

Heriot-Watt University

**SCRIBING, READING
and INVIGILATING
In exams**

A Guide for Staff and Students

October 2019

GUIDELINES FOR SCRIBING, READING and INVIGILATING

INFORMATION FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

Principles

Where students are prevented from satisfying the normal requirements for examinations and class tests because of a disability, it is appropriate for compensatory arrangements to be made. This includes, where appropriate, the use of a scribe/reader.

The use of a scribe/reader in such circumstances enables the student to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of a topic and places them on a par with their peers.

Why provide this support?

- Students have been used to this adjustment at school
- Students may not be proficient typists
- Provide an equal opportunity to show their knowledge and understanding
- Disability Service are legally required to make 'reasonable adjustments' for students

Reasonable adjustments should:

- be the *minimum necessary* to allow the student to demonstrate their level of ability
- not be intended to compensate for lack of attainment
- not give any advantage to the candidate

Who needs a scribe/reader?

Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia, dyspraxia etc.)

Commonly, this group of students forms the largest percentage of students with a disability in H.E. Given the wide range and level of reading, writing and comprehension difficulties experienced by students in this category, it is likely that some students will find it easier to verbalise their answers rather than write them. Using a scribe in this instance is entirely appropriate, though some students may prefer to use a PC. Students with dysgraphia in particular should not be expected to write by hand if they are used to using a scribe.

Students with Permanent Disabilities, Chronic Medical Conditions and Temporary Disabilities

There are a number of disabilities and chronic medical conditions, which may necessitate using a scribe such as a visual impairment or concentration problems. Many medical conditions result in reduced ability or total inability to use fine motor skills. Such conditions can cause difficulties in writing, often affecting the use of fingers, hands and arms. Writing can produce high levels of discomfort and pain which, in many cases, can result in physical damage to nerve and even muscle tissue.

Examples of these include:

- Carpel Tunnel Syndrome
- Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)
- Tendonitis
- Tenosynovitis
- Students with temporary injuries such as fracture

All are covered by professional evidence of disability.

The Disability Service recruit, test and train scribes/readers to ensure acceptable standards.

Who is responsible for arranging a scribe/reader for students?

It is the responsibility of the Disability Service to put the initial adjustments of a scribe and/or reader in place for the student.

It is the responsibility of the School setting the assessment to arrange for a scribe/reader to support a student in their exams.

Arrangements made by the School should take into account:

- Accommodation - separate room with sufficient desk space to accommodate both the student and the scribe.
- Invigilation – this will be carried out by the scribe/reader unless otherwise directed by the School.
- Extra time allowance is recommended for scribing (normally 25%).
- At exams, copies of the exam paper should be given to both scribe/reader and student.
- There should be clear identification on the exam paper that a scribe has been used. On return of the exam paper to the school office, make sure the scribe has noted on the exam booklet the word “scribed” to alert the marker.
- Graphics and diagrams should be produced by the student (unless the disability is a physical one).
- Any problems experienced by either the student or the reader/scribe should be communicated back to the Disability Service in order for this kind of information to be stored centrally. The Disability Service will also take investigative action where required and liaise with the student and reader/scribes as necessary.

Guidelines for Scribing Practice

The Scribe should:

- Turn up 30 minutes before the start of the exam (or as per the School Administrator's instructions)
- Have attended training for the scribing and examination process
- Not have any close connection with the student
- Agree a method of working and managing the exam situation with the student prior to the start of the exam

Writing Speed

The Scribe should be able to handwrite at a reasonable speed over prolonged periods of time.

Legibility

In most cases, the Scribe will hand write. It is important that scribes are able to *write clearly and neatly* – students may wish to read over what is being written. Scribes should sit next to the student so that they can see what is being written.

Occasionally Scribes may be asked to type but will be notified in advance if this is the case. Please notify the school if you do NOT want to type for students in exams.

Communication

The Scribe should be able to communicate clearly and effectively with the student.

Accuracy

The scribe must **not** re-word, re-structure, fill out or in any way augment what is dictated by the student. When requested, the scribe/reader must read back any passages or make alterations to the text on the exact instructions of the student.

It is recommended that the scribe write on every second line in order to accommodate changes, additions and corrections.

Ethical Standards

The scribe/reader must respect student confidentiality at all times and adhere to the University's expectations of scribes.

CHECKLIST FOR SCRIBES

- Before the exam, collect the exam paper 30 minutes in advance or as per the School Administrator's instructions

Do...

- Sit beside the student, so that they can see what you are writing
- Make the student feel as relaxed as possible
- Discuss how you will tackle punctuation, spelling, formulae, etc.
- Give any reminders prior to the exam starting (e.g., "remember that I can read parts as often as you would like me to")
- Write down exactly what the student has dictated
- Make alterations to answers if requested
- Put in the correct punctuation if pre-arranged
- Agree whether you will alert them, e.g. 30 minutes before the end
- Remember to note on the exam booklet the word "scribed" to alert the marker
- Any difficulties – contact School Administrator staff (ensure you have their contact details)
- If the student does not turn up for their exam, you will still be paid for the full session

Don't...

- Explain any words
- Explain any questions
- Provide the student with any additional information
- Suggest when to move on to the next question
- Emphasise correct answers (or incorrect answers) in any way
- Show by your facial expression or body language that the answer given is correct, incorrect, or quite unbelievable
- Show by keeping your pen poised too obviously that you think more needs to be written
- Comment either way if a student asks if the answer is correct
- Draw diagrams, tables or graphs (though adding words to graphics on request is acceptable) unless the student has a physical disability
- Ask a student with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) to spell or punctuate (if you are unsure of a technical term or how to spell a word, use your common sense – spell it phonetically.)
- Don't use your mobile phone
- Be late, this causes unnecessary stress for the student

Guidelines for Reading Practice

The Reader should:

- Turn up 30 minutes before the start of the exam (or as per the School Administrator's instructions)
- Have attended training for the reader and examination process
- Not have any close connection with the student
- Agree a method of working and managing the exam situation with the student prior to the start of the exam

Good Reading Practice

The Reader should be able to read clearly and at a reasonable pace over prolonged periods of time. It is recommended that readers sit next to the students in order that they are at hand to read anything that the student requires.

- Adopt a normal tone of voice
- Be aware of how you articulate words - speak clearly to assist the scribe to distinguish words correctly and reduce the need for interruptions
- Enunciate more clearly than usual while maintaining fluency
- If numbers need to be dictated, tell the scribe before you begin. Say "zero" for '0' and pronounce numbers in a slightly exaggerated fashion to avoid any confusion

Communication

The Reader should be able to communicate clearly and effectively with the student.

CHECKLIST FOR READERS

Reading in an exam

- Before the exam, collect the exam paper 30 minutes in advance or as per the School Administrator's instructions

Do...

- Sit beside the student, so that they can see what you are reading
- Make the student feel as relaxed as possible
- Sit quietly next to the student when not reading
- Give any reminders prior to the exam starting (e.g., "remember that I can read parts as often as you would like me to")
- Read what the student asks you to as often as the student requests it
- Point to the section being read
- Read at normal speed
- Read words on maps, graphs, tables, etc.
- Read back what the student has written if requested
- Agree whether you will alert them, e.g. 30 minutes before the end
- Any difficulties – contact School Administrator staff (ensure you have their contact details)
- If the student does not turn up for their exam, you will still be paid for the full session

Don't...

- Select passages to read without the student indicating this is desired
- Explain any words
- Explain any questions
- Provide the student with any additional information
- Suggest when to move on to the next question
- Emphasise correct answers (or incorrect answers) in any way
- Show by your facial expression or body language that the answer given is correct, incorrect, or quite unbelievable
- Comment either way if a student asks if the answer is correct
- Don't use your mobile phone
- Be late, this causes unnecessary stress for the student

CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS

Before the exam

- Check your scribe/reader adjustments are showing on SSS:
https://myhwu.hw.ac.uk/HWSAS8/twbkwbis.P_WWWLogin
- You may not want to use a scribe/reader for every exam. Your School Administrator will email you asking in which exam you would like to use a scribe/reader. You must reply to this email to let them know as soon as possible.

In the exam

- The scribe/reader will also act as the invigilator
- Check seating arrangement to make sure you are both comfortable and able to work effectively
- Discuss the way you would like the reader/scribe to work – will you draft answers first before dictating to them for example.
- Prepare any mind maps or other notes for yourself if you wish, before beginning dictation (inform your scribe of what you are doing)

Reviewing Scribing/Reading arrangements

- Suggest any changes that would be helpful to your School Administrator
- Check with your School Administrator if your suggestions have been acted upon, well in advance of your next exam

GUIDELINES ON GOOD DICTATION PRACTICE

Dictation is the central aspect of scribing. Good dictation ensures that ideas are accurately transferred from thought into the written word. The main aspects of good dictation are *clarity, punctuation and paragraphing*. It may also be helpful for you to prepare your own mind maps or notes prior to dictation.

Headings can also be very useful in creating structure. The following guidelines will assist in the development of an effective and speedy dictation style. Many of these points will be particularly applicable to essay-type examinations or other written assignments or reports. Students should take note of the following suggestions to improve their style of dictation.

Clarity of Voice in Dictation

- Adopt a normal tone of voice
- Be aware of how you articulate words - speak clearly to assist the scribe to distinguish words correctly and reduce the need for interruptions
- Enunciate more clearly than usual while maintaining fluency
- If numbers need to be dictated, tell the scribe before you begin. Say "zero" for '0' and pronounce numbers in a slightly exaggerated fashion to avoid any confusion

Fluency

- If stuck for a word, don't panic: relax and concentrate on the idea you want to express.
- If you lose your train of thought, you can ask the scribe to read back what has been written.
- Alternatively, you can ask to read what has been written yourself.
- Try to be sure of what you want to say before you say it, but ask the scribe to make corrections if necessary.

Spelling

- Normally the scribe will spell words to the best of their ability. The paper will have the word 'scribed' put on it so that any spelling errors will not be attributed to the student.

Punctuation

- Normally the scribe will add punctuation unless otherwise directed by the student.

Paragraphing

- Let the scribe know when you are starting a new paragraph.

Handy Hints and Words of Advice

- Respond quickly to any requests from the School Administrators.
- Only take on roles which you have been approved for.
- Have contact details of School Administrator in case of a problem.
- Be on time for the exam. Remember you are being paid for the 30 minutes before the official exam starts.
- If you are unwell and cannot cover the exam please let the School Administrator know as soon as possible.
- A student will always have extra time if a scribe/reader is required, if exam has started late due to no fault of the student, add this time to the end of the exam.
- Check for nearest toilet and emergency exit.
- Don't leave the room unless student needs a toilet break.
- Bring a pen that you are comfortable writing with for extended periods of time.
- Check the list of adjustments that are provided by the school administrator.
- They will let you know if the student is sitting an 'open book' exam and will have access to their notes.
- Respect the student's exam, minimum disruption is expected.
- If someone enters the room or PC lab while student is sitting exam, politely ask them to leave.
- Do not use a PC/laptop while student is sitting their exam, the clicking of keys is distracting.
- If you are a reader or scribe, do not wear headphones, be alert and sit beside the student awaiting next question etc.
- If invigilating you can read but please use an eBook as the turning of pages can be distracting.
- Turn off your Mobile phone and ensure the student has their mobile phone switched off.
- Check who you have to give paper to at end of exam as you have responsibility for this until you hand it over to the appropriate person.
- If the student has a medical emergency call 2222 – SafeGuarding.
- Cancelled sessions may happen at times – the administrators will give as much notice as possible.
- Let us know if you have a bad experience.

Further Information

For further information and advice, please contact:

The Disability Service

Disability@hw.ac.uk

0131 451 3386

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