

ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR DISABLED STUDENTS

A General principles applying to the approved variation of assessment for disabled students or for exceptional cases

1. A 'Disabled Student' is any student who comes within the current definition of disability outlined in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 within the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and has disclosed their disability to the University. The Act says a disabled person is "someone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". Usually, at least one of the following areas must be substantially affected:

- Mobility
- Manual dexterity
- Physical co-ordination
- Continence
- Ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects
- Speech, hearing or eyesight
- Memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- Understanding of the risk or physical danger.

So-called 'hidden impairments' are covered, such as, mental health problems; and "specific learning difficulties" such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Asperger's Syndrome.

Conditions such as diabetes, asthma, and epilepsy are also covered.

NB. Anyone diagnosed as having cancer, HIV infection or multiple sclerosis is covered from the point of diagnosis rather than once symptoms start to show.

Students should disclose to the University at the earliest opportunity any disability they may have requiring learning support to enable them to engage fully and satisfactorily with their academic programme and its associated assessments.

2. Disabled students shall be assessed on equal terms with other students and in all cases students must demonstrate achievement and fulfilment of the programme's required progression and award learning outcomes through a method or methods approved by the Assessment Board or the Chair of the Board acting on its behalf.

Assessment Boards must consider disabled students' assessment results in the normal manner without adjustment, except where it can be shown that the student disclosed a disability in good time, but appropriate support was not put in place. In such cases they should make allowances for this in accordance with these regulations and guidelines and the University's assessment and other academic regulations.

3. Should, for whatever reason, a student's disability not be known in time for appropriate learning support to be put in place and/or for appropriate assessment adjustments to have been made, and the Board considers the performance of the student to have been adversely affected by the disability, then the student should submit an exceptional factors claim so that the factors affecting performance in examinations can be taken into consideration.

4. If a disabled student is unable to be assessed by the normal methods (as set out in the Programme Definitive Document), the Programme/Course Leader may approve the variation of the methods as appropriate, bearing in mind the objectives of the programme and the need to assess the student on equal terms with other students and having regard for the University's and the programme's assessment and progression principles and regulations. The Chair of the relevant Assessment Board may vary the methods of assessment on the Board's behalf and consult with the External Examiner where circumstances so warrant.
5. Disabled students' marks or grades for assessments shall not be raised or otherwise modified because of their condition/impairment.
6. The normal length of a student's programme (as specified in the Programme Specification) may be extended where the student's difficulties make it appropriate to do so. Prior to approving extensions, consultation with the Learner Development Service is necessary to ensure funding and provisions for disability related support are reviewed. The length of extension shall be determined having regard for the student's circumstances and needs and for any relevant professional advice received.
7. In order to be allowed to undergo assessment through other than the normal methods, disabled students must have provided relevant evidence to the University's Learner Development Service. Following discussion with a Learning Development Adviser, a Personal Learning Plan will be drawn up. This must be considered and agreed by the relevant Programme Leader or his/her nominee, who will, where necessary, discuss it with the Head of Department or other senior academic manager with responsibility for the programme. The Personal Learning Plan will also identify the student's responsibilities in the process.

See section C below on procedures.

8. Personal Learning Plans, and any recommendations made in connection there with, to vary a student's methods of assessment, shall have regard for the student's programme learning and assessment requirements as set out in the Programme Definitive Document. Where it is felt that a proposed adjustment may not be reasonable, advice should be sought from the Learner Development Service in the first instance.
9. Except where a disabled student's circumstances make it impossible to do so, the University's procedures for the anonymous marking of formal assessments shall be complied with. It will be for the Chair of the Assessment Board concerned to approve any departure from or variation of the procedures and to inform the student of this accordingly.
10. In instances when courses are accredited by professional bodies, assessment arrangements shall comply with the regulations of the accrediting body.

Students should be advised to contact the relevant professional body in good time to ascertain whether any dispensation or other adjustments may be granted.

B Guidelines

1. The University is committed to the principle of employing inclusive assessment methods which are both appropriate to course academic objectives and

commensurate with meeting the additional support needs of those being assessed. In order to do so equitably, these guidelines and the procedures which follow them should be complied with.

2. Disabled students, including students with specific learning difficulties, should inform the University of these in good time so as to enable University staff to respond appropriately to their needs and to initiate arrangements for organising their examinations. Normally this should be brought to the attention of the Learner Development Service in good time.

Where through, for example, late diagnosis a student's disability and/or specific learning difficulty is not known to the university in good time for alternative assessment methods to be considered and implemented for that student, then the student's assessments may be deferred until such time as this can be done.

3. Students should ensure that their Programme Leader, relevant tutors and other staff are aware of their disability and discuss with them any variation in assessment conditions which may have been recommended in their Personal Learning Plan (see C 3 below).
4. Wherever possible, disabled students should undertake the same assessments as others undertaking the course. The usual way of making a reasonable adjustment is to take into account the effect of a student's disability will be to vary the assessment conditions rather than content or method. For example, a scribe may be provided, the time allowed for the examination may be extended or the examination paper may be presented in an alternative form. Where the nature of the disability makes it impossible for a certain form of assessment to be used, the Head of Department must ensure that any alternative form of assessment is of the same standard and presents a comparable level of challenge.
5. When adjustments to assessment conditions have been made or alternative forms of assessment used to take account of disability, no further adjustment should be made at the marking stage as marking criteria must relate solely to a student's demonstration of achievement and fulfilment of the required learning outcomes (see A 5 above).
6. Disabled students should be assessed in such a way that they are neither systematically penalised nor systematically advantaged. In order to make judgements as to the nature and extent of the variation in assessment methods appropriate to any particular candidate, the relevant Head of Department (who will normally be the Chairperson of the Assessment Board) should make use of all the information available, including taking advice from relevant agencies within and outside the University where appropriate.
7. Further advice and guidance on alternative assessment is available from the Learner Development Service and the Centre for Learning and Teaching.

C Procedures

1. Specific arrangements should be identified at the beginning of the student's programme or as close thereto as possible but this will depend, inter alia, on knowledge at that time of the student's disability. However, it is recognised that this is not always possible; there may be changes in the effect of a disability; a student may only have become aware of the disability after they have begun their studies; and, from time to time, alternative arrangements will need to be made for students with temporary injuries or sudden illness.

2. Disabled students should contact the Learner Development Service in good time so that all aspects of their learning and study support needs can be identified and a Personal Learning Plan prepared. Students should present appropriate documentary evidence of their condition such as:
 - a written statement or report from a registered medical practitioner
 - a post-16 diagnostic report provided by a chartered, educational psychologist, or an individual qualified in assessing students with specific learning difficulties.

Further information on whether reports are appropriate can be sought from the Learner Development service.

3. Personal Learning Plans (PLP) should be prepared by Learning Development Advisers in conjunction with the student concerned having regard for his/her programme learning and assessment requirements as set out in the Programme Definitive Document. The PLP should indicate suitable modifications to assessment arrangements to minimise the impact of the student's disability on assessment performance. The implementation of recommended modified arrangements then must be negotiated with the Chair of the Assessment Board (normally the Head of Department), or his/her nominee for this purpose, and a written statement of agreed modifications obtained.
4. An individual PLP should also indicate any specific provision considered appropriate for assignments undertaken on a continuous assessment basis as well as for formal written examinations.
5. Students who require alternative arrangements due to sudden illness or injury should contact their Head of Department as soon as possible and provide supporting medical evidence. The Head of Department should consult with Faculty SAS before approving alternative arrangements to ensure the arrangements can be implemented. Where, for valid reason, it is not possible to make alternative arrangements in such cases, the Head of Department may arrange for the assessment(s) concerned to be postponed. **PLPs will not be produced for these students because they are not covered for the protected characteristic of disability under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010**, however, advice may still be sought from the Learner Development Service or from the Centre for Learning & Teaching on suitable alternative assessments.

D Practical Arrangements

1. Agreed PLP modified examination arrangements may have implications for time schedules, invigilation procedures, room arrangements and the provision of examination papers in particular formats. It is important, therefore, that those responsible for examination arrangements are informed in good time of any special requirements.
2. The following are examples of common arrangements:

2.1 Time-related changes

- (i) Additional time allowances:
The extent of additional time allowances will depend on the needs of the individual student. Normally, the additional time allowed will range from

15 minutes to 30 minutes per hour but even this may be exceeded in exceptional cases where a professional recommendation has been made to that effect.

- (ii) Rest breaks:
Some students may need rest breaks during the examination. This may be to relieve pain or to attend to personal needs. In general 10 minutes per hour may be allowed for rest breaks. The scheduling of these may be determined in advance. Alternatively they may be taken when required by the student, timed by the invigilator and added onto the time allowed for the examination.
- (iii) Flexible schedules:
In some cases disabled students may require flexibility in the scheduling of examinations. For example, some students may find it difficult to manage a number of examinations in quick succession and need to have examinations scheduled over a period of days.

2.2 The Use of Specific Personnel

- (i) Interpreter:
Students who use sign language may require an interpreter at the start of an examination if instructions are delivered orally.
- (ii) Reader:
Students who are unable to read print or students who access auditory information better than visual information may require a reader. Additional time should be allowed due to the extra demands involved. The invigilator will usually act as a reader for the student and a separate room will need to be made available
- (iii) Scribe:
Disabled students with restricted ability to write, type or maintain the posture required for writing or students who present information better in oral than written form may require a scribe. The Learner Development Service will provide details of trained scribes to Examination Officers who can provide this support. Additional time, normally not more than up to 50% extra, should be provided for examinations dictated to a scribe and a separate room and invigilator will be necessary for the examination.
- (iv) Personal Care Attendant:
Some students may be accompanied by a personal care attendant. Arrangements should be made for such an attendant to be able to sit in close proximity to the student and invigilators should be informed of the role of the personal care attendant.

2.3 Assistive Technology

Specific equipment may need to be available to the student in an examination. Such arrangements often include the use of personal computers and word processors, voice activated software and screen readers. Where assistive technology is required, arrangements should be made in consultation with the student, the Learner Development Service and IT.

The use of a computer in written examinations is not normal practice and a recommendation for one to be used can only be made where there is sufficient evidence of the nature and extent of the effect of the student's

condition. Where a computer is used, it must be disconnected from all networks and any discs to be used by the student must be checked to ensure that they are free from any material that would give the student an unfair advantage in the examination.

2.4 Oral Examination

Where appropriate, the assessment of a disabled student may be augmented by an oral examination (“viva voce”) conducted by internal examiners approved for this purpose by the Assessment Board or Chair acting on the Board’s behalf.

E Types of Disability and related assessment arrangements

1. Outlined below are some of the broad types of disability and suggestions for modified assessment strategies. In formalising such arrangements it is important to follow the guidance and procedures outlined above. Any modifications to assessment arrangements should be discussed and agreed with the student concerned and approved by the Chair of the relevant Assessment Board (normally the Head of Department or equivalent) who will also need to identify where the responsibility for resourcing the arrangements will lie.
2. **Dyslexia (Specific Learning Difficulty)**
Students with dyslexia may have a range of difficulties with receiving, processing, expressing or retrieving information which affects their ability to function effectively in one or more area such as reading, writing, following directions, spelling and grammar or expressing ideas in writing.

The provision of study skill assistance together with additional time allowances in assessments will help students with dyslexia manage some of the difficulties they may have in relation to spelling, syntax, grammar and punctuation.

For coursework, the expectation is that, as far as possible, all set deadlines will be met. However, there may be instances when extensions will be required for reasons due to disability or when students are going through the Disabled Students Allowance process and have not had access to their full support entitlement. Disabled students who have a recommendation in their PLP allowing them to discuss and negotiate coursework deadlines sit outside the Exceptional Factors process and can negotiate on an individual basis with academic staff an extension to a coursework deadline. Guidance on the process is available on the website http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/disability_guidelines/index.php?section=plp . It is the tutor’s responsibility to consider the request appropriately and agree the length of extension, if any.

During examinations, a variety of modifications may be required, including:

- additional time for examinations, 25% is usually recommended;
- a reader or scribe;
- overlaying the question paper with a coloured acetate sheet;
- flexibility of wordage requirements in assessed course work;
- use of a computer – *but see note above.*

Accessing study skills support will enable the student to develop appropriate strategies to manage some of their difficulties. Extra time in examinations will compensate for slow reading and/or slow processing speeds, therefore, the work should be assessed anonymously on equal terms with other students. Marks should not be deducted for spelling, syntax, grammar and punctuation errors unless it is a learning outcome of the course.

3. **Deaf or hard of hearing students**

Deaf students and hard of hearing students may use speech, lip-reading, a hearing aid, a loop, sign language or a combination of these. Individual students have different methods of communicating which need to be considered in respect of the assessment procedure. In examinations where a deaf or hard of hearing student is present invigilators should face the student and speak clearly when issuing instructions.

The majority of pre-lingual profoundly deaf students may be sign language users and, if so, this should be regarded as their first language. Sign language is linguistically different to English; variation of context may arise and be of particular relevance to the language structure needed to understand the assessment question. This may also affect the student's command of spelling and grammar.

Appropriate strategies may include any of the following:

- an interpreter in attendance at examinations to sign questions;
- additional time, particularly if an interpreter is required;
- seating close to the invigilator;
- procedural instructions conveyed in writing;
- language modified paper.

4. **Blind or Visually Impaired Students**

Students who are visually impaired have a loss of vision ranging from low vision to no vision at all, which may lead to an inability to read examination questions in standard print and an inability to decipher handwriting when answering questions in examination conditions.

A blind student may need the following modifications:

- examination questions in an alternative medium e.g. Braille or tape;
- technological equipment for reading e.g. a closed circuit television to enlarge written text;
- assistive technology for producing written answers e.g. voice recognition software;
- a reader and a scribe;
- alternative venues with appropriate lighting;
- orientation if examinations are held in unfamiliar venues.

Special arrangements may be necessary if the student is accompanied by a guide dog.

5. **Students with physical disabilities**

Such disabilities include mobility difficulties and chronic pain. These give rise to a range of individual requirements.

Students may require a combination of the following adjustments:

- personal assistance;
- rest breaks that do not count towards the total time allowed for the examination;
- additional time, for example, to compensate for slow speed of writing;
- assistive technology;

- the services of a scribe;
- ergonomic furniture;
- an accessible venue.

Any need for special furniture should be identified by the student in advance and in good time.

6. **Students with chronic medical conditions (which are covered under the Equality Act 2010)**

There are many conditions in this category such as epilepsy, ME, diabetes, asthma, cystic fibrosis and others. Many of these conditions are controlled by medication which may affect the performance of the candidate. Allowances should be made for this. In some cases rescheduling of examinations may be necessary to allow medical or dietary needs to be met.

Students must inform the Head of Department of any chronic medical condition and any action which should be taken in an emergency and invigilators should be informed accordingly.

7. **Students with communication difficulties**

Communication difficulties may include speech that is difficult to understand, stuttering or an inability to communicate orally. Students undertaking oral assessments may require the services of an interpreter or a personal computer with voice synthesizer. Students will require additional time to complete such assessments.

8. **Students with mental health difficulties**

Students with mental health difficulties may find academic assessments particularly demanding. If students have been prescribed medication this may affect their performance in assessments.

It may be necessary to consider flexible deadlines for assessed course work, additional time and flexible schedules for examinations and other forms of assessments to replace oral presentations. The student may need to be seated near an exit in the examination room or may need a separate room.

Whilst every effort will be made to make reasonable adjustment to the assessment conditions of a disabled student, the extent to which this can be done in main assessment periods may be restricted by the availability of suitable rooms and/or other physical and human resources. It may therefore be necessary in some cases to reschedule assessments for such students.