



# Advice guide 17: Rest breaks / 'Stop the clock' in exams

## What are Rest Breaks / 'Stop-the-Clock' in Exams?

Certain disabilities mean that a student will need to stop working to attend to symptoms or requirements directly related to their disability. In an examination situation, this requirement for additional time to attend to disability-related needs is accommodated by **Rest Breaks / 'Stop-the-clock' facility** (the terms Rest Breaks and Stop-the-Clock are interchangeable and refer to the same thing) as a reasonable adjustment. It would be discriminatory to expect the student to use the standard allocated examination time to attend to disability-related needs.

Some typical examples of why a Rest Break / 'Stop-the-clock' facility is recommended and can be utilised are:

- Students with diabetes may need to regularly test their blood sugar levels and adjust them accordingly.
- A student with a chronic back condition may need to take breaks to relieve pain and discomfort.
- Students with high levels of anxiety may need to take breaks in order to employ techniques to alleviate their anxiety such as breathing exercises or mindfulness so that they can engage with their exam
- Students with irritable bowel syndrome may need to use the bathroom urgently and for varying amounts of time
- Students with ADHD or ASC may utilise time to take breaks in order to employ sensory techniques to manage their concentration level.

If you have been recommended Rest Breaks / 'Stop-the-Clock' facility in exams, this means that you will be allowed to 'stop the exam clock' by signalling to the Exam Invigilator that you need to take a rest break for the purposes stated in your **Student Support Plan**. Such breaks cannot be used for any other purpose than those agreed in your support plan. **You cannot write, read, or engage with the exam paper or other students during rest breaks.**

The amount of time you will be entitled to for a break will have been discussed and agreed with your **Disability Adviser** as stated in your **Student Support Plan** but typically, will be for up to 10 minutes for every hour of the exam.





For example, if you have a **three-hour** exam and a recommendation for up to **10 minutes** per hour stop-the-clock break is made, you will be able to break for up to **30 minutes** during that three-hour exam. The elapsed time of the exam could therefore potentially be up to 3.5 hours.

Stop-the-clock breaks are flexible. You may use all, none or only part of your time allowance. If you do not need to use any of the allocated time for rest breaks, you may continue to work through to the end of the exam.

### How does it work in practice?

- You will be informed of the total amount of break time you could use if needed for each exam before the exam.
- You should tell the invigilator when you need to take a rest break by raising your hand or telling the invigilator verbally that you need to take a break.
- The invigilator will note the start of your rest break and your break will then be timed
- During breaks you will not be permitted to access either your question or answer papers. This will be monitored by the invigilator
- You must maintain full exam conditions i.e., not interact with other students during your rest breaks. You will not be allowed to leave the building during rest-breaks
- You may stay in the exam room or may leave the room if supervised by a member of staff. This can include going to the toilet, or for a specific disability-related reason stated in your Student Support Plan
- You must inform the invigilator when you are ready to return to your paper. The time taken will be added to your exam end time
- Rest breaks / 'Stop-the-Clock' may be approved in addition to extra time and other reasonable adjustments for exams. If you are allowed to take both rest breaks and have extra time, the rest breaks will be calculated based upon the original exam duration and cannot be used for any other purpose than those stipulated in your Student Support Plan

### For more information

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