

TOOLKIT ON HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Contents - to skip directly to a section of the contents list, press the 'Control' key and click on the section title in the contents table

Toolkit ON HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	1
Introduction.....	2
Who is disabled?.....	2
The Social Model of Disability	3
Recruitment	4
Admission and Induction	4
Induction.....	7
Curriculum Design.....	7
Teaching Sessions	10
[Section on written coursework to be added]	12
Group Work.....	12
Presentations	12
Projects and Dissertations.....	13
Field Trips, Work Placements and Study Abroad.....	14
Laboratory Based and Practical Sessions.....	15
Examinations and Assessments	17
Further Resources:.....	20

Introduction

Every member of the University plays a part in maintaining and enhancing an inclusive environment to ensure that admissions, learning, teaching and assessment practices, in addition to support services, are both wide-ranging and non-discriminatory. The Equality Act 2010 places obligations on public bodies in connection with a range of protected characteristics: one category of student covered by the Act is disabled students. This Guide is designed to assist staff in meeting our obligations to provide the inclusive environment all our students can legitimately expect and which we are legally obliged to provide.

The University approach is to embed inclusive practice into its policies, procedures and curriculum design and also to work in partnership with individual students to tailor its provision to meet specific, individual requirements. This guide aims to help teaching staff to embed inclusivity from the outset meaning that fewer ad hoc adjustments may be needed to tailor the course to meet individual requirements.

The University aims to empower students to achieve their potential, including where this involves challenges and difficulty. However, it must be acknowledged that there are limits and boundaries for certain students and that to push them beyond their abilities would be detrimental. It is important to place the notion of 'disabilities' on a broad spectrum in which learning differences affect the entire student population. Whilst inclusive practices are aimed at creating an environment that caters for all, some cases will require individual assessment to identify where barriers to learning have become insurmountable and counterproductive. In these instances, the Disability Advisory Service will be involved in order to carry out the assessment and make appropriate recommendations.

The level of diversity within disability, as well as within the student body itself, must be recognised – what may work well for one student with Asperger's Syndrome, for example, could present an impossible conundrum for another. In cases where alternative assessment type or other specific recommendations are made by the Disability Advisory Service, these are made on the basis of medical evidence and empirical observation, as objective judgements concerning the students' capacities and welfare. Particularly where disabilities are not immediately visible or obvious, it should be asked whether what is being required of the student may present an impossible situation equivalent to asking a wheelchair user to climb a staircase.

Whilst the level of support in the workplace may not be as tailored or abundant as that provided at University, it must not be assumed that support is simply lacking for students after graduation. Employers are also bound by equality laws and employees can apply for support through Access to Work. It should therefore not be assumed that providing support and reasonable adjustments to students disadvantages or under-prepares them for 'the workplace' – we must question our assumptions about a student's goals subsequent to graduating and investigate what is meant by 'the workplace'.

Who is disabled?

The most widely cited definition in higher education under current legislation is that which is outlined in the Equality Act. The Act identifies a disabled person as someone with,

'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'.

This definition includes students with a wide range of conditions, including those: with physical or mobility difficulties, who are blind or partially sighted, have hearing loss, have debilitating medical conditions such as heart conditions, cancer or HIV, have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD or Asperger's Syndrome or mental health difficulties, including depression and Anxiety Disorder.

Please contact the Disability Advisory Service (DAS) if you have any questions about whether your student is covered by this document, or how support and adjustments can best be provided. In addition, DAS may be able to provide help and support for students who are temporarily incapacitated but not covered by the Act, for example a student with a broken wrist.

The Social Model of Disability

It is now widely acknowledged that the disadvantage and exclusion faced by many disabled people is not an inevitable result of an impairment or health condition but arises from environmental, social and attitudinal barriers and institutional practices. This is known as the social model of disability and provides a basis for the successful implementation of the duty to promote disability equality.

For further information about the University policy in relation to Students with disabilities please refer to <http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/qualitysupport/Studentswithdisabilities.pdf>

Recruitment

Student Recruitment, schools and departments are responsible for ensuring that recruitment activities and publications are accessible to all applicants and pre-applicants, including those with disabilities. Anticipatory adjustments should be made for disabled applicants and prospective applicants in all aspects of recruitment, including marketing materials, open days, campus tours and visits and enquiries.

Example of an anticipatory adjustment

Written materials (including prospectuses and course marketing materials) should state that they are available in alternative formats on request. Having electronic versions of all materials (eg prospectus, departmental publications) ready to send out on demand can meet the needs of many students. Electronic copy can easily be enlarged for students needing large fonts or students with screen-reading software can have their computer read this aloud. Removal of pictures would aid this. This will also make conversion to alternative formats quicker and easier where this is necessary.

Key issues to consider:

Are there any aspects of the activity (e.g. open day) which could preclude or be off-putting to students with certain disabilities? (e.g. background noise which would be difficult for students who are hard of hearing, Autistic Spectrum Disorders or certain mental health difficulties).

Could this be provided in an alternative way for all students?

- If so, are there alternative ways they could participate or get this information?

Admission and Induction

Admissions policy

The University of Reading's Admissions policy outlines our commitment to equality of opportunity. Individuals are selected, developed and otherwise treated on the basis of his or her relevant merits and abilities and are given equal opportunities within the University.

Course Information and Entry Requirements

Course information should be clear and explicit to help inform applicant choice and should indicate that alternative formats are available on request.

Entry requirements must be non-discriminatory and clearly indicate competence standards (see 'Curriculum design' section).

Where interviews are held, all students must be provided with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the programme. For example, a sign language interpreter may need to be provided for a deaf student. Please contact DAS for advice on interpreters and funding.

Disclosure

Where a student has declared their disability on the application form, Admissions staff must input this detail into RISIS, so that the Disability Advisory Service and departmental Disability Representatives can ensure appropriate communications and support are implemented.

Ahead of the Autumn term starting, the Disability Advisory Service uses the information from the Admissions team to make contact with applicants who have declared a disability on their application form. Applicants are sent a questionnaire asking them to provide more details about their disability and previous support received, as well as checking applications have been made for Disabled Students' Allowance and Halls accommodation. Applicants are asked to supply medical evidence and to return a consent to share form, further detailed in 'Confidentiality and consent to share' below.

Not all students declare a disability or medical condition on their application, for varied reasons: some do not consider themselves 'disabled' and do not realise the term applies to them; some are worried that the declaration will count against or stigmatise them; some simply miss the step on the form or complete the application form incorrectly by mistake.

Some students do not have a disability or medical condition at the time of application and are diagnosed at a later stage.

Students may, therefore, disclose to members of staff at induction stage or later, rather than at the application stage or directly to the Disability Advisory Service. Should this be the case, students should be encouraged to disclose disabilities, specific learning difficulties or serious and chronic medical conditions to the Disability Advisory Service, so that appropriate support can be implemented from the outset. However, students should be made aware of their right to confidentiality, further detailed below in 'Confidentiality and consent to share', below.

Confidentiality and consent to share

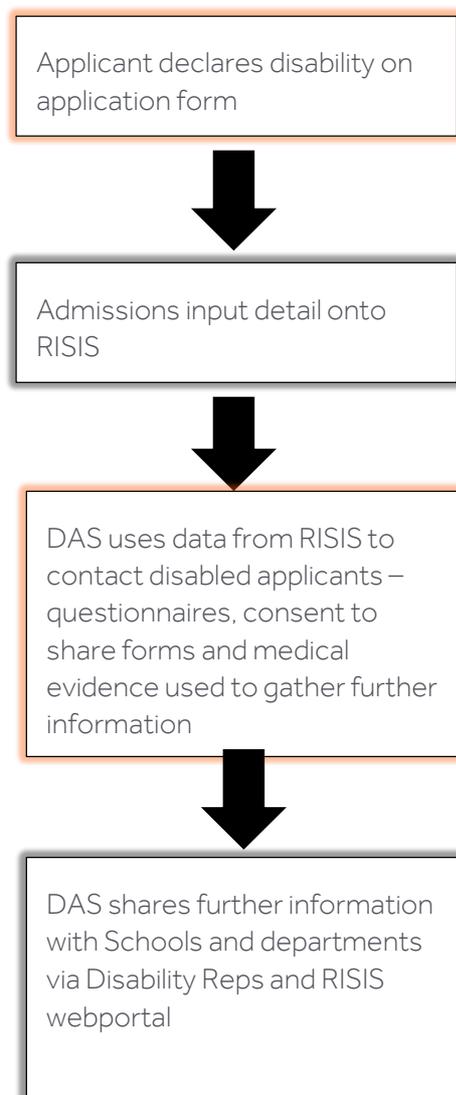
When registering with the Disability Advisory Service, students are asked to complete a consent to share form, indicating whether or not the student grants permission for information to be shared about their disability with relevant members of staff. It also indicates whether or not the student grants consent to share information with parents/guardians. Consent must be explicitly granted in writing before staff can share information about the student's disability – for this reason, if a student discloses a disability to a member of staff, the student should be encouraged to register with DAS/asked for written permission for staff to liaise with DAS on their behalf, rather than a direct referral or query being made about the student by the member of staff to DAS.

As outlined above, at the point of disclosure students should be made aware of their right to confidentiality, and this must be respected if the student requests it. Disclosures made in confidence should be kept in a sealed envelope with 'Only to be opened by ...' (yours and the students name on the outside). The student should sign that they have told you about their disability, but do not want this information passed on, even if this limits support. Forms are available from DAS for such disclosures.

Sharing information

DAS will seek to ensure that students with declared disabilities are aware of support available, appropriate support packages put in place and that all other relevant members of staff are informed (with the student's consent). Once a disclosure has been made and consent to share granted, DAS liaises with school and departmental Disability Representatives (and other departments such as the Exams Office, Accommodation Office etc, as necessary) and updates the RISIS web portal with regard to support needs. Liaison is also achieved through the Community of Practice of Disability Representatives' termly meeting.

Flow of information for disabled applicants



Induction

Induction events should be inclusive and take account of disabled students' requirements.

Students whose disabilities make their transition particularly difficult are welcome to meet with a Disability Adviser before entry, to assist with planning for entry, enrolment and registration in a clear, structured and supportive way. A centralised Induction day for students with disabilities, is provided in the summer, to facilitate this, providing information about funding, provision of support workers and academic writing at university level and students can also meet individually with a Disability Adviser so they can discuss their support in a private and confidential environment. Opportunities for early registration with the University of Reading Medical Practice and early receipt of University Campus Cards may also be available at the Induction Day.

Curriculum Design

Schools and Departments are responsible for ensuring that their programme design provides equality of opportunity for all students to demonstrate achievement of the appropriate learning outcomes. Schools and Departments must anticipate reasonable adjustments and design the course and assessments accordingly. Inclusivity from the outset means that fewer ad hoc adjustments may be needed to tailor the course to meet individual requirements once a student has started the programme. Module and programme validation procedures must consider the accessibility of new modules and programmes and programme specifications must be reviewed regularly to ensure they include no unnecessary barriers to access.

It should be borne in mind that no aspect of curriculum design or course delivery can be considered 'sacred' in the sense that alternative methods for meeting the desired learning outcomes may need to be explored. The learning outcomes themselves must be subject to scrutiny and deconstruction, to ensure that they do not indirectly discriminate against students who, whilst having an aptitude for the course itself, cannot complete certain activities in relation to it.

The conventional lens applied to learning outcomes must be challenged and viewed contextually – for example, the increasing aim to create students fit for the workplace is layered with assumptions and specific ideologies. It must be recognised that embracing a diverse student population means embracing the diverse aims that students bring to their degrees. Whilst many are developing skills needed for the job market, some will not be able to work in any conventional sense after graduating. Some are studying purely for subject knowledge, some are aiming at very specific types of work which are better suited to their particular condition or disability.

Useful further reading on moving away from generic 'employability' skills to consider a more relational approach that takes into account individual dispositions and abilities can be found here: 'Understanding difficulties with generic conceptions of employability'

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/martyn_clark_miriam_zukas_2.pdf

Flexibility

A programme of study which is flexible in its design is likely to be more accessible to more students. Students who work to finance their studies, who have family commitments or problems, who are frequently ill, as well as disabled students, are among those who can benefit from a flexible programme of study.¹

Programme designers must consider the following:

- 1) Is it possible to study a full time programme on a part time basis?
- 2) Is it possible to extend the end-date of a programme of study (or module element)?
- 3) How easy is it to transfer to alternative programmes?
- 4) What scope for choice of modules is there within the programme, and how easy is it to move between these elements?
- 5) What level of flexibility is available with respect to attendance at time-tabled classes (can students be supported by being directed to alternative sources of learning, such as library materials or websites?)
- 6) What flexibility is there with respect to method of delivery? (pedagogies, course materials, placements, field work)
- 7) What flexibility is there with respect to how a student may demonstrate achievement of the course objectives (what forms of assessment have been considered, and on what grounds)?

Justifiable Learning Outcomes and Assessment methods

In order to ensure an inclusive environment and avoid unlawful discrimination, learning outcomes and assessment methods must be justifiable. Programme and module designers need to be precise about what the core objectives of their programme are, so they can assess where adjustments to teaching practices and assessment methods can be introduced. Offering a range of assessment methods from the outset can ensure that students with a particular disability are not unintentionally discriminated against.

Choice for all students often encourages more and deeper engagement; however, it may be that alternative assessment for a particular form of assessment is not necessary, more that support is needed to identify barriers to particular forms of assessment for some students and to enable them to participate. Dialogue with the student is key to this process – a student with severe anxiety may very much wish to present information on a topic but feel an insurmountable anxiety about delivering to a large audience. Delivery by podcast, to a smaller group or to the lecturer is an example of a reasonable adjustment which allows the student to participate in that form of assessment. Departments must incorporate individual adjustments into curriculum design to make the courses themselves more accessible.

The key factor to consider is how to support students to best achieve, and demonstrate their understanding, of the learning outcomes. In extreme cases, an alternative method of assessment to group work, presentations or dissertations may need to be provided where this has been recommended by a Disability Adviser due to a disability making an assessment method impossible for a student with a particular condition, regardless of adjustments.

¹ http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/chapter_2/reflectingonpractice2.html

Information to be provided students

Programme handbooks for students must offer advice on academic and, where appropriate, professional standards. It is particularly important that indications are given of the capacity to make adjustments, and, in the few instances where it is legally justifiable, where adjustments cannot be made (for example, parts of language courses may be exempt from the general policy that dyslexic students will not be penalized for poor spelling and grammar). Course outlines and reading lists must be provided at least four weeks before the start of a course. This provision helps all students, and particularly those whose disabilities make accessing reading materials difficult; those who are blind or have dyslexia or specific learning difficulties for example. Reading lists must also indicate priority and/or relevance (following the Library's guidance on producing effective reading lists will achieve this goal).

Please note that the information above may be subject to change in relation to the implementation of the Student Contract.

Teaching Sessions

You should make simple adaptations to your teaching methods to ensure that students with disabilities are not disadvantaged. If you adapt these into your normal teaching practice, you will provide a more inclusive learning experience for all students and there will be less of a need to adjust your practice for individual students. As such you should adopt the following key principles:

Always face the students when talking to them, and don't stand in front of a bright light – as if you are in shadow it will be difficult for someone who is lip reading

Try to minimize background noise, for students with hearing impairment, and there is appropriate lighting for those who are partially sighted

Try to avoid moving around the class when lecturing

Reserve seating at the front of the lecture theatre when requested for students with visual/hearing impairments, or sensory sensitivities

Provide copies of handouts at least 24 hours (ideally 36 – 48 hours where possible) in advance of lectures – ensure that the print size is at least 14 point.

At the start of term, provide general information on the lecture course, such as reading lists, terminology, key facts

If you have blind or partially sighted students, remember that it takes time for material to be converted to Braille. (It is not always the case that blind or partially sighted students want to make use of braille – ensure the student is consulted about this)

Adopt good practice (detailed below) when producing slides.

Allow appropriate recording of lectures.

Request a change of room if it is not adequate to provide for your disabled students (e.g. physical access and space for students with mobility disabilities, lighting that might prevent or distract disabled students from their learning, lack of hearing loops when required)

On recording

It is university policy that students can audio record lectures, as long as this is for their own purposes - <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/student/OnlineStudentHandbook/> (see 'Recording Lectures') Students with relevant disabilities, as specified in their Assessment for Specific Learning Difficulties or equivalent report, have the right to make a visual recording of lectures or teaching sessions; such students are required to inform the lecturer in advance that they intend to record visually the lecture or teaching session. You should remind all students of these possibilities and encourage them to make use of them. This also creates the opportunity to discuss how to make effective use of the recordings afterwards.

Good tips for lecture slides

Where possible type visual aids in black, in a clear font, at least 24pt – note italics and elaborate fonts may be difficult for students with dyslexia or a vision impairment

Some students find colour useful, others do not. If you use colour ensure they are sufficiently contrasting.

Try not to cram too much information on slides – white space makes it is easier to read for all students

Include new vocabulary on your slides – this will help students with dyslexia or with sensory disabilities. It may be vital for a Deaf student to be told in advance of new words, so they can work out a sign for those words with their interpreter.

It helps students with vision impairment or dyslexia if you read out what is on the slides, but you should do more than just read out your slides!

In addition, give verbal descriptions of diagrams, tables or videos to enable blind or partially sighted students to conceptualize what they cannot see. Diagrams or formulae should also be displayed for as long as possible.

In the Teaching Room

Always face the class when speaking, and stand where you are not in shadow, as that helps students who are lip reading. Universities should be encouraged to provide facilities to allow the lecturer to 'write' whilst facing the audience.

Try to avoid moving around the class as this can be distracting, and can prove difficult for students with hearing difficulties if you move away from a microphone.

Write down any alterations to class times and venues, or assignment due dates, and ensure students with vision and hearing impairments receive such information. There are many students who may not grasp a simple verbal communication, e.g. absent students, hearing impaired students, international students etc.

Remember that it is perfectly acceptable to make a general announcement at the start of term, inviting any students who have a disability to come to talk to you in confidence about specific needs they may have. This will reassure students that you are open to their needs and willing to make accommodations where necessary.

Material in advance

It is good practice to provide material in advance, as that allows all students to prepare for the lecture. For example consider providing provision of handouts or putting slides and handouts on Blackboard at least 24 hours in advance (ideally 36 – 48 hours where possible) as this allows students with a variety of disabilities to access the materials (a blind student could read them with the appropriate software, a partially sighted student could enlarge handouts, a dyspraxic student can make fewer notes, a dyslexic student has the time they need to read the materials). Blind students will need significantly longer if they are to convert handouts to Braille – contact the Disability Advisory Service for advice.

[Section on written coursework to be added]

Group Work

Staff are encouraged to ensure that group work is a positive learning experience for all students. Many students have little experience of working in a group where the outcome formally counts towards their studies, so it is essential to ensure students know what is expected of them in terms of the final produce and also how they are expected to behave in order to achieve this. However, modifications may be necessary to ensure that disabled students are able to benefit from and contribute to group work. For some students, group work may not be a useful learning experience and alternative methods of demonstrating the appropriate learning outcome may need to be provided.

Particular regard should be given to students with Asperger's Syndrome or mental health difficulties, especially in relation to eliminating opportunities for harassment of disabled students. For example, it is particularly important that students with AS are given very clear parameters on expected outcomes and appropriate modes of working. However, this clarity is useful for all students. Clear marking schemes provided in advance, will also help all students. Careful organization of group membership may also be required.

[Link to guidance on running effective group work to be included]

Presentations

Most of us get nervous before giving a presentation, however for some students with disabilities it is impossible for them to give a formal presentation, either because of the severe level of stress it puts them under.

Helpful adjustments for presentations include allowing such students to present to a smaller audience, or just the lecturer; giving a presentation to video or, depending on the disability, just writing or just delivering the presentation.

Where a Disability Adviser recommends alternative arrangements to group work or presentations, an objective judgement has been made based on medical evidence and empirical knowledge based on working with the student over a considerable period of time. Support options to make participation in all course requirements will have been explored and where possible the Disability Adviser works with students to be able to overcome barriers relating to group work and presentations over time. However, in some cases this is not possible due to the extreme and unremitting nature of a student's condition or disability.

Where staff have concerns in relation to students developing skillsets involved in group work and presentations, particularly in relation to preparing to the job market, assumptions need to be questioned – students with disabilities or conditions that make this kind of format unproductive (and sometimes harmful) will not enter jobs that require these skills. Some students are not studying their

degree with a career as the end goal and they should not be indirectly or directly discriminated against due to a mainstream emphasis on particular career development aims.

Projects and Dissertations

A long dissertation or project may be the most challenging piece of work undertaken by a final year student: these are often undertaken across much of the final year. Whilst we wish to encourage independent work here, some support is needed for all students, and more support or allowances is appropriate for students with special needs.

All such projects are done under supervision, and it is important that the student meets the supervisor sufficiently often to ensure the project remains on track.

For students whose disability means they have difficulty in planning their activities, these meetings may need to be more frequent, or supported by a suitable mentor.

As such, it is also important that there is a plan agreed in advance with the supervisor, which details the tasks to be performed and the associated timescale. It is advisable if there are various specific 'deliverables' part way through the project to help keeping to plan.

It is of course noted that during the project it may become apparent that the plan needs modifying, but such modifications should be agreed between the supervisor and student.

Care should be taken as regards allocation of a project to a student with some form of physical impairment, to ensure that the project is feasible for that student, and any special apparatus or software is available. Appropriate discussions should take place between the student and relevant staff to ensure this occurs.

When writing the dissertation / project report, suitable support and guidance should be provided. Again, a plan should be agreed, especially for those with time management difficulties.

Students with dyslexia, for instance, should be encouraged to ask someone to proof read their thesis.

Schools may wish to design in an alternative form or a choice of independent work that will meet the objectives of the final year project/dissertation but remove some of the barriers encountered with the traditional approaches.

See <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/project/rethinking-final-year-projects-and-dissertations-creative-honours-and-capstone-projects> for examples of alternative approaches

Field Trips, Work Placements and Study Abroad

Field trips, work placements and student exchanges should be planned and arranged with the potential and actual requirements of disabled students in mind to ensure that all students have the opportunity to meet the learning outcomes of any placement. Students studying or working abroad as part of their course are also covered by the Equality Act.

Where a field trip, work placement or student exchange poses difficulties for a particular disabled student, consideration of appropriate adjustments to make this a positive learning experience must be made. For example, if a route on a field trip would be difficult for students with mobility difficulties, consider whether the location could be changed so that it is accessible for all students. Other options may include provision of transport, an alternative study location or provision of an assistant or buddy to allow the student to travel at a different pace or have bags and equipment carried for them.

Health and safety assessments should be made for work placements and also for potentially dangerous locations for field trips.

Case study

A partially sighted student was able to fully access the potentially dangerous residential environment of an archaeological dig, by some of the following measures:

- *The use of fluorescent tape around large drops, steps and on tent pegs at the dig, or*
- *The use of a 'buddy'*

Please contact the Disability Advisory Service for assistance with finding workable solutions, or assistants.

Contact the careers service for advice re placements; also see <http://www.reading.ac.uk/managing-placements/>

Where the possibility of reasonable adjustments has been given full consideration and it is simply not possible for a student to participate for reasons relating to their disability, alternative methods of learning and assessment which allow the student to demonstrate their theoretical and technical knowledge, and that they meet the learning outcomes of the programme, should be developed.

Laboratory Based and Practical Sessions

The key principles for these sessions are:

Include disabled students in all activities from the outset

Examine the essential requirements of the course and design activities accordingly

Use different ways of communicating key information about the sessions

Be flexible - no two students are identical, so adapt to student's needs

In advance, discuss with the student their needs, abilities and their experience.

Remember: disabled students are not a health and safety risk per se.

It is good practice to make the subject matter available to all students before the session. This will enable them to prepare for the session – which could prove very useful for disabled students, for instance for those who find time management difficult, but also be beneficial to others.

Case Study

<http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/engage-in-teaching-and-learning/2012/12/19/blackboard-quizzes-to-help-students-to-be-prepared-for-laboratory-practicals-by-dr-richard-mitchell/>

This describes an initiative designed to help all students prepare for laboratory practical by doing an online quiz whose questions are embedded in the lab script, thereby requiring the students to read the script in advance. The study notes the additional benefits of this as regards students with special needs, including dyspraxia and Asperger's Syndrome

For disabled students, it is recommended that you show them around a laboratory prior to the actual session so that they are aware of the types of equipment that is available and the tasks that are to be performed. This should help determine the support that will be needed during the sessions. Feel free to discuss these with the Disability Advisory Service.

There may be adaptive technology that could help.

The student may have a laboratory assistant who, under instruction from the student, will perform tasks that the student cannot execute.

There may be alternative activities, such as computer simulations, which would be more appropriate for the student to do.

Where reports need to be submitted within the practical session, entitlements to extra time in examinations should be taken into account (particularly for students with dyspraxia, manual dexterity difficulties and Asperger's Syndrome). Where possible, space should be timetabled after these sessions to allow for this. Where for timetabling reasons, extra time is not possible within the practical session, alternatives will need to be considered, such as asking the student to return their report the following day.

As with other T&L sessions, for students with visual impairments give full details of visual material, and for those with hearing impairments face the audience, not any board, and don't stand in front of windows or other bright lights.

Ensure instructions are provided in written form, either in handouts or permanently displayed on a white board.

Examinations and Assessments

The University of Reading has well established examination arrangements which aim to facilitate fair outcomes. The Disability Advisory Service and the Examinations office (EO) work collaboratively in order to support disabled students appropriately. Examinations and assessments must provide students with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their academic ability. This may require appropriate adjustments to assessments and examinations without compromising academic standards.

Teaching staff responsible for developing assessment methods must:

- Be clear about the objectives of assessments and use a range of methods of assessing academic ability, providing a choice of method for all students where possible (e.g. group work, essay, video etc). This reduces the need for individual adjustments and allows equality of opportunity for disabled students without the need to disclose their disability.
- Offer an alternative method of assessment where this presents particular barriers for disabled students (whilst maintaining academic standards). See other relevant sections for specific advice (For example 'Group Work and Presentations').
- Consider the best way to ensure that the assessment method will work for all students in order to preclude the need for alternative assessment for certain students, where possible.
- Give feedback on coursework in alternative formats where necessary (e.g. in a word processed document as opposed to hand written) and avoid giving very general feedback (such as stating that a point 'needs developing').
- Consider differential weighting of examinations and coursework. For example, assessing students primarily on examinations where their medical condition means they cannot physically sustain their effort over a year (e.g. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) or primarily on coursework where anxiety levels triggered by examinations substantially affect performance.
- Check carefully the wording of examinations to avoid unnecessary ambiguity, which can cause particular difficulties for students with Asperger's Syndrome or dyslexia. In particular, avoid using double negatives. Make use of peer review of exam questions to help ensure clarity.

In cases where recommendations are made for alternative forms of assessment, the Disability Adviser has made an objective judgement based on medical evidence and empirical knowledge gained from working closely with the student over a period of time. The Disability Advisory Service is aware and fully in support of the need for students to acquire new skills, overcome anxieties and develop themselves in a variety of ways.

Wherever possible, students are supported to meet challenges presented by course requirements, for example where students are affected by severe anxiety in relation to examinations, group work, presentations etc, they are most commonly advised to develop strategies for recognising and managing anxiety with the help of a Counsellor and/or Specialist Mentor. However, in some instances such methods are insufficient to enable a student to adequately undertake a particular form of assessment and it has been deemed unproductive (and sometimes harmful) for the student to be made to participate in this format. A key example would be a student with Asperger's Syndrome who does not conceptualise of themselves in a way which makes writing self-reflective, personalised essays possible (as is the case for Career Management modules embedded within otherwise impersonal science-based subjects).

Academic staff often express concern with regards to students being exempted from certain assessment formats due to this disadvantaging their skillset needed for later life. A key example of this

would be where students are exempted from presentations and staff feel this will disadvantage them in the workplace, where presenting information is often crucial. Staff must question their assumptions in this regard - where a student's disability or condition make presenting material intolerable, they are unlikely to choose a career where this features.

Not all students are able to interact freely with others and although this limits options for work, they can be guided towards roles which play to their natural strengths. Not all students can be leaders or public speakers, nor do they need to be. Some students are not at university in order to gain access to a particular career; not all will be able to work after their degree. They are studying for love of the subject and should not be pressurised to partake in unsuitable assessment formats to develop skills that are not relevant to them.

A wide variety of adjustments to examinations will be made, as required. The following is an indicative, but far from exhaustive list of adjustments which may be applied. Application of these adjustments will depend upon individual circumstances.

- Differential marking arrangements. For example, not penalising dyslexic students for poor spelling and grammar. There may be exceptions where this would compromise academic integrity, for example language courses where spelling and grammar are the very things being tested, but these are justified and warnings in course publicity given.
- Extra time will be provided for a range of students with disabilities automatically in exams and in-class tests. For example, students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD or Asperger's Syndrome are usually permitted 25% extra time. A blind student may be allowed up to 100% extra time. Please note that extra time to complete coursework is not granted automatically and must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis as part of the Extenuating Circumstances process.
- Separate rooms or rooms accommodating fewer people may be provided for certain students; for example, those students with anxiety disorders or particular medical conditions who need rest breaks
- Amanuenses can be provided for students whose disability makes it difficult for them to write their own examination scripts
- A computer may be provided for some students, if appropriate – for example students who are blind or have dyspraxia
- Alternative formats can be provided for examination papers or students may be able to take their examinations on a computer with appropriate software
- Timings of examinations may be arranged to avoid undue disadvantage. For example, ensuring examinations for a student with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome are not taken on consecutive days or that examinations take place only in the afternoon
- Replacement of an examination with a piece of equally challenging coursework that cover the same learning outcomes as the examination

Please contact the Disability Advisory Service for further guidance on what may be done to facilitate equality of opportunity for disabled students.

Marking

Follow the guidance provided on stickers, attached to coursework and examinations, that indicate Specific Learning Difficulties and do not penalise for poor spelling, grammar and syntax (except where these are defined as competence standards for the module or programme).

Mark primarily for content, ideas and critical thinking without penalising for weaknesses of expression, spelling and grammatical errors unless the latter are defined as competence standards (such weaknesses should not be disregarded where expression is so poor that coherence and intelligibility are an issue).

If a student is assessed as having a Specific Learning Difficulty in the course of their programme of study, assessed coursework and examinations undertaken prior to the assessment must be re-marked according to the guidance not to penalise for poor spelling, grammar and syntax. Once the work has been re-marked the student should be informed of any emendations to the original marks.

In line with the guidance above, Schools and Departments should consider adopting the following procedure (piloted by English Literature):

If marking a piece of coursework or an examination script that does not bear a sticker indicating Specific Learning Difficulties and applying a penalty to that work for poor spelling, grammar, syntax or structure, a 'default' mark should be lodged separately with the relevant examinations officer. (This 'default' mark should not be written on scripts or alluded to in feedback to the student). The purpose of the 'default' mark is for the examination officer's reference and allows him/her to amend the mark given to the piece of work if the student is assessed as having a Specific Learning Difficulty at a later date. Once any 'default' marks have been recorded in place of the original marks, the student who has been assessed as having a SpLD part-way through their degree programme should then be informed of any emendations to his/her marks. This procedure avoids the requirement to have a student's work re-marked in the light of an assessment of SpLD.

'Default' marks do not apply where spelling, grammar and syntax are defined as competence standards for a module's assessment.

Further Resources:

The Teachability website hosted by University of Strathclyde: <http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/>

This site provides useful guidance and prompts on how to making teaching and assessment accessible to all students

The DIY Toolkit for alternative and inclusive assessment practices produced by the Higher Education Academy: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/3182>

See also the documents on Inclusive Curriculum Design produced by the HEA (with subject specific documents):

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/inclusion/Disability/Inclusive_curriculum_design_in_higher_education

The University of Nottingham provides a helpful site of Staff Perspectives on Inclusive Practice from across the University, see: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/pesl/resources/disability/>

Also available via the University of Nottingham, see Margaret Herrington (ed.), with Dawn Simpson, 'Making Reasonable Adjustments with Disabled Students in Higher Education -- Staff Development Materials: case studies and exercises', University of Nottingham, June 2002:

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/documents/makingreasonableadjustments.pdf>

Phil, Gravestock 'Developing an Inclusive Curriculum: A Guide for Lecturers', University of Gloucestershire, 2006 (written with a focus on Geography, but with much that is useful across discipline/subject areas): <http://www2.qlos.ac.uk/qdn/icp/ilecturer.pdf>

Strategies for Creating Inclusive Programmes of Study - <http://www.scips.worc.ac.uk/>

'Understanding difficulties with generic conceptions of employability'

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/martyn_clark_miriam_zukas_2.pdf

General information regarding equality can be found on the following websites

Human Resources website

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/policiesandprocedures/humres-policiesequality.aspx>

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC): www.equalityhumanrights.com

The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU): <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/>

The Equality Act 2010 can be found at : <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Quality Assurance Agency UK Quality Code for Higher Education: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code>

