

Reasonable Accommodations at Examinations for Students

Reasonable Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations refer to adaptations or adjustments that may be made to facilitate students based on advice from an expert Advisory Committee. Students diagnosed with a temporary, permanent or long-term impairment, condition or disability, which could impact significantly on their performance at examinations may apply to the Advisory Committee for consideration for a reasonable accommodation to aid them sitting for examinations. The aim of a reasonable accommodation is to eliminate or minimize the potential influence of the impairment, condition or disability on the student's performance at examinations to enable accurate display of the student's knowledge, skills and competence.

Procedure

During the Orientation Programme, all first year students will be introduced to the Faculty Representatives of the Coordinating Centre for Students with Disabilities. It is recommended that students discuss their academic needs and needs for reasonable accommodations at examinations with their Faculty Representative as early as possible during the Orientation Programme.

All applications requesting reasonable accommodations should be forwarded to the Coordinating Centre for Students with Disabilities through the Faculty Representative. **The applications must be made at the beginning of each academic year.** In exceptional circumstances where there is a sudden onset of a disability or difficulty, a student may be permitted to make an application to the Advisory Committee via the Faculty Representative for consideration for a reasonable accommodation at an examination. All applications will be reviewed by the Advisory Committee of the Coordinating Centre for Students with Disabilities in relation to the Reasonable Accommodations Guidelines agreed on by the Senate. It must be noted that the affording of a reasonable accommodation(s) is not in any way meant to provide an unfair advantage to the applicant compared to other students sitting for the same examination. The decision of the Advisory Committee on the student's application will be officially notified to the student and to the Examinations Branch two weeks prior to the scheduled examination.

Reasonable Accommodations to be considered

The foundation on which a reasonable accommodation is to be considered is the current mode of study, recording of responses and communication of the student. The reasonable accommodations outlined in this document are based on the Reasonable Accommodations Guidelines document, which is **only a set of guidelines on minimum adjustments that could be considered. Each student's specific requirements at examinations will be considered on an individual case-by-case basis.**

In the instance when a student's temporary, permanent or long-term disability deters him/her from a specific assessment or component of assessment such as an auditory (listening) assessment component for a student with a severe-profound hearing impairment, appropriate and equitable alternative assessment methods may be considered by the examiners, subject to Faculty Board approval. For instance, an appropriate and equitable alternative assessment method to be considered for a student with severe profound hearing impairment required to sit for an auditory (listening) assessment component may be a face-to-face interview or a written examination instead. If an alternative method of assessment is undertaken, this will be specified in the student's transcript, although this will not affect his/her grade or GPA calculation.

Visual Difficulties

- The question papers need to be offered in a format accessible to the student such as in Braille or using voice-output software.
- Arrangements should be made to offer question papers and assignment guidelines in large print to students with visual difficulties who would benefit from such an adjustment. The font size required for the enlarged version will need to be decided based on the student's individual need.
- In the absence of a question paper being offered in a format accessible to the student with visual difficulties, the questions on the paper may be read out with each question repeated as many times as required by the student with no additional explanation offered.
- Seating could be provided in a separate room with an examiner present to be able to listen to the examination questions on a voice-recorder with the optional use of headphones.
- Students should be allowed to take advantage of any equipment routinely used in the classroom at present to support their low vision at examinations. This may

include recording their answers on a recording device such as a voice-recorder or computer if unable to write via traditional pen and paper.

- In instances where no recording equipment is available or where the student prefers to dictate his/her response to be written down, a scribe could be nominated.
- A student with vision difficulties requiring to sit for an examination with a visual component (e.g. video assessment material) may be offered the relevant visual material via a personal computer if the visual material on the large screen is not accessible.

Hearing Difficulties

- The Advisory Committee should seek advice from an Audiologist and Speech and Language Therapist at the Department of Disability Studies on the suitability of the student to be offered an exemption from an aural examination or when he/she is to be offered an alternative to an aural examination, such as a written script of the aural examination or a face-to-face interview which could be in sign language, if necessary.
- The examiners are recommended to consider including a member of staff who understands the speech of a student with hearing difficulties within face-to-face interview assessments.
- If auditory material presented in the examination hall of an aural examination is not accessible to a student with a mild-moderate hearing difficulties, the auditory material could be presented via headphones.
- Where a personal audio-recorder can be attached to a personal induction loop, the aural examination can be conducted in the main examination hall for students with hearing difficulties.
- A student with a hearing difficulty may be offered seating close to the examination supervisor.

Physical Difficulties

- Special seating, including the use of personal wheelchairs will be considered at examinations.
- If a student has difficulties with producing legible handwriting or has a slow speed at formulating letters, these students may be allowed to use assistive or adapted writing equipment such as modified pens and pencils or record their answers on a voice-recorder, a Word Processor or other computer-assisted technologies.

- A student with physical disabilities can choose to dictate their answers with a scribe nominated to document his/her answer.
- The assistance of a scribe may be necessary where the use of recording devices are unsatisfactory due to the student's physical and/or speech difficulties. The use of an augmentative or alternative communication (AAC) device for face-to-face interview or viva voce assessments may be permissible for students with speech, language and/or communication difficulties. In such an instance, advice will be sought from a Speech and Language Therapist/Pathologist.
- Where a scribe or recording equipment is to be used to document answers, the student would be entitled to 15 additional minutes per hour of assessment.
- A formal assessment by an Occupational Therapist would be required prior to the committee deciding on the reasonable accommodations to be offered.
- The examiners are recommended to consider including a member of staff who understands unclear or dysarthric speech when marking audio-recorded answers of a student with speech and/or physical difficulties to help interpret the student's answers.

Specific Learning Difficulties

- If a student has been diagnosed with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, additional time could be offered in-line with his/her needs.
- A student diagnosed with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia could be offered the examination paper and assignment guidelines in a format accessible to the individual student (e.g. font size, background colour of the paper).
- Where it has been determined that the student's difficulty with reading the question paper is due to a specific learning difficulty, the examination could be in an auditory format offered via a reader or scribe assigned to sit with the student or via an audio-recording.
- When grading the answer scripts, the student's specific difficulties and the method of assessment needs to be considered.
- For a student diagnosed with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, there should be less of a focus on the accuracy of spelling.
- Students could be offered access to word processor with spellcheck permitted.

Psychological/Mental Health Difficulties

If a student has been experiencing psychological/mental health issues which may have an impact on his/her performances at an examination, he/she can make a request through the treating consultant psychiatrist for:

- Specific seating arrangements
- Breaks for medications/access to medications
- Breaks
- Additional time
- Special resources - offer of a scribe or use of Word Processor or assistive computer software
- Examinations to be spaced out
- Consideration for any side effects of medication
- Timing of the examination

The student should provide supporting evidence preferably through a treating consultant psychiatrist and all information provided would be confidential and be disclosed only to relevant parties with the student's consent.

Medical Needs

- Students requiring to take medication, food or drink at a specific time due to medical reasons could be offered short breaks under supervision.
- In lieu of the time taken as periods of rest or as a break, additional time for up to 20 minutes could be offered to the student at the end of the examination.

Environmental Factors

- Students who require specialist seating such as chairs and writing desks, should be allowed the use of this equipment.

Appeals

Students who are dissatisfied with the adjustments suggested to be made at examinations by the Advisory Committee could make an appeal. All appeals are to be considered in light of the Reasonable Accommodations Guidelines.

References

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS—VERSION 1, JUNE 2015

Accessed at: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

Irish Education System Accessed at:

<http://www.gov.ie> <http://www.examination.ie>

Specific Language Difficulties

Accessed at: <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk>