

Guidance on making recommendations and decisions for reasonable adjustments**1. Introduction**

This guidance is intended to help ensure greater consistency in how recommendations and decisions are made about reasonable adjustments for disabled students, where advice is drawn from and the documenting of recommendations and decisions, as well as how students can challenge these decisions.

Students are considered disabled if they meet the criteria of the Equality Act 2010. A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities; this includes activities associated with education.

Changes to the Disabled Students' Allowances phased in over 2015-16 and 2016-17 mean that Universities are likely to come under greater scrutiny to ensure they are fair and consistent. This guidance is intended to ensure that schools/faculties receive clear advice and have the opportunity to consult on how best to support their students and those staff working with them.

The term school/faculties has been used throughout the document to represent both schools and faculties where the School Disability Coordinator role exists at a faculty level e.g. Faculty of Health Sciences.

There have been different practices across schools/faculties in terms of who they approach for advice about supporting disabled students. This has either been Disability Services and/or has been the Equality and Diversity Manager. This guidance is intended to clarify their respective roles.

This guidance also provides an update about the [Disability Support Summary](#) (DSS) process.

2. Responsibility for recommending reasonable adjustments and advising schools/faculties

- Disability Services are the primary contact for school/faculty staff for all enquiries relating to support for disabled students/applicants. It is the role of Disability Advisers in Disability Services to make recommendations for reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants/students, and to advise colleagues on any potential institutional risks relating to support for disabled students.
- Recommendations are documented and communicated via a DSS or, in some circumstances, via phone or email in advance of a DSS. Recommendations and the content of the DSS are based on evidence of a disability, discussion with the student, examples of best practice and the professional judgment of the Disability Adviser. (Where a disabled student hasn't yet used Disability Services or chooses not to, Disability Services can provide some advice to the school/faculty about reasonable adjustments).
- If a school/faculty seeks this advice from the Equality and Diversity Manager, they will be referred directly to Disability Services, unless the advice sought fits with the remit of the Equality and Diversity Manager's role, as outlined in section 3 below.
- Currently, schools make recommendations for some alternative exam arrangement support. This practice is under review as part of the overall review of alternative exam arrangements.
- Where a student has a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia or dyspraxia and their specific needs can be met through a standard template 1 or 2 DSS, one of these will be issued with the expectation that the school/faculty will implement the support where it is not already in place – there is no consultation period with the school/faculty in this case.

- For all other disabled students engaged with Disability Services where evidence is available, a bespoke DSS is drafted and issued to the School Disability Co-ordinator. This begins a 21 day consultation period
- The School Disability Coordinator is responsible for liaising with relevant academic and professional services staff within their school who will decide whether to accept the recommended reasonable adjustments taking into account a range of issues, including academic integrity, practical considerations and institutional risk.
- The school/faculty are required to contact Disability Services within the consultation period to discuss the recommendations if they have any queries or concerns as this may help address them and/or identify alternative options for making reasonable adjustments.
- After the 21 day consultation period, the DSS will be finalised by Disability Services and issued to the school/faculty, student and Library.

3. Who makes the final decision about reasonable adjustments implemented within the school/faculty?

- The school/faculty is responsible for reaching a decision about the reasonable adjustments they make for each student, drawing on the specialist advice available, as appropriate.
- If after the 21 day consultation period a school/faculty is minded to implement support for a disabled student in a manner which is at variance with the advice from Disability Services, they must provide written justification as to why the recommended adjustment is deemed unreasonable and communicate this to Disability Services in time for any remaining concerns to be considered and further advice sought **before** it is communicated by the school/faculty in writing to the student cc'd to Disability Services.
- If Disability Services continues to have serious concerns about the institutional and reputational risks associated with the intended school/faculty decision, they will seek advice from the Equality and Diversity Manager and in their absence the Director/s of Legal Services. Where action being contemplated by a school/faculty is placing the University at risk of legal action, they can be compelled to follow the advice by a relevant Senior University Manager.
- Disability Services will only amend the recommendations of the DSS at the request of the school/faculty, if the amendments are considered reasonable by Disability Services. The DSS will remain in place as a record of recommendations from Disability Services and should also be kept on the school/faculty student file.

4. University complaints procedure:

The University Complaints procedure has been updated, taking into account the significant changes to Government funded Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) which may increase the potential for student complaints about decisions on reasonable adjustments. The updated complaints procedure will give priority to expediting complaints from disabled students about reasonable adjustments so that, where a complaint is upheld, support can be implemented as soon as possible.

There will be an expectation that when a complaint is upheld the school/faculty will recommend to the student that they submit Extenuating Circumstances for the period of time they were without agreed support.