



Additional Information Request Fact Sheet

We have already given you that information in the original application – why are you asking for it again?

At times information is presented in an application in a way that is very general and relies on the verifiers making inferences about what was meant by the statement. In this case the verifiers will usually ask for more specific information, including examples.

It is common in this case for ambiguous terms such as “rarely”, “often”, ‘sometimes’, ‘not consistently’ or “usually” to have been used. For one person ‘often’ may mean 90% of the time, for another person it means 50%. The verifiers cannot make assumptions. It is more useful to make sure you include a more measurable estimation, for example “he is usually nonverbal” could become “he is usually nonverbal – teachers say they have heard him say a word three times only during the last term”.

In addition, the verifiers need to know what happens when a behaviour is observed however infrequently it happens. For example, “she almost never responds to her name” could become “she almost never responds to her name, we have seen this three times in the last month and when she does respond she only turns her head to make eye contact for a fleeting second, then continues her activity”.

Sometimes information given is specific enough, however elsewhere in the application a statement is made that directly conflicts with it. For example, “has no interest in books” but later in the application the statement is made “will sometimes label pictures in books”. In cases such as this the verifiers will ask for clarification.

The verifiers have asked for information about the child/student’s understanding and use of early concepts. Do we have to use a specific assessment tool?

No. It is not reliable practice to attempt to gain information from a once off assessment completed by a person with whom the child/student is not familiar or in an unfamiliar context, as a lack of response may not reflect a lack of understanding. It is expected that more authentic information will be able to be obtained by simply talking with the people who know the child/student best such as a member of their whānau or a key teacher; or by reviewing observation information previously gained from the context of daily routine activities.

What do they mean by 'early concepts'?

The verifiers usually give examples in the additional information request of what they mean when they ask about early concepts, however the term usually refers to the child/student's understanding and use of concepts such as colour, shape, number, size, position and description words. They will be interested in whether the child/student can rote count, whether they have one to one correspondence and can count items, or label numbers that they see. Do they use words like blue, big, under, or on? Will they find a circle for example, when asked to during a mat time activity? You don't need to formally test the child/student, again a more authentic assessment is better, using observational data you have collected over time, or a discussion with people who know the child/student best.

Sometimes information about early concepts has been given in the original application but is difficult for the verifiers to interpret. A common example is when a broad statement has been made such as "this child/student has no understanding of early concepts such as colour, shape or number" but later in the application language examples have been given that contain these words, for example "The child/student says 'blue' as 'bu' and says 'three' as 'fee'". In this circumstance the verifiers are likely to need clarification.

The verifiers do understand that the information a statement is meant to convey can seem obvious when you know the child/student well. It is very important to ask a colleague (who is not as familiar with the child/student) to read your application once it has been completed. They may notice such conflicts, or ambiguities, and you can give context and clarify the information at this stage before submitting the application.

Is it helpful to reference developmental norms throughout the application?

No. It is helpful to tell us what specifically the child/student can do, the support they need, and the skills they are working towards. To keep referencing developmental norms in relation to the child/student's skills means the application is disjointed to read.

Are you just asking for information to exclude the student from the ORS?

No. The aim of the application process is to ensure that all students who are eligible are included in the ORS. The verifiers need sufficient information to ensure the child/student's needs meet the appropriate criterion. If there is not enough information to make a decision, the verifiers will request further information.

As you know the child/student best, it is essential that you nominate the criterion that you feel is most appropriate. If the verifiers decide the child/student's needs do not meet this criterion, consideration is given to the possibility of meeting other criteria. In this case the verifiers may request further information.

We wouldn't be applying if we didn't think they met ORS – it takes a lot of time and considerable effort to put together the application. Why do you need to be so careful about clarifying the information we provide?

Inclusion in the ORS provides specialist support for the whole of the student's schooling and is intended for students with the highest ongoing need for specialist support. Information in the application must clearly demonstrate this level of need.

Have the ORS criteria changed recently?

No. The ORS criteria have not changed since they were originally approved by the government of the day in 1997. All students who meet the criteria, at whatever stage in their schooling the application is made, are included in the ORS.

The student's specialist has said they should have ORS, why isn't that enough information?

Specialists in other agencies such as paediatricians and psychologists are often not aware of the specific eligibility requirements for ORS. We are working at a national level to encourage better understanding of the ORS process and the wider levels of learning support available.

So why do you sometimes ask for paediatric reports?

Paediatric reports, especially developmental reports, often contain pertinent observations and comments that can help clarify and support information within the application.

We gave the information in the application, that the student has a diagnosed intellectual disability. Why have you come back for more information?

A standardised assessment indicating that a student has an intellectual disability may suggest that the student has support needs in school, but it is not necessarily indicative that their needs are going to be ongoing at the level that means they are eligible for inclusion in the ORS.

We have applied for a school-aged student, under Criterion 5. Why are you asking about what they do at home?

Students whose needs meet Criterion 5 have a severe delay in cognitive development which impacts on all areas of their lives. Information from home and community is essential to provide a complete picture of the student's needs across all settings.

If a student has significant difficulties with literacy and numeracy but is able to engage and interact in other areas of their life with markedly lower levels of support, it is unlikely they will meet Criterion 5.