

**University of East Anglia  
Assessments Office**

**Guidelines for the use of a Scribe in University Examinations**

**1. Definition**

1.1 In the examinations context, a scribe is someone who writes down or word processes a candidate's dictated answers to examination questions.

1.2 A scribe is not a reader but the same person may act as both scribe and reader if prior permission has been given for both arrangements.

**2. Circumstances in which a scribe may be used**

2.1 A scribe may be used in cases where candidates are unable to write or word process their own answers as a result of a disability (either long-term or temporary eg as a result of injury). For examination purposes, this would be interpreted as those who are unable physically to use a pen or to word process, or whose free writing cannot be read by others or is grammatically incomprehensible due to dyslexia, or is produced so slowly that answers could not be recorded even in an exceptionally extended examination period. For visually impaired candidates, this means those who cannot record their answers independently through Braille n' Print or other appropriate means.

2.2 A scribe may not normally be used in examinations where the purpose of the assessment is to test competence in a language.

**3. Who may act as a scribe**

3.1 A scribe should be a responsible person who is able to produce an accurate record of the student's answers and can write legibly or word process at a reasonable speed. All those proposed as scribes must be acceptable to the Assessments Office. Under no circumstances may a candidate's relative, friend, peer or subject teacher be used as a scribe.

3.2 Whilst it is not essential in some subjects, a scribe with specialised subject knowledge would be required for subjects with a highly technical vocabulary or specific notation, and this should form part of the concession application.

**4. General principles**

4.1 The use of a scribe should neither give a candidate an unfair advantage nor disadvantage them.

4.2 Students who require a scribe must sit the examination at the same time as the other candidates.

4.3 It is the responsibility of the School to make the necessary arrangements for the use of a scribe and to inform the student accordingly.

4.4 A student using a scribe must be accommodated in such a way that no other student may hear what is being dictated or be otherwise distracted, nor should there be any disturbance to the candidate using the scribe.

4.5 An invigilator familiar with these guidelines must be present throughout the examination to ensure the proper conduct of the examination. In the case of students with visual impairment, or conditions such as ADHD or Asperger's Syndrome, it is reasonable, if the student wishes, for the invigilator to deliver more regular time prompts than is normal under the Invigilator's Guidelines. This should be agreed before the examination commences.

4.6 Requests for extra time in addition to the use of a scribe will be considered individually by concession.

4.7 Student and scribe should meet before the examination to agree how best to work together during the examination. Both should be provided with a copy of these guidelines.

## **5. The role of the student**

5.1 The student is responsible for the content and layout of answers and for ensuring that the scribe understands their requirements in regard to layout.

## **6. The role of the scribe**

6.1 The scribe **must**:

- write/word process answers exactly as they are dictated;
- ensure that students' work is saved regularly at 10 minute intervals;
- write/word process corrections on the script if requested to do so by the student;
- draw or add maps, diagrams or graphs strictly in accordance with the candidate's instructions;
- where rough notes have been made, either by the scribe or by the student (in cases where they are able to produce a limited amount of writing), cross them through before the script is handed in at the end of the examination.

The scribe **may**:

- at the student's request, read back what has been recorded but may **not** offer any comment on what has been written;
- indicate if s/he cannot keep up with the speed of dictation.

The scribe **must not**:

- give factual help, offer any suggestions or indicate when the answer is complete;

- advise the student regarding which questions to answer, when to move on to the next question or the order in which questions should be answered;
- offer any interpretation of a question or indicate by word or action that the student may have made a mistake;
- normally speak during the examination except if they cannot hear what is dictated or cannot keep up with the speed of dictation.

## **7. Special factors**

7.1 With specific reference to visually-impaired students:

- In relation to papers which require diagrams to be drawn, the student and scribe must have discussed in advance how the accuracy of the diagram drawn will be checked by the student against the dictated description;
- The scribe may not speak except when asked by the student to read text back or to read questions again (where the scribe is acting also as a reader).

7.2 Relating to students with limited capacity to write:

- In papers which require diagrams to be drawn, the student may opt to draw their own diagrams.

## **8. Checklist**

8.1 When making arrangements for a student to have the use of a scribe in examinations, the following points should be considered:

- Will the scribe handwrite or word-process and, if the latter, does the scribe have reasonable keyboard skills?
- Does the student have experience of working with a scribe? If not, Schools are encouraged to arrange some practice time before the examination.
- Does the subject matter carry a large amount of technical terminology, diagrams, specific notations, etc. If so, is it necessary for the scribe to be a subject-specialist?
- Please note that the use of a scribe is not appropriate in examinations which test language competence.