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To: Deputy Director-Generals, Chief Directors, Directors (Head Office and district offices), Deputy Directors, Chief Education Specialists, Circuit Managers, Manager: Learning Support, Manager: Curriculum Support, Heads: IMG Coordination and Advice, Senior Psychologists, Learning Support Coordinators, Psychologists, Learning Support Advisers, Curriculum Advisers, Deputy Chief Education Specialists, Assessment Coordinators and principals

Short summary: *This circular provides guidance on the process that schools must follow to apply for their learners who qualify for assessment accommodations regarding barriers to learning and/or immigrant status requests for assessment purposes.*

**Subject: Management of assessment accommodations for learners who experience barriers to learning and assessment: Grades R – 12 and for learners who request immigrant status for assessment purposes: Grades 4 – 12**

1. This circular must be read in conjunction with the *National Policy pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination* published as Government Notices 372 and 373 in Government Gazette, Vol 587 No 37652, dated 16 May 2014.
2. Learners in need of assessment accommodations during an assessment or examination should be identified as early as possible so as to ensure that the learner is not disadvantaged in terms of teaching and learning.

### 3. **Eligibility for assessment accommodations**

#### 3.1 Learners who are eligible for assessment accommodations:

3.1.1 Those who experience barriers to learning arising from a disability, learning difficulty, learning disability, or behaviour and/or psycho-social disorder which prevent them from achieving according to their potential during assessment.

3.1.2 Learners who, during the assessment or examination period experience medical, social or emotional challenges and who have addressed a direct submission to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED).

#### 3.2 Assessment accommodations will not be granted:

3.2.1 where the primary area of difficulty is with the language of learning, teaching and assessment due to the fact that the said language is not the home language of the learner;

3.2.2 to enhance scholastic performance; or

3.2.3 where there is no record of any School-based Support Team (SBST) support previously provided.

3.3 The determination of learners who are eligible for assessment accommodations must be identified as early as the Foundation Phase or at least by the end of March of their Grade 10 year, except in a situation where an emergency or specific need is manifested at a later stage.

3.4 As a learner's assessment accommodation needs may change over time, the assessment accommodation must be progressively re-evaluated at the beginning of each new phase.

3.5 If an assessment accommodation is not approved by the District Assessment Accommodations Committee, the SBST may lodge an appeal within two months of receipt of the original decision. Only the original application will be considered on appeal. No additional information will be considered. The WCED reserves the right to request further assessment from the District-based Support Team (DBST) or SBST.

3.6 The barrier experienced and the assessment accommodation granted must be clearly indicated on the learner's application form and must be entered on the Central Education Management Information System (CEMIS) by the school.

#### 4. Various barriers to learning that may require assessment accommodations

##### 4.1 Sensory impairments

4.1.1 **Visual impairment** which includes blindness and partial sightedness or low vision requiring the adaptation of content, adaptation of the format of the assessment as well as the need for assistive technology. Colour blindness may pose a barrier that needs to be addressed through assessment accommodations in this category.

4.1.2 **Deaf and hard of hearing** which can be measured on a continuum of intensity and can present barriers in terms of the acquisition of both receptive as well as expressive language competencies.

(a) In the case of **deaf learners**, their first language may be South African Sign Language and assessment accommodations can be provided for the mode of examination as well as for certain adaptations in structure and content.

(b) In the case of learners who are **hard of hearing**, depending on the extent of hearing loss, assessment accommodations should make provision for both the mode of examination as well as for differentiated structure and content.

4.1.3 **Deaf-blindness** is a condition in which the combination of hearing and visual loss in learners could cause severe communication and other developmental and educational needs. The assessment accommodations for these learners must be determined on an individual basis and should include multiple approaches of intervention and support.

4.2 **Physical impairments** may result in barriers to assessment because of impaired functioning of the hands, arms, legs, upper body and/or neck.

4.3 **Speech or communication impairments** which involve the inability to speak and difficulty in expressing themselves can create barriers for some learners with physical sensory disabilities. Aphasia is such a condition which can impair both receptive and expressive speech. Assessment accommodations need to be applied in oral assessments.

4.4 **Learning difficulties** refer to a range of barriers experienced in receiving, processing, expressing or retrieving information, any of which may affect the person's ability to function effectively in one or more areas (such as understanding, interpreting, transferring knowledge or skills, receptive or expressive language, spelling, grammar, following directions, spatial relations, numbers, etc.).

- 4.5 **Difficulty with expressing own knowledge in written form, in particular difficulty with spelling and/or grammar**, can present itself in various degrees but may be such that it is almost impossible to evaluate the learner's written work. Difficulties may involve spelling which is so poor that it is impossible for the assessor to understand the work presented by the learner or the learner may express him/herself by using phonetic spelling (particularly in English), which, however, can still be deciphered. These learners include those who have been diagnosed with dyslexia.
- 4.6 **Difficulty with numbers and numerical concepts**, which manifests as Mathematics anxiety or dyscalculia, is a dysfunction in the reception, comprehension, or production of quantitative and spatial information.
- 4.7 **Behavioural and psycho-social disorders** can become barriers during assessment when they have been diagnosed as either mild or severe behavioural or psycho-social disorders, where the learner needs support to mediate the barriers that they experience during assessment. These difficulties may be temporary (e.g. responding to a recent traumatic experience) or long-term. Learners on prescribed medication may be affected by drowsiness, thirst, visual and/or co-ordination difficulties.
- 4.8 **Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders** are conditions where learners may become disorientated during assessment and/or examinations, thus preventing them from answering the question paper to the best of their ability. Assessment accommodations include assistance with either planning or through consistent encouragement and monitoring to prevent the learner from giving up and handing in incomplete assessment work or examination scripts.
- 4.9 **Psychological/Psychosocial/Psychiatric Disorder** (e.g. Anxiety and Depression) may need assessment accommodations.
- 4.10 **Specific medical conditions** may also require differentiation or assessment accommodations, for example severe diabetes, epilepsy, chronic pain, back injury and HIV/AIDS.

## 5. **Mechanisms for assessment accommodations**

- 5.1 Refer to the *National Policy pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination* published as Government Notices 372 and 373 in Government Gazette, Vol 587 No 37652, dated 16 May 2014, regarding the mechanisms for differentiation and/or assessment accommodations.
- 5.2 **Annexure A** provides a summary of the options that can be available at the discretion of the WCED, depending on the severity of a barrier.

## 6. **Endorsed National Senior Certificate for Special Needs Education**

- 6.1 Grades 10 to 12 learners who experience barriers to learning are allowed to follow one of two learning pathways with the aim of achieving a qualification. These are:
- (a) the National Senior Certificate (NSC) as stipulated in the NSC policy document; or
  - (b) a NSC with an endorsement, which is for learners who despite assessment accommodations cannot meet the stipulated requirements of the NSC.
- 6.2 A learner wishing to be considered for alternative promotion requirements must register both as:
- (a) a learner with a barrier to learning; and
  - (b) a learner offering the NSC with an endorsement.
- 6.3 A learner registered in terms of paragraph 6.1 (b), above, must offer and complete the internal and external assessments of not fewer than five (5) subjects including:
- (a) One official language from Group A (NSC policy document), provided that it is offered on at least First Additional Language level, and provided that the language is the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT).
  - (b) Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy, from Group A.
  - (c) Life Orientation, from Group A.
  - (d) A minimum of two (2) subjects selected from Group B, or two (2) official languages from Group A.
- 6.4 A NSC with an endorsement shall be issued to learners registered in terms of paragraph 6.3, above, provided that they comply with the following promotion requirements:
- (a) At least 30% in the required official language at either Home Language or First Additional Language level.
  - (b) A minimum of 30% in four (4) other subjects.
- 6.5 Should a learner with special education needs register for a NSC and fail the NSC in terms of the promotion requirements, the learner may request to have his/her qualification re-evaluated. The request should be related to the disability and be made to the Director: Examinations Administration within 12 months of writing the NSC examination.
- 6.6 The candidates should be flagged on CEMIS as Endorsed National Senior Certificate candidates by the school after approval from the assessment Co-ordinator.

## 7. **Immigrants (for assessment purposes)**

7.1 An immigrant learner is:

7.1.1 a child or a dependent of a diplomatic representative of a foreign government accredited in South Africa; or

7.1.2 a person who:

(a) first enrolled at and entered a South African school in Grade 7 or a more senior grade; or

(b) began his or her schooling at a school in South Africa, then attended a school outside South Africa for two or more consecutive years after Grade 3 or its equivalent, and subsequently returned to South Africa.

7.2 A learner applying for an assessment accommodation as an immigrant learner must be in possession of:

7.2.1 the relevant official documentation (e.g. study permit) issued by the Department of Home Affairs; and

7.2.2 the relevant official documentation issued by the school where the learner entered the South African school system for the first time.

7.3 Learners approved as immigrant learners must be flagged on CEMIS by the school after approval by the assessment co-ordinator.

## 8. **Responsibilities and processes**

8.1 The principal of the school is responsible for the overall management of support for learners in need of assessment accommodations.

8.2 Assessment accommodation support should be introduced as early as possible in the learner's school career and **not** only during end of year examinations or the Grade 12 year.

8.3 The school is responsible for screening and identifying learners, completing application forms, attaching all the relevant supporting documents, forwarding the documentation to the relevant district office, capturing the application electronically and implementing the decision of the district office.

## 9. **Process for applications for assessment accommodations in Grades R - 9 from 2016 onwards**

9.1 Schools should screen learners and the SBST should identify those who may require assessment accommodations.

- 9.2 The SBST must apply to their district office regarding assessment accommodations for learners with barriers/immigrants. All supporting documentation must be provided during this engagement with the district office.
- 9.3 Once all supporting documentation has been received, the district will open the assessment accommodations system for the school to capture their application on CEMIS.
- 9.4 The application will be reviewed by the DBST who will make a final decision.
- 9.5 The final decision from the DBST will be communicated to schools via email.
- 9.6 Approved assessment accommodation letters will be posted on CEMIS.

## 10. **Process for Grades 10 - 12 from 2016 onwards**

- 10.1 From 2016, the process for application for assessment accommodations in Grades 10 - 12 will be the same as for Grades 1 to 9 in all schools, except that the district will communicate their decision to a Provincial Assessment Accommodations Committee for quality assurance purposes. Please note that applications for Grades 10 - 12 assessment accommodations must be received by the district and then captured on CEMIS by the school by the end of Term 1.
- 10.2 The DBST will evaluate the application by end of May while the Provincial Assessment Accommodations Committee will verify and sign off all Grades 10 - 12 applications by end July.
- 10.3 Once applications have been verified, the school will be informed via email by the Directorate: Examinations Administration.
- 10.4 Formally approved assessment accommodation letters will be posted on CEMIS.
- 10.5 Applications for emergencies that occur after the end of July (e.g. candidates with a hand fracture who require a scribe) must be sent to Head Office, Directorate: Examinations Administration who will refer it to the Manager: Learning Support at the district office for evaluation and approval. Verification will be done by the Director: Examinations Administration and letters will be emailed to the school and placed on CEMIS.

## 11. **Scribes/readers and amanuenses**

- 11.1 District offices must identify a panel of scribes and readers or any other persons required to assist learners during the assessment and examinations. The details of this panel must be sent to Head Office.

- 11.2 The Directorate: Inclusive and Specialised Education Support at Head Office must ensure that the panel of readers and scribes are trained prior to the writing of the examinations.
- 11.3 A recording must be made when assessments are written by scribes or amanuenses for all learners.
12. Principals are requested to provide a copy of this circular to all Grades R to 12 coordinators/grade heads and teachers.

**SIGNED:** PA VINJEVOLD  
**HEAD: EDUCATION**  
**DATE:** 2016-04-19