

Additional Learning Support (ALS) requirements in Assessments Policy and Procedures

Purpose:

This document sets out the policy and procedures for learners requiring additional learning support due to a declared disability. It also addresses arrangements for learners seeking temporary support because of accident or injury, and for learners in pregnancy. The document sets out the relationship between approved ALS arrangements (whether permanent or temporary) and applications for exceptional personal circumstances to be taken into consideration.

Changes to policy included in this version:

- This policy makes provision for learners to arrange ALS up to six weeks before any assessment period in the academic calendar, replacing a single cut-off point in the year.

Policy Statement

1. The University is committed to providing additional support for learners who have been assessed as needing extra support or resources in order to help them achieve their learning aims, including where this necessitates additional support or adjustments for assessments. We are always mindful of our legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.
2. We will also use our best endeavors to provide additional support in instances where a learner requires temporary adjustments to assessment arrangements as a result of temporary injury, to enable learners who are able to do so to take an assessment at the scheduled time.
3. In determining reasonable adjustments, we will take account of what constitutes a Competence Standard (Ref: Equality Act 2010: Technical Guidance Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)), as reasonable adjustments cannot be applied to such standards (only to the assessment of them). For further information please refer to Appendix 1.
4. If you require this document in a different format, please contact Registry.
5. All information collected under the requirements of this policy/procedure will be processed in accordance with the Student Privacy Notice. Unless you tell us otherwise, we will share this information with others within the University only for the purposes of arranging assessment(s) with agreed adjustments in place.

Additional Learning Support

6. Learners declaring a disability or specific learning difficulty (including dyslexia) will need to provide relevant evidence or arrange an initial screening via Student Services. A written report will be produced and, where a disability or specific learning difficulty is confirmed as a result of this process, this will document the disability and suggested adjustments for each learner. An Occupational Health Practitioner may be consulted to advise on reasonable adjustments as required, and students may be referred to the Support to Study or Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedure if no reasonable adjustments can be made without compromising professional, statutory and regulatory body competencies or proficiencies. Steps may be taken to introduce reasonable adjustments whilst evidence is sought, and these may be reviewed once evidence is received.
7. ALS requirements necessitating adjustments to examinations (additional time, readers, scribes, etc.) must be defined and agreed **at least 6 weeks ahead of any formal assessment period** so

that the necessary support can be put in place. Where ALS reports are received after this deadline every effort will be made to accommodate the required adjustments. but this may not always be possible. If learners come forward after this deadline, and where adjustments cannot be accommodated, this should be taken forward as Exceptional Personal Circumstances for consideration at the Exceptional Personal Circumstance Boards.

8. Registry is responsible for making the arrangements for additional requirements, in consultation with Course Leaders, Student Services and other relevant staff, for example Estates should room requirements need to be taken into consideration and IT should specific computer equipment and set-up be needed. Student Services can offer advice as to how adjustments might be facilitated, however learners should note that some adjustments may be considered unreasonable and the final decision of what is reasonable or not will be made through liaison with Registry and academic colleagues.
9. Where assessment takes place by means of in-class tests outside the main exam periods learners with ALS requirements will need to be accommodated as required and the Unit Leader should liaise with Registry to ensure the necessary arrangements are in place.

Link with exceptional personal circumstances

10. Learners with declared disabilities for whom additional learning support arrangements have been put into place may not submit applications for Exceptional Personal Circumstances in relation to assessment in respect of the disability for which the adjustments have been made unless the learner has evidence that:
 - (i) any circumstances affected them over and above the special arrangements already made during assessments;
 - (ii) the arrangements put in place did not fully compensate for their condition, *or*
 - (iii) there was a sudden or unexpected deterioration of the known condition for which the adjustments already in place were not sufficient to compensate;
 - (iv) there has been a late diagnosis of a disability or other requirement for additional learning support.

Temporary adjustments

11. If, as a result of unforeseen circumstances, learners have a temporary injury necessitating an examination adjustment they should notify Registry as soon as possible, and normally at least three working days before the first affected examination, using the [Temporary Assessment ALS Request Form](#). All requests must be accompanied by appropriate medical evidence, submitted in English (officially translated, where applicable – please see the definition included on the Temporary Assessment ALS Request Form).
12. Staff shall do their best to accommodate requests made at short notice but it is not possible to guarantee that they will be met, and if a temporary injury is very last minute it may be more appropriate for the situation to be addressed by means of an examination postponement or through an application for Exceptional Personal Circumstances, as applicable.
13. For support in examinations Registry will discuss the learner's needs with Student Services and the relevant Course Leader, to identify whether appropriate adjustments can be accommodated.
14. For written coursework, temporary injuries will usually be addressed by means of an extension to coursework deadlines as covered by the Exceptional Personal Circumstances Policy.

Link with exceptional personal circumstances

15. Learners for whom temporary examination adjustments have been put into place may not submit applications for Exceptional Personal Circumstances in relation to the same temporary injury for which the adjustments have been made unless the learner has evidence that:

- (i) any circumstances affected them over and above the special arrangements already made during Assessments;
- (ii) the arrangements put in place did not fully compensate for their injury, *or*
- (iii) there was a sudden or unexpected deterioration of the injury, for which the adjustments already put into place were not sufficient to compensate.

Pregnancy

16. Learners who are pregnant and who wish to request examination adjustments should contact Registry and provide relevant evidence.
17. In examinations, pregnant learners may require rest breaks and may need to visit the toilet more frequently than those who are not pregnant. They may also require a more comfortable and supportive chair. In such cases, learners may need to sit the examination in a location separate from other learners. In some cases, and where this can be done without compromising academic standards and the demonstration of competences, alternative methods of assessment may be appropriate and should be explored in discussion with Registry.
18. Normally learners are expected to take their pregnancy into account when preparing coursework or preparing for exams so an application for Exceptional Personal Circumstances would not normally be appropriate. However, if there are complications with the pregnancy or the learner's health deteriorates such that their academic performance is affected then an application may be considered, in line with the Exceptional Personal Circumstances Policy. Similarly, if a learner is unable to undertake an alternative method of assessment, or if they experience significant pregnancy-related problems in the course of an examination this should be considered under the Exceptional Personal Circumstances Policy.
19. For coursework assessments it will normally be appropriate to address issues by means of an extension to coursework deadlines.

SpLD / Dyslexia Marking guidelines

20. Learners entitled to ALS marking must indicate this on their Turnitin submission at the top of the page. Similarly, for written exams, Registry will indicate on the front page of the exam paper and within relevant unit mark spreadsheets. Markers should ensure that the ALS Marking Guidelines are applied only in these cases.
21. HSU SpLD/Dyslexia Marking Guidelines should be used by markers when marking timed assessments submitted by a deaf or hearing impaired student, a student with dyslexia, dyspraxia, semantic pragmatic disorder, acquired dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) whose disability affects language processing and written academic English. These guidelines are available in Appendix 2.

Related documents

- Exceptional Personal Circumstances policy
- Student Privacy Notice
- Assessment Regulations.

Version:	2.2
Approved by:	Academic Board
Originator/Author	Deputy Academic Registrar
Policy Owner	Academic Registrar
Reference/ source	Internal. Equivalent policies at other HEIs
Date approved	26 July 2024
Effective from	August 2024
Review date	2025/26
Target	All students and apprentices, all academic staff, Registry staff
Policy location	Public website. Internal
Equality analysis	The policy is specifically intended to formalise arrangements for students requiring additional learning support/reasonable adjustments due to a declared disability, as such it has a direct positive impact.

Appendix 1: Extract from the Equality and Human Rights Commission: **GUIDANCE**

Equality Act 2010

Technical Guidance on Further and Higher Education

This Technical Guidance applies to the provisions in the Equality Act 2010 that were commenced on 1 October 2010.

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Competence standards

What is a competence standard?

- 7.33 The Act defines a 'competence standard' as an academic, medical, or other standard applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability. [Sch13, para 4\(3\)](#)
- 7.34 Education providers are likely to impose various requirements and conditions in respect of courses. However, any such requirement or condition only amounts to a competence standard if its purpose is to demonstrate a particular level of a relevant competence or ability such as a requirement that a person has a particular level of relevant knowledge of a subject.
- Example: The admissions criteria for a course in choreography include a requirement to demonstrate 'a high level of physical fitness'. The course itself, however, is predominately theory-based and does not involve any strenuous physical activity. This is unlikely to be a competence standard**
- Example: The requirement for students studying for a law degree to demonstrate a particular standard of knowledge of certain areas of law in order to obtain the degree is a competence standard**
- 7.35 On the other hand, a condition that a person can, for example, do something within a certain period of time will not be a competence standard if it does not determine a particular level of competence or ability.
- Example: A requirement that a person completes a test in a certain time period is not a competence standard unless the competence being tested is the ability to do something within a limited time period.**

Competence standards and assessment process

7.36 Sometimes the process of assessing whether a competence standard has been achieved is inextricably linked to the standard itself. The passing of an assessment may be conditional upon having a practical skill or ability which must be demonstrated by completing a practical test. Therefore, in relatively rare circumstances, the ability to take the test may itself amount to a competence standard.

Example: An assessment for a practical course in car maintenance cannot be done solely as a written test, because the purpose of the test is to ascertain whether someone can complete car repairs.

What is the significance of this distinction?

7.37 A provision, criterion or practice does not include the application of a competence standard. Therefore the duty to make reasonable adjustments does not include a duty to make reasonable adjustments to the application of a competence standard.

7.38 Although there is no duty to make reasonable adjustments to the application of a competence standard, such a duty does apply to the process by which competence is assessed. So although an education provider has no duty to alter a competence standard, it needs to consider whether or not a reasonable adjustment could be made to some aspect of the process by which it assesses a competence standard.

Example: When assessing the competence standard of a person's ability to read French it would be a reasonable adjustment to provide a visually impaired student with text in large font (if that was the adjustment the student required).

Example: A law student has severe arthritis in her hands. When assessing her level of knowledge, it might be a reasonable adjustment to provide an oral exam or viva instead of a timed handwritten exam. However, there may be an overlap between a competence standard and any process by which an individual is assessed against that standard

Example: A woman taking a written test for a qualification in office administration asks the education provider for extra time for the test because she has dyslexia. This is likely to be a reasonable adjustment for the education provider to make. She also asks if she can leave out the questions asking her to write a business letter and to précis a document, because she feels that these questions would substantially disadvantage her because of her dyslexia. The education provider would not have to make this adjustment because these questions are there to determine her competence at writing and précising, so are part of the competence standard being tested

Appendix Two- SpLD/Dyslexia (formerly ALS) marking guidelines: adjustments for marking

Purpose

This document sets out guidelines for consideration when marking timed assessments submitted by a deaf or hearing impaired student, a student with dyslexia, dyspraxia, semantic pragmatic disorder, acquired dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) whose disability affects language processing and written academic English.

Definitions and context

1. The Equality Act 2010 requires reasonable adjustments to be made by institutions to alleviate or remove the effects of 'substantial disadvantage'. This may mean doing things differently if the usual way would substantially disadvantage a disabled person. Marking guidelines is one example of such a reasonable adjustment.

2. The British Dyslexia Society explains that:

'Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs), affect the way information is learned and processed. They are neurological (rather than psychological), usually run in families and occur independently of intelligence. They can have significant impact on education and learning and on the acquisition of literacy skills.'

SpLD is an umbrella term used to cover a range of frequently co-occurring difficulties, more commonly:

- [Dyslexia](#)
- [Dyspraxia / Developmental Co-ordination Disorder \(DCD\)](#)
- [Dyscalculia](#)
- Attention Deficit Disorder ([ADD](#)) / [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder \(ADHD\)](#)

SpLDs can also co-occur with difficulties on the autistic spectrum such as Asperger Syndrome.

Some common characteristics of SpLDs:

- Memory difficulties.
- Organisational difficulties.
- Writing difficulties.
- Visual processing difficulties.
- Reading difficulties.
- Auditory processing difficulties.
- Time management difficulties.
- Sensory distraction: an inability to screen out extraneous visual or auditory stimuli.
- Sensory overload: a heightened sensitivity to visual stimuli and sound; an inability to cope with busy environments.¹

3. Some students who have experienced brain injuries can develop a form of acquired dyslexia whereby the injury affects cognitive processes and these could manifest in some of the ways described above.

4. Whilst some SpLD students have verbal strengths and can do well in oral assessments or presentations, there are those with spoken language difficulties who have problems with word retrieval, long hesitations, mispronunciations and speaking in incomplete sentences. They could also experience difficulties in sequential ordering of ideas for a presentation in exactly the same way as with their written work.

5. All work from students with a SpLD should be marked according to the specified learning outcomes. The expected achievements and learning outcomes should be made clear to all students, regardless of whether they have a SpLD.

6. It is not intended that these guidelines should conflict with assessment criteria. If the assessment

¹ British Dyslexia Website <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/educator/what-are-specific-learning-difficulties> accessed 22.01.19

criteria for an examination or presentation include the standard of written or spoken English achieved, then to ensure that the intended learning outcomes have been demonstrated those criteria should be applied. However, as a reasonable adjustment, it must be considered whether an alternative method of assessment should be used to determine the student's knowledge of the subject material.

7. These guidelines should not compromise competence standards, or academic judgements on them, where there may be professional standards and expectations relating to written expression and oral communication. There is no requirement to make reasonable adjustments to a competence standard. However, the way in which competency standards are assessed may be differentiated in order to make appropriate reasonable adjustments (**see Appendix 1**).
8. These adjustments do not apply for group projects when it will be expected that component members of the group will engage with each other and work to their strengths. However, if there is an individual written assessment within a timed group project then the marking guidelines *do* apply.

Reading a student's work:

9. Difficulties with the written word may show up much more clearly in exams than in coursework as students may be unable to spot any errors of grammar or spelling, and examination pressure may exacerbate problems, even with an allowance of extra time. Therefore
 - Read for content - take time to unravel meaning. This may involve some re-reading where spelling, punctuation and grammar are awkward.
 - Accept that the script may be awkward to read, and thus avoid irritation.
 - Focus on the student's knowledge, understanding and ideas.
 - Ignore any grammar, punctuation or spelling mistakes.
 - Try to look beyond the student's language-based mistakes in the text - take time to identify an idea, or piece of information, that might crop up out of sequence.
 - Do not actively penalise the student for language-based errors, only competency-based ones.

Oral presentations:

10. Some students with SpLD also experience spoken language difficulties (see para 4). Therefore:
 - Consider the presentation environment to reduce distractions and stress.
 - Mark for content rather than performance.
 - Ignore similar difficulties apparent in the presentation of written work, such as organisation and sequencing.
 - Take account of difficulties reading out loud from notes.
 - Questions should be presented clearly and repeated where necessary, if they are part of the process.

Giving Feedback

11. Some students will not be able to see their own errors in print and believe that what they have written is correct; therefore, the nature of feedback is important. Constructive feedback will be of greater benefit for reflection and future learning than negative feedback, which can be difficult to understand. Guidance on giving feedback is available in the **Feedback on Assessments Policy**.

Reference sources

Bournemouth University: SpID/Dyslexia Marking Guidelines - Chris Scholes, Additional Learning and Disability Support (ALS) 2016-2017

University of Bangor Guidelines for marking and feedback for students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs), Compiled by Dr Jane Jones Student Service and Tutor Co-ordinator February 2014, http://dyslexia.bangor.ac.uk/documents/Marking_guidelines_English.pdf (accessed 22.01.19)