

# Accessible...

## Assessments

**The following points of advice will support staff involved in the design and marking of assessments to ensure that accessibility issues are considered as part of the learning and teaching process.**

- Students need to know the purpose and type of assessment. This information would be most usefully provided in programme information and reinforced at the beginning of programmes/modules. This and most other information will be in programme handbooks but reinforcement of information may help some students to access it.
- Students need to understand the learning outcome for which they are being assessed and what they need to do to pass
- Students need to be prepared for assessment, encourage them to access the information in the programme handbook (follow guidance for '[Accessible ...learning resources](#)') and build in discussion of the rationale for assessment methodology and the value of it.
- Students need timely feedback to help them in the future. Consider using formative feedback to develop academic skills and summative feedback with specific focus to encourage reflection and improvement.
- Students need to know the pass marks for assessments.
- Students need to know what happens if they get less than the pass mark.
- Students need to understand what the grades or marks mean. Remember to note what the division in grades relates to: pass, weak, average, good, and excellent.
- The assessment feedback proforma should provide the student with a clear steer on how they performed in the assessment in specific areas and what they could do to improve next time to encourage reflection on their process of working rather than the result. It also enables the tutor to demonstrate how they evaluate and assess the work.
- Evaluation of assessment processes should be undertaken as part of module, or programme evaluation. This should elicit student feedback on the accessibility of assessment.
- A range of different assessment methods should be available within programmes to allow for different learning styles and strengths to be demonstrated. This will mean that there will be less need to negotiate [alternative assessments](#) for students with disabilities. (link to assessment table)

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- Pay special attention to:
  - Self and peer assessments (e.g. produce guidelines which explain the nature of these assessments as this can reduce students' anxiety)
  - Group work/problem-based assessments (e.g. discuss how diversity can be of benefit to the group)
  - Computer-based assessments (e.g. check that screen readers and text enlargement software can be used without any problems)
  - Optical Mark Reader assessments (e.g. prepare an extensive list of alternatives, because most students who have dyslexia, dyspraxia, visual impairments and/or manual dexterity difficulties do not find these assessments accessible).
- Examples of adjustments:
  - to provide written instructions prior to a practical laboratory session as well as oral instructions during it.
  - to allow a student who experiences anxiety attacks to record his/her contribution to a group presentation on video prior to the event and then show the tape on the day.
  - Students who are blind or partially sighted may need questions in formats such as Braille, enlarged print or on audio tape. Alternatively, the questions could be read out to students.
  - Some students who have dyslexia may benefit from receiving assessment and examination questions in a specific font on a particular colour paper. Always consult individual students
    - about their requirements. Alternatively, provide the questions on disc so that students can print them according to their individual specifications.
    - a student who conveys his/her responses via sign language may need an interpreter to verbalise the answers and an amanuensis to record the replies on paper. If it is not essential
  - to produce the response in a written format, try to record the student's achievements and the interpreter's translation on video.
  - an alternative to a request for a drawing might be a three dimensional model.
- If a student feels that they cannot approach an assessment for reasons of disability, please contact the DRC to negotiate a solution. They should be aware that this will be based on evidenced need and should be arranged in advance of assessment periods. Details of the timeframes involved can be found on the Examinations Office webpage: (<http://www.ex.ac.uk/admin/academic/exams/>) and click on 'specific exam arrangements'

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- When designing or reviewing assessment methods, consider whether the methods would present any barriers to students with disabilities.
- Consider the location and physical accessibility of the physical environment where the assessment is to take place:
  - Last minute changes to venues may cause confusion and make adjustments difficult to arrange, for example:

Students who rely on speech-to-text software or an amanuensis will need to work in a room of their own.

Students who experience anxiety attacks may need to be able to complete their assessment or examination in a separate room.

Wheelchair users will need to:

- have access to the assessment or examination venue.
- work at an adjustable desk or work station.
- work in reasonably close proximity to accessible facilities such as toilets.

Students with visual impairments may need additional and/or adjustable light source

- When marking ensure that the dyslexia-friendly marking guidelines are used, but not if learning outcomes specifically prioritise grammar and punctuation.
- Do not compromise academic standards when marking, but do take into account the impact individual students' circumstances might have on their work.

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