



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Education

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION

**PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES
FOR THE PROVISION OF
SPECIAL ASSESSMENT
ARRANGEMENTS
(SPECIAL CONCESSIONS)
FOR STUDENTS WRITING
LOCAL EXAMINATIONS**

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Procedural Guidelines for the Provision of Special Assessment Arrangements
(Special Concessions)¹

This document provides detailed guidelines for the provision of alternative arrangements (Special Concessions) for students writing national examinations:

- Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA)
- Lower Secondary Proficiency Examination (LSPE)
- Trinidad & Tobago National Learning Assessment (TTNLA) Primary (Standards 1 & 3)
- Trinidad & Tobago National Learning Assessment (TTNLA) Secondary (Form 3)
- Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE)

This document was informed by the regional guidelines and practices for providing special education services by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) <https://www.cxc.org>. Contributions were invited from professionals and practitioners in Special Education and Clinical/School Psychology. The policy revisions were also informed by the recommendations and feedback from numerous stakeholders involved in the concessions process and in the administration of local examinations.

Please Note: *CSEC, CAPE and CVQ examinations are governed by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), and as such, all concession applications should be made in keeping with their guidelines.*

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1. Background

- The Ministry of Education (hereafter referred to as “the MoE”) endeavours to ensure that each student is allowed to demonstrate his/her ability under assessment conditions that are as fair as possible. Where standard assessment conditions could disadvantage a student with special needs, by preventing him/her from demonstrating his/her level of attainment, special assessment arrangements may be authorized.
- Hundreds of applications are received by the MoE each year from parents, principals, and teachers for the provision of special assessment arrangements (special concessions) that would afford equity for all students writing national examinations.
- The MoE is strongly committed to equality of opportunity and equity in its provision for all students and is supportive of arrangements which will reduce barriers to learning and assessment, and therefore contribute to facilitating the development of our children’s full potential.
- The MoE must ensure that the performance achieved by students in any subject is not a misleading description of that student’s level of attainment. The Special Assessment Arrangements are intended to reduce the adverse effects of a student’s disability but must not give the candidate an unfair advantage.
- The arrangements are intended to enable candidates to demonstrate their level of attainment and should not reduce the validity and reliability of the assessment or compromise the credibility of the award.
- It is important to ensure that, before sitting the examination, the candidate has practiced using any special assessment arrangements requested.

2. Special Concessions

- i. Special Concessions are the unique arrangements made to:
 - a. the standard format of an examination paper
 - b. the conditions under which an examination / assessment is done, in order to accommodate the special need(s) of a student.
 - c. All concessions are guided by the schedule for special concessions listed in Appendix I.
- ii. Special Concessions are designed to provide *equity, not advantage*, and serve to level the playing field for students with disabilities and other special challenges. Providing appropriate curricular modifications and accommodations throughout the instructional process supports learning and may even reduce or eliminate a student's challenge. Special Assessment Arrangements increase the student's ability to effectively complete the examinations. However, Special Concessions do **not** reduce the learning expectations for students.
- iii. Special Assessment Arrangements for Examinations, as with prescribed classroom accommodations, are determined individually as evidenced by the valid supporting documentations submitted within the application which meets the criteria for the provision of accommodations. While a general standard is set for the provision of special concessions, it should be underscored that accommodation granted is based on the identified needs of each applicant, the resources available/ what can be provided and not automatically what was requested.

3. Classification or Types of Special Assessment Arrangements

Special Assessment Arrangements offered can be classified as follows:

- **Presentation Accommodations** adjust the presentation of test materials and/or test directions (e.g. Instructions in Sign Language, Braille, Large Print). These may also include the use of specific personnel (e.g. Sign Language Interpreter, Reader).
- **Response Accommodations** adjust the manner in which students respond to or answer test questions (e.g., Oral responses dictated to a scribe; Braille).

- **Setting Accommodations** adjust the environment in which testing normally occurs (e.g. Separate Room, Preferential Seating etc.)
- **Scheduling Accommodations** adjust the time allowance or regular scheduling of test (e.g. Extended and/or Compensatory Time, Scheduled Breaks etc.).
- **Assistive Technology - (Supported Accommodations** e.g. braille, magnifying glass, cube, cube board). Special concessions also address the needs of students who may require adaptive tools or specialized methods. For the assessment of subjects requiring practical or performance activities, for example, specific components of the examination may need to be adapted to meet the specific needs of a student. This may involve adjustments to the process, the environment and / or presentation of the assessment.

All special concessions are administered in a separate room. All students and their caregivers are advised that students requiring special assessment arrangements are accommodated in a specially prepared room. This allows for the flexibility required in the administration of approved accommodations while limiting any distraction or disruption to other students writing examinations under the regular conditions.

4. Scope

These guidelines apply to:

- All primary, secondary, or special school students within public and private school systems, inclusive of children who are home-schooled.
- All teachers, parents/guardians, and principals of private and public schools.
- All professionals of private organizations, and public institutions involved in the testing, assessment, and the provision of intervention-based services for students.
- Internal stakeholders within the MoE (Student Support Services Division-SSSD, School Supervision and Management Division-SSMD, Examinations, Division of Education Research and Evaluation-DERE, Curriculum Planning and Development Division-CPDD, Corporate Communications Division-CCD, Information Communications and Technology Division-ICTD).
- All individuals and/or organizations involved in providing specialized services/therapeutic interventions for students with special educational needs.

5. Eligibility for Special Assessment Arrangement

The digitized applications for the provision of the relevant accommodations or special concessions may be submitted for students in the following categories:

a. **Students with Medical, Physical and Sensory Impairments**

Applications for students with medical, physical, and sensory impairments must be accompanied by a formal medical letter or report (**valid for a maximum of one year from the date of medical examination**) from a recognized medical institution or qualified professional or specialist.

b. **Students with Neurodevelopmental Disorders and Other Psychological/Psychiatric Conditions**

Applications for students with neurodevelopmental disorders and other psychological/psychiatric conditions must be accompanied by a comprehensive formal psychoeducational / psychiatric evaluation report (**valid for a maximum of three years from the date of the report**) from a professional/organization qualified to do psychoeducational / psychological evaluations and must include the key elements listed in Appendix II.

Speech and Language Evaluation reports must be accompanied by a valid Psychoeducational Evaluation that:

- i) establishes the student's level of intellectual and educational functioning.
- ii) rules out intellectual or other disabilities as the underlying cause of a communication disorder.

*Students without documented and diagnosed disabilities who receive classroom support or use instructional tools or accommodations in the classroom **are not automatically eligible** for equivalent special assessment arrangements.*

c. Deadlines

The concession deadline for submission of online applications **must** be strictly adhered to. The deadline dates are determined and communicated via a memorandum each year. Failure to submit prior to the deadline will result in applications not being received and processed for the upcoming local examination.

Please note, applications without the appropriate supporting documentation will not be considered.

d. Emergencies

Applications for concessions as a result of an emergency situation or condition which may adversely affect a student's performance ***may be submitted for consideration after the given deadline date, not more than six weeks, but not less than two weeks prior to the examination date.*** The following situations and /or conditions may constitute an emergency:

- i. Onset of sudden illness
- ii. Recent injury
- iii. Bereavement
- iv. Trauma/extreme emotional/ behavioural distress not related to any previously mentioned (such as abuse, fire, etc.).

All required documentation must be attached to the applications for special assessment arrangements, in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this document. An application does not guarantee that the accommodations requested will be approved (refer to Section 2; part iii).

Applications submitted after the emergency deadline date **will not be entertained for the scheduled examination.** These applications may be considered for any subsequent Supplemental Examinations which may typically be scheduled approximately one month after the original examination date. This only applies for examinations with supplemental dates.

6. Application Procedures

The prescribed digital application forms are completed in their entirety and submitted via the digital application portal of the Ministry of Education.

- Parent Form – uploaded with **all required** supporting documentation
 - Student’s Birth Certificate
 - National Identification Card
 - Proof of Address (Recent Utility Bill)
 - Proof of Guardianship
 - Assessment Reports from qualified professionals (**e.g.** Recent Medical Reports or Psychoeducational Assessments,
 - Any other document that may support the request/application.
- School Form – with all required supporting documentation of each student.
 - Copy of Student’s Cumulative Record
 - Evidence of current Student Performance
 - Sample of Student’s Work (Language Arts, Mathematics, Creative Writing)
 - Any other document that may support the request /application.

Documentation must:

- be submitted on paper bearing a letterhead, signed, and dated.
- state the title, name, and professional credentials of the person(s) who evaluated the candidate.
- state specifically the nature of the disability, and the tests/techniques and resulting scores used in the diagnosis.
- describe the functional limitations arising from the disability.
- include recommendations for specific Special Assessment Arrangements.

Please note that some reports are valid for a determined period, for example, psycho-educational assessments should be completed every three years. Medical reports may be valid for one year.

7. The Approval Process

Approval is required to authorize the provision of special concessions for all applicants and involves the following steps: -

- Completed applications are submitted online via the application portal.
- Submitted applications are verified by the Concession Secretariat.
- Access to verified applications is granted to District SSSD Officers
- Applications are reviewed and initial recommendations are made by District Officers.
- All final decisions for concession applications are made by Senior Officers of the Developmental Assessment and Intervention Unit (DAIU), and Senior Special Education Officers.
- Final decisions are forwarded to Examinations for dissemination to schools and parents/ guardians of private candidates.
- Students and their caregivers should be briefed by the special education officers and prepared to utilize the concession as outlined in the approval notice.
- If the application is not approved, the notice will include a brief explanation of the reasons for the denial of the application.

8. Withdrawals

Parents/Guardians in conjunction with Principals wishing to withdraw an application can do so in writing to the Examinations Section of the Ministry of Education.

9. Appeals

Parents/Guardians wishing to appeal a decision can do so in writing to the Chief Education Officer within one week of receiving the Notice of Approval/Rejection. Within three weeks of receiving the appeal, the Chief Education Officer, after consultation and review with the appeals team, will issue a final determination.

10. Roles/Responsibilities

- The Chief Education Officer, with the support of the Manager of the SSSD and Corporate Communication, is responsible for communicating these guidelines to all stakeholders.
- Stakeholders include parents/guardians, teachers, identified service providers, professionals within, and external to the Ministry of Education, in particular Principals, School Supervisors, and internal stakeholders of the MoE.
- The Examinations Section of the Ministry of Education is responsible for the dissemination of final decisions to the parents/guardians of private candidates and the schools of all other applicants.
- Officers of the SSSD, under the supervision of the Inclusive Education Specialist, will provide technical support for the investigation, processing, and administration of special concessions.

APPENDIX I

SCHEDULE OF SPECIAL CONCESSIONS

Schedule of special Concessions that may be requested for local examinations/assessments

Condition	Possible Concession
Hearing Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign Language Interpreter • Extended time • Separate examination venue / room
Vision Impairment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Vision • Legally Blind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braille / Large Print • Scribe • Reader • Supervised rest breaks • Extended time • Separate examination venue/room
Physical Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scribe • Extended time • Supervised rest breaks • Compensatory time • Separate examination venue/room • Setting accommodation
Neurodevelopmental Disorders and other Psychological/Psychiatric Conditions (e.g., ADHD, Autism, Specific Learning Disorders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended time • Supervised rest breaks • Compensatory time • Separate examination venue / room • Sole occupancy • Close monitoring
Medical Conditions e.g., Asthma, Juvenile Diabetes, Allergies, Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scribe • Permission to take medicine, eat, drink, go to the bathroom, move around during breaks. • Extended time

Condition	Possible Concession
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervised rest breaks • Compensatory time • Close monitoring • Separate examination venue / room • Sole occupancy • Parent on standby

N.B. Extended Time consists of either an additional 25% or 50% of the allotted examination period.

APPENDIX II

Key Elements of a Psychoeducational Evaluation Report

Psychoeducational evaluations provide estimates of students' current intellectual functioning, educational achievement levels, and perceptual-motor functioning; as well as, if necessary, the results of screening tools for social, behavioral, and/or emotional, and adaptive functioning. One of the key goals of the evaluation is to determine if the student meets the criteria for neurodevelopmental and/or other psychiatric disorders/conditions such as but not limited to, learning disorders/disabilities, intellectual disability/borderline intellectual functioning or any depressive or anxiety related disorders that may be impeding his/her academic progress.

Evaluation reports also yield recommendations relevant to educational planning and intervention. Once the test administration has been completed, the psychoeducational report will provide the results and interpretations of the various psychological tests, as well as pertinent details about the student's birth, medical and developmental history, mental health history, social and behavioral history, educational history, and relevant behavioral observations. As such, careful consideration should be given to the assessment measures chosen for the psychoeducational evaluation. A statement of the student's mental health status/thorough mental health examination (e.g., Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE)) inclusive of assessment of abuse, suicidal ideations, homicidal ideations, thought disturbances, and behavioral observations during the assessment **must be included**. *All scores obtained should be tabulated and included in the associated narrative or appendix of the report. Please note, age equivalents are not considered valid estimates of functioning and should be presented with standard scores.*

In light of the extensive use of psychoeducational evaluations across multiple disciplines to establish provisions for a student's care, a statement should also be included that highlights the lack of normative data available for accurate interpretation of the assessment tools, and measures when applicable. Psychometric tests are generally standardized to an American population, which is considered to be approximately one academic year behind Trinidad and Tobago's curriculum.

Based on this, information should be included as to the normative population, and the manner in which data should be interpreted.

The report **must clearly identify any diagnostic impressions** that is justified by the background information and test data available. The diagnosis(es) identified should be aligned with criteria from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition – Text Revision (DSM-5 TR) or International Classification of Diseases, 11th Edition (ICD-11). The diagnosis(es) should also be clearly stipulated in the report according to appropriate diagnostic guidelines, inclusive of severity, and specifiers. Justification for diagnoses that are ruled out, provisional, and/or deferred should also be included. The aforementioned information is presented in the report to provide data, but also evidence and justification for the diagnosis and is valid for a maximum of three years from the date of report.

In addition, formal recommendations should be clearly identified that stipulate whether the student would benefit from curricular modifications and accommodations, and or special concessions for examinations. Recommendations may specify the type of special assessment arrangements that may be put in place to address the student’s identified needs. Suggestions regarding the least restrictive environment for the student may be included. **The report should be presented in full, original form, with a signature, and date.**

The MoE reserves the right to reject an application for special concessions that is submitted with an outdated or incomplete report or inadequate documentation or late application (e.g., report summary, report letter).

Intelligence Tests

The assessment tools chosen should be clinically relevant to the presenting concerns, and only the current versions of the tests will be accepted. A test will be considered obsolete, one year after the release of any subsequent versions.

Intelligence tests or tests that provide an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) should ideally provide the following:

- **Full-scale intelligence quotient:** overall, composite measure of intelligence.
- **Verbal Functioning:** estimate of verbal comprehension and expression.
- **Performance Functioning:** estimate of visual-spatial, perceptual and fluid reasoning.

Other supplementary measures of cognitive functioning are also useful such as:

- **Processing Speed** a measure of information and graphomotor processing speed.
- **Working Memory,** a measure of short-term memory and attention.

Recommended Intelligence Scales include:

Wechsler intelligence Scale for Children, Fifth Edition (WISC-5)

Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children – Second Edition (KABC-2)

Woodcock Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities, Fourth Edition (WJ-4)

A nonverbal intelligence test is also recommended where background information and test data suggest a communication disorder or other speech and language impairments.

Commonly administered nonverbal measures of intelligence include:

Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability (WNV)

Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test, Second Edition (UNIT-2)

Leiter International Performance Scale, Third Edition (Leiter-3)

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition (PPVT-4)

Test of Nonverbal Intelligence, Fourth Edition (TONI-4)

Achievement Tests

Assessment of achievement is an important part of the evaluation to rule out/diagnose learning disabilities. A student does not meet criteria for a specific learning or communication disorder if his/her academic limitations are found to be the result of the following:

- Lack of schooling (due to absenteeism or inadequate instruction)
- Sensory Impairment (e.g., vision or hearing)

- Intellectual Disability evidenced by an IQ score at or below a standard score of 70, and deficits in at least two areas of adaptive functioning (Communication, Socialization, Daily Living Skills, and Motor Skills), identified by at least Moderately Low functioning in these areas.
- Other medical or neurological conditions.

The DSM-5 TR dictates an achievement-intellectual functioning standard score discrepancy model to determine the presence of a specific learning disorder. Ideally, the student's IQ score is compared to the reading, mathematics, and written expression composite test scores individually. Using a strengths and weakness approach, the student's performance of the affected academic skills is well below the expected age or average achievement. One robust indicator is grade level performance being sustainable only by extraordinarily high levels of effort or support. If there is a significant discrepancy between two scores, then the student is said to meet one of the most salient criteria required for the diagnosis of learning disorder in that area.

A discrepancy of more than one standard deviation (i.e., more than 15 points) is considered significant, where the mean standard score of 100 is established. On occasion, a larger discrepancy (e.g., more than 1.5 standard deviations, which would be more than 22.5 points) is considered to be significant.

Recommended Achievement Tests include:

Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Third Edition (KTEA-3)

Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement, Fourth Edition (WJ-4)

Wechsler Individual Achievement Test, Fourth Edition (WIAT-4)

Perceptual/Visual Motor Tests

These tests, also called tests of visual motor integration, assist in the diagnosis of neurodevelopmental disorders and function as markers for motor functioning deficits, which may result from developmental delays, or medical conditions. It is used to evaluate visual maturity; visual motor integration skills; style of responding; reaction to frustration; capacity to correct mistakes; planning and organizational skills; and motivation. Copying figures requires fine motor

skills, the aptitude to discriminate between and perceive visual stimuli, the competence to integrate visual skills with motor skills, and the capacity to shift attention.

Recommended Perceptual Motor Tests include:

Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test, Second Edition (Bender Gestalt II)

Beery-Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration, Sixth Edition (Beery VMI 6)

Measures of Adaptive Behavior

A measure of adaptive behavior (i.e., domestic, daily living, social and functional academic and communication skills) must be obtained to establish criteria for a diagnosis of intellectual disability.

Recommended Measures of Adaptive Behavior include:

Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Third Edition (Vineland-3)

Adaptive Behavior Assessment System, Third Edition (ABAS-3)

Screening for Attention Deficits

There is no single psychological assessment tool for the diagnosis of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). ADHD is a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development. Symptoms must manifest prior to 12 years old and persist for at least 6 months to a degree that is inconsistent with the developmental level of the child. There are several behavior rating scales and computerized tests of attention; most provide measures of hyperactivity-impulsivity and inattentiveness. In addition, to establish a clear diagnosis of ADHD, ratings must be provided from two separate settings in which the student interacts frequently. These settings are typically the home, and the school; however, involvement in additional activities may be considered.

Please note, a diagnosis of ADHD is not a clear justification for provision of special assessment arrangements, specifically additional time, during an examination. A student diagnosed through a medical or psychiatric letter/report with ADHD is encouraged to submit both medical

documentations and a psychoeducational evaluation. The purpose of both documents would be to establish the utilization of any medications related to this condition, which would facilitate medication management, as well as the impact of this current diagnosis on academic functioning as it would relate to the examination setting.

Some commonly used measures include:

Connors' 3 Parent Rating Scales

Connors' 3 Teaching Rating Scales

Brown Attention – Deficit Disorder Scales

NICHQ Vanderbilt Assessment Scales

Measures of Behavioral/Socio-emotional Functioning

Academic difficulties often present in combination with behavioral and emotional difficulties, as such a measure of behavioral/socio-emotional functioning must be assessed and presented.

Some commonly used measures include:

Beck Youth Inventories – Second Edition (BYI-2)

Children's Depression Inventory – 2 (CDI-2)

Revised Children's Manifest Scale – Second Edition

Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition (BASC-3) Childhood

Childhood Autism Rating Scale, Second Edition (CARS 2)

Gilliam Autism Rating Scale, Third Edition (GARS-3)

Behavior Checklist

Projective Measures can also be included for consideration.

These include:

The House-Tree-Person Projective Drawings

The Kinetic Family Drawing

Roberts Apperception Test for Children: 2 (Roberts-2)

The Thematic Apperception Test (T.A.T.)/ Children's Apperception Test (C.A.T.)

Who Can Perform a Psychoeducational Evaluation?

Psychoeducational evaluations should be performed by appropriately qualified psychologists with a minimum master's degree in the areas of Clinical Psychology, Education Psychology, School Psychology or Developmental Psychology. A qualified person must have at least two years of experience in assessment.

Examiners should have extensive knowledge and training in psychological tests and the administration and analysis of these tests. It is important to ascertain if the professional has specific training and expertise in psychoeducational assessment, particularly assessment of learning disorders, and intellectual disabilities. Persons submitting Evaluation Reports may be required to provide documentary evidence of their qualifications and accreditation status.

Who Can Review Psychoeducational Evaluation Reports?

Psychoeducational evaluation reports should be reviewed by appropriately qualified psychologists or special education personnel with a minimum master's degree in the areas of Clinical Psychology, Education Psychology, School Psychology, Developmental Psychology or Special Education. Qualified persons must have specialized training and/or at least five years of experience in assessment. Reviewers should have substantial knowledge in psychological evaluation, psychometrics, test administration, scoring and interpretation of results, and diagnostics/ abnormal psychology.

Psychoeducational Evaluation Report Checklist

The following checklist is provided as a guideline for the submission of Psychoeducational Evaluation Reports.

✓	Psychoeducational Report Checklist Does the report include all the following critical elements?
✓	Appropriate identifying information (including Child's Name, Date of Birth, Gender, School, Standard/Form and Accompanying Parent/ Guardian), Date(s) of Test Administration, Reason for referral.
✓	Background Information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting Problem • Family History • Social History • Educational History • Medical and Developmental History • Drug Use • Legal History
✓	Mental Status Examination (Test and Behavioral Observations)
✓	Tabulated Test Scores (Standard scores and Age Equivalents/ T-scores) of all administered tools.
✓	Test Interpretation
✓	Diagnostic Impressions (DSM-5 TR or ICD-11)
✓	Recommendations (explicitly includes special assessment arrangements and curricular accommodations, recommended special concessions informed by data)
✓	Date of Report Completion
✓	Original Signature(s) of Examiner and Supervisor where relevant
<p><i>Please Note: A Report will be considered <u>incomplete</u> if any element is omitted.</i> <i>The Ministry of Education reserves the right to reject an application for special concessions that is submitted with an incomplete report or inadequate documentation.</i></p>	