DISABILITY CODE OF PRACTICE
with Associated Guidance

2023/24

This Code of Practice is produced by

Disability & Academic Support at Aston University, which is part of Student Welfare

Contents

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INTRODUCTION

Aston University welcomes students with disabilities, is committed to the continuing development of an inclusive environment and a non-discriminatory culture, in the spirit of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and Equality Act 2010.

The University recognises the importance of having effective support mechanisms in place to enable all students to achieve their potential. This Code of Practice seeks to reinforce this commitment. It is intended as a practical tool to identify a range of issues that students with a variety of disabilities could potentially face when studying in higher education, and the type of support that Aston University can offer. It clarifies the University's decision-making processes regarding reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment practices, and the processes for gaining support. The Code identifies opportunities to promote an inclusive environment for learning and assessment, which anticipates the varied requirements of all students, irrespective of disability status.

This Code of Practice is written with the intention of being read in conjunction with the University's Academic Regulations, to provide practical detail on how these may be administered in the context of students with a disability.

Background

'The UK Quality Code for Higher Education' seeks to promote an inclusive approach to student learning and assessment through the core principles of equality and diversity. With regards to disability, this requires offering disabled students and non-disabled students learning opportunities that are 'equally accessible to them through inclusive design, wherever possible, and by means of reasonable adjustments whenever necessary' (Chapter B4, p. 1).

'The Equality Act 2010' consolidates the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Specials Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

Definition of Disability:

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is considered 'disabled' if:

- They have a physical or mental impairment.
- The impairment has a substantial and long-term (has or likely to last 12 months or more) adverse effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

Disability covers a wide range of conditions. These include:

- Sensory impairments, such as those affecting hearing and sight.
- Long-term illnesses with fluctuating or recurring effects such as rheumatoid arthritis, myalgic encephalitis and epilepsy.
- Progressive conditions such as motor neuron disease, muscular dystrophy, and lupus.
- Organ specific, including respiratory conditions and cardiovascular disease.
- Developmental, for example autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and dyscalculia.
- Mental health conditions and illnesses such as eating disorders, bipolar affective disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and depression.
- And, those produced by injury to the body or brain.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on Universities to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students in relation to:

- A provision, criterion, or practice (for example teaching and assessment methods).
- Physical features (for example access to lecture theatres, laboratories, library, and includes furnishings and fittings in or on the premises).
- Auxiliary aids (such as provision of non-medical helper assistance, hearing loops and information in accessible formats).

The duty to make reasonable adjustments requires HEIs to take positive steps to ensure that students can fully participate in their studies and enjoy the other benefits, facilities, and services the HEI provides for students.

Where any of the University's provisions place a disabled student at a substantial disadvantage (i.e. not minor or trivial) in comparison to students who are not disabled, the University is required to take reasonable action to avoid the disadvantage. Hence, the purpose of the duty is to remove barriers to learning, where it is reasonable to do so. On occasions, this may require treating one student more favorably than others (Equality Act 2010, Section 4.33).

The core purpose of the duty to make reasonable adjustments is to enable disabled students to access education in a manner that is as close as is reasonably possible to the standard offered to students in general. Rather than wait for situations to arise, HEIs are required to anticipate the needs of potential disabled students for reasonable adjustments. Failure to anticipate the need for an adjustment may lead to additional expense, or unacceptable delays in complying with the duty to make adjustments.

Example of an anticipatory adjustment:

- A lecturer posts teaching and learning resources on Blackboard in an open format rather than PDF to enable students with a visual impairment to enlarge print size to their requirements.

Competence Standards

HEIs are not expected to make reasonable adjustments to competence standards. Where feasible, however, HEIs are required to make adjustments to the ways that competence standards are assessed, so that disabled students are not disadvantaged through the assessment method. Please refer to the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) for further information on competence standards and reasonable adjustments.

Previous Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments at University are made in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, these may differ to students' previous access arrangements and reasonable adjustments which are determined through Joint Qualification Council Guidance for General and Vocational qualifications.

SECTION 1: SHARING A DISABILITY

Introduction and Core Principles

Aston University is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and endeavoring to meet the needs of students with disabilities. This includes taking proactive steps to encourage disclosure so that reasonable adjustments can be made.

We aim to use the word 'share' rather than 'disclose' a disability, because this is a more inclusive approach. We also recognise information about disability or long-term health condition is personal and we will adhere to data protection policy and procedures.

Limits to confidentiality are specified in Section 2.

Sharing Decisions

In the case of programmes covered by Fitness to Practice criteria, for example Pharmacy (MPharm), any disability that may affect an individual's ability to Practice must be shared.

For all other programmes of study, the decision to share a disability is up to the student. Any student can share a disability at any time during their studies, from the start of the admissions process through to graduation. We recognise that whilst many students will have a longstanding history of disability prior to coming to Aston, some students become disabled or have a disability identified for the first time during their studies. Other students may choose to share a longstanding disability only after their course has started.

Students should be made aware that if they choose not to share a disability or limit the information provided, then while the University will do it's best to meet any support needs they may have, they may not be able to access the full range of support available. This may include:

- Reasonable adjustments to teaching and learning.
- Reasonable adjustments in placements and study abroad.
- Exam accommodations.
- Assistance to evacuate a building in the event of an emergency.

For students on a programme with a Fitness to Practice criteria, non-disclosure may compromise professional registration. Potential Fitness to Practice issues may have to be divulged during Programme enrolment for certain courses leading to professional registration, particularly if students need to be 'fit to Practice' due to expected interactions with patients and/or members of the public as students.

Sharing of a Disability to Disability & Academic Support

Students are encouraged to share their disability on their UCAS form or application to the University, to trigger engagement with Disability & Academic Support and help ensure necessary support arrangements are in place on arrival. The process for sharing at this point is detailed in Section Two.

Students can share a disability by making contact with Student Welfare and Disability & Academic Support | Aston University at any point of their studies.

Sharing of a Disability to Other Members of Staff

Students may share their disability to any member of staff employed by the University, who is then deemed to have received the information on behalf of the University. Following sharing of a disability, the Staff Member should:

- Ask the student if they are in contact with the Disability & Academic Support. If so, remind the student to contact their assigned Disability Advisor for any advice and assistance required.
- Encourage students who are not known to Disability & Academic Support to make contact or seek their written consent to make a referral on their behalf, and then document this in the student record.
- If a student refuses to consent to the above, remind them of the potential impact not sharing information can have on their studies.
- If a student requests that what they share or are talk about remains confidential, explain that it may be necessary to break that confidentiality if the student is felt to be at risk of harming themselves or others, or if they are on a programme covered by Fitness to Practice.

Sharing of a Disability to the University's Placements Team

Sharing of a student's disability to the placement provider should only occur with the student's explicit consent, or if they are on a programme covered by Fitness to Practice.

Disability & Academic Support have Disability Advisors who will work with the Placements team to ensure reasonable adjustments are in place for disabled students before, during and after their placement.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Student

It is the responsibility of the student to:

- Decide if they wish to share disability related information, (unless on a programme covered by Fitness to Practice, where this may be compulsory).
- If so, inform the University by contacting [Disability & Academic Support | Aston University](#) who are part of Student Welfare.
- Consent to share information regarding their disability and support requirements.
- Comply with professional, statutory, and regulatory body requirements regarding sharing a disability where applicable.
- Follow the Disability & Academic Support processes for accessing the support available.

Disability & Academic Support

It is the responsibility of Student Welfare Administrators to:

- Contact the student three times but email if they did not have all the correct information, on occasions students may receive a follow up telephone call.
- Treat all information shared sensitively.
- Seek consent from the student to share elements of this information strictly on a 'need-to-know' basis.
- Store disability related information securely.
- Invite the student to engage with an assigned Lead Disability Advisor.

Other Staff

It is the responsibility of other Staff to:

- Encourage students to share disability related information to Disability & Academic Support.
- Contact Student Welfare by email studentwelfare@aston.ac.uk
  if you want non urgent advice about supporting a student with a disability.
- Seek advice from line manager, follow Safeguarding Policies and Procedures if concerned for a student's wellbeing or that of peers.

SECTION 2: ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Introduction and Core Principles

This Section sets out Disability & Academic Support's processes and practices for engaging with prospective students with disabilities during the admissions stage, with due regard to anti-discriminatory legislation and fulfilling a positive student experience. For programmes covered by Fitness to Practice, there are additional, compulsory disclosure requirements.

Aston University considers applications from all students on the grounds of academic merit, irrespective of disability, but subject to professional practitioner requirements if these apply. It is important that applicants with a disability disclose to the University at their earliest opportunity, so appropriate arrangements for reasonable adjustments can be considered to support their student experience.

A procedure for exploring all possible reasonable adjustments with the applicant will be followed. In exceptional cases, the University may require further advice from Health Professionals.

If the University is unable to meet an applicant's additional needs or can only do so by compromising their learning experience and study outcome, then the University will raise their concerns with the applicant as soon as this becomes apparent.

Students who choose not to engage at an early stage, particularly those with high support needs, may be required to defer entry if these cannot be accommodated prior to the start of term. Similarly, there may be occasions when the University needs to defer entry for late applicants, particularly where external agencies are involved and extensive alterations to on-campus accommodation is required.

Initial Contact Procedure for New Applicants

Disability & Academic Support endeavors to liaise with applicants from the outset so their potential support needs are assessed, discussed, and in place prior to their arrival at Aston.

Disability & Academic Support aims to implement a four-stage initial contact request procedure during the admissions period, which invites students to engage and share information regarding their disability and potential support needs.

Stage 1:

An initial introductory email and a Student Welfare Support Request Form (SWSRF) [Student Welfare Support Request Form.](#)) inviting the applicant to engage with Disability & Academic Support is automatically sent to all applicants with firm or unconditional offers who select a disability category on their application. The SWSRF provides the opportunity for an applicant to share brief details of their disability, current and anticipated support requirements, and provide consent for Disability & Academic Support to share information on a strictly 'need to know' basis with relevant stakeholder groups.

Stage 2:

A follow up email and SWSRF link is sent to disabled students who have not responded to Stage 1 communications.

Stage 3:

A follow up email and SWSRF is sent to disabled students who have not responded to Stage 2 communications.

<u>Stage 4:</u>

On some occasions attempts will be made to contact applicants by phone who are considered to have potentially higher support needs and have not responded to Stages 1-3 communications.

Contact Procedure for Late Applicants

The contact procedure for late applicants with unconditional offers and those coming through Clearing is as follows:

<u>Stage 1:</u>

On receipt of notification from the College Admissions Team, applicants are sent an introductory email and SWSRF from Student Welfare team.

In addition, attempts may be made to contact applicants who are considered to have potentially higher support needs by phone.

<u>Stage 2:</u>

Student Welfare administrators aims to send three follow up emails to students who do not respond.

Non-Respondents

Applicants who share a disability have the right to not engage with Disability & Academic Support if they so choose. However, the team cannot implement reasonable adjustments for situations that they have not been made aware of.

To avoid the potential for perceived harassment, Disability & Academic Support may not pursue further contact with non-respondents to any of the communication opportunities detailed above. The onus to make contact thereafter will lie with the student.

Allocation of a Lead Disability Advisor

Each applicant will be allocated a lead Disability Advisor during the admissions process. Applicants are usually allocated to the lead Disability Advisor assigned to their Academic College.

The role of the lead Advisor is to co-ordinate and communicate the academic -related support needs of students within the University and liaise with external agencies where appropriate. The role continues throughout the student's studies at Aston.

Confidentiality

All information provided by students will be treated sensitively, stored securely, and shared on a strictly 'need-to-know basis. Students are invited to provide consent for three categories of disclosure, to:

- Aston Staff only.
- External agencies.
- Additional named contacts the student would like involved with their support.

Full details of each level are included in the SWSRF; a separate indication is required for each.

All case notes and associated documents will be stored electronically in a secure part of the University's Student Records System with restricted access for six years after the student has left the University.

Confidentiality is not considered as an absolute. There are certain circumstances in which Disability & Academic Support has a responsibility to break confidentiality:

- Where it is believed that a student or third party is in danger.
- Where the university would be liable to civil or criminal court procedures if information were not to be disclosed.
- Where there are Fitness to Practice issues
- If University staff became very concerned about a student's wellbeing or their impact on the potential safety of others, and if we believe that they are not engaging with professional services to address their situation, then we may refer the student to Fitness to Study.

Wherever possible, the student themselves is encouraged to pass on information to the relevant agency. If the student is reluctant to do this, Disability & Academic Support may pass on the information directly.

Personal Care Support

The University does not provide or make provision for personal care support such as assistance with eating, washing, dressing, toileting, and mobility around campus. Home student applicants requiring personal care support will need to contact their Local Authority Social Services Department and have this in place prior to commencing their studies. Students from overseas will also need to have personal care arrangements in place prior to arrival. Disability & Academic Support can advise on potential local service suppliers during the admissions period.

<u>RESPONSIBILITIES</u>

Student

It is the responsibility of the student to:

- Inform the University of their disability at the earliest opportunity if they wish to access support arrangements.
- Respond to communication to engage with Disability & Academic Support at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Apply in good time for Campus accommodation, if required, and inform Disability & Academic Support and Accommodation Services of any adaptations they may require to their room.
- Provide suitable evidence of their disability (See Section 2).
- Make arrangements for personal care assistance as required.
- Apply for the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) if eligible.

Students who choose not to engage at an early stage may be required to defer entry if their needs cannot be safely accommodated for the start of term, particularly those who require a high level of support. Similarly, there may be occasions when we need to defer entry for late applicants, particularly where external agencies are involved and extensive alterations to on-campus accommodation are involved.

Sometimes it may be useful for us to be able to discuss the support needs of a student with other individuals such as a parent/guardian or an existing support worker.

We expect the student to be our primary contact in all decisions concerning their support.

We can only discuss the support needs of a student with other individuals if the student has given prior permission for this to happen by signing a Disability & Academic Support disclosure form which is included within [Student Welfare Support Request Form](#). This is separate to the Next of Kin information held by the University.

We will copy students into email communication with these individuals, unless there is a safeguarding reason, and this is agreed by a manager.

Admissions Teams

It is the responsibility of College Admissions Teams to inform Disability & Academic Support by contacting Student Welfare team, of all students who have shared or indicated a disability otherwise in their application documents. This can be via an automated mechanism or direct emails Student Welfare studentwelfare@aston.ac.uk

Disability & Academic Support

It is the responsibility of Disability & Academic Support to:

- Liaise with prospective students who share a disability throughout the admissions period.
- Allocate a lead Disability Advisor.
- Liaise with Academic Programme Staff, on-campus Residences Staff, current Care Professionals, SEN Co-Ordinators, and other external agencies, with the student's consent.
- Maintain a 'new applicant database' summarising contact stages, information received, stage in DSA application process.
- Store information received securely.

SECTION 3: EVIDENCING DISABILITY AND ACCESSING SUPPORT

Introduction and Core Principles

Aston University recognises its primary legal duty set out in the Equality Act 2010, to support disabled students in their studies through an inclusive environment and individual reasonable adjustments where required. Through these means the University seeks to promote the autonomy of disabled students and their independence as learners, whilst encouraging the development of underpinning study skills such as note taking and proof reading.

The University has a growing range of inclusive resources that are available to all students, irrespective of whether they have a disability or not. To receive additional support and reasonable adjustments such as special exam arrangements, specialist mentoring and tutoring sessions, students must provide documentary evidence that their disability meets the definition of 'disability' as defined in the Equality Act 2010. It is at the discretion of Disability & Academic Support if the documentary evidence is acceptable, the criteria is outline below in 'Evidencing a Disability'.

Costs for additional learning support in Higher Education for UK students are collectively met through Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA), their host University, and local authority. The DSA is a non-means tested grant, agreed, and paid through Student Loans Company (SLC) for the devolved administrations of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, as well as the National Health Service (NHS), and Post Graduate Research Council. DSA funding is intended for students who need support in addition to that provided by their university.

Evidencing Disability

A medical or psychological diagnosis on its own is insufficient to determine if a student meets the criteria for 'disabled', as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Evidence must contain specific details to be accepted for the purpose of reasonable adjustments and study related support, and it is helpful if the medical evidence includes:

a) Diagnosis

b) Likely duration of the disability/health condition

c) Whether the disability/health condition is fluctuating

d) Possible effects of the disability on learning / attendance at University etc. (as if the disability/health condition was undertreated)

e) Any impact on day-to-day activities (as if the disability/health condition was untreated)

   Furthermore, where possible, the medical evidence should identify whether the condition affects:

- Concentration, memory (short and/or long-term), and/or motivation
- Sleep and/or energy levels
- Time-management and/or self-direction
- Ability to mix in groups – i.e., group work be a source of anxiety?
- Reading/writing for long periods
- Use of computers
- Ability to walk any distance
- Ability to travel on public transport
- Ability to live in a community (e.g. within halls of residence)
- Whether medication may have side effects that may impact on learning (e.g., sleep disturbance, fatigue in the mornings etc.)

Medical evidence must be written:

f) by a qualified medical practitioner;
g) on headed paper with the professional's full contact details (including full name, address, telephone number and email)
h) signed
i) accurate
j) up-to-date (ideally written within the last 90 days at the time of submission)
k) evidence which has been altered in any way by someone other that the author will not be accepted

The University would expect medical evidence to be written in English. The University may consider evidence written in another language but this should always be accompanied by a certified translation.

In line with the UK General Medical Council's guidance, we would not normally accept medical evidence which is produced by a close relative, friend or work colleague – even if they are medically qualified.

To consider reasonable adjustments for students with specific learning difficulties, we require evidence of prior support, for example in school or college, screening information or a full diagnostic assessment report. The diagnostic assessment must have been conducted by a chartered psychologist (or equivalent), an education psychologist, or a specialist teacher holding an assessment practicing certified.

The report must be on headed paper with the professional's contact details, included all tests carried out to assess the student's specific learning difficulty, and include a summary of recommendations.

Although short-term conditions are not specifically referred to in the Equality legislation. Staff within the University are encouraged to take a flexible and sympathetic approach to significant and properly verified short-term conditions

For the purposes of this Code, a 'short-term condition' is defined as any condition not covered by the definition of a disability as defined by the Act and noted above.

Academic Staff may seek the advice of the Disability & Academic Support team, as well as the Mental Health & Wellbeing team, when handling such issues and may. Academic Staff at their discretion, put in place short-term adjustments providing that properly verified evidence of the need has been produced.

The *Extenuating Circumstances Policy* could also be used as a way of handling some short-term conditions and should be consulted in addition to this Code.

Guidance for Disability & Academic Support

Medical Evidence for a Disability or Long-Term Health Condition

Medical evidence can be in the following forms:

- As recent as possible letter from a GP, consultant, or other qualified medical practitioner or appropriate specialist, stating the nature of the student's disability, the date when first diagnosed, and explanation of how the disability impacts on the student's study. Evidence included in an Education and Health Care Plan can support the diagnosis, particularly in highlighting areas where the student needs support.
- If you are awaiting a diagnosis, we will consider information you provide, which evidences ongoing or prior need for more than 12 months.

Students who may be eligible for Disabled Student Allowances funding and would like to apply for this can access a form for their medical practitioner/appropriate specialist to complete from gov.uk.

Evidencing Mental Health Conditions

Evidence of a mental health difficulty can be in the following forms:

- As recent as possible letter from a GP, consultant or suitably qualified mental health specialist that states the nature of the student's disability, the date when first diagnosed, and explains how the disability impacts on the student's academic performance, such as concentration, memory, motivational difficulties, anxiety and/or paranoia.
- Students who may be eligible for DSA funding and would like to apply for this can access a form for their medical practitioner/appropriate specialist to complete from gov.uk.

Evidencing Autism

Students on the Autistic Spectrum will be asked to provide the following:

- A medical diagnosis of their condition (this is not age specific).
- Non-medical evidence of learning differences because of the condition, and additional support plans put in place to meet these differences. This can include relevant evidence from Statements, Transition Review Plans, Individual Education Plans and Learning Difficulty assessments.

- We acknowledge that adults may require support and they are still awaiting a formal diagnosis, please speak to a Disability Advisor to discuss the circumstances.

Evidencing Specific and General Learning Differences

- Students with a specific learning difference (SpLD) such as dyslexia will need to evidence this through a diagnostic assessment report from a psychologist or suitably qualified specialist teacher.
- The University offers a limited SpLD screening and diagnostic assessment service to Aston students in accordance with its '*Specific Learning Difficulty Screening and Assessment Policy'*, which is available from Disability & Academic Support on request.
- Students with more generalised learning differences who do not meet the criteria for SpLD but have a documented history of substantial need will be considered by Disability & Academic Support for reasonable adjustments on case-by-case basis.

Further Evidence Requirement

There may be cases where a student's evidence is deemed insufficient to confirm eligibility for reasonable adjustments and/or DSA funding. In such cases, Disability & Academic Support will invite the student to provide further evidence, which may be requested in cases where the student's disability-related circumstances have changed.

Where a student may have difficulty paying the cost of a GP letter as part of medical evidence, Aston will explore funding options to contribute to the cost.

TYPES AND SCOPE OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Inclusive Resources

Aston University accepts its responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to make the learning environment as inclusive as possible, so the need for individual interventions is the exception rather than rule. As such, the University is committed to expanding its range of inclusive resources that are freely available to any student.

A list of inclusive resources available at Aston University and guidance on how to access is detailed in the Tools for Learning section under the 'Current Students' tab on the University website.

Reasonable Adjustments to Teaching, Learning and Assessment

In Universities, reasonable adjustments are recommended by a Disability Advisor informed by evidence from a medical or mental health professional, specialist teacher and/or because of an 'assessment of need'. 'Usual way of working' is not in itself considered a sufficient justification for adjustments.

Implementation of recommendations for reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment practices will be subject to Disability & Academic Support's discretion, College and University policy, and professional body requirements.

In most cases, students' needs will be accommodated by standard baseline adjustments detailed in Sections 4 and 5. A student's support package will be reconsidered if their needs go beyond the scope of these.

University-Funded Support

The following funded support is available to all disabled students at Aston, subject to need, irrespective of domicile status:

- Note taking.
- Practical support assistance.
- Exam support assistance including readers and amanuenses.
- Library support assistance.
- Up to four 1:1 development sessions with the Dyslexia Specialist.
- Coping strategy development sessions per year for students with autism and/or complex mental health conditions with the Mental Health and Autism Specialists.
- Review appointments with their allocated Advisor.

DSA-Funded Support

DSA-funded support is available to most Home university students, according to the following principles, that it:

- Contributes towards additional costs for essential support in relation to their studies because of their disability.
- Supplements the provision of reasonable adjustments made by the institution rather than replace these.
- Is appropriate to the individual needs of the student.

- Does not assist with disability-related expenditure that the student would incur if they were not following their course of study. This includes personal care.

There are four categories of DSA funding:

- *Non-medical helper allowance*: this covers additional disability-related human support that the student requires for academic study. It is limited to specialist support activities such as electronic note-taking, specialist transcription and mobility training, and specialist access and learning support. Examples include specialist mentoring for students with mental health conditions or autism spectrum disorders, and specialist one-to one study skills support.
- *Major items of specialist equipment allowance*: this provides funding for additional major items of specialist equipment which the student requires, because of a disability, to undertake their course effectively. This may include computers for running assistive software, assistive software, specialist equipment for visually impaired students, and audio capture equipment. DSA funding for computers will only be provided where the computer is required solely for disability purposes, and subject to a contribution of around £200 from the student. Students experiencing genuine hardship may seek reimbursement through the University's DSA Specialist Equipment Contribution.
- *Travel allowance*: this may be awarded to pay for additional travel costs to and from the University, which are incurred because of a disability. For example, the difference in cost between public transport and travelling by taxi because of mobility or visual differences.
- *General allowance*: this may be used for miscellaneous expenditure not covered by other allowances, and to supplement the specialist equipment allowance and non-medical helper allowance. The cost of a DSA study needs assessment is deducted from the general allowance.

- Please refer to this link for the full criteria.

ACCESSING SUPPORT

Current Procedures for Evaluating the Needs of Disabled Students

On receipt of suitable medical evidence, a study needs assessment will be undertaken which may be in conjunction with Disability & Academic Support.

Students who are eligible for Disabled Students' Allowances will be encouraged to attend a study needs assessment appointment through the National Network of Needs Assessment Centres. This is fully funded through the student's funding body, and will provide recommendations for equipment, support arrangements and adjustments to study conditions, subject to policies and practices of individual universities.

Disability & Academic Support will offer to undertake similar assessments with students who are not eligible for DSA, or who are in their final term of study.

The University will only be forwarded a copy of a student's DSA Needs Assessment report and subsequent funding approval from Student Loans Company if the student has given explicit consent for this to happen. Disability & Academic Support cannot act on recommendations made within the report or approval letter without having sight of these.

Communicating Reasonable Adjustments within the University

Following an evaluation of needs, the Lead Disability Advisor will compile tailored Support Recommendations, which summarise the agreed reasonable adjustments for teaching and learning environments, exams, and class tests. A draft copy is then forwarded electronically to the student concerned for their approval.

Once approval is confirmed, the Support Recommendation document is distributed electronically to Academic Staff , usually the Module Leader on a need-to-know basis, including Fitness to Practice requirements. It is the role of the Module Leader to distribute the Support Recommendation to relevant staff, such as, Personal Tutors, Programme Directors, and Exams Officers.

Relevant Staff will be alerted to new Support Recommendations via a MAP notification or an electronic system. Staff with the relevant access will be able to check which students have Support Recommendations (and the detail) via the MAP Staff Homepage 'Module Details Lookup', and the 'My Modules' tab.

Accessing recommended/approved non-medical-helper (NMH) support

Aston Funded Support

Where this is agreed by a manager beforehand, the Disability Support Coordinator will put this in place NMH support on receipt of suitable medical evidence or recommendation in a Needs Assessment report, and with the student's confirmation that they wish to access the recommended support. Continuation and intensity of this support will be subject to regular review with Disability & Academic Support Staff, Head of Service and compliance with the terms and conditions detailed in Disability & Academic Support's Support Worker Agreement.

DSA Funded Support

Once approved, Student Loans Company will issue the student with a letter confirming their entitlement to DSA funding, and details of the approved support. The letter is coded 'DSA2'. It will include confirmation of approved supplier(s), and specific instructions on how to make initial contact with them to arrange support. Student Loans Company will

only issue a copy of this to Disability & Academic Support with the student's express consent.

Service level agreements for DSA-funded non-medical-helper support are between the student and provider. The University will not pay external suppliers for sessions that SFE refuses to fund unless agreed in advance.

Reviewing Support

In recognition that a student's support requirements may change during their course of study, Disability & Academic Support Advisors and Specialist Staff will offer one-to-one meetings to discuss these on request. Additional medical evidence may be required to verify need.

Students in receipt of DSA funding who seek amendments to the support detailed in their DSA2 letters must contact their respective Access Centre Needs Assessors in the first instance, as they would need to put forward any new recommendations for support to SLC. SLC will not consider requests via other means.

Non-medical-helper support funded by Aston University will be subject to review. Reviews will be termly in the first instance and annually thereafter.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Student

Evidence:

It is the student's responsibility to:

- Gain suitable medical or psychological evidence of their disability.
- Provide additional evidence as required.
- Comply with Aston's Specific Learning Difficulty Screening and Assessment Policy, if accessing psychological testing through the University's in-house service.

Support:

It is the student's responsibility to:

- Organise their Needs Assessment appointment, if eligible.
- Comply with Access Needs Assessment Centre policies and processes.

- Consent to share DSA reports/DSA2 letters and medical evidence with Disability & Academic Support, if they wish Team members to act on any recommendations made.
- Follow instructions provided in DSA2 letters for accessing all support approved.
- Consent to share Support Recommendation documents produced by Disability & Academic Support with relevant Staff within the University.
- Comply with Disability & Academic Support's Support Worker Agreement if accessing Aston-funded non-medical-helper support.
- Request a review of support requirements if their disability-related circumstances and potential support needs change.
- Inform their Academic College of any changes in health/disability that may impact on their Fitness to Practice if enrolled on a programme that is subject to Fitness to Practice criteria.

Disability & Academic Support

Evidence:

It is Disability & Academic Support's responsibility to:

- Request evidence when needed and offer guidance when additional evidence is required.

Support:

It is Disability & Academic Support's responsibility to:

- Gain the consent of students to distribute Support Recommendations to University Staff on a need-to-know basis, with exception of programmes with a Fitness to Practice requirement.
- Release approved Support Recommendation documents to University Staff on a need-to-know basis.
- Recruit and co-ordinate Aston-funded non-medical-helper support.
- Periodically review support requirements.

Academic College

Support:

It is the responsibility of the Academic College to:

- Access new and updated Support Recommendations via MAP.

- Query Disability & Academic Support about any support requests that are unclear or potentially incompatible with course requirements.

Exams Team

Support:

It is the responsibility of the Central Exams Team to:

- Access new and updated Support Recommendations via MAP.
- Query Disability & Academic Support about any support requests that are unclear or potentially incompatible with examination requirements.

SECTION 4: REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Introduction and Core Principles

This section provides additional information on some of the Reasonable Adjustments that appear most frequently on student Support Recommendation documents, and inclusive teaching practices that can be helpful to all learners, irrespective of disability status. In many cases, these recommendations reflect good teaching practice for all students.

Support Recommendation documents are compiled and disseminated by the University's Disability & Academic Support, subject to approval of the student in question. The Support Recommendations made are based on what is considered good practice within the HEI Sector. Where there is a possibility of potential conflict between the level of adjustment required, desired learning opportunities and outcomes of modules, Disability & Academic Support Staff will consult with the Module Leaders and Programme Directors concerned. This will be conducted on a case-by-case basis.

Support Recommendations for Teaching and Learning can be accessed by Module Teaching Teams, Programme Directors, Personal Tutors and College Administration Staff.

In line Office for Students guidelines on Inclusive Assessments the [Assessment practices in English higher education providers (officeforstudents.org.uk)](#) Aston no longer implement Considerate Marking or Sympathetic Marking. Should this be visible on a Student's Support Recommendations this will be a legacy and other reasonable

adjustments will supersede this. For futher guidance please refer to Aston's Assessment policies.

As mentioned in Section 3, guidance is circulated periodically, and available on request.

Although students may fall under the same categories of disability, each person will experience their disability/ earning difference in an individual way. It is therefore important that individuals have the opportunity to discuss their Support Recommendations with Teaching Staff, Personal Tutors, and Disability Advisors.

Lectures

When designing, planning, and delivering lectures, the following practical considerations need to be considered:

General support:

- Students may benefit from making a **personal audio recording** of the lecture from which they can supplement their notes. Students who experience poor concentration, fatigue, anxiety, have slow information processing and handwriting speeds, or have difficulty listening and writing simultaneously may find this particularly helpful.
- In lectures where complex calculations are being demonstrated, students may benefit from taking pictures of worked examples using a smartphone/electronic tablet for the same reasons as above. In addition, some students may have difficulty tracking information when copying from lecture screens and experience visual stress.
- Students make recordings of visual or oral presentations on the grounds of their disability can do so on the understanding that these must only be used for personal study, and are not to be reproduced or given to anyone else other than for transcription purposes. Recordings must not be shared with peers or uploaded to the internet/social networks/other media. Where sensitivity of information may be an issue, for example when student peers are asked to debate sensitive issues, consent for students to make personal recordings may be withdrawn. In this situation, it is compulsory to comply with the lecturer's wishes. Further details are available in the University's 'Policy for Students and Staff on the Recording of Lectures, Webinars and Other Teaching Sessions' available [here](#).
- **Handouts,** copies of **presentations** and other **reading materials** should be made available electronically on Blackboard, 48 hours in advance of the lecture. To enable students to print these out in any format they find helpful, .pdf and other non-editable formats should be avoided. Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and other adaptable formats should be used in preference. As an alternative, lecturers have the option of emailing handouts and presentations to students with disabilities in

advance. This recommendation may not be appropriate where lectures are based on impromptu discussion, knowledge application and discovery tasks. Lecturers are requested to help students identify alternative means of capturing session content either during or after the event, such as provision of a short, written summary of key points.

- Where teaching methods, ethical and consent considerations allow, **Aston Replay recordings** are particularly encouraged for the following disability-related reasons:

  - To enable students who are too unwell to attend lectures to continue studying.
  - To enable students who experience concentration, information processing speed and writing speed differences to supplement their lecture notes, without the need for a more personalised form of support.

- If a student is supported by a **note-taker**, it is important to ensure that the note taker has everything they need in advance of the lecture. Students are therefore expected to forward support materials on Blackboard to their respective note takers. Students may choose not to sit with their note-taker or interact with them in any way during lectures, to avoid potential stigma and embarrassment. In these circumstances, students are requested to inform lecturers discretely in advance, and confidentiality should be respected. Note takers will leave the room after 20 minutes. Any notes taken will not be forwarded to the student in the event of the supported student failing to attend a lecture, unless there are exceptional disability-related reasons which have been agreed with Disability & Academic Support in advance. Note-takers should not be involved in the lecture, other than to take notes on a student's behalf. Questions arising in lectures should therefore be directed to the student rather than the note-taker.

- Provide advanced notification of **last-minute changes** to location or content where possible, to facilitate orientation, preparation, and physical requirements, and notifying support workers.

- **Directed reading lists** to give a sense of how students should prioritise their reading.

- All responsibility for **subject-specific teaching** lies with Academic Colleges. Subject-specific teaching is not included in specialist study skills or mentoring sessions provided through Disability & Academic Support.

Students with Mobility Differences

- Ensure the venue for a lecture is accessible to wheelchair users and those with limited mobility. Modern wheelchairs often require wider access. Full details of resources available in each of the University's teaching and learning 'pool' rooms can be accessed through the [Teaching and Learning Community (TLC)](#). Whilst

Disability & Academic Support can make a referral to Estates and Facilities to locate height-adjustable desks in scheduled accessible lecture rooms, it is essential that any changes of room are reported to the student concerned and Disability & Academic Support as soon as these become apparent. It may be useful to have a number of seats reserved for students with limited mobility in the more accessible areas of lecture theatres, particularly for larger student cohorts.

Students who are Deaf/Hearing Impaired

- Try to face students who lip read. Avoid speaking whilst turning to write on white boards. Use clearly enunciated speech and avoid standing in front of a window or light which would make lip reading more difficult.
- Provide complex/numerical information or unfamiliar vocabulary in written form where possible.
- It is helpful to repeat questions asked 'from the floor' or comments made by students, to ensure the student understands.
- Some students may require the assistance of a British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreter throughout lectures. It is essential that seating arrangements enable the BSL Interpreter and student to face each other. The pace of lecture delivery may need to be slowed down to enable the BSL Interpreter to translate effectively. Due to the intensity of work, it is usual practice for two BSL Interpreters to share tasks within a lecture.

Students with Visual Impairments

- Provide verbal explanations of all key visual material presented, for example diagrams, tables and graphs. Where possible, provide this information in advance in a more accessible format such as an editable digital copy.
- Guide dogs will need to be accommodated in lecture environments and appropriate policies and processes should be followed.

Students with Dyslexia

- Reading lists that give library class/shelf numbers.
- References to literature written down rather than given verbally, and names of authors spelt out.

Students with an Autistic Spectrum Condition

- Clear, concise and unambiguous language should be used to make processing instructions and lecture content easier.
- Students may appreciate guidance about when and how to ask questions in lectures.

Students with Mental Health Conditions

- Students may have a support worker in attendance to provide emotional support.
- Students prone to acute anxiety and panic attacks may leave the room without prior warning. Attention should not be drawn to the situation, and the student allowed to return discretely on recovery.
- Emotional support animals are not permitted within University premises.

Tutorials and Seminars

When planning tutorials and seminars, the following practical considerations need to be taken account of:

General support:

- Provide **discussion and reference materials** in advance and in electronic format, to facilitate slower information processing speeds, reading and sensory differences.
- References to **literature and key terminology** to be written down in addition to being given orally.
- Some students may be accompanied by **support workers**, who need to be accommodated.
- In some situations, particularly where there are complex issues, a Disability Advisor, may attend a tutorial meeting with a student. This will only be done if the student has given consent. Tutors will always be aware in advance of an advisor's attendance.
- **Personal audio-recordings**: consent can be denied where recording is not considered appropriate, for example to protect confidentiality in case studies from professional practice where personal views and experiences are invited, or when student peers object on these grounds. A clear justification should be provided where consent is denied. In situations where other students can take notes, the tutor should ensure that students who cannot do this for disability-related reasons

are not disadvantaged. Non-medical helpers should be permitted to take notes on the student's behalf.

Students who are Deaf/Hearing Impaired

- Where possible, arrange seats so students can see one another, and lip reading can be facilitated.
- Permit only one person to speak at a time in group discussions.

Students with Visual Impairments

- Ask all group members to introduce themselves once seated to facilitate orientation.
- Describe the layout of the room (particularly key risks) if appropriate.

Students with Dyslexia

- Avoid asking students to read materials out aloud, unless this is a core requirement of the course.
- Where possible inform the student beforehand, so are prepared.

Practical and laboratory-based classes

- A health and safety risk assessment of the area and activities may be required.
- Students should be informed at the earliest stage (ideally published in module information) if there are potential risks, for example, if equipment can impact a pacemaker, or increase the likelihood of a seizure
- If a student is unable to perform the practical activities set due to the nature of their disability, consideration will need to be given to how the student can develop the skills required and meet learning outcomes. Fitness to Practice issues may need to be considered if the student is pursuing a course that is subject to these criteria.
- Students with learning differences such as dyslexia or an autistic spectrum condition may benefit from practical schedules in advance, to allow time for processing.

- Clear, concise, and unambiguous language should be used to avoid confusion and stress. For example, students with an autistic spectrum condition may find the instruction "clear up after yourself" unhelpful and highly ambiguous.

Field trips

The following practical considerations need to be considered when planning field trips:

- Ensure a discussion takes place on proposed activities and travel arrangements with all students who share a disability well in advance of the trip, to identify necessary adjustments. Identify potential health and safety risks. Where appropriate, undertake a risk assessment and identify strategies to deal with unexpected situations.
- It may be appropriate to request medical and insurance clearances in advance of a trip. Additional funding may need to be agreed in advance to cover the costs of non-medical-helper support.
- Some students may require a support assistant throughout.
- Extra time may be needed to complete notebooks, and alternative ways of recording data may need to be considered, for example audio and video recordings.
- Some students may find room sharing difficult on account of their disability. Individual rooms or alternative accommodation may be required.
- All information and instructions pertaining to the trip should be provided in writing as well as verbally. This should include a checklist of what the student needs to do to prepare for the trip and items to bring. Reading materials in advance may be helpful too.

Group work

- Students with social/communication differences or who experience social anxiety may find it helpful to be allocated to groups, rather than be asked to make their own arrangements.
- The setting and agreeing of 'ground rules' for conduct and expectations on formation of groups may prove helpful.

Patient-facing sessions

- Support workers must be DBS checked in advance where note-taking and/or study support assistance is required by the student as a reasonable adjustment.

Placements

Placement providers have a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for students with a disability. The University is responsible for ensuring that professional standards and conditions of placement are met. What is considered 'reasonable' will vary with placement setting and context. Any adjustments made will need to take account of the skills and competencies required by professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies and Fitness to Practice criteria:

- Ensure a discussion of placement requirements and potential adjustments with the student and placement supervisor well in advance of the placement. Consult Disability & Academic Support Advisors if the needs of the student are considered complex.
- If Personal Care Support is required for an overseas placement, this can take up to 12 months to arrange, planning needs to take place early.
- Consider health and safety issues, and, if necessary, arrange a risk assessment in advance of the placement with the student and placement supervisor. Contingency plans may be necessary in the event of disability-related issues arising.
- Consider placement locations, access, and travel arrangements, particularly for wheelchair users and students with a visual impairment.
- Students with a mental health difficulty or an autistic spectrum condition may find staying or working away from their normal environment unsettling. Emotional and on-going specialist mentoring support may prove beneficial. This could be provided locally or online throughout the duration of the placement, subject to local rules.
- Cost-related additional support, for example the services of a British Sign Language interpreter or specialist mentor, may not be covered by Disabled Student Allowances. This may need to be arranged with the placement provider and funded through Access to Work instead [Access to Work](#)

RESPONSIBILITIES

Students

It is the responsibility of the student to:

- Approve draft copies of Support Recommendations on receipt.
- Comply with the University's 'Policy for Students and Staff on the Recording of Lectures, Webinars and Other Teaching Sessions'.
- Access advanced copies of lecture materials and adapt these as required.
- Provide own equipment to record lectures.
- Book an appointment with their lead Disability Advisor if amendments to current recommendations are required.
- Book appointments with Teaching Staff, for example via the Web Appointment Scheduling System (WASS) system, where clarification of lecture content and assignment briefs is needed.

Students using Note-Takers and Support Workers

It is the responsibility of the student to:

- Pass on information to their note-taker/support worker of any amendments to their timetable or lecture cancellations.
- Informing Disability & Academic Support of any changes to their timetable.
- Forward relevant supporting materials to note-takers from Blackboard in advance of the lecture.
- Conform to Agency and/or Disability & Academic Support guidelines for working with support workers.
- Collect notes from note-takers and sign note-taker/support worker time sheets at the end of each lecture if required to. Notes may not be released without signature.

Teaching Staff

It is the responsibility of Teaching Staff to:

- Access student's Support Recommendation documents through MAP or electronic system in place at the time
- Action Support Recommendations for teaching and learning.
- Query Disability & Academic Support about any support requests that are unclear or potentially incompatible with course requirements.

- Ensure that scheduled teaching rooms have sufficient space to accommodate disability-related needs and renegotiate teaching rooms if needed.

Disability & Academic Support

Disability & Academic Support is responsible for:

- Creating and disseminating each student's Support Recommendations to relevant parties via MAP.
- Allocating note-takers and study assistants where recommended and agreed for students who access this form of support for the first time from September 2016 onwards.
- Organising support worker DBS checks where appropriate. Note: it is Disability & Academic Support policy to seek DBS clearance for all study support assistants engaged in Aston's in-house Non-Medical Helper Service.

SECTION 5: REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR EXAMINATIONS, CLASS TESTS AND ASSESSED COURSEWORK

Introduction and Core Principles

Disability & Academic Support is responsible for making appropriate recommendations for special exam and assessed coursework arrangements for students on an individual basis. These are not applicable to competence standards. However, adjustments can be considered to the way in which that standard is assessed. Where there are concerns that potential reasonable adjustments may conflict with competence standards, or expected standards of academic achievements, Disability & Academic Support Advisors will consult with Programme Directors.

Students may have received special exam arrangements in their previous schools and colleges. Reasonable adjustments provided by Aston University may not be identical to those previously received, and will be formulated in accordance with current need, course of study requirements, and both central University/College policies.

Support Recommendations suggested within Needs Assessment reports, medical evidence and psychological reports are intended for guidance purposes only, rather than specific instruction. It is at the discretion of Disability & Academic Support if the recommendations are appropriate. Implementation of these is subject to central University

and Academic College policy. Where there is a query over a recommendation, Disability & Academic Support may request additional information or other forms of evidence.

Disability & Academic Support may reject requests for examination adjustments where appropriate evidence has not been provided.

Students experiencing short term conditions may be granted reasonable adjustments on a short-term basis, for example for the assessment/exam period only, subject to appropriate medical evidence. Academic Colleges are responsible for any support costs arising in these circumstances.

Potential disadvantages arising from new or short term conditions that are unlikely to meet the Equality Act 2010 definition of 'disability' and so cannot be addressed through reasonable adjustments, should be addressed through the University's [Exceptional Circumstances](#) procedure.

Whilst every effort will be made to accommodate additional needs of students with disabilities, short term illnesses and injuries, the University will not normally be able to accommodate these at short notice. New requests for, or alterations to, existing special exam arrangements submitted less than two weeks prior to the start of formal exam periods will not be accommodated by the Central Examinations Team. Late requests that cannot be accommodated by the Examinations team will be referred to Academic Colleges, who will determine what action can be taken.

Assessed coursework

The University considers that reasonable adjustments for assessed coursework should be undertaken both before and after the work is handed in for marking.

Before Hand-In:

- Students with specific learning differences, autism and prelingually deaf students may benefit from a short, 10 minute tutorial (bookable through WASS) before starting an important assignment to discuss their understanding of the set task and brief ideas. This would help to ensure that the student understands what is asked of them and provide reassurance that they are approaching the task along the right lines.
- Students are encouraged to use **enabling software** such as TextHelp Read & Write on Aston Apps in the research, production and proofreading of written assignments that is appropriate to their disability or learning difference. This may have been allocated on an individual basis or made accessible to all Aston students. TextHelp is available on all student space computers within the University. Details of how to use and access TextHelp and similar proof reading software are available via [Tools for Learning](#).

<u>Deadline Extensions:</u>

- Disability & Academic Support does not have the authority to grant extensions to scheduled coursework deadlines. **Extensions to deadlines** for students with disabilities are subject to the University's policy on the late submission of work, and subsequent penalties and individual College practice. If extensions to deadlines are permissible, then these should be supported by a good case (rather than granted automatically on application) and negotiated directly with the Academic College.

- The student is advised to inform their College Administrative Office as soon as possible in situations they cannot complete a piece of coursework on time for disability-related reasons, and where extensions to deadlines are not permissible. If relevant, the College may then direct the student to apply for Exceptional Circumstances.

- Part of any Aston Degree outcome is the ability to communicate effectively in speech and writing. Some assessments therefore will include underpinning presentation skills as core learning outcomes. Presentation skills include accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Where these are being assessed, this will be communicated in assessment briefs. All students, irrespective of disability, are strongly advised to engage with [Tools for Learning](#), to achieve the required standard. This is a collection of inclusive resources, each targeted at improving a particular aspect of work production and presentation, with instructions on application and use.

<u>Feedback:</u>

When providing verbal or written feedback it is helpful to:

- Offer positive comments and use positive statements.
- Use clear and unambiguous language.
- Avoid marking in red or green ink / font as both may be difficult for some students to read.
- Explain how the work could be improved.
- Be explicit about specific problems so that the student can see a way forward and / or seek additional help.
- Correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar; where the same error is made repeatedly, it may be helpful to point this out whilst not correcting each instance.
- Provide written essay feedback in a word-processed format, especially if the marker's handwriting is difficult to read.

Examinations and class tests under timed conditions

Some disabled students may be disadvantaged by a timed written examination because they do not write or have the stamina to write or concentrate for a sustained period.

Similarly, some students may experience considerable physical, sensory, or mental discomfort during exams, or may need to take medication. In some cases, the examination paper may present a barrier because the language in which it is written is difficult to comprehend, for example to students with BSL as their first language. The format in which the paper is presented may limit accessibility. The following standard reasonable adjustments are most used:

Standard reasonable adjustments:

- **25% extra time** for written examinations and class tests is the standard recommendation for students with learning differences, medical conditions, physical disability or sensory impairments which impact on the speed and efficiency of information processing and writing, and for which there is substantial supporting evidence.
- **Timed rest breaks** of up to fifteen minutes per hour are granted to students requiring frequent toilet breaks, relief from pain/discomfort/fatigue, and medication administration during the exam on the grounds of their disability. Time lost to rest breaks is monitored by exam invigilators and added to a student's expected finish time for the exam. In exceptional circumstances based on health need, and if the course allows, more than fifteen minutes per hour maybe granted.
- Students with extra time (or any adjustments) in exams will be seated in the **same room** as other students with extra time provision. This is to minimise disruption when candidates without an extra time allowance leave the room and ensure that the Central Exams Team can cater for students with exam adjustments.

- Spelling, punctuation, and grammar accuracy is not expected in examination scripts produced under timed conditions unless this is deemed a core competence to be demonstrated under these circumstances. Minor errors in examination script presentation should not be penalised if the meaning of the student's response is clear. This excludes critical spellings such as drug names and medical terminology. Scripts must however be legible to be assessed. Guidance is circulated periodically, and available on request.
- Students have the option to take transparent coloured overlays into the exam room to alleviate visual stress.

Non-standard reasonable adjustments:

Non-standard recommendations are made on an individual student basis, and in accordance with complexity of need. Examples include:

- A student may be permitted to sit exams in a **separate room** from other candidates in exceptional cases. Decisions will be made on an individual basis and with compelling evidence of this need. Due to the high demand for this provision, allocation may be subject to review.

- Where the duration of an exam plus additional time exceeds three hours, Colleges may offer a **shortened paper**, professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies permitting. This is to reduce the potential effects of fatigue and facilitate an adequate break should more than one exam occur on the same day. It is the College's choice and responsibility as to how the paper is shortened, ensuring that the core competencies of the syllabus are covered, the choice of questions are like for like with other candidates, and don't compromise academic standards. Students have the right to opt out of this arrangement at any time.

- **Additional time exceeding 25%** will only be granted in exceptional cases, with substantial supporting evidence, and when alternative means of producing responses within a 25% additional time frame or special rubric have been exhausted or deemed unsuitable.

- Students may be granted the **use of a computer** for producing exam responses. Decisions will be based on disability-related need rather than solely a student's preferred way of recording exam responses. To avoid disturbance to non-typing candidates, students who have been granted this reasonable adjustment will be housed in an alternative room along with other candidates who have the same recommendation.

- When a student is scheduled to sit **more than one exam on the same day**, Disability & Academic Support will investigate the possibility with the Exams Office and Academic College concerned of moving one of these to another day in exceptional disability-related circumstances. Decisions will be based on availability of rooms and invigilators, the impact on other candidates sitting the same exam, and external exam board requirements (where applicable).Adjustments to the timetable should be made to allow the student the opportunity to take a longer rest break between examinations when rescheduling the date of an exam is not possible. The student may be required to 'isolate' from other candidates during this period.

- **Amendments to language** in exam papers may be required by students with social communication differences such as Autism, or for whom British Sign Language is the first language. Wording will need to be as clear, straightforward, and unambiguous as possible, free from unnecessary jargon, utilising professional terminology as appropriate, whilst not changing what is being assessed.

- Students with certain medical conditions (such as diabetes and fatigue syndromes) may require the opportunity to **eat and drink** whilst sitting exams.

- Specific **environmental requirements** other than rooming may be required for disability-related reasons. These include ergonomic chairs, height adjustable tables, and seating location.

Non-medical helper support

Some students will require **non-medical helper support** to undertake exams. These roles include amanuenses, readers, and practical support assistants.

However, there are circumstances where the student must record their own written responses, for example in language exams in which the candidate's accuracy of written language production is being assessed:

- All examinations should be invigilated regardless of the presence of a non-medical helper.
- Non-medical helpers need to have appropriate qualifications or practical skills for the task.
- Non-medical helpers must operate within the remit of their roles. For example, those acting as 'hands' in practical assessments should act only under the specific instructions of the student.
- Students' friends, relatives or immediate Tutors will not be allowed to act as non-medical helpers in examinations or assessments as this is a potential conflict of interest.
- Students who have a support recommendation for a scribe to record their exam responses will be offered a single trial session with an amanuensis prior to their first examination. This will be for a maximum of one hour, and with the aim of developing their technique and familiarisation. If further Practice is required, this should be addressed through specialist study skills provision.
- In keeping with SLC/Disabled Students' Allowances policies, students who have a support recommendation for an examinations assistant to read exam scripts aloud will not be entitled to a trial session.
- It is unlikely that students will receive support from the same person for all exams within a single exam period due to the often limited availability of examination support assistants (scribes/readers).
- Where assistive technology software is used in an exam this, must be agreed and planned with the exams team, Academic College and student in advance, a student's Support Recommendations will be updated to reflect this.

Presentations and Viva Voce
Presentations and viva voce may be preferred to written examinations for some students with disabilities. Below is guidance, please note these are generic examples and each student is different.

<u>Presentations:</u>

- Students who find standard means of communication difficult, or who use sign language, may require additional time to communicate or be permitted to make presentations in alternative ways.

- Some students may find the prospect of presenting to a large audience overly intimidating for disability-related reasons. The option to present to markers only, or submit a pre-recorded copy of the presentation, may facilitate access to this mode of assessment.

<u>Viva Voce:</u>

- A student with **Mental Health Conditions** may experience a panic attack and require a short break to enable him/her to regain a more appropriate level of cognitive functioning. It may be helpful if the viva is held in a room that the student is already familiar with. Advance notification of the room may enable the student to visit prior to the day of the viva if this is not possible.

- Students with **Autism Spectrum Conditions** may experience difficulty with making eye contact, picking up on facial expressions and body language, understanding and interpreting metaphorical language, imagery, and colloquialisms. It is helpful therefore for examiners to use clear, unambiguous, literal language, providing this does not change what is being assessed.

- Students with **cognitive processing weaknesses** may require additional thinking time when asked a question, to enable them to process what has been said and recall relevant information before responding. Questions may need repeating, particularly those composed of multiple parts. Students may find it particularly helpful to be issued with a written list of core questions a few minutes prior to the start of the viva and be given the opportunity to read these through. Students may benefit from the use of a white board or large piece of paper to help explain their ideas through diagrams.

- A student with a **visual impairment** may have difficulty with registering visual cues such as facial expression and hand gestures, including those used to indicate an answer provided is sufficient. It would be helpful to agree with the student prior to the viva voce how best to verbalise these cues.

- A student with a **hearing impairment** may require a sign language interpreter, or other form of communication assistance. Students who supplement their hearing through lip reading need to be able to see the examiner's face when they are speaking. The viva voce should be in a quiet area, free from background noise. Questions may need to be repeated.

- The time of day when the viva is scheduled may be particularly important for students who experience fluctuating levels of **pain, concentration, and fatigue**. A student may need the opportunity to get up, stretch and move around during the viva, and may require a high backed, height adjustable chair with arm supports.

Alternative assessment formats:

Disability & Academic Support will ask Academic Colleges to consider alternative forms of assessment on a case-by-case basis when all other adjustments have been explored. Alternative forms of assessment must enable the student to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes and competency standards, taking the needs of the student, specific demands of the course of study, and the professional/statutory/regulatory body requirements into account.

Disability & Academic Support will only consider requests for alternative assessments in the following circumstances, in accordance with individual College policy:

- The student has a condition that meets the Equality Act 2010 definition of Disability.
- The difficulty that the student is experiencing is primarily due to the mode of assessment.
- The student is seeking alternative arrangements across all modules, due to a specific mode of assessment being deemed problematic.
- The student has accessed and trialled all suitable available support aimed at addressing the difficulty.
- Learning outcomes can be addressed by other modes of assessment.
- If applicable, the awarding/regulatory body will permit alternative modes of assessment.

Requests for alternative assessments must be made as early in the academic year as possible, to enable discussion with the Academic College concerned and suitable arrangements put in place. It is unlikely to be possible to accommodate requests that are made after the third week of a teaching period if the exam is scheduled for the end of that period.

Individual Learning Agreements:
Individual Learning Agreements (ILAs) maybe put together by Academic Colleges on a case-by-case basis. With the agreement of the student, Disability advisor may work with Academic Colleges to consider having an ILA to supplement Support Recommendations. ILAs typically include deadline extensions to help students who struggle to manage multiple assignments. The aim is to spread deadlines over a longer period, whilst meeting marking deadlines. This may mean bringing some assignment deadlines to an earlier date. ILAs may include alternative assessments in some Academic Colleges. Since, ILA's are agreed by Academic Colleges, they may be written and implemented in different ways.

Temporary reasonable adjustments for examinations:

Although short term impairments are not covered by Equality Act 2010 legislation a temporary arrangement will be considered if appropriate (where an impairment of this nature may potentially disadvantage a candidate).

Adjustments of this type are administrated by Academic Colleges in the first instance, as short-term injury/illness (recovery period of months) is differentiated from long-term injury/illness (recovery period of 12+ months or ongoing). The former is catered for directly by the College of study, the latter through Disability & Academic Support.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Disability & Academic Support

It is the responsibility of Disability & Academic Support to:

- Consult with Programme Directors on the suitability of non-standard reasonable adjustments.
- Advise Colleges as to the appropriateness of temporary reasonable adjustments for short-term injury/illness.

Student

It is the responsibility of the student to:

- Inform Disability & Academic Support of changes in circumstance or requirements in good time. Support Recommendations will be ongoing unless the student notifies Disability & Academic Support that they no longer wish to receive these.
- Check Blackboard for confirmation of special exam arrangements and room numbers in advance of actual exam dates and recheck for any late alterations.
- Take up all recommended adaptive technology training and make full use of the adaptive technology provided. Request further support if needed.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure the smooth implementation of the Support Recommendations made, it is strongly advisable to arrive in good time for each exam to confirm expectations with invigilators.

If rest breaks are permitted and taken during an exam, it is the student's responsibility to notify the invigilator when starting and finishing each break taken.

Exams Team

It is the responsibility of the Exams Office to:

- Query Disability & Academic Support about any support requests that are unclear or potentially incompatible with examination requirements.
- Inform Disability & Academic Support of the cut-off dates for accepting new Support Recommendations for each exam period.

Invigilators

It is the responsibility of Invigilators to:

- Read and comply with [invigilator guidance](#).
- Record timed rest breaks and amend exam finish times accordingly.
- Query the Chief Invigilator about any support requests that are unclear or potentially incompatible with examination requirements.

Examination Support Workers (Readers/Scribes)

It is the responsibility of examination support workers to:

- Report to the Central Examinations Office 30 minutes prior to the start of each examination.
- Query the Invigilator about any support requests that are unclear or potentially incompatible with examination requirements.

Markers

It is the responsibility of markers to:

- Check marking schemes to see if accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar is a core competence to be demonstrated under examination conditions, and mark accordingly. Scripts must however be legible to be assessed.

Module Leaders/Exams Officers

It is the responsibility of Module Leaders and Exams Officers to:

- Query Disability & Academic Support about any support requests that are unclear or potentially incompatible with examination requirements.

Academic Colleges

It is the responsibility of Academic Colleges to:

- Confirm Support Recommendations with students annually.

Module Staff

It is the responsibility of Module Staff to:

- Keep abreast of student requirements using the appropriate sections of MAP or the appropriate electronic system at the time
- Share the student's reasonable adjustments with the relevant people within the College.
- Organise exam adjustments for class tests.

SECTION 6: REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH (PGR) STUDENTS

Introduction and Core Principles

Due to the nature of PGR degrees, most reasonable adjustments referred to in Section 5 are not relevant for PGR students as many research degree programmes do not have traditionally taught formative sessions or formative exams.

A Disability Advisor will work with PGR students and their supervisor to ensure reasonable adjustments are made, this could include specialist ergonomic equipment and desk equipment. The PGR student will be fully involved in outlining all aspects of their support needs and this will be formally documented and shared their consent.

For those that do, primarily professional doctorates or taught MSc degrees, the reasonable adjustments in Section 5 may be relevant.

The exception to this is the where PGR students are involved in 'Presentations and Viva Voce' which will be expanded upon below.

Please note that the [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#), [General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses](#) and [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#) should be read in conjunction with this section.

There are two formal assessment/examination points for Postgraduate Research students (PGR): the transfer stage (usually at the end of Year 1 for a full-time PGR student) and the final oral examination (the 'viva voce') after submission of the thesis.

There is also a formal progression point, normally at the end of year 2 for full-time and year 4 for part-time students.

The University is experienced in supporting disabled PGR students through these assessment/examination processes and the support offered is done so on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Disability & Academic Support team, the PGR student, and their academic College.

All PGR students are entitled to expect access to reasonable levels of support during their research studies, provided by the University's specialist services (e.g. Disability & Academic Support; Mental Health & Wellbeing; Counselling), the academic department, and by their supervisor(s) and in consultation with Aston Graduate School where appropriate.

The Graduate school has responsibility for recording all support recommendations and ensuring that the Supervisor(s) is/are aware of these, as well as ensuring that reasonable adjustments are in place at the viva voce/transfer stage – but shall not provide direct support and/or advice.

PGR students are encouraged to be open about their needs, disability and/or learning differences. If there is uncertainty about the type of reasonable adjustments that are available to a PGR student, the Disability & Academic Support team will assist and advise the student accordingly.

It is important to note that the transfer assessment and the final oral examination for PGR students are very different from assessments at UG/PGT levels. It may therefore be necessary to identify alternative strategies to those utilised at UG/PGT level for reasons that are central to the particular assessment/examination required at PGR level. See section 5 above under Viva Voce.

In order to be considered for reasonable adjustments, the PGR student must be registered with the Disability & Academic Support team, with *Support Recommendations* in place to outline any reasonable adjustments as recommended by the team. *Support Recommendations* can be updated if additional reasonable adjustments are identified at a later date – but any agreed reasonable adjustments should ideally be in place at least 60 calendar days prior to the expected viva voce and the transfer stage.

The Graduate School, in liaison with the Disability & Academic Support team (and where appropriate, the Mental Health & Wellbeing team), is responsible for communicating any agreed reasonable adjustments and *Support Recommendations* to the PGR student,

members of the viva voce Panel and examiners. The responsibility for facilitating any reasonable adjustments on the day of the viva voce shall lie with the Chair of the Panel or an appropriately nominated (internal) individual on the Panel.

The following reasonable adjustments can be agreed between the Disability & Academic Support team, the PGR student and the College without the need for prior approval by the Dean of the Graduate School (or their nominated deputy) and the Director of Student Welfare (or their nominated deputy):

Staff Guidance

There are two formal assessment/examination points for Postgraduate Research students (PGR): the transfer stage (usually at the end of Year 1 for a full-time PGR student) and the final oral examination (the 'viva voce') after submission of the thesis.

There is also a formal progression point, normally at the end of year 2 for full-time and year 4 for part-time students.

The University is experienced in supporting disabled PGR students through these assessment/examination processes and the support offered is done so on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Disability & Academic Support team, the PGR student, and their academic College.

All PGR students are entitled to expect access to reasonable levels of support during their research studies, provided by the University's specialist services (e.g. Disability & Academic Support; Mental Health & Wellbeing; Counselling), the academic department, and by their supervisor(s) and in consultation with Aston Graduate School where appropriate.

The Graduate school has responsibility for recording all support recommendations and ensuring that the Supervisor(s) is/are aware of these, as well as ensuring that reasonable adjustments are in place at the viva voce/transfer stage – but shall not provide direct support and/or advice.

PGR students are encouraged to be open about their needs, disability and/or learning difficulties. If there is uncertainty about the type of reasonable adjustments that are available to a PGR student, the Disability & Academic Support team will assist and advise the student accordingly.

It is important to note that the transfer assessment and the final oral examination for PGR students are very different from assessments at UG/PGT levels and it may therefore be necessary to identify alternative strategies to those utilised at UG/PGT level for reasons that are central to the particular assessment/examination required at PGR level.

In order to be considered for reasonable adjustments, the PGR student must be registered with the Disability & Academic Support team, with *Support Recommendations* in place to outline any reasonable adjustments as recommended by the team. *Support Recommendations* can be updated if additional reasonable adjustments are identified at a later date – but any agreed reasonable adjustments must be in place at least 60 calendar

days prior to the expected viva voce and the transfer stage.

The Graduate School, in liaison with the Disability & Academic Support team (and where appropriate, the Mental Health & Wellbeing team), is responsible for communicating any agreed reasonable adjustments and *Support Recommendations* to the PGR student, members of the viva voce Panel and examiners. The responsibility for facilitating any reasonable adjustments on the day of the viva voce shall lie with the Chair of the Panel or an appropriately nominated (internal) individual on the Panel.

The following reasonable adjustments can be agreed between the Disability & Academic Support team, the PGR student and the College without the need for prior approval by the Dean of the Graduate School (or their nominated deputy) and the Director of Student Welfare (or their nominated deputy):

- Please reasonable adjustments in section 5 'Viva Voce' must also be considered.
- Examiners to use succinct and focussed questions and avoid the use of multi-part questions, wherever possible;
- A reasonable amount of time to allow for thinking to be provided before answering questions;
- Asking for a question to be repeated/re-phrased or requesting clarification
- Being able to consult a copy of the thesis/submission
- Pre-arranged rest breaks are usually 10 minutes in duration during the viva voce, longer breaks must be agreed before hand.
- Advance briefing for the Panel/Examiners on the particular nature of the disability
- Particular room requirements (e.g. accessibility of the room, lighting, seating, furniture arrangements)
- Providing materials to be used in the viva voce in alternative formats
- PGR student afforded (reasonable) time to write down questions posed by the Panel/examiners or to be provided with the questions in a written format (e.g. on a screen) during the viva voce (but not prior to)
- The use of a British Sign Language interpreter
- A "mock" viva voce should take place in agreement with, and organised by, the PGR student and supervisor.
- PGR students should be supported to receive advance notice of the broad themes and questions of the viva (without compromising academic integrity).

The University does not have a specified regulation regarding the length of the oral examination – it ought to be 'open-ended' and last as long as it needs to. As such, requests for additional time as reasonable adjustments are outlined in section 5.

The following reasonable adjustments at the viva voce require the need for prior approval by the Dean of the Graduate School (or their nominated deputy) and the Director of Student Welfare (or their nominated deputy), and must be submitted for consideration at

least 60 calendar days prior to the date of the viva voce and/or the transfer stage:

- Presence of a supporter/support worker/note taker
- Presence of a Specialist Mentor to assist with communication
- Use of assistive technology

Extensions

Extensions to the completion date and funding of PGR degrees will not be automatically granted. The University acknowledges, however, the practical difficulties related to individual circumstances resulting from long-term medical conditions and disability. Sharing a disability or if you are awaiting a diagnosis, should be shared at an early stage, this will enable the University to identify needs and put in place the appropriate support in advance. Where a needs assessment recommends that a reasonable adjustment is to provide an extension to the PGR student, consideration can then be given to the length of time required. Supervisor(s) should liaise with the PGR student and the Disability & Academic Support team before submitting requests for extensions in these circumstances.

The normal time limit for completion of a programme is defined in the Regulations and varies by type of programme and mode of attendance.

A student who is unable to submit a thesis within the normal time limit may apply in advance for permission for an extension from the Associate Dean Research and reasonable adjustments which are in place should be taken into account.

If extensions are beyond 1 year, a Wavier of regulations is required. A request must have the support of the Supervisor and the College Associate Dean Research. Supporting evidence from the Welfare Team may be included as part of the evidence submitted in support of the request.

When considering such exception requests, the Dean of the Graduate School will take the following into account:

- The individual mitigating circumstances
- The academic progress made to date and whether or not the PGR student is in good academic standing
- The currency of the research
- The availability of continued supervisory support and any resources required to complete the work within the University

- A comprehensive timeline to completion that includes milestones and formal structure for monitoring progress as agreed between the PGR student and their Supervisor(s)
- Whether the context of the research remains academically current

RESPONSIBILITIES

Disability & Academic Support

It is the responsibility of Disability & Academic Support to:

- Consult with students and Supervisors on the suitability of reasonable adjustments.
- Advise Supervisors that reasonable adjustments relating to the Viva Voce are trialled during at least one mock session.

Student

It is the responsibility of the student to:

- Approve draft copies of Support Recommendations on receipt.
- Book an appointment with their lead Disability Adviser if amendments to current recommendations are required.
- Book Web Appointment Scheduling System (WASS) appointments with Teaching Staff where clarification of lecture content and assignment briefs throughout the PGR journey is required.

Supervisors

It is the responsibility of Supervisors to:

- Access student's Support Recommendation documents through MAP or the appropriate electronic system at the time
- Action Support Recommendations for teaching and learning.
- Ensure that reasonable adjustments relating to the Viva Voce are trialled during at least one mock session.

SECTION 7: INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Introduction and Core Principles

There is an expectation that universities take greater responsibility for supporting students with disabilities and specific learning differences that was previously funded through DSA funding, in accordance with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are expected to remove, reduce, or address barriers that disabled students may experience in their learning environments, primarily through the provision of inclusive practice. As detailed in the Introduction to this Code of Practice, inclusive practice incorporates the duty to make 'anticipatory adjustment's where possible, and individual reasonable adjustments where not'. DSA funding has solely been for students who need support in addition to that provided by their HEI since the 2016 to 2017 academic year.

The reforms aim to ensure that HEIs consistently meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010, which is to benefit all disabled students, not just those in receipt of DSAs.

Current Progress

Disability & Academic Support works collaboratively with Academic Colleges, Centre for Learning Innovation and Professional Practice (CLIPP), Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) team, and others, to increase opportunities for the promotion of inclusive teaching and assessment practice throughout the University, and build upon the range of inclusive practices and resources already in place.

Inclusive practice development will be informed by emerging guidance within the sector, and local initiatives at Aston University. Emerging guidance will be generated through the Disabled Students' Commission (DSC) - formerly the Disabled students' Sector Leadership Group (DSSLG) - established by the Minister of State for Universities and funded by the Office for Students, the latest updates of which can be found here.

Advance HE provides secretariat support to the DSC, and oversees the management, coordination and dissemination of research and other DSC outcomes.

Advance HE enables excellence in higher education, helping it shape its future. Advance HE supports institutions in the areas of excellence in education, transformative leadership, equity and inclusion and effective governance, within the UK and globally.

In line Office for Students guidelines on Inclusive Assessments the Assessment practices in English higher education providers (officeforstudents.org.uk) Aston no longer

implement Considerate Marking or Sympathetic Marking. Should this be visible on a Student's Support Recommendations this will be a legacy and other reasonable adjustments will supersede this. For futher guidance please refer to Aston's Assessment policies.

SECTION 8: EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction and Core Principles

This Section is intended to be read alongside the current Aston University's Guide to Exceptional Circumstances, which details what constitutes an exceptional circumstance in relation to disability and specific learning differences. In essence, this University Regulation states that:

- Long-term health conditions, disability, and specific learning differences that impact on a student's ability to study, complete assessments and examination performance are not considered to be exceptional. These should be discussed with Disability & Academic Support in the first instance, if possible, well in advance of examination/coursework submission dates.
- Chronic ill health does not count as an exceptional circumstance unless there has been a sudden 'flare up' of the underlying condition.
- If you attend an examination or other fixed time assessment, the University considers that you have declared yourself 'Fit to Sit' the assessment. Where you have declared yourself 'Fit to Sit', the Examination Board will normally consider you to have made a valid attempt at the assessment, subject to consideration of factors affecting performance which may arise subsequent to beginning the assessment.

Flare-Ups of Chronic Illness

The University recognises that some students with long term, chronic health conditions may be prone to sudden flare-ups of symptoms during times of intense pressure, such as revising for and sitting formal examinations, and coursework deadlines that are closely grouped together.

Where flare-ups of this nature are anticipated on a recurring basis during periods such as this, where possible these should be addressed through Support Recommendations and if appropriate, in Individual Learning Agreements in the first instance.

Attention should be paid to the management of flare-ups through development and application of appropriate coping strategies such as phased revision, psychotherapeutic techniques, and advanced time management techniques.

<u>Non-manageable flare-ups:</u>

Where recurrent flare-ups cannot be addressed through Support Recommendations or Individual Learning Agreements, and this is well documented in the supporting evidence from the student's medical specialist, the student will need to submit evidence with each ECAP application. The evidence needs to:

a) Name the underlying condition,
b) And, most importantly, confirm the flare-up.

The supporting evidence is unlikely to be accepted unless (a) and (b) are included, as (a) alone will be considered a chronic condition and not an exceptional circumstance.

With appropriate medical evidence, Disability & Academic Support will request one or both of the following reasonable adjustments via Support Recommendations:

- 'In the event of a flare-up of the student's medical condition, and where marking turnaround times allow, extensions of up to one week on hand-in dates if requested without late penalties.
- 'In the event of a flare-up of the student's medical condition during examination weeks, the Exceptional Circumstances or Absences Panel is requested to consider ongoing supporting medical evidence'.

In the event of a flare-up that necessitates the need for an extension to a coursework deadline, completion and submission of an Exceptional Circumstances form is not required where the student has the first adjustment if they have sought and gained approval from their College Office in advance of the hand-in date.

If approval is not granted and the deadline cannot be met, the student should then apply for Exceptional Circumstances by completing an Exceptional Circumstances and Absence Form, citing 'flare-up of ongoing medical condition' as the reason, and citing and enclosing a copy of their Support Recommendations as supporting evidence along with evidence of the flare up.

Late Diagnoses of Chronic Illness, Disability and Specific Learning Differences

The University recognises that some students will acquire a chronic illness or disability or receive confirmation of a specific learning difference for the first time during their studies, thereby qualifying them for academic-related reasonable adjustments from that point onwards. Every effort will be made by Colleges, the Examinations Office, and Disability &

Academic Support to accommodate these with immediate effect on receipt of appropriate evidence or information about a working diagnosis.

Students will be required to approve Support Recommendations before Disability & Academic Support can release these to Colleges and the Central Exams Team.

Late diagnosis may be considered an Exceptional Circumstance. However, only applications for Exceptional Circumstances within the current assessment period can be considered, not retrospectively.

The Exam Board may take late diagnosis into account when determining a student's degree class at the Final Stage Examination Board, depending on the severity/impact/likely duration of the diagnosis, and the student's performance following the approval/release of Support Recommendations.

Any limitations to this are as permitted under current Regulations.

Access to Support and Subsequent Uptake

The University encourages students with long term health conditions, disabilities, and specific learning differences to engage with Disability & Academic Support and fully access all opportunities for support provided. For example, in the case of dyslexia, this could include the uptake of all non-medical helper support allocated through Disabled Students' Allowances/Aston University, and ongoing usage of the adaptive technology software provided. Similarly, a student with an ongoing anxiety disorder could work with a specialist mentor, on anxiety management and development of coping strategies.

Students may request supporting evidence of their engagement with Disability & Academic Support from their allocated Advisor for the Exceptional Circumstances or Absence Panel.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Student

It is the responsibility of the student to:

- Engage with Disability & Academic Support and access Support Recommendations on an ongoing basis.

- Source, obtain, and submit evidence to support Exceptional Circumstances applications for disability-related reasons, in line with Aston's Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

Disability & Academic Support

It is the responsibility of Disability & Academic Support to:

Provide supporting evidence of engagement with Disability & Academic Support if requested by the student. Supporting evidence can only be provided if the student has engaged with this service sufficiently prior to the affected assessment (s), such that they have sufficient detail with the student's situation.

Disability & Academic Support are satisfied there will be an adverse impact on the student's ability to study and/or take assessments.

The Extenuating Circumstances panel makes the final decision regarding the claim. A copy of the supporting statement must always be shared with the student before submission.

- Inform Programme Directors of students with non-manageable flare-ups (as outlined above) and request appropriate reasonable adjustments via the Support Recommendations mechanism.
- Provide guidance for Medical Professionals when additional medical information is required, to evidence non-manageable flare-ups of ongoing conditions.

Exceptional Circumstances or Absences Panel (ECAP)

It is the responsibility of the ECAP Panel to:

- Consider the timing of the initial diagnos(is/es) in their decision-making.
- Consult with the Disability & Academic Support team if further information is required, to make a decision.

Final Exam Board

In cases of late diagnosis, it is the responsibility of the Final Exam Board to:

- Consider the timing of the initial diagnos(is/es) and the student's subsequent performance following the introduction of Support Recommendations in line with

current Regulations, when allocating final degree classifications. Consideration of a Waiver of Regulations may be appropriate in exceptional cases.

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SECTION 9: PARKING

Car parks at Aston University Campus are Council owned. University Car Park 5 is available to all students and staff and can be paid for online on a daily basis.

Birmingham city centre has excellent public transport links. Aston University campus is close to dozens of bus routes, as well as being a short walk (approximately 15 minutes) from all three mainline railway stations in the city centre (Birmingham New Street, Moor Street and Snow Hill). Snow Hill is the terminus of the Midland Metro tram service from areas West of the city (West Bromwich and Wolverhampton). Student Travel Cards for the city and region offer discounted rates too.

Students who have a **Blue Badge** are invited to contact Disability & Academic Support by emailing Student Welfare studentwelfare@aston.ac.uk with scanned copies of both sides of their Blue Badge. Disability and Academic Support will communicate with the relevant teams to try to obtain accessible parking.

SECTION 10: QUERIES AND CONCERNS

If students, Academic Colleges, or the Exams Office have any concerns or queries about the implementation of this Code of Practice, advice and guidance is available from Disability & Academic Support in the first instance. Please email the team at this email address studentwelfare@aston.ac.uk

The University's Advice and Representation Centre (ARC) at the Student Union are best placed to offer independent advice and guidance to students.

Version Control			
Version	**Author**	**Date**	**Changes**
0.1	Vanessa Francis	13.01.2023	First draft
0.2	Vanessa Francis	01.06.2023	Second draft
0.3	Cynthia Onyilimba	25.08.2023	Updated cover