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**DAWN Principles, Guidelines and Procedures for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to Students with Disabilities**

**Adopted by DAWN**

JUNE 2019

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**Introduction**

The Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN) Principles, Guidelines and Procedures for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to Students with Disabilities (June, 2019) is the outcome of work undertaken by DAWN in developing standardised assessment procedures for students with disabilities in higher education in Ireland. DAWN is a professional organisation for Disability Officers who are responsible for supporting learners with disabilities in higher education in Ireland (see Appendix 1). Through this collaboration, DAWN hopes to achieve consistency in the standard and delivery of reasonable accommodations in examinations and assessments across the higher education sector.

The purpose of this document is to support Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in developing policies and procedures that ensure students with disabilities are treated fairly and equitably in the examination process, thereby allowing them to compete equitably with their peers and to demonstrate their true knowledge and competency.

DAWN strongly advocates for Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in higher education as a model of inclusive practice that can cater to a diverse student cohort, including students with disabilities. UDL is an inclusive approach that helps institutions build a system in which all students have meaningful and challenging learning and assessment experiences that enable them to succeed. UDL has the advantage of meeting the learning and assessment needs of most students within mainstream teaching and study supports by embedding a choice of learning and assessment activities, providing scaffolded learning and embracing technology.

This document updates the DAWN Policy, Guidelines and Procedures for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to Students with Disabilities, that was originally published by DAWN in 2008 (earlier guidelines on reasonable accommodations in examinations were published by AHEAD in 2001[[1]](#footnote-1)) and updated in 2012/2013.

A working group, chaired by Trinity College Dublin and comprising representatives from Cork Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Tralee, Maynooth University and University College Dublin, was established to comprehensively review the policy (see Appendix 2). The working group met on April 11, 2019 and on April 30, 2019. The recommendations of the working group were presented to DAWN on June 6, 2019 for discussion and endorsement. A final policy document, incorporating the recommendations of the working group and the views of the wider group, was adopted on June 28, 2019.

# **1. Principles for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to students with Disabilities**

* 1. The HEI is committed to ensuring, as far as possible and within the framework of current legislative requirements (the Disability Act 2005, the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015, the Universities Act 1997, the Institutes of Technology Act 2006 and the Technological Universities Act 2018), that students with disabilities have equality of access to and participation in all teaching, learning, and examination and assessment procedures. This includes end-of-semester examinations and any other examinations that contribute to module or course results.
  2. The HEI endorses the principles of inclusive teaching, learning and assessment.
  3. The HEI is committed to ensuring that students with disabilities will be enabled to demonstrate their knowledge and competency on an equal basis with their peers.
  4. For the purpose of this document, reasonable accommodations are defined as “those actions that enable students to demonstrate their true knowledge and ability in examinations without changing the demands of the examination.” The intention behind the provision of such accommodations is to alleviate substantial disadvantages without affecting the integrity of the assessment.
  5. The granting of reasonable accommodations will not put the integrity or status of the examination or assessment at risk and will ensure fairness to all students.
  6. Reasonable accommodations should support students to become more independent in their learning.
  7. Ultimate responsibility for ensuring equity of access in examinations and assessment lies with the HEI, although a number of administrative units and academic departments may be involved in coordinating reasonable accommodations.
  8. For the purpose of this document the definition of disability is that encompassed by the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015 (See Appendix 3). The policy adopted through this document will apply to any student who may be regarded as having a disability under those Acts.
  9. The HEI has the responsibility to recruit and train invigilators and to ensure they understand reasonable accommodations and their application in examinations. (See Appendix 4).

# **2. Procedures for the provision of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations**

## 2.1 Determining Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations

2.1.1 This document provides guidelines for determining when reasonable accommodations may be appropriate in examinations. The actual need for a particular examination accommodation is determined through the needs assessment process, taking account of the student’s individual needs and the impact of the disability in an examination setting.

2.1.2 Students with disabilities who received reasonable accommodations in Irish state examinations, other institutions and/or other jurisdictions will only be granted reasonable accommodations on completion of a needs assessment with the HEI.

2.1.3 Reasonable accommodations should not be provided, removed or refused without prior consultation with the Disability Service.

2.1.4 Reasonable accommodations may be reviewed as needed. Students who fail to use a reasonable accommodation that has been granted may have that accommodation reviewed.

2.1.5 Complaints relating to the provisions of examination accommodations (or failure thereof) should be made using the HEI’s Student Complaints Procedure.

2.1.6 Deadlines are set by the Examinations Office to allow exams to run smoothly. These deadlines are published well in advance. Students should make requests as early as possible in the academic year. This is to ensure the Examinations Office can facilitate examination accommodations. Students applying for reasonable accommodations with the Disability Service after the deadline dates will be accommodated in subsequent examinations.

## 2.2 Availing of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations

2.2.1 Students with disabilities must complete a needs assessment with the Disability Service to avail of reasonable accommodations in examinations.

2.2.2 Students with disabilities must provide appropriate documentary evidence of their disability as outlined by the HEI.

2.2.3 It is the student’s responsibility to inform the HEI of any changes to their disability that may require new or revised accommodations. Changes to examination accommodations are only approved following an updated needs assessment with the Disability Service. See 2.1.6 regarding examination deadlines.

2.2.4 The reasonable accommodations that incoming international students receive in the host institution may differ from those accommodations received in the student’s home institution. Examination accommodations for incoming international students at the host institution will be provided in line with the HEI guidelines.

2.2.5 Assistive technology may be used as an enabling accommodation for examinations unless the student is unable to use the recommended assistive technology due to the nature of their disability.

2.2.6 Students with disabilities who require specialist examination accommodations such as assistive technology or a reader/scribe must ensure that they are proficient in the use of the specialist exam accommodation provided. Students should attend available training in the use of such accommodations if needed.

## 2.3 Notification of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations

2.3.1 On completion of the needs assessment students with disabilities will be notified of the support that will be provided in the HEI, including reasonable accommodations that have been granted for examinations.

2.3.2 The Disability Service will notify the Examinations Office of approved examination accommodations.

2.3.3 The Examinations Office is responsible for coordinating the provision of the reasonable accommodations in end-of-semester examinations.

2.3.4 Academic departments are responsible for coordinating reasonable accommodations in in-class assessments, particularly for credit bearing assessments. Students are required to initiate contact with the school/department as soon as they are informed about the in-class assessment to request reasonable accommodations as per their needs assessment.

## 2.4 Disclosure of Reasonable Accommodations for Examinations

2.4.1 The provision of reasonable accommodations in examinations will be made known to the relevant academic, administrative and examination staff as per the HEI procedures in a GDPR compliant manner.

2.4.2 Students with disabilities are, where possible, marked anonymously. The use of alternative examination arrangements may affect the anonymity of the student.

2.4.3 Marking guidelines apply to students with a disability who have a reading, writing or spelling difficulty. The HEI will ensure that marking guidelines are made available to the relevant academic staff (see Appendix 6.)

# **3. Guidelines and Procedures for Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations**

## 3.1 Examination Venues

3.1.1 Students with disabilities receiving reasonable accommodations may sit their examinations in a different venue to their peer group. These venues may be shared with other students. A student with a disability will only sit an examination in a room by themselves if the examination accommodation requires it.

3.1.2 All announcements or amendments by lecturers should be conveyed to all students with disabilities sitting examinations in alternative examination venues.

3.1.3 The HEI should ensure the following in relation to alternative examination venues:

* Alternative venues should be fully accessible to students with disabilities

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Types of venues required | Who for/Set up |
| Extra time venue – 10 minutes per hour | All students with this accommodation. |
| Low distraction venues | Students with sensory processing difficulties and certain mental health needs/Smaller venues with dividers to allow for low distraction. |
| Individual Venues | Individuals using specialist technology, using a scribe or with significant disability needs. |
| Computer Lab | All students using a computer. |

* The physical space available should be appropriate for the effective provision of the reasonable accommodations, for example:
* A large table to accommodate enlarged papers, braille material, and/or technological aids.
* Adequate floor space for manoeuvring wheelchairs, mobility aids, crutches, canes and any other physical aid.
* Access to power points for equipment and/or assistive technology

## 3.2 Additional Time in Examinations

3.2.1 Students whose examination performance is significantly impacted by a disability may require additional time in examinations.

3.2.2 Extra time is set at 10 minutes per hour. In exceptional circumstances, as determined by the needs assessment, extra time may be extended.

## 3.3 Guidelines for the Provision of Rest Breaks in Examinations

3.3.1 Students who may require a rest break in examinations include students whose ability to complete the examination within the required time is significantly impacted by a medical, sensory, psychological or physical disability.

3.3.2 The HEI should ensure the following in relation to rest breaks:

* Rest breaks should be considered as pauses in the exam and the exam time should be stopped when a student takes a rest break. Students will usually have 10 minutes per hour. Students requiring rest breaks will be provided with additional time in order to take a break if they wish.
* Students should tell the invigilator when they wish to have a rest break. They may take as much or as little out of their allocation as they wish at any one time.
* Students can choose to stay in the room for their rest break or may leave the room if supervised. This can include going to the bathroom, taking a drink or snack if recommended, or moving around to relieve physical discomfort.
* Students may not talk about or work on the examination during their rest break. The student’s examination papers should not be accessible to them during rest breaks.

## 3.4 Use of Assistive Technology (AT) in Examinations

3.4.1 Where AT has been identified as a reasonable accommodation, the student must ensure that they are proficient in the use of that technology. Students should attend training in the use of the technology, if needed.

3.4.2 Use of Computer in Examinations

* Students whose ability to write is significantly impacted by a disability may require a computer in examinations.
* Guidelines for determining reasonable accommodations for students with a disability who have a reading, writing or spelling difficulty are listed in Appendix 5.

## 3.5 Student’s Responsibilities in the use of Assistive Technology during Examinations

3.5.1 The student must confirm that they are proficient in the use of the technology for examinations. To ensure competence in the use of assistive technology, a number of training sessions may be required.

3.5.2 It is the student’s responsibility to be proficient in typing for their examinations. A minimum typing speed of 20 words per minute (wpm) is recommended. Students may be directed to resources to develop their typing speeds as part of the needs assessment meeting.

3.5.3 During an examination it is the student’s responsibility to regularly save their work. If they do not save their work and it is lost, they will not receive any additional time to finish the exam.

3.5.4 Students should not bring any computer-related equipment of their own (e.g. a memory stick or mouse) into the examination without prior approval.

3.5.5 In situations where appropriate facilities cannot be provided or where it is not practical to transfer software/personalised settings (e.g. voice recognition software, document reading software and screen magnification software) it may be permitted for a student to utilise their own equipment and/or the equipment supplied to them by the HEI.

3.5.6. If students have any difficulties during an examination, they must alert the invigilator immediately.

## 3.6 HEI Responsibilities When Providing Assistive Technology for Use in Examinations

3.6.1 Students should be provided with guidelines on how to use their software under examination conditions and, if necessary, should attend training sessions prior to the examination period.

3.6.2 Students who are using a computer will sit their examinations in a different venue to their peer group. These venues are normally shared with other students.

3.6.3 Technical support should be available for each computer-based examination session and at any other necessary stages (e.g. printing).

3.6.4 An examination image should be created which must not give the student access to other applications such as calculators, spread sheets etc. Students taking examinations in which they are allowed to use a calculator should bring their own approved calculator to the examinations. No access is provided to the internet, intranet or any other means of communication. Different examination images may be created to meet the needs of different cohorts.

3.6.5 Sufficient work stations should be available in the examination venue including at least one replacement computer (and printers where required). Appropriate contingency plans should be put in place in the event of any computer malfunction and/or failure during the examination sessions.

3.6.6 The computer should have an adequate power supply (i.e. should be charged and plugged in for the duration of the exam). The computer must have been cleared of any previously stored data, as must any portable storage medium used.

3.6.7 Where MS Word is used to type examination answers, the built-in spelling and grammar checker/ thesaurus/ encyclopaedia and translation features may be deactivated.

3.6.8 Where word processing (e.g. MS Word) is being used, the software package should be set to background-save the students work.

3.6.9 Where word processing is utilised students may be instructed to either save and/or print their examination answers as per HEI procedures.

## 3.7 Use of Computers in Examinations for Students who are Blind/Vision Impaired

3.7.1 For a blind student, document reading software, word processing facilities and/or braille/braille-related devices and software may be needed.

3.7.2 For a student with low vision, screen magnification software and word processing facilities may be required. For screen magnification, a large computer monitor may also be required.

3.7.3 Students who are visually impaired may require examination papers in electronic format to be read using text-to-speech software (see section 5.2.)

## 3.8 Use of Voice Recognition Software in Examinations

3.8.1 A student who is eligible for a scribe may use voice recognition software. The use of a computer with voice recognition software requires a separate examination venue and invigilator.

3.8.2 Students who qualify for the use of voice recognition software in an examination must ensure that they are proficient in the use of that software. Training can be provided by the HEI as required.

3.8.3 The HEI must ensure the computer being used meets at least the minimum software requirements as set out in the manufacturer’s guidelines.

3.8.4 The HEI must ensure the USB headset has been installed and tested with the software prior to the examination.

3.8.5 The examination must be held in an individual venue.

3.8.6 Permission in exceptional circumstances may be given to the student to use their own equipment. In this case, the computer should be cleared of any previously stored data and verified by a nominated member of staff in the HEI.

3.8.7 The invigilator may be required to scribe if voice recognition software is being used and there are any handwritten requirements (for example, diagrams, formulas or other modelled answers) in the event that the software or hardware fails or the student is experiencing voice challenges.

# **4. Marking Guidelines**

## 4.1 Guidelines for Examiners When Marking Scripts

4.1.1 Marking Guidelines provide a framework for marking the scripts of students with a disability and inform the examiner that the student, due to the nature of their disability, has a particular difficulty with spelling, grammar and written expression. Marking Guidelines apply to timed examinations only.

4.1.2 If a learning outcome is that of competence in spelling, grammar or written expression, for example in language subjects, it is not possible to disregard these outcomes.

See Appendix 6 for Guidelines for Examiners When Marking Scripts.

# **5. Use of a Reader in Examinations**

## 5.1 Granting reading support in examinations

5.1.1 Students whose ability to read is significantly impacted by a disability may require reading support in examinations. Ideally, students will use assistive technology (for example, text to speech software or exam reading pens) to read the examination paper. Where the student is using assistive technology, an electronic paper may be required.

5.1.2 Guidelines for determining reasonable accommodations for students with a disability who have a reading, writing or spelling difficulty are listed in Appendix 5.

## 5.2 Use of a Computer as a Reader in Examinations

5.2.1 Computer software which reads out an electronic paper, but does not decode or interpret the paper, may be used in place of a personal reader. The software must be tested to ensure it reads the electronic examination paper accurately. Academic departments must adhere to HEI guidelines when creating electronic examination papers.

5.2.2 Where the software is unable to give factual information from diagrams, graphs and tables for a blind/vision impaired student, it must be supplemented with the support of a personal reader (see section 5.4 on Use of Human Readers in Examinations).

## 5.3 Use of a Reading Pen in Examinations

5.3.1 An exam reading pen is a small handheld device which can be used to scan words, phrases or sections of the examination paper and converts the text to speech, heard through headphones. Unlike ordinary reading pens, an exam reading pen does not have the functionality to explain the meaning of words or to translate words as this functionality would undermine the integrity of the exam.

## 5.4 Use of a Human Reader in Examinations

5.4.1 Where a human reader is provided in examinations, the role of a reader is to read the examination questions only. Most students will be accommodated together in the same venue with a shared reader. In exceptional cases only, an individual reader may be provided as confirmed by the needs assessment.

5.4.2 The reader should be an independent person who is not known to the student.

5.4.3 In the case of technical, scientific, mathematical subjects or a foreign language, the reader should ideally have a working knowledge of that subject/language.

5.4.4 The reader should be able to read accurately and at a reasonable rate.

5.4.5 The reader may also act as the invigilator for the examination.

5.4.6 Sometimes a student may require a reader and a scribe. In such instances the same person may act as both.

5.4.7 The reader should not provide content to the student or offer any suggestions.

5.4.8 The reader should not advise the student on which questions to attempt, when to move on the next question, or the order in which questions should be attempted.

5.4.9 Instructions given on the examination paper can only be repeated when the reader is specifically requested to do so by the student.

5.4.10 The reader should make no other comment or use any intonation which emphasises any part of the examination questions, nor make any interpretation of the examination question(s).

5.4.11 The reader should not discuss any matter with the student during the examination unless it relates to the re-reading of an examination question (having been requested to do so by the student).

## 5.5 Use of a Reader for Vision-Impaired Students in Examinations

5.5.1 Readers should read the examination questions as often as requested.

5.5.2 Readers should provide information regarding time elapsed and time remaining.

5.5.3 Readers should help a student using tactile maps, diagrams, graphs and tables to extract the information which the print copy would provide to a sighted student.

5.5.4 Readers should give the spelling of a word on an examination paper if requested.

5.5.5 Readers should report any communication problems during the examination to the Chief Invigilator/Examinations Office.

# **6. Use of a Scribe in Examinations**

## 6.1 Granting scribe support in examinations

6.1.1 Students are encouraged to use assistive technology where possible. Scribes may only be granted for students who cannot handwrite or use a computer due to the nature of their disability.

6.1.2 A scribe will be allowed in subjects where written communication skills, including English or Irish, are being tested. The student will be assessed only on those aspects of written communication which he or she can demonstrate independently, such as the use of language and effective grammatical presentation. In such situations, a discussion with the department should take place to determine whether the dictation should be word by word or letter by letter or if an alternative examination should be considered.

6.1.3 Where a learning outcome is that of competence in spelling, grammar or written expression (for example, in language subjects), it is not possible to disregard these outcomes.

6.1.4 The HEI may notify the examiner(s) if the student has been granted the use of a scribe in exams and whether access to a scribe precludes the assessment of spelling, written punctuation and grammatical elements of the subject only or whether marking guidelines apply (see Appendix 6).

The method of notification may vary according to the individual HEI’s practice e.g. placing a sticker on the student’s exam paper or indicating the accommodation on the student's needs assessment.

6.1.5 Additional time and a separate venue will be provided when using a scribe.

6.1.6 Guidelines for determining reasonable accommodations for students with a disability who have a reading, writing or spelling difficulty are listed in Appendix 5.

## 6.2 The Role of the Scribe in Examinations

6.2.1 The role of a scribe is to record a student’s dictated answers in an examination.

6.2.2 Both the student and scribe should have access to training and practice sessions before the examination if needed. Students may be asked to sign a form to confirm that they have attended the training and agree to proceed with the examination accommodation.

6.2.3 The scribe should be independent of the student.

6.2.4 The scribe may also act as the invigilator for the examination.

6.2.5 Sometimes a student may require a reader and a scribe. In such instances the same person may act as both.

6.2.6 A recording of the examination may be made to act as a secondary source of information for the examiner if required.

6.2.7 Scribes should have proficient typing skills if typing a student’s dictated answers and should be capable of writing legibly at appropriate speed if writing a student’s dictated answers.

6.2.8 Scribes should ideally have a good working knowledge of the subject being examined.

## 6.3 Guidelines for Scribes in Examinations

6.3.1 The scribe is required to produce an accurate record of the student’s answers and to write/type at an appropriate speed.

6.3.2 The scribe should arrive before the commencement of the examination, allowing sufficient time to establish a rapport with the student, to make seating arrangements and to agree guidelines for:

* Presentation
* Spelling
* Punctuation
* New paragraphs etc.

6.3.3 The scribe should be relaxed. This may help to alleviate any anxieties the student may have in relation to the examination.

6.3.4 The scribe should advise students as to the duration of the examination, the number of questions to be answered and any additional instructions.

6.3.5 The starting time and finish time of the examination should be clearly stated by the scribe and/or invigilator.

6.3.6 An institution may require that the examination script is submitted in electronic format and that the examination material is recorded on an official computer located in the institution, not on a laptop belonging to the student or scribe.

6.3.7 If using a computer, the scribe should ensure the computer is set to automatically save work regularly (every 3 to 5 minutes).

6.3.8 If the student needs a rest or toilet break the scribe/invigilator should accompany them.

6.3.9 A student may elect to write sections of the paper themselves. If the student writes notes, essay plans or illustrations, these should be included with the examination script. For example, the student might draw rough diagrams from which the scribe will draw a final version and include both copies with the examination script.

# **7. Miscellaneous Exam Accommodations**

Additional individual exam accommodations may be required for individual students as per the outcome of the needs assessment. These may include:

## 7.1 Furniture in Exams

7.1.1 Students with disabilities may require alternative furniture (i.e. chair support, writing board, footstool etc.) and/or personal ergonomic aids in examination venues. This will have been noted on the needs assessment.

## 7.2 Food & Drink

7.2.1 Students with medical conditions, e.g. diabetes, may require permission to take food and/or drinks into the exam venue (see Appendix 7).

## 7.3 Awareness Accommodations

7.3.1 Students may find it helpful for invigilation staff to be made aware of the nature of their disability or medical condition, e.g. diabetes awareness, epilepsy awareness or mental health awareness. This can be communicated by an awareness exam support.

## 7.4 Use of Personal Assistants in Examinations

7.4.1 Students who have a personal assistant may require the personal assistant to be in attendance at the examination venue. The invigilator needs to be informed that the role of the personal assistant is to assist in the student’s personal assistance needs only, and that the assistant has no role in the examination process.

## 7.5 Examination Papers in Alternative Formats

7.5.1 Students who are visually impaired may require examination papers in enlarged print.

7.5.2 Students who have a visual impairment may require graphs, diagrams, maps or other visual elements of the examination paper to be presented in a tactile format.

7.5.3 Students who are blind or vision impaired and fluent braille readers may require a braille version of the examination paper.

7.5.4Students who have difficulty reading the examination paper may require coloured overlays.

## 7.6 Electronic Monitoring Devices

7.6.1 Students with medical conditions may require permission to bring related electronic devices into the exam venue for health and/or medication monitoring purposes e.g. Students who have Type 1 Diabetes may have an application on their mobile phone to check glucose level from their insulin pump.  In examinations, the student will be recommended to have a smaller shared venue and extra time (see Appendix 8).

## 

# **8. Irish Sign Language Interpretation in Examinations**

8.1 A sign language interpreter translates oral-based language, text and speech into Irish Sign Language (ISL) so a deaf person can understand what is being communicated.

8.2 Where a student’s first language is ISL, an interpreter may, if requested, be made available to translate the examination paper into ISL. An interpreter may also be made available to facilitate a student whose first language is ISL answering the examination questions in ISL.

8.3 An invigilator will be present in the individual exam venue.

8.4 The interpreter should arrive before the commencement of the examination, to make seating arrangements and to interpret interactions between invigilators and students. This time should also be used as an opportunity for the student and the interpreter to become familiar with each other’s communication styles.

8.5 The interpreter should translate all announcements and information given by the invigilator prior to and during the examination.

8.6 The interpreter should translate all interaction between the examiner and the student, including questions and clarifications. The interpreter should interpret no other speech/sign, nor go beyond the student's or the invigilator’s/examiner’s communications.

8.7 The student may request that the interpreter translate questions from the written examination paper. If, following translation, there is need for further clarification, the interpreter may attempt to rephrase their interpretation but they must not attempt to introduce additional information over and above that which is specifically mentioned in the question. Any further clarification that is sought should be referred to the examiner and not offered by the interpreter.

8.8 Where a student’s first language is ISL, an interpreter may, if requested, offer a translation of ISL vocabulary into English; this may include offering the spelling of words in English based on ISL vocabulary.

8.9 The interpreter must not provide additional examples, contextual information or attempt to provide guidance to the student in answering a question.

8.10 If a student wishes to sign their examination and to have it transcribed either simultaneously or subsequently, the interpreter may seek clarification, as is normal in interpreted interaction. This should be done in a manner that reduces the impact upon the student’s flow. If the interpreter is seeking frequent clarification, the matter should be raised with the Disability/Access Officer at the earliest opportunity, and a suitable replacement for subsequent examinations should be found.

# **9. Exceptional Examination Arrangements**

9.1 Adjustments to assessment for a student with a disability may take one of two general forms:

(a) Modifying the circumstances under which the existing assessment is taken

(b) Providing an alternative/equivalent form of assessment. In only a very small number of cases the effects of the student's disability are such that an alternative form of assessment is required. Choice of assessment should be encouraged.

9.2 An exceptional examination arrangement occurs when the HEI recognises that the department/school may need to consider providing alternative assessment methods where examination accommodations specified here are not sufficient to meet the needs of the student.

# **10. Flexible Examination Arrangements**

10.1 Flexible examination arrangements refer to any alteration in the standard form of assessment in order to accommodate a student’s disability. This might include:

* Provision of an oral examination instead of a written test
* Some flexibility around the scheduling of examinations, such as allowing more time between examinations for a student with a physical disability who experiences fatigue
* Examinations split into more than one session

It should be noted that flexible examination arrangements are granted in exceptional circumstances only.

# **11. Alternative Forms of Examination Assessment**

11.1 For some students with disabilities, where appropriate standard assessment accommodations cannot be made, it may be necessary to consider an alternative form of assessment to an examination. The law requires the HEI to make “reasonable accommodations” and encourages flexibility and inclusivity by providing assessments that are suitable for as many students as possible. In this way, fewer adjustments need to be made for individuals.

Items to consider in designing an alternative assessment:

* + Are current learning outcomes effectively measured using the proposed assessment?
  + How are the needs of the student with disabilities met by using the proposed assessment?
  + Have the proposals been discussed with the student?
  + If it is not possible to meet their needs through use of an alternative assessment, it would have to be considered whether or not the learning outcomes are in any way discriminatory. If so, they may need to be re-evaluated.
  + Will academic standards or professional practices be maintained if the alternative assessment is used?

# **12. Amendments to Exam Accommodations**

12.1 Examination accommodations should not be removed without prior consultation with the student.

12.2 Where a student is not availing of the reasonable accommodation that has been granted at the needs assessment meeting, the Disability Service may request a meeting with the student to establish whether or not they continue to require the reasonable accommodation.

12.3 Any amendments to reasonable accommodation should be stated on a revised reasonable accommodation form and be made available to the student.

12.4 Where a student advises they no longer require an accommodation, they must inform the Disability Service in writing, e.g. from their student email address. This is retained on the student’s file.

12.5 Where a student subsequently requests the reasonable accommodation, they must discuss this with the Disability Service.

# **Appendix 1: Member Institutions of DAWN**

Higher Education Institutions in DAWN include:

* Athlone Institute of Technology
* Carlow College
* Cork Institute of Technology
* Dublin City University
* Dublin Business School
* Dundalk Institute of Technology
* Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design & Technology
* Griffith College Dublin
* Institute of Technology Carlow
* Institute of Technology Tralee
* Law Society of Ireland
* Letterkenny Institute of Technology
* Limerick Institute of Technology
* Mary Immaculate College Limerick
* Maynooth University
* National College of Art & Design
* National College of Ireland
* National University of Ireland Galway
* Queens University Belfast
* Shannon College of Catering – NUI Galway
* St Angela’s College Sligo - NUI Galway
* Technological University of Dublin
* Trinity College Dublin
* University College Cork
* University College Dublin
* University of Limerick
* Waterford Institute of Technology

# **Appendix 2: Membership of the Examinations Working Group**

* Ms. Brigid Gormley, Disability Adviser, Maynooth University
* Ms. Valerie Moore, Access Officer, Institute of Technology Tralee
* Ms. Ruth Murphy, Disability Projects Co-ordinator, Cork Institute of Technology
* Ms. Julie Tonge, Disability Officer, University College Dublin
* Mr. Declan Treanor, Director of Disability Service, Trinity College Dublin

Assistive Technology examination accommodations were reviewed by Ms Linda Doran, Disability Support Service Manager, University College Cork.

Surveys of Higher Education Institutions were coordinated by Mr. Declan Treanor, Director of Disability Service, Trinity College Dublin.

# **Appendix 3: Definition of Disability**

The legal definition of disability, which is outlined in the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015*,* defines disability as follows:

1. The total or partial absence of a person’s bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person’s body,
2. The presence in the body of organisms causing or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness,
3. The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person’s body,
4. A condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or
5. A condition, illness or disease which affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.

These include “a disability which exists at present, or which previously existed but no longer exists, or which may exist in the future, or which is imputed to a person.” A disability is significant, long term and/or enduring in nature.

# **Appendix 4 Disability Awareness Invigilation Training**

Please refer to these guidelines in conjunction with the HEI’s General Invigilator Guidelines.

Invigilating examinations for students with disabilities:

1. General Principles
2. Reasonable Accommodations
3. Disability Types
4. Impact of Disabilities on Exam Performance
5. Reasonable Accommodation Examples
6. Venue Types
7. Circumstances That May Arise
8. Invigilator Attribute: a Good Invigilator
9. If in Doubt…

**1. General Principles:**

* Maintain a calm and reassuring presence while facilitating student requests.
* Take time to clarify that you understand a student's request before deciding on the validity of their request. Requests that would result in undue disruption or cheating cannot be facilitated.
* If in any doubt about a student, request consult with the chief invigilator or the Exams Office.
* If you refuse a student’s request and they show any sign of not fully accepting your refusal, follow up with the chief invigilator or the Exams Office.

**2. Reasonable Accommodations**

* Exam accommodations are the most common reasonable accommodation provided to students with disabilities.
* You are therefore tasked with a dual role, invigilation of exams and the provision of reasonable accommodations.

**3. Disability Types**

* Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
* Autistic spectrum
* Blind or visually impaired
* Deaf or hard of hearing
* Dyspraxia
* Mental health difficulty
* Neurological disability
* Physical disability
* Significant ongoing illness
* Speech and language communication
* Specific learning difference, e.g. dyslexia

**4. How Disabilities Impact Exam Performance**

* A disability, or the effect of medication, can slow cognitive functioning and reduce concentration, memory and physical stamina.
* Some students cannot write legibly or fast enough over prolonged periods.
* A large exam venue can be intimidating and overwhelming for students with sensory processing difficulties, ADHD or anxiety.
* Some students may need assistive technology or exam papers in alternative formats in order to sit their exams.

**5. Examples of Reasonable Accommodations**

* Extra time – the most common reasonable accommodation
* Disclosure of disability via sticker
* Use of computer
* Low distraction venue
* Use of specialised software
* Individual venue
* Scribe and or reader
* Enlarged or electronic exam papers (e.g. on A3 paper or USB key)

**6. Venue types**

* Exam accommodations may be provided in main venues, where appropriate.
* Group venues may be used to facilitate similar exam accommodations.
* Computer venues, such as computer labs, may be used for students using a computer.
* Low distraction venues may be used by students with sensory processing difficulties or anxiety.
* Individual venues may be used by students who use a scribe, voice recognition software or other human support, e.g. ISL interpreter.

**7. Low Distraction Venues**

* Low distraction venues aim to reduce visual and auditory distraction within exams.
* Noise should be kept to an absolute minimum in these venues.
* Students may be permitted to use earplugs or headphones during the exams, this must be agreed at the needs assessment.
* Computers should not be used in low distraction venues.

**8. Individual Venues**

* Where you are the sole invigilator in an examination venue, it is always necessary to call the chief invigilator or Exams Office if there is a query that arises during the examination time.

**9. Circumstances That May Arise**

What should you do if a student…

* Becomes distressed, anxious or panicky?
* Requests repeated breaks?
* Stands up and stretches or walks about?
* Arrives with a magnifier or coloured overlay?
* Wears earplugs or ear protectors?
* Brings food and a drink into the exam?
* Asks you to read part or all of their exam paper?
* Causes a disruption to other students?
* Disagrees with you about something exam related during the exam?

You should…

* Check the student’s examination accommodations if known.
* Not panic! Be calm and supportive.
* Allow a student to take repeated breaks. Ask if they are ok and contact the chief or exams office if necessary.
* Minimise disruption to others, position students who may need to stand/stretch at the back of the room – ideally before the start of the exam (may apply to 2 or 3 students).
* Allow earplugs, magnifiers, overlays etc. (anything useful that does not distract others or break exam rules).
* Allow a student to bring in food and a drink into their exam (most likely they are diabetic) this may be verified via Invigilator notes or with Exams Office if concerned – don’t confront a student in an exam unless it is causing a disruption to others.
* Be prepared to read part or all of an exam question or paper if asked (most exam questions are short). If needed, this can be done outside the exam venue.
* Call the chief invigilator or Exams Office if necessary.

**10. A Good Invigilator…**

* Turns up on time. A late start can cause multiple problems, including greater student distress, less time to solve other problems and shortened rest for students with second exams.
* Doesn’t panic, but tries to solve problems by understanding them rather than just saying “no.”
* Knows (or finds out) what venue type they are going to, what they are taking with them and when the exam is supposed to start and end.
* Allows students to turn on their laptops and ensure their software is working before the exam starts.

**11. If in doubt…**

* First contact the chief invigilator or the Exams Office.

# **Appendix 5: Guidelines for Granting Reasonable Accommodations to Students with a Disability who Have a Reading, Writing or Spelling Difficulty**

These guidelines have been informed by the criteria applied by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in Ireland and also by the criteria applied by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) in the UK.

These guidelines are intended to assist HEIs when determining the examination accommodations that may be required by students with a disability who have a reading, writing or spelling difficulty. The need for a particular accommodation is determined through the needs assessment process, taking account of the student’s individual needs and the impact of the disability in an examination setting.

In a small number of complex cases – where the learning profile of the student falls outside of these guidelines, there is a co-morbidity of diagnosis, or other mitigating circumstances that are deemed to constitute a significant barrier to performance – appropriate examination accommodations may be awarded based on the expertise, and at the discretion of, the Disability Officer.

1. Students with a disability who demonstrate a lower than average writing, reading, working memory or processing speeds (i.e. at or below a standard score of 89/23rd percentile) may require extra time in examinations.
2. Students with a disability who demonstrate one or more of the following may require a computer in examinations:
   * a lower than average writing speed (below 15wpm)
   * a speed of processing at or below a standard score of 85/ 16th percentile
   * a level of legibility that would make the paper unreadable to an examiner
3. Students with a disability who have a spelling attainment at or below a standard score of 70/ 2nd percentile may require the use of a scribe.
4. Students with a disability whose reading speed, accuracy or comprehension is at or below a standard score of 85/ 16th percentile may require a reader in examinations.

# **Appendix 6: Guidelines for Examiners When Marking Scripts from Students with a Disability Who Have a Reading, Writing or Spelling Difficulty**

A student with a disability who has a reading, writing or spelling difficulty can be disadvantaged when assessment takes the form of a written, timed examination. Student’s written work may contain:

1. **Surface errors** in spelling and grammar such as inaccuracies in the use of tense, grammatical agreement, plurals, spelling and punctuation.
2. **Structural flaws** including weak sequencing of ideas, paragraphs, and sentences; unclear expression of cause and effect; lack of competence in using abstract language or lack of awareness of writing genre.

The following guidelines should be taken into consideration when marking the examination script of a student with a reading, writing or spelling difficulty:

1. First, read the script quickly to judge the student’s underlying understanding of the topic; then, assess their performance against the learning outcomes. If the script contains all the required elements but does not introduce them in a clear logical order, avoid penalising the student for a lack of structure in their writing unless this is a stipulated competency being assessed.
2. Errors in **spelling** do not necessarily mean that the student is confused about the meaning of the word or its function in their writing. Generally, such errors do not lead to ambiguity and should not be penalised when subject knowledge is being assessed.
3. **Lexical** errors, such as “coarse”for “course*,*” do not mean that the student is confused about the meaning of the words. This kind of error should not be penalised unless it leads to ambiguity.
4. **Grammatical** errors, like incorrect tense endings, lack of subject-verb agreement and incorrect word order may not affect the meaning of the sentence.

For example: “Some of the features of Socratic dialogues were they seek definitions of abstract ideas, cross examining beliefs to expose contradictions and he used to use questioning to bring the pupil to recognise the truth*.*”Here the student’s meaning is clear, the errors do not lead to ambiguity and the student should not be penalised.

1. **Students with difficulties in reading, writing and spelling might not always use punctuation as a tool to clarify meaning.** Scripts may contain long sentences that are difficult to follow with indiscriminate punctuation or no punctuation at all. Very short sentences or fragments of sentences might also be produced.

For example: “The study considered three main areas of research. The effects of frequent drug use the role of the family in the offenders behaviour and the impact of custodial sentences on reoffending.In this case the student’s meaning is clear, but errors in punctuation can lead to ambiguity which will be reflected in the mark awarded.”

1. Some students may have **restricted vocabulary** and use a far more limited range of words than one would expect. Avoid penalising students who may have an immature style of writing, unless written communication is a specified learning outcome.
2. Where grammar and spelling are core competencies of a course, a student’s work must be marked on the basis of accuracy in the language and therefore these marking guidelines will not apply.
3. In all subjects, if a student’s errors make a material difference to the meaning of their work, it will not be possible to classify them as surface errors that do not incur penalty. For instance, if a nursing student writes hypertension instead of hypotension, this will affect the mark awarded.
4. In all subjects, if the surface errors or structural flaws make the student’s work so ambiguous that it is impossible to decipher the meaning, then this diminishes their ability to demonstrate the module’s learning outcomes and this would be reflected in the marks awarded.

# **Appendix 7: Guidelines for Students with Disabilities with permission to bring food and beverages into examinations**

Students who have been granted permission to bring items of food and/or beverages into examination halls on disability-related grounds are obliged to show due consideration to other students with whom the examination centre is shared.

Students are therefore required to select items which are odourless and quiet to access and consume.

Students are advised to remove food items from any noisy packaging in advance of the examination and place them in a lunch box or similar container.

Students will not be permitted to bring items into the examination centre which will cause undue noise, distraction or disruption e.g. crisps, crackers.

The HEI will have the final decision on the day.

End/.

# **Appendix 8: Guidelines for the use of Apps in Exams**

Students who have Type 1 Diabetes may have an application on their mobile phone to check glucose level from their insulin pump.  In examinations, the student will be recommended to have a smaller shared venue.  The following procedures by the Examinations Office apply:

1.       The student notifies the invigilator of the requirement to have their mobile phone accessible to them during the exam in order for them to monitor their insulin levels.

2.       The student will put their mobile phone to silent and flight mode.  They will then hand their mobile phone to the Senior Invigilator who stores it in a secure location.

3.       If and when the student needs to check their glucose levels via the mobile phone app, they will raise their hand and the invigilator will accompany the student to the hall outside the exam room where they can access the monitored results.

4.       The invigilator will get the mobile for the student and will witness the student checking the mobile phone app.

5.       When the student has finished engaging with the mobile phone app, they will give the mobile phone back to the invigilator who will place it in a secure location.

6.       The student re-enters the room to continue with the examination.

7.       The time taken to check their mobile phone app will be added on to the end of examination.

1. AHEAD. (2001). Examination Arrangement for Students with Disabilities: A Guide for Institutions of Higher Education. Dublin: AHEAD Education Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)