

Alternative Assessment to Formal Examinations for Disabled Students

Overview

The QAA Code of Practice for disabled students (Precept 13) states:

‘Assessment and examination policies, practises and procedures should provide disabled students with the same opportunity as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes.’

The University of Huddersfield is committed to ensuring that students are encouraged, supported and enabled to achieve their full potential in their chosen area. As part of the commitment, the University of Huddersfield believes that reasonable adjustments should be made to ensure that those with disabilities are able to engage as fully as possible.

Aims of the Guidelines

1. These guidelines intend to ensure that equitable and uniform practise is followed when a decision is taken to provide an alternative assessment to a formal exam. Alternative arrangements must not give a student an unfair advantage over other candidates or disadvantage them due to their disability.
2. These guidelines recognise that it is not possible to draw up a set of arrangements that are appropriate for every student – this will depend on individual circumstances, the format of the examination, the required learning outcome of the exam and whether an assessment is governed by an external professional body.
3. The guidelines acknowledge that the University of Huddersfield will not compromise academic requirements and standards. Alternative modes of assessment must be pursued to minimise the impact of an impairment on the student’s performance and must not be allowed to compromise learning outcomes.

Procedure

1. Students are advised to ensure that the University is aware of their disability by contacting Disability Services. This means that all aspects of support can be considered, including alternative assessments. This is ideally done through a DSA Needs Assessment carried out by an approved assessor.
2. Ideally, specific arrangements for exams should be made at the beginning of the course. However, it is recognised that this may not always be possible due to changes in the effect of an impairment, the student becoming aware of the disability after they have begun their studies or the student not being fully aware of the impact of their disability on their studies until they have experienced an exam period. Unless this is the case, students are advised to apply for an alternative examination assessment by the end of the first term. If a student does not apply within this time, alternative assessments may not be available to them.
3. **An alternative to the formal examination should only be granted in exceptional circumstances.** Wherever possible, disabled students should undertake the same assessments as others undertaking the course. Adjustments can be made to the exam to provide equality of opportunity such as:
 - Time related changes (additional time, rest breaks, flexible start times)
 - Modification of exam papers (transcribed papers, modified answer books, coloured paper, large print)
 - Personal Assistance (an amanuensis, scribe, prompter, personal care assistant, interpreter)
 - Specialist equipment (computers, dictionaries, adjustable furniture, lighting)
 - Seating arrangements (alternative venue, seating near invigilator)

4. A student who wishes to have an alternative mode of assessment to a formal exam, must make their initial request to the Course Leader.
5. An alternative examination arrangement may not be granted if it is not possible to demonstrate the learning outcomes with an alternative mode of assessment without compromising standards or if a professional body governing an assessment does not agree to an alternative.
6. All requests for alternative examination arrangements should be accompanied by documentary evidence of disability and evidence that the student's disability makes the standard mode of assessment potentially unfair. Examples of acceptable documentary evidence include:
 - A written statement from a registered medical practitioner. (The statement should contain confirmation of the disability and the effects of the disability. A sick note does not constitute adequate evidence.)
 - A current assessment from an Educational Psychologist (carried out since the student's 16th birthday).
 - An audiogram (a graphic representation of an individual's hearing loss).
 - A current DSA Needs Assessment by an approved assessor

A letter/report from a GP alone will not normally be sufficient evidence for an alternative assessment. This evidence should usually be taken in conjunction with either a DSA Needs Assessment and also in consultation with the academic department and Disability Services.

Students and staff should contact Disability Services for further information about documentary evidence.

If for any reason a student does not have documentary evidence, they should contact Disability Services to gain support and guidance in providing the necessary evidence.

7. The decision about an alternative assessment must be made with the input of the student, the Course Leader, Disability Services and, where necessary the External Examiners and the School Teaching Committee. The final decision about whether to offer an alternative to the exam and the format this will take must be made by the Course Leader.
8. The decision will be based upon whether an alternative format to the formal exam is viable for assessing the learning outcomes of the course and the impact of the disability on the student. A student should therefore not expect the same arrangement as students on other courses.
9. If a decision is made to offer an alternative assessment format, the school will inform the student, the relevant Disability Coordinator, Disability Services, Registry and appropriate staff within the department who are responsible for assessment arrangements.
10. If a decision is made not to offer an alternative assessment and the student wishes to appeal, the student can invoke the Student's Complaints Procedure.
11. If an alternative assessment procedure has been undertaken, any external request for a reference with regard to the student should not remark on the alternative assessment as the same learning outcomes will have been demonstrated.
12. A disability which has not been declared prior to the examination cannot be taken into account retrospectively unless the student can demonstrate a valid reason for not declaring earlier. Once the examination results have been issued, a student cannot declare a disability.

Alternative Assessment to Formal Examinations for Disabled Students Flow Diagram

