

Research and Information Services

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The Use of Extra Time as an Assessment Arrangement for Disabled Candidates and/or those with Additional Support Needs

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Introduction

This paper outlines the findings from work carried out into the use of extra time by candidates with additional support needs.

Recent legislation makes explicit the duty of organisations, such as SQA, to promote equality for disabled people. Furthermore, we had received correspondence claiming that our policy relating to assessment arrangements and, in particular, that of allowing extra time for disabled candidates or those with additional support needs, could be seen to give an advantage over other candidates. While we are obliged under the Disability Discrimination Act to ensure we make adequate arrangements for disabled candidates, it seemed worthwhile exploring the extent to which this arrangement was being used. This is why this paper focuses on the use of extra time rather than other assessment arrangements.

This paper explores two issues:

- ◆ How is SQA policy about extra time in external examinations put into practice?
- ◆ How does practice in Scotland compare with that of the other countries in the UK?

In order to examine how well SQA guidance is understood and applied, we intended to analyse all requests for additional support to find out how often, when, and why additional time is requested, relative to other possible adjustments. We wanted to look, in particular, at whether this differs across subjects, but robust data analysis by subject was not possible because of inconsistencies in the recording of time used. We also asked invigilators to record the actual amount of time used by candidates who had been granted extra time.

Use of extra time

In 2007, there were 42,194 requests for assessment arrangements from 11,400 candidates. Of these, 33,285 (79%) requested the use of extra time. (See Appendix 1 for assessment arrangements data in full.)

The requests for, and the use of extra time were monitored and analysed for 2006 and 2007. In 2007, almost all requests (94%) had an allowance of 25% extra time, with the remaining being granted 33%. Of the requests for extra time which had been granted, 61% had not used any at all, while only 0.1% used their full allocation.

	2006	2007
Requests		
Requests receiving 25% extra time	93%	94%
Requests receiving 33% extra time	7%	6%
Use*		
Approved requests using none of the time granted	73%	61%
Approved requests using all of the time granted	4%	0.1%
No report or absent	3%	10%

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because some candidates used some of their approved extra time.

One issue that requires further exploration is the extent to which extra time is not used, despite being requested. Understanding why this happens could help to inform future policies.

There is ad hoc evidence suggesting that the granting of extra time can be sufficient reassurance for candidates (for whom extra time has been granted) to complete their assessments in normal time. However, other anecdotal evidence suggests that some candidates who have been given extra time to complete their assessments do not want to be stigmatised, or be seen as different from their peers, by taking up their allocation.

Comparisons with Other Countries in the UK

Examining bodies and centres in England, Wales and Northern Ireland provide extra time for candidates with additional support needs according to regulations published by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) — *Regulation and Guidance Relating to Candidates who are Eligible for Adjustments in Examinations*. These regulations cover GCSE, GCE, GNVQ, AEA, Entry Level, Basic Skills, and Key Skills examinations and apply to all awarding bodies.

The main difference between these regulations and SQA's is that JCQ awarding bodies allow the head of a centre to arrange up to 25% extra time for candidates without having to seek permission from the awarding body. The regulations set out a number of conditions under which this use is granted. The centre also needs to register every candidate using access arrangements. Further, the awarding body can grant up to 100% extra time. This decision is based on the individual circumstances of the candidate.

The differences in approaches between Scotland and the rest of the UK, then, are mainly administrative. The concept of allowing extra time for some candidates is generally supported and endorsed by awarding bodies in the UK.

Appendix 2 includes JCQ's criteria for granting extra time.

Recommendations

SQA should consider exploring these findings, in liaison with Guidance and Support Teachers in centres, with a view to learning more about centre and candidate perceptions and uses of the facility of extra time.

However, SQA should not consider making any changes to current arrangements. As far as it is possible to tell at present, our current arrangements strike a balance between individual needs and wider considerations of fairness.

Appendix 1: Assessment arrangements

The total number of assessment arrangement requests for the 2007 diet was 42,194 submitted on behalf of 11,400 candidates. This represents an increase in candidates (7%), but a decrease in the total number of requests (-3%) on the previous year. Compare this to the overall entries for National Qualifications in 2007, where there was an increase in candidates (4%) and an increase in entries (3%).

Year	Number of candidates submitting requests	Number of requests
2005	9,814	41,454
2006	10,650	43,291
2007	11,400	42,194

The profile of requests by level is broadly the same as for previous years. More than half of the requests came from Standard Grade candidates. However, this proportion has continued to drop over the past few years. On the other hand, Intermediate 1 requests as a proportion of all requests have increased. This mirrors the changing profile of overall entry numbers where some centres are replacing Standard Grades with Intermediate qualifications.

Level	Requests as a percentage of all requests		
	2005	2006	2007
Standard Grade	57.9%	56.6%	55.4%
Intermediate 1	8.2%	9.2%	10.2%
Intermediate 2	13.1%	13.4%	13.7%
Higher	19.0%	19.0%	18.9%
Advanced Higher	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%

The proportions of requests from Intermediate 2, Higher, and Advanced Higher candidates have remained comparatively stable.

	Requests as a percentage of all (pre-appeal) entries		
Level	2005	2006	2007
Standard Grade	5.8%	5.9%	5.8%
Intermediate 1	9.3%	8.9%	8.0%
Intermediate 2	6.2%	6.2%	5.4%
Higher	4.8%	5.2%	5.0%
Advanced Higher	4.1%	4.3%	4.2%

At both Intermediate levels, the proportion of requests has fallen from 2006. These two levels are where there has been the greatest increase in overall entries. At Standard Grade, Higher, and Advanced Higher, there has been little change.

Standard Grade is the level with most requests from candidates for assessment arrangements. This is to be expected as candidates generally present at more subjects at Standard Grade than at other levels. As the table below shows, the numbers of requests per candidate have remained stable.

	Requests per candidate		
Level	2005	2006	2007
Standard Grade	4.7	4.4	4.0
Intermediate 1	1.4	1.4	1.4
Intermediate 2	1.8	1.8	1.8
Higher	2.5	2.4	2.3
Advanced Higher	1.5	1.5	1.5

The table below shows the principal reasons for requesting assessment arrangements in 2007. As with previous years, the vast majority of requests are submitted because of specific learning difficulties including dyslexia and dyspraxia. At all levels, this accounts for between 57% and 71% of all requests.

Requests by difficulty as a percentage of total requests, 2007					
Main reason	Standard Grade	Intermediate 1	Intermediate 2	Higher	Advanced Higher
Specific learning difficulties	60.2%	57.1%	64.2%	64.1%	71.2%
General learning difficulties	12.2%	14.3%	7.7%	5.7%	4.0%
Medical condition	5.5%	5.0%	6.0%	8.5%	7.7%

The most commonly requested arrangements in 2007 were for extra time (79%) of all requests) and separate accommodation (60%).

Arrangements as a percentage of total requests, 2007					
Arrangement	Standard Grade	Intermediate 1	Intermediate 2	Higher	Advanced Higher
Extra time	74.8%	78.1%	83.9%	86.7%	87.2%
Separate accommodation	67.3%	72.3%	52.3%	42.0%	31.6%
Scribe	39.7%	44.9%	27.3%	15.9%	7.9%
Reader	45.7%	53.3%	30.0%	17.0%	8.5%
Use of ICT	6.1%	4.9%	11.6%	14.0%	18.1%

Appendix 2: JCQ Criteria

2.1 Extra time

2.1.1 Up to 25% extra time may be agreed by the centre. If a centre feels, however, that more than 25% extra time is necessary and such an arrangement reflects the candidate's normal way of working, they should seek advice from the awarding body at the beginning of the course. Awarding bodies will not normally permit the examination to run for more than 100% extra time. The head of centre must be satisfied that the candidate is medically fit to take a prolonged examination. More than 25% extra time may be permitted at the discretion of the awarding body and can be applied for in the following circumstances.

- ◆ The candidate is eligible for reading or writing assistance but requires more time in a subject testing reading or writing, where such assistance might not be permitted;
- ◆ The candidate has below average speed of processing;
- ◆ The candidate is applying for a reasonable adjustment under the terms of the DDA 1995.

Supervised rest periods are not counted in the time allowance.

2.1.2 Extra time will not be permitted in examinations testing the time in which a practical skill is performed, such as keyboarding, sports, musical performance, or expressive arts, where the timing may be a crucial part of the assessment.

Examples of how Access Arrangements for extra time would apply

- ◆ A candidate was diagnosed as mildly dyslexic in Y7. He has made good progress with his reading and writing, which are now within the normal range for his age. He does make spelling mistakes, but these are minor and do not affect the ability of the examiner to read and understand his scripts. He is allowed 10% extra time in written papers (but not multiple choice papers) to allow for any residual difficulties.
- ◆ A candidate has a moderate dyslexic condition affecting speed of processing. She may be allowed up to a maximum of 25% extra time, depending on her need, to finish writing her papers.
- ◆ A candidate has substantial learning disabilities. He is permitted up to a maximum of 25% extra time, depending on his need, in his History examinations. He is also entered for Drama. He cannot have extra time in the performance, where the group has to perform according to the script. He can have extra time in the Drama written papers.
- ◆ A candidate has severe cerebral palsy. He manages multiple-choice papers within the maximum 25% extra time, which his centre may agree. He cannot word process History answers in that amount of time and is permitted up to 50% extra time for those papers.

- ◆ A blind candidate is using braille papers. There is a great deal of text to read in History and there are many diagrams and tables in Science. She is permitted 100% extra time to complete her examinations in these subjects.
- ◆ A candidate has significant learning difficulties which impair his reading and writing processes. He is allowed a reader and scribe to help him.

JCQ (2007) *Access Arrangements and Special Consideration; Regulations and Guidance Relating to Candidates who are Eligible for Adjustments in Examinations* (1 September 2007 – 31 August 2008)