

## **Fair access to assessment policy**

### **1. Introduction**

**1.1** UWL has a duty to ensure that the integrity of all awards, including its own awards and those of external award bodies and apprenticeships are maintained at all times. At the same time UWL has a duty to ensure that it provides equality of opportunity and fair access to assessment while maintaining these standards.

**1.2** It should be noted that while this policy covers arrangements on an individual basis, sometimes making adjustments to assessments for all students, provided that they meet the learning outcomes and criteria is the most inclusive way to ensure equality of opportunity.

### **2. Aims of the policy**

**2.1** The aim of this policy is to ensure that the University has the necessary systems and procedures to allow the provision of fair access to assessment, including reasonable adjustments for those with disabilities or short term circumstances that require them. These should reflect the needs of individual students and must also ensure that assessment continues to enable a valid, reliable and consistent judgement to be made about achievement of all learning outcomes against the stated assessment criteria.

**2.2** The policy also provides for special consideration to be given to students that experience temporary illness, injury or indisposition at the time of an assessment. This should allow them to demonstrate the achievement they are capable of for the units that are subject to special consideration.

### **3. Scope**

**3.1** This policy applies to the following:

- UWL staff;
- Assessors;
- Internal Verifiers;
- Quality Reviewers and External Verifiers;
- Key stakeholders involved in unit and qualification development;
- Qualifications Regulators.

**3.2** This policy applies to all awards of the University and the following external awards:

- Qualifications and units approved under the Ofqual Regulated Qualifications Framework;
- Education and Skills Funding Agency associated qualifications;
- Non qualification units approved by UWL.

**3.3** For some external awards, permission is required before reasonable adjustments can be made and this is covered under Section 12 below.

### **4. Definition of reasonable adjustments**

**4.1** A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the student at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation.

**4.2** Reasonable adjustments must not affect the reliability and validity of the assessment outcomes, but may involve:

- Changing usual assessment arrangements, for example allowing a student extra time to complete the assessment activity;
- Adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in Braille;
- Providing assistance during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader;
- Re-organising the assessment room, such as removing visual stimuli for a student with autism;
- Changing the assessment method, for example from a written assessment to a spoken assessment;
- Using assistive technology, such as screen reading or voice activated software.

**4.3** Reasonable adjustments are recommended and approved by the Wellbeing Service in collaboration with the relevant School/Course. Reasonable adjustments are set in place before the assessment activity takes place; they constitute an arrangement to give the student access to the units and qualification. The work produced by the student will be marked in the same way as the work of other assessed students.

**4.4** The University is only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of giving access. What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances, the impact of the disability on the individual, cost implications and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment.

**4.5** An important consideration when consideration of reasonable adjustments is that this does not override the need to maintain competence. The adjustments should allow the student to demonstrate this competence but not replace it. This is particularly the case with awards that lead to professional registration or a professional qualification.

## **5. Types of assessment and reasonable adjustments**

**5.1** Different types of assessment make different demands on the student and will influence whether reasonable adjustments will be needed and the kind of reasonable adjustment which may be put in place.

**5.2** The adjustments that are appropriate for a particular assessment will depend upon:

- The specific assessment requirements of the units and/or qualification
- The need to ensure core competencies or essential skills are assessed appropriately
- The type of assessment.
- The particular needs and circumstances of the individual student.
- Whether the learning outcomes can be met via another alternative assessment method.
- Equality of opportunity – no reasonable adjustment should give a student an unfair advantage or disadvantage.

## **6. Assessments which are not taken under examination conditions**

**6.1** With these types of assessments, the University has greater flexibility to be responsive to an individual student's needs and choose an assessment activity and method that will allow the student to demonstrate attainment.

**6.2** These types of assessments may include, for example:

- Coursework;
- Set assignments which are researched in the student's own time;
- Assessment activities devised by the University;
- Assessments where the student has to collect evidence in order to demonstrate competence.

**6.3** In these types of assessments the student may meet the specified assessment criteria in any way that is valid. To facilitate access where there is evidence of need, the University may allow the student to use any mechanical, electronic or other aids in order to demonstrate achievement as long as the aids:

- Are generally commercially available;
- Reflect the student's normal way of working;
- Enable the student to meet the specified criteria;
- Do not give the student an unfair advantage.

## **7. Assessments which are taken under examination conditions**

**7.1** Where the method of assessment is more rigidly determined, such as for assessments taken under specified conditions, there may be a greater need for adjustments to standard assessment arrangements in order to give access.

## **8. Identifying students who are eligible for reasonable adjustments**

**8.1** Any adjustment to assessment will be based on what the student needs to access the assessment. Below are some examples of student needs that may be adjustments to assessments. This list is not exhaustive and it should be noted that some student needs will fall within more than one of the categories set out below.

- Communication and interaction needs;
- Cognition and learning needs;
- Sensory and physical needs;
- Behavioural, emotional and social needs.

**8.2** The student will be eligible for reasonable adjustments if their performance during an assessment is likely to be substantially affected by a particular impairment. Many of these students will be defined as being disabled under the Equalities Act 2010.

**8.3** An adjustment to assessment should only be considered where the difficulty experienced places the student at a substantial disadvantage, in comparison with persons who are not

disabled. Where the difficulty has a relatively low impact, the school should assist the student by signposting help with study and assessment skills.

**8.4** A student does not necessarily have to be disabled (as defined by the Equalities Act 2010) to be entitled to reasonable adjustments to assessment. Every student who is disabled will also not necessarily be entitled to or need an adjustment to assessment. The student may have developed coping mechanisms which minimise or remove the need for assistance.

## **9. Identifying students' needs**

**9.1** Students who wish to apply for reasonable adjustments must apply to the Students Services Wellbeing Team for an Individual Support Plan (ISP). This process will:

- Identify those students who are having difficulties or are likely to have difficulties accessing assessment;
- Identify whether reasonable adjustments may be needed;
- Identify the appropriate adjustment in collaboration with the School and Course Leader;
- Ensure that the adjustment is in accordance with the UWL guidelines.

**9.2** It is the University's responsibility to ensure that all applications for reasonable adjustments are based on the individual need of the student and that the evidence in support of the application is sufficient, reliable and valid. The University should maintain records of all cases for audit purposes and to monitor the effectiveness of the reasonable adjustments which have been made.

**9.3** Requests for reasonable adjustments, particularly for formal examinations, must be made in accordance with any published deadlines to ensure there is sufficient time to make appropriate arrangements.

## **10. Reasonable adjustments that can be made**

**10.1** The school may present assessment materials or documents in a way that reflects the student's normal way of working and enables him or her to meet the specified assessment criteria. For example, materials do not have to be in written format, unless specified by the assessment requirements.

**10.2** The school may allow the student to present their answers or evidence in any format as long as it enables them to demonstrate that they have met the assessment criteria, for example, answers or evidence do not have to be in written format unless specified by the assessment criteria.

**10.3** The school is advised to contact UWL Wellbeing Team to discuss alternative arrangements that may be appropriate for specific situations and is advised to adopt a flexible approach in identifying alternative ways of achieving the assessment requirements.

## **11. Requirements for reasonable adjustments**

**11.1** The outcome produced by the student must at all times:

- Meet the requirements of the specifications regardless of the process or method used;
- Be as rigorous as assessment methods used with other students;

- Be assessable;
- Be able to be moderated or verified.

**11.2** The student must fulfil the demands of the criteria, regardless of method used to obtain the evidence. The assessment criteria may not be amended, re-worded or omitted.

**11.3** The student may use any mechanical or electronic aids which are available in the workplace or which are commercially available in order to demonstrate competence. For example, these may include specially adapted equipment or assistive technology.

**11.4** The school is required to provide the necessary resources to enable a student with access-related needs to produce evidence of developing the portfolio.

**11.5** All adjustments should be consistent with the student's normal way of working and must not give the student an unfair advantage over others.

## **12. Requirements for external awards and apprenticeships**

**12.1** Where a school is offering external awards or apprentices that include external awards (vendor qualifications) as part of the overall standards, it must observe the requirements set out below.

**12.2** While assessors, internal moderators and quality reviewers normally prefer to see a portfolio made up of evidence which is varied, the University should be prepared to accept a more restrictive variety of evidence as a means of enabling fair access to assessment. It is sensible, however, to discuss this matter with the internal moderator and/or quality reviewer at an early stage.

**12.3** The student must achieve all the required units to gain the qualification. It may sometimes be the case that some full qualifications are inaccessible because of a student's inability to demonstrate competence in all parts of the qualification. In these cases, unit certification will always be available.

**12.4** Where reasonable adjustments are put in place for an externally awarded qualification, the school should check whether permission needs to be obtained from the awarding body or the Quality Reviewer. The school should ensure that they adhere to the awarding body's requirements for record keeping and supporting evidence.

**12.5** In some cases the awarding body may permit the University to implement reasonable adjustments without seeking prior permission. The awarding body may, however, require the University to report back when they have permitted reasonable adjustments. The school should declare that the information provided for awarding body is accurate and that the adjustments to assessment have been made in accordance with the guidance of awarding body. The declaration should be signed and dated by a member of the University staff who has formally been given delegated authority for this by the Head of End Point Assessment.

**12.6** The list of possible reasonable adjustments in Appendix 1 lists the most commonly requested adjustments to standard examination arrangements which can be used when considering where the decisions on applying different reasonable adjustments need to be applied. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list and schools are advised to contact the Wellbeing team for advice on alternative ways of accessing assessment for particular

situations. This could be allowing presentations to the tutor only or submitting assignments in different formats.

### **13. Where the University is the end point assessment organisation for university awards**

**13.1** Where the University is the endpoint assessment organisation the school is required to apply for adjustments to assessments on behalf of the student. (See Appendix 1).

**13.2** The University should apply for special consideration using the form supplied. A separate form should normally be completed for each student for each unit or qualification. **13.3** The form should be submitted by the required deadline. It should be noted that applications received after the deadline may not be processed in time for the student to take the assessment. The application should be signed and dated by a member of the University staff who has formally been given delegated authority for this by the Head of End Point Assessment and should include the following declaration:

- The information in the application is accurate;
- The school will be able to provide the arrangements requested if their use is approved by the UWL;
- The reasonable adjustment will be implemented in accordance with the guidance given by the UWL;
- The school will not exceed the allowances given.

**13.3** Schools and Quality Reviewers have a duty to seek advice from Head of End Point Assessment in any case where they do not consider that they have the necessary expertise to judge whether a reasonable adjustment is needed, and/or how it should be applied.

**13.4** In cases where a group of students has been disadvantaged by a particular event (for example fire alarm) a single form should be submitted. A list of students affected should be attached to the form.

**13.5** Schools should note that:

- Not all the adjustments to assessments described below will be reasonable, permissible or practical in particular situations. If in doubt, the school is advised to contact Head of End Point Assessment for advice. In some circumstances it may be more appropriate to select an alternative assessment task for the student;
- The student may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all units and qualifications. Some students may need a single adjustment; others may require a combination of several adjustments;
- Adjustments to assessments will most commonly be needed for assessments which are taken under constrained/examination conditions.

### **14. Special consideration following an end point assessment**

**14.1** In certain cases, a student may make an application for special consideration. Applications for special consideration may be made no more than 7 days after the assessment.

**14.2** The student needs to submit evidence in support of special consideration. This may include a statement from the invigilator or any other appropriate information which should be retained by the school.

**14.3** Requests for special consideration may only be accepted after the results of the examination have been released in the following circumstances:

- Application has been overlooked at the University and the oversight is confirmed by the Head of the End Point Assessment Centre;
- Medical evidence comes to light about a student's condition, which demonstrates that the student was affected by the condition at the time of the examination, even though the problem revealed itself only after the assessment;
- For on-screen assessments where results are immediately available.

**14.5** If the application for special consideration is successful, the student's performance will be reviewed in the light of available evidence. It should be noted that a successful application of special consideration will not necessarily change a student's result.

## **15. Records**

**15.1** The School should keep records for audit purposes where they are permitted to agree on reasonable adjustments, where they apply to UWL for permission or where they agree on adjustments to assessment with the Quality Reviewer.

**15.2** The application should be signed and dated by a member of the University staff who has formally been given delegated authority by the Head of the End Point Assessment Centre. The signatory must declare that the information given is accurate.

## **Appendix 1 - List of possible reasonable adjustments for examinations**

### **Extra Time**

- Invariably applied to examination based assessment.
- Extra time should not be allowed where its use will invalidate the assessment criteria.
- Extra time should not give the student an unfair advantage over others. The amount of extra time must be realistic.

### **Supervised rest breaks**

- Schools should ensure that both the student and his/her work is supervised during the break.
- The duration of the break should not be deducted from the assessment time.
- Rest breaks should not be allowed where their use would invalidate the assessment criteria.

### **Changes in organisation of the assessment room**

- The school should consider the needs of each individual student and, where possible, arrange the assessment room to suit the student.

### **Separate accommodation within the University**

- Schools should ensure that, where students are accommodated separately for assessments taken under examination conditions, usual examination conditions apply and separate invigilation is arranged.

#### **Taking the assessment at an alternative venue**

- For assessments taken under examination conditions, standard examination conditions should be in place at the alternative venue and the standard procedures for security of assessment material and despatch of the student's work should be followed.

#### **Use of coloured overlays, low vision aids, tinted spectacles, CCTV and OCR scanners**

- The student should be familiar with how the aid works.
- The use of aids should not give the student an unfair advantage over other students or invalidate the assessment criteria.

#### **Use of assistive technology**

- The student should be familiar with how the assistive technology works.
- The assistive technology should not give the student an unfair advantage over other students or invalidate the assessment criteria.

#### **Use of bilingual dictionaries and bilingual translation dictionaries**

- The use of a bilingual dictionary should not give the student an unfair advantage over other students or invalidate the assessment criteria.

#### **Assessment material in enlarged format**

- Where appropriate, the University should meet UWL deadlines for requesting enlarged assessment material.
- In cases where the University is permitted by the UWL to enlarge assessment material, the University should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is enlarged.

#### **Assessment material in Braille**

- Where appropriate, the University should meet UWL deadlines for requesting brailled assessment material.
- In cases where the University is permitted by UWL to braille assessment material, the University should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is brailled.

#### **Assessment material in BSL**

- The school should meet UWL deadlines for requesting assessment material in BSL.
- In cases where the University is permitted to translate the assessment material into BSL, it should take responsibility for the security of the material and for the accuracy of the translation.
- The school should provide sufficient playback equipment that is in full working order.

### **Assessment material on coloured paper**

- Where appropriate, the University should meet UWL deadlines for requesting externally set assessment material on coloured paper.
- Where the University is permitted to modify the assessment material, it should take responsibility for the security of the assessment material and for the accuracy of the modification.

### **Assessment material in audio format**

- Where appropriate, the University should meet UWL deadlines for requesting assessment material in audio format.
- Where the University is permitted to produce an audio version of the assessment material, they should take responsibility for the security of the material and for ensuring that the entire document is copied. The school should ensure that sufficient playback equipment is provided in full working order.

### **Use of ICT to present responses**

The school should ensure that:

- the computer is used solely by the student and not by someone acting on the student's behalf unless the student has permission to use a scribe;
- the computer is working correctly at the time of an assessment. It is the University's responsibility to arrange the ICT provision for the student;
- the student has access only to those facilities (for example spell/grammar checker, voice activated software, speech reading software,) which have been agreed in advance with UWL;
- the student is not able to gain access to existing files or documents. Where a system operates from flash drive, CD or floppy disk, the student must be supplied with a formatted flash drive or disk containing only the software required for the assessment;
- the computer should be free-standing and not be connected to the Internet, unless this is required in the assessment;
- the student is accommodated separately if the use of a computer is likely to distract other students. In this case separate invigilation should be arranged;
- the student is present when his/her work is printed. It is normal practice for a printed version of the student's work to be submitted and authenticated for assessment, and not the disk;
- where a question/answer booklet is provided, the student might need to answer some questions in the booklet and type other answers. Answers should be clearly labelled and the printout must be attached to the question paper/answer booklet;
- the student should be proficient in the use of the computer and its software;
- the student's work is saved frequently and, if possible, using an auto-save facility.

### **Responses using electronic recording devices**

- The school should check whether permission should be sought from UWL Wellbeing Team to record the student's responses electronically.
- Recording the student's responses electronically should not be allowed where it will invalidate the assessment requirements.
- The school should ensure that the appropriate recording equipment is provided in full working order.
- The student using recording equipment should be accommodated separately, with separate invigilation, where its use will disturb other students.

### **Responses in BSL**

- The school should check whether permission should be sought from UWL Wellbeing Team to sign the student's responses on video.
- Signing of the student's responses on video should not be allowed where it will invalidate the assessment requirements.

### **Responses in Braille**

- A scribe should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

### **Reader**

- The school should check that the use of a reader is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the student to undertake the assessment. The school should select a reader and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.
- A separate invigilator should be present when a reader is used.
- A reader should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

### **Scribe**

- The school should check that the use of scribe is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the student to undertake the assessment.
- The school should select a scribe and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.
- A separate invigilator should be present when a scribe is used.

### **BSL interpreter**

- The school should check that the use of BSL interpreter is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the student to undertake the assessment.
- The school should select a BSL interpreter and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.
- A separate invigilator should be present when a BSL interpreter is used.
- A BSL interpreter should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

- The BSL interpreter should meet the person specification provided by UWL Wellbeing Team, or should have an appropriate qualification in the sign language so as not to disadvantage the student.

### **Prompter**

- The school should check that the use of a prompter is the most appropriate arrangement to enable the student to undertake the assessment.
- The school should select a prompter and fully brief him/her on their responsibilities.
- A separate invigilator should be present when a prompter is used. A prompter should not be allowed where such use would invalidate the assessment requirements.

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