

Disability Resource Centre

Examination Arrangements – Using an Amanuensis

Training with an amanuensis - Basic principles

- An amanuensis is a person who writes down a candidate's dictated answers to questions in an examination.
- An amanuensis should be able to produce an accurate record of the candidate's answers, write legibly and at an average speed. (The average writing speed for an undergraduate is 25 to 28 words per minute).
- If an amanuensis is provided, extra time, a separate venue and invigilation will be necessary.
- The candidate should have practise of working with the amanuensis before the examination.
- It is preferred that an amanuensis be a graduate of the same discipline as that of the examination so that they have knowledge of the vocabulary.
- Working with an amanuensis takes practice for both parties, as decisions have to be taken about such matters as spelling, punctuation, and especially in a timed examination setting, the speed of dictation.
- The Faculty / Department should be consulted regarding criteria for spelling and punctuation for examinations. This is especially important for candidates with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD).

The Amanuensis' Responsibility

The amanuensis:

- Shall not give factual help or offer suggestions to the candidate
- Shall not advise the candidate on how to organise responses
- Shall not correct grammatical errors
- Shall write down answers as they are dictated and shall draw diagrams, maps and graphs only in accordance with the candidate's instructions
- Shall practice with the candidate and agree appropriate working methods, to include the way in which spelling and punctuation will be dealt, with reference to the Faculty / Department criteria for examinations, which is especially important for candidates with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)

We suggest that having agreed the spelling and punctuation criteria for examinations with the Faculty / Department, the student and amanuensis complete the following process:

- Practice initially for short periods with the student dictating already written short pieces of work
- Move on to longer pieces of work, firstly pre-written then shorter questions
- Finish with timed answers to past examination questions

The Candidate's Responsibility

The candidate:

- Shall recognise that the role of the amanuensis is to write down answers as they are dictated and shall draw diagrams, maps and graphs only in accordance with the candidate's instructions
- Shall recognise that the amanuensis cannot and should not offer advice on how to organise responses
- Shall recognise that the amanuensis cannot and should not correct grammatical errors
- Shall recognise that the amanuensis cannot and should not give factual help or offer advice
- Shall practice with the amanuensis and agree appropriate working methods, to include the way in which spelling and punctuation will be dealt, with reference to the Faculty / Department criteria for examinations, which is especially important for candidates with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)

We suggest that having agreed the spelling and punctuation criteria for examinations with the Faculty / Department, the student and amanuensis complete the following process:

- Practice initially for short periods with the student dictating already written short pieces of work
- Move on to longer pieces of work, firstly pre-written then shorter questions
- Finish with timed answers to past examination questions

The Faculty's / Department's Responsibility

The Faculty / Department:

- Shall assist in the recruitment of a suitable amanuensis if necessary
- Shall provide clear and explicit information to the candidate and amanuensis regarding the criteria for how spelling and punctuation will be treated in the examination. This is especially important for candidates with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD).
- If required, shall liaise with the appropriate University bodies with regard to applying for and organising special examination arrangements
- Shall liaise with the College with regard to funding payment to the amanuensis

The College's Responsibility

The College:

- Shall assist in the recruitment of a suitable amanuensis if necessary
- If required, shall liaise with the appropriate University bodies with regard to applying for and organising special examination arrangements if necessary
- Shall liaise with the Faculty / Department with regard to funding payment to the amanuensis

Practical Matters

- The DRC would anticipate that the practice / training process could be carried out over a period of one month. However, candidates with a SpLD may require more time than this, in which case advice from the DRC should be sought.
- The DRC recommends that 25% extra time is allowed plus 10 minutes in every hour rest break for the amanuensis. The arrangements for a candidate with a SpLD may differ and should be specified in an Educational Psychologist's report.
- The DRC suggest that the amanuensis writes on every other line so that amendments may be made easily if necessary.

- The usual fee for an amanuensis ranges between £25 per hour and £35 per hour.