

Birkbeck College
College Procedure, Practice and Guidelines

Title: **Procedures for Determining Special Examination Arrangements**

1. Objectives

- 1.1 To define the arrangements for students with disabilities in the conduct of College examinations.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This procedure applies to all examinations and assessments, both at Undergraduate and Postgraduate level, to ensure that the College arrangements meet the obligations set out by the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4, the Disability Rights Commission's Examinations and Assessments Good Practice Guide, the QAA Code of Practice on Students with Disabilities Precepts and College Policy.
- 2.2 These are broad guidelines to cover the different disabilities. The recommendation for arrangements for individual students will be based on the medical documentation, the experience and judgement of the Disability Service Manager and Examinations Office and the criteria agreed by the Committee on Disability and Examinations.

3. Responsible Officers

The following have major responsibilities:

Disability Service Manager (DSM)
Disability Advisor (DA)
School-nominated Examinations Officer
Disability Liaison Officers (DLO)
Chairs of the Boards of Examiners
Assistant Registrar (Examinations) (AR)
Senior Examinations Officer (SEO)
Committee on Disability and Examinations

4. Procedures – Procedures for students with declared disabilities

- 4.1 Applicants for Birkbeck programmes of study are given the opportunity to declare a disability on the application form. All applicants declaring a disability are sent a disability information pack and invited to see the Disability Service Manager. Students must present medical confirmation of the disability or in the case of dyslexia, a dyslexia assessment report. The disability is indicated on the Student Record System.
- 4.2 Schools must include in their Student Handbook a statement on special examination provision (text to be agreed by Disability Office) and to draw students' attention to the Disability Office in their induction programmes.
- 4.3 New and returning students will have another opportunity to declare a disability on the enrolment forms and on the examination entry forms. These students, who have not declared a disability on the application form, are invited to see the Disability Service Manager and present medical confirmation of the disability. The DA will indicate the disability on the Student Record System.
- 4.4 The Disability Service Manager will discuss with the student any examinations assistance that is required (Appendix A) and will enter the requirements on the Disability database, which is shared with the Examinations Office. In order for these requirements to be considered the student must complete a Confidentiality Consent form authorising the Disability Service Manager to inform College staff of their needs.

- 4.5 A copy of the appropriate medical or dyslexia assessment documentation is given to the Senior Examinations Officer by the DA for the Examinations Boards.

5. Procedures - Examinations procedures 10 weeks in advance of an examination week for students with declared disabilities

- 5.1 Posters will be prominently displayed on College and School notice boards inviting students to contact the examinations office or disability office if they feel they may need special examination provision as a result of disability or medical circumstances. The Disability office will place articles in Lamp and Owl (the Birkbeck Students' Union magazine) and Staff Newsletters to draw attention to the need to make special arrangements regarding examination provision.
- 5.2 The Examinations Office and the DSM will prepare an Examiners Handbook that contains relevant extracts from the Disability Rights Commission's Examinations and Assessments Good Practice Guide and the QAA Code of Practice on Students with Disabilities Precepts. This will be made available to all Boards' of Examiners/Programme Directors and on the Web.
- 5.3 The Examinations Office will write to all Chairs of Boards of Examiners, DLOs and School Administrators requesting the names and brief circumstances of students known to them who may require special examination provision, including those students who may have taken a break in studies during the previous session.
- 5.4 The Examinations Office will send a letter to students with disabilities informing them of the agreed examination provision; a copy will be forwarded to the Chair of the relevant Board of Examiners. The letter will explain the scope for appealing for amendment of the agreed provision and the procedure to be followed.
- 5.5 New students without full medical documentation may have "interim" provision in their first term of study to ensure that special arrangements can be made for School assessments that count towards the final agreed results /grades of modules. Full documentation must be received by March 15th in order to provide the agreed provision.
- 5.6 Returning students for whom special provision has been made in previous years will continue to receive the previously agreed provision and will be invited to discuss a reappraisal of their needs with the DSM to ensure that the provision continues to be adequate.
- 5.7 March 15th will be the summer term exam deadline for receipt of applications for special provision for students with declared disabilities. For the examinations in the spring term the deadline will be the 15th November. After these dates special provision may not be accommodated unless there are acceptable reasons for the delay.

6. Procedures for students with other medical conditions.

- 6.1 Students who are not registered with a disability but are affected by a medical or other condition which may need special examination arrangements must submit supporting medical certification / documentation to the Examinations Office as soon as possible before the examination. The Examinations Office will attempt wherever practicable to put in place alternative/special arrangements at short notice in the event of an examination candidate being unexpectedly affected by a medical condition or injury. Some kinds of special arrangements, however, cannot be put in place without sufficient advance notice and planning.
- 6.2 The Examinations Office will inform the student of the agreed provision; a copy will be forwarded to the Chair of the relevant Board of Examiners.

7. Committee on Disability and Examinations

- 7.1 If a student finds the provision under 5.4 or 6.2 insufficient for their needs they may put forward a case to the Committee on Disability and Examinations.
- 7.2 The Committee will consider a request for any provision which is outside the standard criteria.

7.3 On receipt of the final decision on the provision, the Examinations Office will write to the student confirming the agreed provision. Final details giving exact dates, times and room locations will be advised separately nearer the time of the examination.

7.4 A copy of the decision will be forwarded to the Chair of the relevant Board of Examiners.

8. Procedures one to two months in advance of the examinations

8.1 The Examinations Office will confirm in writing to the student precise arrangements concerning dates, times and location of their examinations. Copies will be forwarded to the relevant Chair of Board of Examiners and the Disability Office.

8.2 The Examinations Office will identify in consultation with the Disability Service Manager/ Disability I T officer/ ITS any resources implications in the case of specialist I T or software. Where specialist I T and/or soft ware have been approved, the student will be invited to a trial run using the equipment.

8.3 The Examinations Officer will have a familiarisation session with specialist equipment in order to handle minor difficulties that might arise during the examinations.

8.4 Where an amanuensis has been agreed, the student will be invited to a trial run to familiarise both the student and the amanuensis with the process.

8.5 Where trial runs are conducted the student will be invited to a debriefing session with the Senior Examinations Officer and the DSM and ITS/ Disability I T officer to address any outstanding problems and confirm the final arrangements.

9. Procedure on the day of the examinations

9.1 The Examination Office will ensure that all the arrangements are in place.

9.2 ITS will ensure that a member of staff will be available to assist in any technical difficulties.

10. Procedure for a student who is ill during an examination

10.1 If a student is ill during an examination they will be escorted to University of London Central Institutions Health Service on Gower Street. If after treatment the student can proceed with the examination, they may be given the equivalent amount of lost time at the end of the examination.

10.2 If other students have been disturbed by an ill candidate, they may be given the extra time as compensation.

10.3 The relevant Chair of the Board of Examiners will be informed in all cases.

11. Monitoring the examination arrangements

11.1 The Disability Office will send a feedback questionnaire to disabled students in order to monitor and evaluate the provision and to assist in determining future practice. Where the student indicates the support was not satisfactory the Disability Service Manager will arrange for a meeting between the student and the Assistant Registrar (Examinations) to reassess the support needs.

11.2 The Examinations Office will send a feedback questionnaire to other students and any student who may have September referrals.

11.3 The Assistant Registrar (Examinations) and the Disability Service Manager will in the Autumn term submit an annual report to the Disability Committee and the Teaching Committee on the outcome of monitoring special examinations provisions made in the preceding examination period.

12. Procedure for School Examinations/tests which count towards the final results/grades

- 12.1 There may not be sufficient time in the first term to fully assess new students' special examinations requirements for the first assessments. Where possible an interim arrangement will be agreed with the Programme Director. Where it was not possible to provide agreed special provision for School assessments, the Boards of Examiners will be advised to use discretion in the weighting given to the results of such assessments.
- 12.2 The Examinations office will advise the Programme Directors of the interim provision.
- 12.3 All Programme Directors will be responsible for ensuring that tutors are aware of any students for whom special provision has been agreed and for implementing the provision. Any feedback on the appropriateness of the provision should be discussed with the Disability Service Manager and Examination Office.

13. Discretion of Examiners

- 13.1 Notwithstanding any of the foregoing Boards and Sub-Boards of Examiners retain discretion to implement College policy on Disability and/or Mitigating Circumstances.

GENERAL DEFINITION OF DISABILITY CATEGORIES AND FORMS OF SPECIAL EXAMINATION ASSESSMENT PROVISION

Physically impaired students:

This could include students who have multiple sclerosis, ME, back problems, head injuries, dexterity problems e.g. RSI or have mobility problems, e.g. wheelchair users. The requirement for evidence will vary according to the specific circumstances.

Supporting evidence required would be a medical report from either a General Practitioner, Consultant Orthopedic Surgeon or other specialist medical practitioner. In cases of chronic disability this should not normally be more than two years old.

Appropriate arrangements may include:

- sheltered accommodation normally with other candidates with special examination provision
- accessible venue with accessible toilet facilities
- a suitable desk and seating
- special lighting
- word processors
- specialist equipment i.e. ergonomic keyboards and mouse, wrist rests, footrests, writing slopes
- amanuenses and/or reader
- additional time
- alternative arrangements for assessment where appropriate.

Note: A student would not normally be allowed rest periods as such, but may be granted a specified amount of extra time which s/he may manage as s/he wishes according to the medical advice received. A student requiring both extra time and rest periods will be treated as an exceptional case and reported as such to the Committee on Disability and Examinations and the Board of Examiners.

Blind or visually impaired students

Supporting evidence should be either a copy of their Registration of Partial Sight or Blindness or a letter from a General Practitioner or Consultant Ophthalmologist.

Appropriate arrangements would depend on the level of the student's eyesight, their eye condition and their technical skills as follows:

- partially sighted student may be able to use large print examination papers and write in conventional examination booklets
- for students with a greater degree of visual impairment closed circuit television may be appropriate
- Braille users may prefer examination questions and their answers to be in Braille. Alternatively they may use special computers or audio cassette
- computers with character enhancing or screen reading software
- amanuensis and/or reader
- additional time ranging from 15 to 30 minutes in the hour (in exceptional circumstances more) depending on the level of visual impairment and arrangements in place.
- sheltered accommodation
- larger desks.

Deaf or hearing-impaired students:

Supporting evidence required (outlining level and degree of hearing loss) should be a medical report from either a General Practitioner or Consultant Audiologist.

Appropriate arrangements would depend on whether the student is pre-lingually deaf, if the first language is British Sign Language (BSL) or if they have an acquired hearing loss:

- students whose first language is BSL may require an interpreter, communication support worker or lip-speaker to be available
- assessments to be provided on video.
- simplification of the language of the paper may be required for pre-lingually deaf students
- additional time allowances

- a support worker
- sheltered accommodation.

Students with mental health issues

Supporting evidence required would be a medical report from a General Practitioner or Consultant Psychiatrist.

Appropriate arrangements may include

- a limited number of exams in one week or in one day,
- sheltered accommodation
- additional time
- support from welfare and counselling staff before and after exams.

Dyslexic Students.

Supporting evidence required would be an assessment report in line with the recommendations outlined in the SPLD Working Group 2005/DFES guidelines. We will also recognise assessments conducted by Chartered Educational Psychologists and those with Diplomas in SPLD prior to the publication of the SPLD Working Group report. Dyslexia reports must be in English and indicate the degree to which dyslexia might affect the student's performance in further/higher education and make specific recommendations for support and assessment.

Appropriate arrangements may include:

- extra time to read and understand papers and prepare answers (normally between 10 and 15 minutes per hour)
- a reader
- enlarged copies of the question paper
- hand held coloured filter
- a personal list of spellings (approved in advance by the academic school)
- hand held spell checker (i.e. Franklin language master)
- writing in coloured pens (other than black or blue)
- specialist equipment, e.g. computer, with spell check, thesaurus, tape recorder etc
- exam papers printed on different coloured paper or double spaced text, appropriate fonts and margin indents
- amanuensis
- sheltered accommodation.

All students diagnosed with dyslexia will be given sticky labels with the following text:

"This candidate has been reported as having been assessed as dyslexic. Markers of scripts are asked to take note of this, but any question of allowances to be made must be left for consideration at the meeting of the board of examiners held to determine the results."

These labels may be attached to their scripts and may, where appropriate, be attached to their examinable essays.

Students with dyslexia may benefit from detailed feedback on examinations in order to develop exam strategies for coping with timed work. Many dyslexic students report that exam marks are considerably lower than course work marks. It may benefit the student to go through the exam paper with tutors after the exam boards have reported final results.

Students with hidden disabilities (i.e. epilepsy, diabetes, respiratory problems or heart conditions);

Supporting evidence required should be a medical report from either a General Practitioner or other specialist medical practitioner.

Appropriate arrangements may include:

- supervised breaks
- sheltered accommodation
- extra time
- support worker.

Students with Autism and Aspergers syndrome and other medical conditions

Supporting evidence required would be a medical report from a General Practitioner or Consultant Psychiatrist.

Appropriate arrangements may include:

- change of routine when sitting exams
- exam papers written in specific style
- support worker to clarify the language of an exam paper
- extra time.

EXAMINATIONS AND PCs

Where provision includes the use of personal computers etc for formal written examinations, the Examinations Office in collaboration with ITS will provide a personal computer with the following specifications:

- Either a PC with Windows 2000, 15" screen, standard keyboard and mouse
- Or a Laptop with Windows 2000, 12" screen, a separate keyboard and mouse and mains power supply.
- Microsoft Word 2000.
- Standard spell check facilities (unless not permitted for a particular examination).
- 2 x 2 HD formatted discs labelled with candidate number, code, title and date of examination.
- Facilities to save to hard drive as well as floppy drive.
- If required, an alternative keyboard and mouse may be provided.

ITS responsibilities: ITS will ensure that the equipment is at the venue specified by the Examinations Office. Candidates requiring specialist hardware, software or furniture, which cannot easily be moved, will be required to take the examinations in a location in which the equipment is permanently located. The candidate's own equipment will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. In such cases, ITS will make configuration changes and/or install additional software to prevent access to material on the system. This will entail making the system available to ITS for up to 1 week prior to the examination.

Candidates responsibilities: It is recommended that candidates work from the hard disk and only move the information to a diskette at the end of the examination. It is the candidate's responsibility to save their work frequently during the examination and any work lost due to careless use is the candidate's responsibility. There will be no printing facilities in the examination venue. The candidate's work will be printed out once returned to the Examinations Office and securely tied inside the candidate's answer book (which may contain rough work/answer planning, or any diagrams or calculation answers).

Examinations Office responsibilities: The Examinations Office will appoint invigilators who are sufficiently qualified to assist the candidate with any difficulties they may experience with the operation of the PC. The Examinations Office will retain discs and be responsible for the security of any equipment etc borrowed from ITS.

THE USE OF AMANUENSIS OR READERS

An amanuensis may either legibly write or word-process at a reasonable speed a candidate's answers to questions. They should ideally know enough about the subject, terminology and vocabulary but shall, if possible, not be an expert. An amanuensis should not normally be one of the student's tutors. If a student has a note taker in class, this person may be considered suitable to act as the amanuensis, provided they are sufficiently independent of the student.

The use of an amanuensis should neither give the student an unfair advantage nor should it disadvantage the student. In certain circumstances additional time may be permitted for the use of an amanuensis.

During the examination the student is permitted to use answer books to do essay plans, draw diagrams/charts etc, which are given to the examiners with the complete script.

A student should, wherever possible, have adequate practice in the use of an amanuensis.

During the examination an amanuensis:

- must not give factual help to the student or offer any suggestions or advise the student regarding what questions to answer, how to manage the exam time, i.e. suggest when to move on to the next question or the order in which the questions are answered.
- must write or word-process answers exactly as they are dictated.
- may read back what has been recorded to the students and make any corrections as directed by the student.
- must accompany the student if s/he needs to temporarily leave the exam room.
- will not normally be expected to write or type for the full duration of the examination, since the student will be expected to carry out some form of planning and rough work.

SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION

Special rooms will be provide for students with special needs:

- Students with enlarged copies of the question paper or those in wheel chairs who normally require additional desk space.
- Students with back problems requiring special seating.
- Students with dyslexia who are distracted by noise or other people
- Students who are allocated extra time beyond the time of the main examination hall.

The room may accommodate a small number of students with special needs. Whilst completely separate rooms may be desirable this is rarely feasible because of room shortages and invigilation costs. Students will be advised to bring earplugs.

Committee on Disability and Examinations

Membership: Chair of the Disability Committee (Chair)
Chair of College Board of Examiners for Arts
Chair of the College Board of Examiners for Science
Chair of the LLB Board of Examiners

Advisors: Disability Service Manager
Senior Examinations Officer
Assistant Registrar (Examinations)
Senior Administrator, Faculty of Lifelong Learning

Terms of Reference:

To determine on behalf of the Academic Board the established procedure for students with disabilities who require consideration beyond the criteria established by the Disability Committee.