

Guidelines for Scribes in Examinations

A scribe is a person who writes down a student's dictated answers in an examination. Sometimes the term 'amanuensis' is used instead of 'scribe'. A student is assigned a scribe if he or she has difficulty producing legible text. There can be many different reasons for this e.g. dyspraxia, rheumatoid arthritis, visual impairment, or a temporary injury such as a wrist sprain.

The two related aims of a scribe are to ensure that the student is neither disadvantaged in comparison to his or her peers, nor provided with an advantage. As in all examinations, the object is to make a true assessment of the student's attainment.

- Essential requirements of a scribe: A scribe's handwriting must be legible and written at a speed at least commensurate with the average adult speed (approximately 25 words per minute) over prolonged periods of time. Alternatively the scribe should be able to touch type.
- The scribe must be fluent in English and have an acceptable standard of spelling and punctuation. There should be no uncorrected hearing impairment.
- The scribe must not have any personal interest in the success or otherwise of the student.

Before an examination:

- It is important that the scribe is familiar with any language/terminology specific to the subject being examined.

- Graphics and diagrams should be produced by the student where possible. Where not possible, alternative arrangements must be agreed before the start of the examination.
- During the examination, the scribe is normally permitted to ask the student to spell any specialist or technical terms/names and any less familiar words. It should be agreed beforehand whether the student wants to be interrupted or whether he/she would prefer to address spelling issues after dictating a response.
- If the examination provision states the use of a spell checker in addition to a scribe, the scribe can use this on the student's behalf only under the direction of the student.

During an examination:

- The student's details must be filled in correctly.
- The student must not be influenced by the scribe in his or her choice of questions, or the order in which the questions are attempted.
- The scribe must transcribe the exact words of the student and not have any personal input into the answer. This includes factual, academic or grammatical input, e.g. word order.
- Other than capital letters and full stops, the student must also dictate punctuation.
- There should be no indication to the student as to the quality of the answer. This includes facial expression and other body language.
- It is acceptable for the student to write sections of answers for themselves or draw diagrams if they wish to do so.
- The scribe must not speak to the student unless there is a particular

difficulty e.g. they did not hear the response or the student is speaking too quickly. The scribe can also ask the student to spell any specialist or technical term.

- Although the scribe is permitted to read the responses back to the student, they must not proofread the work on the student's behalf.
- Any alterations made to the text must be on the exact instructions of the student. It may be advisable to write on every second line to clearly accommodate any changes requested by the student.

After an examination:

- All information regarding the examination and the student must be kept confidential