



## GUIDELINES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Smarter Balanced members identified frequently asked questions (FAQs) and developed applicable responses to support the information provided in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium's *Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines*. These questions and responses, as well as the information in the *Guidelines* document apply to the Smarter Balanced interim and summative assessments.

Members may use these FAQs to assist districts and schools to understand the universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations available for the Smarter Balanced assessments. Schools may use them with decision-making teams (including parents) as decisions are made and implemented with respect to use of the *Smarter Balanced Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines*.

Additional information to aid in the implementation of the *Guidelines* is available in the *Individual Student Assessment Accessibility Profile (ISAAP) Module*, the *Test Administration Manual*, and the *Implementation Guide*. These documents may be found on the [Smarter Balanced website](#).

The FAQs are organized into four sections. First are general questions. Second is a set of questions about specific universal tools and designated supports. Questions that pertain specifically to English learners (ELs) comprise the third set of FAQs, and questions that pertain specifically to students with disabilities comprise the fourth set of FAQs.

### OVERVIEW OF FAQs

1. *What are the differences among the three categories of universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations?*
2. *Which students should use each category of universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations?*
3. *What is the difference between embedded and non-embedded approaches? How might educators decide what is most appropriate?*
4. *Who determines how non-embedded accommodations (such as read aloud) are provided?*
5. *Are any students eligible to use text-to-speech or read aloud for ELA reading passages on the Smarter Balanced assessments?*
6. *Why are some accommodations that were allowed on previous assessments not listed in the Smarter Balanced Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines?*
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13. *Who is supposed to input information about designated supports and accommodations into the Administration and Registration Tools (ART) or into a member's comparable platform? How is the information verified?*
14. *Are there any supplies that schools need to provide so that universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations can be appropriately implemented?*
15. *What happens when accommodations listed in the Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines do not match any accommodations presented in the student's IEP or 504 plan?*
16. *Are there accessibility resources that members have discussed and agreed not to include in the Smarter Balanced test?*
17. *What are the process and timeline for updating and making changes to the Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines?*
18. *Is the digital notepad universal tool fully available for ELA and math? Will a student's notes be saved if the student takes a 20-minute break?*
19. *For the global notes universal tool, if a student takes a break of 20 minutes, do the notes disappear?*
20. *For the highlighter universal tool, if a student pauses a test for 20 minutes, do the highlighter marks disappear?*
21. *How are students made aware that the spell check universal tool is available when moving from item to item?*
22. *For the zoom universal tool, is the default size specific to certain devices? Will the test administration manual provide directions on how to do this adjustment?*
23. *For the English glossary universal tool, how are terms with grade- and context-appropriate definitions made evident to the student?*
24. *For the mark for review universal tool, will selections remain visible after a 20-minute break?*
25. *Can universal tools be turned off if it is determined that they will interfere with the student's performance on the assessment?*
26. *How are the language access needs of ELs addressed in the Smarter Balanced Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines?*
27. *Why are resources to support English language proficiency needs classified as universal tools and designated supports?*
28. *Is text-to-speech available for ELs to use?*
29. *What languages are available to ELs in text-to-speech?*
30. *For which content areas will the Consortium provide translation supports for students whose primary language is not English?*
31. *Does a student need to be identified as an English learner in order to receive translation and language supports? What about foreign language exchange students?*
32. *For the translated test directions designated support, what options are available for students who do not understand the language available in the digital format? Can a human reader of directions in the native language be provided?*



33. *How is the translations glossary non-embedded designated support different from the bilingual dictionary?*
34. *Will translations be available in language dialects/variants?*
35. *What accommodations are available for students with disabilities (including ELs with disabilities)?*
36. *Is an embedded ASL accommodation available on ELA items that are not part of the Listening test?*
37. *Will sign languages other than ASL (including signing in other languages) be available?*
38. *Can interpreters be used for students who are deaf or hard of hearing who do not use ASL?*
39. *What options do districts have for administering Smarter Balanced assessments to students who are blind?*
40. *Why is the non-embedded abacus an accommodation for the non-calculator items? Doesn't an abacus serve the same function as a calculator?*
41. *Can students without documented disabilities who have had a sudden injury use any of the Smarter Balanced accommodations?*
42. *How will the test administrator know prior to testing that the print on demand accommodation may be needed?*
43. *For the print on demand accommodation, how are student responses recorded – by a teacher using a computer or some other method?*
44. *How do member officials monitor training and qualifications for the non-embedded read aloud accommodation?*
45. *For students taking the paper-pencil test, can read aloud be provided in small groups?*
46. *If students are using their own devices that incorporate word prediction, will this impact their score?*
47. *How are assistive technology (AT) devices certified for use for the Smarter Balanced assessments?*
48. *What kind of medical supports may be used by students? What monitoring is needed?*

## GENERAL FAQs

1. *What are the differences among the three categories of universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations?*

Universal tools are access features that are available to all students based on student preference and selection. Designated supports for the Smarter Balanced assessments are those features that are available for use by any student (including English learners, students with disabilities, and English learners with disabilities) for whom the need has been indicated by an educator or team of educators (with parent/guardian and student input as appropriate). Accommodations are changes in procedures or materials that increase equitable access during the Smarter Balanced assessments by generating valid assessment results for students who need them and allowing these students the opportunity to show what they know and can do. The *Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines* identify accommodations for



students for whom there is documentation of the need for the accommodations on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 accommodation plan.

Universal Tools, designated supports, and accommodations may be either embedded in the test administration system or provided locally (non-embedded).

2. *Which students should use each category of universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations?*

Universal tools are available to all students, including those receiving designated supports and those receiving accommodations. Designated supports are available only to students for whom an adult or team (consistent with member-designated practices) has indicated the need for these supports (as well as those students for whom the need is documented).

Accommodations are available only to those students with documentation of the need through either an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 accommodation plan. Students who have IEPs or 504 accommodation plans also may use designated supports and universal tools.

What Tools Are Available for My Student?

	All Students	English learners (ELs)	Students with disabilities	ELs with disabilities
Universal Tools	✓	✓	✓	✓
Designated Supports	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓
Accommodations			✓	✓

<sup>1</sup> Only for instances that an adult (or team) has deemed the supports appropriate for a specific student's testing needs.

3. *What is the difference between embedded and non-embedded approaches? How might educators decide what is most appropriate?*

Embedded versions of the universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations are provided digitally through the test delivery system while non-embedded versions are provided at the local level through means other than the test delivery system. The choice between embedded and non-embedded universal tools and designated supports should be based on the individual student's needs. The decision should reflect the student's prior use of, and experience with, both embedded and non-embedded universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations. It is important to note that although print on demand is a non-embedded accommodation, permission for students to request printing must first be set in the Administration and Registration Tools (ART) or the member's comparable platform.



4. *Who determines how non-embedded accommodations (such as read aloud) are provided?*

IEP teams and educators make decisions about non-embedded accommodations. These teams (or educators for 504 plans) provide evidence of the need for accommodations and ensure that they are noted on the IEP or 504 plan. Members are responsible for ensuring that districts and schools follow Smarter Balanced guidance on the implementation of these accommodations.

5. *Are any students eligible to use text-to-speech or read aloud for ELA reading passages on the Smarter Balanced assessments?*

For students in all grades, text-to-speech or read aloud is available on ELA reading passages as a non-embedded accommodation for students whose need is documented on an IEP or 504 plan, subject to each member's laws, regulations, and policies. Text-to-speech and read aloud are available on reading passages in all grades. Text-to-speech and read aloud for ELA reading passages are not available for ELs (unless the student has an IEP or 504 plan). Whenever text-to-speech is used, appropriate headphones must be available to the student, unless the student is tested individually in a separate setting. Similarly, if the student receives a read aloud accommodation, the student may need to be tested in a small group or individual setting (also see FAQ 45).

6. *Why are some accommodations that were allowed on previous assessments not listed in the Smarter Balanced Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines?*

After examining the latest research and conducting numerous discussions with external and member experts, Smarter Balanced members approved a list of universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations applicable to the current design and constructs being measured by its tests and items within them. Upon review of new research findings or other evidence applicable to accessibility and accommodations considerations, the list of specific universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations approved by Smarter Balanced may be subject to change. The Consortium has established a standing committee, including members from Governing members, to review suggested adjustments to the list of universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations to determine whether changes are warranted.

Proposed changes to the list of universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations will be brought to Governing members for review, feedback, and approval. Furthermore, members may issue temporary approvals (i.e., one summative assessment administration) for individual students.

Member leads will evaluate formal requests for temporary approvals and determine whether the request poses a threat to the measurement of the construct. The formal requests will include documentation of the student need, the specific nature of the universal tools, designated supports, or accommodations, and the plan for follow-up monitoring of use. Upon issuing a temporary approval, the member will send documentation of the approval to the Consortium. The Consortium will consider all member-approved temporary accommodations as part of the Consortium's accommodations review process. The Consortium will provide to members a list of the temporary accommodations issued by members that are not Consortium-approved accommodations. In subsequent years, members will not be able to offer



as a temporary accommodation any temporary accommodation that has been rejected by the Consortium.

7. *Under which conditions may a member elect not to make available to its students an accommodation that is allowed by Smarter Balanced?*

The Consortium recognizes that there should be a careful balance between the need for uniformity among members and the need for members to maintain their autonomy. To maintain this balance, individual members may elect not to make available an accommodation that is in conflict with the member's laws, regulations, or policies.

8. *Can members allow additional universal tools, designated supports, or accommodations to individual students on a case by case basis?*

Yes, only in certain restricted and emergent circumstances. To address emergent issues that arise at the local level, authorized staff members will have the authority to provide temporary approvals for individual students. Authorized staff members include only those individuals who are familiar with the constructs the Smarter Balanced assessments are measuring, so that students are not inadvertently provided with universal tools, designated supports, or accommodations that violate the constructs being measured.

The temporary approvals for individual students will be submitted to Smarter Balanced for review. Temporary approvals accepted by Smarter Balanced will be incorporated into the official guidelines released by Smarter Balanced in the following year or continue to be investigated for acceptance. Authorized staff members are not to add any universal tools, designated supports, or accommodations to the Smarter Balanced Guidelines; only the Smarter Balanced Consortium may do so.

9. *What is to be done for special cases of “sudden” physical disability?*

One exception to the IEP or 504 requirement is for students who have had a physical injury (e.g., broken hand or arm) that impairs their ability to use a computer. For these situations, students may use the speech-to-text or scribe accommodations (if deemed appropriate based on the student having had sufficient experience with the use of the accommodations).

10. *Who reviewed the Smarter Balanced Guidelines?*

In addition to individuals and officials from the Smarter Balanced Governing members, several organizations and their individual members provided written feedback during the creation of the guidelines. Furthermore, Smarter Balanced facilitates an annual process to solicit feedback from membership. This feedback includes both feedback from each member in addition to stakeholder feedback provided to members.



11. *Where can a person go to get more information about making decisions on the use of designated supports and accommodations?*

Practice and training tests provide students with experiences that are critical for success in navigating the platform easily. The practice and training tests may be particularly important for those students who will be using designated supports or accommodations, because the practice tests can provide data that may be useful in determining whether a student might benefit from the use of a particular designated support or accommodation. It is important that students have ample opportunities to use selected designated supports and accommodations in daily instruction. Smarter Balanced practice and training tests are available at [Practice Tests and Sample Questions](#).

In addition, it is recommended that decision makers refer to professional development materials provided by Smarter Balanced or state offices on the *Individual Student Assessment Accessibility Profile (ISAAP)* or member-developed process, as well as other member-developed materials consistent with the *Smarter Balanced Implementation Guide*.

Additional information on the decision-making process, and ways to promote a thoughtful process rather than an automatic reliance on a checklist or menu, is available through materials developed by groups of members.<sup>1</sup>

12. *What security measures need to be taken before, during, and after the assessment for students who use universal tools, designated supports, and/or accommodations?*

Test security involves maintaining the confidentiality of test questions and answers, and is critical in ensuring the integrity of a test and validity of test results. Ensuring that only authorized personnel have access to the test and that test materials are kept confidential is critical in technology-based assessments. In addition, it is important to guarantee that (a) students are seated in such a manner that they cannot see each other's terminals, (b) students are not able to access any unauthorized programs or the Internet while they are taking the assessment, and (c) students are not able to access any externally-saved data or computer shortcuts while taking the test. Prior to testing, the IEP team should check on compatibility of assistive technology devices and make appropriate adjustments if necessary. When a non-embedded designated support or accommodation is used that involves a

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<sup>1</sup> These materials were developed by collaboratives of members to address decision making for students with disabilities, ELs, and ELs with disabilities:

- *Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: Assessing Special Education Students State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards, Council of Chief State School Officers.
- *Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of English Language Learners*. Washington, DC: Assessing English Language Learners State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards, Council of Chief State School Officers.
- *Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of English Language Learners with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: Assessing Special Education Students and English Language Learners State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards, Council of Chief State School Officers.



human having access to items (e.g., reader, scribe), procedures must be in place to ensure that the individual understands and has agreed to security and confidentiality requirements. Test administrators need to (a) keep testing materials in a secure place to prevent unauthorized access, and (b) keep all test content confidential and refrain from sharing information or revealing test content.

Printed test items/stimuli, including embossed braille printouts, must be collected and inventoried at the end of each test session and securely shredded immediately. DO NOT keep printed test items/stimuli for future test sessions.

The following test materials must be securely shredded immediately after each testing session and may not be retained from one testing session to the next:

- Scratch paper and all other paper handouts written on by students during testing;
  - Please note, for mathematics and ELA performance tasks, if a student needs to take the performance task in more than one session, scratch paper may be collected at the end of each session, securely stored, and made available to the student at the next performance task testing session. Once the student completes the performance task, the scratch paper must be collected and securely destroyed to maintain test security. If the student is using an assistive technology device, the test administrator must ensure that all test materials are deleted from the device.
- Any reports or other documents that contain personally identifiable student information;
- Printed test items or stimuli.

Additional information on this topic is provided in the *Test Administration Manual* (TAM).

13. *Who is supposed to input information about designated supports and accommodations into the Administration and Registration Tools (ART) or into a member's comparable platform? How is the information verified?*

Generally a school or district will designate a person to enter information into the ART or the member's comparable platform. Often this person is a test coordinator. For those students for whom an IEP team (or educator developing the 504 plan) is identifying designated supports as well as accommodations, that team or educator is responsible for ensuring that information from the IEP (or 504 plan) is entered appropriately so that all embedded accommodations can be activated prior to testing.

Entry of information for IEP and 504 students can be accomplished by identifying one person from the team to enter information or by providing information to the person designated by the school or district to enter data into the ART. For students who are ELs, an educator who knows the student well and is familiar with the instructional supports used in the classroom should provide information to the person designated to enter information into the ART.



14. *Are there any supplies that schools need to provide so that universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations can be appropriately implemented?*

Schools should determine the number of headphones they will provide (for text-to-speech, as well as for the listening test) and other non-embedded universal tools (e.g., thesaurus), designated supports (e.g., bilingual dictionary), and accommodations (e.g., multiplication table) for students. An alternative is to identify these as items that students will provide on their own.

15. *What happens when accommodations listed in the Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines do not match any accommodations presented in the student's IEP or 504 plan?*

IEP or 504 teams should consider accommodations a student needs in light of the *Smarter Balanced Guidelines*. If it is decided that a specific accommodation is needed that is not included in the *Guidelines*, the team should submit a request for a temporary approval to the member. The member contact will judge whether the proposed accommodation poses a threat to the constructs measured by the Smarter Balanced assessments; based on that judgment the member contact will either issue a temporary approval or will deny the request.

Temporary approvals will be forwarded to a standing committee; this committee makes a recommendation to the Governing members about future incorporation of new accommodations into the *Smarter Balanced Guidelines*.

16. *Are there accessibility resources that members have discussed and agreed not to include in the Smarter Balanced test?*

There are several accessibility resources that members discussed with external experts, discussed with members, and agreed not to include in the Smarter Balanced test:

- Translated 'word list' for ELA tests
- Bilingual dictionary for all ELA items except for the full write portion of the ELA Performance Task; the full write is the second part of a Performance Task
- Calculator on mathematics items in grades 3-5
- External protractor/ruler for online mathematics tests
- Multiplication table for mathematics items in grade 3
- Members also agreed to keep the current scribing policy; members agreed not to restrict it
- Members also agreed not to change the font style

## **UNIVERSAL TOOLS AND DESIGNATED SUPPORTS FAQs (AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS)**

17. *What are the process and timeline for updating and making changes to the Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines?*

Smarter Balanced asks members to request changes to the *Guidelines* once each year. The process for making changes to the *Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines* is initiated by a survey that Smarter Balanced



administers in March and April. Member leads or designees then submit requests via the survey. Upon collecting the survey results, Smarter Balanced engages in a process during April and May to examine research, solicit feedback from external experts and advisory committees, and discuss the requests with the UAAG Committee. Any new policy and/or change to existing policy that the UAAG committee recommends is brought to member leads for a vote. Smarter Balanced then updates the *Guidelines* as necessary and posts the updated version the last week of June.

18. *Is the digital notepad universal tool fully available for ELA and math? Will a student's notes be saved if the student takes a 20-minute break?*

The digital notepad is available on all items across both content areas. As long as a student or test administrator activates the test within the 20-minute break window, the notes will still be there. There is no limit on the number of pauses that a student can take in one test sitting.

19. *For the global notes universal tool, if a student takes a break of 20 minutes, do the notes disappear?*

Global notes, which are used for ELA performance tasks only, will always be available until the student submits the test, regardless of how long a break lasts or how many breaks are taken.

20. *For the highlighter universal tool, if a student pauses a test for 20 minutes, do the highlighter marks disappear?*

If a student is working on a passage or stimulus on a screen and pauses the test for 20 minutes to take a break, the student will still have access to the information visible on that particular screen. However, students do lose access to any information highlighted on a previous screen.

21. *How are students made aware that the spell check universal tool is available when moving from item to item?*

When appropriate, items include universal tools available for students to use. For the spell check tool, a line will appear under misspelled words.

22. *For the zoom universal tool, is the default size specific to certain devices? Will the test administration manual provide directions on how to do this adjustment?*

The default size is available to all students and is not specific to certain devices. Information on how to use the zoom universal tool is included in the directions at the beginning of each test. Please note that in addition to zoom, students may have access to magnification and an enlarged mouse pointer, which are non-embedded designated supports.

23. *For the English glossary universal tool, how are terms with grade- and context-appropriate definitions made evident to the student?*

Selected terms have a light rectangle around them. If a student hovers over the terms, the terms with the attached glossary are highlighted. A student can click on the terms and a pop-up window will appear. In addition, a student can click on the audio button next to each term to hear it.



24. *For the mark for review universal tool, will selections remain visible after a 20-minute break?*

If a student takes a break for longer than 20 minutes, the student will not be able to access items from previous screens.

25. *Can universal tools be turned off if it is determined that they will interfere with the student's performance on the assessment?*

Yes. If an adult (or team) determines that a universal tool might be distracting or that students do not need to or are unable to use them, that universal tool can be turned off. This information must be noted in the ART prior to test administration.

## FAQS PERTAINING TO ENGLISH LEARNERS (ELs)

26. *How are the language access needs of ELs addressed in the Smarter Balanced Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines?*

The language access needs of ELs are addressed through the provision of numerous universal tools and designated supports. These include universal tools such as English dictionaries and thesauri for full writes and English glossaries, and designated supports such as translated test directions and glossaries. These are not considered accommodations in the Smarter Balanced assessment system.

27. *Why are resources to support English language proficiency needs classified as universal tools and designated supports?*

- Resources that support students' needs regarding English language proficiency are different from resources that support students' needs associated with disabilities. Historically, assessment systems have confounded these two types of student needs.
- Students who are not formally classified as English learners may benefit from access to language supports on Smarter Balanced assessments. Therefore, associating language supports exclusively with formal English learner classification is unnecessarily limiting and potentially harmful.
- Smarter Balanced makes available resources to support English language proficiency needs as embedded universal tools and designated supports to ensure that the greatest number of students has access to these resources.
- English learners who also have disabilities can be provided access to accommodations as identified in their IEPs/504 plans.

28. *Is text-to-speech available for ELs to use?*

Text-to-speech is available as a designated support to all students (including ELs) for whom an adult or team has indicated it is needed for math items and for ELA items (but not ELA reading passages). Text-to-speech for ELA reading passages is available for an EL in all grades only if the student has an IEP or 504 plan. For text-to-speech to be available for an EL, it must be entered into the ART.

29. *What languages are available to ELs in text-to-speech?*

Text-to-speech is currently available only in English. However, the translated glossaries include an audio component automatically available to any student with the translated glossaries embedded designated support.



30. *For which content areas will the Consortium provide translation supports for students whose primary language is not English?*

For mathematics, the Consortium will provide full translations in American Sign Language, stacked translations in Spanish (with the Spanish translation presented directly above the English item), and primary language pop-up glossaries in various languages and dialects including Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, Tagalog, Ilokano, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, and Ukrainian. For the Listening portion of the English Language Arts assessment, Smarter Balanced will provide full translations in American Sign Language delivered digitally through the test delivery system.

Only translations that have gone through the translation process outlined in the *Smarter Balanced Translation Accommodations Framework for Testing English Language Learners in Mathematics* would be an accepted support.

31. *Does a student need to be identified as an English learner in order to receive translation and language supports? What about foreign language exchange students?*

Translations and language supports are provided as universal tools and designated supports. Universal tools are available to all students. Designated supports are available to those students for whom an adult (or team) has determined a need for the support. Thus, these are available to all students, regardless of their status as an EL. Foreign language exchange students would have access to all universal tools and those designated supports that have been indicated by an adult (or team).

32. *For the translated test directions designated support, what options are available for students who do not understand the language available in the digital format? Can a human reader of directions in the native language be provided?*

If a student needs a read aloud/text-to-speech accommodation in another language, then the test directions should be provided in that other language. The reader or text-to-speech device must be able to provide the directions in the student's language without difficulty due to accent or register. To ensure quality and standardized directions, the reader or text-to-speech device should only use directions that have undergone professional translation by the Consortium prior to testing. Smarter Balanced is providing a PDF of the translated test directions in: Arabic, Burmese, Cantonese, Dakota, French, Haitian-Creole, Hmong, Ilokano, Japanese, Korean, Lakota, Mandarin, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and Yup'ik.

33. *How is the translations glossary non-embedded designated support different from the bilingual dictionary?*

The translations glossary non-embedded designated support includes the customized translation of pre-determined construct-irrelevant terms that are most challenging to English learners. The translation of the terms is context-specific and grade-appropriate. Bilingual dictionaries often do not provide context-specific information nor are they customized. In addition, the translated glossary includes an audio support.



34. *Will translations be available in language dialects/variants?*

Translated glossaries are available in different languages and dialects including Arabic, Burmese, Cantonese, Filipino, Hmong, Korean, Mandarin, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese.

## FAQs PERTAINING TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

35. *What accommodations are available for students with disabilities (including ELs with disabilities)?*

Students with disabilities (including those who are ELs) can use embedded accommodations (e.g., American Sign Language, braille) and non-embedded accommodations (e.g., abacus, alternate response options, speech-to-text, word prediction) that have been documented on an IEP or 504 accommodations plan. These students also may use universal tools and designated supports. A full list of accommodations can be found in the *Guidelines* document, tables 5 and 6.

36. *Is an embedded ASL accommodation available on ELA items that are not part of the Listening test?*

The embedded ASL accommodation is not currently available on any ELA items that are not part of the Listening claim. For the Listening test, a deaf or hard of hearing student who has a documented need in an IEP or 504 plan may use the embedded ASL.

37. *Will sign languages other than ASL (including signing in other languages) be available?*

Currently, only ASL is available.

38. *Can interpreters be used for students who are deaf or hard of hearing who do not use ASL?*

Smarter Balanced has consulted with external experts who have unanimously advised against this practice. Research indicates severe challenges with standardization and quality.

39. *What options do districts have for administering Smarter Balanced assessments to students who are blind?*

Students who are blind and who prefer to use braille should have access to either screen reader support with refreshable braille (only for ELA) or screen reader support with on-site embosser-created braille (for ELA or math). Students who are blind may also take a paper-pencil form of the assessment in braille. Various braille codes are offered for both online and paper-pencil braille.

For those students who are blind and prefer to use text-to-speech, access to text-to-speech should be provided for the math test, and for ELA items only (text-to-speech is not available on ELA reading passages without a specific documented need in the student's IEP or 504 plan).

Non-embedded read aloud accommodation in all grades is available for students who have an indicated need on ELA reading passages in their IEP or 504 plan. Students should participate in the decision about the accommodation they prefer to use, and should be allowed to change during the assessment if they ask to do so. Students



can have access to both braille and text-to-speech that are embedded in the Smarter Balanced assessment system.

40. *Why is the non-embedded abacus an accommodation for the non-calculator items? Doesn't an abacus serve the same function as a calculator?*

An abacus is similar to the sighted student using paper and pencil to write a problem and do calculations. The student using the abacus has to have an understanding of number sense and must know how to do calculations with an abacus.

41. *Can students without documented disabilities who have had a sudden injury use any of the Smarter Balanced accommodations?*

Students without documented disabilities who have experienced a physical injury that impairs their ability to use a computer may use some accommodations, provided they have had sufficient experience with them. Both speech-to-text and scribe are accommodations that are available to students who have experienced a physical injury such as a broken hand or arm, or students who have become blind through an injury and have not had sufficient time to learn braille. Prior to testing a student with a sudden physical injury, regardless of whether a 504 plan is started, test administrators should contact their district test coordinator or other authorized individuals to ensure the test registration system accurately describes the student's status and any accommodations that the student requires.

42. *How will the test administrator know prior to testing that the print on demand accommodation may be needed?*

The test administrator will know this information prior to testing because accommodations need to be documented beforehand and print on demand is an accommodation. Any accommodations – including both embedded and non-embedded accommodations – need to be entered into the ART. The print on demand accommodation applies to either passages/stimuli or items, or both.

43. *For the print on demand accommodation, how are student responses recorded – by a scribe or some other method?*

The method of recording student responses depends on documentation in the IEP or 504 plan (e.g., after first recording responses on the paper version, the student could enter responses into the computer or the scribe could enter responses into the computer). All individuals acting as a scribe must have read, agreed to, and signed a test security agreement.

44. *How do member officials monitor training and qualifications for the non-embedded read aloud accommodation?*

Members will need to develop processes and procedures to monitor training and the qualifications of individuals who provide the read aloud accommodation when text-to-speech is not appropriate for a student. Member officials can use the Smarter Balanced [ELA Audio Guidelines](#) and [Mathematics Audio Guidelines](#) available online to obtain additional information about recommended processes to follow. Members can also use the *Smarter Balanced Read Aloud Guidelines* (see Appendix D).



45. *For students taking the paper-pencil test, can read aloud be provided in small groups?*

For a paper-pencil test, read aloud can be administered to a small group of students as long as the students are taking the same test (e.g., grade, content area) and students have experience testing under this condition. The number of students in the small group should allow a student to ask the reader to slow down or to repeat text without the request distracting others. For online assessments, readers should be provided to students on an individual basis.

46. *If students are using their own devices that incorporate word prediction, will this impact their score?*

Word prediction is an allowable non-embedded accommodation. The students' score will not be affected under these circumstances. Students using these devices must still use their knowledge and skills to review and edit their answers.

47. *How are assistive technology (AT) devices certified for use for the Smarter Balanced assessments?*

Assistive technology device manufacturers may use the Smarter Balanced practice test through a secure browser as a method of determining if a device works with the assessment. In addition, schools and districts can use the practice test through a secure browser to evaluate devices to ensure their functions are consistent with those allowed in the UAAG.

48. *What kind of medical supports may be used by students? What monitoring is needed?*

Medical supports would encompass any supports that have been prescribed or recommended by a medical professional who supports the student's health. The student's health and well-being are the highest priority. Medical supports may require the use of an app on a cell phone or tablet. These supports are not exhaustive but may include: glucose monitors, durable medical equipment, hearing aids, FM systems, service animals, etc. The use of medical supports may require a separate setting or additional monitoring by the test administrator to ensure the student is not accessing the internet for any other purpose.