University of **Reading**

Students with disabilities: key principles for staff, students and applicants

[Approved by the University Board for Teaching and Learning on 1 February 2016.]

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These principles are designed to provide an overview of the approach which we take at the University of Reading to issues relating to disability: they are designed to help staff, students and applicants and are supplemented by more detailed guidance and practical advice on specific aspects of our approach and policies: see particularly the Disability Advisory Service website www.reading.ac.uk/disability) and the Toolkit for Inclusive Practice in Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Admission: http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/disability/Guide-to-Inclusive-Practice-in-Teaching-and-Learning.pdf

The University's Policy on Inclusive Practice in Teaching and Learning provides greater clarity and emphasis to its commitment to an inclusive approach, as already set out in the Curriculum Framework and the Teaching and Learning Strategy. The Policy aims to increase the accessibility and inclusivity of Reading's learning and teaching practices by embedding key adjustments and setting out the expectations for all academic programmes.

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Our approach

1. The University welcomes a diverse student population and aims to embed support for all students within its environment, facilities and teaching practices. Students with disabilities form an integral part of the University's academic community and are entitled to support that enables equal and unimpeded access to education. It must always be assumed that in any given academic year there will be a number of students in all Schools requiring support for disabilities.

2. The University operates an inclusive environment to ensure that admissions, learning, teaching and assessment practices, in addition to support services, are both wide-ranging and non-discriminatory. Whilst this policy refers specifically to teaching and learning, the University's duty to provide equality of opportunity and support extends beyond teaching and learning to encompass the entire campus environment in which students live and socialise, as well as study.

3. The University admits students to programmes on the basis of academic eligibility and does not allow disability to present barriers to admission. For further information please refer to the University Admissions Policies: http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/admissions/Admissions_Policy_UG_and_PG_Taught_Programmes_March_2015.pdf

4. **Social and Political Context:** It is now widely acknowledged that people with disabilities are disadvantaged by attitudinal and environmental barriers rather than their impairment or medical condition alone. This is known as the social model of disability and provides a basis for the successful implementation of the duty to promote disability equality.

5. **Legal Context:** The Equality Act 2010 (which replaced the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001) places legal obligations on public bodies in connection with a range of protected characteristics: one category of student covered by the Act is students with disabilities. The key legal obligations are to eliminate discriminatory policies, practices and procedures and to make reasonable adjustments to ensure students with disabilities can fully

access university life. Both anticipatory adjustments and individual adjustments must be made. For further information about the legal context, please refer to Appendix 1, Legal Requirements in Provision for Students with disabilities.

6. The University is also informed by guidance provided by the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Education, Chapter B4 Section 2: Students with disabilities; see Key Sources of Information and Support section for link to chapter.

7. It is important to remember that the enhancement of the quality of provision for students with disabilities is a shared responsibility of ALL staff not just those with a disability or learning support remit. An outline of specific roles and responsibilities involved in certain aspects of disability support is provided in the Roles and Responsibilities section of this policy.

8. Useful principles to bear in mind when considering the support of students with disabilities are:

– Consultation and communication are key: members of staff are not expected to provide immediate solutions in isolation; staff collaborate within a broader network of support to overcome any challenges faced by students with disabilities. This must include consultation with the student themselves.

– Many aspects involved in reasonable adjustments and creating an inclusive environment for students with disabilities link to general good practice; enhancing teaching and learning to the benefit of the student body at large. Small changes often make a substantial difference in a student's ability to perform on an equal basis to other students.

– The University aims to take a needs-based approach rather than to provide provision on the basis of generalised characteristics of particular disability or diagnosis; adaptations necessary for differing needs often result in an inclusive environment for many students.

Definitions

Who is disabled?

9. The most widely cited definition in higher education under current legislation is that which is outlined in the Equality Act. The Act identifies a disability as:

> 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

10. This definition covers a wide range of impairments, including (but not limited to) physical and mobility difficulties, hearing impairments, visual impairments, specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, medical conditions such as HIV or cancer, and mental health difficulties.

11. It is important to note that the term 'disability', although often connected to physical disability, in particular wheelchair users, is a much broader term encompassing a wide range of 'invisible' as well as visible disabilities. Support provided for students with non-physical and less immediately visible disabilities is equally important and legally protected as for those with physical disabilities.

12. The term 'disability' is problematic and frequently contested by those who are labelled as such. Students may not identify with the term but still require support in order to access education on an equal basis and achieve their full academic potential. Support should be viewed in terms of support that is required to enable students to overcome unreasonable barriers. For further information about terminology and types of disabilities, please refer to the Toolkit for Inclusive Practice in Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Admission: http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/disability/Guide-to-Inclusive-Practice-in-Teaching-and-Learning.pdf

13. If an applicant, student or staff member needs advice on whether they or one of their students is disabled within the legal definition please consult Disability Advisory Service (DAS).

Reasonable Adjustments

14. Students with disabilities who face disadvantages in realising their full academic potential require reasonable adjustments to be made. These remove the barriers impeding progress.

15. The University's duty to make reasonable adjustments applies in the context of arrangements for determining admission, teaching and learning and other services which we offer to students. We will make any appropriate adjustments in order to enable a disabled student to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes that we require to be shown for progression, the award of credit and/or qualifications.

16. 'Substantial' is defined as more than minor or trivial and having a significant impact on normal day-to-day activities. Within the context of Higher Education this will include such activities as attending lectures and seminars, taking notes, carrying out research, communicating with staff and peers, planning work, organising and managing workload and sitting exams.

Definition of 'reasonable'

17. The application of an adjustment will result from consideration of the particular circumstances involved and will involve both staff and students in discussion of possible courses of action. What is 'reasonable' will vary according to a range of factors influencing the feasibility of creating the adjustment. These factors include:

- how practicable the changes are

- the efficacy of the adjustment required in order to overcome the disadvantage in question

- feasibility with regard to constraints imposed by cost, physical resources and time

- health and safety issues

- impact on other staff and students in implementing an adjustment

18. Due consideration must be given to all possibilities with regard to adjustments; as referenced above, individual members of staff are not expected to provide instant solutions to what can often be complex challenges involving conflicting demands. Due consideration involves consultation and the exploration of a sequence of potential steps towards solving particular issues. Cost alone is not considered sufficient reason to not make necessary adjustments.

19. Creating inclusive practice involves two types of reasonable adjustment: anticipatory and individual. All staff should be actively involved in strategically identifying anticipatory adjustments, and in making decisions regarding individual reasonable adjustments. Consultation with the student forms a key part of this process.
For further guidance on consulting students with regards to their support, please refer to 'How and when to speak to students' section of the Toolkit for Inclusive Practice in Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Admission.

Anticipatory adjustments

20. Anticipatory adjustments means planning ahead to be able to accommodate a range of potential needs of future students, instead of primarily having to make reactive, local adjustments in an environment which has built-in barriers to those with differing needs.

21. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) means that public bodies have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, including in terms of shaping policy as well as in delivering services.

22. It also requires that public bodies:
- have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination

- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

23. Meeting the PSED requires anticipating the variety of possible requirements that students with disabilities may have, rather than solely making adjustments for individuals on a case by case basis. The University is required to be proactive in assessing the impact of policies, procedures and provision and to make any changes resulting from such evaluation.

Key areas in which anticipatory adjustments are to be made in the planning and development stage are:

- developing the curriculum, i.e. ensuring the course aims and competence standards are not either directly or indirectly discriminating against a diverse cohort of students; this can happen where unchecked assumptions are built into the course design. An example of this would be incorporating the ability to present information confidently to an audience into competence standards in a way that very rigidly does not allow for adjustments to be made for students with Asperger's Syndrome or mental health issues.

- course delivery - ensure a variety of methods by which students engage with the course material, taking into account diverse learning styles, e.g. ensuring a mixture of auditory, visual and kinaesthetic delivery by including 'flipped' classroom formats, embedding videos into presentations, posting podcasts of lectures onto Blackboard

- reviewing assessment methods at the design, validation and delivery stage – ensure a variety of assessment methods and, where possible, allow students to choose those which best allow them to demonstrate their knowledge

- staff training, e.g. ensuring staff are aware of the social model of disability

- recruitment and marketing, e.g. ensuring a variety of formats for marketing material, such as podcasts embedded into online webpages

- planning estate management, ensuring accessibility, such as automatic doors, at architectural design stage

- accommodation – e.g. ensuring a sufficient number of adapted rooms

For further specific examples of anticipatory adjustments please refer to the Toolkit for Inclusive Practice in Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Admission:
http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/disability/Guide-to-Inclusive-Practice-in-Teaching-and-Learning.pdf

Individual adjustments

24. Not all matters can be dealt with under a generic policy, nor can an entirely pan-inclusive environment be provided which caters for all students and their diverse support needs. Individual adjustments therefore need to be made on a case-by-case basis where bespoke support is required that could not be anticipated nor accommodated within the overall inclusive practice provided by the University.

25. An example of an individual adjustment would be a student with Asperger's Syndrome requiring an individual room in examinations due to sensory sensitivity and needing an Oral Language Modifier to ensure correct interpretation of the questions; adjustments such as these need to be made on a case-by-case basis depending on particular individual needs (not all students with Asperger's need Oral Language Modifiers or individual rooms). However, it should be noted that this adjustment can still be anticipated more broadly by ensuring at estate management and architectural design stages that small, individual rooms are factored into the design of buildings where examinations will take place.

For further specific examples of individual adjustments please refer to the Toolkit for Inclusive Practice in Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Admission: http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/disability/Guide-to-Inclusive-Practice-in-Teaching-and-Learning.pdf

26. In addition to support provided internally by the University, students with disabilities may also be eligible for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), funded by Student Finance England. The support provided by DSA is tailored according to individual support needs, for example supplying the funding for a specialist mentor for students with mental health diagnoses to help them manage their emotional wellbeing alongside the demands of their course. The Disability Advisory Service supports students to apply for, adjust and implement support funded via DSA.

Extenuating Circumstances

27. The University's extenuating circumstances procedure is available to all students. Those students with disabilities may not use the procedure as a blanket provision, nor can extenuating circumstances be granted by dint of disability alone. However they can use the procedure for an exacerbation/change of an existing condition, the impact of a newly/recently diagnosed condition or the impact of an existing disability on other insurmountable circumstances affecting the student's ability to successfully complete assessed work.

28. For further guidance on the extenuating circumstances procedure please refer to: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/student/rules-and-regulations/std-serv-extenuating-circumstances.aspx

Examination arrangements

29. Students may qualify for additional support in examinations and assessment arrangements due to their disability. Examples of such arrangements include: having extra time in which to complete examinations and timed assessments; being allowed to take rest breaks during examinations and timed assessments; being allowed to use a computer to type examination answers; being allowed to sit the paper in an alternative venue.

30. Arrangements for support in examinations are coordinated by the Examinations Office in conjunction with the Disability Advisory Service, upon receipt of appropriate evidence. Arrangements that are put in place for main examinations are usually also required for in-class tests that take place within Schools and Departments.

Roles and Responsibilities

31. While the enhancement of the quality of provision for students with disabilities is a shared responsibility of all staff, not just those with a disability or learning support remit, certain roles and departments have a particular responsibility for issues relating to disability, as described in what follows.

32. The network referred to below provides the primary avenues for seeking advice when considering how to support students with disabilities. For further practical advice, case studies and sources of information please refer to the Toolkit for Inclusive Practice in Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Admission.

The Disability Advisory Service (DAS)

33. DAS is part of the Student and Applicant Services directorate, based in the Carrington Building. DAS and the University Counselling Service form the Student Wellbeing team.

34. DAS advises individual applicants and students with regard to support available to them with their studies and other aspects of university life. DAS also counsels Schools, departments and individual staff on specific adjustments for particular students and helps Schools develop plans for broader, anticipatory and inclusive forms of support for students with disabilities.

35. In terms of overall responsibility for advising on reasonable adjustments, the Disability Advisory Service should be referred to as the primary source of knowledge and experience. Where the Disability Advisory Service propose that a reasonable adjustment be made, this is based on medical evidence and knowledge of both the student's disability as well as empirical observation of the particularities involved in the individual case.

36. The Disability Advisory Service aims at supporting students to overcome obstacles and develop fully as learners, where this is possible. However, where adjustments and exemptions are requested this is due to a fully informed assessment having been made of the student's capabilities inherent to their disability and advice is given in terms of what will be most conducive to a student's health and wellbeing. The Disability Advisory Service is fully cognisant of legislation in relation to the parameters involved in whether an adjustment can be deemed 'reasonable' or not.

37. The Disability Advisory Service takes into account limitations involved for the University with regards to competence standards, financial impact and the impact on staff and other students, measuring these against legal requirements and arriving at a conclusion that would ensure the University's accountability were a case to be examined in a court of law.

38. Where complex cases, ambiguities and conflicts arise in relation to reasonable adjustments, the Disability Advisory Service seek advice from medical professionals, the Director of Student and Applicant Services and the University Legal Services.

39. In addition, DAS contributes to the specific policies drawn up by the University and provides general guidance notes for students and to Schools which may need to make adjustments in order to comply with the law.

40. The Disability Advisory Service can provide guidance to applicants, students and Schools on the implementation of University policies.

41. See the DAS website – www.reading.ac.uk/disability - for more details.

Key roles within Schools and Departments

Personal Tutor

42. The role of the Personal Tutor is essentially twofold: academic development and pastoral care. Many of the problems which Tutors come across can be due to various possible causes. Typical problems such as loss of concentration and motivation could be due to no clear sense of identity, depression, a viral illness, anxiety or a range of disorders which range from eating problems to obsessiveness etc. Equally, academic underachievement could be due to poor study skills or dyslexia or to doubts about whether the right programme has been chosen and its relevance in career terms. Liaising with, and referral to, the Disability Advisory Service and Disability Representative (please see below) to ensure support of students with disabilities is vital.

43. Further information can be found in the Disability sections of the Personal Tutor's Handbook: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/personaltutor/Commonissues/pt-Disability.aspx

44. Disability Advisers refer students to Personal Tutors for general ongoing support within the Department but specifically in relation to advice on submitting Extenuating Circumstances form and

as a first port of call when considering options in relation to suspension, withdrawal, changing to part time study etc. Disability Advisers sometimes attend meetings where disability-related reasons are involved in such requests and work with Personal Tutors in relation to them.

Disability Representative

45. Each school and some departments within schools have their own disability representative who implements and disseminates information relating to students' individual support requirements on each of a School/Department's programmes.

46. Disability Advisers refer students to Disability Representatives for specific information in relation to disability support within the Department and as a further form of support to supplement that of the Personal Tutor.

Senior Tutor

47. The Senior Tutor has general day-to-day responsibility for student welfare and guidance and a role in discipline in matters affecting or relating to academic progress; disciplinary and welfare issues pertaining to students with disabilities often require consultation between the Senior Tutor, the Disability Representative and/ or the Disability Advisory Service in order to ensure appropriate support and decision-making.

48. As described above, Disability Advisers tend to refer students to their personal tutor in the first instance where advice is needed in relation to extenuating circumstances, suspensions, withdrawals, programme changes, but also make clear that the Senior Tutor makes decisions in relation to these and can be referred to directly if necessary.

49. Disability Advisers liaise with Senior Tutors where reasonable adjustments require discussion and authorisation at School level and where issues relating to personal tutors require resolution.

Teaching Staff

50. Teaching staff more broadly are also responsible for incorporating reasonable adjustments, both anticipatory and individual, into their teaching and learning methodology, as described under 'Reasonable Adjustments' above, ensuring that disability and equality legislation and the University's policy in relation to this are adhered to in the way that courses are designed, delivered and assessed. Teaching staff should participate in relevant training, know how to access resources in relation to disability and equality, and consult colleagues within their Department as well as the Disability Advisory Service in relation to supporting students with disabilities.

Examinations Office

51. The Examinations Office and the Disability Advisory Service work collaboratively in order to support students with disabilities appropriately. Examinations and assessments should provide students with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their academic ability. This may require appropriate adjustments to assessment and examinations without compromising academic standards. A wide variety of adjustments to examinations will be made, as required. Application of these adjustments will depend upon individual circumstances.

52. For more information on additional arrangements to support students with disabilities in examinations please refer to: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/student/exa-special.aspx

Counselling

53. The Counselling Service offers short-term counselling support, free of charge for all current students (undergraduates and postgraduates). The Service is composed of a multi-disciplinary team of counsellors and mental health advisors offering specialist support for any developmental, clinical and academic problems

Study Advice

54. The University study advisers can help with essay writing skills and exam techniques, providing one-to-one study skills sessions, workshops, seminars and online resources.

Library

55. The Library has a Disability Co-ordinator who contacts all students with declared disabilities and offers individual help in using Library resources, including in the use of assistive technology such as text to speech:
http://www.reading.ac.uk/library/contact/info-for/disabled/lib-disabled.aspx.

Role of all members of University staff

56. All members of staff have a responsibility to adhere to the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and to the principles laid out in this document, at all times, specifically:

   – Have due regard to equal opportunities generally, and disability equality specifically, in their work and how this will affect the way they carry out their duties

   – Promote equal opportunities

   – Undertake training and learning opportunities as appropriate to their role

   – Seek advice from the Disability Advisory Service or other member of staff as appropriate with regards to potential disability discrimination issues and before implementing decisions with regards to disability support

Role of the University

The University has a responsibility to support staff so that they can meet their responsibilities, for instance, providing a suitably inclusive environment, teaching facilities appropriate for all students, and relevant training to all staff.

57. The principal University Boards and committees which determine policies and oversee issues relating to disability are:

   - The University Board for Teaching and Learning (UBTL):

     - The Sub-Committee on Delivery and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (DELT)

     - the Sub-Committee on Student Experience and Support

   - the Equality and Diversity Committee

Other committees which will consider matters pertaining to disability include those charged with the management of teaching facilities, residential accommodation and admissions.

Summary of roles in relation to reasonable adjustments:

58. The Disability Advisory Service, using supporting evidence and guidance from health professionals, as appropriate, work with the following areas/members of staff in order to implement reasonable adjustments at Department, School or University level:

    - the Senior Tutor normally implements reasonable adjustments at School or Departmental level. He/she will communicate with module conveners as necessary;
    - the Exams Office for adjustments to examination arrangements;
    - where extenuating circumstances relating to a disability affect assessment it is dealt with by the relevant Special Cases Committees through the extenuating circumstances procedure (described in paragraphs 27 and 28).

Declaring a disability

59. The University encourages all applicants to declare a disability when they apply. However, it should be noted that applicants to certain professional programmes are required to declare any disability at the point of applying to the University. We also provide many opportunities for students to declare a disability when they arrive or during their course of study. We strongly encourage students to declare and also ask staff to encourage anyone who they know has a disability but who has not declared it to do so. A declaration can be made to the DAS, who can advise an applicant or a student on issues relating to confidentiality, if he or she has a concern about declaring a disability.

60. It should be noted that cultural issues may limit disclosure and staff must be accordingly sensitive to a student's wishes in relation to this.

61. Not all disabilities will have been diagnosed before a student arrives at University; students may consult the Disability Advisory Service for guidance on exploring potential diagnoses and can register with the service at any stage during their degree, should a diagnosis be made.

62. In some instances students may not have been diagnosed before coming to University if they have lived in a different country previously in which their disability is not recognised; this most often the case for mental health issues and specific learning differences (SpLDs) such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. Students with previously undiagnosed mental health issues can be referred to their GP, the Counselling team and Disability Advisory Service for support.

63. Specific learning differences can be difficult to assess where English is the second language; to this end the Disability Advisory Service has an additional section to the SpLD screener specifically orientated towards students for whom English is an additional language.

Confidentiality

64. Students have a right to confidentiality through the Data Protection Act. This includes, for example, providing references. This entails not sharing any information with regard to the student's disability with any other person, except with the student's express permission to do so. When registering with the Disability Advisory Service, students are asked to indicate whether or not they grant consent to share information, strictly on a 'need to know' basis, with other members of staff (for example, this would allow a Disability Adviser to inform the Examinations Office of additional arrangements

needed in exams) and with their parent(s)/guardian. Students are able to indicate where they don't wish the information to be shared beyond the Disability Advisory Service.

65. When students give the Disability Advisory Service consent to share, the Disability Advisers share information among appropriate staff, as described above (paragraphs 45, 46, 49, 51-), in order to implement specific arrangements for examinations, accommodation etc. Additionally, information about the student's disability (name of diagnosis and salient points with regards to their support needs) is added to the RISIS web portal, to which only the Disability Representative and Senior Tutor within each School or Department has access.

66. Beyond information being shared in order to implement specific support arrangements, Disability Advisers discuss with students to what extent they would like general information about their disability to be shared with academic and support staff within their School or Department. This is often useful, for example, in the case of students with Asperger's Syndrome who benefit from staff being made aware that they do not intend to offend others if speaking bluntly etc, or to be aware that students with chronic conditions that result in flare ups may be absent from lectures.

67. It can also be the case, however, that students are sensitive about their conditions and do not wish for academic staff to be broadly informed. Disability Representatives therefore consult Disability Advisers in relation to disclosing information within a department and whether or not particular members of staff will benefit from having an awareness of a student's disability is approached on case by case basis, with full knowledge of the student concerned.

68. Confidentiality should be discussed with students in terms of the general framework of confidentiality that surrounds any disclosure of a disability and in terms of consent to share that may be necessary in order to implement support. Where students have requested absolute confidentiality it must be respected; however, students must be made aware that in extreme cases where there is a risk of harm to the self or to others, confidentiality may need to be breached but this would be discussed with the student in advance. It should also be noted that this may mean staff will not be aware of the need to make reasonable adjustments in these cases.

69. Confidentiality applies to verbal and written exchanges, both within and without the University. Staff must be aware of legislation governing Data Protection and Freedom of Information when committing information about students to writing.

Offshore Delivery

66. The University delivers a number of degree programmes in conjunction with partner institutions based overseas, as well as course which are delivered through online and blended delivery.

67. Whilst it is acknowledged that different legal jurisdictions operate in overseas locations, the principles described in this policy are assumed to apply to programmes involving offsite delivery.

Key sources of information and support

Disability Advisory Service: www.reading.ac.uk/disability, disability@reading.ac.uk, 0118 378 8921

Toolkit for Inclusive Practice in Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Admission http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/disability/Guide-to-Inclusive-Practice-in-Teaching-and-Learning.pdf

Counselling and Wellbeing Service: www.reading.ac.uk/counselling, counselling@reading.ac.uk, 0118 378 4216

Departmental/School Disability Representative – contact DAS if you are unsure of your contact

Study Advice: www.reading.ac.uk/studyadvice

Exams Office: www.reading.ac.uk/exams, examinations@reading.ac.uk

Joint Faculties Office: http://www.reading.ac.uk/joint-faculties-office/

Student Services: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/student/contact/student-contact.aspx

Centre for Quality Support and Development: http://www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/

Personal Tutor Handbook: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/personaltutor/pt-home.aspx

Useful general guidance on all matters relating to equality is provided by:

- The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC): www.equalityhumanrights.com
- The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU): www.ecu.ac.uk/publications
- The Equality Act 2010 can be found at: www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2010/pdf/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 can be found at:
- www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1
- Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Education, Chapter B4 Section 2 ' 'Disabled Students'http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/Documents/Quality%20Code%20Chapter%20documents%20%282013-14/Quality-Code-Chapter-B4.pdf

Related policies and guides

Admissions: http://www.reading.ac.uk/Study/admissions/admissions-policies.aspx

Examinations: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-policies.aspx; http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/student/exa-special.aspx

Extenuating Circumstances: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/student/rules-and-regulations/std-serv-extenuating-circumstances.aspx

Staff Guide to Supporting Students with Mental Health Difficulties: http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/personaltutor/Supporting_-_Mental_Health_Difficulties.pdf

Appendix: Legal requirements in provision for students with disabilities

70. The legislation, particularly Part 6 of the Equality Act, places obligations on us to change practices or environments in order to remove the disabling effects or barriers to participation in HE encountered by academically qualified people with disabilities. We are under an obligation not to discriminate against students with disabilities by subjecting them to 'less favourable treatment' (direct discrimination) or by applying 'a provision criterion or practice' which is discriminatory in relation to disability (indirect discrimination). It is also contrary to the law to fail to make a reasonable adjustment to policies, procedures, provisions or the physical environment, in order to overcome a disadvantage encountered by a disabled student.

71. We strive to be inclusive and as such welcome suggestions and constructive feedback to further this effort. Suggestions should be addressed to the DAS or the Chair of the Equality and Diversity Committee.

72. Students have the right to appeal or complain should they feel that they have been discriminated against due to their disability. The appeals procedure would apply if a student feels he/she has not had disability sufficiently taken into account in respect of assessment or degree classification. The complaints procedure would apply if either a student feels that reasonable adjustments have not been made or if they feel they have otherwise been discriminated against because of their disability.

73. For further information about the Appeals and Complaints procedures please refer to http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/Complaints_procedure_with_flowchart_(revised_April_2014).pdf; http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-appeal.aspx

74. Our approach is to ensure that matters relating to disability are, as far as practicable and sensible, dealt with under our normal policies and processes. Hence, the University's processes of validation, annual review and periodic review of academic programmes require Schools to consider and report on issues relating to disability.

75. For details of these processes see www.reading.ac.uk/internal/qualitysupport/guide/qual-guidehome.aspx

Competence standards

76. While the Equality Act identifies a general entitlement of students with disabilities to reasonable adjustments, it also permits the application of specific competence standards, which need not be altered, in academic judgements. Competence standards are defined by the Equality Act 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 competency or ability'.

77. Whilst there is no duty to make any adjustment to a competence standard itself, the duty to make reasonable adjustments does apply to the assessment of that standard, that is, to the process of enabling a student to demonstrate that they meet the standard. As a University we may set our own competence standards or we may apply them on behalf of a professional, statutory or regulatory body. We are expected to be able to justify the application of competence standards in academic programmes and we review them to ensure that they are non-discriminatory and proportionate.