

Individual Exam Arrangements

Many students have recommendations for “individual exam arrangements” in their support plans. This guidance aims to advise those involved in implementing those recommendations.

Other guides that may be useful include:

Guidance for booking an amanuensis
Guidance for amanuensis
Guidance for students using an amanuensis
Guidance for readers
Invigilator Guidance (from Assessments Office)

These are available from the Equality and Diversity Website and Office

What do we mean by ‘exam’ here?

Individual Exam Arrangements are usually specific to written paper examinations taken in silence in a hall, often with a large number of students present.

Sometimes arrangements are recommended for additional types of exams, such as vivas, practical/clinical assessments, performances or assessed presentations. These will be made on individual support plans and are not included in this guidance which concentrates on formal written paper exams.

What type of arrangements might a student get?

Individual Exam arrangements depend on a student’s need and not all students with the same disability will need the same arrangements. It is the Adviser’s job to assess these needs on a case by case basis. Recommendations are made based on the reported student’s individual needs and from specialist or medical evidence.

Examples of arrangements may include (but not exclusively):

- Reader
- Amanuensis
- Marking provisions/Use of exam labels
- Rest breaks with the clock stopped (in general 10mins per hour)
- Modified exam papers – colour specified paper or language adjustments or different size font
- Seating requirements – cushioned chair or a specified position in the room
- Support to exit and return to exam following a health episode
- Extra time
- Specific instructions about time of exams
- Alternative room requirements

Whose responsibility is it?

An Adviser will meet and discuss the student's needs as part of the support plan process. Once arrangements have been agreed upon the Adviser will include these recommendations in a support plan and it will be distributed to the student's School and the Assessments Office.

Schools are responsible for informing students and making the arrangements for those with individual/separate rooms of venues for their exams, arranging scribes etc. The assessments office is responsible if the only arrangement is for extra time in the main venue.

Schools should not contact the student to enquire if they (the student) will still require the individual arrangements as recommended for them in the Student Support Plan or emergency examination memorandum. All exam recommendations should be put in place without the need for confirmation from the student that they will still require these arrangements.

The School should then send the student the arrangements via email or post. If a School tries to contact a student regarding confirmation of arrangements by phone, and the student is not reachable the school should always make the arrangements regardless and still send an email or postal copy of arrangements. This could be in a traditional exam timetable format or a clear and concise other format.

The school should always ensure that the student is sent the information via email or post, even if they have discussed it over the phone. Students are advised to check with their School if they have not heard about arrangements being implemented before the exam period. However, the School has the overall responsibility to ensure that students receive the relevant information about their exam arrangements.

See also the amanuensis guidance for details on booking an amanuensis.

What do the different individual arrangements mean?

Individual Room

If a student has been allocated an individual room and/or a reader the invigilator can also act as an amanuensis or reader – see invigilator and amanuensis/ reader guidance for further advice.

Students who might be recommended an individual room include (though not exclusively) students with a variety of mental health needs, dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties (SpLDs), concentration difficulties, or who require rest breaks for a medical condition.

Separate Room

A separate room will have a small number of students in it, all of whom have individual arrangements of some kind, usually extra time. Amanuenses or readers and rest breaks cannot be accommodated in these rooms; they must be given an individual room instead.

Students who may be recommended a separate room include (though not exclusively) those with mental health needs, SpLDs, or a medical condition which makes it difficult to take an exam in the main room but does not need complete isolation, and those with extra time who cannot work in the main hall.

Use of a Computer/Computer Suite

Ideally those who have been recommended a word processor or computer for typing answers should have an individual room. However arrangements can be made for students to be grouped together in a PC suite if a number of them require a word processor, so long as they do not require a reader or amanuensis as well. Students with and without PCs should not be mixed together in one room.

Computers used in exams can be a laptop or a desktop and generally should not be the student's own computer and should be approved by the University as suitably set up for an exam. On very rare occasions a student will need to use their own computer, and this will be specified in their student support plan. It should only have assistive technology in operation that has been recommended in the support plan, as described in the "exam arrangements" section. It should not be connected to the internet. The spell checker function must be switched off. Suitable exam laptops with assistive technology installed are available from the Equality and Diversity Office and should be booked in advance.

Once the exam is finished, the student's work should be saved (possibly to a USB pen drive or similar) and then printed out for submission. If appropriate a SpLD sticker can be added to the manuscript.

Main Hall

Some students will take their extra time in the main hall, with students who do not have individual arrangements. When the standard exam time finishes all students should be advised to put down their pens, including those with extra time, and then only those with no further time can be dismissed. Once the room has emptied of students without individual arrangements and is quiet again, the clock can be started and the extra time taken. An invigilator must remain present with these students until the end of the exam.

All students are required to remain in the exam hall for the first and last half hour of the time given. Students with extra time cannot leave during the extra time period. Students will be required to decide whether they wish to leave at the end of the standard exam period or continue and take up all of the extra time. If there is only one student with extra time in the room then the exam can stop at any time within the qualifying extra time. Likewise, if all the

students with extra time have finished writing before the extra time has expired the exam can be stopped. The invigilator must ensure that the students have all definitely finished so as not to end their extra time prematurely and disadvantage them.

Rest breaks

Rest breaks can be accommodated in an individual room only. Guidance suggests students should be given 10 minutes rest break per hour of the exam (including extra time). This can be used as needed, at any point in the exam, but is not a requirement. This time should not be used as a bulk break every hour (unless the student requests it). It can be split and taken throughout the exam whenever the student feels the need. The student will tell the invigilator when they would like to take their break. The invigilator should time the breaks the student is taking and should not allow more than the allocated time each hour.

When a rest break is taken, the clock must be stopped in the exam. Rest breaks should be timed by invigilators to ensure times are not exceeding the allocated recommendations.

If the student does not take any rest breaks through the first/second hour, these rest breaks have been lost; they should not be taken as extra breaks throughout the rest of the exam or added onto the end of the exam.

A reader or amanuensis can also stop at this time, but the invigilator must maintain exam conditions, with the clock stopped. If the student leaves the room for a toilet break, they should be accompanied in the usual way.

Is there any guidance for specific conditions or episodes?

Panic Attacks and/or Severe Anxiety

A panic attack is a severe attack of anxiety that can arise suddenly with little or no warning. The panic occurs in the absence of any real threat or danger, although intrinsically stressful situations, such as examinations, may increase the likelihood of a panic attack occurring.

People who experience panic attacks experience very real and frightening physical symptoms. They may have chest pain, may hyperventilate have numbness in hands and feet and may have feelings of detachment from reality. Panic attacks usually last only a few minutes, but some candidates may experience feelings of unease and fatigue for up to several hours after the attack.

A student may ask to leave the room at the onset of a panic attack; they will need to be accompanied by an invigilator.

What should you do if a candidate is having a panic attack?

- Remain calm
- Reassure the student

- Prevent others from crowding round
- Suggest they try to control their breathing on a regular count.
- Ask the student what strategies they normally use to control the attack.
- Once the panic has eased, ask the student if she/he feels well enough to continue their exam. If so, start the exam again in 30 minutes, thus giving the student time to prepare him/herself mentally. Please note that the student will require an additional 25% extra time in addition to any extra allocated time they may have if this happens. The additional 25% extra time as a result of panic attack/seizure should only be 25% of the remaining time left of the exam after the panic attack/seizure, not 25% of the total exam time.

Epilepsy

Most seizures happen with warning, last only a short time and stop without any special treatment. Injuries can occur, but most people do not come to any harm in a seizure and do not usually need to go to hospital or see a doctor. Most seizures stop of their own accord. Students may know the warning signs before a seizure and may ask to leave the room; they will need to be accompanied by an invigilator.

There are two main types of seizure;

Minor seizures

During a minor seizure the student may seem blank and will not be able to speak or answer questions normally. They may act in an odd way like chewing or smacking their lips, say odd unexpected things. Minor seizures may come on suddenly and last only a short time (a few minutes). When a student is having a seizure;

1. Stay Calm
2. Note the time of the seizure – if it lasts longer than 5 minutes call an ambulance
3. Prevent others from crowding around
4. Remember the student may be dazed when s/he comes around
5. Very rarely, the student may become agitated. If so do not obstruct the student - they're better left alone. Instead, wait nearby and observe closely, intervening only if necessary.
6. Ask the student if s/he feel well enough to continue their exam. If so, start the exam again in 30 minutes, thus giving the student time to prepare him/herself mentally. Please note that the student will require an additional 25% extra time in addition to any extra allocated time they may have if this happens. The additional 25% extra time as a result of panic attack/seizure should only be 25% of the remaining time left of the exam after the panic attack/seizure, not 25% of the total exam time.

Major Seizures

During a convulsive seizure (where the person jerks or shakes) it helps to put something under their head to protect it. When a student is having a seizure;

1. Stay calm.
2. Note the time of the seizure – if it lasts longer than 5 minutes call an ambulance
3. Prevent others from crowding round.
4. If the student is lying down, put something soft under the student's head - like a jacket or cardigan - to prevent injury.
5. Move things away from student if there is a risk of injury e.g. desk and chair
6. Once the seizure is over stay with the student giving reassurance until s/he has fully recovered. Do not offer them a drink unless you are sure they are fully recovered.
7. Ask the student if s/he feel well enough to continue their exam. If so, start the exam again in 30 minutes, thus giving the student time to prepare him/herself mentally. Please note that the student will require an additional 25% extra time in addition to any extra allocated time they may have if this happens. The additional 25% extra time as a result of panic attack/seizure should only be 25% of the remaining time left of the exam after the panic attack/seizure, not 25% of the total exam time.
8. When a person has a convulsive seizure it is possible that their regular breathing pattern will be affected and they may go blue. Although this can be frightening to witness, it does not usually mean it is a medical emergency, unless the person has completely stopped breathing. If the student stops breathing then a first aider and the ambulance should be called. Also, if the seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes, even if the student is breathing, an ambulance should be called.

In all cases

Please do not try and stop the seizure.

Do not call for an ambulance unless the seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes

Some students will have specific requests for the support they require when having a seizure. Schools should make sure that Invigilators are aware of these.

What other types of exams might arrangements be recommended for?

Some students also have alternative assessments that require individual arrangements. For example, students on practical or vocational courses, such as nursing or a health care profession course have clinical skills assessments and some courses include a viva or Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). If individual arrangements are required for these assessments, the Adviser will include separate specific arrangements for these in the student support plan and/or will include the recommendation that the same arrangements should be made for "in class or informal assessments."

Invigilator guidance

Invigilators should be provided with a list of individual exam recommendations for their exam session so that they are aware of any student in the exam who has individual needs. This information should be provided by the assessments office if the student is sitting in the main venue or by the School if the student is in a separate/individual room. It is the invigilator's responsibility to ensure that all recommendations are supported in the exam for each student, e.g. a student must not be refused a rest break if s/he has not used up the allocated time allowed for that hour.

Exam memos are issued to students and Schools by the Equality and Diversity Office. These are used when exam arrangements are required but have only been identified close to the exam date, so a support plan has not been distributed yet. The most common arrangement stipulated on an exam memo is extra time. Students are told to bring their exam memo (stating extra time) to their exam and show to the invigilator. The invigilator must ensure the student is given the extra time stated on the memo, unless there is a very good reason not to, and the Assessments Office should be contacted to discuss this before the decision is taken not to allow the extra time. If the arrangement cannot be put in place, the invigilator should note this, and the student may wish to submit a PMC form claiming for 'standard of performance'.

Students will be informed by the Equality and Diversity Office that it may be difficult to implement any additional recommendations, other than extra time, such as room requirements or use of a word processor, very close to an exam.

Invigilators are expected to respect that the student's needs have been assessed by their Adviser, deemed appropriate for the student, and therefore must be implemented to best of their ability.

Invigilators should not publicly identify a student's disabilities, if known, as they may not have disclosed this to other people present.