

Deciding upon / Making Reasonable Adjustments for Applicants and Students

The intention of this document is to advise heads of schools, selectors, degree programme directors, institute heads, section heads and other University staff of the key issues to be considered and process to adopt when a disabled applicant/student requests or identifies the need for disability related reasonable adjustments to their course of study or access to University student related services.

The outcome of the process should have an audit trail which records:

- What is requested
- How it is considered
- All decisions made
- When to review an adjustment
- Who is responsible for reviewing that adjustment.

Responsibility to decide upon and, in most cases, make the reasonable adjustments lies with the head of school, service or institute. The role of Disability Support is to advise. Ultimately, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning will, in cases of dispute, make a final decision.

Determining What is Reasonable

On identification of the need for an adjustment or in the case of an applicant/student requesting an adjustment (e.g. to the teaching and learning environment) there needs to be a decision about the 'reasonableness' of the request. This request may be on the application form, during an open day or interview or directly to Disability Support.

If the request is straightforward, the head of school/institute/service can nominate a person to take responsibility for evaluating the request and taking appropriate action. In most cases this will be the selector. If the request is more complex the head/staff member involved can request a **case conference**.

When assessing reasonable adjustments the Disability Rights Commission Code of Practice Post-16 guide to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995: Part 4 states reasonableness is dependant on the circumstances of the case in question and is likely to vary according to;

- The type of services being provided
- The nature of the institution or service and its size and resources
- The effect of the disability on the individual disabled person or student

In addition the guide states it is possible to take the following into account when considering an individual case (although the list is not exhaustive):

- The need to maintain academic and / or other prescribed standards

- The financial resources available to the responsible body
- Grants or loans likely to be available to disabled students (and only disabled students) for the purpose of enabling them to receive student services, such as Disabled Students' Allowances
- The cost of making a particular adjustment
- The extent to which it is practicable to make a particular adjustment
- The extent to which aids or services will otherwise be provided to disabled people or students
- Health and safety requirements
- The relevant interests of other people including other students

Consultation

It is important to consult with all relevant parties concerned, including the applicant/student when working through an adjustment request. It is important to investigate the reasonableness of a requested adjustment rather than assuming it could/could not be done.

In some instances it may be necessary to seek external advice to establish an applicants exact access requirements. For advice on external services available to assist with such an assessment contact Disability Support.

Notification and Recording of Decision Made

The applicant/student should be notified of the decision, which is recorded in the applicant/student file and advised to Disability Support. You must ensure a record of the process undertaken to investigate a disability related adjustment request is recorded within the school/service and/or Disability Support. An applicant whose request is declined may well appeal the decision. Whilst this may initially be via the University complaints procedure, the applicant/student may also be able to request the Disability Rights Commission intervene and investigate the decision.

Seek Funding, Where Relevant

Funding should be sought for any disability related ICT/technical equipment, personal assistance or other needs requiring funding. During the application process the University is responsible for funding adjustments. For students, funding may be available through Disabled Students' Allowances for some adjustments e.g. provision of support workers. Where a student is not eligible for Disabled Students' Allowances there is a fund available to pay for personal equipment and support workers. Any support the University is responsible to provide should be identified, appropriate funding sought and the agreed support/access provided in a timely manner. Delays in providing such support may place the University at risk of a disability discrimination claim.

Purchase and Supply of Support

The purchase and supply of support should be monitored until in place to ensure no unnecessary delays occur. For applicants, this should be done within the school/institute/service (Disability Support can advise). Students can receive support for this from Disability Support. The school/service is responsible for monitoring the provision of agreed assistance to disabled applicants/students.

Review Support

Review of support is required periodically to ensure adjustments continue to work well. This may be carried out by the student's personal tutor or another nominated person within the School. Disability Support will regularly offer students an opportunity to review their support.

If the applicant/student is unsatisfied

If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of this process they have recall to the relevant grievance procedure or external assistance (legal advice or the Disability Rights Commission).