

## POLICY

### Policy and Procedures on Inclusive Assessment, making reasonable adjustments and providing for alternative assessment arrangements

#### Contact Officer

Disability and Dyslexia Service

#### Purpose

This policy sets out the University's commitments to promoting and facilitating an inclusive environment for learning and assessment, including making provision for reasonable adjustments and alternative assessment arrangements for disabled students.

#### Overview

Through its mission and values the University of Worcester has a strong commitment to social and educational inclusion. The University Learning and Teaching Strategy and the University Assessment Policy define inclusion as central tenets of professional practice, reflecting not only institutional responsibilities enshrined in the Equality Act 2010, but also the values of the UK Professional Standards Framework.

These commitments mean ensuring that disabled students (including those with long term medical conditions) and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary. This applies equally to assessment. As set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning: 'Through inclusive design wherever possible, and through individual reasonable adjustments wherever required, assessment tasks provide every student with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement' (QAA 2014, 17).

The associated procedures set out the process for requesting such adjustments or arrangements, and their approval. Approval involves the Disability and Dyslexia Service and course/module leaders.

#### Scope

This policy applies to all staff of the University, and particularly to staff who teach and/or provide learning support for students; it is a professional and legal responsibility for staff to ensure practice is inclusive, in line with this policy.

The policy has been drawn up with reference to good practice available within the sector, including that available from the Equality Challenge Unit.

The policy and procedures are of particular relevance to students with disabilities, special educational needs or long term medical conditions.

### 1 Key Principles

1.1 In keeping with legislation and associated guidance from the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#), higher education providers are required to take reasonable steps to:

- mitigate against substantial disadvantage where a provision, criterion or practice may create barriers for the involvement and educational attainment of disabled people;
- alter or remove physical features that place disabled persons at a substantial disadvantage;
- provide an auxiliary aid where, without one, disabled students would be put at a disadvantage;
- consider adjustments to assessments or the provision of alternative arrangements for assessments, being mindful of the specific learning requirements of students with disabilities.

1.2 All students of the University can expect a learning and assessment experience that is consistent with Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance and which is underpinned by the values and practices of inclusion.

1.3 Inclusive practice involves:

- providing accessible learning and assessment for all students;
- providing for flexibility in learning, teaching and assessment;
- ensuring the relevance of curriculum assessment items for all students;
- ensuring teaching staff have the requisite professional competencies for teaching and assessing all students;
- making reasonable adjustments where appropriate and/or considering applications for alternative assessment arrangements.

1.4 Inclusive teaching and assessment is best facilitated by anticipating and planning for the learning requirements of all students. This involves anticipating and considering, in a generalised way, the requirements of students with learning and/or physical disabilities.

1.5 Key aspects of inclusion for learning, teaching and assessment, should inform all phases of programme design, development, approval, evaluation and review on an ongoing basis.

1.6 The University recognises that the adoption of inclusive teaching, learning and assessment methods does not negate the need to make reasonable adjustments for individual students.

1.7 In keeping with the Equalities Act 2010 the University does not seek to modify competence requirements or learning outcomes which meet the definition of a competence standard, but does make adjustments to the means by which these are assessed, where necessary. A genuine competence standard applies equally to all students and may not be modified. However, depending on the need of an individual disabled student, the means by which that student is enabled to demonstrate the standard can be adjusted/adapted. This might involve, for example: adapting materials used in an assessment to aid accessibility; providing assistance during assessment; re-organising the assessment physical environment and facilitating the use of assistive technology and a computer. Similarly in some circumstances it may be most appropriate to provide for alternative assessment arrangements to prevent disadvantage whilst assuring academic rigour.

1.8 Where students are diagnosed with a specific learning difficulty at a point in their course after which they have already submitted assessments, they may apply to take an alternative assessment where it is adjudged that the original assessment may have unfavourably disadvantaged them as a consequence of their disability.

1.9 Students who disclose specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, or a disability impacting on spelling, syntax, or structural organisation of written work, such as for pre-linguistically deaf students) have the facility to bring the nature of their disability to the attention of the staff who mark their work. This is in order to accommodate the student's functional difference, and does not affect academic standards applied in the marking of work or assessment of the achievement of learning outcomes.

## Procedures

### 2 Inclusive assessment by design

2.1 Through inclusive design, anticipatory planning, and providing real choice, assessments should meet the needs of the vast majority of students.

2.2 Planned anticipatory inclusive assessment design should be mindful of the learning requirements of all students, particularly those with disabilities, and other student groups, such that all students are enabled to demonstrate to their full potential what they know, understand and are able to do.

2.3 Assessment practices should be designed to address learning outcomes and competency standards in ways that are facilitative and non-discriminatory. A competency standard is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as 'an academic, medical, or other standard applied by, or on behalf of, an education provider for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability'.

2.4 Students and other key stakeholders should be consulted in the design, development and implementation of inclusive assessment practices.

2.5 Inclusive assessment is most relevant and effective when it is designed to engage with real world tasks and challenges.

2.6 Programmes and courses should include elements of choice in assessment items mindful of anticipatory learning requirements of all students, including those with disabilities.

2.7 Assessments and learning practices including for example: teaching and learning environments, field trips, group work, placements, and laboratory work should as far as possible be accessible and inclusive by design, so that only minimal adaptations or adjustments are necessary for individuals.

2.8 Inclusive practice in assessment should be provided for by reflecting and acting upon the nature of students' assessment experiences at differing stages as modules and courses are designed, taught, evaluated and reviewed.

2.9 Evidence that elimination of disability related barriers has been considered is required for the approval and re-approval of programmes.

2.10 University routes to professional recognition (PG Certificate Learning and Teaching in HE, and the Worcester CPD Scheme leading to Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, as well as the University Teaching Awards) require staff to evidence a commitment to the values, principles and practices of diversity and inclusion; incorporating a capacity to engage effectively with inclusive assessment.

2.11 The University will provide staff with opportunities for professional development in the area of inclusive assessment design, practice and implementation.

2.12 In some circumstances, given the individual nature of disabilities, it may be necessary to develop individualised reasonable adjustments to assessment. These should be developed incorporating the views and experiences of individual students as well as drawing on professional support and advice from Student Services.

### **3 Reasonable adjustments for individual students**

3.1 Where it is necessary to make adjustments to assessments in order to meet individual student learning needs, such adjustments should be reasonable and take account of the principles of equity and parity of assessment practices. In considering all requests for specific adjustments, the University will make individual reasonable adjustments based on the student's particular requirements. The University will need to consider the extent to which the adjustment requested is due to the impacts of the student's disability.

3.2 There is no current legal definition of what a reasonable adjustment might entail. However, the Equality Challenge Unit has published [guidance on making reasonable adjustments](#) and this should be considered when making decisions about adjustments in assessment. Decisions should be further informed by considering:

- a. whether the student is disadvantaged by the current modes of teaching or assessment;
- b. how effective proposed adjustments will be in overcoming any disadvantage;
- c. whether an adjustment request is related to a disability or is just an expression of preference;
- d. whether proposed adjustments are reasonable in terms of:
  - i. the practicality of the changes for staff and students,
  - ii. the potential impacts on other students,
  - iii. the potential wider benefits to other students.

3.3 It is not possible to identify all possible reasonable adjustments that may be required for disabled students. A broad range of general and specific adjustments are set out in the guidance document. These include adjustments such as additional time allowances, alternative locations for examinations, use of amanuensis, computer or assistive technology, provision of material in Braille, large print etc.

### **4 Alternative assessment arrangements**

4.1 In exceptional circumstances, where existing assessment options, even with reasonable adjustments, continue to present barriers to disabled students, the need to provide for alternative assessment arrangements should be considered.

4.2 As with reasonable adjustments, alternative assessment arrangements must be reasonable and take account of the principles of equity and parity of assessment practice.

4.3 Alternative arrangements, for example a written rather than an oral presentation or vice versa, or a poster or video as an alternative to a written report, should be requested by the student and discussed initially with a Disability Adviser before further discussion and approval by the module and course leader.

### **5 Disclosure**

5.1 Consideration of the learning and assessment requirements of disabled students is integral to inclusive assessment. As identified in the Equality Act 2010, 'a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

5.2 It is the University's responsibility to give students opportunities, at various stages of their course, to disclose disability, dyslexia or a long-term medical condition and to ensure appropriate confidentiality.

5.3 It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the University is aware of his/her disability and to apply for any variation in assessment conditions within deadlines established for this purpose. Any request must be supported by acceptable medical or other evidence of disability or long-term medical condition.

5.4 Note: Some courses such as Teaching and Nursing require disclosure as a part of the Occupational Health clearance.

5.5 All information is confidential and is only shared with student consent, to those directly involved in making reasonable adjustments on behalf of the student.

5.6 The University will endeavour to ensure that access and reasonable adjustments are applied consistently across the institution.

5.7 A record of agreed arrangements is kept on the student's file and is also attached to the Class List available to all tutors; the arrangements will apply for the duration of the course, unless the student formally requests that these be re-considered.

5.8 Students are given a record of their entitlements (DDS1) and are encouraged to discuss these with tutors.

## **6 Requesting and approving alternative arrangements**

6.1 Students requesting alternative assessment arrangements should first discuss their needs with a Disability Adviser in the Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS).

6.2 Documentary evidence (medical or specialist) must be produced to support the request. This evidence should normally be no more than two years old at the time of the student making an initial application for alternative assessment arrangements, and should have been conducted when the student was aged 16+. In the case of dyslexia or other specific learning difficulty, a diagnostic report carried out when the student was aged 16+ will be sufficient.

6.3 Students must normally apply for alternative assessment arrangements at least four weeks before the date of the assessment. Late applications will not normally be considered unless directly related to the individual's impairment, although due consideration will be given to individual circumstances.

6.4 The Disability Adviser will complete Form DDS1 and retain a copy of the documentary evidence to accompany the form, which will be held on the student's file. Copies of completed Form DDS1 will be forwarded to the student, and details will be posted on the SOLE-based class lists which can be accessed by course and module leaders and the Examinations Officer.

6.5 Students should discuss their alternative assessment needs with their course and/or module leader(s), who may consult with the Disability and Dyslexia Service. Requests for alternative assessment arrangements will normally be agreed between the student, the Disability Adviser and the course leader, where appropriate, after liaising with the module leader concerning learning outcomes.

6.6 Placements may require different adjustments to those made for academic study. Students should initially talk to the person responsible for arranging the placement about their needs, making

reference to their University entitlements. A Disability Adviser may be able to offer additional advice should this be required.

## **7 Examination and test arrangements**

7.1 Students should present a copy of the completed Form DDS1 to module leaders in respect of class tests – this must be done in good time, and in any case normally at least four weeks before the date of the class test.

7.2 Where an allocation of extra time for University examinations is agreed, this will normally be 15 minutes per hour (or 25%) unless a different amount is deemed necessary on the basis of independent evidence in individual circumstances. Where extra time is agreed for students this should also be allocated for class tests as well as more formal examinations.

7.3 In cases where an adjustment for University organised examinations is required, such as the use of a computer or use of an amanuensis, the necessary arrangements will be made by the Examinations Officer for the student to sit their examination(s) in a separate room from the main body of students.

7.4 In other cases, e.g. course 'tests', the student's Institute will make the necessary arrangements, taking advice from the Examinations Officer and the Disability Co-ordinator as appropriate on the organisation of the venue, invigilation and other practical arrangements for the student. A disabled student's support worker may not act as an invigilator for a student with whom they have a professional support role. However, support workers may be used as invigilators for those students with whom they have no relationship.

7.5 It will be the responsibility of the invigilator(s) to ensure that examinations and tests involving disabled students are conducted in accordance with agreed alternative arrangements, including the allocation of extra time, and that as far as possible in other respects, the usual rules for the conduct of examinations are observed.

## **8 Alerting markers to disability related difficulties**

8.1 Students who have difficulties presenting information in written format as a result of their disability can use the University's *Disability declaration coversheet* to notify markers for any examination or coursework assessment, where this has been formally agreed with the Disability and Dyslexia Service and recorded on the DDS1.

8.2 *Disability declaration coversheets* permit students to retain some degree of anonymity (although this may inevitably be compromised where class sizes are small), but alert the marker to the need to take into account disability related difficulties in the presentation of written work.

8.3 Disability declaration coversheets can be down loaded from SOLE, and where work is submitted electronically, can be copied and pasted as a coversheet to the assessment, so that a single assessment document is uploaded to SOLE or Blackboard as required.

8.4 Guidance is provided to staff on good practice in marking the work of pre-linguistically deaf students and those with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and semantic pragmatic disorder.

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<b>Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates</b>	<a href="#">University Assessment Policy</a> <a href="#">UW Learning and Teaching Strategy</a>
<b>Policies/Rules Superseded by this Policy</b>	Policy, Procedures and Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Disabled Students (Sept 2009)