Students with Special Allowances – FAQs

Issued on 24/4/2020

Getting used to a change in the way we work always takes time. The following steps may help:

1) Make sure you have the equipment and assistive technology you need

2) Make sure you know how it works well in advance of the exam, so you feel confident on the day

3) Do a trial run in advance so you know how you may feel, and what issues there might be, making sure that you can successfully access the various assistive technologies outlined below.

4) If you have read the FAQs below and still feel unsure, please do contact Victoria Crowe, our HE Tutorial Supervisor, via email Victoria.crowe@ccn.ac.uk who will be able to assist you.

Does the 10-day extension option, available to all students during this Covid-19 pandemic, apply on top of the 2 weeks additional time on assessments for those with special allowances?

No, the option for a 10-working day extension applies to all students during the pandemic. However, if you have special allowances and feel that this 10-working day extension is not sufficient you do have the option to request, via the Mitigating circumstances process (but without the need to supply supporting evidence), to submit at the next assessment period (August) and this will be treated as a first attempt uncapped (i.e. a defer).

I have rest breaks and extra time set up for my exams. How do I incorporate this during the exam?

The College's plan is for online assessments to be taken in an open format and within an extended time period of 23 or 24 hours to enable all students enough time to complete it. You will be told how long the exam is expected to take (for example 2 hours), when the questions will be released and the deadline to submit your answers. You can complete your exam at any time within the 23 or 24 hour window and you can build in rest breaks and take longer than the expected time to complete your exam. You don't need to show evidence of when you started and ended your exam and you don't need to record when you took rest breaks.

However, ALL students must stick within the given word limits, or risk penalties.

I have Invigilator prompts such as timing or focus reminders
You can set a number of alarms to help you notice the passing of time and to remind you of where you are in the exam. These could be set every 10 mins or so, to bring your attention back to the exam. It is not appropriate to have another person in your household to act as a prompt for you.

I usually have my exam paper printed on coloured paper/ larger font
You can print out your exam paper if you wish or use any coloured overlays that you have available. However, you can also amend the settings on your computer to view your document with a different background colour. You can also amend font size. There are a number of ways

to do this, depending on your computer. Please refer to the following website to search for specific guidance: https://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk/impairment/vision.

I find it difficult to read on screen
You can print out your exam paper if you wish. Alternatively see the information below about utilising Text to Speech software, so your exam paper can be read to you.

Please also note that you can download your exam paper in alternative formats using Blackboard Ally. More information about Blackboard Ally is available online at https://studentccnac.sharepoint.com/sites/0001/SitePages/Blackboard.aspx#how-to-use-blackboard-ally-to-download-alternative-formats

Blackboard have also introduced a stand-alone conversion tool where you can upload a file and it will produce the alternative formats – see https://ally.ac/covid19/.

I usually have a scribe and / or a reader in an exam
Assistive software can read text out to you to take the place of a scribe (i.e. Text to Speech, Screen Readers). Assistive software can also be used so you can dictate words to your computer (i.e. Speech to Text). You may already have Speech to Text, Text to Speech or a Screen Reader software on your computer. These may be in-built features specific to your computer, software you have been recommended via a DSA Needs assessment (e.g. Text Help Read and Write Gold, Claro Read & Dragon Naturally Speaking) or equivalent programmes you have found yourself.

You can use these in your exam without seeking additional permission. It is not appropriate to have another person in your household to act as a reader or scribe for you.

I have assistive technology software on my computer but I am out of practice in using it
If your software was recommended through DSA, you will have been allocated a number of training sessions to familiarise yourself with the software. You can check with the assistive technology training provider (detailed on your DSA2 letter) whether you have any training hours left to use on a refresher session. If you have used all of the recommended assistive technology training hours, you can email your needs assessor and ask if they can recommend refresher training sessions.

There are a number of free online tutorials you can search for online.

How will I know whether the exam paper format is compatible with my assistive technology?
As many exam papers as possible will be produced in Word and will be formatted with headers and alt text on images/diagrams/graphs to make them compatible with screen reader software. Some exam papers may have to be in PDF because of the software they're produced on. These should work with the majority of assistive technology programmes.

If you are unsure of the format that the exam paper will be in, please check with your Course leader or Module lecturer. Once you know what format the paper will be in you can check in advance that it is compatible with your software.

I have never used assistive technology for Speech to Text, or Text to Speech. What are the options?

Blackboard Ally allows you to download documents in alternative formats. Please refer to the guidance online**: https://youtu.be/tOORcSEjtJU**

Please note though that Ally works for resources uploaded to Blackboard and not on other sites such as ATS.

Free Screen readers and Speech to Text add-ons: your computer may have inbuilt features for Text to Speech and Speech to Text.
Visit https://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk/impairment/make-your-device-talk-to-you for advice on Text to Speech functions specific to your computer.
Visit https://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk/impairment/talking-to-your-device for advice on Speech to Text functions specific to your computer.

Microsoft Word has in-built Text to Speech and Speech to Text functions. Google Chrome Screen Reader & Google Drive Voice have similar functions. These should be free to access. Please see below for further guidance and please note that other equivalent free software is available.

Speech to Text and Text to Speech within Microsoft Word
Depending on what version of Microsoft Word you are using, you may have access to the in-built Speech to Text and Text to Speech functions. These may not work on older versions of Word. The information below includes links to guides on how to utilise these features using the latest versions of Word through Office 365**.**

Please note you can download Office 365 onto your home computer or device, when you login to your SharePoint account, or via the IT help within the Student Zone area of Blackboard.

- Speech to Text in Word for Word for Office 365 - https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/dictate-your-documents-in-word-3876e05f-3fcc-418f-b8ab-db7ce0d11d3c?redirectSourcePath=%252fen-gb%252farticle%252fdictate-your-documents-d4fd296e-8f15-4168-afec-1f95b13a6408&ui=en-US&rs=en-GB&ad=GB#Tab=Web

- Text to Speech in Word for Office 365, Word 2019, 2016, 2010 - https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/use-the-speak-text-to-speech-feature-to-read-text-aloud-459e7704-a76d-4fe2-ab48-189d6b83333c

- Text to Speech in Word for Office 365 using Read Aloud - https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/listen-to-your-word-documents-with-read-aloud-967a1533-4ba3-4e84-8ddc-132b1564434f

Office 365 Immersive Reader
The Office 365 Immersive Reader is available in the online versions of Word, Outlook and OneNote. It has many features to support learners with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, or speakers with English as an additional language. Features include:

- Parts of speech - highlight words of a certain type, for example nouns and verbs.
- Syllabification - break words down into syllables.
- Focus mode - focus on one line or paragraph at a time.
- Translation - translate individual words or the whole document. A picture dictionary is also available for some words.
- Read aloud - have the computer read a word or the whole text aloud.

Text to Speech using the Google Chrome Reader add on

- Open Google Chrome as your internet browser
- Go to the Google Chrome Web Store (https://chrome.google.com/webstore/category/extensions)
- Search using key words 'Read Aloud' and select the 'Read Aloud: A Text to Speech Voice Reader'
- Click Add to Chrome, Add Extension
- Here is a brief You Tube video on using the function and adding the reader: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIJ6VYd99lg
- You should now see a megaphone icon on the top right corner of the Chrome Browser
- Here is a link to a video on how to use the Read Aloud function: https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/read-aloud-a-text-to-spee/hdhinadidafjejdhmfkjgnolgimiaplp?hl=en

Speech to Text using Google Drive

- You will need to use Google Chrome as your internet browser
- You will also need to set up a Google account and open Google Drive: https://www.google.com/drive/
- Open a document you want to work on in Google Drive
- Click on Tools and select Voice Typing
- Click on the Microphone icon and it will type what you dictate