

Policy for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to Students with Disabilities

| | |
|--|---|
| Document Reference and Version No | Version 1.0 Approved by Academic Council in April 2014, and by Governing Body June 2014 |
| Purpose | To ensure fairness in assessment by providing an equitable examination process for all IADT students |
| Commencement Date | September 2014 |
| Date of next review | 2015, and thereafter every 3 years |
| Who needs to know about his | IADT staff and students |
| Revision History | None |
| Document Authors | Access Working Group (adapted from DAWN National Policy) |
| Policy Owner | Governing Body/Academic Council |
| Procedure Owner | Registrar |

INTRODUCTION

The two documents, *Policy for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to Students with Disabilities* and *Procedures and Guidelines for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to Students with Disabilities* apply to end of module examinations set by all Academic Departments, and which are administered by the IADT Examinations Office only and not to any other forms of programme assessment.

They are the outcome of work undertaken by the IADT Access Working Group at the request of the Registrar. They draw on documents of the Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN), The Association for Higher Education, Access and Disability (AHEAD) and have been informed by and guided by contributions and feedback from the President and Registrar of IADT, Department Heads, Academic Staff, the Examinations Office and the Teaching & Learning Committee.

These documents supplement the Academic Council approved suite of assessment policy and procedures, and are designed to address the principle of fairness in assessment. The purpose of these documents is to ensure that students with disabilities are treated fairly and equitably in the examination process, thereby allowing them to be examined on an equal footing with their peers and to demonstrate their true knowledge and competency. This is also in accord with 2009 *Assessment and Standards*, principle 4, "Assessment procedures are credible: ... (b) Fair Assessment is inclusive. It recognises that different people can have different learning needs, styles and approaches".

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. GENERAL POLICY COMMITMENTS..... | 4 |
| 2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF PROVISION OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS IN EXAMINATIONS TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES | 5 |
| 2.2 Availing of Reasonable Accommodations | 6 |
| 2.3 Notification of Reasonable Accommodations | 6 |
| 2.4 Disclosure of Reasonable Accommodations | 7 |
| 3. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS IN EXAMINATIONS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES | 7 |
| 3.1 Alternative Venues | 7 |
| 3.2 Time Allowance | 8 |
| 3.3 Rest Breaks | 8 |
| 3.4 Waiver for Spelling & Grammar | 8 |
| 3.5 Use of a Computer | 8 |
| 3.6 Scribe | 8 |
| 3.7 Voice Recognition Software | 9 |
| 3.8 Reader | 9 |
| 3.9 Sign Language Interpreters | 9 |
| 3.10 Furniture in Examination Venues | 10 |
| 3.11 Personal Assistants..... | 10 |
| 3.12 Examination Papers in Alternative Formats..... | 10 |
| 3.13 Flexible Examination Arrangements..... | 11 |

1. GENERAL POLICY COMMITMENTS

- 1.1 *IADT is committed to ensuring, as far as possible and within the framework of current legislative requirements, that students with disabilities have equality of access to and participation in all examinations.*
- 1.2 *IADT is committed to ensuring that students with disabilities will be enabled to demonstrate their knowledge and competency on an equal footing with their peers.*
- 1.3 *For the purpose of this document reasonable accommodations are defined as those actions that enable students to demonstrate their true knowledge and ability in examinations without changing the demands of the examination. The intention behind the provision of such accommodations is to alleviate a substantial disadvantage without affecting the integrity of the examination.*
- 1.4 *The granting of reasonable accommodations will not put the integrity or status of the examination at risk and will ensure fairness to all students.*
- 1.5 *Reasonable accommodations should support students to become more independent in their learning.*
- 1.6 *In keeping with principle one of Assessment and Standards which states "Learners are responsible for demonstrating their learning achievement", IADT affirms that learners have the primary responsibility for communicating all relevant information about their circumstances in a timely and accurate manner to the appropriate IADT units.*
- 1.7 *Ultimate responsibility for ensuring fair institutional systems and good practice in ensuring equality of access in examinations lies with the IADT Registrar, although a number of administrative units and academic departments may be involved in coordinating reasonable accommodations.*

1.8 IADT is committed to good practice in providing accommodations and responding to developments in the understanding of learning needs and models of support that can be provided to students with disabilities.

1.9 For the purpose of this document the definition of disability is that encompassed by the Equal Status Acts 2000-2011 as amended from time to time (see Appendix 1 of Procedure document).

1.10 This document is applicable only to those students with a permanent or long-term disability, and any temporary illness, condition or injury when supported by appropriate documentation (see Appendix 2 of Procedure document).

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF PROVISION OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS IN EXAMINATIONS TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

2.1 Provision of Reasonable Accommodations

2.1.1 This section provides guidelines for determining when reasonable accommodations may be appropriate in examinations. The actual need for a particular accommodation is determined through the needs assessment process, taking account of the student's individual needs and the impact of the disability in an examination setting.

2.1.2 A Needs Assessment is carried out with all students with disabilities who present themselves to the Access Office. The Needs Assessment determines the level and type of support required in college, including reasonable accommodations for examinations.

2.1.3 Reasonable accommodations will not be provided without prior consultation with the Access Office/Service / WRSS.

2.1.4 Reasonable accommodations may be reviewed with each student annually.

2.1.5 Should a student with a disability wish to complain that a specific examination accommodation has not been granted the complaint should be made using the Institute Complaints Procedure.

2.1.6 As implicit in the General Policy, IADT is committed to good practice in providing accommodations and responding to developments in the understanding of learning needs and models of support that can be provided to students with disabilities. From time to time, pilots of new methodologies will be undertaken where practicable.

2.2 Availing of Reasonable Accommodations

2.2.1 Students with disabilities must register with the Access Office at the earliest opportunity and complete a Needs Assessment to avail of reasonable accommodations in examinations. Normally this will occur two months before a scheduled examination session.

2.2.2 Students with disabilities must provide appropriate supporting documentation from an accepted Medical Consultant or Specialist (see Appendix 2 of Procedure).

2.2.3 It is the student's responsibility to inform IADT of any changes to his/her disability which may require new or revised accommodations as soon as possible. Changes to examination accommodations are only approved following an updated Needs Assessment with the Access Office/Service.

2.2.4 The provision of assistive technology is an optional accommodation for examinations provided the student is fully competent and experienced with the technology.

2.2.5 Students with disabilities who require specialist examination supports such as assistive technology or a reader/scribe must attend training in the use of such accommodations. It is the student's responsibility to be proficient in the use of technology for examinations.

2.3 Notification of Reasonable Accommodations

2.3.1 On completion of the Needs Assessment students with disabilities will be notified by the Access Office/WRSS of the support that will be provided, including reasonable accommodations that have been granted for examinations as approved by the relevant Head of Department.

- 2.3.2 A list of students with relevant information regarding supports for students in Examinations is made available by the Access Office/WRSS to the Examinations Office.
- 2.3.3 A Head of Department, on receipt of information from the Access Office/WRSS about the needs of students for various supports, will advise the relevant academic staff members as relevant.
- 2.3.4 The Examinations Office is responsible for coordinating reasonable accommodations in end of module examinations only.

2.4 Disclosure of Reasonable Accommodations

- 2.4.1 The provision of reasonable accommodations in examinations will be made known to the relevant academic, administrative and examination staff, and not to any other party. The minimum information necessary for the various parties to provide the accommodations will be provided.
- 2.4.2 Marking Guidelines apply to students with a disability who have a reading, writing or spelling difficulty. The Head of Department will ensure that marking guidelines are forwarded to the relevant academic staff (see Procedures document).

3. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS IN EXAMINATIONS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

3.1 Alternative Venues

Students with disabilities receiving reasonable accommodations sit their examinations in a different venue to their peer group as appropriate. These venues are normally shared with other students. Only in exceptional circumstances will a student with a disability sit an examination in a room of their own. This accommodation will be based on identified need and supported by appropriate documentation.

3.2 Time Allowance

Students whose examination performance is significantly impacted by a disability may require extra time in examinations. The standard extra time allowance is set at 10 minutes per hour. In exceptional circumstances this extra time may be extended based on identified need supported by appropriate documentation

3.3 Rest Breaks

Students who may require a rest break in examinations include students whose ability to complete the examination within the required time is significantly impacted by a medical, sensory, psychological or physical disability. This entitlement is extended based on identified need supported by appropriate documentation.

3.4 Waiver for Spelling & Grammar

Unless otherwise stated it is assumed that no students are penalised for spelling & grammar errors in examinations. If a core component of assessment is that of competence in spelling, grammar and written expression and it is not possible to disregard these elements the Institute prospectus and all programme information must clearly and explicitly state that all students enrolling on the programme will need to be able to demonstrate these competencies in examinations.

Please see *Guidelines for Examiners when Marking Scripts from Students with a Disability who have a Reading, Writing or Spelling Difficulty* (Procedure document).

3.5 Use of a Computer

Students whose ability to write by hand is significantly impacted by a disability may require a computer in examinations, based on appropriate supporting documentation and a needs assessment.

3.6 Scribe

Scribes may only be granted for students who cannot handwrite or use a computer due to the nature of their disability.

If a core component of assessment is that of competence in spelling, grammar and written expression, it is not possible to disregard these elements. In other subjects testing written communication skills, including English or Irish, a scribe will be allowed, but the student will be assessed only on those aspects of written communication which he or she can demonstrate independently, such as the use of language and effective grammatical presentation.

Additional time of fifteen minutes per hour and a separate venue will be provided when using a scribe.

3.7 Voice Recognition Software

A student who is eligible for a computer or a scribe may use voice recognition software if Institute resources allow. The use of a computer with voice recognition software requires a separate examination venue and invigilator.

3.8 Reader

Students whose ability to read is significantly impacted by a disability may require a reader in examinations based on identified need supported by appropriate documentation.

Most students will be accommodated together in the same venue with a shared reader.

If it is appropriate to use assistive technology (for example, text to speech software) and Institute resources allow, an electronic paper will be required.

3.9 Sign Language Interpreters

A sign language interpreter translates oral based language, text and speech, into Irish Sign Language (ISL) so a Deaf person can understand what is being communicated.

Where a student's first language is ISL an interpreter may be made available to translate the examination paper into ISL based on identified need supported by appropriate documentation.

An interpreter may also be made available to facilitate a student whose first language is ISL answering the examination questions in ISL. This can be done in one of the following ways:

- The student may wish to sign his/her examination and to have this simultaneously transcribed by a scribe.
- In exceptional circumstances where learning outcomes cannot be assessed by any other mode, the presentation of examinations in ISL recorded on videotape may be permitted based on identified need supported by appropriate documentation.
- If a student signs the examination to a scribe or on video, additional time, a separate examination venue and appropriate invigilation will be granted.

3.10 Furniture in Examination Venues

Students with disabilities may require alternative furniture (i.e. chair support, writing board, footstool etc.) in examination venues.

3.11 Personal Assistants

Students who have a Personal Assistant may require the Personal Assistant to be in attendance at the examination venue.

3.12 Examination Papers in Alternative Formats

- Students who are visually impaired may require examination papers in enlarged print.
- Students who have a visual impairment may require graphs, diagrams, maps or other visual elements of the examination paper presented in a tactile format.
- Students who are blind or vision impaired and fluent Braille readers may require a Braille version of the examination paper.
- Students who have difficulty reading the examination paper may require coloured overlays.

3.13 Flexible Examination Arrangements

Flexible examination arrangements refer to any alteration in the standard form of assessment in order to accommodate a student's disability or exceptional condition. These arrangements might include:

- Provision of an oral examination instead of a written test.
- Some flexibility around the scheduling of examinations, such as; allowing more time between examinations for a student with a physical disability who experiences fatigue, at all times having regard to the integrity of the examination process
- Examinations split into more than one session for exceptional medical conditions

It should be noted that flexible examination arrangements are granted in exceptional circumstances only. Their approval will be based on identified need supported by appropriate documentation and will require the approval of the Head of Department and the Examinations Office.