

# Guidelines for Using a Scribe in Timed Examinations

## Introduction:

This document is intended as a guide for the student in understanding the role of an examination scribe, the implications of using an examination scribe as well as the responsibility of the student when using a scribe in examinations.

The circumstances where a scribe is needed are many and varied. Candidates who may require a scribe include those who:

1. are blind or visually impaired,
2. have orthopedic impairments which affect writing,
3. tire easily or have muscle weakness,
4. have limited dexterity,
5. have a specific learning difficulty resulting in a written expression level significantly below average
  - a lower than average writing speed (below 15 wpm),
  - b level of legibility that would make the paper unreadable to an examiner
  - c speed of processing at or below the 16th percentile

Students with permanent disabilities, as well as those with recently acquired temporary disabilities may find a scribe an appropriate support for completing written examinations. In all cases students must provide appropriate medical/psychological evidence of their writing difficulties to substantiate their application for a scribe and must meet the criteria for needing a scribe.

## What is a scribe?

A Scribe is a person who writes down a candidate's dictated answers to questions in an examination. The scribe must record only the dictated words. It is not the role of the scribe to structure, punctuate or plan answers for the student.

## Eligibility

If you have a disability that adversely affects your ability to write effectively, you may be assigned a scribe if you have appropriate evidence to support this.

### **You may be eligible for a scribe if:**

- It has been recommended in a needs assessment and you meet the criteria set by DAWN
- You agree to abide by the list of student responsibilities for using a scribe.
- You have had an accident/engaged in an activity, which has resulted in a temporary disability and an inability to sit an exam without the aid of a scribe

### **Student Responsibilities.**

In order to maintain the smooth running of examinations and to maintain the integrity of examinations in UCC, the student is required to undertake the following responsibilities:

- To register with the DSS and identify the need for a scribe with a Disability Advisor.
- To return supporting documentation to the DSS.
- To attend scribe the training session organized by the DSS in advance of examinations.
- To practice what they have learned at the training session in their own time before the examinations.
- In the case of a temporary disability, to inform the relevant Department of the need for a scribe.
- To be punctual for the exam itself.
- At the end of the exam read or have the exam read to you to ensure that you are satisfied that the exam is an accurate reflection of what you dictated.
- To sign the 'Declaration of Accurate Record Form.
- If you do not sign the 'Declaration of Accurate Record' you must write to the examinations office. within three days of the exam to inform them why you think it is not an accurate reflection.

### **Preparatory Steps before the Exam**

- Attend the Scribe training session organized by the DSS where good practice guidelines for scribing exams will be provided.
- Meet the scribe before the exam to carry out a one hour practice session.
- Students should practice examinations using the same time limits and other conditions that apply for the real examination. This can be done with a friend or fellow student in order that you become accustomed to having a scribe and can gain confidence in your ability to control the process.
- Arrive to the exam at least fifteen minutes before the start time.

### **Some practical guidelines for the exam**

- Remember you are in control of the exam situation so stay relaxed.
- Speak at a pace that allows the scribe to write at a comfortable pace rather than rushing and maintain good diction.

- If you go blank or you are unsure what to say next, ask the scribe to read back the answer so far or the last paragraph.
- Indicate to the scribe if you want to skip a space and go back to that point/spelling at the end of the exam.
- Use whatever planning tool you have decided upon e.g. mind map, bullet points.
- Use a headings system as a way to develop structure and clarity in answers.
- Let the scribe know when you want text to be crossed out.
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Sit beside the scribe and watch what is being written down by the scribe.

### **At the end of the exam**

- Each answer sheet should be marked “Written by Scribe” to ensure the person marking the paper knows it has been written by a scribe.
- Check for spaces left blank to be filled in at the end of the exam.
- You should read through the paper and then sign the Declaration of Accurate Record Form to ensure you are happy with what has been scribed. If you do not want to read the papers ask the scribe to read it back to you.

For more information on using a scribe in an examination and on examinations in general please visit <http://www.ucc.ie/en/media/DAWN-Exam-Guidelines.pdf>

To view a copy of the Declaration of Accurate Record Form please visit <http://www.ucc.ie/en/dss/guidelines/Declaration-of-Accurate-Record-Form.pdf>