

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy for Students with Disabilities and Guidance for Staff, Students and Applicants



**Harper Adams
University**

July 2020

Policy Statement

1. The University has a higher proportion of students in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) than any English Higher Education Institution, with the exception of five specialist arts colleges. In 2018/19, 17.7% of Harper Adams' students were in receipt of the DSA, compared with a national average of 7.10% (*HESA, 2020: undergraduates (FT) in receipt of the DSA 2018-19*). Disability includes any physical, sensory or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This includes Specific Learning Difficulties such as dyslexia. Many of the disabled students at Harper Adams have dyslexia.
2. Harper Adams is committed to a student centred approach which includes growth in personal effectiveness and improved career and life opportunities (Harper Adams Strategic Plan, 2020-25). In supporting this aim, and in line with the published Equal Opportunities Policy and the relatively high levels of student disability, this learning, teaching and assessment policy and guidance has been approved by the Academic Board to inform students, applicants and staff when considering inclusive and reasonable adjustments for disabled students.
3. This policy should be read in conjunction with others relating to the support of disabled applicants and students. These include Admissions; Learner Support; Careers; Placement; Health & Wellbeing; Learning Teaching and Student Experience Strategy and Guide to Inclusive Learning & Teaching.
4. This policy has also been prepared to support Harper Adams in meeting its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010. These include the obligation not to treat somebody less favourably because they are disabled and the requirement to make reasonable adjustments to any arrangements or the physical environment that would place a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage.
5. Records relating to a student's disability will be retained for a period of 18 months following the conclusion of study, for the purpose of answering any complaints or appeals. This allows the University to align itself with the current Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) complaints process. For students where a dispute is ongoing or is in reasonable contemplation for which there is a statutory limitation period, the records relating to the issue in dispute will be kept for the relevant statutory limitation period.
6. Reasonable adjustments are those based on the specific circumstances or needs of individual students that may be required to ensure that a disabled student is not placed at a substantial disadvantage. In making judgements on what is reasonable, account must also be made of maintaining academic standards, the health and safety of the individual and others, practical and financial feasibility and ensuring that others are not, as a

consequence of adjustments, placed at a substantial disadvantage. Inclusive adjustments are those which anticipate a range of diverse needs on a general basis and which may benefit many, if not all, students.

7. The University’s policy is to operate in an inclusive manner, in anticipating the diverse needs of all students, wherever possible. Where, however, a student has a disability which needs individualised adjustments to learning, teaching and assessment practices, the Head of Disability & Learner Support Services will determine the specific reasonable adjustments that will be authorised for individual students. In making such decisions, the Head of Disability & Learner Support Services will take into account the need to maintain academic standards, the health and safety of all individuals, the practical and financial feasibility of adjustments and the need to ensure that others are not, as a consequence of making an adjustment, disadvantaged. The Head of Disability & Learner Support Services will be informed by psychologists’ reports, diagnostic assessments or medical evidence and needs assessment reports from recognised professionals or access centres. UK students with a disability, including dyslexia, may be eligible for support through the Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSA). These allowances are intended to assist UK students with disabilities who are studying in Higher Education.

8. Procedure for Reasonable Adjustment Request which is not funded through the Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA)

If a student (including pre-enrolled applicants) would like to make a request for a reasonable adjustment which is not supported through the DSA then the following procedure must be followed.

Initial meeting with Head of Disability & Learner Support

Services to discuss request and make application for its provision. The student must supply the relevant evidence at least 3 days in advance of the meeting, where the University does not already have copies of the evidence. The Head of Disability & Learner Support Services will document the key points arising from the discussion of the request as set out in Annex A.

Suitable evidence to be provided:

Medical evidence	A GP/Consultant or suitably qualified member of the medical profession which clearly justifies the need for the reasonable adjustment and the impact of the adjustment not being made.
Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) evidence	A report undertaken by either an Educational Psychologist (registered with the HCPC) or a Specialist Teacher Assessor with a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate.

	<p>Diagnostic assessment reports should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use report format recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines • Use tests recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines and subsequently updated SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) and STEC (a sub group of SASC).
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If request costs up to and including £3,000/year then the decision will be made by the Head of Disability & Learner Support Services within 7 working days. It is at the discretion of the Head of Disability & Learner Support Services if further advice is required at this stage.

If request is more than £3,000/year then the decision will be referred to the University Reasonable Adjustments Review Panel. This panel consists of at least two of the following: Head of Student Services (Co-chair of panel), Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement (Co-chair of panel), a tutor (either Course Manager, Course Tutor, or Head of Department/Associate Head of Department, as considered appropriate). The request and accompanying evidence will be presented to the panel by the Head of Disability & Learner Support Services. The decision will be made by the panel and notified to the student by the Head of Disability & Learner Support Services within 3 working days.

Request Approved: Where a student's request is approved then the University will fund the support and make arrangements for the support to be put in place. Approval will state the conditions which must be satisfied by the student for the adjustment to continue.

Request not approved: Where a student's request is not approved and, having been advised of the reasons for the request being declined, the student is dissatisfied, they may request a review of the decision through the Student Complaints Procedure, using Stage 1 procedure (<http://www.harper.ac.uk/keyinfo>).

Stage 1 Early Stage Resolution will be considered by the Head of Student Services, Head of Educational Development and Quality Enhancement and the Head of Disability & Learner Support Services. If the student remains dissatisfied, they are entitled to submit a formal, stage 2 complaint, following the arrangements set out in the published procedure. If the complaint progresses to Stage 2 then the student, if funded by Student Finance England (SFE), will be advised to, concurrently, enter a formal appeal against the University's decision to SFE. The Head of Disability & Learner Support Services will direct the student to the appropriate procedure for doing so and provide guidance as necessary.

The student and the University will complete a 'Support Request Form' and send to SFE where the case will be referred to the Exceptional Case Team for review.

9. Adjustments to assessment arrangements are intended to compensate for the impact of a student's disability. It is a policy of Harper Adams Academic Board that no student, whether disabled or not, is penalised in time constrained assessments for minor spelling and grammar errors (other than for language examinations). Examiners are, therefore, expected to disregard such errors for all students in assessing their examination scripts and focus on content, rather than on the precise conventions of written communication. For this reason, it is policy not to identify the examination scripts of students with a Specific Learning Difficulty, since no adjustments are made in the marking process.
10. For coursework assessments, which are not time constrained, no further adjustments are made, other than through the additional learner support arrangements provided. Students may indicate on their assignment submission form that they have a Specific Learning Difficulty and that they would particularly welcome detailed and constructive feedback regarding structure, grammar and spelling. Students are encouraged to discuss this feedback with Academic Guidance Tutors and Learner Support Tutors to help them to develop their study and written communication skills. No adjustments should be made to marks, where effective communication is a specified assessment criterion.
11. A staff development programme is in place to assist staff in all areas of the University to meet the general and specific needs of students with disabilities. This includes programmes relating to learning, teaching and assessment and inclusive practice.
12. In addition to a staff development programme, Harper Adams provides the following guidance and procedures for staff, students and applicants:
 - Internal sources of help and guidance for staff, students and applicants
 - Resources and services to support students with disabilities
 - Guidance on inclusive adjustments to learning, teaching and assessment practices for staff. Please see 'Guide to Inclusive Learning and Teaching' at <http://www.harper.ac.uk/keyinfo> .
 - Curriculum modification for students
 - Sign-posting to further sources of additional information for staff, students and applicants.

Guidance for Staff, Students and Applicants

Internal Sources of Help and Guidance

13. The following provides a list of those who can be contacted by any staff member, student or applicant who is seeking guidance on how disabled students can be supported through inclusive or reasonable adjustments. The service is normally open during undergraduate term times between 8am - 5pm on weekdays and by appointment at other times. In the first instance, members of the learner support team should be approached for general queries as below:

Jane Hill (Head of Disability & Learner Support Services), oversees the advice, screening and support arrangements for applicants and students with disabilities. Tricia Cox (Disability and Learner Support Adviser) is available for advice, screening and support arrangements for applicants and students with disabilities.

One-to-one appointments can be booked through Debbie Harrison (Learner Support Officer) in FS9 in The Faccenda Centre, or alternatively for specific queries, Jane Hill can be contacted at jhill@harper-adams.ac.uk or 01952 815417. Jane is based in FS15 in the Faccenda Centre. Tricia Cox can be contacted on tcx@harper-adams.ac.uk or 01952 5491. Tricia is based in FS11 in the Faccenda Centre.

Tricia Cox, Suzanne Evans, Julie Hill, Lisa Powell and Rachel Trigg (Learner Support Tutors - Dyslexia & Study Skills) are available to support students in developing their study skills. One-to-one appointments can be booked through Debbie Harrison in FS9 in The Faccenda Centre. The Learner Support Tutors are based in FS10, FS14, FS19a and FS21 in the Faccenda Centre.

Sarah Parsons (Maths Support Tutor) is available to support students in developing their numeracy skills and ability to solve problems using numbers. One-to-one appointments can be booked through Debbie Harrison in The Faccenda Centre, or alternatively for specific queries, Sarah can be contacted at sjparsons@harper-adams.ac.uk or 01952 815379. She is based in FS13 in the Faccenda Centre.

Debbie Harrison (Learner Support Officer) can advise applicants on the Disabled Students Allowance and other sources of support for students with disabilities. She also co-ordinates the central booking system for one-to-one appointments with members of the Learner Support Team. Debbie can be contacted at learnersupport@harper-adams.ac.uk or 01952 815282. She is based in FS9 in The Faccenda Centre.

Available Services and Resources to Support Students with Disabilities

14. The following services and resources are available to help learners reach their full potential.

Disability and Learner Support Service

15. Learner support tutors are available to support students with dyslexia (on a one-to-one basis for students with a diagnostic assessment report) and study skills (on a group basis for all students). Numeracy support is also provided on a group or one-to-one basis. Please see the internal sources of help above.
16. Learner support tutors are responsible for guiding students so that, over time, they become better able to source, select, retrieve and process information and compose correctly structured and logical pieces of written work. They are not responsible for detailed proof-reading of students' work, although they may read a section of work to provide guidance to a student on how their approach may be improved, with the use of appropriate assistive technologies, where applicable. Students are encouraged to discuss work and the accompanying feedback that has been returned from tutors with learner support tutors and develop strategies to improve their study and writing skills.
17. The Head of Disability & Learner Support Services, the Disability & Learner Support Adviser and the Learner Support Officer also assist students in:
- arranging screening, initial and expert assessments of disability or specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia
 - arranging needs assessments in support of identifying reasonable adjustment requirements
 - making Disabled Students' Allowance claims (ie consumable allowances)
 - arranging with the Examinations Office Manager for provision of specialist support, including readers, sign-language interpreters, note-takers, lip readers and non-medical personal assistants
 - arranging any special assessment arrangements (see assessment reasonable adjustments below)
 - arranging for information materials to be made available in alternative formats (eg Braille or audio formats)
 - arranging, with the Head of Library Services, specific reasonable adjustments in the library
 - arranging, with the Head of Student Services and Head of Estates and Facilities, specific accommodation requirements

Software Available

18. The following assistive technology software is available for use by students, where appropriate, from the Learner Support Team:

TextHelp Read and Write Gold is available on the University's portal (for all students to use) which is a text to voice software which allows work or scanned text to be read back to the listener. Earphones are available for this purpose.

MindGenius is available on the University's portal (for all students to use) which is a piece of mind mapping software. The mind maps can also be downloaded into Word or PowerPoint.

Other dyslexia software (is available on a Learner Support laptop for use by students during learner support sessions or to trial when considering their own purchase. The software available is:

Dragon Naturally Speaking is a voice recognition software package that converts the spoken work to written text.

JAWS is a screen reading software for visually impaired students.

Inspiration which is a mind-mapping software package.

Other Equipment

19. Other equipment available to loan includes a limited number of laptop computers (preloaded with TextHelp Read and Write Gold and MindGenius), dictaphones, Franklin spell-checkers and the provision of coloured overlays.

Assessment Arrangements

20. Assessment arrangements should be organised to ensure that a student's disability does not, unfairly, disadvantage them in demonstrating that they can satisfy module learning outcomes. Reasonable adjustments typically include revising the assessment arrangements and, in those circumstances where this is not appropriate, offering an alternative mode of assessment. In the case of the latter, the student is expected to meet the same academic standards as other students and all module learning outcomes must be assessed. Reasonable adjustments that are typically made are listed below.

Adjustments to Assessment Arrangements

21. The following adjustments may be made, where agreed with the Disability & Learner Support Manager at least four weeks before examinations commence:
- additional time of 25% of the assessment duration
 - using large print format or colour overlays
 - providing assistive technology such as a PC, voice activated PC
 - in exceptional circumstances, providing rest breaks, where a needs assessment report indicates where such is required providing clean, unmarked dictionaries or specialist spell checkers
 - providing separate venues
 - providing personal assistance in the form of a signer, reader, scribe or prompter

Only in exceptional circumstances can assessments that are written in a language other than English be assisted through the use of a scribe. In assessments where a scribe is exceptionally used and criteria include the accuracy of spelling, a separate spelling test will be undertaken by the candidate.

Requests made after the published deadline for making reasonable adjustments to examination arrangements (typically at least four weeks in advance of an examination or by the end of the Spring term at the latest) cannot be guaranteed to be approved although the University will give consideration where there are mitigating circumstances to do so. Students are made aware of deadlines and the University needs a reasonable period of time in which to make separate arrangements for individual students.

22. Where time constrained assessments are organised outside of the formal examination periods, tutors are responsible for liaising with the Examinations Office to ensure that these adjustments are made. Such in-class assessments are normally constrained to three weeks in an academic year, in order to ensure that special support needs can be met, students must make individual tutors aware of their needs at least four weeks in advance of such assessments, so that any reasonable adjustments can be considered.
23. In giving feedback, tutors should be mindful that typical errors of students with a Specific Learning Difficulty such as dyslexia, identified by the University of Sussex, include:
- omitted words or punctuation
 - excessive or misplaced punctuation
 - repeated phrases
 - unsophisticated language or simplified language (often part of a strategy to reduce grammatical or spelling errors, but which doesn't necessarily denote unsophisticated thinking)

24. Tutors should also be mindful of the limitations of spell-checkers. Typical errors, identified by the University of Sussex, include:
- homophone substitutions (there/their; effect/affect; course/coarse)
 - phonetic equivalents (frenetic for phonetic; homerfone for homophone)
 - incorrect word substitutions (distance for disturbance)
 - American spellings (colorful)
25. Students are expected to seek guidance from Learner Support Tutors so that they are able to prepare appropriately to develop their study skills. Students are also expected to use assistive technology (eg spell-checkers) in overcoming problems with presenting written work, caused by their disability. Where it is essential that specialist terms are distinguished between each other (eg where two similarly correctly spelt words are phonetically the same but have very different meanings or serious consequences if confused with each other), students are expected to develop spelling strategies for these specialist terms, with a Learner Support Tutor's support.

Alternative Modes of Assessment

26. In circumstances where adjustments to assessment arrangements are not sufficient to overcome the disadvantage of a student that is caused by their disability, the Head of Disability & Learner Support Services will work with individual module leaders to agree, with the approval of the Head of Subject Assessment Board, alternative modes of assessment. In determining alternative modes, the revised assessment must test the student's ability to demonstrate all module outcomes, including any related to effective communication. Any student not satisfied with the outcome of a reasonable adjustment request should follow the student complaints procedure. (www.harper.ac.uk/keyinfo).

Curriculum Modification

27. Reasonable adjustments will be considered for students with disabilities where evidence indicates that 100% attendance is unrealistic. Where a reasonable adjustment to attendance requirements has been agreed, the University normally expects a minimum level of attendance of 66%. The approval of reasonable adjustments to attendance levels will only be approved where student attainment levels are satisfactory or where attendance at mandatory, competency-based skills development sessions is not affected.

If a student is unable to meet this requirement, then the university will discuss alternative options, which could include transfer to part-time study or postponement of study. Any student not satisfied with

the outcome of this reasonable adjustment should follow the Student Complaints procedure (available at www.harper.ac.uk/keyinfo).

28. The curriculum can be modified to the extent that students will be supported, as far as is reasonable, to develop the intellectual, practical, technical and transferable skills and the knowledge and understanding demanded within the published programme specification. Where a student's disability prevents them from being able to develop specific skills (eg practical skills requiring good co-ordination), a programme can be negotiated that allows the student, within the constraints of their disability, to develop and demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding commensurate with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies ("the Qualifications Framework") and award level descriptors, published by the Quality Assurance Agency. Any student not satisfied with the outcome of a reasonable adjustment request should follow the student complaints procedure (<http://www.harper.ac.uk/keyinfo>).

Additional Advice: Some Useful Links

The following list provides details of contact details and website links that individuals may wish to go to for further information.

Action on Hearing Loss

(Previously the Royal National Institute for the Deaf)

Web: <https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/>

British Dyslexia Association (BDA)

Information and advice on dyslexia for dyslexic people and those who support them.

Web: <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

Equality and Human Rights Commission– Offers advice on measures to prevent disability discrimination and a conciliation service.

Web: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en>

Advance HE – Helps universities and colleges and their staff to provide the best possible learning experience for their students (including those with a disability).

Web: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/>

National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) – A professional association for anyone who works in the post 16 education sector involved in the management or delivery of services for disabled students.

Web: <https://nadp-uk.org>

National Association Access Centres (NAAC) – Information & advice on how and where to get a student's study needs assessed.

Web: <http://www.nnac.org>

Mind – National Association for Mental Health

Web: <https://www.mind.org.uk>

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)

Web: <http://www.rnib.org.uk>

QAA Quality Code: For the assurance of academic quality & standards in higher education.

Web: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>

Annex A: Request for A Reasonable Adjustment not Funded through the Disabled Students' Allowance

This form will be completed by the Head of Disability & Learner Support Services after a meeting with the student to discuss support required

Student Name	
Student ID number	
Course	
Start & Finish dates	
Date of Assessment (with Head of Disability & Learner Support Services or nominee)	
Name of Assessor	

- 1. Details of disability provided by diagnostic assessment and/or medical evidence and Study Needs Assessment.**

- 2. Reasonable Adjustment Request: Outline of request by student (to include impact on study)**

- 3. Details of provisions already in place including any current reasonable adjustments at HAU.**

- 4. Summary of study difficulties and accompanying evidence (to be attached with this request)**

5. Options and Costings

Option	Provider	Costing per year	Total cost over the course

6. Recommendation

1. Head of Disability & Learner Support Services Outcome	Rationale¹
2. Reasonable Adjustments Panel Outcome	Rationale¹

¹ Rationale for both approval and rejection of the request as a reasonable adjustment request