



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission

Corr na Madadh, Baile Átha Luain, Co. na hIarmhí
Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

Circular S 24/ 12

Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE)

- 1) Accommodating candidates in Special Examination Centres**
- 2) Introduction of a session rate for Superintendents of Special Examinations Centres.**

To: The Authorities of Second Level Schools

Dear Principal,

I am writing to you about two issues concerned with the State Examinations Commission's Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations (RACE Scheme). Firstly, I wish to advise you of the circumstances in which it is appropriate to place more than one candidate in a special examination centre. Secondly, I wish to notify you of a change to the method of calculating payment for superintendents of special examination centres with the introduction of a session rate in place of a daily rate. Further details of both of these issues are set out below.

1) Provision of Special Centres to Examination Candidates

a) General Information

As you are aware special centres are provided in the case of candidates who cannot be accommodated in ordinary examination centres for a variety of reasons, from needing the assistance of scribes and readers to candidates with particular emotional and behavioral needs.

There has been very significant growth in the provision of special centres in recent years, from some 1,800 in 2001 to almost 9,000 in 2011.

The SEC appreciates the challenges that this level of provision of special centres poses for school authorities in terms of the management of this process at school level during the examinations, ranging from the appointment of superintendents to the provision of suitable accommodation.

The SEC operates a devolved model of provision for Junior Certificate candidates which allows schools a large degree of autonomy. In general, the SEC accepts a school's

2) Special Examination Centre Rate

Superintendents of special examination centres, appointed by the school authorities, have in the past been paid a flat daily rate regardless of the number of examinations superintended on a particular day.

The special centre superintending daily rate in 2011 was €85.50 for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) acting as superintendents and €112.04 otherwise. With effect from the 2012 examinations superintendents of special examination centres will be paid by reference to the number of examination sessions that they superintend. The special centre superintending rate will be amended to a session rate of €42.75 for SNAs and €56.02 for non SNAs (i.e a superintendent of a special centre who superintends two sessions in any day will continue to be paid the equivalent of the previous daily rate).

A session is regarded as a morning or an afternoon examination sitting. In this context the aural tests in modern European language examinations, which take place immediately after the written examination in each subject, are regarded as part of the one examination session and are not regarded as a session in their own right.

It is noted that, unlike the superintendents of main examination centres, superintendents of such centres are responsible for either one or a very small number of candidates, do not have custody of the box of examination papers or the stationery box and have no responsibility for the safe custody and return of the examination scripts to the SEC.

A further circular on payment/claim arrangements will issue in due course.

Finally, I want to thank you and your staff for the help given in providing special centres for candidates with special needs at the examinations. This is an important element in the suite of special arrangements available to schools and the SEC in accommodating the needs of such candidates and reflects the very strong partnership between schools and the SEC. Should you require advice or clarification on any of the matters raised please contact Helen Martin, Higher Executive Officer on 090 644 2781 or James Dunning Assistant Principal Officer on 090-6442769.

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Feeney
Director, Operations & IT Division
March 2012

recommendation on the application form as sufficient evidence to enable the SEC to confirm the type of accommodation that should be provided to the candidate in his/her Junior Certificate. A key feature of this devolved model is that an accommodation provided at Junior Certificate is not automatically granted for Leaving Certificate. Each application for reasonable accommodation in the Leaving Certificate examination is considered on its own merits either by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in the case of special educational needs or issues arising from psychological conditions or by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) in the case of physical conditions. Some of the accommodations granted under the scheme include giving the candidate access to a special examination centre.

b) Assignment of Candidates to Special Examination Centres

The granting of a special examination centre does not automatically mean that the candidate will be sitting in an examination centre on their own. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for school authorities to assign a small number of candidates (also being accommodated under the RACE scheme) to one special centre under the control of one superintendent. The purpose of this letter is to provide firm guidance to schools in relation to assigning candidates to special centres.

The following are examples of where it may be appropriate to accommodate more than one candidate in a special centre:-

- 1) Candidates who have certain emotional or behavioral difficulties
- 2) Candidates who have non-contagious medical conditions
- 3) Candidates who have been granted the use of a word processor
- 4) Candidates who have been granted the use of a reader but who only require occasional words or phrases to be read to them; in this type of scenario, it may be possible for a small number of candidates to share one reader

c) Other Considerations

There may be situations, other than those given above, where schools consider it appropriate to assign more than one candidate to a special centre.

Decisions in accordance with these guidelines can be made by the school authority in light of both candidate and school circumstances.

Schools may find that it is appropriate to establish more than one special centre which accommodates a number of candidates.

The SEC considers it acceptable, where practical at school level, to accommodate candidates, sitting a mix of Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations in one special centre.

The SEC is satisfied that implementing these guidelines does not diminish the quality or nature of the actual accommodation granted to a candidate based on their identified needs in the certificate examinations under the RACE scheme.

The SEC accepts that in general, candidates must continue to be accommodated in centres on their own in instances where they interact throughout the examination with the superintendent, such as when scribes or full-text readers (in contrast to the reading assistance described at 4 above) have been approved, and in the case of candidates using a tape recorder.