

HE09E

Guidelines and Procedures for Alternative Examination Arrangements for Students with disabilities or Students with Health Problems

Purpose

The aim of reasonable adjustments to examination and assessment arrangements is to enable students with disabilities to demonstrate their abilities by making reasonable adjustments to standard forms of assessment. This does not change the purpose of the assessment but may alter the form. It is important that academic standards are maintained and therefore reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities must be made using the following procedure to ensure parity for all students.

Declaring a disability or health problem

If a student declares a disability, the Disability Team will contact them to make her/him aware of the provision of reasonable adjustments to examinations. The Disability Team will also contact these students to ask them to visit the service to discuss reasonable adjustments to examinations.

Students who are pregnant should discuss their needs with Occupational Health who will make appropriate arrangements.

The last date for submission of requests for reasonable adjustments to examinations will be 4 weeks before the examination period. After this time requests will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and there is no guarantee that requests can be accommodated, although every attempt will be made to do so.

If students contact their school to request reasonable adjustments to examinations, departments must refer the student to the Disability Team. This is to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made on an equitable basis across the Institute.

Evidence and Recommendations

Students who request reasonable adjustments to examinations will be required to provide evidence to support their request e.g. a completed medical form, or an appropriate assessor's report for students with specific learning difficulties. The Disability Team can advise individual students about appropriate evidence and can arrange assessments with a Specialist Assessor for students who may have specific learning difficulties.

It should be noted that obtaining the appropriate evidence can take some time. If a student declares a disability shortly before an examination period there may not be time to obtain this evidence and it will not be possible to make reasonable adjustments. Where a student is awaiting evidence they may be allocated to the alternative exam room with no other adjustments put in place. This means that if evidence does arrive before the examination other adjustments such as additional time can be put in place. If the evidence does not arrive no reasonable adjustments will be made and the student will simply sit the examination in a different room to their cohort.

Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

Students who suspect they may have SpLD have an initial screening test with the Disability Team using the Dyslexia Adult Screening Test (DAST). This is a nationally normed diagnostic test. There can be a significant delay between students having an initial screening for SpLD with the Disability Team and them having a full psychological assessment. This means that students can sit one set of examinations without additional time. The majority of students who are referred for Specialist Assessment are subsequently diagnosed as having SpLD.

Students who proceed to the full specialist assessment, and are subsequently diagnosed with a SpLD, will be offered 25% extra time for exams. It is important that students follow the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) application process through to the end, ensuring that they receive all reasonable adjustments in the future including appropriate equipment, support and exam arrangements.

Disability Services Responsibilities

Once the Disability Team has received information about a student's disability they will ensure that the student is supported in making an application to the DSA team via Student Finance England (SFE), the funding body. During this process, SFE will issue a letter to the student instructing that they have a full needs assessment. The needs assessment is carried out by an independent assessment company and will make recommendations for appropriate support and adjustments. The Disability Team will discuss with the student reasonable adjustments for exams but evidence must be present and an application for DSAs in place.

Examples of reasonable adjustments are -

1. *Additional writing time*
2. *Rest breaks/stop the clock*
3. *Use of an amanuensis (scribe)*
4. *Use of a reader*
5. *Use of a PC*
6. *Alternative exam room*
7. *Separate room within the department*
8. *Use of coloured overlays in exams*
9. *Papers in alternative formats (e.g. large print/ Braille)*
10. *Use of specialist equipment e.g. chair/ writing slope*
11. *Use of specialist software*

Where a change of format of assessment is requested such as coursework in place of an exam or splitting an exam into two sessions this request will have to be agreed with the school. The school must then seek approval from Progression and Standards Committee (PSC). Where it is not possible for the Disability Team and the school to reach an agreement about reasonable adjustments either party should contact the chair of PSC who will make a decision as to what is reasonable in that situation. The Disability Team will enter exam recommendations onto the student record.

Location of Exams

Students who do not sit their exams in the main exam room will be recommended one of the following locations:

Alternative Exam Room - this room is for students with mobility needs or who require additional time, rest breaks or who need to be in a smaller examination room

PC Room - this room is for students who need to type rather than write their examinations.

Separate room in the school - this recommendation will be made where students need specialist equipment, use an amanuensis or need to be in a room by themselves.

The Examinations Office's Responsibilities

The Examinations Office will make appropriate examination arrangements for the majority of students with disabilities who sit their exams in the alternative exam room or the PC room, and require any specialist equipment and invigilation. The Examinations Office will email students and the relevant departments with reasonable adjustments for exams to inform them what arrangements have been made for students.

If specialist equipment is required the Examinations Office should contact the Disability Team to discuss this.

School Responsibilities

Any costs incurred are the responsibility of the school, although the school should contact the Disability Team to discuss whether any costs may be met by the Disabled Student's Allowance.

Complaints

Where a student feels aggrieved by the recommendations of the Disability Team, they should first contact the team to discuss further. Following this, if the complaint is not successful, the student should contact the Academic Registrar and HE Quality Manager to discuss.

Anonymous Marking

Students may have difficulties presenting information as a result of a number of different impairments. For example, students with SpLD, such as dyslexia, may have difficulties with handwriting, spelling, punctuation or grammar. Students with visual impairments may present information poorly, if they are unable to re-read their own work. Students with hearing impairments who are pre-linguistically deaf may also have difficulties with the grammatical structure of English.

Where a student's disability may lead to discrimination within the marking process, a student will be given the opportunity to declare this disability on the submission front cover Turnitin sheet. These cover sheets can be obtained from school offices or downloaded from the website. This allows the student to retain their anonymity and alert the examiner to the nature of the student's impairment. For marking guidelines

please see document entitled Marking the Work of Students with disabilities (appendix 6).

Departmental module and programme boards

Reasonable adjustments to exams and assessment are put in place to enable students with disabilities to have the same opportunity as all students. Whilst such arrangements may level the 'playing field', it is recognised that a student's difficulties may not be fully accommodated by such arrangements.

It should also be taken into account that, as the nature of some disabilities is variable, students may have significant difficulties during a particular stage of their course. Therefore, further consideration of a student's difficulties by the school module and programme boards should occur and advice should be sought from the Disability Team. Where a personal supervisor or tutor is aware that a student has been disadvantaged as a result of their disability it is their responsibility to inform the module or programme board.