

The Academic Regulations 2018/19
Appendices
Appendix 6 – Guidelines on Reasonable Adjustments and the Assessment of Disabled Students

GUIDELINES ON REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND THE ASSESSMENT OF DISABLED STUDENTS

Introduction

Edge Hill University has had guidelines for the assessment of disabled students since 1993. These have now been revised in the light of the Equality Act 2010 and the revised QAA Code of Practice Section 3: Disabled Students, Feb. 2010. The university has a duty to make 'Reasonable Adjustments' regarding learning, teaching and service provision to 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 favourably 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.

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 incidences 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 which have additional requirements deriving from Professional Bodies (e.g. Faculty of Health Nursing programmes; Initial Teacher Training; Law).

These Guidelines do not replace the Exceptional and Mitigating Circumstances regulations, which may still be used by a student who feels that their work has been adversely affected by illness or other personal circumstance.

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 marking and provision of feedback which should be provided to students with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties.

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.
- Adjustments and modifications to the processes of assessment will be agreed at the earliest possible opportunity in a programme of study.
- Modifications take in to account the individual requirements and the university context including resource issues and that students who have a similar impairment can have diverse needs.

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- 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.

Alternatives that may need to be negotiated and arranged

Modifications/ adjustments may be relatively 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.

Modifications and Alternative forms of Assessment

The following listing contains examples of modifications and alternative forms 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 availability and suitability of venues and equipment:

Alternative locations for assessment

- Specific location agreed within a conventional examination room
- Adapted examination furniture/ special lighting provided
- Separate room for examinations
- Physical access to the location and to lavatory facilities¹ suitable for a disabled student

Adjustments to the timing of assessment

- Extra time agreed (up to 25% additional time²)
- Fewer requirements in terms of volume of work requested within the same time limit
- Time-limited rest periods/ breaks agreed

Use of specific equipment or software.

- Use of 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 difficulties or disabilities
- Use of video/ digital recorder for oral answers

Other adjustments to examinations.

- Use of scribe or amanuensis
- Provision of papers/ materials in large font or Braille.
- Provision of exam questions on coloured paper
- Use of coloured acetate overlays
- Use of interpreter/ translator
- Use of a reader.
- The digital recording of questions

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.

² Where it is felt that 25% additional time would not be a sufficient reasonable adjustment, the University would normally consider an alternate form of assessment for the student concerned.

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Adjustments to oral presentations

- Oral presentation delivered by another person, which has been prepared by a student with speech difficulties

(Further examples of modifications/ adjustments can be found in McCarthy,D. & Hurst,A. (2001) *A Briefing on Assessing Disabled Students*. LTSN Generic Centre Assessment Series 8.)

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 impairments, long-term mental health or health conditions; autism or aspergers. They may also seek advice from their Personal Tutor; their Module/ Course Tutor and/or their Learning Facilitator (if appropriate). Both teams are based on the first floor of Catalyst.
- 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.
- After discussion with the relevant staff (e.g. Dyslexia adviser or Inclusion Officer) a *Request for Examination and Test Modifications* form will be completed. This details any specific arrangement which they consider that they require. This will be submitted to the Examinations Officer in the Academic Registry.
- The form will be reviewed and the arrangements agreed by an Assessment Modifications Board. As the 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.
- 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, students should use the Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances (EMC) procedure. Guidance can be obtained from a Personal Tutor/ Personal Teacher; their Course/ Module Tutor; and/or the Assessments team in Academic Registry.
- The Board's constitution will comprise:

Associate Dean of Faculty 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 Inclusive Services

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 the modifications.

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- The Examination Modifications Officer will be responsible for implementing any modifications to formal examinations; whilst the relevant Department will be responsible for implementing all other assessment modifications, including in-class tests. 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.

The procedure to be followed for agreeing alternative methods of assessment

- Any student who believes they might be unable to complete a particular form of assessment is advised to discuss their concern with the SpLD or Inclusion Team at their earliest opportunity. They may also seek advice from their Personal Tutor/ Personal Teacher; their Course/ Module Tutor; and/or their Learning Facilitator (if appropriate).
- 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.
- When after discussion with the relevant Team it is confirmed that alternative assessment is appropriate the 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 Examination Modifications Officer in order to be noted at the next Assessment Modifications Board.

The responsibilities for implementing the Guidelines

- Each Department/ programme has the responsibility for informing all students at the commencement of their programme about their entitlement 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 Team, their Personal tutor or the Examination Modifications Officer of their needs at the earliest opportunity. Modifications unavailable for consideration by the Assessment Modifications Board will not be put in place until the following semester. Students should submit a claim for exceptional and mitigating circumstances (EMC) as per the university scheme. Students will be required to produce confirmation that the modifications were not in place due to the process involved and not due to inactivity on their behalf.
- 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.
- Where it is clear that the nature of the requested modification would be more appropriately approved by the Faculty Review Procedure, this will be reported to the next Assessment Modifications Board for information.
- The Academic Registry is responsible for convening the Assessment Modifications Board, for implementing the decisions of that Board when in relation to formal examinations, and for informing the student of the decisions. Where decisions relate to forms of assessment not administered by the Academic Registry, the Examinations Modifications Officer will inform the relevant faculty or department as appropriate.

Other matters

Updated: August 2018

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Reviewed: August 2018

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- These Guidelines require all validated Definitive Course Documents to contain a clause in their Assessment Requirements that indicates 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 assessment will be met within the budget of the Academic Registry, who are responsible for actioning the modifications agreed by the Assessment Modifications Board.
- Students who are dissatisfied with their recommended modification will 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.

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