

UCD Access Centre



Guidelines for Students and Staff on Alternative Exam Arrangements for students with a disability in UCD

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1. Introduction

UCD is committed to ensuring that students with a disability do not experience disadvantage during timed exams.

Alternative exam arrangements are intended to ensure that the assessment instrument enables the student to demonstrate their skills and knowledge to the best of their ability. Alternative exam arrangements will not alter the robustness of the academic standards or learning outcomes to be assessed, but are intended only to provide an alternative instrument to assess performance skills or knowledge.

To make appropriate arrangements, it is essential that students who require exam supports inform the UCD Access Centre in good time and follow the procedures explained in these guidelines.

This manual outlines the exam accommodations and procedures for organising these accommodations, for students with disabilities in UCD.

All supports provided are based on an assessment of the student's individual needs as identified during a needs assessment meeting when a student registers with the UCD Access Centre.

The UCD Access Centre does not provide exam supports to students with temporary illnesses or injuries. If a student requires temporary exam supports they should contact Assessment UCD Registry as soon as possible.

Exam accommodations are reviewed and updated regularly to identify models of best practice in supporting students with a disability in the exam process.

Where new enhancements are proposed students will be invited to test the new developments, provide feedback and participate in the ongoing process. New enhancements will be rolled out at the start of the academic year and full training will be provided.

2. Exam support procedures

2.1 Exam support procedure for end of semester exams

The procedure for all students with disabilities who receive exam supports is as follows:

1. Students must formally register with the Access Centre as early as possible in the Academic year and no later than **12pm on the Monday of Week 6** of the current semester.
2. Students must complete an **UCD Access Centre Registration form** with a member of Access Centre staff.
3. Students must provide appropriate evidence which confirms the nature and extent of their disability.
4. Students should provide notification of the State Examinations' Commission (RACE) Documentation (where applicable).
5. Students should be aware that exam supports will be communicated to the relevant Module Coordinator, Programme Office and Assessment UCD Registry. Since September 2011 details of students registered with the Access Centre for disability support are now included in infobhub class list reports.
6. Students must discuss any changes to exam supports with the Access Centre as early as possible and no later than the **Week 6** of the current semester. Students who register with the Access Centre after this date will receive supports for examinations in the following semester e.g. if registering after week 6 of semester 1 the student will receive supports in semester 2.
7. Students will receive a letter/email from the Access Centre: Disability Support outlining the exam supports they will receive and the location of their exam centre. It is the student's responsibility to check this email/letter for their exam details.
8. Students who need to use specialist supports e.g. a computer, Assistive Technology or a scribe, must attend training in the use of these supports well in advance of the exam period.
9. Students who no longer wish to avail of, or wish to change their exam supports, must meet with the Disability Adviser.

2.2 Exam support procedure for class tests/mid-term exams

The UCD Access Centre coordinates exam supports for **end of semester exams** only.

Class tests or mid-term exams are organized by the Module Coordinator.

The procedure for class tests/mid-term exams is as follows:

1. The onus is on the student to make the Module Coordinator aware of the supports they require. The student receives a letter of registration, outlining the supports they need, on completion of their needs assessment/registration meeting which should be presented to the Module Coordinator at the start of each semester.
2. When the date and time of a class test or mid-term exam is confirmed the student should discuss their exam supports with the Module Coordinator who will put the supports in place.

Schools and colleges may use their own laptops/PC for mid- term exams, the UCD Access Centre has a limited number of exam mode laptops available for use.

Module coordinators may find the Alternative Exam Arrangement section of UCD Registry's Assessment website helpful:

http://www.ucd.ie/registry/assessment/info_stu.htm

Since September 2011 details of students registered with the Access Centre for disability support are included in infobhub class list reports which are available to all module coordinators.

Students with IX grades should liaise with their module coordinator regarding their support needs for these exams.

3 Exam supports available in UCD for students with a disability

Exam supports for students with a disability are identified based on the need of the student and in line with DAWN guidelines.

3.1 Awareness in Exams:

Awareness of Psych Difficulties = APD

The examiner is made aware that the candidate has psychological difficulties which may become worse in stressful situations and will take this into account when marking the script.

The examiner is made aware of this accommodation either by the student's letter of registration or the DSS001 report, which is available through infoview.

Epilepsy Awareness = EPAW

The exam centre is made aware that the candidate has epilepsy.

Writing awareness = WRAW

The examiner is made aware that the nature of the candidate's disability may make handwriting difficult for them.

The candidate may have poor handwriting, find it difficult to write quickly or misuse upper and lower case letters. The candidate should not have marks deducted for poor presentation or legibility.

This support is often used by students who have dyspraxia, a Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD) e.g. dyslexia, or a physical disability which affects their handwriting.

The examiner is made aware of this accommodation through the student's letter of registration and the DSS001 report.

Wheelchair Access = WACC

The examination centre will be wheelchair accessible.

3.2 Assistance in Exams:

Reader (READ)

The invigilator will read the examination paper to the student. If there is a lot of text to be read the candidate may sit the examination in a separate room with an invigilator/reader. If a number of candidates require occasional reading they may be accommodated in a small group and share a reader/invigilator.

The reader will only read the instructions and questions as they appear on the exam paper and will not assist the candidate in any other way.

Readers may be used by a student who has a visual impairment or a student who has a specific learning difficulty and demonstrates a lower than average reading speed or demonstrates a level of difficulty in reading attainment below the 10th percentile.

Amanuensis (AMAN)

An amanuensis (scribe) will write down the candidate's answers to examination questions. A separate examination room is provided when this accommodation is used.

An amanuensis is often used for students who have a physical disability, visual impairment, or a student with a specific learning difficulty who demonstrates a lower than average writing speed, a level of legibility that would make the exam script unreadable to the examiner or a difficulty in writing/spelling attainment below the 10th percentile.

Written Instructions (WRIN)

The candidate will be provided with written instructions in place of those that are normally read out by the invigilator.

This support is often used by students who have a hearing impairment or who are deaf.

Learning Disability Awareness Label (DYAW)

The candidate's examination paper will have a Learning Disability Awareness label attached to the front cover.

Students with a Specific Learning Disability can experience considerable difficulties when asked to sit timed, written exams. The nature of their disability means they may experience difficulty in processing written language. This difficulty may become worse when asked to read or write under stressful conditions.

Typically students with an SLD will have difficulty with spelling, grammar and the organization of materials. Under exam conditions it is common for these students to concentrate on the process of writing itself rather than the meaning and content.

When a learning disability awareness support has been granted the examiner should mark only for content and ideas and should ignore mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar, unless spelling and grammar is specifically being assessed. Full guidelines are available on page 15.

There is currently no mechanism for a Learning Disability Awareness label to be considered in MCQ exams.

Learners with a Specific Learning Disability may use a Learning Disability Awareness Label if they demonstrate attainments in literacy areas that fall at or below the 25th percentile.

White Noise Machine (WNMA)

A white noise machine will be provided in the examination centre.

A separate examination room is provided when this accommodation is used.

White noise can be useful for students who are easily distracted e.g. a student who has ADHD or Tinnitus.

3.3 Extra Time/Breaks:

Extra Time 5 minutes per hour in exams (ET05)

Extra Time 10 minutes per hour in exams (ET10)

Extra Time 15 minutes per hour in exams (ET15)

Extra Time 20 minutes per hour in exams (ET20)

The candidate will be granted between 5 and 20 minutes of extra time per hour in exams.

In exceptional circumstances the candidate may be granted a greater amount of extra time with prior approval from the Vice President for Teaching and Learning for the relevant programme.

Additional time may be granted to students in the following circumstances;

- Where the student's disability worsens due to stress/exam conditions (e.g. mental health, anxiety).
- Where a student has a physical disability which makes it difficult for them to complete exams within the allocated time.
- Where a student with a Specific Learning Difficulty has difficulty in processing written language.

Extra time covers students who require rest breaks and breaks for medication during their examinations.

3.4 Exam Location:

Alternative Exam Location (AELO)

The candidate will sit exams in an alternative examination centre.

For end of semester exams, the alternative exam location will usually be in the Newman building. Students will usually sit in classrooms with a small group.

Students who require certain exam supports, such as extra time, a reader, use of a computer or scribe, will sit their exams in the alternative exam location to enable these supports can be put in place.

Sit in a separate room (SEPR)

The candidate will sit in a separate examination room with an invigilator.

Students who require a separate room in which to sit exams often have a scribe or other exam accommodations which may disrupt other candidates.

CTBR (Close to bathroom)

The candidate will sit in an examination room close to a bathroom.

3.5 Assistive Technology:

Computer (COMP)

The candidate will answer exam questions using a computer with a basic word processing package (WordPad).

Students who receive this support are either unable to write or have very poor handwriting e.g.

- Students who are visually impaired and require the use of assistive technology
- Students who have physical disabilities
- Students with a specific learning difficulty e.g. Dyspraxia or Dyslexia
- Students who demonstrate a level of legibility that would make the paper unreadable to the examiner.

PC with Jaws (PCJW)

The candidate will use a computer with JAWS (screen-reading software) installed.

Students who are blind or have a visual impairment may require a computer installed with screen-reading software to enable them to read the examination paper and answer questions.

PC with Voice Recognition Software (PCVR)

The candidate will use a PC with Voice Recognition Software to enable them to dictate their answers to exam questions.

Students who receive this exam support may have a disability which makes it difficult for them to express their thoughts in writing or have a physical disability which makes it difficult for them to write. Students must be proficient in the use of this software before it can be used in exams.

PC with Zoom Text (PCZO)

The candidate will use a computer with Zoom Text (magnification software) installed.

Students with visual impairments may use a computer with magnification software to complete exams.

Digital Dictaphone Recorder (DDR)

The candidate will dictate their answers to exam questions into a digital dictaphone recorder.

The examiner will receive a copy of the recording and a transcript of the answers given.

Students who use a digital Dictaphone recorder may have difficulty expressing themselves in writing.

A digital dictaphone may be used by students who have:

- a physical disability
- a visual impairment
- a specific learning difficulty that demonstrates a lower than average writing speed
- a level of legibility that would make the exam script unreadable to the examiner
- a difficulty in spelling attainment below the 10th percentile

Blue Background (BLUE)

The candidate will receive exam papers printed on coloured paper.

Please note that if there are graphs or diagrams on the exam paper they may not show up clearly on a non white background. Additionally exam materials will not be printed on a blue background e.g. photographs. If you are in doubt, please ask your module co-coordinator if this would be an issue.

This support is only given in exceptional circumstances and must be organised well in advance with the Access Centre.

Students with visual impairments or a Specific Learning Disability may find exam papers easier to read if printed on coloured paper.

3.6 Alternate Format:

Brailed Paper (BRLP)

The candidate will be provided with an exam paper printed in Braille.

ENLP = Enlarged Paper

The candidate will be provided with an exam paper in large print.

EPDK = Exam Paper on Disk

The candidate will be provided with an exam paper in electronic format.

Students who are blind or have a visual impairment may receive their exam paper in electronic format to enable them to read it using screen-reading software.

3.7 Exam Furniture:

RADK = Raised Desk

TYPC = Typist Chair

LTAB = Large Table

NSC = Needs Soft Chair

DKLP = Needs Desk Lamp

LECT = Lectern

The candidate will be provided with assistive furniture for use during their exams.

Students with physical and sensory disabilities and those with significant ongoing illnesses may require assistive furniture.

NOEN = No exam needs

The student is registered with the Access Centre: Disability Support but does not require exam supports.

4. Exam Support Regulations

Students who receive exam supports must register with the Access Centre, provide documentation to verify their disability, and complete a registration meeting with a member of Access Centre staff before the 6th week of the current semester.

Students who register after this date will receive exam supports in subsequent examinations.

Students who register with the Access Centre after this date will receive supports for examinations in the following semester i.e. if registering after week 6 of semester 1 the student will receive supports in semester 2.

Students who wish to amend or remove exam supports must meet with the Disability Adviser by the 6th week of the current semester.

Exam supports will only be changed or amended after this date in exceptional circumstances.

Students who require temporary exam supports, i.e. those students who are not registered with the Access Centre but who have a temporary illness or injury, should contact UCD Assessment as soon as possible so that necessary arrangements can be made. If the illness or injury persists then the student should contact the Access Centre with a view to registering for disability support.

If a Personal Assistant (PA) is required by a student, for toilet assistance or physical support, the assistant should make themselves known to the Invigilator in Charge.

In order to maintain the integrity of the examination process the PA should not be in contact with the student during the examination without an invigilator present.

5. Information for UCD Staff

5.1 Instructions for UCD staff on how to download the list of students requiring exam supports

Information on the academic and exams supports required by individual students with a disability are available on Infohub Classlists. All module coordinators have access to this information.

The DSS001 Infoview report lists all modules containing students who are registered with the Access Centre who receive supports. The following information is provided: Student Number, Student Name, Programme Description, Support Type (Academic Supports and Exam Supports) and Support Service Description.

To request access to DSS001 the Head of School should email the Access Centre with the staff member's name, personnel number, ucd connect log in, name of report and school.


Academic staff can also download an Infoview report which lists the exam supports required by students who are taking one of their modules.

Follow these steps to download the report:

- Login to UCD Connect
- Click on the Administrative Services tab
- Under applications click on Infoview
- Select the report DSS001
- Enter the relevant term code (e.g. for the Academic Year 2010-11, enter 201000)
- Click on Run Query

5.1 Advice on marking exam scripts with a disability awareness label

An exam script with a learning disability awareness label attached to the front (see example below), indicates that the candidate has a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) e.g. Dyslexia.

	University College Dublin
Learning Disability Awareness Label	
Please examine this script in accordance with UCD's Learning Disability Awareness Guidelines.	
Student Number: _____	
For further information, refer to: http://www.ucd.ie/access/dss_staff_examsupports_markingscripts.htm	
I have marked the candidate's script in accordance with the learning disability guidelines	
Examiner signature: _____	
Date: _____	

Students with SLDs can experience considerable difficulties when asked to sit timed, written exams. The nature of their disability means they may experience difficulty in processing written language. This difficulty can be made worse when asked to read or write under stressful conditions.

Typically students with an SLD may have difficulty with spelling, grammar and the organization of materials. Under exam conditions it is common for these students to concentrate on the process of writing itself rather than the meaning and content.

To address these difficulties students may receive a number of exam supports e.g. extra time, use of a reader/computer etc. They may also be entitled to have their examiner made aware of their difficulty so this can be taken into consideration in the assessment process.

Typical errors in written work will include the following:

- Poor spelling
- Clumsy grammar
- Poor sentence construction
- General disorganization
- Work deteriorates over time
- Processing difficulties
- Discrepancy between coursework and exam performance

Exam conditions may make the student's normal coping mechanisms, e.g. checking and re-checking written work or using Assistive Technology, difficult or impossible to use.

The following are guidelines for marking scripts with a learning disability sticker.

Mark for understanding and content

Focus on whether the student has understood the topic or task rather than on poor spelling or grammar.

Students with SLDs have difficulty proof reading and do not recognize their spelling mistakes.

Decide on the key points which should be included in the answers and look for those.

Take any notes or mind maps which have been submitted with the script into consideration.

Scan through

Scan quickly through the answers to get a sense of the ideas and content.

Sometimes a student's work can lack structure though the ideas and information are there.

Be selective

Do not penalize the student for mistakes in grammar, sentence construction, punctuation and spelling (unless these are specified learning outcomes).

Be selective about correcting the student's English.

Check drafts of coursework

It can be very useful for the student to get some feedback on drafts.

Make comments on the structure of the work, the order of the ideas, layout and presentation.

Assignments on PC

Consideration can be given when correcting assignments which have been created using a PC.

Difficulties of sentence structure, grammar and punctuation may remain and should be treated as described in the guidelines above.

Do not penalise the student for poor handwriting.

Feedback

If possible feedback can be extremely useful for a student.

Feedback should be given orally and in written format and should point out areas of concern that are primarily focused on the subject area rather than spelling and grammar issues.

If you have questions about marking exam scripts with a learning disability label; contact the Access Centre.

5.2 Advice on the correction of assignments and examinations of students presenting with a specific learning disability studying a language

Typically students with an SLD may have difficulty with spelling, grammar and the organization of materials. Under exam conditions it is common for these students to concentrate on the process of writing itself rather than the meaning and content.

Any compensation given to a student cannot interfere with the integrity of the course matter. Exemptions can only be given in grammar when grammar is not an essential component of the course

Exemptions in grammar and spelling can be given in components of a language course that is not concerned with the grammatical aspects of the language such as theory and history.

Exemptions in spelling can be allowed in terms of not penalizing spelling mistakes that relate to their disability such as reversing letters and juxtaposing sound units. If the correct spelling of a word in another language is an essential component of a task set then a waiver cannot be given.

When correcting assignments from aspects of the course not concerned with grammar the following guidelines are relevant:

- a. Scan through the student's assignment to obtain a sense of what they are trying to say.
- b. Look for key ideas and essential information.
- c. Scan through all of the student's work including rough work.
- d. Limit the amount of time spent correcting spelling and grammar mistakes and instead pick reoccurring problems and give constructive written feedback to the student.
- e. Mark for content and understanding rather than lack of grammar and spelling mistakes, however do seek an overall structure.

When a student has a specific learning disability that impacts on their ability to write legibly please allow extra time to decipher the student's handwriting and refer back to notes and drafts that they include.

Appendix 1

Guidelines for AMANUENSIS/ EXAM SCRIBE

Job Description:

An Amanuensis is an individual who types/writes down a student's dictated answers to questions in an examination. If an amanuensis is provided, additional time of 10 minutes extra per hour and a separate room will be necessary. The amanuensis may also act as the invigilator for the exam. The student should have adequate practice with working with an amanuensis before taking an exam by this method.

Person Specification:

- Amanuenses, are normally sourced and managed through **Assessment UCD Registry** for the end of semester examinations. In class and mid term examinations are the responsibility of the Programme office.
- Assessment UCD Registry can provide a list of experienced Amanuenses.
- An Amanuensis should be able to produce an accurate record of the student's answers, write legibly and at an average speed.
- Where possible an Amanuensis should have a good working knowledge of the subject matter being examined.

Guidelines for Amanuensis:

- Be punctual – you should arrive a minimum of 30 minutes before the beginning of the exam. This time should be used to establish and discuss guidelines for:
 1. Presentation
 2. Spellings
 3. Punctuation
 4. New paragraphs

Be relaxed – the student will have the normal anxieties that every student has before an exam so it is important to present yourself as relaxed and comfortable as possible.

- Students are individuals – most of them will have worked with scribes before and will have their own approach.
- Seating – encourage the student to decide the seating arrangements.
- At the beginning advise students of the duration of the exam, the number of questions to be answered and any other additional instructions. Announce clearly the starting time and the finishing time, emphasising that the time limits must be respected to ensure equity.

- If the student needs a rest/toilet break the scribe/invigilator must accompany them.
- Many students will write their own essay plans or mind maps. These should of course be included in the answer books.
- Many students will draw their diagrams in rough and the Amanuensis will draw a final version of the diagram. Include both copies in the answer book.
- Under no circumstance should a scribe attempt to offer assistance or advice on the examination topic or alter a student's answers.

READER FOR EXAMINATIONS

Job Description:

A reader is a person who, on request, will read to the student (a) all or any part, of the examination paper and (b) any part of the student's answers. The Reader may also act as the invigilator for the exam. The student should have adequate practice of working with a Reader before taking an examination by this method.

Person Specification:

- Readers, are normally sourced and managed through **Assessment UCD Registry** for the end of semester examinations. In class and mid terms examinations are the responsibility of the Programme office.
- A Reader should be able to read accurately and at a reasonable rate, and in the case of a foreign language, scientific, mathematical or technical subject should ideally have a working knowledge of that subject.

Guidelines for Readers:

- The reader should read to the student the exact text of the examination question(s).
- The reader should not give factual help to the student nor offer any suggestions.
- The reader should not advise the student regarding which questions to attempt, when to move on to the next question, nor the order in which questions should be completed. Instructions given on the question paper can be repeated only when the Reader is specifically requested to do so by the student.
- The reader should make no other comment or use any intonation which emphasizes any part of the examination questions, nor make any interpretation of the examination question(s).
- In the event that the student requires a lot of assistance from a Reader they should be accommodated separately to avoid disturbing other students.

- **Prior to the examination, the Reader should announce to those students who require a Reader that they are available to read throughout the examination.**
- **Prior to the examination, students who require the assistance of a Reader should be advised to raise their hand to alert the Reader whenever they need them to read any part of the examination.**
- The Reader should be prepared for periods of inactivity during the examination.

Specifically for Students who are Visually Impaired:

The Reader:

- Should read, as often as requested, the questions and the answers already recorded.
- Must, if asked give information regarding time elapsed and remaining.
- Is permitted to help the student using tactile maps, diagrams, graphs and tables to obtain the information which the print/amended print copy would give to a sighted student.
- Must give the spelling of a word only if requested,
- Should immediately refer, to the Invigilator in Charge, any problems in communication during the examination.