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BOTSWANA  
EXAMINATIONS  
COUNCIL

## **Guidelines for:**

# **Access Arrangement and Special Consideration; A Guide for Centres**

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## 1. Introduction

This booklet is intended to assist centres entering candidates who:

- have permanent or long-term special needs;
- suffer from medical conditions which affect performance at the time of the examinations;
- have sat examinations under adverse conditions due to illness, bereavement, etc.

There are a large number of Access Arrangements which might be agreed. For example;

- Candidates with communication difficulties may have problems with written communication skills. Such candidates may need extra time to complete written work, or they may need the assistance of a writer or the use of a word processor.
- Candidates with cognitive and learning difficulties may require extra time for examinations, and they may also need assistance with reading the question paper and/or writing the answers.
- Candidates with sensory and physical needs might need extra time, a reader, a sign language interpreter or the use of a word processor or a scribe. In addition, they may require a question paper with modified print (enlarged or brailled) or modified language (simplified).
- Candidates with behavioural or emotional needs might need rest breaks, separate invigilation or accommodation arrangements. They might also need extra time, a reader or a writer.

This booklet contains a comprehensive summary of the more common Access Arrangements which are available. However, each case will be considered individually, and centres are free to request Access Arrangements other than those included here.

## 2. What are Access Arrangements

2.1 Access Arrangements are made to allow candidates with long-term or permanent disabilities gain access to BEC qualifications and to demonstrate their attainment in the best possible circumstances. The Access Arrangements which might be agreed include allowing the candidate extra time in an examination, providing a modified question paper, and assisting the candidate in reading the question paper or in writing the answers.

2.2 The intention of Access Arrangements is to provide an environment in which all candidates can demonstrate what they know and what they can do. However, Access Arrangements should not give candidates an unfair advantage.

2.3 In order to ensure fairness and equity, BEC will always require centres to provide evidence of need before any Access Arrangements can be agreed.

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### 3. Principles Governing Access Arrangements

3.1 The following principles will apply when Access Arrangements are considered:

- All candidates, including those for which Access Arrangements have been made, will be assessed according to the same marking criteria, so that all grades issued to candidates have the same validity.
- All candidates will be assessed for what they know and what they can do rather than what they might have achieved had circumstances been different.
- Access Arrangements must not compromise the integrity of the assessment, and for this reason, the arrangements which are available will be restricted in some syllabuses.
- Access Arrangements cannot be made to compensate for the fact that English is not a candidate's first language.
- Candidates might not require the same Access Arrangements in each examination. Subjects and assessments vary, often leading to different demands on the candidate.
- Centres should request Access Arrangements which reflect the candidate's normal way of working and for which there is evidence of need.
- Failure to comply with the guidance in this booklet has the potential to constitute malpractice which might affect the issue of candidates' results. Failure to comply is defined as putting in place Access Arrangements that have not been approved by BEC or permitting Access Arrangements which are not supported by appropriate evidence.

3.2 Access Arrangements will not be permitted if their application would compromise the assessment objectives of the syllabus. The application of this principle has a number of important implications for candidates who are in need of Access Arrangements:

- Centres are advised to contact BEC at the beginning of the candidate's course of study to ensure that it will be possible to make Access Arrangements which are adequate and appropriate. In particular, it is important that a candidate does not embark on a course of study which leads to examinations which require skills to be demonstrated which are beyond the scope of the candidate unless it is known in advance that adequate Access Arrangements can be made.
- Some types of impairment may affect the candidate's ability to meet the requirements of the assessment objectives specified in the syllabus, and it might not be possible to devise Access Arrangements which will enable the candidate to demonstrate attainment in these assessment objectives. In such cases, it may be considered inappropriate for such candidates to follow a course of study which leads to an examination parts of which cannot be accessed by the candidates.
- If a candidate is fully aware that they will not be able to meet all the assessment criteria but

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still wishes to proceed with the course of study, the candidate may do so at the discretion of the centre.

3.3 The following are examples of how the assessment criteria for certain syllabuses would limit the access arrangements which could be made available to the candidate:

- A disabled candidate can make only limited use of his hands but wishes to follow a course leading to BGCSE Design & Technology. The candidate is unable to design or realise without a lot of help. In such circumstances, the candidate would be unable to access the most important and compulsory assessment objectives, and no access arrangements can be offered. In such circumstances, little allowance could be made for the disability, and the candidate would find it very difficult to meet the demands of the assessment.
- A candidate with learning difficulties has difficulty in reading and writing properly but wishes to take JC English. As the assessment objectives being tested in English include reading and writing, the candidate cannot be allowed a reader to access the question paper. The use of a writer may be permissible, but without the use of a reader, candidate would be significantly disadvantaged.
- A candidate who has little or no use in the hands wishes to take BGCSE Art & Design in painting, and the centre suggests that another person could paint according to the candidate's instructions. Since the most important assessment objective is the ability to paint, such Access Arrangements could not be allowed.

## 4. Applying for Access Arrangements

### 4.1 Procedure to be followed when applying for Access Arrangements

The following procedures should be followed when applying for Access Arrangements:

- Application for Access Arrangements should be made well in advance of the examination. BEC cannot guarantee to deal with late applications, particularly when modified question papers are required. Generally, applications should be received at BEC three months in advance of the first examination for which the access arrangement is required.
- Applications should be made using **BEC/EAC/P05/F01 – Application for Access Arrangement** form. Centres should make sure that the correct form is used and that all relevant information is provided.
- Applications must be submitted by the Head of Centre (or Private Candidate). Applications cannot be accepted from school candidates or their parents. Centres should note that, although applications will often be supported by information from the Special Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development or registered practitioners, applications must be made by the Head of Centre and **not** by the Special Education Department.

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- All applications should normally be supported by medical evidence in the form of a statement from a registered medical practitioner and/or a statement from the Special Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development. In the case of permanent or long-term disability, it is expected that the Special Education Department would have been involved, perhaps over a long period of time. In such cases, BEC would expect the Special Education Department to provide written support and recommendations as to the Access Arrangements which should be made. However, final decisions about the Access Arrangements which can be allowed will be taken by BEC.
- Evidence provided by friends or relatives of the candidates is not allowable.
- Once an application has been submitted to BEC, the Head of Centre (or Private Candidate) will be notified in writing of the decision made by BEC 8 weeks before the start of an examination in writing of the decision with regard to authorisation of access arrangements.
- No Access Arrangements can be made until written notification from BEC has been received at the centre. The only exception to this principle might be in an emergency. For example, a candidate might have suffered a broken arm, although the centre might not become aware of the condition until immediately before the examination. There might not be time for the Head of Centre to submit an application for Access Arrangements and certainly not enough time to wait for a written response from BEC. In such circumstances, it is best for the centre to contact BEC by telephone, so that the permission to use Access Arrangements can be given verbally and immediately. The Head of Centre would then be expected to complete the application form stating the access arrangements which were agreed and implemented. Medical evidence in the form of statement from a registered medical practitioner would be required.
- If it is not possible to contact BEC, the Head of Centre must use his/her discretion on the day of the examination to make any necessary Access Arrangements. In doing so, the Head of Centre must ensure that the assessment criterion for the syllabus is not compromised in any way. The Head of Centre would then be expected to complete the application form stating the access arrangements which were implemented. Medical evidence in the form of statement from a registered medical practitioner would be required.
- Centres should note that there are specific regulations which apply to some of the common types of Access Arrangement. These regulations must always be followed. Failure to comply with the regulations may be regarded as malpractice, and could lead to action against candidates and/or staff at the centre.

## 4.2 Supporting Evidence from specialists

In order to ensure fairness and equity, BEC will always require centres to provide evidence of need for applications to be processed. The reports submitted should meet the following criteria;

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- A certified document on letterhead, bearing the name, relevant qualification(s) and signature of fully qualified specialists.
- A clear statement of the candidate's degree of disability or special needs type.
- Justification for the accommodation or reasonable adjustments.
- The report must have been prepared in a period no more than three years prior to the date of the first written examination
- The report must include an assurance that the evidence of specific difficulties was obtained through the results of appropriate and recognised tests.

## 5. Access Arrangements Available for BEC Qualifications

### 5.1 General

The following access arrangements are available for BEC qualifications. Since each application for access arrangements is considered individually, the list is not intended to be exhaustive. So, BEC is able to consider alternative arrangements which are not listed here.

### 5.2 Extra Time

The needs of many candidates with disabilities will be met by an additional time allowance. The normal allowance is up to 25%, although in more severe cases, BEC would consider a larger allowance. For example, extra time of up to 100% might be allowed for a blind candidate using a Braille question paper and producing a Braille script.

In cases where extra time is allowed, the centre must ensure that appropriate invigilation and timetabling are in place.

### 5.3 Supervised Breaks

Candidates with some disabilities might benefit from taking supervised breaks. A break can be taken outside the examination room, but the candidate must be supervised at all times. When a break takes place, the timing of the candidate's examination should be stopped and re-started when the candidate is able to continue. The timings are approved as follows; 2 minutes rest breaks after 30 minutes of continuous writing and or 5 minutes rest breaks after 1 hour of continuous writing. However BEC would consider each application individually and change the rest breaks as necessary.

Supervised breaks may be considered as an alternative to, or in addition to, a request for extra time. Supervised breaks may be appropriate for a candidate with poor concentration skills or other medical or psychological reasons.

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#### 5.4 Use of a Writer through Oral Response

If the candidate cannot write independently, an application to use a writer should be submitted. The Head of Centre is responsible for selecting an appropriate person to act as the writer, and the Regulations Governing the Use of a Writer must be followed at all times. A completed **BEC/EAC/P05/F04 - Writer Cover Sheet** form must be attached to the script. Centres should note that the use of a writer is not permitted in examinations where writing is part of the assessment criteria as specified in the assessment objectives in the syllabus.

Centres that have requested for oral response and the use of a scribe/amanuensis must record the responses on a standard tape or CD/DVD in addition to producing a written script.

If a centre is not able to record the candidate(s)' oral responses, BEC must be informed before the candidate can take the examination so that alternative arrangements can be approved.

#### 5.5 Use of a Computer

If the candidate normally uses a personal computer (PC) as a word processor an application can be made to use the PC in examinations. The Regulations Governing the Use of a Computer must be observed. A copy of the letter which provided BEC approval of the use of a PC should be submitted with the candidate's script.

#### 5.6 Provision of a Transcript

In cases where the candidate prefers to write his/her own script, but the outcome is writing which is difficult to read, the Head of Centre may arrange for a transcript to be provided. The Regulations Governing the Production of a Transcript must be observed and a completed **BEC/EAC/P05/F05 - Transcription Cover Sheet** form must be submitted with the candidate's script.

#### 5.7 Provision of Modified Question Papers for Visually Impaired Candidates

5.7.1 BEC is able to provide question papers modified for visually impaired candidates. Centres should note that the candidates using modified question papers are still expected to answer the same questions as other candidates, and the modified question papers will not have questions which are different or easier than the original question paper. The following formats are available:

##### ➤ Brailled Question Papers

The question papers will be modified by simplifying or removing visual information, and diagrams may be provided in a tactile form. Both contracted and uncontracted braille are available, and the application for access arrangements should indicate which format is required. If candidates answer in braille, BEC will arrange for a transcript of the candidate's script to be prepared before the script is marked.

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### ➤ **Enlarged Print Question Papers**

Each page of the original question paper is enlarged from A4 size to A3 size. This enlargement is not appropriate where the question paper contains scale drawings.

### ➤ **Modified Enlarged Question Papers**

The question paper is first modified so that visual information is simplified. The question paper is then re-printed without enlargement in an 18 point bold typeface. This is often the most appropriate modification for candidates with severe impairment or for question papers containing scale drawings.

## **5.8 Use of Sign Language to Assist Candidates with Hearing Impairment**

Sign language may be used to assist candidates to read the questions but must not be used to explain what the question is asking the candidate to do. The communication of answers (e.g. from a candidate to a writer) is not permissible.

## **5.9 Provision of Modified Question Papers for Candidates with Hearing Impairment**

In certain syllabuses, question papers can be provided with a simplified carrier language. For example, complex sentences can be divided into shorter and simpler sentences. The questions remain the same as for other candidates, and no attempt is made to simplify technical terms. Answers from all candidates are assessed according to the same marking scheme.

Modifications are not made to question papers in syllabuses such as English Language and Setswana where it is not possible to simplify the language without compromising the assessment objectives. In addition, in the case of multiple choice tests, it is assumed that the carrier language used in the question paper cannot be simplified further and so modifications are not normally attempted.

## **5.10 Use of a Reader**

Candidates with severe learning difficulties may require assistance with the reading of the question paper. In such cases, the Head of Centre is responsible for selecting an appropriate person to act as the reader, and the Regulations Governing the Use of Readers must be followed. Normally, a reader would only be allowed if the candidate's reading skills have been assessed for accuracy, speed and comprehension, and found to be significantly below average. BEC would expect any such assessment to be carried out by the Special Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, and the outcome of the assessment should be submitted with the application for Access Arrangements.

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### 5.11 Use of a Prompter

Candidates with concentration difficulties or those who recently went through a traumatic event and showing signs of depression may require assistance with a prompter. In such cases, the Head of Centre is responsible for selecting an appropriate person usually one of the invigilators to act as the Human prompter. The prompter will draw the attention of the candidate to the question paper after intervals of 30 minutes of continuous writing. Normally, a prompter would only be allowed if the candidate's concentration time has been assessed and found to significantly affect the candidates' writing time. BEC would expect any such assessment to be carried out by the Special Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development or a qualified specialist, and the outcome of the assessment should be submitted with the application for Access Arrangements.

### 5.12 Use of a Practical Assistant

A practical assistant is a person who carries out some tasks in a practical assessment at the explicit instruction of the candidate. This is permitted for candidates who have difficulties (e. g impaired physical co-ordination or vision challenges) that prevent them from carrying out practical assessments safely and independently. Approval to use this arrangement is made at the sole discretion of Botswana Examinations Council (BEC). In such cases, the Head of Centre is responsible for selecting an appropriate person usually one of the invigilators to act as the Practical assistant and the Regulations Governing the Use of practical assistant must be followed throughout. Normally, a practical assistant would only be allowed if the candidate's difficulties have been assessed and found to significantly affect the candidates' holding of apparatus or any such equipment as maybe needed to carry out the practical examination. BEC would expect any such assessment to be carried out by the Special Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development or a qualified specialist, and the outcome of the assessment should be submitted with the application for Access Arrangements

### 5.13 Separate Room/Accommodation

Requests for a separate room are normally accompanied by applications for extra time, reader, scribe, rest breaks, modified question papers, braille question papers and sign language interpretation. However, if the candidate's disability and/or the nature of the special arrangement might disturb other candidates during an examination, the candidate must take the examination in a separate room and be supervised according to the regulations governing the conduct of examinations. Normally, a separate room would only be allowed if the candidate's difficulties have been assessed and found to significantly disturb other candidates. BEC would expect assessment to be carried out by the Special Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development or a qualified specialist, and the outcome of the assessment should be submitted with the application for Access Arrangements.

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## 5.14 Preferential Sitting

Candidates with various significant difficulties due to medical conditions, visual impairment, or physical disabilities or those who are hard of hearing may require preferential sitting in an examination room. Normally, preferential sitting would only be allowed if the candidate's difficulties has been assessed and found to significantly warrant preferential sitting during an examination. BEC would expect any such assessment to be carried out by the Special Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development or a qualified specialist, and the outcome of the assessment should be submitted with the application for Access Arrangements.

## 6. Regulations

### 6.1 General

This section is intended to provide a detailed description of the regulations which must be followed by the centre in the implementation of the Access Arrangements which have been agreed with BEC. Failure to follow these regulations would be regarded as maladministration on the part of the centre. In such circumstances, BEC might be forced to take action against the staff in the centre, and it might be necessary to withhold results of the candidates concerned.

### 6.2 Regulations Governing the Use of a Writer

6.2.1 A writer is a person selected by the Head of Centre to write down a candidate's answers. The answers must be written down exactly as dictated by the candidate. With BEC approval, a writer may be used in written examinations and/or in the preparation of coursework. Subject to BEC approval, candidates are allowed the use of a writer if they suffer from a permanent or long-term physical disability which prevents them from communicating in writing. Candidates suffering from a temporary disability such as a broken arm may also be eligible.

6.2.2 The use of a writer is not normally permitted in examinations where writing is part of the assessment criteria as specified in the assessment objectives in the syllabus. However, in such cases, it may be acceptable for the candidate to dictate not only the words but also the punctuation. BEC will specify any such conditions and requirements when their decision about the application is communicated to the centre.

6.2.3 The following regulations must be followed when a writer is to be used by a candidate:

- The use of the writer must be approved by BEC in advance of the examination or before any written coursework in started.
- The use of the writer should not give the candidate any advantage over other candidates, nor should the candidate be disadvantaged in any way which can be avoided.
- The use of a writer must not be allowed to modify the requirements of the assessment nor any

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specific requirements of the syllabus.

- Additional time (normally up to 25%) will be permitted to accommodate the use of a writer.
- A writer must be a responsible adult who is able to produce an accurate record of the answers dictated by the candidate. The person must be able to write legibly. In the case of scientific, mathematical or technical subjects, the writer should have a good working knowledge of the subject being examined.
- The writer is responsible to the Head of Centre and should be selected by the Head of Centre.
- The writer should not normally be the candidate's teacher. If there is no alternative to the use of the candidate's teacher, BEC must be informed of the circumstances in advance. On no account should a relative or friend of the candidate be used as a writer.
- A candidate using a writer must be situated away from other candidates so that no other candidate is able to hear what is being dictated. Ideally, the candidate should be placed in a separate room with the writer and an invigilator. It is not permissible for the writer also to act as the invigilator.
- The candidate should have the opportunity of practice in the use of a writer before any coursework task is started or any written examination takes place.
- In cases where the need for a writer arises immediately before a coursework task or examination, the Head of Centre must provide a writer, suitable accommodation and invigilation. The Head of Centre must ensure that the regulations are followed, and the circumstances must be reported to BEC immediately.

6.2.4 The following procedures must be followed by the writer during an examination or coursework task;

- Must not give any help beyond writing the answers dictated by the candidate;
- Must not offer any advice to the candidate about the choice of question, when to move from one question to another, or about the order in which questions should be answered;
- Must write down the answer exactly as they are dictated by the candidate. In cases where accuracy of language is being tested, it might be necessary for the candidate to dictate their answers letter by letter;
- Must draw maps, diagrams and graphs strictly according to the candidate's instructions;
- Must write corrections to answers if requested to do so by the candidate;
- Must read back what has been written when asked to do so by the candidate;
- Must refer any problem of communication with the candidate to the invigilator.

6.2.5 At the end of the examination, **BEC/EAC/P05/F04 – Writer Cover Sheet** form should be completed and attached to the script. A copy of the letter from BEC giving permission on the

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use of the writer should also be attached to the script. The transcription produced by the writer should be dispatched to BEC in the normal way with the scripts of the other candidates.

6.2.6 If the Head of Centre considers that the arrangements have not enabled the candidate to fully demonstrate his/her attainment, an application for Special Consideration should be submitted to BEC. This application should provide a full explanation of the difficulties experienced by the candidate.

### 6.3 Regulations Governing the Use of a Computer

#### 6.3.1 General

These regulations apply to candidates who normally rely on a computer to produce written work, and who have been given permission to use a computer in written examinations. In these regulations, the term computer is taken to include personal computers (PC's), word processors and other devices capable of producing output in text, graphics and diagrams.

#### 6.3.2 Principles Governing the Use of a Computer

6.3.2.1 The following principles will apply when a candidate uses a computer in an examination:

- The objective of using a computer is to enable a candidate with disabilities to demonstrate their attainment in relation to the assessment objectives of the syllabus. However, the use of the computer must not result in a misleading assessment of that attainment and must not give the candidate any unfair advantage over other candidates.
- All candidates who are able to produce answers in writing will be expected to do so. The use of a computer is reserved for candidates with disabilities which prevent them from producing answers in the normal way.
- Centres should note that it might not be possible for a candidate to meet all of the assessment objectives of a syllabus through the use of a computer. For example, in the case of Art & Design, there might be an assessment objective such as drawing by hand which could not be demonstrated by the use of a computer. In such circumstances, the candidate would be unable to score the marks, and no allowance could be given.
- When used in an examination, BEC expects a computer to be used as a basic word processor. If other facilities are to be used, BEC will need to be made aware of the hardware and software which the candidate proposes to use. This must include details of the candidate's access to facilities such as thesauruses, calculators, etc. Before approval can be given, BEC must be able to determine what effect, if any, use of the computer might have on the reliability of the assessment of the candidate in each subject for which the candidate is entered.
- In addition for certain subjects such as English, candidates using a computer must not have

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access to facilities such as dictionaries, spell checkers, grammar checkers or predictive text software. All such restrictions will be specified when BEC gives approval for the use of a computer by a candidate.

- The candidate's script should be submitted to BEC in the normal way with the scripts of other candidates. A copy of the letter from BEC giving approval for the use of the computer by the candidate should be attached to the script.

### 6.3.3 Code of Practice Governing the Use of a Computer

6.3.3.1 The following code of practice will govern a candidate's use of a computer in an examination:

- Where the use of a computer has been approved, the candidate will be assessed using the same marking scheme as all other candidates, and credit will be given according to the assessment criteria of the syllabus. Where the use of the computer has prevented the candidate from demonstrating a particular skill, no credit will be given for that skill and no allowance will be made.
- A computer may be used only by the candidate specified in the Access Arrangements agreed with BEC, and help in the operation of the computer cannot be provided by others. It follows that the candidate must be sufficiently skilled in the operation of the computer and its software. Similarly, user manuals must not be available to the candidate during the examination.
- The Centre must ensure that the computer is in good working order at the time of the examination.
- The Centre must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the candidate has access only to the facilities which have been agreed with BEC. For example, the candidate must not be able to access files or documents stored on the computer or any of the facilities which have been specifically excluded by BEC when the use of the computer was approved.
- If the candidate's use of the computer is likely to cause any disturbance to other candidates, the candidate using the computer should be accommodated separately from other candidates. In all cases, BEC's regulations regarding invigilation must be observed throughout.
- It is permissible for those supervising the candidate's use of the computer to advise the candidate to save his/her work at regular and frequent intervals.
- The printing of the candidate's script should take place in the presence of the candidate after the time for the examination has expired.
- ***BEC/EAC/P05/F02 - Computer Cover Sheet form*** must be completed and sent back to BEC.

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## 6.4 Regulations Governing the Production of a Transcript

6.4.1 A transcript is a copy of the candidate's script which is made after the examination has taken place and without the participation of the candidate. The copy may be handwritten or produced on a word processor. The purpose of a transcript is to aid the examiner in the marking of the script. The transcript will only be used by the examiner if it is impossible to decipher part of the candidate's script.

6.4.2 The following regulations will apply to the production of a transcript:

- The written approval of BEC must be obtained in advance of any transcript being made.
- The transcript must be made by a teacher at the centre who is familiar with the candidate's handwriting and able to provide an exact representation of the candidate's work.
- For components where answers are written in spaces on the question paper, the transcript must be written on a blank question paper. Otherwise, the transcript must be written on the same examination stationery as used by other candidates. The candidate's original answers should not be annotated in any way.
- The transcript must be written immediately after the examination under secure conditions. The candidate should not be involved in any way.
- In examinations such as English and Setswana, care must be taken to ensure that the transcript is a verbatim copy of the original script. All errors, including errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar must be accurately represented.
- The **BEC/EAC/P05/F05 - Transcription Cover Sheet** form should be completed and attached to the script. A copy of the BEC letter which approved the preparation of the transcript should also be attached to the script. The completed **BEC/EAC/P05/F05 - Transcription Cover Sheet** form should be signed by the teacher who prepared the transcript and countersigned by the Head of Centre.
- The transcript should be attached to the back of the candidate's script with the Transcription Cover Sheet and the BEC letter, and sent with the scripts of the other candidates in the normal way. The production of the transcript should not be allowed to delay the dispatch of the scripts to BEC

## 6.5 Regulations Governing the Use of a Reader

6.5.1 A reader is a person who, at the request of the candidate, will read to the candidate any part of the examination paper or any part of the candidate's answers.

6.5.2 The following regulations must be followed by the reader and by the candidate. It should be noted that failure to follow these procedures could affect the issue of the candidate's results:

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- Permission for the use of a reader must be obtained from BEC in advance of the examination (or, in the case of coursework, before the candidate starts the coursework).
- The use of a reader must neither give the candidate any unfair advantage over other candidates nor should the candidate be disadvantaged in any way which can be avoided.
- The reader must not modify the requirements of the examination or any specific requirements of the assessment objectives of the syllabus. For some syllabuses, the ability to read written words may be an assessment objective, and when such assessment objectives are being assessed the use of a reader is not allowed.
- Additional time will be allowed when a reader is used (normally up to 25% of the duration of the examination).
- The reader should be selected by the Head of Centre and is responsible to the Head of Centre. The reader must be a responsible adult who is able to read accurately and at a reasonable rate. In the case of a scientific, mathematical or technical subject, the reader should have a working knowledge of the subject.
- A reader would not normally be the candidate's own teacher. However, if there is no alternative but to use the candidate's teacher, BEC must be consulted in advance. On no account should a relative or friend of the candidate be used as a reader.
- A candidate using a reader must be situated away from other candidates so that no other candidate is able to hear what is being read. Ideally, the candidate should be placed in a separate room with the reader and an invigilator. It is not permissible for the reader to also act as the invigilator.
- The candidate should have the opportunity of practice in the use of a reader before any coursework task is started or written examination takes place.
- During an examination or during the production of coursework, the reader:
  - Must read accurately;
  - Must only read the rubric and the questions. There must be no explanation or clarification of the questions;
  - The reader must not give factual help to the candidate and must not make any suggestions;
  - Must not offer any advice to the candidate about the choice of question, when to move from one question to another, or about the order in which questions should be answered;
  - Must repeat instructions given on the question paper only when requested to do so by the candidate;
  - In the case of a candidate who is visually impaired, the reader must read the questions and the answers already recorded as often as requested by the candidate. The reader should also give information about the time remaining if asked to do so by the candidate. The reader is

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also permitted to give help to the candidate by giving information conveyed by maps, diagrams, etc. provided that the information given would be easily accessed by a fully sighted candidate.

- Should communicate the spelling of a word on the question paper, if asked to do so by the candidate;
  - Must refer any problem of communication with the candidate to the invigilator.
- If the Head of Centre considers that the arrangements have not enabled the candidate to fully demonstrate his/her attainment, an application for Special Consideration should be submitted to BEC. This application should provide a full explanation of the difficulties experienced by the candidate.

## 6.6 Regulations governing the use of a Practical Assistant

### 6.6.1 General

- 6.6.1.1 A Practical Assistant is a person selected by the Head of Centre to assist the candidate during practical examinations. The instructions for assistance must be carried out exactly as dictated by the candidate.
- 6.6.1.2 Subject to BEC approval, candidates are allowed the use of a practical assistant if they suffer from a permanent or long-term physical disability, which prevents them from handling equipment or apparatus properly. Candidates with visual impairment or a temporary disability such as a broken arm may also be eligible.
- 6.6.1.3 The use of a practical assistant is not normally permitted in examinations where handling of equipment or apparatus is part of the assessment criteria as may be specified in the assessment objectives in the syllabus.
- 6.6.1.4 The use of a practical assistant must be approved by BEC in advance of the examination or before any practical examination starts.
- 6.6.1.5 The use of the practical assistant should not give the candidate any advantage over other candidates, nor should the candidate be disadvantaged in any way which can be avoided.
- 6.6.1.6 A practical assistant must not be allowed to modify the requirements of the assessment nor any specific requirements of the syllabus.
- 6.6.1.7 Additional time of 25% Extra-time will be permitted to accommodate the use of a practical assistant.
- 6.6.1.8 A practical assistant must be a responsible adult who is able to follow instructions as dictated by the candidate.
- 6.6.1.9 In the case of scientific, mathematical or technical subjects, the practical assistant should have a good working knowledge of the subject being examined.

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- 6.6.1.10 The practical assistant is responsible to the Head of Centre and should be selected by the Head of Centre.
- 6.6.1.11 The practical assistant should not normally be the candidate's teacher. If there is no alternative to the use of the candidate's teacher, BEC must be informed of the circumstances in advance. On no account should a relative or friend of the candidate be used as a practical assistant.
- 6.6.1.12 A candidate using a practical assistant must be situated away from other candidates so that no other candidate is able to hear what is being dictated. Ideally, the candidate should be placed in a separate room with the practical assistant and an invigilator. It is not permissible for the practical assistant also to act as the invigilator.
- 6.6.1.13 The candidate should have the opportunity to practice with the practical assistant before any practical examination is started.
- 6.6.1.14 In cases where the need for a practical assistant arises immediately before a practical examination, the Head of Centre must appoint a practical assistant, find suitable accommodation and invigilation.
- 6.6.1.15 The **BEC/EAC/P05/F06 - Practical Assistant Cover Sheet** form should be completed and attached to the script. A copy of the BEC letter which approved the preparation of the transcript should also be attached to the script. The completed **BEC/EAC/P05/F06 - Practical Assistant Cover Sheet** should be signed by the teacher who prepared the transcript and countersigned by the Head of Centre.
- 6.6.1.16 The following processes must be followed by the practical assistant during an examination. The practical assistant should:
- Not give any help beyond handling the equipment or apparatus as dictated by the candidate;
  - Not offer any advice to the candidate about the choice of question, when to move from one question to another, or about the order in which questions should be answered;
  - Draw maps, diagrams and graphs strictly according to the candidate's instructions;
  - Write corrections to answers if requested to do so by the candidate;
  - Refer any problem of communication with the candidate to the invigilator.
  - At the end of the examination, a practical assistant cover sheet should be completed and attached to the script. A copy of the letter from BEC giving permission on the use of the practical assistant should also be attached to the script. If the Head of Centre considers that the arrangements have not enabled the candidate to fully demonstrate his/her attainment, an application for Special Consideration should be submitted to BEC. This application should provide a full explanation of the difficulties experienced by the candidate.
  - Practical assistant would not normally be permitted in subjects such as **Art, Design &**

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Technology and **Music**, **BUT** where only minimum assistance is required an application should be made following the guidelines in the *Access Arrangements and Special Consideration*.

### 6.6.2 The Practical Assistant **MUST NOT**:

- Give factual help to the candidate whatsoever.
- Assist the candidate throughout the entire assessment: there should be parts of the assessment that the candidate can do without the help of the assistant. In other words care must be taken to ensure the assistant does not do everything for the candidate, otherwise it will be difficult to assess the candidate's own effort. If this is not adhered to a candidate may lose marks.

### 6.6.3 Information to Candidates Working With Practical Assistants

The practical assistant;

- Should know the subject and the assessment requirements.
- Will carry out your instructions as you give them (unless to do so may be dangerous). For instance he/she may set-up, hold or hand you the appropriate equipment as per your instruction.
- Will not be able to give you any factual help or tell you what you have to do (e. g what questions to do, when to move on to the next question or the order in which you should answer questions)
- Might ask you to explain if he/she does not understand your instructions.
- Might not need to help you throughout the whole assessment, as there may be parts of the assessment that you can do without his/her help.
- Should have been working with you during the year, and you should know how to work with them in an assessment/examination situation unless in the event the condition was just discovered.
- Should not be your relative or your subject teacher of the subject being assessed. However, any teacher who teaches that subject can be your assistant.

## 7. Appeals against the Outcome of Applications Access Arrangements

7.1 Centres will be informed of the outcome of each application for Access Arrangements. Following the receipt of an outcome, the Head of Centre (or Private Candidate) has 14 days in which to make an appeal against the decision made by BEC. The Appeal must be in writing and addressed to the Executive Secretary at BEC. The submission must set out the grounds

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for the appeal, and must seek to demonstrate some failing of the part of BEC. Centres should note that the appeals process will investigate the procedures which have been followed by BEC.

- 7.2 BEC reserves the right to reject an appeal if the criteria in paragraph 7.1 are not met or where BEC deems the grounds for the appeal to be inappropriate.
- 7.3 BEC will inform the Head of Centre (or Private Candidate) of the outcome of the appeal within 28 days of the receipt of the appeal. The outcome of an appeal is regarded as final and BEC will not enter into further correspondence about an appeal after the outcome has been notified to the Head of Centre (or Private Candidate).

## 8. Special Consideration

### 8.1 What is Special Consideration?

8.1.1 Special Consideration is granted to candidates who suffer from medical conditions which affect performance at the time of the examinations or who have sat examinations under adverse conditions due to illness, bereavement, etc. Special Consideration normally takes the form a small adjustment to the marks awarded to the candidate to take account of the circumstances in which the candidate sat the examination. If the candidate was unable to take the examination for an acceptable reason, an allowance may be made to take account of the missing component.

### 8.2 Principles Governing Special Consideration

8.2.1 The following principles will apply when Special Consideration is given to a candidate:

- Candidates will be assessed according to the same marking criteria, so that grades issued to all candidates have the same validity.
- All candidates are assessed for what they know and what they can do rather than what they might have achieved had circumstances been different.
- Special Consideration must not give the candidate any advantage over other candidates.
- Special Consideration must not adversely affect the integrity of the assessment, and for this reason, the application of Special Consideration may be restricted in certain syllabuses.

### 8.3 Eligibility for Special Consideration

8.3.1 A candidate will be eligible for Special Consideration if:

- Performance in a component is affected by circumstances beyond the control of the

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candidate, for example recent personal illness, accident, bereavement, serious disturbance during the examination, subject to the provisions in paragraph 8.2;

- A component is missed due to circumstances beyond the control of the candidate. Such circumstances would include recent personal illness, accident, and bereavement, subject to the provisions in paragraph 8.2;
- Access Arrangements which were made in respect of a permanent or long-term disability proved inappropriate or inadequate.

8.3.2 A candidate will **not** be eligible for Special Consideration if:

- Any part of the examination is missed due to personal arrangements or unauthorised absence from any examination;
- The candidate was disadvantaged by circumstances which were not beyond their control, such as misreading the timetable or statement of entry;
- No evidence is supplied by the centre that the candidate had been affected by a particular condition at the time of the examination;
- The reason for the application is that the candidate's first language is not English;
- Preparation for an examination is affected by difficulties during the course, such as disturbances through building work, lack of proper facilities, changes in or shortages of staff, employment disputes;
- The effect on the final assessment cannot be reliably quantified by BEC;
- In cases where a component has been missed, the candidate has completed less than 50% of the assessment measured in terms of the weightings given to each component of the syllabus.

8.3.3 Examples;

8.3.3.1 The following are examples of circumstances which might be eligible for Special Consideration. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, and each case will be considered on its merits.

- Illness of the candidate;
- Terminal illness of a parent or carer;
- Recent bereavement in the candidate's immediate family;
- Serious and disruptive crisis leading to acute anxiety about the family;
- Incapacitating illness of the candidate;
- Serious road accident;
- Incidence of severe conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, asthmatic attack, etc;

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- Trauma due to recent physical assault.

## 8.4 Applying for Special Consideration

8.4.1 Centres must follow these procedures when making applications for Special Consideration.

8.4.2 Before making an application, centres should consult paragraphs 8.3 to make sure that the candidate is eligible for Special Consideration.

8.4.2.1 Applications should be made by completing **BEC/EAC/P14/F01 – Application for Special Consideration** Copies of the form will be dispatched with the Entry Instructions for the current examination series.

8.4.2.2 Applications must be submitted by the Head of Centre or by the Chief Invigilator in the case of private candidates in BEC venues. Applications will not be accepted from candidates or their parents.

8.4.2.3 Applications on behalf of candidates affected by illness must be supported by a medical report from a registered medical practitioner. Applications without such support will not be considered.

8.4.2.4 BEC will acknowledge the receipt of applications. If an application cannot be considered, BEC will inform the centre of the reasons.

8.4.2.5 All applications for Special Consideration must be received at BEC no later than 1 week after the last written examination in the series.

## 8.5 Adjusting the Candidate's Marks

8.5.1 Special Consideration will normally be given by applying an allowance of marks to each component affected. The size of the adjustment will be decided by the appropriate BEC committee.

8.5.2 In determining the magnitude of the adjustment, the committee will take into account the timing, nature and extent of the illness or misfortune. They will consider the severity of the circumstances, the date of the examination in relation to the circumstances, the nature of the assessment, etc. Each case will be assessed individually.

8.5.3 When a candidate has missed a timetabled component for an acceptable reason and can provide evidence that he/she was unfit to take the paper, the Committee will determine the grade to be issued by considering all available evidence including the candidate's performance on other components and the Forecast Grade provided by the centre. The candidate must have completed at least 50% of the assessment measured in terms of the weightings given to each component of the syllabus. Otherwise a grade will not be issued.

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## 8.6 Incomplete or Shortfall in Coursework

- 8.6.1 Where a candidate has a shortfall in coursework, for example, as a result of changing schools, accident or other conditions beyond the candidate, the centre can apply for Special Consideration to be given. Centres are required to complete Forms **BEC/EAC/P14/F01 – Application for Special Consideration and BEC/EAC/P14/F02 – Incomplete/Lost/Damaged Coursework** stating how much of the coursework has been completed.
- 8.6.2 If a grade is to be awarded when there is a shortfall in coursework, the candidate must have completed at least 50% of the total coursework requirement.
- 8.6.3 Wherever possible, candidates should not be penalised for the inadvertent loss of coursework or damage to coursework. Where loss or damage has occurred, centres should notify BEC of the circumstances as soon as possible by completing **BEC/EAC/P14/F02 – Incomplete/Lost/Damaged Coursework**.
- 8.6.4 Where marks for the missing work are recorded in the centre's records, BEC will allow the marks to be submitted in the normal manner. In the case of moderation which takes place in the centre, the marks should be made available to the visiting moderator. If moderation takes place at BEC, the marks should be submitted with the marks of the other candidates.
- 8.6.5 If some of the work is lost before being marked, centres must make any available work available to a visiting moderator. If the component is moderated at BEC, any available coursework should be submitted with the work of other candidates.
- 8.6.6 If no work exists, the form **BEC/EAC/P14/F02 - Incomplete/Lost/Damaged Coursework** should be completed. In the case of visiting moderation, the completed should be made available to the moderator; otherwise, the completed form should be submitted to BEC.

## 8.7 Appeals against the Outcome of Applications for Special Consideration

- 8.7.1 Centres and Private Candidates will be informed of the outcome of each application for Special Consideration. Following the receipt of an outcome, the Head of Centre (or Private Candidate) has 14 days in which to make an appeal against the decision made by BEC. The Appeal must be in writing and addressed to the Executive Secretary at BEC. The submission must set out the grounds for the appeal, and must seek to demonstrate some failing of the part of BEC. Centres should note that the appeals process will investigate the procedures which have been followed by BEC.
- 8.7.2 BEC reserves the right to reject an appeal if the criteria in paragraph 8.7.1 are not met or where BEC deems the grounds for the appeal to be inappropriate.
- 8.7.3 BEC will inform the Head of Centre (or Private Candidate) of the outcome of the appeal within 28 days of the receipt of the appeal. The outcome of an appeal is regarded as final and BEC

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will not enter into further correspondence about an appeal after the outcome has been notified to the Head of Centre (or Private Candidate).