



Alternative Forms of Assessment for Disability or Unforeseen Medical Circumstances Policy

Item	Description
Document Reference:	PL.003-v002
Document Name:	Alternative Forms of Assessment for Disability or Unforeseen Medical Circumstances Policy
Review Date:	July 2020
Last Reviewed:	July 2016 Administrative review: July 2020
Commencement Date:	2017
Approving Authority:	Academic Board
Date Approved:	Followed prior approval process
Department Responsible for maintenance & review	Student, Library and Academic Services, Quality and Teaching Excellence
Contact:	ar.qte.regs@northumbria.ac.uk

1 Disabled Students

- 1.1 This section is intended to apply to disabled students who require individual modified or alternative forms of assessment for examinations or other assessment arrangements. The term 'disabled students' includes all those who fall within the definition of a disabled person set out in the Equality Act 2010:

'A disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial, adverse and long term effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

- 1.2 This definition covers (but is not limited to) students with mobility impairments, sensory impairments, mental illness or mental health difficulties, Asperger's Syndrome or other autistic spectrum conditions, dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties, medical conditions such as epilepsy or diabetes and other long term medical conditions. It is important to realise that, for the purposes of the Equality Act, a student may be entitled to assessment adjustments (1.4 below) because of a long-term condition (typically lasting at least 12 months) even though they do not consider this condition to be a 'disability' as such.
- 1.3 The Equality Act requires educational institutions to take reasonable steps to ensure that a disabled student is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a student who is not disabled.
- 1.4 In the case of examinations or other assessment arrangements this requires institutions to make 'reasonable adjustments' to arrangements where necessary to prevent a disabled student being disadvantaged. For most disabled students removing the disadvantage will mean individual modifications being made to the examination or other assessment arrangements (see 3 below). For a smaller number of disabled students these measures will not remove the disadvantage and in these cases alternative assessment methods to examinations or other assessment arrangements will be required (see 4 below).
- 1.5 There may be other non-disabled students who have short-term medical conditions which could not be foreseen but which arise before or during examinations and require similar individual modifications to be made to examinations (see 4 below).
- 1.6 Disabled students will be dealt with on an ongoing basis throughout the student's study at the University and therefore do not come under the remit of the Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) procedure unless there has been an acute episode or flare up of their disability. However, an unforeseen short-term medical emergency, e.g. a broken arm, may require both individual modifications to be made for examinations and, if appropriate, consideration via the PEC process of the particular circumstances of the student during a critical period.

2 General principles

- 2.1 Any examination or other assessment arrangement should be a fair test of each candidate's academic ability and should enable students to demonstrate fully their attainment of learning outcomes. The same academic standards should be applied to all students and in most cases disabled students will be able to out the

same assessment as others studying the same module. However, where a disabled student would be disadvantaged by examination or other assessment arrangements individual modifications or alternative assessment methods should be made available to minimise the disadvantage created by the disability and to not otherwise advantage the student taking into account the need to ensure that defined learning outcomes of the programme are met and that competence standards are not compromised.

- 2.2 In an examination or other assessment arrangement a disabled candidate should be permitted access to equipment or aids which s/he would normally use in day to day study and communication, e.g. word processor.

3 Individual modifications to examinations or other assessments or alternative assessment methods

- 3.1 In order to make individual modifications or alternative assessment methods, to examinations or other assessment arrangements the University must know of the student's disability. The onus lies with the student to disclose disability and students/applicants are urged to consult the Disability and Dyslexia Support Team (DDST) in Student Support and Wellbeing at an early stage so that their needs can be assessed. See 3.6 for procedures when the University becomes aware that a student has a disability part-way through the programme.
- 3.2 Disabled students requiring individual modifications, or alternative assessment methods, to examinations or other assessment regulations must be able to provide DDST with 'evidence' of their disability. In the case of students with dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties this should be in the form of a diagnostic assessment report by an Educational Psychologist or similar. For other disabilities this should be written evidence from a GP or similar appropriate professional. DDST can advise students on the type of 'evidence' required and how to obtain it.
- 3.3 For disabled students there remains a need to respond flexibly, and occasionally on an ad hoc basis. Modifications, or alternative assessment methods, to examinations or other assessment arrangements may need to be as individual as the student concerned.
- 3.4 Depending on the effects of each disabled student's individual impairment, individual modifications, or alternative assessment methods, to examinations or other assessment arrangements may be required, as recommended by DDST. Individual modifications to examinations or other assessment methods will be notified by DDST to Faculties via the Disabled Students Support Recommendations report and (in the case of examinations) the Individual Requirements for Examinations form (IRE). Individual modifications to examinations will be notified by DDST to Academic Registry by recording the requirements on the student record system. It should be noted that examinations are planned and organised well in advance of when they actually take place and that when notifications are received at later stages individual examination arrangements may only be possible if resources are available. Where individual examination arrangements cannot but put in place in time students will be referred to the PEC processes.

- 3.5 Where a disabled student requires alternative assessment methods the student should initially discuss this with a DDST. Where DDST agrees that alternative assessment methods may be required they will contact the Programme Leader to advise them of this and will convene a multi-disciplinary case conference involving the Disabilities Adviser from DDST, Programme Leader, relevant academic staff and others as appropriate. The case conference will discuss and agree whether alternative assessment methods are appropriate and, if so, what the alternative assessment methods should be. Further information may also be sought from the student. The case conference will make recommendations via the Faculty Representative to the Chair of the Faculty Education Committee for a final decision.
- 3.6 Occasionally a student's disability may not be diagnosed until some or all of their assessments have been completed, or too late for appropriate reasonable adjustments to be put in place to remove substantial disadvantage. In such circumstances the Examination Board should be provided with relevant information relating to the student's disability. This is to enable it to make a judgement as to whether the student would be at a substantial disadvantage as a result of their disability if the Board applied the usual procedures when determining progression or award. If such a disadvantage was identified, the Board should consider whether it is appropriate to make any reasonable adjustment to its procedures. When considering possible adjustments, the Board should only consider assessments completed during the academic year in which the University discovered the disability. Only in exceptional circumstances can Examination Boards make such adjustments retrospectively when diagnosis of discovers the disability occurs after the Examination Board has met.
- 3.7 In exceptional circumstances, where a student who has a disability or long-standing medical condition has chosen not to declare this to DDST, or has declined reasonable adjustments identified in a DSSR, they may still submit a claim for personal extenuating circumstances. In such cases it is important to make contact with DDST as soon as possible, so that relevant documentation to inform the claim can be provided. PEC claims must be submitted before the published Faculty deadline for the period in which the assessed work is assessed (see guidance about factors affecting assessed work (Student Guidance)) Marks from assessed work submitted after submission of such a PEC claim will be considered at the Examination Board as in 3.6 above. Any claims for assessments completed and submitted before submission of the PEC claim must include an explanation for why the student did not fully engage with DDST at the earliest opportunity. If a good and valid reason for delaying fully engaging with DDST is not provided, this element of any PEC claim will be disregarded.

4 Individual modifications to examination arrangements to accommodate unforeseen medical circumstances

- 4.1 Non-disabled students may require individual arrangements to be made at examinations due to unforeseen medical circumstances e.g. broken arm, which impacts on the student's ability to complete an examination. All requests made by students for additional time or individual examination provision should be supported by appropriate medical certification. Students are required to submit requests and medical certification as soon as possible following the accident/illness/diagnosis in order to allow time for individual provision to be

made. As with disabled students it should be noted that examinations are planned and organised well in advance of when they actually take place and that when notifications are received at later stages individual examination arrangements may only be possible if resources are available. Where individual examination arrangements cannot be put in place in time students will be referred to the PEC processes.

- 4.2 The student should submit any request for individual modifications to examinations to DDST. Individual modifications to examinations will be notified by DDST to Faculties via an IRE. Individual modifications to examinations will be notified by DDST to Academic Registry by recording the requirements on SITS. The IRE should be kept on the student's file in the student's home Faculty so that any subsequent PEC report can be considered with full information, as a guide for future examinations and in case of an appeal.
- 4.3 The student may also submit a PEC report in respect of the illness/injury, which relates to the effect upon performance not covered by the individual arrangements for examination. Any individual arrangements made for a student should be reported by the Faculty Office to the relevant PEC Committee.