

Reasonable Adjustments Procedure

Reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment for students with a disability

Purpose:

This document sets out the procedures to ensure we meet the needs of students requiring reasonable adjustments.

1. Health Sciences University (HSU) aims to develop inclusive teaching, learning and assessment to benefit all students, as well as providing regular training to academic staff. However, the university recognises that, at times, reasonable adjustments will be needed to ensure students are not disadvantaged.
2. Students are encouraged to declare a disability at the earliest opportunity. Students may disclose a disability in a number of different ways:
 - Telling the university on their application form during the admissions process
 - Through contacting Student Services and meeting with a Disability and Inclusion Advisor
 - By telling a member of staff in their course team or their personal tutor
 - Sharing the information through other processes, for example, in requesting suitable accommodation
3. Students declaring a disability or specific learning difficulty (including dyslexia) should arrange an initial screening via Student Services and provide all available evidence.
4. For applicants declarations will be picked up from the application form. Contact will be made to book an early appointment to ensure adjustments are in place for the student at the earliest opportunity.
5. Where a student engages with Student Services a Student Learning Plan will be produced and, where a disability or specific learning difficulty is confirmed as a result of this process, this will document the disability and suggested adjustments for each learner. Any DSA or Occupational Health suggestions will be incorporated within this.
6. The Student Learning Plan process is as follows:
 - a) Student meets with a Disability and Inclusion Advisor
 - b) Following the meeting, reasonable adjustments are recommended by the Disability and Inclusion Advisor in the form of a Student Learning Plan
 - c) This is shared with the student and permission is sought to share with the course team

- d) Where consent is given, this is then shared with the course team
 - e) Reasonable adjustments are added to the Student Record system. This will be done no later than six weeks before an assessment period to ensure Registry can run a report of reasonable adjustments needed.
 - f) The student will receive confirmation of the recorded reasonable adjustments within three weeks of submission of the request.
 - g) Where adjustments are requested after this time, and/or outcomes of an assessment are received after this date, every effort will be made to put the necessary adjustments in place. It should be noted this cannot be guaranteed at short notice.
 - h) Should it be too late to put adjustments in place, the Exceptional Personal Circumstances policy should be followed.
7. Where there is a complex need or uncommon adjustment, Student Services will liaise with Registry and academic colleagues to ensure this can be accommodated
 8. In considering reasonable adjustments, Student Services will take into account:
 - The impact of the disability on the individual student
 - Effectiveness of the proposed adjustment
 - Practicality
 - Potential Health and Safety issues
 - Costs of proposed adjustments; that funding can be reasonably met from funds within the University, if Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) does not fully cover the proposed adjustment
 - Support is comparable within other universities in the Higher Education (HE) sector
 - The most effective way of reducing any disadvantage for the student
 - Whether support could be provided to reduce disadvantage e.g. a reader
 - Relevant interests of other students
 9. Should there be concerns about implementing proposed reasonable adjustments, advice should be sought from the Head of Student and Wellbeing Services.
 10. Uptake and implementation of reasonable adjustments will be monitored and reported to ensure compliance with this policy and its associated procedures.

Types of reasonable adjustment

11. Reasonable adjustments will vary from student to student and be dependant on condition(s) declared. They apply to both written and practical assessments. Typical adjustments requested may include:

For teaching and learning:

- Access to teaching materials ahead of the session
- Awareness of occasional absence for treatments and access to materials so the student can continue to work from home
- Leaving notes up after a teaching session so the student can go back over them
- Alternative or prioritised reading lists

- Provision of materials in alternative formats
- Written lists to accompany multi-step oral instructions
- Permission to use assisted technology to record a session
- Sitting position in class
- Rest breaks

For assessments:

- Stop the clock rest breaks (ten minutes in every hour)
- 25% extra time
- Use of a coloured overlay
- Headphones or ear defenders
- Adjustment to the format of a presentation
- Alternative method of assessment
- Use of a computer
- Use of a reader or scribe
- Rest breaks

Placements

12. Where a course includes Practice Based Learning, placements will be considered during the initial meeting with the Disability and Inclusion Advisor and recommendations detailed in the Student Learning Plan
13. Where less common adjustments are needed these will be discussed in the first instance with the academic team, and if necessary, the Practice Educator.
14. Where different adjustments are needed due to a change of placement type, the student should discuss with the Disability and Inclusion Advisor in the first instance.

Alternative Assessment arrangements

15. Where existing assessment options, even with adjustments, continue to present a barrier for the student, the need for an alternative mode of assessment should be considered
16. Alternative assessments proposed should be reasonable and consider equity for other students. Academic teams should discuss with their unit and/or course leader before implementing.
17. Examples of an alternative assessment may be a written rather than oral presentation or poster or video instead of a written report.
18. To apply for Alternative Assessments please use the Alternative Assessments form as least six weeks days before the assessment is due.

Temporary adjustments

19. If, as a result of unforeseen circumstances, learners have a temporary injury necessitating an examination adjustment they should notify Registry as soon as possible, and normally at least three working days before the first affected examination, using the Temporary Assessment ALS

Request Form. All requests must be accompanied by appropriate medical evidence, submitted in English (officially translated, where applicable – please see the definition included on the Temporary Assessment ALS Request Form).

20. Staff shall do their best to accommodate requests made at short notice but it is not possible to guarantee that they will be met, and if a temporary injury is very last minute it may be more appropriate for the situation to be addressed by means of an examination postponement or through an application for Exceptional Personal Circumstances, as applicable.
21. For support in examinations Registry will discuss the learner's needs with Student Services and the relevant Course Leader, to identify whether appropriate adjustments can be accommodated.
22. For written coursework, temporary injuries will usually be addressed by means of an extension to coursework deadlines as covered by the Exceptional Personal Circumstances Policy.
23. Where practical assessments are affected by temporary injuries (e.g. broken limb), Course Leaders must liaise with Registry to determine whether the task can be reasonably adjusted

ALN Marking Guidelines

24. Where a student has indicated they are entitled to ALN marking on a submission or Registry have indicated on an exam paper, SpLD marking guidelines must be followed. Please see Appendix A and Appendix B for further information.
25. Students entitled to ALS marking must indicate this on their Turnitin submission at the top of every page. Similarly, for written exams, Registry will indicate on the front page of the exam paper and within relevant unit mark spreadsheets. Markers should ensure that the ALS Marking Guidelines are applied only in these cases.
26. HSU SpLD/Dyslexia Marking Guidelines should be used by markers when marking timed assessments submitted by a deaf or hearing impaired student, a student with dyslexia, dyspraxia, semantic pragmatic disorder, acquired dyslexia, ADHD/Autism or other specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) whose disability affects language processing and written academic English.

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Originator/Author	Head of Student Services and Wellbeing
Policy Owner	Academic Registrar
Reference/ source	Internal. Equivalent policies at other HEIs
Date approved	13 August 2025
Effective from	September 2025
Review date	2028/29
Target	All students and apprentices, all academic staff, Registry staff
Policy location	Public website. Internal
Equality analysis	The procedures are specifically intended to formalise arrangements for students requiring additional learning support/reasonable adjustments due to a declared disability, as such they have a direct positive impact.

Appendix A- SpLD/Dyslexia (formerly ALS) marking guidelines: adjustments for marking

Purpose

These guidelines provide a framework for applying marking adjustments when assessing the work of students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) that affect language processing and written academic English. The aim is to ensure fairness and compliance with the Equality Act 2010 by removing substantial disadvantage, while maintaining academic and professional competence standards.

Definitions and legal context

1. Under the Equality Act 2010, institutions must make reasonable adjustments to alleviate or remove the effects of substantial disadvantage. This may mean doing things differently if the usual approach would substantially disadvantage a disabled person.
2. Marking guidelines are one example of such a reasonable adjustment, ensuring that students with SpLDs are assessed fairly against learning outcomes without being unfairly penalised for difficulties arising from their disability.
3. The British Dyslexia Association defines Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) as neurological (rather than psychological) differences in the way information is learned and processed. They usually run in families and occur independently of intelligence. They can have a significant impact on education, learning, and the acquisition of literacy skills.

SpLD is an umbrella term covering a range of frequently co-occurring difficulties, most commonly:

- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia / Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)
- Dyscalculia
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

SpLDs may also co-occur with other conditions, such as Asperger Syndrome.

4. Common Characteristics of SpLDs:
 - Memory difficulties
 - Organisational difficulties
 - Writing difficulties
 - Visual processing difficulties
 - Reading difficulties
 - Auditory processing difficulties
 - Time management difficulties
 - Sensory distraction: inability to screen out extraneous visual/auditory stimuli
 - Sensory overload: heightened sensitivity to visual or auditory input, difficulty coping in busy environments
5. Acquired Dyslexia:

Some students who have experienced brain injury may develop a form of acquired dyslexia. This can affect cognitive processes and manifest in similar ways to other SpLDs.
6. Impact on Oral Assessments

While some students with SpLD's may have verbal strengths and perform well in oral assessments or presentations, others may experience:

- Word retrieval difficulties
- Long hesitations
- Mispronunciations
- Speaking in incomplete sentences
- Difficulty sequencing ideas for presentation (similar to challenges in written work)

Guiding Principles for Marking

7. All student work, including that from students with SpLDs, should be marked against published learning outcomes. These outcomes must be made clear to all students.
8. These guidelines do not override assessment criteria*. Where assessment criteria explicitly include the standard of written or spoken English as part of the intended learning outcomes, those criteria should be applied. However, as a reasonable adjustment, an alternative method of assessment may be considered to test knowledge without disadvantage.
9. Assessment criteria should not be confused with marking criteria, particularly where marks are allocated for transferable skills related to written language. Unless written communication is an explicitly stated learning outcome, students should not be penalised in this section for difficulties arising from a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD).
10. These guidelines must not compromise competence standards or academic judgments relating to them. There is no requirement to adjust a competence standard itself; however, the method of assessing it may be adjusted.
11. Marking adjustments should focus on content knowledge and achievement of learning outcomes, rather than penalising for surface-level language or spelling/grammar errors where these are not part of the intended outcomes.
12. The adjustments outlined here apply to individual assessments. They do not normally apply to group projects where work is shared and members can utilise one another's strengths. However, if an individual written component is part of a timed group project, these marking guidelines should be applied to that component.

Practical Examples of Reasonable Marking Adjustments

13. Written Exams and Timed Assessments

- Focus marking on accuracy of subject knowledge and relevance to the question.
- Do not penalise for spelling, grammar, or punctuation unless explicitly part of the learning outcome.
- Where handwriting is difficult to read due to an SpLD, allow clarification or transcription.

14. Coursework and Essays

- Mark primarily for content, structure, and argument rather than surface-level errors.
- Highlight patterns of error in feedback without deducting marks where these are disability-related and not part of the intended outcome.
- Use clear, plain language in feedback to support comprehension.

15. Presentations and Oral Assessments

- Where spoken language is not part of the assessed outcome, focus on clarity of ideas and subject knowledge, not fluency or pronunciation.

- Allow additional preparation or practice time if appropriate.

16. Group Projects

- No adjustments to group-marking criteria where outputs are shared and collaborative.
- Apply adjustments to individually produced written or oral components where relevant.

17. Professional Competence Standards

- Where written or oral communication is a defined professional competence (e.g., in teaching, law, health sciences), assess against that standard.
- Consider alternative ways for the student to demonstrate the competence (e.g., oral defence instead of written response), provided it does not dilute the standard.

Appendix B: Quick Reference Guide: SpLD/Dyslexia Marking Adjustments

Purpose

To ensure fair assessment of students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) in line with the Equality Act 2010, without lowering academic or professional standards.

1. Core Principles

- Mark against published learning outcomes
- Focus on content and knowledge
- Do not penalise for disability-related errors unless part of the outcome
- Maintain competence standards where required
- Apply adjustments to individual assessments, not shared group work (unless an individual component is assessed)

2. Common SpLD Characteristics

- Memory or organisation difficulties
- Writing, reading, or processing delays
- Spelling and grammar errors
- Auditory/visual processing difficulties
- Sensory overload or distraction

2. Marker Do's & Don'ts

DO:

- Apply criteria consistently to all students
- Consider whether errors are content-related or disability-related
- Give constructive, clear feedback
- Use plain English in feedback

DON'T:

- Double-penalise for the same error
- Reduce marks for spelling/grammar unless directly assessed
- Ignore professional standards - adjust the method, not the standard

3. Practical Adjustments by Assessment Type

- **Written Exams / Timed Tests**
 - Focus on subject knowledge
 - Ignore spelling/grammar unless assessed
 - Allow clarification if handwriting is unclear

- **Coursework / Essays**
 - Prioritise argument, structure, and evidence
 - Highlight (not penalise) disability-related errors
 - Use accessible feedback
- **Presentations**
 - Focus on clarity of ideas, not fluency
 - Allow extra prep/practice time
- **Professional Competence**
 - Assess against required standards
 - Use alternative formats only if they meet the same standard

4. **Quick Marking Questions**

Marker Checklist for Adjustments

Have I applied the published learning outcomes consistently?	
Am I assessing knowledge and skills, not disability-related errors, unless directly relevant to the outcome?	
Have I provided clear, constructive feedback that supports improvement?	
Have I avoided double penalising (e.g., marking down for both grammar and content where errors stem from the same difficulty)?	
If written communication is part of the competence standard, have I ensured assessment is fair, transparent, and compliant with professional expectations?	
Am I assessing knowledge or language?	
Would a student without an SpLD lose the same marks for this?	
Is the error relevant to the learning outcome?	
Have I recorded my adjustments for audit?	

Remember: Marking adjustments remove disadvantage, not rigour. Maintain fairness for all students.