
HSC disability provisions guide for teachers and parents

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Preface

The *Disability Provisions Information Guide* outlines principles, policies and procedures for the implementation of HSC disability provisions. It is intended to enhance the clarity of the disability provisions program so that its purpose and scope are better understood and used by schools, students and parents.

If you have any queries about the HSC disability provisions program, please contact Student Support by phone +61 2 9367 8117 or email studentsupport@nesa.nsw.edu.au.

Parents and students should contact their school in the first instance.

What are HSC disability provisions?

Disability provisions provide students with practical support to access, i.e. read and respond to, the Higher School Certificate (HSC) exams.

In providing disability provisions for the HSC exams, NESAs comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) (DDA) and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, issued under the DDA.

Disability provisions are one way that NESAs ensure there are reasonable adjustments available to students with disability so that they can access and participate in the HSC on the same basis as students without disability.

What is covered

Disability provisions address students' exam needs related to learning, medical, vision or hearing disabilities. For example, students with a:

- learning disability may use reader or writer
- medical disability may access toilet breaks or use adapted furniture
- vision disability may use braille or large-print papers
- hearing disability may use an oral or sign interpreter.

What is not covered

Disability provisions do not apply to:

- Conditions that may or may not occur during an exam (episodic), eg migraines. An occurrence of this type of condition would be covered by an [illness/misadventure application](#), except when there are identifiable factors that might contribute to, or trigger, a condition. For example, if fluorescent lighting frequently results in a migraine, a student might request seating near a window with natural light.
- Loss of preparation time or difficulty undertaking a course, eg a musical instrument being broken some months prior to the HSC.
- Difficulty with reading due to English being an additional language/dialect for a student.

Schools' responsibilities under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*

All schools must ensure that students with disability are able to access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

Schools should regularly assess their students' learning needs and implement [adjustments](#) as required to support students on a day-to-day basis throughout their schooling. Adjustments provided in school may change over time in response to a student's changing needs.

Adjustments should be determined collaboratively with the student, parents/carers and other people who support the educational needs of the student. It may be considered discriminatory if adjustments are not in place for identified students with a disability.

Schools are responsible for any decisions made at school level to offer adjustments to students with a disability in school-based tasks. School-determined adjustments will not necessarily apply in the Higher School Certificate examinations as what is assessed in school-based assessments may be different to HSC examinations. In addition, for HSC examinations, each

application is assessed to ensure consistency and equity across the *entire* HSC cohort. **NESA only approves disability provisions for the HSC exams.**

When providing students with adjustments for school-based assessments, schools are encouraged to take into account NESA's key messages and [principles for exam modifications](#) to ensure that, where appropriate, adjustments are put in place that are consistent with disability provisions granted for the HSC.

Note

There is **no guarantee** NESA will grant the same provisions as those given at school.

Key messages for schools, students and parents

1. Every student applying for HSC disability provisions is unique

Each application receives individual attention by trained and experienced NESA staff, with access to expert health professionals as required. This ensures provisions granted respond to each student's specific learning, medical and psychological health needs that have an impact in exam situations.

2. The provision of *reasonable adjustments* for a student with a disability is a legal requirement

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) (DDA) and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, issued under the DDA, require that students with a disability are provided with reasonable adjustments. NESA's [principles for exam modifications](#) ensure that reasonable and fair measures are taken to allow students with a disability to access exams on the same basis as other students.

3. Students benefit from early and complete applications for provisions

Most applications for disability provisions open in term 4 the year before a student's HSC exams and close at the end of term 1.

This timeframe allows time for schools to gather the relevant reports and evidence to submit an application, and time to lodge an appeal where appropriate. Applying for provisions on time gives students the opportunity to use their approved provisions in school-based tasks that take place prior to the HSC exams.

Late submissions create uncertainty for students and may not give them enough time to practise with their approved provisions or to use them in any school-based tasks. Schools should ensure that applications are submitted on time.

Schools will, in the future, be able to apply for HSC provisions as early as Year 10 for disabilities whose impact on a student's exam performance is unlikely to change. This includes students with diabetes, vision impaired students requiring braille, students with physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida, and students with long standing developmental coordination disorder causing illegible or painful writing requiring a writer.

NESA will advise when the early year 10 applications are available.

4. Provisions are not granted solely on the basis of a diagnosis

Disability impacts students in different ways and to different degrees. Applying a one-size-fits-all approach does not recognise the individual needs of each student. Students with the same disability may need and receive different provisions. It is therefore possible that students with

the same disability can have different approved provisions.

5. Provisions are determined on the basis of *functional evidence*

The impact of a condition or disability on how a student functions in an exam situation is the key consideration when determining provisions. Functional evidence can include results of the student's performance on approved reading and spelling tests, work samples that include extended responses and teacher comments on adjustments that have been trialled at school. NESA determines provisions by comparing a student's health reports and functional evidence against standards and guidelines set out by NESA's panel of specialists. Guidelines are subject to regular independent review and are confidential to NESA to preserve the integrity of the process.

6. Provisions are intended to provide access to HSC exams, not to achieve potential

Provisions aim to ensure that a student with a disability can read the exam questions and communicate their responses to the markers. The achievement of potential is subject to many variables outside the control of NESA, such as teaching, commitment, study and preparation for the exam.

7. HSC provisions are informed by planning and practice throughout high school

Some disabilities are evident for many years prior to the HSC exams. This means students and schools can practise and compare different adjustments in school-based tasks to determine what is appropriate for each student. Schools should maintain records of adjustments provided and how they enabled access to the task for students with a disability. These records will inform NESA decisions on provisions for HSC exams. This is most relevant for modifications of exam papers.

8. The HSC remains a handwritten exam for now*

Access to a computer can facilitate faster word production and easier editing compared to handwriting. For this reason, use of a computer is rarely approved. For access to a computer to be granted, it must be evident that no other provisions can address the specific needs of the disability for an individual student.

* The only exception is the HSC Science Extension examination, which is provided on line.

9. Approved provisions must not confer an advantage

The HSC is recognised for being a level playing field, where students sit for an exam at the same time and under the same conditions. A student with an approved unjustified provision, such as extra time to work, would receive a significant advantage over students without that provision. NESA must balance the interests of all students, including those without provisions.

10. HSC provisions may differ from school-determined adjustments for tests, assessments and classwork

Adjustments approved by schools for school-based assessment tasks may not be appropriate for the HSC exams. For the HSC, it is NESA's responsibility to ensure that students across NSW with similar functional evidence of the impact of their disability receive similar provisions. Schools should advise students that school-determined adjustments may not be approved by NESA for the HSC exams.

Applying for HSC disability provisions

Schools are responsible for submitting disability provision applications. However, students and parents should be involved throughout the application process. They can do this by:

- Discussing the impact of the student's disability with the school throughout schooling, including possible adjustments and support required for the student to access the curriculum as well as exams.
- Advising the school when the student's scheduled specialist appointments are taking place. In this way, the school can provide medical forms requiring completion at the appropriate time so that a special appointment just for this purpose is not required.
- Keeping the school up to date with any changes in impact of the disability, medications etc.

Application process for schools

1. Schools nominate at least one, preferably two, disability provision points of contact. NESAs recommends that these are members of the school learning and support team who are familiar with the student's issues. A school may choose different contact people for each student.
2. Schools submit all applications for HSC disability provisions through [Schools Online](#).
 - Principals can obtain access to Schools Online by calling Student Records on +61 2 9367 8001.
 - Principals can set up an account and provide access for staff members.

Instructions on how to submit an application are on [Schools Online](#) under the *Disability Provisions* section. Select *Work with Disability Provisions > How to Apply Online*.

Supporting evidence for applications

Each application must provide:

- **Evidence of a diagnosed disability**
 - NESAs medical, vision or hearing form(s) need(s) to be completed by a qualified health professional relevant to the condition(s). This must include the health professional's comments regarding the impact on the student's ability to access and respond to questions in an exam situation.
- **Functional evidence**
 - Specific measurable data that demonstrate the level of impact in an exam situation. For example, reading results, spelling results and writing samples that meet NESAs requirements as outlined on the NESAs application. The evidence must be relevant to the provisions requested – eg there is no need to provide writing samples for a student with reading or spelling difficulties.
- **Teacher comments**
 - These must show how the student's disability affects them and how provisions implemented at school address their needs in reading and/or responding to exam questions.

Detailed information about the type of evidence that is required for common provisions is included in *Types of Evidence*.

Key dates

Disability Provisions applications for:	Applications open	Deadline
Students for whom the impact of their permanent disability in exam situations will not change, eg students with diabetes, vision impaired students requiring braille, students with physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida, students with long standing developmental coordination disorder causing illegible or painful writing, requiring a writer.	Term 4 the year prior to the HSC	End of Term 1 of HSC year Note: In the future, NESAs are planning to have these applications open in Year 10 NESAs will advise when this is available
Students for whom the impact of their disability in exam situations may change, eg specific learning disorders, ADHD, epilepsy, Crohn's disease	Term 4 the year prior to the HSC	End of Term 1 of HSC year
Students for whom the impact of their disability in exam situations is variable and unstable, eg newly diagnosed psychiatric/neurological disorders. Applications for these conditions should only be submitted after intervention and/or therapy has been undertaken and evidence of strategies are in place to support the need for provisions requested. Details of strategies in place must be provided in the application.	Year 12, Term 3	End of week 6 of Term 3 of HSC year
Students who require emergency provisions for late injury and illness, eg car or sporting accidents, broken arm, recent surgeries	6 weeks prior to the start of HSC exams	Up until day of exam If an injury/illness occurs on the exam day or the day prior to the exam, schools should contact NESAs Student Support on (02) 9367 8117.

Assessment of applications

NESA reviews all applications and makes decisions based on the evidence submitted by the school using NESAs approved, evidence-based guidelines.

NESA has a panel of specialists that includes medical practitioners, educational psychologists and consultants for the visually or hearing impaired. NESAs request expert advice from this panel as required.

When a decision has been made, the decision letter listing the approved and/or declined provisions is provided to the principal and student through [Schools Online](#), with a copy for the principal and the student. The student will also receive an alert on [Students Online](#).

Appeals

Schools can appeal NESA's decision to decline a provision within 14 days of receiving the decision letter.

Parents or students wishing to appeal should speak with their school, which is responsible for submitting the appeal.

The appeal must include:

- the reason why the decision is considered unacceptable, referring to evidence supplied in the original application
- **new** supporting evidence. This may include a further medical report that clearly states why the student requires the provision with supporting evidence, or additional reading, writing or spelling test results. Providing medical reports that are older than the ones already provided will not assist with the appeal process.

NESA will consider the appeal, make a decision and notify the school on [Schools Online](#) within 21 days of receiving the appeal.

Cost of applications

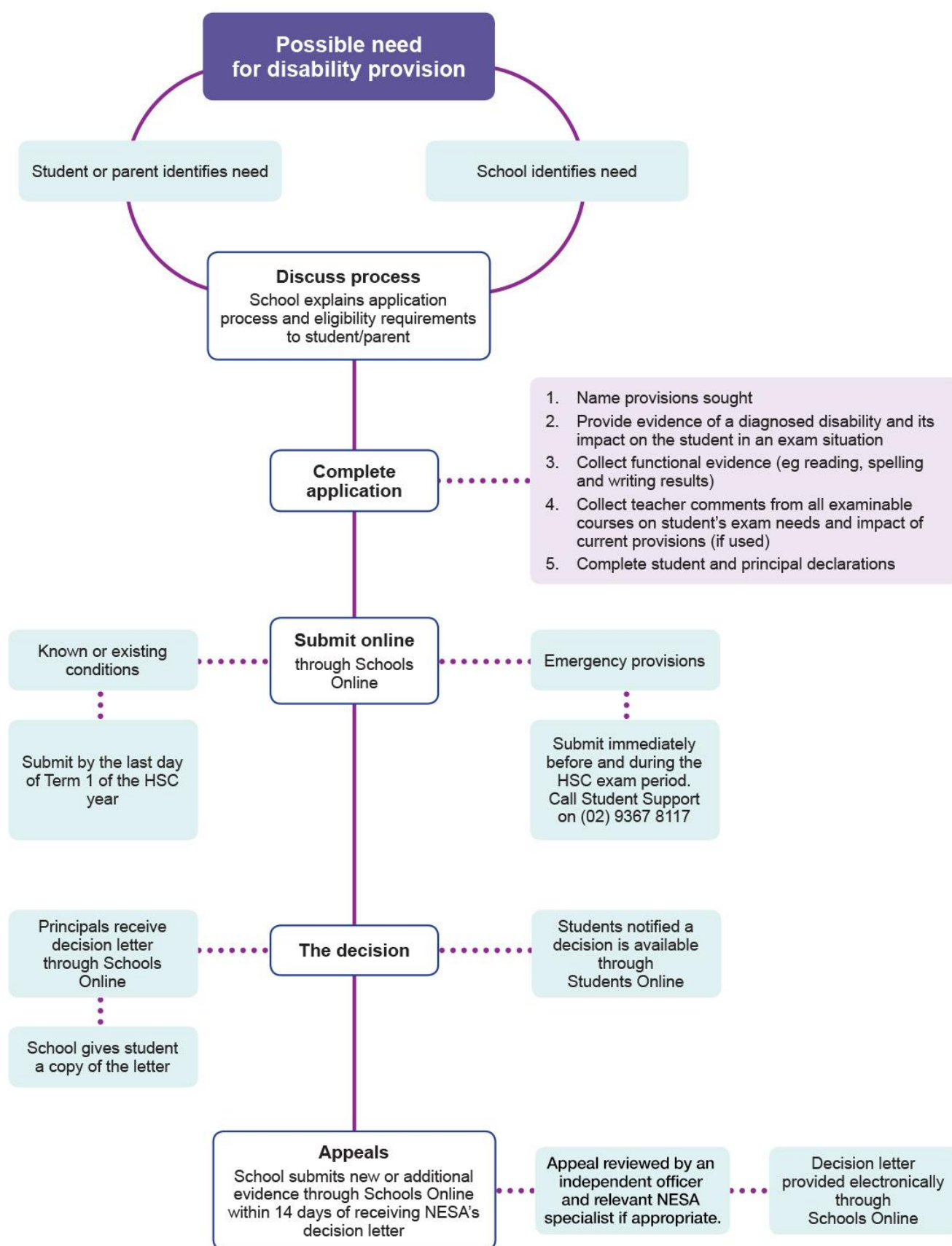
NESA has made the application process as practical and efficient as possible. In most cases, it will involve no cost or minimal cost to the student. NESA only requests evidence that is specific to the provisions being requested. Schools and students do not need to spend time or money obtaining unnecessary information. Please see the *Types of Evidence* table for more information.

- Most functional evidence can be obtained by schools (through reading and spelling tests, samples of a student's writing) at no additional cost to the school or student. Writing samples are usually from the student's own assessment tasks.
- In most cases, medical / hearing / vision reports can be obtained when the student regularly sees their health professional and will not require additional appointments or cost.
- Teachers are required to comment on the impact of provisions the student uses in exam situations. Collecting this information should be part of schools' usual practice in evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of in-school adjustments.

Note

Students benefit from early and complete applications for provisions. Appeals or applications submitted close to the exam date may not be resolved in time for that exam.

How to apply for disability provisions for HSC exams



Types of evidence

This section includes the most common provisions and the evidence that is required for a student to be eligible for these provisions. Evidence required will vary depending on the reason the provision is needed.

The list of provisions is not exhaustive. For advice on other provisions, schools can contact the NESA Student Support on +61 2 9367 8117 or email studentsupport@nesa.nsw.edu.au.

Provision	Disability / condition / symptom	Evidence required
Reader or electronic reader / C-pen	Reading disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ YARC, WIAT-II or WIAT-III reading test results ▪ NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers ▪ Student declaration
	Irlen syndrome / Scotopic sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ YARC, WIAT-II or WIAT-III reading test results ▪ NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers ▪ Student declaration
Writer	Pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability ▪ NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers ▪ Student declaration
	Spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ South Australian Spelling Test, WIAT-II or WIAT-III spelling test result ▪ NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers ▪ Student declaration
	Impaired written output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability ▪ Two writing samples that meet the criteria outlined on the Writing Sample Information form ▪ NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers ▪ Student declaration
Rest breaks	Anxiety disorder*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability ▪ NESA teacher comments forms, completed

Provision	Disability / condition / symptom	Evidence required
	Fatigue	by each of the student's teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student declaration * All students experience some degree of anxiety. Disability provisions are for students with a diagnosed disability
	Pain	
	Concentration difficulties (eg ADHD)	
Extra time to write	Impaired written output (due to physical or cognitive impairment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NESAs Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability ▪ Two writing samples that meet the criteria outlined on the Writing Sample Information form ▪ NESAs teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers ▪ Student declaration
Extra time to type (applies when a student is approved a computer or undertaking an online exam eg Science Extension)	Impaired typed output (due to physical or cognitive impairment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NESAs Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability ▪ Two typed samples that meet the criteria outlined on the Writing Sample Information form ▪ NESAs teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers ▪ Student declaration
Extra time Other than impaired typed /written output	Reading disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ YARC, WIAT-II or WIAT-III reading test results ▪ NESAs teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers ▪ Student declaration
	Hearing impairment with associated language delay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NESAs Hearing form ▪ YARC, WIAT-II or WIAT-III reading test results ▪ NESAs teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers ▪ Student declaration

Provision	Disability / condition / symptom	Evidence required
	Slower processing (eg medication, brain injury)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability Two writing samples that meet the criteria outlined on the Writing Sample Information form and/or YARC, WIAT-II or WIAT-III reading test results NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
	Physical impediment (eg cerebral palsy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability Two writing samples that meet the criteria outlined on the Writing Sample Information form NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
	Vision impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Vision form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Toilet breaks	Need for frequent or extended toilet breaks (eg Crohn's disease, bladder / urinary tract infection)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Enlarged font N18 / N24 / N36	Vision disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Vision form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Black and white papers (Geography and Visual Arts only)	Colour vision deficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Vision form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comment form, completed by the relevant teacher(s) Student declaration

Provision	Disability / condition / symptom	Evidence required
Diabetic provisions (includes breaks to test Blood Glucose Level, eat, drink, take insulin, go to the toilet and time to recover, if required)	Diabetes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of diabetes Student declaration
Examiner / marker aware (eg a student in a speaking or performance examination who requires accommodation where the student has a stutter or is unable to maintain eye contact.) This provision does not involve variation to marking guidelines.	Medical / hearing / vision (eg stutter, student relies on lip reading)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical / Hearing / Vision form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms completed by the relevant subject teachers, with specific details on how markers/examiners need to accommodate the student in the exam Student declaration
Infant feeding breaks (breastfeeding)	Baby born shortly before HSC exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical confirmation of pregnancy with expected delivery date or medical confirmation of birth NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Alternative venue (eg hospital supervision)	Student in hospital (eg undergoing treatment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability Alternative venue form completed by the school and the venue NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Home supervision	Student unable to leave home (eg extreme social phobia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability Alternative venue form completed by the school and the venue NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration

Provision	Disability / condition / symptom	Evidence required
Small group supervision	Social anxiety disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
	Hearing impairment (eg Tinnitus, difficulty with ambient noise)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Hearing form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Individual supervision	Condition that causes student to disrupt others or incapable of working near others (eg Tourette's syndrome, extreme social phobia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Modified exam paper (eg non-instrument paper – modifying questions that require drawing or measuring; or textual description to replace images)	Student unable to access standard exam questions (eg severe cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability Modified paper information profile completed by school (in Supporting Evidence section of disability provisions application form) NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
	Severe vision impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Vision form, including diagnosis of a related disability Modified paper information profile completed by school (in Supporting Evidence section of disability provisions application form) NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Oral interpreter	Hearing impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Hearing form, including diagnosis of a related disability and an unaided audiogram NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration

Provision	Disability / condition / symptom	Evidence required
Sign interpreter	Hearing impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Hearing form, including diagnosis of a related disability and an unaided audiogram NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Computer	Eligibility for a writer (see above) and inability to dictate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability, and evidence of why student cannot access the exam using other provisions, such as a writer Two writing samples that meet the criteria outlined on the Writing Sample Information form (unless handwriting causes pain or is physically impossible) Two typed samples that meet the criteria outlined on the Writing Sample Information form NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
	Vision impairment requiring the use of screen reader (eg JAWS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Vision form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Thesaurus/dictionary	Hearing impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Hearing form, including diagnosis of a related disability and an unaided audiogram NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Braille exam papers	Student's normal practice is to access text using braille (eg severe vision impairment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Vision form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Brailler	Student's normal practice is to respond using a Brailler (eg severe vision impairment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Vision form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration

Provision	Disability / condition / symptom	Evidence required
JAWS program to read exam questions	Student's normal practice is to access text using JAWS (eg vision impairment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Vision form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
JAWS program to read exam responses	Student's normal practice is to access their responses using JAWS (eg vision impairment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Vision form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Support person / prompter (eg someone to physically manipulate exam papers or equipment or prompt the student to proceed to next question)	Inability to move independently through the exam OR needs physical assistance (eg Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, significant cerebral palsy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Support person to be the reader / writer (student must be eligible for reader and/or writer)	Inability to communicate with a writer that meets the NESA reader/writer rules (eg Autism Spectrum Disorder)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Medical form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration
Coloured paper ONLY from the range below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflex Blue Reflex Green Reflex Pink Reflex Sand Reflex Yellow Trophee Lilac 	Irlen syndrome / Scotopic sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YARC, WIAT-II or WIAT-III reading test results – test conducted on white paper NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Must include evidence of the school providing coloured paper Student declaration
	Vision impairment (eg Albinism, Achromatopia causing glare distress)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NESA Vision form, including diagnosis of a related disability NESA teacher comments forms, completed by each of the student's teachers Student declaration

Support for schools

Contact the Student Support team for further information or assistance completing an application on

+61 2 9367 8117 or email studentsupport@nesa.nsw.edu.au.

Parents and students should contact their school in the first instance.

Useful links

[Principles for exam modifications](#)

Rules for specific provisions

- [Diabetic needs](#)
- [Rest breaks](#)
- [Oral and sign interpreters](#)
- [Computers/laptops](#)
- [Readers and writers](#)

Statistics and reports by:

- [sector](#)
- [school](#)
- [provision](#)