



University of Plymouth

## **The University of Plymouth (UoP) Staff Guide**

**to**

### **Reasonable Adjustments for students with disabilities**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this guide is to provide a framework to help identify what are reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities. It is intended as a practical tool to identify the range of issues students with disabilities face and the kind of support University of Plymouth can offer. It is aimed at University of Plymouth staff who need to determine and agree reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities who study with the University. There are no determinative factors for reasonable adjustments and each case needs to be reviewed on its own merits.

University of Plymouth's Equality and Diversity policy promotes equality of opportunity and works to eliminate any unlawful or unfair discrimination and harassment in the workplace or place of study. It applies to all aspects of staff and student activity within the University.

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## **Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act gives rights to disabled people protecting them from discrimination, and harassment throughout their studies.

Where students with disabilities are at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with those who are not disabled, there is a duty on Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) to take **anticipatory** reasonable steps to remove that disadvantage. HEI's should aim to remove barriers that prevent students with disabilities from participating fully in university life and studies. Disabled students are also entitled to individual reasonable adjustments for specific requirements. There are no determinative factors for reasonable adjustments and each case needs to be reviewed on its own merits.

HEI's have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students in relation to the three areas detailed below:

1. A provision, criteria or practice
2. Physical features
3. Auxiliary aids

Ref: Equality and human rights 2014

### **Disability definition**

A person has a disability if—

- (a) A person has a physical or mental impairment, and
- (b) The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. (Equality Act 2010, Section 6)

## **What are reasonable adjustments?**

The measure of what is a reasonable adjustment will depend on an individual's and an institution's circumstances and can include consideration of:

- Resources available to the HEI
- Cost of making the particular adjustment
- Practicality of the changes
- Potential benefits to other staff, students and visitors

There are no determinative factors for reasonable adjustments and each case needs to be reviewed on its own merits. Reasonable adjustments may not apply to competency standards.

## **Competency Standards**

Within the context of quality and academic standards, a learning outcome for a module or a programme is a competency standard – it is something that we expect students to achieve. As with a competency standard, there are no reasonable adjustments available for a learning outcome. Achievement of a learning outcome is demonstrated through assessment. How that achievement is demonstrated, in other words, how we assess that achievement, is subject to reasonable adjustment. As well as all of the institutional considerations around what constitutes a “reasonable” adjustment, at the level of assessment, what is “reasonable” is a matter of academic judgement, and so what is “reasonable” should test the student's achievement of a learning outcome while taking into account the student's identified learning needs as identified within their support documentation.

In defining reasonableness, institutions are not required to compromise competence standards. However, not all competences, assessment criteria or learning objectives which students might be expected to fulfil on a particular course are genuine competence standards as defined by the Equality Act.

The Equality Act 2010 defines a competence standard as: ‘An academic, medical or other standard applied for the purposes of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability.’ (S.13, para 4(3))

Courses may have learning outcomes that meet the definition of a competence standard. HEIs are not required to make reasonable adjustments to learning outcomes that meet this definition **but may be required to make adjustments to the means by which they are assessed.**

Professional bodies also have a responsibility to review their competence standards to ensure they are not discriminatory.

Programme competence standards should be set out clearly in programme handbooks, including placement handbooks, and made easily available to students before starting course modules. The competence requirements of the professional body should also be made easily available to applicants and students at all stages of the course.

Further details around competency and reasonable adjustments are in the Equality Challenge Unit's guidance: *Understanding the interaction of competence standards and reasonable adjustments* published in July 2015. The link for this guide is here:

[http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ECU\\_Understanding\\_competence-standards-FINAL.pdf](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ECU_Understanding_competence-standards-FINAL.pdf)

#### **Examples of possible Reasonable Adjustments:**

- Making individual provision for a student to have their own room for an examination and/or use of a word processor due to a mental health condition.
- Providing alternative fieldwork assessment options that still meet the required learning outcomes for a student with a physical disability that affects their mobility in certain terrains.
- Improving physical access to design workshops for individuals needing wheelchair and general mobility access.
- When decorating, making anticipatory adjustments by considering strong colour contrast between walls and other surfaces to provide a more accessible physical environment.
- Providing course and university promotional materials in alternative formats, e.g. audio, braille, large print.

- Providing a support worker to take notes for a student with cerebral palsy in classes and practical assistant in library to retrieve materials.

It should be noted that adjustments should be made on an individual basis and similar adjustments may not be suitable for another student with similar needs. In addition, adjustments do not then set precedents for other students but can be taken into account when considering another student's needs.

(Equality Challenge Unit, 2010)

It should be noted that nothing in this guidance is conclusive, and each situation would need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, would require ongoing conversations with the relevant student, and be reviewed on a regular basis.

## **Disclosure**

A student can disclose a disability at any time whilst at university. A condition may emerge during their studies or a student may choose to disclose later in their programme. Encouraging disclosure means, a student's requirements for attending university can be determined. A disclosure form is provided for this in Appendix C. The university is expected to take reasonable steps to find out about a student's disability and clearly publicise availability of support and help.

A student who consents to disclose a disability allows Disability Services to liaise with faculty support, teaching, administrative staff and relevant external providers of support who provide non-medical helpers, funding bodies, specific support providers, Disabled Students' Allowance assessment centres etc. A student can choose not to disclose a disability but should be informed that they may limit the support they receive, until such time as they choose to disclose any disabilities. Lack of disclosure could result in a barrier to the UoP providing the full range of support available, but a lack of *initial* disclosure does not preclude a student accessing the full range of support, once they choose to disclose.

Disability evidence can include diagnostic assessment reports, a GP/Consultant letter, and Educational Health Care Plan (EHC) or Educational statement.

## **Changes to the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)**

From 2016-17 **some categories** of non-medical help are not funded by the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), for new students, or for students who are continuing their studies and are newly assessed as disabled. These arrangements will affect most students who declare themselves as disabled and are entering Level Zero, Stage 1 and postgraduate programmes in 2016 onwards and some continuing or direct entry students at other stages.

The financial responsibility for meeting the non-medical needs of students in these categories now lies almost wholly with the HEI. The categories that are no longer funded nationally typically involve one-to-one student support in the form of a study assistant (traditionally known as an enhanced enabler), note-taker and similar roles. **DSA has not been withdrawn completely**; students with complex needs will still receive support and this may include non-medical support.

In some situations, an inclusive pedagogy is not sufficient adjustment, and more support is needed. For example, students, typically those with specific mental health issues, may need further support to attend and participate in 'everyday' classes. The University, through Disability Services, will aim to assess, source and finance support needs. These assessments will be undertaken for students who disclose their disability to the University of Plymouth.

The Student Support Document (SSD) will identify relevant reasonable adjustments, which the University needs to make internally, <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia/student-support-documents>.

The SSD is not shared with external support agencies. Where additional needs are identified, referral to the Reasonable Adjustment Review Panel (RARP) may be required.

### **Identifying the need for Reasonable Adjustments**

Where a student's needs are likely to go beyond those provided by inclusive pedagogy, appropriate adjustments should be considered and as there are no determinative factors for reasonable adjustments, agreed on a case by case basis with the student, faculty, the UoP Safety Office and Disability Services.

## **Reasonable Adjustment Review Panel (RARP)**

As a result of changes to the DSA, the RARP was established in December 2015 in order to consider and make recommendations on cases where levels of support recommended would either not be covered by, or would cost more than funding provided by the DSA, or may be above a level that the University may regard as reasonable.

The purpose of the RARP is to assess the need for and reasonableness of any potential adjustments. The RARP makes equitable, academically sound and financially viable judgements about the levels of additional support funding to be provided for students with disabilities. As already stated there are no determinative factors for reasonable adjustments and each case is reviewed on its own merits.

**A level of support may be seen as reasonable when it conforms to the following possible factors. The list below is not determinative:**

- The support is funded by the DSA or equivalent grant or bursary, or can reasonably be met from funds within the University.
- Support for students with disabilities will be provided at a level that is judged to be broadly comparable to the HE sector norms in relation to particular disabilities, and appropriate to local conditions. This is only a factor and should not be seen as conclusive.
- Overall levels of support provided for disabilities at the University should generally take account of the need to promote an increasing degree of autonomy and independence over the student life cycle, so as not to disadvantage disabled students when they enter the workplace after graduation, or create unrealistic expectations of support beyond University.
- Support aims to reflect the levels provided by Access to Work ([www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview)) grants to pay for practical support for disability, health or mental health conditions. This is only a factor and should not be seen as conclusive.

- Support for a disability at the University should not be provided at a level that would not normally be expected in society at large.
- Additional support for a disability provided as part of the overall student experience at University of Plymouth, including on programmes of study, and any essential fieldtrips and placements, should be provided **up to** a level where the essential competencies and learning outcomes required by any assessment panel and/or relevant fitness to practise requirements can be met by the student. Adjustments will not be made to learning outcomes in these situations. Support **should not** go beyond that level, in order to avoid a situation where a University of Plymouth graduate would be seen as unfit to practise in a professional field relevant to their UoP qualification, or to progress to further study.
- Additional support for a disability provided as part of the overall student experience at University of Plymouth should not be provided at a level or in such a way as to impact negatively on the academic progress, wider experience or professional work of other students or staff.

Further details of the RARP can be found in this link:

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/reasonable-adjustments>

A student template for the RARP is in Appendix A. This is completed by a Disability Adviser in Disability Services and is used at RARP meetings for the panel to make a decision on whether the requests made by the Disability Adviser (in consultation with the student and/or DSA external assessment centres) are reasonable.

The RARP will be collating anonymised examples of reasonable and unreasonable adjustment requests to inform good practice at University of Plymouth in the future.

## **Determining reasonable adjustments**

There are currently no clear definitive rules to determine what is reasonable. The consideration is judged against:

- The effectiveness of the adjustment in preventing the disadvantage.
- The extent to which it is practical for the university to make the adjustment.
- The cost and availability of the resources including external services and finance.
- The extent to which making the adjustment would disrupt the university's activities.
- The need for the learning outcomes of each degree to be met.

Communication between UoP staff and the individual student is vital at all stages for a successful outcome. Records should be kept of all discussions, as this will inform good practice and any external challenge, e.g. an SFE appeal. There are no determinative factors for reasonable adjustments and each case is to be reviewed on its own merits.

### **Reasonable Adjustments for assessments:**

HEIs are required to make reasonable adjustments including adjustments to assessment processes wherever possible in order to ensure that disabled students are not disadvantaged.

(Equality Challenge Unit, 2015)

### **Examples of possible reasonable adjustments for assessments include:**

- Consideration of, and adjustment to, exam requirements where appropriate.
- Exam reader/s.
- Advance dates given for assessments.
- Draft work accepted for checking well ahead of the deadline.

- Oral presentation of work allowed in the form of *vivas*, but both staff and students need training in the use of *vivas* to meet the learning outcomes of courses.
- When allowed, *Vivas* should be recorded for external examiners.
- The option of students presenting coursework instead of doing examinations considered (but see competency standards).
- Examinations with an open book or seen provision is considered.
- Audio or video presentations allowed for students who find direct presentation difficult (e.g. due to expressive language difficulties).
- Mind mapped presentations may be acceptable for some assessment components.
- Good practice dictates that practice assessment papers are available with feedback and marked if requested for ALL students.
- Projects and work of a more practical kind, may be acceptable alternatives to dissertations.
- Portfolios or presentations may be acceptable alternatives to essays
- Short answer responses may be an acceptable alternative to essays in some contexts.
- The use of voice activated software allowed if needed.
- The use of text reading software, if needed.
- In examinations, students have additional time, and if necessary the use of information technology with the facility to change the background colour and font, access to large print versions of the questions and the services of a reader or amanuensis.
- Students may be given the opportunity to type exams with each case being reviewed on its own merits.

- All alternative forms of assessment reviewed at Academic Progress Review Boards.

(Equality Challenge Unit, 2015)

There are no determinative factors for reasonable adjustments and each case will need to be reviewed on its own merits.

### **Admissions**

The Equality Act (2010) makes it unlawful to discriminate against an applicant or student in relation to admission (s91) because of their disability or disabilities, which states:

'(1) the responsible body of an institution to which this section applies must not discriminate against a person—

- (a) In the arrangements it makes for deciding who is offered admission as a student;
- (b) As to the terms on which it offers to admit the person as a student;
- (c) By not admitting the person as a student.'

Offers may be subject to further discussions with faculty and support services to establish whether a student can fully access the course. In the event that these discussions lead to an offer being withdrawn, the university will work with a student to explore if there are any alternative options available.

### **Reasonable Adjustments for Fieldtrips**

For fieldwork and off-site activity of all kinds, please see the university Code of Practice on Fieldwork and offsite activities – <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia/field-trips-and-off-campus-learning-activities>

Further information can be found in Appendix B.

## **Examples of possible reasonable adjustments for fieldwork and off site visits**

### **include:**

- Setting a local fieldtrip, which meets the learning outcomes of the module for students who are unable to be away from their usual accommodation or are unable to travel.
- Consider using technology based fieldtrip scenarios, which meet the student's learning outcomes.
- Where accessible travel is not available, consideration needs to be given to an alternative mode of transport, i.e. a taxi.
- Some students with disabilities may need a support worker to accompany them; clear communication with the student and the Disability Service will be needed.
- There may need to be additional planning for residential trips where some students will require their own accommodation and will not be able to stay in shared rooms.

### **Additional relevant policies**

Accessible and inclusive learning guidance is available via the Teaching and Learning link and <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/teaching-and-learning/inclusivity> and at Disability Services: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia>

There is relevant information to help aid discussions with students and UoP staff to gain better understanding of students learning requirements. The Student Support Document (SSD) outlines how disabilities such as dyslexia and mental health conditions can affect some students: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia/advice-about-specific-conditions>

### **References**

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/equalityact2010-technicalguidance-feandhe-2015.pdf>

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Legislation.gov.uk. (2016) *Equality Act 2010*. Available at:  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/6> (Accessed: 15 June 2016)

University of Plymouth (2016) *Equality objectives, University of Plymouth*. Available at: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/equality-objectives> (Accessed: 15 June 2016).

## Appendix A

### RARP Form

<b>Student Details</b>			
<b>Student Initials</b>			<b>Date of Birth:</b>
<b>International Student</b>	Choose an item.		
<b>Programme of Study</b>			
<b>Faculty</b>			
<b>School</b>			
<b>Stage of study</b>	Choose an item.		
<b>Funding body</b>			<b>SRN:</b>
<b>Supplier</b>			
<b>Disability declared</b>			
<b>Disability Code - HESA</b>	Choose an item.		
<b>Funding for support already in place?</b>	Is there existing UoP support in place?		

<b>Name of Referrer</b>	Choose an item.		
<b>Anticipated Cost requested</b>	£		
<b>Contact address</b>			
<b>Contact Number/s</b>	<b>Mobile:</b>	<b>Landline:</b>	
<b>Email</b>	personal:  PU: @students.plymouth.ac.uk		
<b>Place of Study</b>	UoP		
<b>DSA Details</b>			
<b>Applied for DSA?</b>	Choose an item.		
<b>Go ahead received from Funding Body?</b>	Choose an item.  E.g. Interim support?		
<b>Date of referral</b>	Click here to enter a date.		
<b>Date support required to start</b>	Click here to enter a date.		
<b>Date of decision of panel</b>	Click here to enter a date.		

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**Case details**

**Disability Advisor's outline of case and rationale for consideration by panel.**

**Recommended Inclusive practice to reduce necessity of future reasonable adjustments (e.g. physical access/inclusive design to support all students):**

**Decision of panel:**

**Rationale for Decision:**

**Any further actions required?**

<b>Support Details</b>			
<b>Bands 1 &amp; 2 Support</b>			
<b>Manual Note Taking Support</b>	<b>Support Details</b>	ü	<b>Hours</b>
<b>Practical Services and Support</b>	<b>Support Details</b>	ü	<b>Hours</b>
	Laboratory/workshop		
	Reader support		
	Library support		
	Mobility support		
	Scribe		
	Sighted Guide		

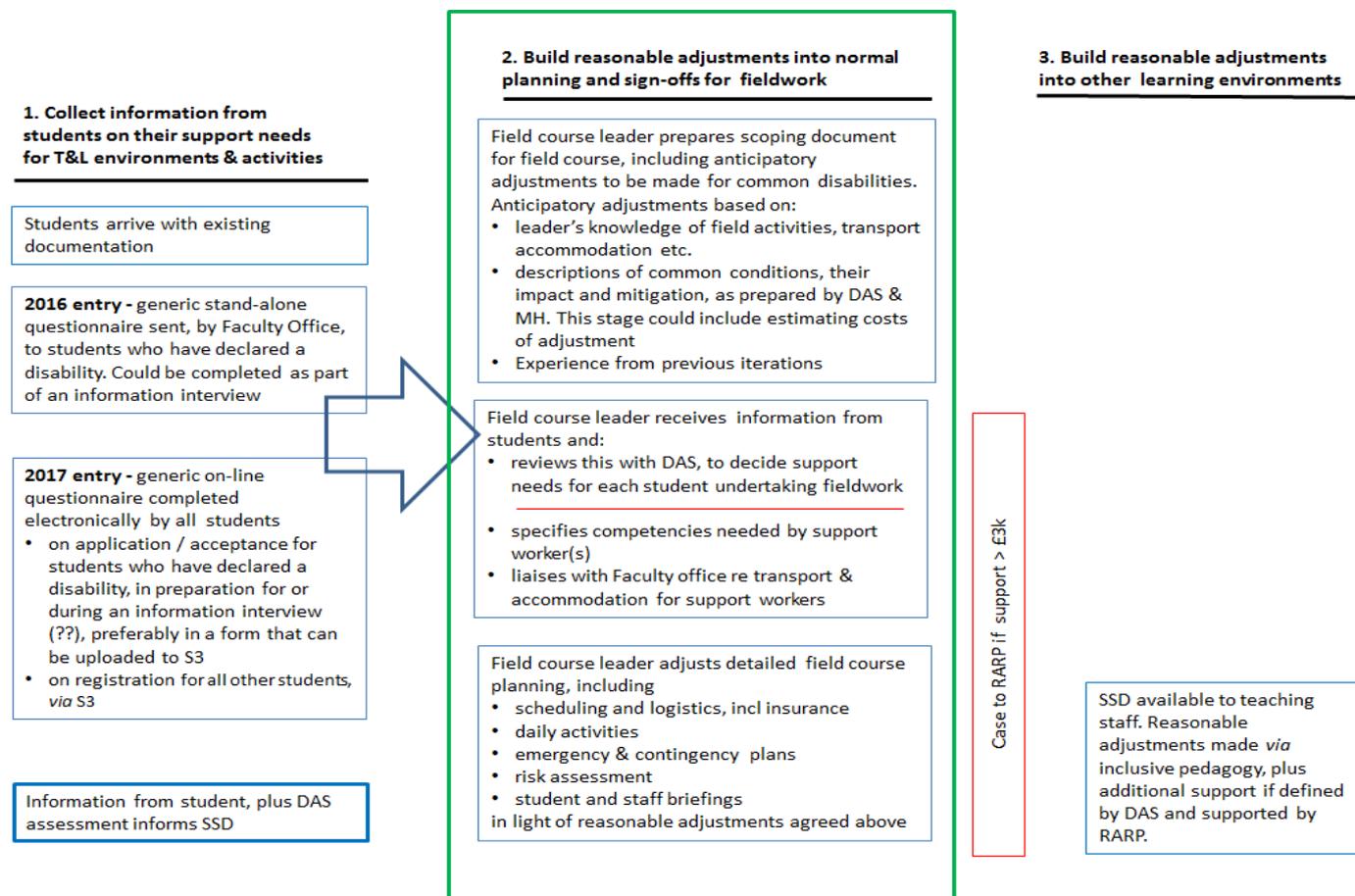
	Proof Reader		
	Other (please specify)		
<b>Examination Support</b>	<b>Support Details</b>	ü	<b>Hours</b>
<b>Study Services Support</b>	<b>Support Details</b>	ü	<b>Hours</b>
	Mental health		
	ASD		
	Other (please specify)		
<b>Bands 3 &amp; 4 Support</b>			
<b>Specialist Enabling Support</b>	<b>Support Details</b>	ü	<b>Hours</b>
	Communication Support		
	Electronic note taking		

	Specialist Transcription		
	Mobility Trainer		
	Other (please specify)		
<b>Specialist one to one Study Skills Support</b>	<b>Support Details</b>	ü	<b>Hours</b>
	Specialist 1:1 SPLDs		
	Specialist 1:1 other		
<b>Specialist Mentoring Support:</b>	<b>Support Details</b>	ü	<b>Hours</b>
	Mental health		
	ASD		
	Other (please specify)		
<b>BSL interpreter</b>	<b>Support Details</b>	ü	<b>Hours</b>

<b>Language Support Tutor for the Deaf</b>	<b>Support Details</b>	ü	<b>Hours</b>
<b>Case information for supplier to be passed on to support providers:</b>			

## Appendix B

### Fieldwork and Off Site Activities Table



## Appendix C

### Disability Services Disclosure Form

Name		Click here to enter name.
Date of Birth		Click here to enter a date of birth.
Signature / electronic agreement		Click here to enter electronic signature.
Date		Click here to enter date.
B	You have a social/communication impairment such as Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	You are blind or have a serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses	<input type="checkbox"/>
D	You are deaf or have a serious hearing impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>
E	You have a long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy	<input type="checkbox"/>
F	You have a mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder	<input type="checkbox"/>
G	You have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D	<input type="checkbox"/>
H	You have physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using your arms or using a wheelchair or crutches	<input type="checkbox"/>
I	You have a disability, impairment or medical condition that is not listed above	<input type="checkbox"/>
J	You have two or more impairments and/or disabling medical conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>YES</b>	I agree to an exchange of relevant information about my disability and/or support requirements, including my DSA report if appropriate, being disclosed to those faculty, teaching and administrative staff who have a need to know, and to relevant external providers of support (e.g. those who provide enablers/support workers i.e. note takers, mentors, study skills tutors), funding bodies, specific support providers, DSA assessment centres etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>NO</b>	I do not agree but I understand that if I do not agree to disclosure about my disability this may limit the support I receive.  <i>If you are unsure about giving your consent or wish to discuss this disclosure with us please contact a duty disability advisor as soon as possible on 01752 587676 to avoid delays in processing.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In the event that I do not take up a place I understand that this information will be shredded within a reasonable period.

**Please complete and return to the Learning Gateway, Roland Levinsky Building as soon as possible in order that any support you may need can be put in place**