

Procedures & Guidelines for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to Students with Disabilities

Document Reference and Version No	Version 1.0. Approved by Academic Council April 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)
Document Owner	Registrar – Academic Procedure Document

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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".

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1. PROCEDURES FOR APPLICATION FOR AND APPROVAL OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS IN EXAMINATIONS

1.1 Application for Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Following a Needs Assessment and production of the requisite documentation, as detailed in Appendix Two, an application for Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations will be made on the student's behalf by either the Access Service or WRSS. The application form will be sent to the Head of Department for approval and they in turn will forward the approved form to the Examinations Office. The Examinations Office will forward copies of the form to the Head of Department and Access/WRSS.

1.2 Identification of Examination Scripts from Students with a Disability who have a Reading, Writing or Spelling Difficulty

The examination scripts of students with a disability who have a reading, writing or spelling difficulty will be marked according to the *Guidelines for Examiners when Marking Scripts from Students with a Disability who have a Reading, Writing or Spelling Difficulty* which have been adopted by the relevant programme. Such scripts will be identified by a sticker stating: 'Student registered with Access/WRSS See details provided to Department'.

2. PROCEDURES FOR THE PROVISION OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS IN EXAMINATIONS TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

2.1 Procedures for the Provision of Alternative Venues for Examinations

IADT seeks to ensure the following in relation to alternative examination venues:

- Alternative venues should be fully accessible to students with disabilities.
- The physical space available should be appropriate for the effective provision of the reasonable accommodation, for example:
 - A large table to accommodate enlarged papers, Braille material, and/or technological aids.
 - Adequate floor space for manoeuvring wheelchairs, mobility aids, crutches,

canes and any other physical aid.

- Access to power points for equipment and/or assistive technology.
- It is the responsibility of the Examinations Office to ensure that all announcements or amendments by lecturers are conveyed to all students with disabilities sitting examinations in separate examination venues.

2.2 Procedures for the Provision of Rest Breaks in Examinations

Some students, depending on their circumstances, may require rest breaks.

IADT seeks to ensure the following in relation to rest breaks:

- Rest breaks should be considered as pauses in the exam and the exam time should be stopped when a student takes a rest break.
- Students should tell the invigilator when they wish to have a rest break. They may take as much or as little out of their allocation as they wish at any one time.
- Students can choose to stay in the room for their rest break, or may leave the room if supervised by a member of staff. This can include going to the bathroom, taking a drink or snack if recommended, or moving around to relieve physical discomfort.
- Students may not talk about or work on the examination during their rest break. The student's examination papers should also be turned over during rest breaks.

2.3 Procedures for the use of Computers and Assistive Technology Software in Examinations

2.4 Students' Responsibilities during Examinations

- The student must confirm that they are proficient in the use of the assistive technology used for examinations. To ensure competence in the use of the assistive technology, a number of training sessions may be required.
- It is the student's responsibility to be proficient in typing for his/her examination.
- During an examination it is the student's responsibility to save their own work. If they do not save their work and it is lost, they will not receive any additional time to finish their exam.
- Students should not be permitted to bring any computer related hardware of their own (e.g. a memory stick or mouse) into the examination without prior approval and

checking. In situations where appropriate facilities cannot be provided or where it is not practical to transfer software/personalised settings (voice recognition software, document reading software and screen magnification software) it may be permitted for a student to utilise their own equipment (provided that it does not interfere with the integrity of the Examinations Process) and/or the equipment supplied to them by IADT.

- If students have any difficulties during an examination they must alert the invigilator.
- Lead Time. A reasonable amount of lead time is required by the Institute examinations office to allow provision of these arrangements.

2.4.1 Guidelines for the use of Computers & Assistive Technology Software in Examinations

The following guidelines should be taken in to account with regard to the use of computers in examinations:

- Students should be provided with written guidelines on how to use their assistive technology software under examination conditions and, if necessary, should attend training sessions prior to the examination period.
- Students who are using a computer will sit their examinations in a different venue to their peer group. These venues are normally shared with other students.
- Technical support should be available for each computer based examination session, limited to computer and assistive technology software functions.
- An examination image should be created which must not give the student access to other applications such as calculators, spread-sheets, etc.. Students taking examinations in which they are allowed to use a calculator should bring their own approved calculator to the examinations. No access is provided to the internet, intranet or any other means of communication. Different examination images may be created to meet the needs of different cohorts with appropriate leading time (i.e. visually impaired students, students with specific learning difficulties etc.).
- Sufficient work stations should be available in the examination venue including at least one replacement computer (and printers where required). Appropriate contingency plans should be put in place in the event of any computer malfunction and/ or failure during the examination sessions.
- The computer should have an adequate power supply (i.e. should be charged and/or plugged in for the duration of the exam). The computer must have been cleared of any previously stored data, as must any portable storage medium used. Where word

processing is utilised, students must save their examination answers. A USB key is provided with the exam paper by IADT. Students save their work to the USB key and the USB key is returned to the invigilator at the end of the examination. A backup copy must be saved to the examination computer/laptop by the student.

2.5 Procedures for the use of a Computer in Examinations for Students who are Blind/Vision Impaired

- The computer must be set-up in line with the general computer set-up guidelines.
- For a blind student, document reading software, word processing facilities and/or Braille/Braille-related devices and software may be needed.
- For a student with low vision, screen magnification software and word processing facilities may be required. For screen magnification a large computer monitor may also be required.

2.6 Procedures for the Provision of Scribes in Examinations

The role of a scribe is to record a student's dictated answers in an examination.

2.6.1 Procedures for appointing and overseeing a scribe

- The scribe should be an independent person and not known to the student.
- The scribe also acts as the invigilator for the examination.
- Sometimes a student may require a reader and a scribe. In such instances the same person may act as both.
- A recording of the session is recommended as this will act as a secondary source of information for the examiner if required.
- Scribes should have proficient typing skills if typing a student's dictated answers, and should be capable of writing legibly at appropriate speed if writing a student's dictated answers.
- In the case of a foreign language, scientific, mathematical or technical subject, the scribe should ideally have a working knowledge of that subject/language.
- An extra 15 minutes per hour will be allocated in the case where a scribe is being used.

2.6.2 *Procedures for Scribes*

- The scribe is required to produce an accurate record of the student's answers and to write/type at an appropriate speed.
- Depending on the circumstances, the student may meet the scribe in advance of the examinations and agree guidelines for:
 - Presentation
 - Spelling
 - Punctuation
 - New paragraphs, etc.
- The scribe should advise students as to the duration of the examination, the number of questions to be answered and any additional instructions.
- The starting time and finish time of the examination should be clearly stated by the scribe and/or invigilator.
- IADT may require that the examination script is submitted in electronic format and that the examination material is recorded on an official computer located in IADT, not on a laptop belonging to the student or scribe.
- If using a computer, the scribe should ensure the computer is set to automatically save work regularly (every 3 to 5 minutes). If using Microsoft Word, go to Tools/Options/Save and select the preferred time.
- If the student needs a rest or toilet break, the scribe/invigilator should accompany them.
- A student may elect to write sections of the paper themselves.
- If the student writes notes, essay plans or illustrations, these should be included with the examination script. For example, the student might draw rough diagrams from which the scribe will draw a final version and include both copies with the examination script

2.6.3 *Procedures for the Provision of Readers in Examinations*

The role of a reader in examinations is to read the examination questions only. Most students will be accommodated together in the same venue with a shared reader. In exceptional cases only an individual reader may be required.

2.6.4 Procedures for appointing and overseeing a Reader

- Both the student and reader should have access to training and practice sessions before the examination.
- The reader should be an independent person and not known to the student.
- In the case of a foreign language, scientific, mathematical or technical subject, the reader should ideally have a working knowledge of that subject/language.
- The reader should be able to read accurately and at a reasonable rate.
- The reader may also act as the invigilator for the examination.
- Sometimes a student may require a reader and a scribe. In such instances the same person may act as both.

2.6.5 Procedures for Readers

- The reader should not provide content to the student or offer any suggestions.
- The reader should not advise the student on which questions to attempt, when to move on to the next question, or the order in which questions should be attempted.
- Instructions given on the examination paper can only be repeated when the reader is specifically requested to do so by the student.
- The reader should make no other comment or use any intonation which emphasises any part of the examination questions, nor make any interpretation of the examination question(s).
- The reader should not discuss any matter with the student during the examination unless it relates to the re-reading of an examination question (having been requested to do so by the student).

2.6.6 Procedures for Readers Working with Vision-Impaired Students

- Readers should read the examination questions as often as requested.
- Readers should provide information regarding time elapsed and time remaining.
- Readers should help a student using tactile maps, diagrams, graphs and tables to extract the information which the print copy would provide to a sighted student.
- Readers should give the spelling of a word on an examination paper if requested.
- Readers should report any communication problems during the examination to the invigilator.

2.7 Procedures for the Provision of Irish Sign Language Interpreters in Examinations

- The interpreter should arrive before the commencement of the examination, to make seating arrangements and to interpret interactions between invigilators and students. This time should also be used as an opportunity for the student and the interpreter to become familiar with each other's communication styles.
- The interpreter should translate all announcements and information given by the invigilator prior to and during the examination.
- The interpreter should translate all interaction between the examiner and the student, including questions and clarifications. The interpreter should interpret no other speech/sign, nor go beyond the student's or the invigilator's/examiner's communications.
- The student may request that the interpreter translate questions from the written examination paper. If, following translation, there is need for further clarification, the interpreter may attempt to rephrase their interpretation but they must not attempt to introduce additional information over and above that which is specifically mentioned in the question. Any further clarification that is sought should be referred to the examiner and not offered by the interpreter.
- Where a student's first language is ISL an interpreter may, if requested, offer a translation of ISL vocabulary into English; this may include offering the spelling of word in English on the basis of ISL vocabulary.
- The interpreter must not provide additional examples, contextual information nor should he/she attempt to provide guidance to the student in answering a question.
- If a student wishes to sign his/her assignment or examination and to have this simultaneously transcribed by a scribe, the interpreter may seek clarification, as is normal in interpreted interaction. This should be done in a manner that reduces the impact upon the student's flow. If the interpreter is seeking frequent clarification, the matter should be raised with the Disability/Access Officer at the earliest opportunity, and a suitable replacement for further examinations should be found.
- It is the responsibility of the Examinations Office to ensure that all announcements or amendments by lecturers are conveyed to all students with disabilities sitting examinations in separate examination venues.

2.8 Technological Solutions and Future Proofing

As indicated in the 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, thus piloting new methodologies of from time to time. For example, second level schools are commencing the introduction of the use of a computer as a reader, and students progressing to higher education may have an expectation of the availability of this model. Sections 2.8.1 and 2.8.2 below are indicative procedures for this context, and will, if practicable, be trialled in 2014/15 and adopted as part of this core document during its 2015 review.

2.8.1 Using a computer as a reader

- Computer software which reads out an electronic paper, but does not decode or interpret the paper, may be used in place of a personal reader. The software must be tested to ensure it reads the electronic examination paper accurately.
- Where an application for a computer reader is approved, invigilators are permitted to open examination papers up to one hour before the starting time of the examination to test the software.
- Where the software is unable to give factual information from diagrams, graphs and tables for a blind/vision impaired student, it must be supplemented with the support of a personal reader.

2.8.2 Procedures for the Use of Voice Recognition Software

- Students who qualify for the use of Voice Recognition Software in an examination must develop a mature voice file with appropriate subject specific vocabulary.
- Ensure the computer being used meets at least the minimum software requirements as set out in the manufacturer's guidelines.
- Ensure the USB headset has been installed and tested with the software prior to the examination.
- The examination must be held in a separate venue where the accuracy of the software cannot be impacted by external noise.
- The invigilator may be required to scribe if Voice Recognition Software is being used and there are any handwritten requirements, for example: diagrams, formulas or other modelled answers.

3. GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS WHEN MARKING SCRIPTS FROM STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY WHO HAVE A READING, WRITING OR SPELLING DIFFICULTY¹

Reflecting the principles adopted in the Policy, and those articulated in *Assessment and Standards*, that “(b) Fair assessment is inclusive [and] [i]t recognises that different people can have different learning needs, styles and approaches ” it is understood that a student with a disability who has a reading, writing or spelling difficulty can be disadvantaged when assessment takes the form of a written timed examination. The following are matters which may be considered in marking an examination, and in devising or reviewing programme assessment strategies, to alleviate any such disadvantage.

3.1 Types of Errors

Student’s written work may contain:

- **Surface errors** in spelling and grammar such as inaccuracies in the use of tense, grammatical agreement, plurals, spelling and punctuation.
- **Structural flaws** including weak sequencing of ideas, paragraphs, and sentences; unclear expression of cause and effect; lack of competence in using abstract language or lack of awareness of writing genre.

3.2 Marking Guidelines

The following should be taken into consideration when marking the examination script of a student with a reading, writing and/or spelling difficulty:

1. First, read the script quickly to judge the student’s underlying understanding of the topic; then assess their performance against the learning outcomes. If the script contains all the required elements but does not introduce them in a clear logical order, avoid penalising the student for a lack of structure in their writing unless this is a stipulated competency being assessed.

¹ Adapted from *Guidelines for Marking the Work of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties* (University of Central Lancashire)
http://www.uclan.ac.uk/information/services/sds/marketing_guidelines_for_students_with_specific_learning_difficulties.php [accessed 14th June 2012]

2. Errors in **spelling** do not mean that the student is confused about the meaning of the word or its function in their writing. Generally, such errors do not lead to ambiguity and should not be penalised when subject knowledge is being assessed.
3. **Lexical** errors, such as *coarse* for *course*, do not mean that the student is confused about the meaning of the words. This kind of error should not be penalised unless it leads to ambiguity.
4. **Grammatical** errors, such as incorrect tense endings, lack of subject – verb agreement and incorrect word order which do not affect the meaning of the sentence should not be penalised. For example: *Some of the features of Socratic dialogues were they seek definitions of abstract ideas, cross examining beliefs to expose contradictions and he used to use questioning to bring the pupil to recognise the truth.* Here the student's meaning is clear, the errors do not lead to ambiguity and the student should not be penalised.
5. **Punctuation** might not be used by the student as a tool for clarifying meaning. Scripts may contain long sentences that are difficult to follow with indiscriminate punctuation or no punctuation at all. Very short sentences or fragments of sentences might also be produced. For instance: *The study considered three main areas of research. The effects of frequent drug use the role of the family in the offenders behaviour and the impact of custodial sentence's on reoffending.* In this case the student's meaning is clear, but in cases where errors in punctuation lead to such ambiguity that the meaning is unclear this will be reflected in the mark awarded.
6. Some students may use a **restricted vocabulary in exams due to spelling difficulties** and employ a far more limited range of words than they are otherwise able to do. Avoid penalising students who may appear to have an immature style of writing, unless a high standard of written communication is a specified learning outcome.
7. Where grammar and spelling are explicit core competencies of a programme a student's work must be marked on the basis of accuracy in the language and therefore these marking guidelines will not apply.
8. In all subjects, if a student's errors make a material difference to the meaning of their work, it will not be possible to classify them as surface errors that do not incur penalty. For instance, if a nursing student writes *hypertension* instead of *hypotension*, this will affect the mark awarded.
9. In all subjects, if the surface errors or structural flaws make the student's work so ambiguous that it is impossible to decipher the meaning, then this diminishes his/her

ability to demonstrate the module's learning outcomes and this would be reflected in the marks awarded.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Definition of Disability

The legal definition of disability, which is outlined in the Equal Status Acts (2000-2011), as amended from time to time, defines disability as follows:

1. "the total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body,
2. the presence in the body of organisms causing or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness,
3. the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body,
4. a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or
5. a condition, illness or disease which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour."

APPENDIX 2 : Documentation Required for Verifying a Disability

DISABILITY	MEDICAL CONSULTANT/SPECIALIST	EVIDENCE OF DISABILITY REQUIRED
Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Appropriately qualified Psychiatrist or Psychologist or Neurologist or Paediatrician	CAO Evidence of Disability Form or a report with the same level of detail completed by the appropriate professional.
Asperger's Syndrome/Autism	Appropriately qualified Psychiatrist or Psychologist or Neurologist or Paediatrician	CAO Evidence of Disability Form or a report with the same level of detail completed by the appropriate professional.
Blind/Vision Impaired	Ophthalmologist or Ophthalmic Surgeon	CAO Evidence of Disability Form or a report with the same level of detail completed by the appropriate professional.
Deaf/Hearing Impaired	Professionally qualified Audiologist	CAO Evidence of Disability Form or a report with the same level of detail completed by the appropriate professional. A Bilateral Audiogram from a qualified Audiologist is also required.
Developmental Co-ordination Disorder/Dyspraxia/Dysgraphia	Appropriately qualified Psychologist and an Occupational Therapist or Neurologist	A full psycho-educational assessment from an appropriately Psychologist and a report that assesses motor skills and functioning from an Occupational Therapist or Neurologist.
Mental Health Condition	Psychiatrist	CAO Evidence of Disability Form or a report with the same level of detail completed by the appropriate professional.

DISABILITY	MEDICAL CONSULTANT/SPECIALIST	EVIDENCE OF DISABILITY REQUIRED
Neurological Conditions	Neurologist/other relevant Consultant	CAO Evidence of Disability Form or a report with the same level of detail completed by the appropriate professional.
Neurological Conditions – speech, language and communication disorders and written language difficulties associated with these disorders	Speech and Language Therapist	CAO Evidence of Disability Form or a report with the same level of detail completed by the appropriate professional.
Physical Disability	Orthopaedic Consultant or other relevant consultant appropriate to the disability/condition	CAO Evidence of Disability Form or a report with the same level of detail completed by the appropriate professional.
Significant Ongoing Illness	Diabetes Type 1: Endocrinologist or Paediatrician Cystic Fibrosis (CF): Consultant respiratory physician or Paediatrician Gastroenterology Conditions: Gastroenterologist Others: Relevant consultant in area of condition or Consultant Registrar/Registrar	CAO Evidence of Disability Form or a report with the same level of detail completed by the appropriate professional.
Dyscalculia	Appropriately qualified Psychologist	A full, recent psycho-educational assessment.
Dyslexia	Appropriately qualified Psychologist	A full, recent psycho-educational assessment.

Appendix Three: Form Granting & Recording Examination Accommodations

EXAMINATION ACCOMMODATIONS

1. TO BE COMPLETED BY WRSS/ACCESS OFFICE

STUDENT NAME:

STUDENT NUMBER:

PROGRAMME:

EXAMINATION ACCOMMODATIONS NEEDED:

EXTRA TIME: * ☐ **USE OF SCRIBE ****

USE OF COMPUTER ☐ **ACCESS TO READER** ☐ **SEPARATE ROOM** ☐

Signed Date

THE WRITING & RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICE OR ACCESS OFFICE

** ten minutes per hour ** extra 15 minutes per hour allowed*

Students are not penalised for spelling or grammar errors in exams unless otherwise stipulated.

2. TO BE COMPLETED BY HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

THE ABOVE EXAMINATION ACCOMMODATIONS ARE AUTHORISED FOR THIS STUDENT

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: DATE:

3. TO BE COMPLETED BY EXAMINATIONS OFFICE

I/WE CONFIRM THE ABOVE EXAMINATION ACCOMMODATION WILL BE APPLIED IN ALL EXAMINATIONS FOR THE DURATION OF THE STUDENT'S PROGRAMME

FOR EXAMINATIONS OFFICE: DATE:

4. TO BE FORWARDED BY EXAMINATIONS OFFICE

WHEN COMPLETED BY HEAD OF DEPARTMENT AND EXAMINATIONS OFFICE COPIES TO THEN BE RETURNED BY EXAMINATIONS OFFICE TO: 1. HEAD OF DEPARTMENT 2. ACCESS OFFICE/ WRSS