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Special arrangements for the baccalaureate for candidates with special needs

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Aims and objectives of the European schools

The words which express the essential aims of the European Schools have been sealed, in parchment, into the foundation stones of all the schools:

“Educated side by side, untroubled from infancy by divisive prejudices, acquainted with all that is great and good in the different cultures, it will be borne in upon them as they mature that they belong together. Without ceasing to look to their own lands with love and pride, they will become in mind Europeans, schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers before them, to bring into being a united and thriving Europe.”

- to give pupils confidence in their own cultural identity – the bedrock for their development as European citizens;
- to provide a broad education of high quality, from nursery level to university-entrance;
- to develop high standards in the mother tongue and in foreign languages;
- to develop mathematical and scientific skills throughout the whole period of schooling;
- to encourage a European and global perspective overall and particularly in the study of the human sciences;
- to encourage creativity in music and the plastic arts and an appreciation of all that is best in a common European artistic heritage;
- to develop physical skills and instil in pupils an appreciation of the need for healthy living through participation in sporting and recreational activities;
- to offer pupils professional guidance on their choice of subjects and on career/university decisions in the later years of the secondary school;
- to foster tolerance, co-operation, communication and concern for others throughout the school community and beyond;
- to cultivate pupils’ personal, social and academic development and to prepare them for the next stage of education.

I. Introduction

“Special Arrangements to the baccalaureate” refer to candidates with individual learning needs, who have the intellectual capacity to meet all curriculum and assessment requirements and who require special arrangements to demonstrate their level of achievement.

This document is intended to complement the document 2009-D-619, where the procedures are described, and states the policy for special arrangements for the European Baccalaureate, also for SEN pupils.

The European Schools believe that all students should be allowed to demonstrate their ability under assessment conditions that are as fair as possible. Where standard assessment conditions could put a candidate, in particular those with special educational needs, at a disadvantage, preventing them from demonstrating their level of attainment, special arrangements may be requested and authorized.

The pupil’s legal representatives or the pupil himself if aged 18 are responsible for submitting an application for special arrangements. The application shall state precisely which special arrangements are being requested and should always include an up to date and complete diagnosis from a specialist.

The Director of the School is normally responsible for the decision. The whole procedure is outlined in the document 2009-D-619 (paragraphs 4.5.4 and 4.5.5).

The special arrangements include changed or additional conditions during the written and oral examination. The special arrangements enable the candidate to demonstrate his or her level of competences more fairly and are not intended to compensate for any lack of knowledge or ability.

The European Schools are committed to an educational philosophy based on common European syllabuses with common assessment criteria. Therefore, the special assessment needs policy may not reflect the standard practice of any one country. To achieve equity among candidates, the policy represents the result of a consideration of accepted practice in all member states of the European Union.

The same standards of assessment should always be applied to all candidates, regardless of whether or not they have special needs. The special arrangements described in this document are intended for students with certified learning disabilities, but with the intellectual capacity to meet all assessment requirements leading to the European Baccalaureate

The external examiners should not be informed about the special arrangements organized for a specific candidate. The school and the Central Bureau treat all information about a candidate as confidential.

Each application for special arrangements will be treated on its own merit.

II. Responsibilities of the school

Special arrangements have to be requested by the pupil's legal representatives or by the pupil himself if he has reached the age of responsibility. The decision is normally taken by the Director, referring to the advice of the Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group should consider before hand whether suitable arrangements for assessment can be made available for that student.

The request approved, the Director is responsible for making available all necessary arrangements.

If special arrangements are requested, it is essential that the school (i.e. SEN coordinator in collaboration with the class teacher) ensure that the candidate is or becomes familiar with those arrangements. The candidate must be familiar with any special equipment, including a computer and its software, authorized for use in an examination.

Before the examination, the candidate may practise, when needed, with the person appointed by the Director (a scribe, a reader, etc.).

III. Conditions for special arrangements

Under the following conditions a request for special arrangements can be introduced to the school.

a. Temporary medical condition

A recent medical certification detailing the nature of the condition of the student has to be presented to the school.

b. Long-term medical condition or permanent disability

An up to date detailed report from a medical or psychological service is required as supporting documentation for all candidates with a long-term medical condition or a permanent disability in need of special arrangements.

IV. Application for special arrangements

a. All candidates with special assessment needs

An application for special arrangements must specify in writing, exactly which arrangements are being requested.

b. Supporting documentation

A medical or psychological report must have been undertaken no earlier than the previous academic year before the entry into the baccalaureate cycle. Some flexibility will be allowed

for candidates with a permanent disability. The School reserves the right to query or decline a report, if it considers that the diagnosis is not a well-founded or sufficiently well described.

The supporting documentation must:

- give details about the tests or techniques used to arrive at the diagnosis on paper with a letterhead, signed and dated,
- state the title, name and professional credentials of the expert who has undertaken the evaluation and diagnosis of the candidate
- state specifically the nature of candidate's medical or psychological problems, and
- if not written in one of the vehicular languages be accompanied by a translation into English, French or German.

V. Special arrangements

The arrangements listed below can be authorised by the School. Special arrangements, where necessary, can be combined.

a. Additional time

Additional time may be authorized for written and oral examinations according to the candidate's assessed needs. For written examinations, additional time is restricted to 10 minutes or less for each hour of the examination.

For the oral examination, the preparation time can be extended with an additional time restricted to 10 minutes.

b. Computer or other microprocessor-controlled device

The European Schools recognize that a computer or other microprocessor-controlled device provides a highly effective means of communication for many candidates with special assessment needs. For this reason computers and other forms of assistive technology are normally permitted for written examinations if the candidate is unable to provide a handwritten response.

A form of technology will usually be authorized when it is the candidate's normal method of working and does not provide the candidate with an advantage. Each request will be appraised and considered on its own merit.

In written examinations a computer can be used as a sophisticated typewriter, for the sole purpose of providing an alternative to handwriting. If a candidate with special assessment needs uses a computer as their usual means of communication, the candidate will normally be permitted to use a computer in his or her examinations.

The Director is responsible for ensuring that a candidate does not have access to stored information on the available computer or other microprocessor-controlled device. The use of a spellchecker during the written examinations is normally decided by the School for candidates with severe dyslexia.

The automatic save option, when available, should be used during the examination to ensure that the candidate's work is regularly saved on to the memory.

The work of the candidate should be printed as soon as possible after the examination. The candidate should be present to verify and sign that the printed copy is a complete copy of his/her work.

c. Scribe

A scribe is a person who writes down the dictated response of a candidate. The use of a scribe is permitted for all forms of assessment where a candidate is unable to provide a legible and handwritten response.

Additional time amounting to 10 minutes for each hour of the examination will normally be authorized when a candidate is assisted by a scribe. Prior to the examination, the school should provide an opportunity for testing this way of working together. In addition to the role as a scribe, the appointed person also acts as an invigilator, since the examination will be organized in a separate room.

The scribe must transcribe the candidate's responses word for word and may read back answers at the request of the candidate. Whenever possible, the scribe should not be the candidate's own teacher for the subject being examined.

d. Reader

The role of a reader is to read the examination paper to a candidate and to read back the candidate's answers, when requested to do so. However, the assistance of the reader is not confined to the written examinations; a reader may assist a candidate also during the preparation of the oral exams.

Additional time amounting to 10 minutes for each hour of the examination will normally be authorized when a candidate is assisted by a reader. Prior to the examination, the school should provide an opportunity for testing this way of working together. In addition to the role as a reader, the appointed person also acts as an invigilator as the examination will be organized in a separate room.

e. Modifications to the format of the examination papers

Modifications such as enlarged print and/or a change of font can normally be made to examination papers for candidates with a visual impairment.

f. Audio recordings of responses to examination papers

If a candidate is unable to provide a handwritten or word-processed script, and a scribe is not a viable alternative, authorization may be given to audio record responses.

The recording must be then transcribed verbatim by a person appointed by the school (for example, a school secretary).

g. Written answers in case of oral exam

If a candidate has severe difficulties (i.e. severe stammering) or is completely unable to express himself orally, answers in oral examinations can be given in written form. The time for preparing the oral and the examination time in this case will be doubled.

h. Transcriptions

Transcription is justified when a candidate with a specific learning difficulty, or a physical disability, has very poor handwriting skills and cannot use a word processor. It is necessary to transcribe the whole of a candidate's script on a piece of paper separate from the candidate's script and produced word for word. The transcript must be produced by a teacher who is familiar with the candidate's handwriting; it must be verbatim, with no corrections. Both the original script and the transcription should be kept and used during the correction phase.

i. Separate room

A candidate is permitted to take an examination in a separate room, if it is related to the special assessment needs, in the best interests of the candidate or other candidates in the group. If the examination is taken in a separate room, all regulations governing the conduct of the European Baccalaureate examinations must be observed.

j. Written instructions

A candidate with a hearing impairment may receive instructions in written form. This paper must only explain and describe the conduct of the examination.

k. Naming of colours

For a candidate who is colour blind, the Director can appoint someone to name colours in an examination paper. As a preventive measure, when preparing the examination paper, colours can be substituted or completed by readable signs.

VI. Extraordinary arrangements

When the legal representatives of the pupil or the pupil himself if aged 18 ask for extraordinary arrangements (not listed in the chapter V of this document), then procedure to be followed is outlined in the document 2009-D-619, paragraph 4.5.4.