

ADJUSTMENTS IN COURSE AND EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: NOTES OF GUIDANCE

INTRODUCTION

Who does this apply to?

Students with a disability or a medical condition who need to apply for special study or examination arrangements, will need medical or other independent specialist evidence to support their requests for those arrangements.

This applies to people who:-

- have a visual impairment
- have a hearing impairment
- have mental health difficulties
- have mobility or dexterity difficulties
- have other disability-related or medical reasons for requiring specific arrangements

MEETING STUDENT NEEDS

The needs of candidates vary, and the University will endeavour to provide a package of measures tailored to each candidate's individual needs. There are two very different types of adjustment. The first is variation in the examination regulations (ie course and mode of examination), and these are determined by the University's Educational Policy and Standards Committee. The second form of adjustment relates to the conditions in which the examination is held (timing, location, special requirements), and these are determined by the Proctors. The Proctors are charged with ensuring that the Statutes of the University are upheld and under that falls the fair and proper conduct of examinations. In all cases the University is committed to making reasonable adjustments while maintaining comparability with other candidates.

The following notes are provided to give guidance as to the kind of adjustments that may be possible. It is possible that the needs of an individual may not be covered by the following list; that should not be taken as suggesting that other adjustments will not be contemplated. The University is ready to consider all reasonable requests backed by medical or other appropriate specialist advice. It is also committed to regularly reviewing its provisions for candidates with disabilities or medical conditions in the light of experience.

It is important that candidates should appreciate that in making adjustments the University needs to ensure comparability with other students. It is for this reason that medical or other appropriate specialist advice is required for all adjustments. Moreover, because the University is committed to ensuring that the *severity of the effects* of disability is taken into account, it may not always be the case that the adjustments are the same as those made in other contexts (eg at school). Although there is a standard allowance of extra time for dyslexic students, this may be varied in individual cases; there is no automatic entitlement to the use of a word processor or amanuensis (that is a scribe). Amanuenses will only be provided in the most severe cases). The University seeks to establish the degree of need and respond accordingly.

In considering adjustments the University must take into account the impact on other candidates of any adjustments: eg if a disabled student is taking papers with extra time or using special equipment, it may be necessary for the University to prescribe that an examination is taken in a different venue from other candidates.

MODE OF EXAMINATION AND VARIATION IN DURATION OF COURSE (EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE)

In certain circumstances it may be possible for the EPSC to substitute a different mode of assessment for that provided in the *Examination Regulations*: eg to substitute a take home exercise for a timed examination paper. It should be noted that the University will only contemplate this in very exceptional circumstances, and that in determining the form of any substitute exercise the need to maintain the academic coherence of the course and comparability with other candidates must be major considerations.

It is important to appreciate that it is possible to extend a student's period of study. The regulations for undergraduate degrees prescribe no more than a minimum period of residence (nine terms) and a maximum lapse of time since matriculation (three terms more than the normal duration of the course), after which a candidate is 'overstanding for Honours'; both of these may be varied at the discretion of the Educational Policy and Standards Committee. Cases where the duration of the course is to be varied should be accompanied with a clear statement of the candidate's proposed programme of study. Students in receipt of LEA funding should note that additional funding will need to be negotiated with the LEA. Other sponsoring bodies will also need to be informed as appropriate.

Students may also extend the duration of their course by suspending status for up to three terms of an undergraduate course, and longer for periods of postgraduate study. This solution implies that no study takes place during the period of suspension.

Part-time study is only available for a small number of courses, and will not normally be authorised for undergraduate degrees, though the equivalent of part-time study might be achieved by use of the dispensations mentioned in this section.

CONDITIONS OF EXAMINATION (PROCTORS)

Adjustments: general

Many of the adjustments under this heading will apply to candidates with a variety of types of disability or medical condition.

extra time (varied according to need), rest periods
scheduling of exams (eg to ensure appropriate spacing, not more than one per day)
extensions to submission deadlines
examinations held in different venue (eg College)
use of amanuensis (for reading or dictation)
sessions for candidates to familiarise themselves with the examination venue
and any special equipment provided

Adjustments: physical needs

provision of food and drink or appropriate medication in examinations
special seating arrangements (placement and type of desk and chair)
provision of appropriate rest and exercise facilities
provision of helper in examination room to assist with physical needs

Candidates with hearing difficulties

seating close to any persons making announcements to assist with lip-reading
provision of instructions in writing
special arrangements in any oral exercise or examination (including possible use of sign language)

Visually impaired candidates (including colour blindness)

extra time and rest periods
use of word processor with appropriate software
use of amanuensis (for reading and/or dictation)
enlargement of question papers and provision of larger desk
brailled question papers and other examination materials
use of tinted overlays
use of special answer booklets with clear ruling
special seating arrangements and appropriate lighting levels

Candidates with mental health problems

timing and spacing of examinations
measures to address side-effects of medication
location of examination
taking examinations on their own (if appropriate)

Dyslexic/dyspraxic candidates

Extra time
Use of word processor
Use of amanuensis

HOW TO SEEK ADJUSTMENTS

It is important that the requirements of students with a disability or a medical condition should be identified as early as possible, and a package of appropriate measures agreed in advance; any adjustments agreed by the University authorities should be replicated in College assessments (eg 'collections').

Disabled students and those with medical conditions should contact the relevant authorities of their College (usually the Senior Tutor) as soon as possible after they have received an offer. They will also be contacted by the University's Disabilities Office if they have declared a disability at the point of application. Both will be able to advise as to the best manner of seeking the necessary adjustments. In making a case for adjustments Colleges may wish to consult both Faculty Disability Officers, and the University Disabilities Office.

It is essential for the reasons outlined above that requests for adjustments are accompanied by medical or other appropriate specialist opinion. Students and colleges should note that while study needs assessments provided for the Disabled Students Allowance provide helpful pointers, and may be included with any request for adjustments, they are not in themselves sufficient evidence, and should be backed by appropriate specialist advice. When seeking medical evidence it is important that the information students ask from their doctors or specialists is appropriate and relevant to the arrangements they are requesting.

For example

- If a student has a disability that means that the examinations cannot be taken in a large room then the evidence needs to state that clearly, giving the reasons why that is the case.
- If a student has a disability that means that he or she cannot work early in the morning or for extended periods of time then again clear evidence from a doctor explaining why this is so is required.

If a student's medical evidence simply states that there is, for example, a mental health problem and that the student is taking medication, then it is not necessarily clear why special examination arrangements should be provided.

How to obtain medical evidence from a doctor or specialist

Students may wish to show this information sheet to their doctor or specialist

When seeing a doctor or specialist the student should explain to them that to obtain special study or examination arrangements the University requires medical evidence that clearly states the nature/name of the disability as well as outlining what arrangements may be necessary and why.

For example,

- Student X has manic depression and is taking medication to control this condition. One of the side effects of the medication is that Student X's hands sometimes shake and therefore Student X cannot always write or type. Stressful situations often exacerbate this condition and therefore Student X will need a scribe (amanuensis) for examinations.
- Student Y has ME or chronic fatigue syndrome and has difficulty working for extended periods of time. Student Y will need extended deadlines for course-work, as well as extra time and rest breaks during examinations because of the significant fatigue experienced due to her/his condition. Also Student Y should sit no more than one four-hour examination in any one day.

Once the supporting medical evidence has been obtained, it should be shown to the Senior Tutor of the College who will discuss it with the student and forward a request to the Proctors. The Proctors will determine what adjustments are appropriate. If variations in mode of examination are needed, the materials will be passed on by the Proctors to the Educational Policy and Standards Committee for consideration. **All requests for adjustments should be routed through the Proctors in the first instance.**

Once an adjustment in examination arrangements has been agreed with the Proctors it cannot be varied except with the Proctors' approval.

If students require further advice or assistance when seeking special examination arrangements or trying to obtain appropriate medical evidence they should contact the Disability Office. To ensure that the necessary adjustments are made this should be done as soon as possible.

Procedures for dyslexic students

On arrival at the University, students who are dyslexic should arrange through their colleges to have an existing (not more than six years old) educational psychologist's report referred to one of the University's designated psychologists. In some cases it may be appropriate to have a new assessment made; or for a student not previously diagnosed as being dyslexic to have an assessment carried out for the first time. The University's designated psychologists will advise about special study support if necessary, and will recommend any appropriate special examination arrangements for onward transmission to the Proctors. Such arrangements are normally in the form of extra time for written papers. Where essential, the psychologists can also recommend the use of a word-processor in examinations. It is crucial that any special study support or examination arrangements are resolved early in a student's University career. If students have been diagnosed as dyslexic, or have any concerns that they might be suffering from this condition, they should notify their Senior Tutor as soon as possible.

Medical problems arising in the course of examinations

If a medical condition or the effects of a disability are exacerbated by circumstances arising during the examination period, the student concerned should seek supporting medical or other specialist documentation, and arrange for the Senior Tutor (or equivalent officer) to forward it to the Proctors, who will notify the Examiners if it is appropriate. It is vital that this evidence be submitted as soon after the examination as possible, as retrospective evidence can only be considered in the most exceptional circumstances.

Junior Proctor
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