are recording their answers (i.e. using a scribe or recording device).
- For candidates who need the full use of a reader (as opposed to reading assistance).
- For candidates who have a contagious medical condition.

All schools should establish a shared examination centre, or a small number of shared examination centres, to be used by candidates approved for reasonable accommodations for the following reasons:

- Use of a word processor or other aids.

- Approved use of a reader, but only requiring limited reading assistance (occasional words or phrases to be read to them); in this scenario, it will be possible for a small number of candidates requiring reading assistance to share a reader in a shared special centre established for this specific purpose.
- Non-disruptive emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- Non-contagious medical conditions.

**Accommodations that can be provided by the school without application to the SEC**

- Allowing the candidate to move within the centre.
- Use of a special desk or chair normally used in the classroom.