



ClaroRead DSA Justification Guidelines

March 2022

Introduction

This document is intended for anyone who needs to justify a recommendation for ClaroRead in a Needs Assessment Report for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). It introduces the features and tools that are available with ClaroRead, and explains how they can help students who qualify for DSA support.

ClaroRead is used extensively by DSA students in the UK and has a long history of being recommended by assessors.

For more information and resources about ClaroRead and DSA, visit our [Disabled Students' Allowance](#) web page.

What is ClaroRead?

ClaroRead is a toolbar that is available for Windows, Mac, and Chromebook. It works alongside many common applications to provide support for reading and writing – not just word processors, but also web browsers, Adobe Acrobat, and so on.

Behind the simple toolbar is a wide range of functionality to help with reading and writing. ClaroRead's features include:

Text-to-speech (TTS)	<p>Read practically any text from a student's screen, using a range of high-quality voices. Configurable word-by-word highlighting helps students to follow text as it is read out.</p> <p>ClaroRead's available voices include many languages and accents, either male or female.</p>
Scanning (OCR)	<p>Scan documents from paper, file (including PDF), or screen, using OCR to make text accessible.</p> <p>OCR, or <i>optical character recognition</i>, is the conversion of pictures of text (for example, a photo of a document) into computerised text that can be copied, edited, and so on.</p>
Writing tools	<p>Check spelling, including phonetic misspellings and homophones, with a speaking dictionary to help students choose the right words.</p>
Word prediction	<p>Add advanced word prediction to any application.</p>
Font and spacing	<p>Adjust font size, typeface, and spacing in Microsoft Word.</p>
Save to audio/video	<p>Save text to an audio or video file so students can listen to it later.</p>
Speech recognition integration	<p>Write text using speech recognition, through integration with Dragon (Windows) or the operating system's own speech recognition functionality (Mac and Chromebook).</p>

ClaroRead is a simple, easy-to-use, flexible software solution that helps students to read, write, study, sit exams, and increase their confidence.

All ClaroRead users have free access to training, webinars, and other resources on the Claro Software website.

Assessors can get free licences for ClaroRead and our other products. Simply email dsagroup@texthelp.com with your details.

ClaroRead extras

ClaroRead includes a range of additional tools, all of which can be accessed from the toolbar's Extras button on Windows and Mac. These include:

ClaroView	Screen tinting. Applies a tint to the whole screen, with a TrueBlack mode that better simulates a physical filter.
Claro ScreenRuler	Screen tinting and masking. Applies a tinted strip or a solid line across the screen that moves with the student's pointer and helps them focus on the current line or paragraph.
ClaroCapture	Study skills tool that helps students gather information from many sources in preparation for writing essays, reports, and so on.
ClaroIdeas	Mind mapping and idea capture application that helps students organise their thoughts, ideas, notes, tasks, and so on
Claro AudioNote	Audio capture application that helps students to record and review lectures, complete with bookmarks. Students can also record audio notes directly into Word and PowerPoint.
ClaroPDF	Simple PDF reader that reads out text with synchronised highlighting. Students can also add highlighting and simple annotations to their PDFs.
Speaking Calculator	Simple calculator that speaks numbers, operations, and results.
Auto Converter	Converts PDFs or image files (JPEG, PNG) to accessible Word, PDF, or plain text files.

For more information, see our [Windows Software](#) and [Mac Software](#) web pages.

On Chromebook, screen tinting and ClaroCapture are available under Settings > Extras, while ClaroIdeas and ClaroPDF can be installed separately.

For more information, see our [Chromebook Apps](#) web page.

Mobile apps

ClaroRead users also have access to the premium versions of Claro Software's mobile apps, helping them to read and write on their iPhones, iPads, and Android devices. These include:

ClaroSpeak iOS / Android	<p>Reads out text, with highlighting, from documents on a student's mobile device or the cloud. Students can set font characteristics and background colour to make text easier to read.</p> <p>ClaroSpeak also helps students write text with speech recognition (iOS only), echo text, spellcheck, and word prediction.</p>
Claro Keyboard iOS	<p>Supplements or replaces the system keyboard on a student's iPhone or iPad, giving them easy access to ClaroSpeak's enhanced word prediction and text-to-speech.</p>
ClaroPDF iOS / Android	<p>Reads out text with synchronised highlighting.</p> <p>On iOS, students can also annotate and save PDFs, as well as converting text, images, and web pages to accessible PDFs.</p>
Claro ScanPen iOS / Android	<p>Reads out text from a photo, as students highlight it with their finger or stylus.</p> <p>With no online access required, ScanPen can be used in exams.</p>
Claro MagX iOS	<p>Turns a student's mobile device into a high definition visual magnifier, making it easier to read text and look at small items.</p>

For more information, see our [iPhone/iPad Apps](#) and [Android Apps](#) web pages.

Other Claro Software applications

For students who do not need the full range of ClaroRead's extensive features, the following applications are available separately through the DSA scheme:

- Writing Helper
- Claro ScreenRuler

Note that only Claro ScreenRuler is included with ClaroRead.

Writing Helper

Writing Helper is a separate application designed specifically to help students to organise and write assignments, such as essays, reports, and even dissertations. It guides the user through a linear, structured approach that starts with the essay question (or title) and a deadline, and ends with their assignment in Word format.

Writing Helper is available for recommendation through the DSA scheme, with or without ClaroRead. It has its own [Writing Helper DSA Justification Guidelines](#) document.

For more information, see our Writing Helper web page.

ClaroRead in exams

Whether a student can use assistive technology in an exam depends on several factors, for example their college or university's policies, whether it has been agreed as a reasonable adjustment, and whether suitable hardware (typically a university-owned laptop) and licences are available.

When recommending ClaroRead (or any other assistive technology) for a student, you need to consider what options they have for exams.

While ClaroRead SE is designed for use in exams, it is typically used as part of a college or university's site licence rather than recommended for individual students. Students with individual ClaroRead licences can install ClaroRead SE on a second laptop, or use ClaroRead with spellcheck disabled – this can be done securely by invigilators or network administrators. All versions of ClaroRead work offline.

For Chromebooks, the free version of ClaroRead Chrome does not include spellcheck.

For iOS or Android devices, for example iPads, ClaroPDF and Claro ScanPen can be used. These do not include spellcheck, or require an internet connection, and can be put into iOS Guided Access mode, restricting students from using any other app or function.

For more information, see our [Exams](#) web page.

How can ClaroRead help?

ClaroRead can be an appropriate recommendation for students with the following learning needs:

Reading and writing difficulties	Including dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia.
Mental health issues	Including anxiety, stress, ASD, OCD and ADHD/ADD.
Visual impairment	Including blurred vision, visual stress, poor visual acuity, and retinal migraines.
Physical disabilities	Including fine motor control issues and difficulty sitting at a desk.

The following sections detail how ClaroRead's features can help with each of the above learning needs.

As an assessor, you can decide which of ClaroRead's features are best suited to a particular student. If ClaroRead is an appropriate recommendation, on its own or in conjunction with other assistive technology, the justification in that student's Needs Assessment Report should reflect those features.

Note that this document cannot cover all possible needs and solutions – every disability is different, and students may fall into several of the above categories. For example, a brain injury might result in acquired dyslexia, blurred vision, and problems with fine motor control. Each student's individual needs will require a different combination of ClaroRead features and tools.

One of the benefits of recommending a suite like ClaroRead is that students can try out many different features and decide what works for them. The features that a student uses may also change, as they grow in confidence, for example, or as they progress from sixth form through to postgraduate degree.

Reading and writing difficulties

Text-to-speech (TTS)

ClaroRead's core feature is its ability to read out text from the user's screen in a clear, human-sounding voice, complete with highlighting as the words are read out. This is great for students with difficulty reading, whether it is due to visual, perceptual, or linguistic difficulties.

ClaroRead can easily read aloud text from PDFs, Word documents, emails, web pages, and so on. The student can listen to whole sentences and focus on their meaning, rather than having to distinguish individual letters and words. Reading fatigue is a common problem for dyslexic students – ClaroRead helps them to work longer, or just not get so tired.

Text-to-speech gives students a multi-sensory approach – they can choose to hear text instead of reading it, whenever they want, in a range of different ways. The student is in control, which increases independence and builds confidence – with headphones or an earpiece, they can follow text at the same speed as everyone else in the class or, importantly, during an exam.

ClaroRead's word-by-word (or sentence-by-sentence) highlighting helps the student to focus as text is being read out.

Alternatively, if the student wants to skim through text, they can turn the speed up and listen for a particular word or phrase.

Text-to-speech can also help when writing, giving auditory feedback as the student types or selects text. This is a great proofreading tool, and can help to make sure that the student has used the right words, spelled them correctly, and even put their punctuation in the right place.

Writing tools

ClaroRead's advanced writing tools are there to help students with their writing, and to give them confidence that they have got it right.

The Check button combines spelling checker, homophone checker, speaking dictionary (complete with pictures for common words), and thesaurus into a single easy-to-use Check window – this helps the student to understand *why* a word is incorrect, and gives them assistance in selecting the right correction.

ClaroRead's spelling checker is smart enough to identify phonic approximations, incorrectly used homophones, and so on. It then uses context to suggest the right correction. For example, *school* may be misspelled as *skool*, *scool*, *scule*, or *skule*, while a user may confuse *there*, *their*, and *they're*.

The Homophones button runs an in-depth check, which identifies *all* homophones (as well as any spelling mistakes) and gives the student a chance to change them. This is designed to give documents a final, thorough check, for example before submitting an important essay.

ClaroRead's dictionary tooltip gives the user a quick definition for any word in any application. For many words, the tooltip also shows how they are broken down into syllables. It can even handle translations – great for students with English as a second language.

The dictionary tooltip gives users the confidence to use new words, resulting in richer writing.

Word prediction

Word prediction can help students write more quickly, as they can choose the right word after a few letters rather than having to type it out in full.

ClaroRead learns as the student types and tries to predict the words that they want to use next in a sentence, as well as completing words they have started typing.

Word prediction can be configured to suit each student's writing and typing ability. For example, a student with dyspraxia might want a large range of words to appear after typing the first few letters, to minimise keypresses. Alternatively, a severely dyslexic student may rely on a smaller range of words, but need them to appear even if they have typed the letters in the wrong order.

ClaroRead's word prediction list includes pictures alongside common words, which can help students to select their words quickly.

ClaroRead includes subject-specific prediction dictionaries – for example Archaeology, Biology, and Nursing. The Biology dictionary includes words and phrases such as *amoeba*, *DNA sequencing*, and *ventricle*.

Word prediction isn't just for minimising keystrokes. It can also help with spelling as it will never suggest an incorrectly spelled word – this can result in increased vocabulary and motivation, as the student trusts their ability to use more words.

Font and spacing

Changing font size, typeface, and the spacing between words, lines, and paragraphs can make reading easier. ClaroRead's toolbar includes buttons to easily change fonts and spacing across an entire Word document.

Save to audio

Some students are much better at listening to text than reading it. While ClaroRead's standard text-to-speech can handle larger documents, it may be even more useful to save them to audio files – effectively converting them to an audio book.

Screen tinting and masking

One of the traditional aids for dyslexia and visual stress or Irlen Syndrome is to use a coloured filter or tinted glasses. This can be a quick fix for some students.

ClaroView simulates a coloured filter or overlay for the whole screen. The student can choose the colour and strength of the tint – as prescribed by their optician, for example. Specifying a pale filter can reduce contrast, which can make text easier and less tiring to read.

TrueBlack mode prevents dark colours from become washed out, preserving contrast and better simulating a physical filter (or tinted glasses).

Claro ScreenRuler masks the screen so that the student can focus on just the area that they are reading. It applies a tinted strip (*ruler*) or a solid line (*underline*) across the screen that moves with the cursor and mouse pointer. The student can choose the colour of the tinted strip, as well as tinting the screen outside it. Many people find a pale ruler on a darkened screen helpful, for example.

Scanning (OCR)

ClaroRead does a great job of reading text from PDF files, Word documents, emails, web pages, and so on. However, some text cannot be read directly – this is *inaccessible* text.

Examples of inaccessible text include text printed on paper, in image files, or scanned documents that haven't been processed into text.

ClaroRead's Scan button can handle all of these, enabling students to access any text – from a snippet of on-screen information to an entire textbook.

Students can use the Scan from Screen feature to quickly read out any text they see on their screen. This is particularly good for web pages, videos, images, and applications that do not allow text to be copied.

Claro's mobile apps, such as ClaroSpeak and Claro ScanPen, enable students to read text wherever they are.

Claro AudioNote

Claro AudioNote can record speech directly into PowerPoint presentations and Word documents. Students with difficulty writing can use this to make their own notes, or to work informally with their study group or tutor.

ClaroIdeas

ClaroIdeas is a mind mapping and idea capture program that helps with research, planning, outlining, studying and presenting.

It can help neurodiverse students to organise their thoughts, as well as break down complex problems or handle complicated instructions.

ClaroCapture

ClaroCapture can help students to collect information from various sources, including their own thoughts, and export it all to Word, PowerPoint, or Claroldeas.

One of ClaroCapture's most useful features is the ability to highlight a Word document or webpage, using different colours for different types of information, and then to extract it all into a single project, grouped by highlight colour. It will even create bibliographies automatically.

Speech recognition integration

A speech recognition tool such as Nuance's Dragon may be recommended for students who have severe difficulties with writing. ClaroRead integrates with Dragon, so they can access both tools from a single toolbar – students can click ClaroRead's Dictate button instead of having to open Dragon separately.

ClaroRead can also "echo back" what Dragon has recognised, to make sure that it has understood dictation correctly.

For students using Macs or Chromebooks, ClaroRead uses macOS or Google's own speech recognition. Students can click ClaroRead's Dictate button, dictate text, and it will be entered into their current application.

Mental health issues

Ease of use	<p>For students suffering from anxiety or stress, just knowing that they have a helping hand available can help. ClaroRead is always there to read text for them.</p> <p>Most of ClaroRead's functionality is easily accessed from a simple toolbar, to try to reduce stress as much as possible. The toolbar can be configured to show only the buttons that a student uses. The last thing anyone wants is to add more complication to their desktop.</p>
Text-to-speech (TTS)	<p>ClaroRead's high quality voices read with expression and tone. With many voices available, students can choose one that they enjoy listening to. Being able to easily change between voices and alter their speed can help students with ADHD or ADD to stay focussed.</p> <p>ClaroRead's highlighting helps students to focus as text is being read out. Using headphones when reading can also help by cutting out aural distractions.</p>
Writing tools Word prediction	<p>ClaroRead's spelling checker, homophone checker, dictionary, thesaurus, and word prediction can all reduce the stress of producing written work, by helping students to write text that is correctly spelled and punctuated, using a rich vocabulary.</p> <p>Over time, this can build confidence and self-esteem.</p>
Screen masking	<p>Claro ScreenRuler's screen masking can really help students with ADHD or ADD to concentrate, by focussing on smaller amounts of text at a time and reducing visual stress.</p> <p>Using the reading ruler enables students to track text as they are reading, whether it is one line at a time or several paragraphs. As the student is in control of the ruler, it keeps them engaged and builds confidence.</p>
Save to audio Save to video	<p>Saving text to audio is great for students who prefer to listening to text than reading it. Knowing that they have an easier way to handle their reading list can help with anxiety, and students can also listen to their documents in a more relaxed environment – while taking a walk, for example.</p> <p>Saving text to video results in a simple window showing just that text being read out, with highlighting, using a configurable font and background colour. This can help students to avoid other on-screen distractions.</p>

<p>Claro AudioNote</p>	<p>If the user is finding it hard to focus on a lesson or lecture, they can record it using AudioNote and then review it later (in short sections if necessary), adding notes and so on.</p>
<p>ClaroIdeas</p>	<p>ClaroIdeas can help neurodiverse students to organise their thoughts, as well as break down complex problems or handle complicated instructions – giving them the tools to cope with potentially stressful situations.</p> <p>ClaroIdeas can also help students to organise their personal lives, from producing shopping lists to planning a holiday.</p>
<p>ClaroCapture</p>	<p>ClaroCapture can help students get over that stressful “blank page” problem. Highlighting lots of text in different colours and then clicking a button to collate it all is an intuitive way of working and enables students to focus on their source text – rather than having to keep switching between it and their essay, which can be very distracting.</p> <p>Knowing that their bibliographies will be produced automatically, using the style mandated by their university, can also reduce anxiety.</p>

Visual impairment

Text-to-speech (TTS)	If a student has difficulty reading text, ClaroRead's text-to-speech can always read it out for them.
Save to audio	The text-to-speech features described earlier, under <i>Reading and writing difficulties</i> , can all help students with visual impairment. ClaroRead's save to audio feature and speech recognition integration may also be useful. Note that ClaroRead is unlikely to be a total solution for students with severe visual impairment. Instead, these students should be recommended specialist visual impairment software, such as Dolphin SuperNova and Freedom Scientific JAWS. ClaroRead may be recommended alongside these, for students who would benefit from features and tools that are unavailable elsewhere.
Speech recognition integration	
Screen tinting and masking	ClaroView and ScreenRuler can help students with dyslexia or Irlen Syndrome. However, they may also help with other conditions, such as light-induced and retinal migraines. For example, reducing contrast and blue light by specifying a pale red or amber overlay can make the screen more comfortable to read, so a student can use their computer for longer without risking a migraine.
Font and spacing	Students with visual impairment will usually have their screen text enlarged already, for example using Windows' Ease of Access settings. ClaroRead's Font and Spacing buttons may still be useful, however, to quickly increase font size, typeface, and spacing in Word documents.
Claro MagX	The Claro MagX app turns a student's iPad, iPhone, or Android device into a high definition magnifier. This means that students with visual impairment will always have a magnifier with them.

Physical disabilities

Text-to-speech (TTS) Save to Audio	<p>If a student has difficulty sitting at a desk, or cannot stay in one position for long, text-to-speech can help them continue to read text while taking time away from their screen.</p> <p>Saving longer texts to audio files can also help, enabling the student to listen while relaxing or moving around.</p>
Word prediction Speech recognition integration	<p>If a student's physical difficulties make it hard for them to use a keyboard, ClaroRead's word prediction can help by reducing the number of keypresses that they need to write words and sentences.</p> <p>Speech recognition can also help – if a student already uses Nuance's Dragon (or if it is being recommended for them), for example, ClaroRead will integrate with it. See the <i>Reading and writing difficulties</i> section.</p>
Scanning (OCR)	<p>ClaroRead's document scanning enables students to make electronic copies of textbooks, notes, handouts, and so on, with text that can be read out by ClaroRead or copied into other applications. This means that the student does not need to carry as many heavy books or papers around with them, making it easier for them to stay mobile.</p> <p>Being able to copy and paste text into other applications also reduces the need for typing.</p>
Claro AudioNote	<p>Claro AudioNote can record speech directly into PowerPoint presentations and Word documents. Students with difficulty writing can use this to make their own notes, or to work informally with their study group or tutor.</p>