

SECTION 7: EXAMINATION AND ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS

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7.1 THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL DISABILITY REPRESENTATIVE (SDR)

- 7.1.1 It is the responsibility of School Disability Representatives (SDRs) to ensure that information concerning a student's special needs reaches the necessary individuals and central services, including the student's Academic Tutor, relevant teaching staff, the Disability Advisory Service, the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office, and SDRs in other Schools if the student is taking modules from more than one School.
- 7.1.2 Students who suspect that they may have specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia) should always be referred to the Disability Advisory Service (please see section 7.2.10-7.2.12 below).

7.2 SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS IN WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

- 7.2.1 Students who have been assessed as having specific learning difficulties may apply for special arrangements in examinations. Similarly, special arrangements may be made for students who are ill at the time of their examinations, who have a disability, or who, for good reason, are unable to sit an examination at the specified time.

Setting up special arrangements in examinations

- 7.2.2 The Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office will receive recommendations for special examination arrangements from the Disability Advisory Service or Counselling Service for those students who have registered with a disability other than a specific learning difficulty. Students who have registered with a specific learning difficulty are dealt with separately – please see section 7.2.10-7.2.12 below. The Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office will also contact SDRs and students to check cases where students have registered with a disability but do not have special arrangements in place. If special arrangements are required, the details are added to the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office special arrangements database and the arrangements are implemented for all of the student's centrally-timetabled examinations. The arrangements will normally remain in place for the duration of the student's period of study.
- 7.2.3 In some cases, a student's Academic Tutor or SDR may feel that the student would be best served by sitting examinations within the School. Such a recommendation may also come from the Disability Advisory Service, Counselling Service or University Study Advisers. In such circumstances, the School will normally be responsible for arranging an invigilator and a suitable venue. The Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office will provide the School with the necessary examination materials, including question papers and answer books.
- 7.2.4 Where a student has not registered with the University as having a disability but feels that they may require special arrangements in examinations, they will normally discuss their concerns with their Academic Tutor or SDR in the first instance. In dealing with these concerns, the Academic Tutor / SDR should seek appropriate advice from relevant medical, counselling, academic or administrative staff. If special examination arrangements are required, the SDR should contact the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office to request that appropriate arrangements be made. Students should provide appropriate medical evidence

(e.g. GP's letter or DSA Assessment). It is vital that such arrangements are requested as early in the Session as possible, especially if the student's needs are complex.

Special Examination Arrangements

7.2.5 All students for whom special examination arrangements are to be made will receive, in addition to their examination timetable, a letter or email giving details of their specific arrangements (provided the arrangements are not 'emergency' arrangements made at the last minute). Students are made aware that the timetable states standard finishing times and does not include extra time.

Students who are ill

- 7.2.6 Students with ongoing medical conditions or physical disabilities may be able, by prior arrangement with the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office, to sit their examinations in an alternative special arrangements venue. Arrangements will be made on an individual basis, and students will need to provide medical evidence of their condition before being allocated a place in one of the special arrangements venues.
- 7.2.7 Again, a student's Academic Tutor or SDR may feel that the student would be best served by sitting examinations within the School. In such circumstances the School will normally be responsible for arranging an invigilator and a suitable venue. The Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office will provide the School with the necessary examination materials, including question papers and answer books.
- 7.2.8 If a student is taken ill on the day of an examination they should be advised to seek medical help. The student should also contact the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office, as it may be possible for arrangements to be made for the student to sit their examination later the same day in one of the special arrangements venues.

Students who have specific learning difficulties

- 7.2.9 Students who have, or who think they may have, specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia) may apply for special examination arrangements via one of the following routes:
- *If the student has already been diagnosed with specific learning difficulties*, they should provide the Disability Advisory Service in the Carrington Building with a copy of a full diagnostic assessment report by an educational psychologist or person of similar professional standing. This report will then be forwarded to the University's Specialist Teacher Assessor, who will either (a) make recommendations based upon it; or (b) screen the student to assess the risk of a formal SpLD (most commonly where the report does not contain sufficient information).
 - Old (pre-16) **full diagnostic assessments** may give enough evidence to recommend University-based reasonable adjustments.
 - Exam Access Arrangements Reports are insufficient for University adjustments because they are not evidence of disability.
 - *If the student has not been assessed for specific learning difficulties*, they should be advised to contact the Disability Advisory Service to request an initial screening form. It is important that the student does this as early in the Session as possible, as appointments may not be available in the immediate run-up to the examinations.
- 7.2.10 The University's Specialist Teacher Assessor will then write to the SDR, Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office and Disability Office giving details of their recommendations. Where special examination arrangements are recommended, these will be implemented automatically unless approval has been granted by both the School Director of Teaching and

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Learning and the Teaching and Learning Dean for the recommendations to be disregarded (please see section 7.5 below).

- 7.2.11 The most frequent recommendations made for students who have been diagnosed with specific learning difficulties include:
- Extra time in which to complete examinations (most commonly 10 or 15 minutes extra per hour);
 - No penalties to be given for poor spelling, grammar or sentence structure in examinations and in coursework.
- 7.2.12 Students for whom such recommendations have been made will normally sit their examinations in a venue designated for students who receive extra time. If they are not to be penalised for poor spelling, grammar or sentence structure they will be given coloured labels indicating this to attach to the front of each answer book (please see section 7.3 below for details of special coursework arrangements for students with specific learning difficulties).

Students who have physical difficulties

- 7.2.13 Students with physical difficulties may be able, at the request of the SDR, to sit their examinations in an alternative venue where the need to rest, stretch or walk around can be accommodated. Individual arrangements will be made for students who use wheelchairs, or for students who have particularly complex needs.

Students who require the use of a computer in examinations

- 7.2.14 The Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office has a dedicated computer room for use by students who either due to physical or specific learning difficulties are unable to write their examination answers by hand. The computers used are standard University PCs, which are isolated from the network to prevent access to emails or the internet. Printing facilities are provided free of charge.

Students who require the use of an amanuensis in examinations

- 7.2.15 Students who are unable either to write by hand or type their answers may request the use of an amanuensis (scribe) in examinations. As a student using an amanuensis needs to be accommodated in a separate room, it is usually necessary for the School to provide a suitable venue.
- 7.2.16 In addition, the School is usually asked to nominate a suitable individual (most frequently a reliable postgraduate) to act as the amanuensis, especially where the examination requires the use of specialist or technical terminology. The Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office will, however, pay for the amanuensis for all centrally-timetabled examinations and will also provide the necessary examination materials.

Students who suffer from severe exam anxiety / stress

- 7.2.17 The vast majority of students suffer some degree of anxiety during examinations, and anxiety / stress as such will not normally constitute grounds for special arrangements to be made. However, students who suffer severe exam anxiety / stress and / or panic attacks may be able to sit their examinations in an alternative venue by arrangement with the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office. As space is limited only the most serious cases can be accommodated.

Students who cannot sit examinations on a specific day

- 7.2.18 Where a student is unable to sit examinations on a specific day or during a specific period, the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office should be notified as early in the Session as possible. The Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office will endeavour to take such requirements into account during the timetabling process, but it should be recognised that this is not always feasible.
- 7.2.19 If it has not been possible for the student's requirements to be taken into account (or if the student has only realised after the timetable has been produced that they are unable to sit an examination at a particular time, e.g. because they have to attend a family funeral), then it may be possible for the student to sit the examination earlier or later than scheduled. However, it will not normally be possible to move the examination to a different day. Arrangements are made on an individual basis, but will involve the student sitting in an alternative venue and being held in a period of academic isolation. It should be noted, however, that in this situation it may be more appropriate for a student to submit an Extenuating Circumstances Form and ask to be 'deemed not to have sat' for a particular paper.
- 7.2.20 Alternatively, a School may in certain circumstances set a special paper for the student concerned. The Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office will normally be able to arrange for the student to take the alternative paper at a suitable time.

Students who cannot sit papers of more than three hours duration per day

- 7.2.21 Where a student is unable to sit papers of more than three hours duration per day, the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office should be notified as early in the Session as possible, so that this information can be incorporated into the examination timetable. Students in this position will typically be those who need a large amount of extra time in which to complete their papers (e.g. where an examination, due to the student's extra time allowance, extends to four hours or longer), or those who suffer from severe fatigue. If it is not possible for this information to be incorporated into the examination timetable, a School may be asked to set a special paper for the student concerned, which the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office can arrange for them to take at a suitable time.

7.3 SPECIAL COURSEWORK ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES OR OTHER DISORDERS OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

- 7.3.1 In addition to making recommendations concerning examinations for students with specific learning difficulties, the University's Specialist Teacher Assessor or Disability Advisors may also recommend that such students should not be penalised for poor spelling, grammar or sentence structure in coursework. The Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office will provide SDRs with coloured labels detailing the Disability Office's recommendations, which students should be asked to attach to all pieces of coursework they submit.
- 7.3.2 From September 2015, the normal process for submitting coursework will be online. Students will be emailed a personalised green e-Sticker by the Examinations, Student Records and Graduation Office early in the autumn term. They should paste the e-sticker into their electronic coursework before they submit it online. Guidance for students about this process is published here: <http://bit.ly/uorgreenstickers>.

- 7.3.3 In addition, for coursework produced under conditions of strict time limitations (such as practical reports), students with specific learning difficulties should be given the same amount of extra time as they would be entitled to in examinations.

7.4 SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR IN-CLASS TESTS

- 7.4.1 Where in-class tests (administered locally by Schools/Departments) form part of the summative assessment for a programme, the School/Department is responsible for ensuring that students with special needs benefit from any special arrangements which have been agreed for University examinations. For example, students with specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia) should be given the same amount of extra time in an in-class test as they would be entitled to in a University examination.

7.5 ACADEMIC GROUNDS FOR DISREGARDING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDY ADVISERS

- 7.5.1 It is assumed that the recommendations made by the University's Specialist Teacher Assessor in respect of examinations and coursework for students with specific learning difficulties will be implemented automatically – Academic Tutors are not required to approve recommendations made for their students.
- 7.5.2 Waiving of the recommendations will only be permitted on clear academic grounds, and then only with the approval of both the School Director of Teaching and Learning and the Teaching and Learning Dean. Such grounds may include modules that specifically test spelling, grammar or sentence structure (e.g. in the Department of Modern Languages and European Studies), or modules where technical and specialist language are an integral part of the subject.

7.6 RETROSPECTIVE ALLOWANCE IN EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS DIAGNOSED WITH A DISABILITY DURING THEIR PROGRAMME OF STUDY

- 7.6.1 For information on Retrospective allowance in examinations and assessment for students diagnosed with a disability during their programme of study, please see: <https://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/student/exa-RetroAllowance.aspx> and, for the full policy: <https://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/exams/Retro-allowance-policy.pdf>.