

## **Guidance for Staff on Reasonable Adjustments**

### **1. Guidance**

Please see the Reasonable Adjustments Guide to Staff for further advice and information on any of the points below.

### **2. Disclosure and consent**

The University of Birmingham encourages students to disclose their disability so that they can access support available across the University. In line with current legislation, the term 'disability' includes specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia); mental health difficulties; autistic spectrum disorders and other on-going health conditions. Disclosure of a disability and associated needs is regarded as a positive step.

There are numerous opportunities for a student to disclose, both prior to admission and at any time whilst at university. A student's supervisor or tutor can refer him/her to Student Support Services, or students can make direct contact themselves. Once s/he has given written consent to disclosure, details of a student's disability will be kept confidential and safe. All of the information supplied regarding the disability will be stored in the form of electronic and/or paper records and processed in accordance with Data Protection Legislation. The information will be retained by the University after the student's registration has ceased in accordance with the University's records management procedures and then destroyed in a secure manner.

In order to ensure that appropriate support can be put in place, the student needs to give Student Support Services written consent to liaise with other staff within the University on a "need to know" basis. This consent will remain in place for the duration of the student's registration unless s/he asks to have it withdrawn. Students who choose not to disclose their disability or limit that disclosure may not be able to access the full range of support available.

### **3. University responsibilities**

Principal Academic Units (PAUs) are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments implemented (for example, by reviewing the performance of students with a disability in comparison to other groups of students through the annual module and programme review process). Student Services are responsible for compiling this data for consideration by the Equality Executive Group.

In order to fulfil the statutory duty to make anticipatory adjustments, PAUs should, for example, analyse data about their cohorts in order to assist with making all activities as inclusive as possible – from course planning and module design to applicant visit days and social events.

For teaching and learning activities, the most important thing to consider is whether any particular skill constitutes a competence - if it does, then the skill itself is not subject to reasonable adjustments but the method of assessment may be. Whether a skill is a competence may depend on the course and if it embodies professional requirements i.e. the same skill may only be a competence in certain circumstances. The Equality Act 2010 does not override health and safety legislation. There might, therefore, be circumstances when, although an adjustment could be made,



it would not be reasonable as it would endanger the health and safety of either the disabled person or other people. This should not, however, be used as an excuse not to make reasonable adjustments.

#### **4. Reasonable Adjustments Contact (RAC)**

The structure of some PAUs will mean that it is more appropriate for there to be a single contact at PAU, rather than programme level. The name of the RAC will be provided to Student Services and any alterations notified via the RAC Canvas site. It will also be clearly publicised in any information that students are expected to read (e.g. in a Programme Handbook). This role might typically be taken by a Wellbeing Officer, but may be taken by another member of staff with special responsibilities in this area. The RAC should ensure that contact is made with any student who has declared a disability and/or has a Reasonable Adjustments Plan (or Student Support Advice document -SSA) in place. Where no RAP/SSA is in place, the student should be referred to Student Services and the Disclosure Protocol followed:

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/disability/index.aspx>

The RAC should remind the student of support that is available from the University and of the student's responsibility to discuss any appropriate reasonable adjustments that should be considered with their Key Worker.

Where students may have issues with either attendance or submission, this will be highlighted in the student's Reasonable Adjustments Plan (or SSA). Any concerns about Disabled students adhering to the Code of Practice on Student Academic Engagement should be discussed with Student Support before action is taken to ensure that support can be reviewed and appropriate adjustments are in place.

#### **5. Student responsibilities**

There is no legal duty for a student to disclose a disability; they can do this at any time – on application forms, during tutor meetings for example. The Student Services registration form is freely available online. Students also have the option of limiting their disclosure, however, this may mean that there is a limit to what adjustments can be put in place. This will be clearly explained to them by Student Services.

As many adjustments could potentially provide an academic advantage to a non-disabled student, evidence must be provided to access reasonable adjustments. There is guidance about this on the [Evidence Guidance webpages](#)

For queries about registration or the provision of evidence, students should search the [Student Help Knowledge Base](#)

Disabled students will still be expected to follow the Code of Practice on Student Academic Engagement and should contact Student Services where they have issues with attendance or submission in order that appropriate reasonable adjustments can be put in place. Wherever possible, students should notify their department in advance of absence or being unable to submit



work by the deadline, however where there are genuine disability-related reasons, this should be discussed at the earliest opportunity.

## **6. Identifying the Need for Reasonable Adjustment**

The RAC is responsible for implementing the recommendations in a RAP/SSA and should discuss and agree with the student the practical implementation of the recommendations. Should any element of the RAP/SSA or its implementation give cause for concern, the RAC should consult with the Student Services Key Worker who will review the RAP/SSA and implement any necessary changes. Student Services should be consulted regarding the need for any significant alteration or addition to the RAP/SSA.

The SSA/RAP is a dynamic document that can be revised and amended by the key worker at any point throughout the student's studies. Therefore it should be viewed as a starting point for discussion about adjustments.

If an adjustment is highly individual in most cases the key worker will discuss this with the RAC in advance and agree on the specific wording. However, this is not normally required.

Where there are genuine reasons why a specific adjustment cannot be made the RAC should consider what alternative adjustments may be put in place and discuss this with the student's key worker. An amendment will be considered where deemed appropriate.

There is an escalation policy within Student Support Services, so that issues are raised and discussed with line managers and/or legal services. We recommend that decisions about "reasonableness" are not made by one individual person (e.g. the RAC), but are escalated within the department and/or college.

The RAC is responsible for disseminating the adjustments recommended in the RAP/SSA to all appropriate staff within the PAU – for example the Personal Academic Tutor, Timetabling and Examination Tutors and all teaching staff involved with that student.

For students with disabilities as defined by the Act, adjustments are only made from when their registration with Student Support is complete (i.e. the appropriate evidence supplied and consent to share is obtained). Screening results for dyslexia or other Specific Learning Difficulty do not constitute a diagnosis. Standard adjustments (see below) can be put in place by PAUs as soon as their registration with Student Support has been confirmed.

It is good practice for the PAU to make contact with each disabled student to review their support, at least annually, for example, during a progress review where a standard set of questions could be asked, and to direct the student to Student Services for further advice if this seems appropriate. In some cases including where a student's condition changes or concerns are raised with the Wellbeing Officer, it may be appropriate for the PAU to hold a review with individual students more frequently.

## **7. Implementing Reasonable Adjustments**



Inclusive practice should be embedded within all core areas of the University. For disabled students, this means that reasonable adjustments should be anticipatory, as well as tailored for individuals as necessary. The following would be considered standard baseline and anticipatory reasonable adjustments for all disabled students:

- Course outlines and reading lists should be made available at least 4 weeks before the start of the course.
- Reading lists should differentiate between essential/desirable reading (indicate priority and/or relevance)
- Outline lecture handouts /PowerPoint slides should be made available at least 24 hours in advance of taught sessions, preferably in electronic format e.g. via Canvas.
- Recording of taught sessions (e.g. lectures) using the student's equipment (e.g. digital voice recorder, specialist software) for personal learning
- Email notification (via student's bham address) of any changes to existing arrangements such as changes to courses/ rooms/ cancellation of sessions

#### Additional reasonable adjustments

For students with Specific Learning Difficulties with more complex needs, together with those with other disabilities including mental health conditions or other health conditions, reasonable adjustments including consideration of alternative forms of assessment will be determined on a case by case basis. In such cases, Student Services should be contacted in the first instance to discuss individual adjustments as appropriate.

Examination accommodations are put in place by the Examinations Office (in the case of centrally administered Examinations) or by the PAU (in the case of locally administered class tests) and are given only on the recommendation of appropriate staff from Student Services or from the University Medical Officer (or Deputy). For further information on the Examinations Office and relevant procedure, visit:

<https://bham.sharepoint.com/sites/acadss/>

Where collaborative programmes with other bodies are set up, responsibilities with regards to implementing, funding and monitoring all reasonable adjustments should be discussed and formally agreed in advance. Advice can be provided by Student Services and the Head of Collaborative Provision.

## **8. Extenuating Circumstances**

As per the Code of Practice on Extenuating Circumstances 2.3, the ECs process should NOT be used for Disabled students, when reasonable adjustments should be put in place. Occasionally, it may be appropriate to use ECs when, for example, a late diagnosis means that adjustments have not been able to be put in place. Please speak to Student Support for further advice.

Any tracking form for recording extensions or exam accommodations should be distinct from the ECs process. PAUs should not ask for additional evidence or justification, as this would be likely to be seen as discriminatory.



## 9. Short term conditions

Often students with short term conditions simply need the flexibility which can be provided by following other Codes of Practice. Staff in Registry will often be able to assist with further advice.

For exam accommodations, students should be directed to use the Temporary Exam Accommodation Request Form

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/student/academic-support/registry/exams/alternative/temporary-exam-arrangements.aspx>

PAUs should monitor when short term conditions may become longer term (lasting or likely to last longer than 12 months), and therefore follow the disclosure policy.