University Code of Practice

Reasonable Adjustments

Document reference:	QH:E4
Date first approved:	May 19
Date coming into force:	September 2019
Date last reviewed:	September 2023
Date amended to current version:	August 2025
Current version no:	2.01
Approved by:	Academic Board
Responsibilities:	Programme Coordinator Supervisory Team Registrar
Application to collaborative provision:	Mandatory
Contacts:	Head of Academic Quality and Learning
Applications for exemptions to:	Academic Quality and Standards Committee
Report exemptions to:	Academic Board

Summary/ Description:

This Code sets out the University's arrangements for providing reasonable adjustments and alternative assessment arrangements for students with disabilities, long-term or mental health conditions.

The University is committed to providing appropriate support for students with disabilities or with similar needs. This is achieved by developing a Statement of Reasonable Adjustments (SORA) for each individual student in consultation with the student, Programme Coordinator/Supervisory Team and internal/or external specialist advice as required. Students are invited and encouraged to declare their needs as early as possible in their studies (ideally on application). New conditions, or significant changes in conditions, can be declared at any time during their studies and an existing SORA reviewed or put in place as needed.

The Code should be read in the context of the applicable Academic Regulations:
Academic Regulations: Taught Programmes (QH:C1)
Academic Regulations: Research Degrees (QH:D1)

Further Guidance
See the Introduction to the Quality Handbook (QH:A1) for further guidance and explanations of:

- how the Handbook is designed to work and what it covers and does not cover
- how it is structured
- the 'external reference points' and established practice which have informed each of the Codes
- key concepts and themes
- some suggestions for further reading
- a quick guide to each Code, including definitions and things to watch out for.

This university Code has been written in accordance with the approach approved by the University to enhance clarity involving the following terminology: must = mandatory should = advisable may = desirable. Where these terms are used they are emphasised in bold.

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INTRODUCTION

Authority

1 The Academic Quality and Standards Committee is the final arbiter of the application and interpretation of this code of practice as it relates to students on taught programmes, and Research and Research Degrees Committee as it relates to students on research degrees. Where there are differences in the way the Code relates to students on taught programmes and those on research degrees, this is made explicit in the text; otherwise the word 'programme' relates to both taught programmes and research degrees.

Scope of the Code

2 This Code applies to the learning, teaching and/or research and all assessment conducted as part of programmes leading to the award of the University's higher education qualifications.

Application to collaborative provision

3 Unless specified by the Academic Board, this Code applies to all provision referred to in paragraph 2 whether that provision is delivered by the University or another approved provider in accordance with a formal legal agreement.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

4 The University is committed to promoting and facilitating an inclusive environment for learning, teaching and assessment, including making provision for reasonable adjustments and alternative assessment arrangements for disabled students (including specific learning disabilities), and for students with needs arising from ongoing or mental health conditions. It is also committed to providing an environment in which applicants and current students feel confident that they can disclose a disability or other need and will receive appropriate guidance and support. This applies whether students are studying programmes leading to qualifications classified as taught or research.

5 These commitments mean ensuring that disabled students as well as non-disabled students are provided with learning opportunities which are equally accessible, whether this is achieved through inclusive design or through making individual reasonable adjustments. In terms of assessment specifically, the University reflects the statement of sound practice in the UK Quality Code that:

> 'Through inclusive design wherever possible, and through individual reasonable adjustments wherever required, assessment tasks provide every student with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement' (UK Quality Code 2014: Chapter B6).

6 Inclusive design is addressed in the Code on Programme Approval (QH:C2).

7 The University complies with HM Government of Gibraltar Equal Opportunities Act 2006 and has adopted the definitions set out in the UK's Equality Act 2010, which requires (UK) universities to make reasonable adjustments to learning, teaching and assessment to ensure that disabled students are not put at a substantial disadvantage. The University also extends this to support students who do not consider themselves to have a 'disability' but who would still benefit from additional support with their studies due to an ongoing medical or mental health condition.

Academic standards

8 In making reasonable adjustments to assessments the University applies the approach used in the UK where universities do not alter the academic standards of their awards, and therefore do not make changes to the intended learning outcomes; their approach is to make reasonable adjustments in individual cases or exceptionally to adapt the way in which those outcomes are assessed so that a student with a disability (including a long term medical condition or a specific learning disability) has an equal opportunity to demonstrate the extent to which they can meet the learning outcomes.

Definition of disability

9 The University uses the definition of disability set out in the UK Act to mean a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on a person's ability to do normal daily activities. The phrase 'long-term' generally means a condition which has lasted, or is likely to last, 12 months or more. The University will also provide support where the impairment lasts for a shorter period.

10 A disability can arise from a wide range of impairments which can include, but are not limited to:

(a) specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia)
(b) mental health difficulties (e.g. depression, anxiety, schizophrenia)
(c) mobility difficulties (e.g. wheelchair users, back pain, hypermobility)
(d) blindness or visual impairment
(e) deafness or hearing impairment
(f) autistic spectrum conditions (e.g. Asperger syndrome)
(g) long-term health issues (e.g. diabetes, arthritis, cancer, HIV, autoimmune conditions)
(h) progressive conditions (e.g. motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy, forms of dementia)
(i) fluctuating or recurring conditions (e.g. bipolar disorder, epilepsy, rheumatoid arthritis, myalgic encephalitis (ME), chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS)).

Other circumstances where students may require reasonable adjustments

11 The University also provides individual support for students who:

(a) are pregnant, have recently had a baby or who are a carer

(b) are unable to fully comply with the published assessment requirements for reasons of religious observance.

Range of support available

12 As indicated below, the nature of the support which will be provided will depend on the specific circumstances of each individual student, however, the range of help available includes:

(a) additional tuition and library access for students with specific learning difficulties
(b) support mechanisms and workload planning for students with mental health difficulties
(c) ensuring there is physical access for students with mobility difficulties
(d) providing materials in an alternative format for students who are blind or have a visual impairment
(e) providing materials in an alternative format for students who are deaf or have a hearing impairment
(f) support mechanisms and workload planning for students with autistic spectrum conditions
(g) support mechanisms and workload planning for students with long-term health issues, progressive conditions, fluctuating conditions or recurring conditions
(h) special examination arrangements such as: additional writing time, rest breaks, use of a PC or specialist software, alternative exam room, use of coloured overlays in exams, red answer booklets, use of specialist equipment e.g. chair/writing slope, timetabling of examinations in morning or afternoon sessions only
(i) interruption of studies for an agreed period of time
(j) use of an amanuensis (scribe)
(k) use of a reader.

13 Students are also entitled to make applications under the Mitigating Circumstances procedures where additional short term assistance is required over and above any individualised support agreed as a reasonable adjustment. This may occur for example where a student with an ongoing medical or mental health condition experiences a change in their condition, which might be short term, such as:

(a) an acute episode or crisis
(b) a serious worsening of their condition
(c) a mental health problem which may fluctuate unpredictably
(d) an acute flare-up of a mental health or medical condition due to increased examination stress
(e) a new condition.

Informing the University

14 It is the student's responsibility to inform the University of any disability or other need for which they wish to have reasonable adjustments made as soon as they are able to do so. For additional needs that existed before the student starts their programme, this should happen

when the student applies to study, or at least when the student enrols. If extensive arrangements are likely to be needed early notification and discussion of those arrangements is essential. Students can also declare a condition at any time during their studies.

15 Where a student indicates on their application that they have a condition which will require support they will be contacted by Student Services to begin the process of developing an individual support package. After arriving at the University – and at any time during their studies (for example in the event of a new condition developing, or an existing condition worsening) they should contact the Registrar, their Programme Coordinator (taught programmes) or their Supervisory Team (research degrees).

16 Students should also be reminded at key points of the academic year (such as a few weeks before summative assessments) of the need to inform the University of any condition that they have not already declared and how to do so.

Confidentiality

17 The University will treat any information provided by a student in relation to this procedure confidentially, and will only share that information with staff who 'need to know' and with the consent of the student. Students are entitled to make a 'partial declaration': that is to specify which members of staff can have access to the information and which details are disclosed. However, a partial declaration may make it more difficult for the University to support fully the student's needs. This will be discussed with the student at the point of declaring a need.

Medical Evidence

18 Once the University is notified of a student's condition appropriate medical evidence will be requested, such as: a doctor's letter, or psychologist's report for students with specific learning difficulties. The University may (with the consent of the student) engage expertise from outside the University where this is considered necessary to advise the University on the validity and precise nature of the condition and/or on the specific arrangements which should be made to support the student.

Statement of Reasonable Adjustments

19 The University will work with the student, the Programme Coordinator (taught programmes) or their Supervisory Team (research degrees) and any external source of professional expertise, to develop a Statement of Reasonable Adjustments (SORA) which will set out as precisely as possible the reasonable adjustments that are needed to support the student in relation to each form of learning, teaching and assessment that the student will encounter. This will take account of needs in relation to teaching sessions, specific forms of learning and teaching such as field trips or placements, as well as formative and summative assessment tasks. The SORA will also confirm which staff are entitled to receive a copy of the Statement.

20 Where, for whatever reason, it is not possible to have in place the SORA or the adjustments set out in the SORA in time for assessment activities, the student will be able to use the

individual mitigating circumstances procedure to request a fresh attempt at an examination (taught programmes only) or an extension. A mitigating circumstances application is not required for those matters (including extensions or deferrals) already set out in the SORA.

21 For some students it will be possible to agree one SORA that may cover their entire programme. If a student experiences a change in their condition they should contact the Registrar, Programme Coordinator (taught programmes) or their Supervisory Team (research degrees) to instigate a review of their SORA.

Alternative Assessment arrangements

22 In exceptional circumstances, where existing assessment options, even with reasonable adjustments, continue to present barriers to a disabled student, the need to provide for alternative assessment arrangements should be considered. As with reasonable adjustments, alternative assessment arrangements must be reasonable and take account of the principles of equity and parity of assessment practice. Alternative arrangements might take the form of a written rather than an oral presentation or vice versa, or a poster or video as an alternative to a written report.

23 Alternative arrangements will be discussed and agreed with the student and the Programme Coordinator/Supervisory Team and, if appropriate, the external examiner for the programme.

Anonymous Marking (Taught programmes)

24 Students may have difficulties presenting information as a result of a number of different impairments. For example, students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia may have difficulties with handwriting, spelling, punctuation or grammar. Students with visual impairments may present information poorly, if they are unable to re-read their own work. Students with hearing impairments who are pre-linguistically deaf may also have difficulties with the grammatical structure of English. In such cases, it may not be possible to mark anonymously, and the Programme Coordinator/Supervisory Team need to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure fairness.

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