

Inclusive Practice in Examinations and Assessments

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Legal Framework

- The DDA (Part IV) places a duty on educational bodies to ensure that
 - disabled students do not receive less favourable treatment and that
 - reasonable adjustments are made to remove any substantial disadvantage experienced by a disabled student
- This responsibility applies to the full range of our activities, including setting and marking of examinations and assessments

Purpose of Examinations

- Examinations and assessments are an important part of the University experience for *all* students
- They are essential as a means of demonstrating learning outcomes and recording academic achievement

Exam Criteria

- It is important that examinations and assessments are designed in ways which are rigorous enough to maintain academic standards
- They should
 - Be reliable and consistent.
 - Be valid - i.e. an accurate measure of what they are meant to measure.
 - Not provide any student with an unfair advantage/disadvantage.
 - Accurately reflect the ability of the student.
 - Be flexible so that each student has an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge/achievement

Common Practice - Making Adjustments

- Most academic departments are familiar with making adjustments to existing exam arrangements. These are *not* 'concessions' for the individual students but adjustments designed to reduce/remove unfair disadvantage.
- They include -
 - Extra time,
 - Reader/scribe,
 - Use of Computer/other Technology
 - Large print exam papers/other formats
 - Individual room

Making a Real Change!

- For some students, adjustments to existing exam arrangements may not remove the disadvantage - a more reasonable adjustment may be to design an alternative means of assessing their achievement.
- These can include -
 - Adjustments to timetables
 - Increasing level of continuous assessment
 - Oral examination and/or presentations
 - Learning Log
 - Other methods

Before you go there

- For alternative means of assessment to be possible, it will be essential to have clarity and agreement on the learning aims of the course/programme. i.e. to identify the 'core requirements' of the course.

Where to begin

- Ensure that the learning aims are inclusive at the course/programme proposal stage
- Clear, well-defined aims and objectives will ensure that all staff have a common understanding of what is possible and allows the identification of areas of flexibility and possible barriers

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Wider issues

- As well as arranging alternatives/ adjustments for 'standard' exams, the following areas should be considered -
 - Laboratory work/assessment
 - Computer-based assessment
 - Group-work/peer assessment
 - Class-based assessment
 - Work-based assessment
 - Dissertations

Things to Consider

- Practical issues - e.g. staffing/technology
- Previous methods used by student
- Impact of disability on performance
- Advice from assessment of needs
- Staff awareness/training
- Constraints - e.g. practicality, costs
- Could *all* students be offered alternative means of assessment??

Critical Steps

- Have well-defined learning aims
- For any exam procedure/policy, it is important that -
 - The policy is clear and well-publicised
 - The procedure operates with minimum delay
 - All students are aware of the policy for making adjustments and how to request this
- Engage with the student
- Keep arrangements under review for future exams.