

Online assessment: adjustments for disabled students

Context

There are approximately 3500 students with Exam Access Arrangements (EAAs), in all Schools, across all Faculties. EAAs are a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act, and as such, the University must ensure they are in place for any form of assessment offered.

Online or remote assessment is likely to be far more inclusive for many students, especially in relation to handwriting vs typing, and in the exam room setting, which can often overwhelm students. Moving to online assessment may mean that many students do not need all their EAAs, especially those which address venue and access to facilities.

However, online assessment will create additional barriers for some disabled students. For example, this might include:

Cohort	Issue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blind or visually impaired students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compatibility of exam software with assistive technology, specifically screen readers and voice dictation software. • No access to reader or amanuensis (scribe). • Video assessments are often inaccessible. • Unable to read graphs, diagrams, charts or equations unless effectively described.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D/deaf or hearing-impaired students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any element which is presented via audio, including instructions or uncaptioned videos. • Students whose exam papers are usually interpreted by a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter. • Students who use BSL who would ordinarily sign their answers to a BSL interpreter, who then scribes the answer.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autistic students • Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (e.g. dyslexia) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of instructions when there is no invigilator or module leader in the room to check with.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with mental health conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety around new formats and processes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD) or other disabilities which affect concentration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining concentration in a non-formal setting. • Managing time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with disabilities which affect handwriting and typing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No access to amanuensis (scribe).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compatibility of exam software with assistive technology, specifically screen readers and voice dictation software.

Principles of inclusive online assessment

In order to ensure that online assessment is accessible to a wide range of disabled students, and students with other protected characteristics, the University has agreed the following principles in relation to online assessment:

1. Students must have access to their usual assistive technology

Many disabled students work with assistive software which is commonly recommended as part of their statutory disability-related funding. This might include screen reading software, and voice dictation (speech to text) software. Proctoring functionality in some systems which locks down the student's machine, will mean that students cannot use their assistive software, and the assessment will become inaccessible to them. These students must have assessments delivered in an alternative format

2. Students must be able to submit a handwritten or word-processed version of their answers

Some students will not be able to use their assistive software to input answers within some online assessment software. These students must be allowed to submit their answers in an alternative format, such as a word-processed or handwritten document, which could be emailed to a specified contact.

3. Students must be informed of the format of the assessment in advance, including the software platform

This will enable students to understand any access issues relating to a particular form of assessment, and to have the opportunity to resolve these in advance.

4. Students must have the opportunity to test assessment methods ahead of the formal assessment

Some forms of online assessment will be new to many students, and they will need the opportunity to test new systems and formats in order to establish any access issues. Access issues should be reported to the School.

5. Module leaders must set expectations around word limit, which must be clearly articulated in the rubric

This is especially important for assessment offered over a lengthy time window, such as 48 hours, so that there is a clear instruction around how much students are expected to write. Suggested wording is as follows:

“Students are expected to write between XXX and XXX words when answering the set question. We anticipate that this task should take students approximately 2 hours to complete. As the time taken to complete the task does not form part of the assessment criteria, and to take into consideration of students with additional needs, all students will be given at least 48hrs to complete the assessment task.”

6. Module leaders must continue to follow the inclusive assessment guidance

Following the [inclusive assessment guidance](#) and associated templates will ensure that assessment instructions are written in an inclusive, accessible format, with less need for language modification. This is particularly important when students are working in isolation with limited ability to check instructions. The guidance should be followed both when creating both open book and closed exam papers.

7. Module leaders must ensure that diagrams, charts, graphs, tables, images and equations are accessible to disabled students, where required

Visually impaired students may not be able to access these elements in some types of exam software and alternative provision must be made for these students. Examples of how to make adjustments to image-based content can be found below:

- [Alt text and describing images](#)
- [Describing charts and graphs](#)
- [Describing equations and formulae](#)

8. Schools are responsible for clarifying instructions for assessments within expected working hours

Schools will need to develop a process so that a nominated contact is available to clarify instructions for assessments during usual working hours, and communicate the details of this process to students. For any queries outside normal working hours, students should proceed with the assessment as best they can but report any difficulties to their School at the earliest opportunity so that these can be picked up at marking stage.

9. Assessments should be offered within a 48-hour assessment window Using a minimum 48-hour assessment window will automatically include most extra time allowance and rest breaks, and will support students who are working in different time zones. This should be considered the optimum approach and should be adopted wherever possible.

10. Where there are pedagogic reasons for an assessment being time-limited to less than 48 hours, module leaders must include extra time and rest break allowances

A standard extra time allowance is 25% (15 minutes per hour) and a standard rest break is 10 minutes per hour, however, this can vary by student. Please check student requirements for extra time and rest breaks with your [School Disability Contact](#).

11. Previously agreed adjustments around submission of work must be honoured

For example, students who usually have a recommendation for flexibility around submission of coursework must have the same flexibility for coursework submitted in lieu of a formal, seated exam. Schools will need to clarify the process for agreeing this with students.

12. Previously agreed adjustments around scheduling must be honoured

Where students have recommendations for scheduling adjustments (for example, no exams on consecutive days), schools will be provided with additional information and will need to take this into consideration in timetabling their assessments.

13. Students who require British Sign Language interpretation will require a bespoke arrangement.

This includes students who require exam papers to be interpreted, as well as students who give their answers via an interpreter. Students in this situation must contact Disability Services (disability@leeds.ac.uk) at the earliest opportunity.

14. Students who require transcription of exam papers must be given access to transcription services

Exam papers for students requiring transcription must be made available to the Transcription Service (Vibi.Rothnie@rnib.org.uk) at least 3 weeks in advance of the assessment.

15. Students who have a recommendation for marking consideration must be identified so that assessed work can be marked for content

SES teams should agree the process for identifying these students, and advise students how their work will be flagged as mark for content.

16. The mitigating circumstances process must be available to students who cannot access the assessment

Some students will not be able to access certain types of online assessment. Where students are unable to access assessment, they must be directed towards the mitigating circumstances process.

17. All students must be given guidance on how to set up a safe and comfortable working environment

Students may be working for long hours in the same working space, and they should be [offered guidance](#) on how to manage their space and time effectively to support their wellbeing.

Accessibility of online assessment tools

Module leaders should be aware that not all online assessment tools are accessible to all disabled students and should consider how best to make assessment content accessible for disabled students.

Exam access arrangements: mapping for online assessment

The following table includes all the exam access arrangement codes in SWAMEDI (Banner) and indicates alternative arrangements for online assessment. Please note that Disability Services will not make changes to SWAMEDI to reflect the change to online assessment; instead, SES colleagues and module leaders should use this table to map existing recommendations to proposed adjustments.

Timetabling

Code	Descriptor	Notes	Alternative for online assessment
AM	Morning Exams Only		Schools will be sent information about students who may need scheduling consideration. Schools must take these considerations into account when timetabling assessment for their students.
BA	No Evening Exams		
BT	No Exams Before 10:00am		
EC	No Two Exams in One Day		
EO	Exams not on Consecutive Days		
NA	No Exam Arrangements	Student does not want EAAs implemented	
NE	No Written Exams	Student has alternative to the written exam (specify module code(s) or ALL modules)	
PM	Afternoon Exams Only		
XE	Not Current Exam Session	For students who miss the exam deadline	

Venue / Seat

BR	Seat at Back of Room		Not applicable
EE	Exams Taken in Familiar Venue		
FR	Seat at Front of Room		
ND	Seat Near the Door		
RL	Room Number Limit		
SR	Separate Room		
RA	Permission to read aloud		
SW	Seat Near Window		

Invigilator / Assistance

EA	Amanuensis	Also known as Scribe	Students must be allowed to use their assistive software for all exams (for example, speech to text software).
			Schools will need to develop a process so that a nominated contact is available to clarify instructions for assessments during usual working hours, and communicate the details of this process to students. For any queries outside normal working hours, students should proceed with the assessment as best they can but report any difficulties to their School at the earliest opportunity so that these can be picked up at marking stage.
FI	Familiar Invigilator		
PA	Personal Assistant		Not required for online assessment, but students may require additional time if there are tasks they need to perform without assistance.

PR	Prompter		Consider electronic prompting (e.g. timer or countdown). Guidance will be made available to students.
SM	Specialist Mentor		Not required for online assessment.
EG	Reader		Students must be allowed to use their assistive software for all exams (for example, speech to text software).
EQ	Interpreter		Students who require British Sign Language interpretation will require a bespoke arrangement – contact Disability Services (disability@leeds.ac.uk).

Exam papers

EH	Braille		Contact Disability Services (disability@leeds.ac.uk) or the Transcription Service (Vibi.Rothnie@rnib.org.uk).
EI	Large Print		Students should be able to adjust font sizes on their devices. Should an assessment not enable changes to the font, the Module Leader should provide the assessment in an alternative format.
EP	Coloured Paper		Most students with this recommendation will be able to print on coloured paper, if required. Students can also download screen tinting software, such as ColorVeil .
ER	Papers in Audio Format		Contact Disability Services (disability@leeds.ac.uk) or the Transcription Service (Vibi.Rothnie@rnib.org.uk).

EY	Language Modification		Module leaders must follow the inclusive assessment guidance to reduce the need for language modification.
PE	Electronic Exam Papers		Not applicable

Computer

EF	PC		Consider what will happen for students who do not have reliable PC access.
EU	JAWS software		Students must be allowed to use assistive software
PC	PC Settings		Unchanged, but consider giving students guidance on how to adjust settings on home PCs.
ZR	Zoomtext		Students must be allowed to use assistive software

Equipment

AC	Adjustable Office Chair		Responsibility of the student. Provide guidance on how to set up an ergonomically safe working environment.
CE	Ergonomic Chair		
EK	Lectern		
ET	Coloured Overlays Permitted		
FO	Footstool		
HD	Height Adjustable Desk		
LU	Lumbar Support		
ME	Equipment		
BF	Backfriend		

Condition

DB	Medical Condition		Not relevant for making adjustments.
DC	Panic Attacks		
DF	Mental Health Condition		
DI	Diabetic		
DY	Specific Learning Difficulties		
EN	Wheelchair		
EM	Physical Writing Problems		
HE	Hearing Impairment		
UX	Undiagnosed – exams only	Has not provided evidence of disability but has provided evidence of previous exam arrangements at school. Will only have access to exam arrangements and no other disability support. See Appendix 1 for further information.	
VI	Visual Impairment		
XC	Aspergers Syndrome/Autism		
XD	Mobility Difficulty		

Information for Invigilator

BL	Permit Check Blood Sugar Level		Unchanged, to be done during rest breaks.
EZ	Regular Breaks		Ensure appropriate rest breaks are built into any time allowance. In most cases, the minimum 48 hour assessment window will cover the student's requirement for rest breaks.
II	Invigilator Instructions		Not required
LR	Permission to Leave the Room		Student responsibility
MA	Permission to Move Around		Student responsibility
RA	Permission to read aloud		Student responsibility
MD	Permission to take medication		Student responsibility
MN	Medical Requirements		Not relevant
PD	Permission to Eat and Drink		Student responsibility
XB	Access to Toilet		Student responsibility

Marking

EJ	Mark for Content		Students must be identified so that assessed work can be marked for content. SES teams should agree the process for identifying these students, and advise students how their work will be flagged as mark for content.
ES	Not Penalise-Poor Handwriting		Unchanged but irrelevant if typing exams

Current Session Only

EL	Current Session Only		Unchanged
----	----------------------	--	-----------

Miscellaneous

TY	Exam Type		Irrelevant depending on the nature of the exam
----	-----------	--	--