



## help with exams for children and young people with IBD

- access arrangements
- special consideration
- requests for exam support

We are the specialist charity for children and young people affected by crohns and colitis.

We **lead research** into better treatments, **support children and families** with relevant information, work with health professionals to **improve care** and **give children a voice** to increase public understanding of Crohn's and colitis.

**We believe that all children deserve a childhood unlimited by inflammatory bowel disease**

Pat Shaw House  
13–19 Ventnor Road  
Sutton, SM2 6AQ

020 8949 6209  
support@cicra.org  
www.cicra.org

find us on facebook | twitter | instagram  
@CICRAcharity

CICRA is the operating name of  
Crohns In Childhood Research Association,  
a registered charity in England and Wales  
(number 278212) and Scotland (SC040700)

*With thanks to Steve Green, Deputy Head Teacher and  
Examinations Officer, Royal Free Hospital Children's School*

## help with exams

There are various ways in which exams might affect a young person with IBD. Exams can add to the pressure on young people with such an unpredictable illness and the resulting stress can increase their need for visits to the toilet. Early morning is usually the worst time for sickness and diarrhoea and the worry of being in a fixed place for any length of time may lead to further problems. It may be necessary, especially during exams set by an outside board, to have an invigilator to stay with a young person during their exam and escort them to the toilet as many times as is necessary and allow them extra time to complete their exam.

Should it be necessary to ask for Special Consideration from an exam board, it can be helpful if a consultant or GP are able to submit a letter on behalf of a young person with IBD.

Later in this leaflet is just one example of a letter prepared by a consultant in support of a patient addressed in this instance to the Examinations Officer of a school, asking them to submit a request for Special Consideration to an external exam board. This provides a useful template that can be used as a basis for GP or consultants to write to the school's Examinations Officer.

You may also find it helpful to refer to guidance from the Joint Council for Qualifications, the body that provides a single voice on examination administration for the seven largest qualification providers:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>

Please also refer to guidance on how schools should help children with IBD with their education and studies such as CICRA's factsheet on **supporting children with medical needs in schools**. We also have leaflets for primary and secondary schools and a pocket sized easy read handout with the key facts any class teacher needs to know to support a student with inflammatory bowel disease. See [cicra.org/schools](http://cicra.org/schools)

# access arrangements and special consideration for children with medical needs

## what can be done before and during exams?

### **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments**

These are applied so candidates are not disadvantaged either before or during exams. You can apply via your school's Exams Officer who makes the application on line. It is advisable to apply as early as possible so the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) can begin to assess your needs. Not all of these will apply to a child or young person with IBD, but some of them often will.

Depending on your normal way of working, Access Arrangements can include:

- deadline extensions to cover shortfalls in coursework
- use of a laptop or word processor
- modified papers (June 2019 deadline is January 31st)
- use of a prompter
- use of a reader or sign language interpreter
- use of a scribe
- private invigilation at home
- unlimited supervised rest breaks during exams
- 25% extra time (based on writing, reading, cognitive speeds and assessed by SENCO and/or an Educational Psychologist (EP))
- 50% extra time (ditto above but usually reserved for candidates with learning difficulties)
- more than 50% extra time (ditto above but usually reserved for candidates with severe learning difficulties such as a visual impairment)

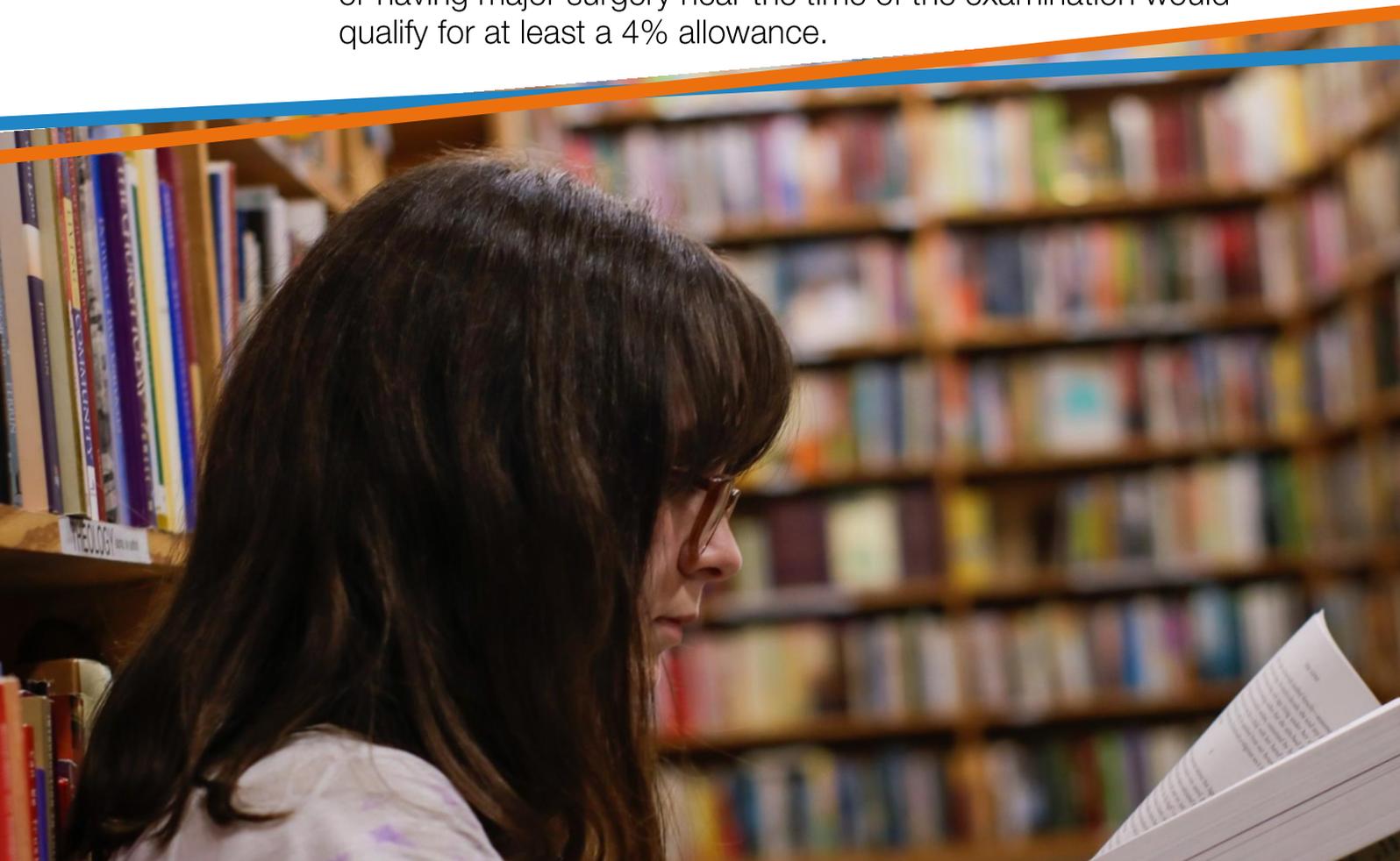
## what can be done after exams?

### Special Consideration

These are adjustments to marks or grades applied after the exams have been completed, imposed to reflect a candidate's normal level of attainment in either exams or the completion of coursework

Schools can request special consideration for candidates who were:

1. Absent from a timetabled component or unit due to illness:
  - a. When a candidate has missed an exam, an adjustment can be made to the final grade if they have covered the whole course
  - b. If coursework for any assessment has been fully completed, the minimum requirement for enhanced or projected grading has been reduced to 25%.
  
2. Present, but disadvantaged as a result of illness immediately before or during the examination period:
  - a. The maximum allowance is 5% of the total raw marks available for that component or unit. This is usually reserved for terminal illnesses or very serious or a disruptive domestic crisis leading to acute anxiety.
  - b. Candidates with very serious conditions such as Crohn's flares or having major surgery near the time of the examination would qualify for at least a 4% allowance.



# request for exam support

Please note: it is important that a letter specifically addresses the issues affecting a young person as a result of their IBD. This ideally should come from a GP, consultant or specialist nurse and include things like:

- year of diagnosis
- type of IBD
- explanation of IBD (remitting / relapsing, unpredictable, no cure and lifelong)
- whether they are in remission or flare
- symptoms and particularly if any are increasing or getting worse
- current treatments they are receiving or taking (eg infusions, steroids)
- need for medical appointments and review by the specialist IBD team
- how much they have tried to attend school and / or keep up with their work
- which exams they are taking and at what level (SATS, GCSE, A' Level, BTEC, degree)
- abdominal pain may mean they are unable to perform at their academic best
- support they need in order to perform to their academic potential, such as:
  - individual invigilation
  - seated near the exit
  - near toilets and / or allowed to use them during exams / tests
  - access to drinks and snacks during exam
  - additional time (discuss with the exams board if they need the amount of time specified)
- request they be given the maximum exceptional circumstances they are entitled to
- ask for a key person to be nominated by the school to liaise with a child in case they have difficulty in achieving hand in dates or undertaking homework
- who the school can contact for any further medical letters (ie GP, consultant, nurse)

# example letter to school requesting special consideration

Dear Examinations Officer

Regarding: [name of young person]

Date of Birth:

[name of young person] has been diagnosed with [name of condition, eg Crohn's disease or Ulcerative colitis], one of the main types of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). IBD is a remitting, relapsing disease and unpredictable in nature. [name of child] has had several relapses over the past [year/month], which have caused tiredness, lethargy and difficulties concentrating [list any relevant symptoms or effects]. Although [name of child] maintained good school attendance/ good work when able to, around the time of their examinations, the standard of their work suffered considerably due to an increase in symptoms and considerable stress throughout this period. This is very common with this diagnosis. They found it a strain to keep up with the class and revision work and were concerned they were not able to match their previous 'best' standard.

Although stress does not cause IBD, it can cause the condition to be more active. Throughout the examination period, it was quite clear {name of child} was subject to disadvantage by:

- being too tired to revise as much or as effectively as they could
- feeling considerably stressed and unwell on the day of all their examinations
- being extremely anxious and distressed with feelings generated around being late for morning examinations (morning exams are a particularly anxiety for students with IBD, as this is a time when their bowels are most active)
- thoughts throughout the exam regarding the need to use the toilet

I would be grateful if you would continue to support them moving forward and submit a post examinations Special Consideration request on the grounds of the above. If staff also feel the standard of [name of child]'s coursework was affected by their illness then we recommend an application for Special Consideration be made for coursework as well.

**cicra** 

better lives for children with crohns and colitis

