

# FROM THE DIRECTOR OF STUDIES

## DISABILITY PROVISIONS ALERT

Alan Harper | Director of Studies (20 November 2012)

Many readers will be aware that the Board of Studies makes special provision for students with a physical or psychological disability which may disadvantage them in examination situations.

The range of disabilities which may be considered is extensive, but examples would include such things as

- Diabetes, where the student may need to eat regularly, to visit the toilet frequently or to test blood sugar levels
- Dyslexia, where an examination paper printed on a particular coloured paper may assist
- Chronic fatigue, where rest breaks may be required
- Chronically bad hand writing, where use of a writer may assist
- Panic attacks, where environmental changes and access to medication may help.

Applications to the Board of Studies for appropriate provisions for particular conditions require substantial documentation as evidence, and considerable input from the School. Once submitted, they are reviewed and determined by an expert panel engaged by the Board. Hence, the process must begin early, so that the Board has the time to deal properly with the many thousands of applications which are received each year.

Students in Year 12, who had disability provisions approved for the former School Certificate, **must make a new application for the Higher School Certificate.**

Applications for disability provisions for the HSC examinations are usually required to reach the Board around the end of March each year. Students who wish to make applications should thus begin the process early in the year. A great deal of evidence is required, both from appropriate professionals, and from within the School, all of which takes a good deal of time to garner.

Applications are submitted by the School on-line and are administered by Mrs Heffernan in the TESS Department. Boys seeking to make an application should contact Mrs Heffernan.

I do hasten to point out that, when conditions develop or are identified after the end of March, the Board is very accommodating in dealing with late applications, even up until the morning of the exam (in exceptional circumstances)! For students with known conditions, however, it is important that they realise that they may disadvantage themselves if they do not allow the Board sufficient time to deal properly with their application.

**IB students** should note that the procedures for the IB are significantly different and they should consult Mr Goetze, the Director of the IB, for information as soon as possible.

### SCHOOL INTERNAL PROVISIONS

To the extent that resources allow, the School attempts to mirror the Board's provisions internally for boys in Years 7-11. Application forms may be obtained from Mrs Heffernan.

It is important that parents and boys realise that the granting of a provision by the School does not pre-empt any decision which may later be made by the Board of Studies or IB Organisation.

### INVESTIGATION INTO DISABILITY PROVISIONS

Early in 2009, there was a great deal of press commentary, deriving from questions in the NSW Parliament, which suggested that some schools – all of them Independent schools! – were unfairly favoured by the Board in its granting of disability provisions. The Board subsequently appointed an independent auditor to examine its processes and practices relating to this whole matter. When the auditor reported, he could not have given the Board a better report. Its policies were judged an appropriate response to the Disability Discrimination Act, and its procedures were found to be completely even-handed, evidence based and fair. What was clear, however, was that some schools and some sectors in general were underrepresented in submitting applications for disability provisions. The Board thus undertook to make information on the whole matter even more accessible through its website. It continues actively to encourage eligible students to apply.

Because Trinity makes a point of advising parents and boys about disability provisions, invests the necessary resources to support boys' applications, and so has a significant number of boys granted an appropriate provision, there is no reason for boys or their parents to feel in any way that they have been favoured or that they have gained some kind of unfair advantage. Indeed, quite the reverse. Disability provisions are precisely about trying to "level the playing field" for students who suffer from genuine disadvantage. That is a principle we try to embed in our society as a whole. Public examinations are a good place to start.



**Trinity Grammar School**

SENIOR & MIDDLE SCHOOLS | 119 PROSPECT ROAD, SUMMER HILL NSW 2130  
PHONE +61 2 9581-6000 | FAX: +61 2 9799-9449