**University of Chichester**

**Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS)**

**Acceptance of Evidence and Criteria for Adjustments to time-limited written examinations (including written in-class tests) for students with disabilities, health conditions, mental health issues and Specific Learning Difficulties**

**Summary:**

* There is a deadline each semester for processing exam adjustments. The deadline dates are advertised by Academic Registry during the semester. Applications for adjustments can only be processed once agreed between the student and the relevant Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS) Advisor, or Mental Health Advisor, before the deadline. Students must make an appointment with a DDS Advisor, or, in the case of a mental health condition, the Mental Health Advisor, before commencing the course or as soon as possible after starting.
* It is the student’s responsibility to provide a full diagnostic assessment report, or recent relevant medical evidence, as requested by the University. Any financial costs involved in securing such evidence remain the responsibility of the student. If evidence is held by a third party e.g. school or college, it is the responsibility of the student to recover the documents.
* Deadlines for application for exam adjustments need to be adhered to.
* Acceptance of a diagnostic report or recommendations made therein, including for examination adjustments, are at the discretion of the DDS Advisor, or Mental Health Advisor, as appropriate.
* Where there is a query over a recommendation for exam adjustments, it may be necessary to ask for supplementary tests to be carried out. Any financial costs involved remain the responsibility of the student.
* All evidence should be provided by an appropriately qualified medical practitioner or psychologist or appropriately qualified specialist teacher.
* The DDS has the right to deny examination adjustments where the appropriate evidence has not been provided or when the appropriate published deadline has not been met.
* Eligibility for adjustments over and above the usual adjustments given will be considered on an individual basis by the DDS. Where there are professional practice concerns, the relevant Academic Department will be consulted before a final decision is made.
* Agreed recommended exam adjustments will be noted on the Student Additional Requirements Agreement (SARA) by the DDS or Mental Health Advisor, and forwarded to the Assessment Office and Academic Department for implementation. Where a student has missed the deadline for adjustments, the student will be advised to claim Mitigating Circumstances.

**Part 1. - Advisory Guidelines for Acceptance of Assessments of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) Dyslexia, Dyspraxia etc.)**

**Section 1.1 - UK Assessment Reports, post-16**

* The University recognises that it is good practice to promote the quality of assessments of SpLDs and that UK assessments must conform to the standards and the recommendations of the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES: Guidelines on the Assessment of Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia and Attention Deficit

Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD) in Higher Education (the latest revised version), for both qualified psychologists and specialist teachers. See; <http://www.sasc.org.uk/SASC_Default.aspx?id=2>

* Assessment must normally have taken place when the student was aged 16 years or over. Assessments carried out before the age of 16 may be accepted; please see point 1.2 below for more information.
* An assessment of a SpLD should normally be a report based on a full diagnostic assessment (excepting where the condition is also a medical condition, see below).
* Assessments for ‘Access Arrangements for Examinations’ for GCSE, A Level or equivalent will not be accepted for University examination adjustments. ‘Top up’ assessments are not acceptable.
* UK assessors are expected to have an approved qualification either as;
  1. An educational/chartered psychologist and be listed on the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC). This can be found at:

<http://www.hpc-uk.org/>

**Or as**

* 1. A specialist teacher listed on the SASC website with full membership of an appropriate professional body, together with a current Assessment Practising Certificate (APC) and a certification number. This list can be found at:

<http://www.sasc.org.uk/Assessors.aspx>

* An assessment must use the appropriate adult tests according to the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines (and its subsequent updates).
  1. Wherever possible, these tests should be standardised on the adult population with clear evidence of validity and reliability
  2. The core components of the assessment report should follow the preformat as set out in the DfE’s Guidelines (and its subsequent updates)
  3. Areas investigated should include:
     1. Attainments in literacy and (where appropriate) numeracy
     2. Underlying ability
     3. Cognitive profile (such as memory, processing speed and phonological skills etc.)
     4. Supplementary background information and history of difficulties that inform the diagnostic process
* All assessments must be signed and dated by the assessor
* Each assessment report must have a clear diagnosis of a SpLD.
* **Assessments for Dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder/Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD/ADD)**; must be evidenced by an appropriately qualified professional. A full diagnostic assessment carried out in line with the above criteria is helpful when considering reasonable adjustments for ADD/ADHD or Dyspraxia. However, it is recognised that ADD/ADHD or Dyspraxia may be considered a medical diagnosis and therefore a letter from a suitably qualified medical professional may be acceptable where they are able to confirm the diagnosis. For Dyspraxia a report from an Occupational or Speech Therapist may be acceptable. For ADHD/ADD a report from a Psychiatrist may be acceptable. If such reports are not available then the DDS may accept a letter from a GP confirming that records regarding the original diagnosis are held in the student’s medical records.
* **Needs Assessments** carried out for the DSAs are not regarded as evidence for examination adjustments for SpLDs.
* All cases will be considered on an individual basis by the DDS.

**Section 1.2 – UK Assessment Reports, pre-16**

The University accepts the Department of Education’s recommendations of February 2019 that the reports from diagnostic assessments undertaken before the age of 16 should be considered as evidence of a specific learning difficulty. The University will therefore consider these assessment reports subject to the following criteria:

* The assessment should have been undertaken by a suitably qualified assessor, for example a chartered or educational psychologist, or a specialist teacher.
* A full and complete diagnostic assessment should have been conducted with a clear diagnosis of a SpLD.
* Areas investigated by the assessor should include:

i. Attainments in literacy and (where appropriate) numeracy

ii. Underlying ability

iii. Cognitive profile (such as memory, processing speed and phonological skills etc.)

iv. Supplementary background information and history of difficulties that inform the diagnostic process.

* All assessments must be signed and dated by the assessor.
* All cases will be considered on an individual basis by the DDS.

**Section 1.3 – International Assessment Reports**

International diagnostic reports will be considered on an individual basis. However the following will normally be expected:

1. Reports must be written in English or translated into English by an approved translator and verified.
2. Reports must be produced by an appropriate and qualified professional.
3. There must be the use of appropriate tests with appropriate standardised scoring.
4. Standardised scores should be included in the written report.
5. All assessments must be signed and dated by the assessor.

**Part 2. Acceptable evidence of conditions other than SpLDs (medical issues, mental health conditions, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, physical disabilities)**

1. The DDS or Mental Health Advisor will normally require a student to provide medical evidence of their health condition or mental health condition to consider reasonable adjustments. Suitable medical information would normally be recent, include a clear diagnosis and/or description of the condition and give indications of its likely impact where possible. The evidence should be written by a suitably qualified medical professional.
2. It is the student’s responsibility to provide the medical evidence necessary for consideration of the adjustment. Any financial costs involved in securing such evidence remain the responsibility of the student.
3. In certain circumstances where the disability or medical condition is visible and clearly evident to the DDS Advisor or Mental Health Advisor, they may make recommendations on reasonable adjustments without request for further medical evidence.
4. Letters from GPs summarising findings from other medical professionals contained in the student’s medical records may be acceptable.
5. In the case of mental health conditions, letters from a psychiatrist or GP would normally be acceptable at the discretion of the Mental Health Advisor.
6. In the case of Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD), it is recognised that some students may have only been assessed once at a very young age. In these cases the DDS will consider: the original diagnostic assessment; Statements of SEN/Education; Health and Care Plans; Transition Review Plans; Individual Education Plans (or equivalent form of record keeping on a pupils SEN in schools); and Learning Difficulty Assessments.
7. In certain circumstances where the original medical evidence is no longer available, the DDS or Mental Health Advisor may accept a Disabled Student Allowance Needs Assessment report. This acceptance is on the basis that the report is no more than 3 years old and where it details the information outlined in the original medical evidence. In these cases, the Advisor will use the report as confirmation of the health condition or disability, but it is up to the Advisor as to whether any advised adjustments recommended in the report are acceptable.

**Part 3 – Examination Adjustments**

1. The University will consider all reasonable recommendations for reasonable adjustments to examinations outlined in the accepted diagnostic report for the SpLD.
2. Where a student is claiming an adjustment on the grounds of a medical health condition, a mental health condition, a physical disability, a sensory impairment, or an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), then there may not be a clear recommendation of suitable reasonable adjustment contained in the evidence. In these cases the Disability Advisor or Mental Health Advisor will decide on suitable reasonable adjustments.
3. In diagnostic assessment reports for a SpLD, recommendations for examination adjustments must be clearly stated e.g. 25% extra time. Where there is no recommendation for examination adjustments, the student may be required to undertake a new assessment carried out by a suitably qualified assessor, the cost of which will need to be met by the student.
4. In diagnostic assessments for a SpLD, any recommendation for additional extra time, above 25%, will need to be fully justified and evidenced.
5. Recommendations made for adjustments to examinations in a diagnostic report for a SpLD will be considered, but the final decision for acceptance will be made by the DDS.
6. Recommendations by a DSA Needs Assessor will only be considered where there is supporting evidence acceptable to the DDS’s criteria.
7. Students will not be allowed automatic extra time for coursework (including, for example, essays, dissertations and projects). The Advisor may note on the SARA that consideration be given to requests for extensions. However, the final decision on whether an extension can be granted rests with the individual tutor.
8. The DDS Advisor may use the findings of the diagnostic report to assess the impact of difficulties on other forms of assessment, including presentations, practical work, oral assessments etc. Such reasonable adjustments will be logged on the student’s SARA form.

**Part 4 - Criteria for Reasonable Adjustments**

1. **Extra time of up to 25% on the grounds of a medical condition, physical disability, mental health condition, ASD or a sensory impairment**

* Appropriate evidence must be available to show that the impairment has a substantial adverse effect on the student’s ability to work under time limited conditions.
* For certain medical conditions, a physical disability or mental health condition, it may be more appropriate to consider rest breaks rather than extra time.

1. **Extra time of up to 100%**

* There must be a strong justification as to why more than 25% extra time is

required. This is only applied in exceptional circumstances.

* The amount of extra time will be determined on an individual basis, where factors such as fatigue will be considered.
* A reader or a scribe might be the more appropriate adjustment.
* Where the extra time results in an assessment time beyond 4 hours then further adjustments may be needed. These may include consideration of breaking up the assessment into two or more parts.
* Where the extra time results in an assessment time beyond 4 hours which cannot then be adjusted through breaks, it may be necessary to discuss alternative assessment methods with the department concerned.

1. **Supervised rest breaks**

A rest break is a period of time where the candidate stops engaging in the examination activity, including writing, reading, planning. Any time taken for such breaks is added onto the time available to the candidate at the end up to a maximum agreed amount. The approved assessment or evidence must confirm that the candidate has a genuine need for the arrangement on account of a medical condition, a physical disability, a psychological condition or other acceptable condition. In certain circumstances the DDS Advisor or Mental Health Advisor may recommend rest breaks without this being directly referred to in the evidence supplied if they consider it necessary.

**Supervised rest breaks might be considered for the following conditions (NB This is not an exhaustive list):**

* Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)
* Hyper-mobility
* A medical or mental health condition or extreme stress
* ADD/ADHD
* Visual impairment
* A physical difficulty with writing for long periods such as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)
* Normally, the length of a rest break will be from 5 minutes up to a maximum of 15 minutes per hour, but the actual timing of the breaks is dependent on the nature of the candidate’s condition. Where no time is noted on the SARA the Assessment Office will consider the break to be 5 minutes per hour.
* The maximum possible time allowed for breaks is normally calculated on the basis of complete hours. (For example, for a 2 hour exam a candidate may have up to 2 x 15 minute breaks. However, for a 2.5 hour exam the candidate is still only allowed 2 x 15 minute breaks).
* The University considers the length of the individual exam to include any additional extra time allowance awarded when calculating maximum break time a candidate is entitled to. (For example, if a student is taking a 2 hour exam and has been awarded 50% extra time then the length of time of the exam is judged as being 3 hours. If this student is entitled to rest breaks in addition to the extra time, then they are eligible for 3 rest breaks of 15 minutes each).
* There must be a strong justification as to why more than 15 minutes per hour is

required for rest breaks. This is only applied in exceptional circumstances.

1. **Separate room**

* Where a student is granted an adjustment such as extra time, rest breaks, use of a PC etc., they will normally be placed in a small group room.
* The DDS Advisor or Mental Health Advisor may assess that the candidate has a genuine need for a separate room on account of a medical condition, a physical disability, a psychological condition or behavioural or emotional needs. This may include; needing to move to relieve pain, social phobia, sensitivity to noise, the use of reader/scribe, speech to text software, the need of proximity to lavatories, vulnerability to distraction, use of adapted furniture etc. In certain circumstances, the Advisor may recommend that the candidate is placed in a separate room where it is helpful to avoid distraction or impact on other occupants of a small group room.

1. **Evidence of the need for a reader**

A reader will not be allowed if a candidate’s literacy difficulties are primarily caused by English not being his/her first language.

So as not to give an unfair advantage, a reader will only be considered if a candidate has a substantial impairment which affects his/her reading.

* In the case of a student with an SpLD, the need for the reader should be recommended and justified in the diagnostic assessment.
* In the case of a student who has a visual impairment or is blind, the use of a reader may be considered where one or more of the below criteria is/are met:
* Braille / modified / enlarged exam papers cannot be read independently

**And/or**

* Sight deteriorates over time so that by the end of the examination the candidate’s ability to read the modified paper is significantly impaired.
* A reader will not normally be allowed to read questions or text in papers (or sections of papers) assessing reading. A candidate who would normally be eligible for a reader but is not permitted this arrangement in a subject (or a section of a paper testing reading) may be granted extra time of up to 50%. The use of a coloured overlay may support a candidate’s reading. Where such an arrangement still places the candidate at a substantial disadvantage, then alternatives will need to be discussed with the department and the DDS.
* A reader may not be appropriate where there are concerns over fitness to practice. It is the responsibility of the department concerned to make the student aware that a reader is inappropriate. In such cases the Department should discuss alternative reasonable adjustments with the DDS.
* In the case of students who are deaf or hearing impaired, it may be necessary to provide a Communication Support Worker to read the questions to the student. It is sometimes necessary for students who use British Sign Language for the reader to explain the meaning of ‘carrier language’ in the question. This does not relate to course specific language that the student needs to know. It may be more suitable to agree a Language Modified Paper in advance (see below).
* A candidate and reader are accommodated in a separate room, so other candidates cannot overhear what the reader is saying and are not disturbed.

1. **Scribe or Word Processor**

(N.B. Where a PC is provided it is not normally the practice at the University for the spell-checker to be disabled. It is therefore the responsibility of the candidate to decide whether to use this.)

A scribe or PC will not be allowed if a candidate’s literacy difficulties are primarily caused by English not being his/her first language.

So as not to give an unfair advantage, a scribe or PCwill only be considered where one or more of the following apply:

* In the case of a student with an SpLD, the need for the scribe or PC should be recommended and justified in the diagnostic assessment. Justifications for this may include: substantial handwriting and/or spelling difficulties; severe organisational difficulty which makes their work so hard to read and understand that an examiner may not be able to assess their work fairly.
* Students who do not have an SpLD but do have a recognised disability may be allowed use of a scribe or PC where they have a substantial impairment which affects his/her handwriting and would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a non-disabled person as assessed by the appropriate Disability Advisor. They may additionally be asked to provide supporting medical evidence of their difficulty.
* Students who do not have a disability or SpLD may be recommended use of a scribe, PC or transcript (see below) where they are able to demonstrate with supporting acceptable evidence that they have illegible handwriting to such an extent that an examiner would not be able to mark their work fairly.
* Where spelling, grammar and punctuation are part of the assessment criteria, if a scribe or PC with spell-checker enabled is used, the department concerned may need to consider an adjustment of marking criteria to reflect this.
* A scribe or PC with spell-checker enabled may not be appropriate where writing is part of the assessment criteria and/or where there are concerns over fitness to practice. It is the responsibility of the department concerned to make the student aware that a scribe or PC with spell-checker enabled is inappropriate.
* Students with visual impairments and some SpLDs may require access to change font or background colour of the screen. For students with an SpLD this may be evidenced in the Diagnostic Assessment or in a supplementary assessment for Scotopic Sensitivity or Irlen/Mears Syndrome.
* **‘Usual way of working’** is not considered in itself sufficient justification for an adjustment. There should be other current supporting evidence that meets the University criteria for adjustments.

**7. Transcript**

Evidence of the need for a transcript of handwritten exam scripts

A transcript will not be allowed if a candidate’s literacy difficulties are primarily caused by English not being his/her first language.

A transcript will only be considered where:

* A candidate has substantial handwriting difficulties to such an extent that their normal writing is so hard to read that an examiner may not be able to mark their work fairly and where this is more appropriate than other adjustments.
* Spelling is so difficult to decipher that it would be beneficial for an examiner to be able to refer to a transcript.
* A scribe or use of a word processor is inappropriate (such as in exams requiring complex written mathematical calculations or scientific notation, or where a candidate is unable to use a scribe or word processor effectively).

The transcript should be completed within a reasonable amount of time after the exam has finished. Any transcript should be agreed by the candidate as a true and fair representation of what they have written in their original version.

**8. Use of prompter**

A prompter may be used where a candidate:

* has little or no sense of time
* loses concentration easily
* is affected by obsessive-compulsive disorder and cannot move on easily to the next question.

**9. Additional requirements not already mentioned**

Students with disabilities and SpLDs may require additional adjustments not already mentioned including:

* **Coloured overlays;** the use of a coloured overlay should be allowed (including reading rulers) where sufficient evidence of a difficulty with reading has been given. Students should provide their own coloured overlays for use in examinations
* **Assistive software;** where assistive software is the student’s normal way of working, and it is justified by the medical or SpLD evidence, the University will work with the student to provide the appropriate version. In some cases it may be necessary to allow the student to bring in their own hardware/software if the University is unable to provide a suitable equivalent. In those cases it may be necessary to discuss a suitable method for ensuring the student does not gain an unfair advantage.
* **Adjusted Font/Backgrounds, large print, braille etc;** Where a student has an SpLD or visual impairment, they may require an adjustment to any reading material and question papers. This adaption will be assessed by the Advisor using the evidence provided by the student.
* **Modified language;** Students who are deaf/Deaf or hearing impaired may require modified language papers. This requirement should be assessed by the Sensory Impairment Advisor. In some rare cases this adjustment may also be recommended in diagnostic reports for some cases of SpLDs. Modified papers need to be agreed by the relevant academic department to ensure the meaning has not been changed.
* **Ergonomic chairs and tables;** Some students with physical or health needs may require ergonomic furniture. This requirement should be mentioned in the medical evidence supplied by the student. Where this is not the case the Disability Advisor may make the recommendation.
* **Seating arrangements;** Where a studenthas a particular medical condition or mental health issue, it may be necessary to specify positioning in the room. This may also be the case for a Hearing Impaired student in order to allow them to see the invigilator.This requirement will be assessed by the appropriate Disability or Mental Health Advisor.
* **Lighting;** Where a student has demonstrated particular issues with lighting (need for enhanced/reduced lighting etc) it may be necessary to adjust the lighting for an individual.
* **British Sign Language Interpreter;** Students who have BSL as their first language may require an interpreter rather than a reader in the exam. This adjustment will be considered by the Sensory Impairment Advisor. A language Modified Paper may be more appropriate in some circumtances.

**10. Temporary adjustments**

When a temporary impairment would disadvantage a candidate, a temporary arrangement will be considered when appropriate supporting evidence is provided. Temporary arrangements may be considered by the Exams Office where a student has an evident need without needing to refer the case to DDS. They may, however, wish to discuss any arrangements in consultation with advice from a DDS Advisor. In some situations, such as the use of a scribe for a student who has never used this arrangement, it may be more appropriate for the individual student to apply for Mitigating Circumstances and seek to postpone the assessment.

1. **Extended deadlines for assignments**

Automatic extensions for assignments are not permitted for any student, including dyslexic students. Negotiated extensions are only permitted with the agreement of the relevant department.

1. **Differentiated marking**

Candidates with a diagnosis of Dyslexia, outlined in an acceptable Diagnostic Assessment Report may be eligible for differentiated marking consideration, as outlined in Differentiated Marking of the Work of Students with Dyslexia Policy University of Chichester 2007

1. **Alternative forms of assessment**

In rare and exceptional circumstances alternative forms of assessment will be considered by the faculty/ department when all other adjustments have been explored with the advice of DDS or Mental Health Advisor. Alternative forms of assessment must enable the student to demonstrate the learning outcomes and competency standards.

1. **Complaints**

In the first instance complaints relating to examination adjustment decisions should be sent to the Head of the Disability and Dyslexia Services. Appeals against these decisions should be made in writing to the Director of Student Support and Transition.

**Acknowledgments**

The University of Surrey Disability and Dyslexia Service (2015)

Joint Council for Qualifications; Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations (JCQ 2013)

The University of Oxford Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties, Information for professionals conducting diagnostic assessments (2012)