

Guidance on making recommendations and decisions for reasonable adjustments to the teaching and assessment of disabled students



Summary			
This guidance explains how recommendations and decisions are made about reasonable adjustments for disabled students. It also specifies how students can challenge decisions about reasonable adjustments, and how disagreements about reasonable adjustments can be resolved.			
Scope - This document applies to:			
All students, all staff, for guidance			
For applicants entering in:	2018/19 onwards	Applies to academic year:	2018/19 onwards
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Division	Student Services		
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Scope: disabled students studying at any level; Out of scope: students who are not disabled (e.g., students who are injured, ill or pregnant)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance is intended to ensure greater consistency in how recommendations and decisions are made about reasonable adjustments for disabled students, where advice is drawn from, and how recommendations and decisions are documented. It also specifies how students can challenge decisions made about reasonable adjustments to their teaching and assessment.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 Historically, there have been different approaches among 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.

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

- 2.1 Disability Services is 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 students/applicants, and to advise colleagues on potential institutional risks relating to support for disabled students.
- 2.2 Disability Services is the recommender of reasonable adjustments to assessment. This differs from previous guidance, where both Disability Services and Schools/Faculties made recommendations for students' assessment adjustments.
- 2.3 Recommendations are documented and communicated via a Disability Support Summary (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 advice to the School/Faculty about reasonable adjustments to teaching.)
- 2.4 If a School/Faculty seeks advice from the Equality and Diversity Manager, they will be referred 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.
- 2.5 Where a student has a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia, and their needs can be met through a standard template 1 or 2 DSS, one of these will be issued, with advice

issued simultaneously to the Exams Office. The expectation with template 1 or 2 DSSs is that the School/Faculty and/or Exams Office will implement the support where it is not already in place – there is no consultation period with the School/Faculty or Exams Office in the case of template 1 or 2 DSSs.

- 2.6 For all other disabled students engaged with Disability Services where evidence is available, a bespoke (template 3) DSS is drafted and issued to the School Disability Co-ordinator, with AEAs recommendations shared with the Exams Office. This begins a consultation period of 21 working days.
- 2.7 The School Disability Coordinator is responsible for liaising with relevant academic and professional services staff within their School/Faculty who will decide whether to accept the recommended reasonable adjustments considering a range of issues, including academic integrity, practical considerations and institutional risk.
- 2.8 The Exams Office, on behalf of the Academic Registrar, will comment as appropriate on proposed exams adjustments, addressing issues concerning the practical implementation of the adjustments, resource limitations, matters of institutional risk and any other issues arising from the recommendation that fall within the Academic Registrar's responsibility for the conduct of examinations.
- 2.9 The School/Faculty and the Exams Office 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.
- 2.10 After the consultation period of 21 working days, the DSS will be finalised by Disability Services and issued to the School/Faculty, student and Library.

3. Responsibility for finalising decisions about reasonable adjustments to the teaching and assessment of disabled students

- 3.1 Disability Services is responsible for securing agreement about the reasonable adjustments that are made for each student, considering representations from the School/Faculty on matters of academic integrity, academic judgement and discipline-specific requirements or constraints and from Education Services/Exams Office relating to implementation.
- 3.2 To ensure consistent practice and the appropriate conduct of exams across the University, Education Services is accountable for implementing alternative exams arrangements.
- 3.3 If, after the consultation period of 21 working days, there is no agreement about a student's reasonable adjustments, Disability Services will liaise with stakeholders to agree a decision, with the expectation that an operable compromise position meeting both the student's needs and the University's obligations will be agreed. If Disability Services' liaison does not produce a decision, or if Disability Services has serious concerns about the institutional and reputational risks associated with a decision, Disability Services will seek advice from the Equality and Diversity Manager and, in their absence, the Director(s) of Legal Services. Where action being contemplated may place the University at risk of legal action, the School/Faculty or the Exams

Office can be asked to follow advice by the PVC Education or their delegate, with recourse to advice from the Secretary's Office.

- 3.4 The DSS will remain in place as a record of recommendations from Disability Services and should also be kept in the School/Faculty student file.

4. University complaints procedure

- 4.1 The University complaints procedure gives 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.
- 4.2 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 they were without the recommended support.