**Queen’s Register of Support Providers**

**Non-Medical Helper (NMH) Exam Support Guidelines**

**for Students**

**A. Exam Scribe Support**

**Definition of a Scribe**

An Exam Scribe is someone who writes down or types a student’s dictated answers to questions in an examination situation ie someone who **accurately transcribes what is spoken into written format**.

**Who uses an Exam Scribe?**

Exam Scribes are used by students with a range of disabilities:

* dyslexic students
* students with chronic medical conditions that result in a reduced ability or total inability to use fine motor skills
* blind or visually impaired students
* students with temporary injuries ie non-disabled students who have been rendered temporarily disabled due to accidental, sporting or other injuries of a temporary nature.

**Arrangement of an Exam Scribe**

Once you have met with your Disability Officer and your support needs have been identified, you will be referred to Queen’s Register of Support Providers. If you have been referred for exam scribing support, Queen’s Register of Support Providers will match you with a suitably experienced person from the Register. Letters of confirmation are then sent to both parties confirming the nature of support and each other’s contact details.

At this stage, the Exam Scribe is responsible for making the initial contact. Thereafter, both you and the Support Provider have equal responsibility for arranging further meetings. You will have access to your exam timetable information via the Queen’s Online system and it is **your responsibility** **to pass this information on to your Exam Scribe, particularly if your timetable changes at any point**.

Typically, exams for students who require special ‘Green Room’ arrangements will be scheduled in the Ashby Building and/or the Medical Biology Centre (MBC). Exam Scribes will be asked to report to a particular room in the Ashby/MBC on arrival and to make themselves known to the Invigilator. If computing facilities are required for typing up a student’s responses, a computer or lap top will be arranged in advance by the Exams Office and provided on the day for the student and his/her Exam Scribe.

**Student Responsibilities**

Students using Scribes in an exam situation must be aware of their own responsibilities so the experience is a positive and successful one for both parties. **The process relies on the student’s ability to use a Scribe effectively and efficiently.**

**Students should:**

1. **Meet or speak with the scribe in advance** of the exam to agree how you will work together, what the exam will involve (multiple choice, essays, diagrams, maps etc) and to discuss how to approach issues such as spelling, punctuation, presentation etc.

2. Establish in advance a way of **structuring the answers** that are to be dictated to the Scribe eg essay plans, mind maps, bullet points.

3. **Practice** using a Scribe (eg a friend or family member) by answering past paper questions under exam-type situations before sitting the real thing so you know what to expect and what methods work best for you.

4. Alternatively, you may **practice with the Scribe** you have been matched with. Your Education & Library Board, or the Central Services Agency if you are a Nursing student, will pay for one hour of practice exam scribing per student per course. Disability Services will fund the remainder.

5. Decide on the **seating** **arrangement** that will work best for you. Usually, if the Scribe is right handed, they will sit to the student’s right side or to the left if they are left handed.

6. Before dictating, **think** about exactly what you want to say before saying it.

7. **You should not discuss the exam questions** or speak with the Scribe except to:

* Ask the Scribe to read the exam instructions and questions;
* Dictate your responses, describe diagrams and instruct about layout, headings etc;
* Ask the Scribe to read aloud what has been written, and instruct about amendments as necessary;
* Respond to enquiries from the Scribe eg to clarify what was dictated or ask about spellings.

8. **Speak clearly and slowly** so the Scribe can hear and may write at a comfortable pace.

9. Indicate **punctuation, spelling, paragraphing** etc unless you have a specific learning difficulty (eg dyslexia) and you have agreed in advance that the Scribe should use their discretion as far as possible.

10. Clarify in advance with the Scribe if he/she is to **draw their own diagrams** so you know what to expect.

11. Provide your own **specialist equipment** such as calculators, set squares, compasses etc.

12.  **Read through** the whole paper at the end to ensure that all the information is correct and that details on the front cover of your script(s) (anonymous number etc) have been completed. With multiple choice papers, it is your responsibility to ensure that that the correct boxes have been ticked.

13. Be aware of both the **advantages and disadvantages** (see following page) of using a Scribe and remember that you are responsible for the information presented on the exam script, not your Scribe.

**Good Dictation**

Central to effective scribing is good dictation. Effective dictation ensures that ideas are accurately transferred to the written word. The key aspects of good dictation are clarity, punctuation and paragraphing. It is also helpful if you prepare notes, essay plans or mind maps prior to dictation to use as aide memoires and to help maintain focus and direction.

**Students should consider the following to help improve their style of dictation:**

**a. Clarity of Voice**

* Use a normal tone of voice.
* Speak slowly and distinctly to help the Scribe distinguish words correctly and to reduce the need for interruptions.
* Pronounce words clearly but at the same time, maintain fluency.
* If dictating numbers, pronounce them in a slightly exaggerated manner to avoid any confusion and say ‘zero’ for ‘0’.

**b. Fluency**

* Try to be sure of what you want to say before you say it but do not be afraid to ask your Scribe to make corrections as you go or at the end. Your Scribe should leave a clear line between each line of writing for this purpose.
* If stuck for a word, do not panic. Relax and concentrate on what you are trying to say.
* If you lose your train of thought, ask the Scribe to read back what has been written.
* Alternatively, you can request to read it back yourself.
* Use short sentences wherever possible.

**c. Spelling**

* Arrange in advance with your Scribe for them to indicate when unsure of how to spell a particular word/name. Alternatively, if you would prefer not to be interrupted until the end of the exam, agree this in advance.
* Spell out all words that you want to make sure are spelt correctly. Otherwise, wait until the Scribe seeks clarification from you.
* Check over your work at the end and check especially for readability, spelling errors, accuracy of references etc.
* If you have acknowledged spelling difficulties (eg if you are dyslexic), make your Scribe aware of this before the start of the exam and ask them to spell technical or difficult words as best they can.

**d. Punctuation/Paragraphing**

Good punctuation is essential to give structure and sense to what is written so you should ensure that you dictate punctuation to your Scribe (see below). Students with specific learning difficulties may wish to instruct their Scribes to punctuate “as necessary”.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **If you want to….** | **then say…** |
| End a sentence | “full stop” |
| End a paragraph | “new paragraph” or “full stop, paragraph” |
| End a question | “question mark” |
| Create a short pause | “comma” |
| Open brackets | “open brackets” |
| Close brackets | “close brackets” |
| Start a quotation | “quote” |
| End a quotation | “unquote” |
| Introduce a list of items | “colon” |
| Break a sentence | “dash” |
| \*Start a new section | “new major heading” |
| \*Indicate a new sub-section | “new sub heading” |
| \*Indicate a new minor sub-section | “new minor sub-heading” |

\*Check in advance with your Module Co-ordinator and/or Advisor of Studies that the use of headings in your exam script is acceptable. Headings are useful to help organise your responses and keep to the point.

**Advantages of Using a Scribe**

1. It does not aggravate or further damage existing medical conditions or injuries.
2. It provides an opportunity to produce written information that is comparable in volume and style to that of other students.
3. It ensures that the written papers are legible for the examination markers.
4. It enables the exams for ‘Green Room’ students to be scheduled at the same time as other students and removes the need for deferring exams.
5. It reduces the risk of something ‘going wrong’ when technical solutions such as recorders are used.
6. It can be used in a range of assessment situations eg in the laboratory or field as well as the examination room.
7. It is adaptable to a wide range of disability and medical conditions.

**Disadvantages of Using a Scribe**

1. Control of the writing process is removed from the student.
2. To reproduce their understanding of a topic in written format, the process relies on the student’s ability to use a Scribe effectively and efficiently.
3. It relies on the ability of the Scribe to reproduce dictated information accurately, efficiently and legibly.
4. For the student, structuring and keeping track of one’s thoughts is challenging in itself and is even more so when using a Scribe in an examination setting.
5. The ‘stop-start’ nature of dictation can interrupt the flow of thought.
6. Lack of familiarity with the method of scribing may increase already high levels of examination-related anxiety.

**B. Reader Support**

**Definition of a Reader**

An Exam Scribe may also be expected to provide some Reader support during the exam. Alternatively, a student may be referred for Reader support only.

A Reader is the communication channel through which you can access your examination paper. **Any interpretation or understanding of any aspect of the paper is entirely your own responsibility.**

In an exam situation, a Reader will, **as often as requested**, read out to you the exam paper instructions, the questions, any accompanying material and/or any part of the your written answers.

**Who uses Readers in an Exam Situation?**

Normally, Readers are used by students with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties, by students with visual impairments and by students with underlying medical conditions like MS which may cause visual disturbances.

**Exam Reader Arrangements**

As with Exam Scribes, once you have been matched with a Reader, the Reader is responsible for making the initial contact with you. Thereafter, both you and the Support Provider have equal responsibility for arranging further meetings. You will have access to your exam timetable information via the Queen’s Online system and it is your responsibility to pass this information on to your Reader. Queen’s Register of Support Providers will also receive copies of the exam information for each student from the Exams Office and this will be emailed to the Reader to allow them to confirm their availability.

Normally the exams for students using Reader support are held in the Peter Froggatt Centre (PFC). Readers and students are asked to report 20 – 30 minutes before the start of the exam, to room 03/006A in the PFC and to make themselves known to the Chief Invigilator. You will then be directed to the room that you will be using.

**Your Reader will:**

* Read accurately, without explaining or clarifying any words or terms;
* Read in a clear, articulate voice and at a normal pace ie not to fast/slow;
* Identify which visual materials relate to which questions and explain this to you;
* Read the words on diagrams, maps etc;
* On request, spell words in the questions but **not** in the answers produced by you;
* Only read what you ask them to read and only read when you require them to;
* Repeat the instructions given on the question paper only when specifically requested to do so by you;
* Be familiar with the subject and terminology where the exams involve foreign languages or scientific/mathematical/technical subjects.

**Your Reader will not:**

* Elaborate on or explain any aspects of the questions;
* Interpret or discuss the questions or your answers;
* Act as a proof reader;
* Offer any factual assistance or suggestions;
* Advise you about which questions to attempt, when to move on to the next question or the order in which questions should be completed;
* Make any comments about the questions or use any intonation to emphasise any parts of the questions;
* Read any section of the paper if not requested to do so;
* Discuss anything with you unless it relates to re-reading parts of the exam paper;
* Refuse to read anything over again if asked.

**Readers for Students who are Visually Impaired**

Readers working with students with visual impairments will:

* Read, as often as requested, the questions and the answers already recorded;
* If asked, give information regarding the amount of time elapsed and time remaining;
* Help you use tactile maps, diagrams, graphs and tables to obtain information readily available to sighted students;
* Give the spelling of a word only if requested.

**Students Using Reader Support**

Students using a Reader for their exams are:

1. Strongly encouraged to **practice** working with the Reader or even a friend/relative before using this type of support in an exam situation. As with practice Scribing sessions, your Support Provider will be paid for any practice Reader sessions you have with them.

2. Advised to ask their Reader to **read out the instructions** for the exam paper so you understand exactly what is required. **This is** **essential** as the Reader will not be able to advise you if you have answered the wrong number of questions.

3. Recommended to ask the Reader to make marks against the questions you intend to answer. Alternatively, take a note of the question numbers you aim to attempt.

4. Encouraged to tell the Reader to speed up or to slow down if the pace is not suitable for you.

5. Advised to not feel self-conscious about asking for anything to be re-read as this is precisely what your Reader is there to do.

6. Required to not ask the Reader to comment on any aspect of the exam questions or your answers. **Any interpretation or understanding of the exam paper is entirely the responsibility of the student.**

**C. Prompter Support**

A Prompter is someone who will sit with a student in an exam situation and help the candidate stay on track, focus on their exam and complete the paper within the prescribed time limit. Students using this form of exam support will have an individual room arranged for them by the Exams Office.

Prompters are normally assigned to students with concentration difficulties, extreme time management issues and/or who lose track of time easily. This can include students with obsessive-compulsive disorders, Asperger’s Syndrome and mental health difficulties.

Occasionally the role will be combined with other exam support roles and a student’s Scribe and/or Reader may also be required to act as their Prompter.

**Main Duties**

A Prompter will sit beside the student in an exam situation to provide moral support, encourage the candidate to remain focused on the exam and, if appropriate, to suggest when to move on the next question / advise on time lapsed and remaining. The Prompter should be familiar enough with the student to know the difference between real attention lapses and periods of thinking. If the Prompter is aware of a lapse of concentration, he/she should immediately bring back the student’s concentration by using one of the below prompting methods.

**Examples of Prompting Methods** (use whichever method works best for you)

* A **tap** on the table or on the student’s arm to break the ‘spell’ and encourage the student to regain their concentration.
* **Verbal cues** and/or use of the student’s name to remind them to focus, move on to the next question or to inform on how much time is left.
* **Visual cues / flashcards** shown to the student to encourage them to re-focus or move on to the next question.

**A Prompter will:**

* Indicate, using the agreed prompting method, when to re-focus and/or move on.
* Be able to identify the difference between a period of thought and an actual lapse in concentration.
* Ensure that the student is clear about the limitations of the Prompter role.
* Only provide Scribe and/or Reader support if assigned to the student as a Scribe Prompter, Reader Prompter or Scribe Reader Prompter.

**A Prompter will not:**

* Advise on which questions to approach.
* Offer any factual help or suggestions.
* Suggest which order questions should be answered in.
* Scribe and/or read anything unless they have been assigned to as a Scribe Prompter, Scribe Reader or Scribe Reader Prompter.

**Queries**

If you have any queries about scribing or questions about your non-medical helper exam support, please contact:

**Queen’s Register of Support Providers**

Disability Services

Queen’s University

Belfast, BT7 1NN

**Tel:** 028 90 975275; **Email:** nmhregister@qub.ac.uk

**Web:** [www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/StudentsReceivingNon-MedicalSupport/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/StudentsReceivingNon-MedicalSupport/)