

EXAM CONCESSIONS



When it comes to furthering your education at home, school or college, one of the most useful things you can know about is how to ask for exam concessions.

The aim of exam concessions is to give you an equal opportunity to demonstrate your ability in the skills being assessed when standard arrangements may make this difficult for you. Because exams can be stressful, which can make your symptoms worse, it's better to have concessions in place even if you don't need them on the day. Remember - all requests for exam concession need to be supported by a medical letter, which, if possible, should name the requested concessions and give reasons.

Provided that the Examinations Officer has medical evidence that you have been diagnosed with ME/CFS, they can offer you rest breaks without referral to the Awarding Bodies (sometimes known as the Examinations Board). You can take as many **rest breaks** as needed. This time does not count as part of the exam time or as part of the 25% extra time (see later). You should decide how these rest breaks will be taken and whether a bed needs to be available in the examination room. If you leave the room, the invigilator will need to accompany you. For all other concessions, the Examinations Officer will need to refer to the Awarding Bodies.

Generally speaking, Examinations Boards are more than happy to support young people with a medical condition, and that even if their guidelines don't mention a specific concession or request, you should still ask if there is something you need that's supported by medical evidence.

Possible concessions

Taking the exam at home is particularly useful if you have difficulties getting to school. Exam conditions would need to be established at home, with a dedicated place, quiet surroundings, a clock, all telephones pulled out and a note on the door asking visitors not to call. An invigilator would need to bring the exam paper and stay for the duration of the exam, returning the paper to the Examination Centre at the end of the time.

25% extra time means you will have to tolerate paper collecting and the distraction of other students leaving the hall. Consider asking for a **separate room**. Sometimes this concession is offered but may mean sharing the room with other candidates who have concessions, which can make rest breaks difficult. A separate room should mean a room for you alone with your own invigilator. Taking the examination in the main hall with all other students means a candidate with extra time can be disturbed when everyone else leaves the room.

Using a computer can be requested if this is your usual way of recording answers because of chronic fatigue or muscle weakness, although the spell checker should be switched off and the recycling bin may be checked.

Using a scribe means having someone else write or type your answers from dictation – this does take practise. You would need to show you are unable to write or word process, and that this is their usual way of recording answers. The scribe would be in the examination room with you as well as the invigilator. Similarly, if you ask to **use a reader** because of visual impairment, they would be in the examination room with the you and the invigilator. You can also ask for the exam paper to be photocopied onto a specified **coloured paper**.

Exams may be timetabled at a difficult time for students with ME/CFS, so it is possible to ask for the **time to be changed**. A candidate whose exam has been moved from 9.30am to 2.00pm, would need to be supervised at home or at school between those times until the invigilator delivers the paper. If an exam is brought forward, the candidate would need to be supervised from after their exam until one hour after the published start time for all other students to ensure no contact takes place between candidates. (Moving the time of the examination for students with ME/CFS is dealt with as examination clashes are for other students).

We recommend asking for **no more than one exam** to be sat each day. **Changing the day** of an examination may be difficult as the supervision has to take place overnight. If you're at boarding school, you could spend the night in the sanatorium. For day students, Awarding Bodies may allow parents to supervise, although this is not always granted. If the supervisor cannot sleep in a candidate's house, the alternative is for the candidate to sleep at a supervisor's house.

Applying for concessions

Exams taken in November to January have a concessions deadline of the end of October; the deadline for February-April exams is the end of November; and the May/June exams deadline is mid-February. You should still apply for concessions outside the deadline if your condition changes, or if you have experienced a sudden onset of ME/CFS.

Start early with a personal approach to the Examinations Officer and get a medical letter from the beginning, especially as the Examinations Officer may not know you, or be aware of the full range of concessions available. Some Examinations Officers believe that concessions only mean 25% extra time and rest breaks, so a spare copy of the publications from the Joint Council (see below) may come in useful.

Whether you are the candidate or the parent of a candidate, don't pass this important task on to anyone else. Leaving it to a third party, such as a teacher, often loses valuable time and can lead to misinformation. Put your requests and relevant information in writing, so all communication is recorded, and keep a log of all telephone conversations or, preferably, include the content in a follow-up letter. Keep copies of all correspondence in a file.

Finally, if you find you are having extra difficulties just before or on the day, a grade by Special Consideration can be applied for. Awarding Bodies would need to be consulted if a candidate is unable to fulfil all coursework requirements and where an extension of time might be required.

Who's who of exams

Your school or college is referred to as your **Examinations Centre**. At the Examinations Centre there will be an **Examinations Officer** whose job it is to enter candidates for their examinations and to arrange exam concessions – this could be a teacher, or someone especially appointed for the job. The **invigilator** is the person who delivers the examination papers, monitors the examination and returns the papers to the Examinations Office. The invigilator cannot be a parent, home tutor or interested party. The **supervisor** is the person who stays with you if the time of your exam is moved either before or after the examination period (see below). Sometimes, Awarding Bodies will agree to supervision by parents. Sometimes, Examinations Officers complain that they cannot afford to supply separate invigilators or supervisors – but they must provide them if concessions have been agreed by the Examination Boards.

For more information and instructions, visit:

[Joint Council for Qualifications](#)