The Academic Regulations Appendix 6: Guidelines on Reasonable Adjustments and the Assessment of Disabled Students

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Edge Hill University

The Academic Regulations

Appendix 6: Guidelines on Reasonable Adjustments and the Assessment of Disabled Students

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Summary

Appendix 6 sets out Edge Hill's approach to the assessment of disabled students. The appendix covers the principles informing the University's position and provides details of the adjustments that can be made to forms of assessment and the procedure to be followed for agreeing such modifications.

Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
Alternative Assessment	This can be offered to students when neither the standard nor modified arrangements are suitable for their individual needs.
Assessment Modifications Board	This board meets before each examination period and reviews all assessment modification and alternative assessment requests.
Modifications	A formally agreed amendment to the standard arrangement for an examination and/or timed assessment.
Personal Circumstances	Application based scheme to ensure students who may be experiencing difficult circumstances and are unable to complete work to their usual standard (or complete work at all) are not penalised at mark level.

Purpose

The purpose of the document is to ensure the reasonable, timely and consistent application of modifications to examinations and other forms of assessment for disabled students and the consideration of alternative forms of assessment for those individual cases where specific adjustments would not be suitable.

Regulations

1. Introduction

Edge Hill University has had guidelines for the assessment of disabled students since 1993. These have been revised over time in the light of the Equality Act 2010, the revised QAA Code of Practice Section 3: Disabled Students, Feb. 2010 and the OIA good practice framework: Supporting disabled students October 2017. The University has a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' regarding learning, teaching, and

service provision for disabled students (please see the notes on the Equality Briefing at the end of this document). Discrimination can occur when a disabled person is treated less favorably for a reason relating to the person's disability; and/or when a responsible body fails to make a reasonable adjustment when a disabled student is placed, or likely to be placed, at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a person who is not disabled. Edge Hill University aims to implement an inclusive approach to the provision of its teaching and learning opportunities and this also informs the guidelines.

2. Scope of the Guidance

This guidance applies to all disabled students. Many disabled students may not require 'reasonable adjustments' to the processes of assessment; others may require minor modifications.

The guidance covers all forms of assessment. Although emphasis has been placed in the past on modifications to examinations, it is important to recognise that other forms of assessment also need to be considered; for example – class tests, oral presentations, computer-based assessment, practical work assessment, etc. The guidelines also apply to any instances of re-assessment.

The guidelines apply to all programmes and courses. However, there may be some differences in the administration of the guidelines in those programmes where professional competencies may need to be demonstrated.

These guidelines are separate to and do not replace Personal Circumstances processes and regulations, which may still be used by a student who feels that their work (including examinations) has been adversely affected by illness or other individual circumstances.

The guidelines recognise that all modified assessments submitted under this guidance will be subject to universal marking schemes which affect all students. However, separate guidance does exist relating to the provision of feedback which should be provided to students with dyslexia and other specific learning differences.

3. The principles informing the Guidelines

- The assessment of disabled students will test the same core levels of achievement in relation to validated learning outcomes as the assessment of their peers. The Equality Act and implementation of reasonable adjustments should not undermine the academic standards of a particular course.

- Where possible, adjustments and modifications to the processes of assessment will be agreed at the earliest possible opportunity in a programme of study and processed to specific deadlines in order to facilitate administration for relevant assessment and/or examination periods.

- Modifications consider the individual requirements and the university context (including resource issues) and acknowledge that students who may have a similar impairment can have diverse needs.

- Any modifications or adjustments made will be agreed and monitored with the relevant staff (academic and support), negotiated with the student, and supported by documentary evidence and/or the professional judgement of tutors and the Disability Support teams.

4. Alternatives that may need to be negotiated and arranged

Modifications/ adjustments may be minor. On some occasions however, the student may require an alternative form of assessment which effectively tests the same learning outcomes via a different method, due to the individual requirements of the disabled student. The use of alternative forms of assessment is dealt with in a separate section of these guidelines.

The following list contains examples of modifications and changes to formats of assessment. The list is illustrative and should not be regarded as representing the only modifications which may need to be made. It should also be noted that it may not be possible to implement recommendations in every case, particularly given physical restraints such as the availability and suitability of venues and equipment or any obligatory course regulations imposed by a professional body:

Different locations for assessment

- Specific location agreed within a conventional examination room
- Adapted examination furniture/ special lighting provided
- Small (shared) room for examinations
- Individual room for examinations (where practicable)
- Physical access to the location and to lavatory facilities[1] suitable for a disabled student

Adjustments to the timing of assessment:

[1] Where a student requires personal care to access these facilities their carer will be able to be located near the exam location and the invigilator informed of their role.

- Extra time agreed (up to a maximum of 25% additional time[2])
- Time-limited rest periods/breaks agreed (normally five minutes per hour) and to be managed by the student. If more than five minutes per hour is required an alternative form of assessment may need to be considered.

Use of specific equipment or software:

- Use of university PC/ laptop for examinations (with restrictions on what can be imported into the examination setting)
- Use of specialised software and enabling technology for students with specific learning differences or disabilities
- Use of video/ digital recorder for oral answers

Other adjustments to examinations:

- Use of a scribe
- Provision of papers/ materials in large font or Braille.
- Provision of exam questions on coloured paper
- Use of coloured acetate overlays (available for collection from Catalyst Helpdesk)
- Use of an interpreter/ translator
- Use of a reader (or read aloud software)
- The digital recording of exam questions

Adjustments to oral presentations:

- Oral presentation delivered by another person, which has been prepared by a student.

Further information about modifications/ adjustments at university can be found below:

Competence standards and reasonable adjustments | Advance HE

Reasonable adjustments in college and university | Disability charity Scope UK

Disabled Student Commitment | Advance HE

5. The procedure to be followed for agreeing modifications or alternative forms of assessment

- Any student who believes they might need a modified or alternative assessment is advised to discuss their requirements with the SpLD Team (e.g. for SpLDs such as dyslexia or dyspraxia), or the Inclusion Team, for students with physical or sensory impacts and challenges, sudden or long-term mental or physical health conditions or autism. They may also seek advice from their Personal Tutor; their Module/ Course Tutor. The SpLD Team and Inclusion Team are happy to work with staff and students to inform considerations and you can contact the teams

via email:

spld@edgehill.ac.uk
inclusionteam@edgehill.ac.uk

- Any tutor who becomes aware of the potential need for modifications to their assessment, should, with the agreement of the student concerned, refer the student to the relevant team for advice in a timely manner. Delaying any referral could seriously disadvantage the student and may lead to potential disability discrimination.

- After discussion with the relevant staff (e.g. Learning Support Advisor or Inclusion Officer) an *Assessment Modification Request* form will be completed. This details any specific arrangement which they consider that the student requires. This will be submitted to the Assessment Team in Academic Registry.

- The form will be reviewed, and the arrangements agreed by an Assessment Modifications Board. As majority of modifications relate to formal examinations, these boards will take place in advance of the main institutional examination periods. The date will recognise both the requirement to give students sufficient time to have their learning needs recognised and the amount of time required to put the modifications in place. Under certain circumstances a modification may be approved by Chair's Action.

- If the recommendation does not fall within the boundary of permitted or practicable recommendations, it is possible for an alternative assessment to be agreed at Faculty level. Any Alternative Assessment request would be referenced at the next Assessment Modifications Board. Alternative Assessment requests should adhere to the same deadlines as regular exam modification requests. The deadlines for each examination period (January, May and August) will be published to staff and students.

- There may be occasions where a student becomes temporarily disabled owing to illness or injury. In cases such as this, when the disability is temporary and does not meet the Equality Act definition of a disability, and where minor adjustments cannot be made, students should use the Personal Circumstances Form (PCF) procedure. Guidance can be obtained from a Personal Tutor, their Course/ Module Tutor and/or the Assessment Team in Academic Registry.

- The Assessment Modification Board constitution will comprise of:

    - Deputy/Associate Dean of Faculty or Dean's chosen alternative to act as Chair (representation on a rotating basis between the three faculties)
    - Designated member of academic staff from each of the three faculties
    - Faculty Assistant Registrars

- Representative(s) from SpLD and Inclusion teams
- Assistant Registrar - Assessment and Examinations
- Examination Modifications Officer (Secretary)

In addition to consideration of requests for modifications, the Assessment Modifications Board will assure itself of the probity and equity of the modifications and will monitor the use of modifications within its area of responsibility. The Board(s) will present an annual monitoring report to the Student Experience Sub Committee. When considering requests for modifications to assessment the Board may request further medical or other evidence from a student before agreeing to the modifications.

- The Examination Modifications Officer will be responsible for implementing any modifications to formal (in-person) examinations; whilst the relevant Department will be responsible for implementing all other assessment modifications, including presentations, in-class tests and online assessments. Under the Data Protection Act, students can request confidentiality about the reason for needing modifications to the form of assessment. This may mean that in rare circumstances, a department may be required to offer an alternative form of assessment for a student without knowing the reason for this need. However, it will be usual practice to encourage a student to be open in their discussions with the relevant tutors, who can offer support in many other ways.

6. The procedure to be followed for agreeing alternative methods of assessment

- Any student who believes they are unable to complete a particular form of assessment is advised to discuss their concern with the SpLD Team or Inclusion Team at their earliest opportunity. They may also seek advice from their Personal Tutor or their Course/Module Tutor.

- Any tutor who becomes aware of the potential need for alternative methods of assessment, should, with the agreement of the student concerned, refer the student to the relevant team for advice being mindful of deadlines for the administration of the process. Students may be referred to the Personal Circumstances process if they are outside the deadline for alternative assessment applications and the assessment cannot be modified.

- When after discussion with the relevant team it is confirmed that alternative assessment is appropriate, the course/module tutor will be responsible for devising the appropriate alternative assessment in agreement with the Programme Leader and Head of Department or equivalent. The alternative is also agreed with the external examiner and approved by the faculty to ensure quality control. The

recommendations will be reported back to the Assessment Team in Academic Registry in order to be noted at the next Assessment Modifications Board.

- Alternative Assessment may be required on an ongoing basis and in some cases, for the full duration of a student's programme.

7. The responsibilities for implementing the Guidelines

- Each Department/ programme has the responsibility for informing all students at the commencement of their programme about the availability of adjustments to assessments and the process to be followed in agreeing assessment modifications. This should be communicated in writing alongside the assessment requirements for the module/ course/ programme.

- Students requiring modifications to assessment are responsible for notifying the Inclusion or SpLD Team, Catalyst Helpdesk or their Personal tutor. Modifications unavailable for consideration by the Assessment Modifications Board may not be put in place in time for the next assessment point. In such cases, students should submit a claim for Personal Circumstances as per the University scheme to defer the assessment (irrespective of whether they attempt it or not). Advice on such applications can be obtained from the Assessment Team.

- Under certain circumstances a modification may be approved by Chair's Action. The use of Chair's Actions should be limited to those cases where an immediate decision is required; for example, where a first-year student has an in-class test in advance of the semester one Assessment Modifications Board.

- Academic Registry is responsible for convening the Assessment Modifications Board, for implementing the decisions of that Board (when in relation to formal in-person examinations) and for informing the student of the board's decision. Where decisions relate to forms of assessment not administered by Academic Registry e.g. online assessments, the Assessment Team will inform the relevant Faculty or department as appropriate.

- In advance of the main institutional examination periods and other year-round examinations, students with approved modifications will be contacted by Academic Registry to confirm arrangements for their examination(s). For in-class tests or other assessments students should contact their module tutor to make them aware of their requirements in advance of the assessment date.

8. Other matters

These guidelines require all validated Definitive Course Documents to contain a clause in their Assessment Requirements that indicate that students with disabilities or specific learning difficulties are entitled to request modifications/ adjustments to their pattern of assessment, and these will be dealt with under these approved guidelines. There is no need for these modifications to be dealt with as “minor amendments” going to the AQSC. An external examiner will not be consulted about modifications to existing forms of assessment but should be consulted where an alternative form of assessment is being proposed.

- Any additional expenses involved in implementing the modifications to examinations will be met within the budget of Academic Registry. Expenses related to implementing modifications to alternative or other assessments will be met by the specific department.

- Students who are dissatisfied with their recommended modification should raise their concerns via the standard Faculty level review meeting process. Students in this position must do so at the point that they receive written confirmation of their agreed modification recommendation and not after the assessment has taken place.

- Amendments to a student’s recommended modification will not be applied retrospectively to assessments which have already occurred with approved recommendations in place.

Key to Relevant Documents

This policy refers to the following document which you may find useful:

- Appendix 7 – Procedures for the Submission of Personal Circumstances

Annexes

There are no annexes to this policy.

End matter

Title	Appendix 6: Guidelines on Reasonable Adjustments and the Assessment of Disabled Students
Policy Owner	Head of Academic Registry
Policy Manager	Assistant Registrar - Assessment and Examinations
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