



Epilepsy and exams – a guide for young people

If you have epilepsy, this may have an effect on your performance in exams. Because of this, you may be able to get some extra help during exam time, to make sure that you get the results that you deserve.

You and your parents or carers need to actively seek advice about the help that you are entitled to. You can do this by contacting the exams officer at your school or college.

The exams officer will arrange any help that you are entitled to. It is a good idea to talk to them at the beginning of the course, or as soon as you are diagnosed with epilepsy, about how your epilepsy may affect your education and performance in exams. This will give them plenty of time to make any special arrangements for you.

There are two main types of help that you may be entitled to, to help you in your exams: access arrangements and special consideration.

Access arrangements

Access arrangements are changes that can be made in exams to help disabled people or people with learning disabilities. They were put in place to make sure that the exams system complies with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Further information about the Disability Discrimination Act is available from Epilepsy Action.

If you have epilepsy, there are different types of access arrangements that may help you.

One access arrangement could be to allow you to have up to 25 per cent extra time in an exam, if seizures may affect your ability during the exam (for example if you have frequent absence seizures). If you have other severe disabilities as well as epilepsy, you may be entitled to have more than 25 per cent extra time.

Alternatively, an exam supervisor could sit with you to identify seizures and add extra time according to how much time you missed because of the seizures.

Your school or college can also organise for you to sit an exam at a different time, or in a different place to other people who are taking the same exam. This may be helpful if you usually have seizures first thing in the morning, for example. Your school or college can arrange for you to have an exam in the afternoon, to give you time to recover.

If you have epilepsy, you are entitled to have supervised rest breaks during an exam. This is as long as your school or college already knows about your epilepsy before the exam period begins, or you can prove you have epilepsy, with a medical certificate from your doctor.

Applying for access arrangements

To apply for access arrangements, speak to the exams officer. It is advisable to do this at the beginning of the course or as soon as you are diagnosed with epilepsy, rather than waiting until the exams begin. If you leave it too late, the exam

officer may not have enough time to make sure that you get all the help you are entitled to.

In some cases, the exams officer may ask you for some medical evidence to support your request for extra help, such as a letter from your doctor.

Special consideration

Special consideration means that you may be entitled to have your mark increased by up to five per cent of the total marks available in that exam. You may qualify for this if an event during an exam, or close to it, may cause you to do less well than you are capable of. For example, if you have a seizure during an exam or in the morning before an exam.

The exam board would decide how much your mark for each exam could be scaled up by. They would make this decision based on the work you have managed to do in the exam and on assessed work you have done previously, such as other exams or course work. They would also ask your teacher for information about other work you have done on the course.

Applying for special consideration

To apply for special consideration, speak to the exams officer at your school or college. They will need to send a *Special consideration* request form (available from the Joint Council for Qualifications) to the Special Requirements Unit of the exam board. The teacher who is running the course will be able to provide details of the specific exam board.

The application for special consideration must be made within seven days after the exam. If you can supply a letter of support from a medical professional, this will strengthen your claim.

Helping yourself during exam time

If you have epilepsy, exam time may increase the risk of seizures, due to extra stress and not getting enough sleep or regular meals, all of which are common triggers for seizures.

To help yourself have a fair chance at your exams, it is important to try to reduce the risk of seizures, so they do not affect your performance in exams. This might include setting aside time for relaxation, to try to reduce stress and anxiety, and to make sure that you do not skip meals and get enough sleep.

Further information about epilepsy and education is available from Epilepsy Action.

Further information

Epilepsy Action

Freephone: 0808 800 5050

Email: helpline@epilepsy.org.uk

Website: www.epilepsy.org.uk

Joint Council for Qualifications

Website: www.jcq.org.uk

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

Freephone: 0808 800 5793

Website: www.ace-ed.org.uk

Epilepsy Action makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of information in its publications but cannot be held liable for any actions taken based on this information.

If you are reading this publication more than six months after the date shown below, please contact Epilepsy Action to check whether it is still current.

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