

Staff Guide to My Adjustments

Introduction

The role of the Disability and Mental Health Service (DMHS) is to provide information, advice and support to students who are disabled or who have a long-term medical or mental health condition. This includes resources available to them both within the School and from external agencies. DMHS also acts as a source of information and advice to LSE staff on supporting or making adjustments for disabled students.

DMHS Advisers collaborate with students to develop their 'My Adjustments' (MA). MAs are intended to guide academic and other staff as to the reasonable adjustments a student requires under the Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments are required where a student's disability or health condition puts them at a disadvantage when compared to their peers; the purpose of the adjustments is to reduce such disadvantages.

The adjustments outlined in an MA should not affect the competency standards or learning outcomes of any given programme of study. In addition, the MA is a working document and revised plans can be issued to reflect any changes in the student's support needs.

DMHS recognises that academics and professional service staff play key roles in ensuring the implementation of MAs.

MAs are tailored to individual student needs but often include standard recommendations and phrases. By making the same recommendation for multiple students, it is intended that adjustments are then easier to interpret and to implement by staff in academic schools. MAs for one student may differ from another for a student with a similar health condition or disability. This is because we take an approach that considers the effects of study activities and assessments on the student, according to the Social Model of Disability.

For this reason, within this guidance we have avoided making a direct connection between a recommendation and a certain disability or health condition, except where it is felt that this will aid understanding of the rationale. Furthermore, the structure of the MA form allows the student to share the nature of their disability and how it impacts them should they choose to, but this is not essential, and students often prefer not to divulge such details. Their choice not to share this personal information does not remove the legal duty of the School to provide reasonable adjustments.

The purpose of My Adjustments

Recommendations made on the MA are considered reasonable adjustments. The MA is the most visible method by which the School demonstrates its commitment to meeting legal obligations around disability equality in Higher Education. Recommendations made in an MA should normally be accepted and implemented by academic and other departments, in accordance with the School's responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010). Adjustments are only recommended by DMHS upon the provision of robust medical evidence.

The adjustments should remain in place for the duration of a student's academic programme.

It is the responsibility of the Department Circulator in the student's home department to ensure that all relevant staff are informed of the adjustments required, including the departmental circulators in other departments where the student is studying.

Standard Adjustments

The following list details the standard adjustments that are often recommended for individual students within MAs, together with a more detailed explanation about why these recommendations may be made and how they should be implemented.

Academic Department Adjustments

1. All lecture slides/notes to be provided in advance

- Ideally at least 24 hours before, this allows students who have difficulty processing information to familiarise themselves with lecture material ahead of lecture. To allow for preparation of subject content prior to taught classes, in order for the student to contextualise and absorb information and take notes more easily.
- Enables students to manipulate materials into accessible format, for example large print or for the use of a screen reader.
- Enables students to annotate handouts to supplement note taking.
- To provide students who are deaf or hard of hearing with some context to support lip-reading.

2. Directed reading lists that identify key texts

- This helps students with difficulties processing information to make the best use of the time and resources available.
- Producing a directed reading list involves highlighting the key texts, and sometimes, the key chapters or sections within books. It can also be helpful to include texts which are available in alternative formats and those that use plainer English.

3. Extensions to deadlines should be permitted where possible

- Some students, for reasons relating to their disability, may require longer to research information for assignments and to produce and edit their work. Students may also be dependent upon timetabled support staff, for example Study Skills Tutors and library support workers.
- Extensions to deadlines are most commonly afforded to students where it is felt that their academic productivity may not be in keeping with the number of hours for which they study. These students therefore require additional time in order to be able to produce a comparable level of work to their peers. For example, this may include:
- Difficulties with concentration/distractions which means that students must 'pace' their studies – either because of cognitive processes or as a result of a side-effect of their disability (such as pain management, medications which impact on sleeping patterns, anxiety etc).

- Slower reading speeds which mean that assignment research and the assimilation of ideas takes more time.
- Reduced writing accuracy, which means that more time is needed for proof-reading
- The LSE Extension policy states that extensions can be granted for up to 10 days. It is intended for interpretation by departments based on the length/requirements/credits awarded for a piece of work. It may also be appropriate to consider the 'clustering' of assignment deadlines that a student may experience. It is not appropriate to make subjective judgements based on the perceived severity or otherwise of the student's condition. Please note that the student is not required to submit further evidence of their disability when requesting the extension (even if the condition fluctuates) – this evidence has already been provided to DMHS prior to the creation of their MA. With fluctuating conditions, it is important to remember that the student will experience disability and disadvantage even when their health is not at its absolute worst.

4. For on-campus teaching, please allow the student to record sessions and take photos of information on the board.

To enable the student to create a back-up for note taking by recording information. Students with difficulty with writing may need to record information in class as an alternative to taking written notes.

This recommendation may be made where a student has a physical disability, mental health condition or cognitive impairment that impedes them taking accurate written notes quickly.

Students with MAs have been made aware that they ought to seek permission to record at the beginning of each session and that such permission does not allow them to share, copy or publish their recordings. It is the responsibility of members of teaching staff to deal with requests to record appropriately.

5. Please ensure that a recording of lectures is available to the student

To support students who have difficulty listening, focusing, and writing notes at the same time. Some conditions mean that disabled students cannot fully benefit from their attendance at the live lecture. They might have to take frequent breaks, write very slowly, or experience pain or chronic fatigue that impacts upon cognitive function. They may face significant anxiety or experience difficulties processing information at speed. All of these impact on the ability to take meaningful lecture notes. Having access to a recording reduces the pressure of trying to take comprehensive notes at the time, allows more active engagement in the session and supports independent review of material afterwards. Some mental or physical conditions unavoidably have a substantial impact on attendance, especially where a condition is fluctuating or requires regular medical appointments. In these situations, having a recording means the teaching session is not lost to the student.

LSE operates an 'opt out' policy in relation to lecture recordings, ie all lectures are recorded unless the lecturer has a specific reason for opting out, however this 'opt out' is not available when there is a student with MAs, and this specific adjustment recommended, in the lecture. For more information see [LSE Lecture Recording Policy](#). As per the policy, these recordings should be released immediately after the lecture to students with this recommendation in their MAs – or at latest 48 hours after the lecture.

6. Disability related absences - apply flexibility, subject to course requirements.

Such absences may be due to medical appointments. Absences may also be due to a specific medical condition which interrupts their studies from time to time and should not count towards attendance requirements. It is appropriate to ask the student to provide evidence (e.g. hospital appointment cards) for such absences – but not when the absence is due to a disability such as an auto-immune condition where energy and pain levels constantly fluctuate.

7. Alternative strategies for presentations required

This is recommended when a student's condition puts them at a substantial disadvantage in this area compared to their non-disabled peers. If the ability to give a presentation is not a learning outcome for the programme, an alternative means of demonstrating knowledge should be offered – such as a written document. If the ability to give a presentation is a learning outcome, it may be appropriate to offer the student the option of presenting to one member of staff, a small group instead of the whole class, or delivering it remotely.

8. Captioning/subtitles

This is required by students who are deaf or hard of hearing and/or have auditory processing difficulties. All audio-visual material should be subtitled in order for the student to access the learning. In order to arrange this, please contact The Eden Centre or see [Transcriptions and closed captions](#)

Exams

1. 25% extra time
2. Extra time is needed to take account of slower processing, reading and/or writing speeds when compared to peers.
3. Extra time is commonly afforded to students where it is felt that their academic productivity may not be in keeping with the number of hours for which they study. These students therefore require additional time to be able to produce a comparable level of work to their peers. For example, this may include:
 - Difficulties with concentration/distractions which means that students must 'pace' their efforts in exam situations– either because of cognitive processes or a side-effect of their disability (such as pain management, medications which impact on sleeping patterns, anxiety etc).
 - Slower reading speeds which mean that it takes more time for them to digest and respond to questions
 - Slower processing speeds which means that the assimilation of ideas and structuring of essay responses takes more time
 - Reduced writing accuracy, which means that more time is needed for proof-reading
4. **Use of a PC**
5. This recommendation is made for students whose disabilities prevent them from handwriting legibly and without pain for extended periods of time.
6. **Letter of Notification (SpLD)**

This is attached to the course work and exam scripts when a student should not be penalised for minor errors in grammar and spelling. However, their work should still be clear and logical.

The key recommendation is:

Wherever possible, do not penalise for errors in spelling, syntax, word order, and expression.

In some departments, clarity of expression and accuracy in spelling is an integral part of what is being tested and, therefore, errors of this kind cannot be ignored. If this is the case, the departmental policy must be transparent to students so that they understand what is required of them and where they are likely to be penalised.

We suggest that you mark positively for content, focusing on what the student is trying to say or argue rather than on minor errors.

In addition, wherever possible, avoid penalising the candidate for:

- Long paragraphs that look like a single sentence but are composed of an undifferentiated string of simple sentences linked by conjunctions.
- Short sentences that lack links with those that precede and follow.
- Sentences where it is possible to see that prepositions have been omitted or mistaken, e.g.
- 'of' in place of 'on'.
- Sentences that change direction mid-stream: this may be because the student has realised that the sentence requires the use of a word that they cannot spell and so needed to rephrase the sentence to avoid a spelling error.
- The use of a repeated sentence structure.
- Apparent preference for simple words rather than the more complex academic terms. This may reflect the student's difficulties with rapid word retrieval or with spelling and often creates a false impression of an immature understanding of the topic.

7. Letter of Notification (deaf)

This is attached to the work of a student who is prelingually deaf. Please take this into account when marking for sentence structures and spelling.

Students who were born deaf or who developed a significant hearing loss at a very young age may have difficulties with the structure of written English. For severely and profoundly deaf people, acquiring language is a different process from the ways in which hearing people develop language. In addition, they may have no auditory memory to support their acquisition of English.

Although deaf students may have more time to read the question, this will not improve sentence structure, grammar, or punctuation. This student should not be penalised for minor errors in grammar and spelling, but their work should still be clear and logical.

8. Letter of Notification (ASD)

This is attached to the work where a candidate has an autism spectrum condition, which is a life-long condition. An autistic student's thinking and learning style is different and they may find it harder than is usual to organise themselves and their work, sequence tasks, express their thoughts in an organised and fluent manner, or use language with fluency in keeping with their ability in their chosen area of study. They may also struggle to recognise and address the needs of their audience.

9. Letter of Notification (VI)

This is attached to work where the candidate's visual impairment will limit their ability to visually check their work for errors and layout. It may have been produced using assistive technology so while the sound of the words should be accurate, spellings may differ, and the work may not make the visual impression that the student would have chosen.

10. Rest breaks

A student may need to take rest breaks for a variety of reasons, to stand/stretch, to eat/drink or take medication, to use the toilet or just as a break to manage concentration difficulties. Different students will need to take rest breaks at different times and the frequency/duration will be individual to each student.

11. Consideration of extra time for take-home papers.

Take-home papers can remove some of the restrictions and inconvenience of traditional exams, as the student can take their own breaks and arrange their environment better to suit their needs. However, for online or take-home papers with a time limit of 24 hours or less it is appropriate to add around 25% additional time where this adjustment is included.

12. Alternative Assessments required

This recommendation is only made after careful consideration of the medical evidence and where the prescribed form of assessment may not be appropriate for the student, even with the usual adjustments. Alternative assessment can take any form so long as it demonstrates the learning outcomes are met e.g. a piece of coursework instead of an exam/viva etc.

Any of the above recommendations that cannot be met should be discussed with DMHS, so that alternative adjustments can be put into place.