



# Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Students

## Policy and Procedure

### 1. Introduction

We are committed to social and educational inclusion through the University Learning and Teaching Strategy. This inclusion is reflected in the values of the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in Higher Education.

The Equality Act 2010 states, 'a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

#### 1.1. Purpose

We aim to ensure that students receive an inclusive learning experience which means a person with a disability and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part B1-6, states this provision should be offered wherever possible through reasonable individual adjustments and applies equally to assessment.

UK legislation and associated guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, higher education providers are required to take reasonable steps to:

- mitigate against substantial disadvantage where a provision, criterion or practice may create barriers for the involvement and educational attainment of disabled people;
- alter or remove physical features that place disabled persons at a substantial disadvantage;
- provide an auxiliary aid where, without one, disabled students would be put at a disadvantage;
- consider adjustments to assessments or the provision of alternative arrangements for assessments, being mindful of the specific learning requirements of students with disabilities.

#### 1.2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff and students, and of particular relevance to students with disabilities, special educational needs or long term medical conditions. The policy has been developed with

reference to good practice available within the sector, including that available from the Equality Challenge Unit. The policy highlights the requirements with the Equality Act 2010 for staff to ensure that the teaching and learning experience is inclusive for all students. Depending on the need of an individual disabled student, the means by which that student is enabled to demonstrate the standard can be adjusted/adapted. This might involve, for example: adapting materials used in an assessment to aid accessibility; providing assistance during assessment; re-organising the assessment physical environment and facilitating the use of assistive technology and a computer. Similarly in some circumstances it may be most appropriate to provide for alternative assessment arrangements to prevent disadvantage whilst ensuring there is appropriate academic rigor.

## **2. Policy**

We cannot modify competence requirements or learning outcomes which meet the definition of a competence standard, but we aim to make adjustments to taught and assessed aspects of learning, where necessary.

Any adjustments made to the teaching and assessment or alternative arrangements to meet individual student learning needs, must be reasonable and take account of the principles of equity and parity of both the teaching and assessment practices.

In considering the necessary adjustment, we will make individual reasonable adjustments based on the student's particular requirements. We will consider the extent to which the adjustment requested is due to the impacts of the student's disability.

There is no current legal definition of what a reasonable adjustment might entail. Any Reasonable adjustment will be considered in line with the Equality Challenge Unit guidance on making reasonable adjustments. This guidance can be found at:

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/managing-reasonable-adjustments-in-higher-education/>

Decisions will be made on a case by case basis and should also be informed by considering:

a. whether the student is disadvantaged by the current modes of teaching or assessment; b. how effective proposed adjustments will be in overcoming any disadvantage; c. whether an adjustment request is related to a disability or is just an expression of preference; d. whether proposed adjustments are reasonable in terms of:

i. the practicality of the changes for staff and students, ii. the potential impacts which may put other students at a disadvantage, iii. the potential wider benefits to other students.

It is not possible to identify all possible reasonable adjustments that may be required for disabled students. A broad range of general and specific adjustments are set out in the guidance document. These include adjustments such as additional time allowances, alternative locations for

examinations, use of amanuensis, computer or assistive technology, provision of material in Braille, large print etc.

In exceptional circumstances, where existing teaching and assessment options, even with reasonable adjustments, continue to present barriers to disabled students, the need to provide alternative assessment arrangements should be considered.

Alternative arrangements, for example a written rather than an oral presentation or vice versa, or a poster or video as an alternative to a written report, should be requested by the student and discussed initially with their course and/or module leader(s), who should consult with Disability Support & Inclusion. This request should be made as soon as possible as last minute requests may not be accepted.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

Requests for alternative assessment arrangements will normally be agreed between the student, Disability Inclusion Tutor and the course leader, where appropriate, after liaising with the module leader concerning learning outcomes. It should also be noted that the LanguageCentre is able to support students with the need to improve their academic English should this support be necessary.

Any different assessment methods encountered by PGR students also need to be taken into consideration, with input from the appropriate supervisor where required. Discussions regarding reasonable adjustment and the agreed outcomes will be logged on the student record and held by Disability Support & Inclusion.

### **4. Related Policies and Procedures**

This policy should be read alongside the 'Procedure for the consideration of an application for reasonable adjustments shown as Annex C:1 to this Policy.

### **5. Review, Approval and Publication**

Disability Support & Inclusion within Student Support Services will undertake a review of this policy every three years. The review of this policy will be conducted in consultation with School Disability Inclusion Tutors and will be reported through Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee and University Learning and Teaching Committee.

### **Annexes**

'Procedure for the consideration of an application for reasonable adjustments' is shown as Annex C:1 to this Policy.

## 6. Document Control Information

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## Annex C:1

# Procedure for the consideration of and application for reasonable adjustments

## 1.0 Outline

Consideration of the learning and assessment requirements of disabled students is integral to inclusive assessment. As identified in the Equality Act 2010, 'a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

1.1 It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the University is aware of their disability and to apply for any variation in assessment conditions within deadlines established for this purpose.

1.2 It is the University's responsibility to give students opportunities, at various stages of their course, to disclose disability, dyslexia or a long-term medical condition and to ensure appropriate confidentiality.

## 2.0 Disclosure

2.1 Any request must be supported by acceptable medical or other evidence of disability or long-term medical condition.

2.2 A student can only be considered to have a disability once they have been assessed, diagnosed and evidence has been provided. Retrospective applications for adjustments cannot therefore be made automatically. For example, a student who is assessed as having an SpLD is likely to be entitled to extra time from the point of diagnosis.

2.3 There are circumstances where it is appropriate to consider a new diagnosis in light of the most recent modules, particularly where a student has not successfully progressed. Therefore on some occasions, the appeals process may take the recently diagnosed disability into account and allow an alternative method of assessment to be taken, or a further resit opportunity to be offered.

2.4 Where students are diagnosed with a specific learning difficulty part way through their course they may, in certain limited circumstances, apply to take an **alternative assessment** where it is adjudged

that the original assessment may have unfavourably disadvantaged them as a consequence of their disability. This would normally only apply to modules affecting the student's ability to proceed, and where a student has already begun to engage with Disability Support & Inclusion to establish that difficulties are relating to a specific learning difficulty.