

UCD Access Centre



Guidelines for Staff on Academic Supports for Students with a Disability in UCD

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1. Introduction

These guidelines explain the academic supports provided for students with a disability in UCD. They are intended to help academic staff provide assistance to students with a disability.

All supports are based on individual needs and are determined for each student when they register with the Access Centre. Students are encouraged to review their supports regularly to ensure their needs are met.

There are two types of supports available to students with a disability: academic supports and exam accommodations.

Exam accommodations pertain to both end of semester exams and continuous assessment and are explained in the following document:

Guidelines for Students and Staff on Alternative Exam Arrangements for Students with a Disability in UCD.

These guidelines relate specifically to the academic supports used by students with a disability in UCD.

All supports and accommodations are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

2. Procedure for students who wish to register with the Access Centre for disability support

The procedure for all students who wish to register with the Access Centre for disability support is as follows:

- Students can register with the Access Centre at any time during their course of study. It is recommended that students register as early as possible as some supports can take time to organize.
- Students must attend an initial meeting with a member of Access Centre Staff where their needs will be assessed to determine the supports they require.
- All students must provide evidence of their disability before support can be arranged. This may be a letter from a consultant for those with a disability/medical condition, an educational psychologist report for those with a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, or a report from a psychiatrist for those with mental health difficulties.
- Students are made aware that recommendations for support will be communicated to appropriate academic staff and support units.

- The student is given a letter of registration which outlines their recommended supports. It is explained to the student that it is their responsibility to inform relevant lecturers/tutors of any assessment or academic supports they require. The student may use their registration letter to communicate this information.
- Students are encouraged to review their supports regularly and can make an appointment to discuss their supports with the Disability Adviser at any time.

3. Communicating the supports required by students with a disability to academic staff

All academic supports and exam accommodations are recorded on the student record system and made available to module coordinators through Infohub Class Lists.

It is recommended that this information is disseminated to all staff involved in teaching the student. We appreciate that individual departments will have their own procedures for communicating information. The information should be treated on a “need to know” basis. Thus only those staff who teach or otherwise deal with the student should receive information, rather than all staff.

It is the student’s responsibility to make lecturers/tutors aware of any supports they require. However, as some students are reluctant to approach academic staff, it is recommended that staff actively seek this information e.g. by contacting students individually where possible, or by encouraging students to make contact with them via email or during their office hours.

Academic supports and exam accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the individual’s certified disability. Documents supplied by students as evidence of a disability are held by the Access Centre and are not disclosed to any third party.

For general guidelines on how academic staff can support students with particular disabilities please refer to:

DAWN Handbook - Teaching Students with Disabilities: Guidelines for Academic Staff

If you have a specific query on how to support a student with a disability either ask the student themselves or contact the Access Centre Disability Adviser for advice.

4. Academic supports available to UCD students with disabilities

Academic supports are tailored to meet individual requirements and may include the following:

i. Disability Awareness

A number of disability awareness supports are used to alert academic staff to the nature of a student's disability. The student will have consented that academic staff are informed of the nature of their disability.

For general guidelines on how academic staff can support students with particular disabilities please refer to the DAWN Handbook. If you have a specific query on how to support a student with a disability either ask the student themselves or contact the Access Centre Disability Adviser for advice.

a. Asperger's Syndrome Awareness

b. Cystic Fibrosis Awareness

The student may be absent from time-to-time due to appointments or illness related to their disability.

If there is more than one student with Cystic Fibrosis in the class it may be necessary to ensure that they are placed in separate tutorial groups due to the risk of cross contamination. Similarly they may need to sit apart from each other in lectures.

If you notice that there is more than one student with Cystic Fibrosis in your class, please alert the Disability Adviser who will liaise with the students regarding appropriate arrangements.

c. Diabetes Awareness

d. Epilepsy Awareness

e. Fatigue Awareness

The student may experience fatigue due to the effects of their disability or the effects of medication used to control a medical condition.

The student may be unable to attend or complete lectures from time-to-time due to fatigue.

The student may have difficulties with concentration and completion of tasks or assignments due to exhaustion.

Academic staff should be conscious that the student tires easily and may require a rest period or break during lectures and tutorials.

f. Hearing Difficulty Awareness

g. Learning Disability Awareness

Specific Learning Difficulties refer to a number of conditions that affect a person's ability to learn. The student will have particular difficulties with one or more of the processes required for fluent reading, writing and number work. They might include difficulties with memory, organization and co-ordination. Examples of Specific Learning Difficulties include dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia.

Academics should be sensitive of possible self-consciousness by the student about speaking or reading aloud in lectures and tutorials.

Written material should be provided using printed text rather than handwritten notes. The layout should be clear and simple and a clear font should be used such as Arial rather than a serif font such as Times Roman.

Constructive feedback particularly on written assignments may be useful. Particularly in relation to the structure of the work, the order of ideas, layout and presentation.

h. Mental Health Awareness

Mental health difficulties include anxiety, obsessions, phobias, depression, eating disorders and schizophrenia.

For many students, a condition may be variable and they may experience periods of particular difficulty. This may require some understanding and flexibility.

The combined effects of medication and disturbed sleeping patterns of many people with mental health difficulties can affect a student's ability to participate and keep up with college work. Flexibility around deadlines may be helpful.

i. Migraine Awareness

j. Visual Impairment Awareness

The effects of a visual impairment can vary widely. Academics should consult the student who will inform them of any assistance they need.

ii. Photocopy Card

The Access Centre provides students with disabilities a limited amount of photocopy credit per academic year.

This is to facilitate students who have missed all or part of a class for reasons related to their disability e.g. due to a hospital or other appointment, due to concentration difficulties or when a student is sick and cannot attend.

Photocopy credit is not intended to cover all photocopying requirements of students. If a student feels they require extra photocopying credit, for reasons related to their disability, they should discuss this with the Disability Adviser.

iii. Overhead notes (if not covered by Blackboard)

Lecture notes should be provided to the student in advance of the class if not already available on Blackboard.

This support is recommended for students who have a substantial difficulty in taking notes in class on account of their disability.

The notes may include abbreviated lecture notes and PowerPoint slides. Handouts should also be provided in advance.

Notes should be provided in electronic format where possible to allow the student to use Assistive Technology, such as text-to-speech software or magnification, if required.

All course materials provided are for the students own personal use and should not be shared.

iv. Use of Recording Device (Livescribe, Digital Dictaphone Recorder, Audionote)

Permission to record lectures is a reasonable accommodation which enables some students with a disability to get the most from lectures, which might otherwise be inaccessible to them.

Reasons why a student may require the use of a recording device include:

- when handwriting is painful or causes discomfort due to a chronic medical condition or physical disability;
- when a student with a Specific Learning Disability, such as Dyslexia, is unable to listen and write at the same time.

Students who require information in an audio-format should be permitted to record lectures, unless there are justifiable reasons why this might not be possible in an individual situation.

All students receiving recording devices from the Access Centre agree that the recording will be used exclusively for the purposes of private study and will not be disseminated or shared with any third party under any circumstances.

If it is not possible for a student to record a particular class, the student should be informed of this well in advance so an alternative method can be arranged to ensure that the student has full access to the lecture content. An alternative method should be discussed by the lecturer, student and the Disability Adviser. All parties should be clear on what provisions are being made well in advance of the class itself.

v. Extended Deadlines when Agreed by Department

The Access Centre encourages all students to submit their work on time.

Extended deadlines is recommended as a support for students who may find it difficult to submit assignments on time due to the impact of their disability.

Students are informed by the Access Centre that they need to contact the member of staff concerned for any extensions prior to the existing deadline for the work.

Students are aware that they are not in receipt of a blanket extension for the academic year and that this is a form of support not to be abused.

Where a student has been ill as a result of their disability, medical notes must be provided by their GP to support any recommendations for extensions by the Access Centre.

There is no policy or guideline on how much time is reasonable. This will depend on the individual student's circumstances and the lecturer involved. On occasion it may not be possible to provide students with an extension e.g. work must be submitted before the next exam board meeting. However, where possible, staff and students should agree a suitable submission date between themselves.

After the agreed submission date the piece of work should be treated as overdue in accordance with the department's procedures.

vi. Note-taking

This support is recommended for students who have a substantial difficulty in taking notes in class on account of their disability e.g. if the student is hard of hearing or has a physical disability which affects their handwriting.

Some students may choose not to sit beside their notetaker in class and it may not be apparent who the notetaker is.

All notetakers are encouraged to make themselves known to the lecturer.

The role of the notetaker is to take notes only. They should not participate in class discussions or interact with other students. A typed copy of the notes is sent to the student by email after the class.

Notetakers should not attend a class if the student is not there. However, in exceptional circumstances, notetakers have been arranged to take notes for students who are sick and cannot attend, for reasons related to their disability. Notetakers are asked to report to the Access Centre if a student habitually fails to turn up.

vii. Extra Academic Tuition

Extra academic tuition is occasionally provided to undergraduate students who have missed part of their course due to absence or who are finding a particular aspect of their course difficult due to the impact of their disability.

Extra academic tuition is funded by the Access Centre and is provided by tutors (often postgraduate students) that have been recommended by the appropriate school.

Extra tuition is intended to address a particular difficulty or aspect of the course. The Access Centre does not provide grinds or tuition aimed purely at enhancing grades. Extra tuition will only be provided after the student has discussed their difficulties with the relevant academic and when a suitable tutor is available.

viii. Learning Support Sessions

Group learning support sessions are offered to all incoming students who register with the Access Centre for disability support.

Learning support is not subject specific but rather concentrates on the development of the study skills that all students need, particularly in their first year at college.

Learning support sessions are recommended to help students with difficulties they may have in the learning environment due to the impact of their disability. Learning support is intended to improve students' learning skills and developing learning strategies to help them with their academic study.

ix. Use of PC

Academic staff should allow the student to use a computer to take notes or use assistive software during the class.

This support is often recommended for students who have a substantial difficulty in taking notes on account of their disability.

x. Use of Literacy Software

The student has been provided with software to assist with learning, comprehension and self-editing. Literacy software (Texthelp) is available on all university networked computers.

xi. Wheelchair Access

The Access Centre liaises with Buildings and Services to ensure that lectures are scheduled in an accessible venue, when there is a wheelchair user registered to take the module.

Academic staff should ensure that all other aspects of the module take place in an

accessible location.

Details of field trips should be provided well in advance to allow the student to make appropriate travel arrangements. Consider the accessibility of the field trip location.

xii. Transport

The Access Centre allocates funding for college-related transport costs for students who have physical or mobility difficulties or who have a visual impairment.

Funding for transport is only allocated when the Access Centre is satisfied that the need to avail of alternative transport arrangements and incur additional expenses in order for the student to participate equitably is supported by the diagnosis in the assessment of disability.

Details of field trips should be provided well in advance to allow the student to make appropriate travel arrangements. Consider the accessibility of the field trip location.

xiii. Use of Personal Assistant

This support indicates that the student may be accompanied to classes by a Personal Assistant (PA).

The PA is there to assist the student and should not contribute to the class unless they are assisting the student to make their contribution.

The PA may take notes for the student and assist them in travelling between classes.

xiv. Irish Sign Language (ISL)

This support indicates that the student is deaf or hard of hearing and a sign language interpreter may accompany them to lectures and/or tutorials.

Please ensure that the interpreter receives a copy of any handouts or materials to be used.

Often the interpreter and the student will encounter new words during a lecture that have no corresponding sign in ISL. The interpreter must either finger spell the word or agree a new sign with the student, which can interrupt the flow of the lecture. It is helpful to provide a list of new technical terms so that new signs can be agreed in advance of lectures.

During lectures the interpreter will sit at the top of the class and the student will be seated in the front row.

Avoid walking between the interpreter and the student.

When communicating speak and look directly at the deaf person. The interpreter will convey the message in the first person and will communicate the meaning and content of what you are saying.

The interpreter may contribute to the class on the student's behalf or may seek clarification on a particular point in order to explain it more clearly to the student.

ISL interpreters are arranged by the Access Centre.

xv. Speed Text

This support indicates that the student is deaf or hard of hearing and a speed text operator may accompany them to lectures and/or tutorials.

Please ensure that the speed text operator receives a copy of any handouts or materials to be used.

The speed text operator will type the content of the lecture in real time and the student will follow the lecture on their own computer screen. The student is provided with a transcript of the lecture.

Speed text operators are arranged by the Access Centre.

xvi. Use of Radio Aid

This support indicates that the student is deaf or hard of hearing and requires the use of a radio aid in lectures and tutorials.

The Access Centre provides the student with the radio aid and training in how to use it.

Most radio aids require the lecturer to wear a clip on microphone. The student will usually wear the receiver around their neck. The student will ask the lecturer to use the microphone at the beginning of the class.

xvii. Alternative Format for Books

This support is provided to students who are blind or vision impaired and who are unable to use printed materials.

Academics can assist in assuring that blind or visually impaired students receive their reading material in a timely manner by providing the student with details of the required reading as early as possible.

Academics should ensure that handouts are available in an electronic format and that readings provided on Blackboard or by other means are accessible.

If you need advice on how to make your documents accessible, or need material to be converted to an accessible format, contact the Disability Adviser.

xviii. No Ongoing Supports

It has been decided at the student's Needs Assessment that no academic supports are required at present.

Students who are registered with the Access Centre are advised to review their supports regularly and may discuss their supports with the Disability Adviser at any time.

xix. Other

Additional supports which are not covered here will be considered by the Disability Adviser on a case-by-case basis.