



Academic Assessment Guidelines for Students with Disabilities or Specific Learning Needs

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Academic Assessment Guidelines for Students with Disabilities or Specific Learning Needs

Introduction

1. These guidelines are intended to support staff in implementing standard practices for academic assessment for those with physical disabilities, mental health needs or specific learning needs (SpLN). They should be read in conjunction with the College's [Disability Policy](#).
2. The College has two designated Disability Officers, one with responsibility for physical disabilities and mental health needs, and one with responsibility for SpLN. Their role is to advise students and liaise with the academic staff. The Disability Officers are members of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Monitoring Group.
3. Various definitions of disability and SpLN are described in the Disability Policy. It should be remembered that a diagnosed disability may be experienced differently by different students in so far as it affects their completion of academic assessments.
4. The College has a responsibility under current disability equality legislation, to ensure that it does not discriminate against students with disabilities or SpLN and that it makes reasonable adjustments when a disabled student may be placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a student who is not disabled. The College's [Assessment Policy and Procedure](#) states: 'Assessment tasks will provide every student with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes through inclusive design wherever feasible and through individual reasonable adjustments as required to demonstrate their achievement through the assessment process, with no group or individual disadvantaged. The College keeps the needs of students to the forefront of its thinking when designing assessments, including those studying at different locations, from different cultural/ educational backgrounds, with additional learning needs, or with protected characteristics. Assessment procedures and methods are flexible enough to allow adjustments to overcome any substantial disadvantage that individual students could experience'.
5. The College provides training and staff development opportunities for all tutors on how best to support students with disabilities and learning difficulties. The College

provides tutors with specific guidelines on appropriate teaching strategies and good practice in assessing and marking the work of students with disabilities and SpLN.¹

6. The following paragraphs set out general guidelines and describe some of the adjustments that can be agreed. Some disabilities present particular and predictable problems in assessment settings and so specific adjustments are described for these disabilities.

Scope

7. This policy does *not* apply to students on the following programmes:
 - Those accredited by the Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB)
 - Equipped to Minister
 - Equipped for Digital Ministry
 - Pastoral Supervision

These students are subject to separate College policies or the policies of their accrediting institution.

General guidelines

8. Wherever possible, students who have a disability or SpLN should undertake the same assessments as others on their course.
9. If a student is unable, due to their disability or SpLN, to be assessed by the normal arrangements specified in the relevant unit descriptor, they may send a request to the Programme Director that the assessment method be varied. This should be done within two weeks of the assessment being issued and in consultation with the relevant Disability Officer or Programme Director.
10. To be considered for any adjustments to academic assessment, students must provide evidence of a medical or clinical diagnosis (or other appropriate evidence). The Senior Registrar can provide advice on obtaining the required evidence.
11. Reasonable adjustments must not affect the validity or reliability of assessment outcomes, nor must they give the student an unfair academic advantage over other students. They must not impact on any competence standards and must be permissible and practical for the particular circumstances in which they are implemented. As a result, the same adjustments may not always be allowed or be

¹ Available from the Learning Enhancement Department

feasible in all situations. All reasonable adjustments will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into account a variety of factors.

12. On receipt of a request for an alternative assessment, the Programme Director will discuss the case with the Academic Director as soon as possible. All proposals for alternative assessments will be given final approval by the Academic Director. Where the student is registered for an award with a validating body, and the validating body requires it, approval will also be sought from that body through the Senior Registrar. Depending on the time taken to approve the alternative assessment, the student may be given an extended deadline for submission.
13. Students may be granted extensions for assessed coursework or additional time for examinations, as described in the sections below.
14. The Senior Registrar will maintain a register recording details of any such alternative arrangements. These will be reported annually to the Pre-Progression and Awards Board.

Submission deadlines (coursework)

15. Students who are registered disabled will be granted reasonable adjustments to assessments at the beginning of their course on provision of appropriate written evidence to the Disability Officers.
16. Students with a formal assessment of SpLN are permitted an extra two weeks for unit assessments and four weeks for undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations. This is granted as standard, and no special requests need to be submitted. If such students believe they require longer than the standard extension, they should submit a request to the Special Cases Committee as in paragraph 18 below.
17. Students without a formal assessment of SpLN, but that have had an internal assessment by the Learning Enhancement Co-Ordinator (LEC) may be granted some adjustments to assessments on the provision of suitable evidence to the Special Cases Committee.
18. Students with other health needs, either long term or acute, can apply for extensions to deadlines for submitted work by providing evidence to the Special Cases Committee. Students are required to use the 'Notification of Mitigating Circumstances (MC1)' form which can be found on the Moodle main page or under the Academic Administration page. The Special Cases Committee will consider all requests in light of the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and the evidence submitted, and with respect to the requirements of the relevant validating body, if any.

Additional time allowance or deferral (exams)

19. Students who are registered disabled will be granted reasonable adjustments to examinations at the beginning of their course on provision of appropriate written evidence to the Disability Officers.
20. Students with a formal assessment of SpLN are granted 25% extra time for all written exams at all levels as standard. In the case of severe SpLN, up to double the scheduled examination time may be granted. The additional time allowance will be agreed as soon as possible after a student's registration, or upon receipt of the result of the formal assessment. The Learning Enhancement Co-Ordinator will forward the recommendation of the assessment body to the Academic Director who will approve the provision and inform the Senior Registrar.
21. Students without a formal assessment of SpLN, but that have had an internal assessment by the Learning Enhancement Co-Ordinator (LEC) may be granted some adjustments to examinations on the provision of suitable evidence to the Special Cases Committee.
22. Students who have had a late diagnosis of a disability, either physical or SpLN, can apply for deferral of an exam by providing evidence to the Special Cases Committee. Students are required to use the 'Notification of Mitigating Circumstances (MC1)' form which can be found on the Moodle main page and under the Academic Administration page. The Special Cases Committee will consider all requests in light of the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and the evidence submitted, and with respect to the requirements of the relevant validating body, if any.

Use of information and communication technology (ICT)

23. A flexible approach will be adopted to enable students with disabilities or specific learning needs to utilise new technologies in completing examinations, provided that this does not, in the judgement of the Academic Director, give such a candidate an advantage over other candidates. Appropriate restrictions will be applied when necessary (for example, disallowing internet usage when using an electronic device or disabling a spell checker).

Assessment of SpLN

24. Students seeking the standard adjustments to assessment on the grounds of SpLNs described in this policy must provide the LEC with a valid diagnostic assessment completed by a recognised assessment centre.
25. The report of this assessment should be submitted at the start of the course if possible, or in any case at least 20 working days before the first educational

assignment for which an alternative arrangement is sought. In cases where this assessment is more than three years old, the Learning Enhancement Co-Ordinator will perform an in-house needs assessment to ensure that its recommendations remain appropriate. Except in accordance with the appeals procedure described below, educational assignments attempted prior to the formal diagnostic assessment of SpLN will not be subject to review.

26. Students who have a valid diagnostic assessment will be marked as such on the Learning Support List. They are also asked to declare this on their Assignment Cover Sheet. When marking assignments submitted by such candidates, tutors will not comment on matters of language, style, grammar, spelling and general presentation, or take account of these in their mark.
27. All students with a valid diagnostic assessment receive the standard extra time allowance for coursework and examinations set out in this policy. Any further adjustment to assessment arrangements by the college will not exceed recommendations made in the diagnostic assessment.
28. Further adjustments to assessment for students with SpLN, whether granted based on a diagnostic assessment or, if there is an internal assessment, at the discretion of the College according to the general principles in this policy, may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. An oral examination or interview instead of a written assessment, appropriate to the length and academic level of that assessment. This should be recorded so as to be available for the consideration of the External Examiner.
 - b. Further time allowed for coursework or examinations in addition to any standard amount granted.
 - c. The use of relevant IT equipment and software may be allowed in examinations provided that the Academic Director is satisfied with security and invigilation arrangements as well as the student's competence in using the equipment.
 - d. Candidates in an examination setting can be provided with extra answer sheets to use for rough work so that any notes made can be seen simultaneously with the attempted answers. In that case the rough working shall be crossed through once and the extra answer sheets handed in at the end of the exam.
 - e. Examination papers may be provided in alternative format (e.g., with enlarged font, specific typeface, and/or coloured paper).
 - f. Additional rest periods of 10 minutes may be provided per every hour of an exam. For longer exams it may be permitted to sit the exam in two parts or take longer rest breaks.
 - g. A written examination may be replaced in whole or in part by an oral examination or the oral examination may be regarded as supplementary to a

- written paper. Such an oral examination should be recorded so as to be available for the consideration of the External Examiner.
- h. Exceptionally, examination questions may be read by a person or recorded and made available on an appropriate audio device at the request of the candidate, provided that the questions are appropriate to such a medium.
 - i. Exceptionally, examination answers may be recorded on a suitable audio device by a candidate.
 - j. If appropriate, an extended lending period may be available for particular texts and other resources from the college library.

Specific arrangements for hearing impaired students

29. Wherever possible, teaching staff setting examination papers for a candidate who is prelingually deaf should, through the Academic Director, make arrangements for the paper to be scrutinised by a specialist teacher of the deaf who may identify language or phrasing of questions which may prove problematic and where necessary, recommend the modification of the 'carrier language' used, without changing the meaning of a question.
30. An additional time allowance may be made available to a prelingually deaf candidate to provide an opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings over the phrasing or vocabulary of the questions. Rest breaks may also be beneficial.
31. An interpreter for the deaf may be used to facilitate understanding of any assessment question or task.

Specific arrangements for visually impaired students

32. Examination papers should be provided in a medium appropriate to the candidate's visual impairment, including:
- a. Braille, provided that a print copy is available at the examination for checking purposes.
 - b. Recorded and replayed on a suitable audio device, provided that questions are brief and appropriate to such a medium.
 - c. Large print and/or specific typeface
33. Candidates may be allowed to type answers to examination questions but if this arrangement is made, someone must be available to read the typed answers back to the candidate.
34. Examination answers may be recorded on a suitable audio device by a candidate.

35. An additional time allowance, to be determined in individual cases, based on specialist advice, may be made. Rest breaks may also be beneficial.

Specific arrangements for students with other physical disabilities or mental health needs

36. Specific arrangements will be based on a medical or clinical diagnosis (or other appropriate evidence) and determined on individual basis. They may include:
- a. Additional time allowance for assessments
 - b. Provision of supervised rest breaks in examinations
 - c. Personal assistance where necessary

Marking and feedback

37. The LEC will inform markers each semester of the student numbers of those students with SpLN who have a valid diagnostic assessment of their need. Students are also asked to include this information on assignment cover sheets. When marking the work of these students and giving feedback on it, markers should focus on matters of content rather than presentational issues such as grammar and spelling.

38. Similarly, the LEC will inform markers of the student numbers of prelingually deaf students and students are asked to include this information on assignment cover sheets. When marking the work of these students and giving feedback on it, markers should focus on matters of content rather than language because of impairment in language development.

Monitoring of alternative assessment arrangements

39. In all cases of alternative assessment arrangements on the grounds of SpLN or disability the Pre-Progression and Awards Board will monitor assessment arrangements and ensure that the implementation of these regulations do not advantage or disadvantage any one student or group of students over others.

40. The Senior Registrar will ensure that External Examiners are fully aware of any modifications to assessments that have been implemented.

41. The Senior Registrar will maintain a register recording details of any such alternative arrangements. These will be reported annually to the Pre-Progression and Awards Board.

42. Any complaint or appeal in this matter should be submitted and dealt with according to the [Student Complaints Procedure](#) or the appeals procedure described below, as appropriate.

The cost of alternative assessment arrangements

43. The College may seek to recover the cost of providing alternative assessment arrangements wherever this is made possible through additional funding available to students with disabilities.
44. UK students have the option to apply for a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). DSAs help pay for the extra costs associated with studying that are incurred as a direct result of a disability (for example, mobility impairment, sensory impairment, Autistic Spectrum Condition, AD(H)D, mental health difficulty, effects of disabling illness) or specific learning need (dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, AD(H)D). The allowances can help to pay for a non-medical personal helper, items of specialist equipment, assistive software, travel and other course-related costs. The allowance is neither means-tested nor repayable.
45. Further details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas>
46. Non-UK students should consult with the College at the earliest opportunity to discuss requirements for disability-related academic support.
47. The College is not able to meet the costs of necessary professional assessments for individual students.

Appeals

48. If a request for alternative assessment arrangements is refused, or the student is unhappy with any other aspect of this procedure, the student has the right to appeal in writing to the College Principal within 10 working days of the outcome of the claim being communicated.
49. An appeal may only be made on the following grounds:
 - A material and demonstrable procedural irregularity in this process.
 - Evidence that the College did not consider all of the information available to it at the time of its consideration of the claim.
50. Appeals will not be considered on the following grounds:
 - Dissatisfaction with the reasonable judgment of the Academic Director, LEC, Disability Officers or Special Cases Committee;
 - Late submission of an application for alternative assessment arrangements or late submission of evidence to support an application where there are no compelling grounds why the application was late.

51. In the case of submission of assignments, launching an appeal does not remove the requirement to submit the work as soon as possible.

Completion of procedures and independent review

52. Once such a student has finished the internal appeals or complaint procedures the College will promptly send a Completion of Procedures letter to the student. This will set out clearly what issues have been considered and the College's final decision.

53. If the appeal is rejected and this procedure has been completed, students registered with validating Universities can request a review of their appeal.

- University of Manchester registered students can request a review of their appeal to the Registrar, Secretary and COO of the University of Manchester.
- Liverpool Hope University registered students can request a review of their appeal to the Pro Vice Chancellor.

54. If the Student believes the issue has not been appropriately addressed, the student may complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for higher Education. The OIA review will focus on the final decision. The OIA must receive a student's Complaint Form within 12 months of the date of the Completion of Procedures Letter. For further details see: [Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education - OIAHE](#)