

**DAWN Formal Exam Guidelines 2024**

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Standard and Non-standard Reasonable Accommodations in Formal Examinations

# Reasonable Accommodations

# “Those actions that enable students to demonstrate their true knowledge and ability in examinations without changing the demands of the examination.” The intention behind the provision of such accommodations is to alleviate substantial disadvantages without affecting the integrity of the assessment ([DAWN 2019 Guidelines](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.tcd.ie%2Fmedia%2Ftcd%2Fdisability%2Fdocs%2FDAWN-Exam-Guidelines-2019.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)).

# Non-Standard Reasonable Accommodation

In an event where standard Reasonable Accommodations are not sufficient to meet the needs of the student and they cannot undertake the standard teaching, learning, and assessment, the University recognises that schools may need to consider providing alternative non-standard teaching, learning, and assessment methods, while maintaining academic standards.

# Formal Examinations

Formal Examinations in a university context are structured assessments scheduled at specific times, typically at the end of a term or semester, to evaluate students' knowledge and skills in a course. Conducted under supervision in controlled environments, these exams follow a standardised format, including 1,2 or 3 hour examinations, multiple-choice questions, essays, or practical tasks, and have set time limits. They are graded based on predefined criteria and significantly impact students' final grades and academic progression.

Standard Guidelines

# 1. Guidelines for Extra Time

## 1. Initial Needs Assessment

* **Documentation Review:** Require students to provide current, relevant

documentation from a qualified professional that details their disability and its

impact on exam performance.

* **Individual Consultation:** Conduct a one-on-one meeting with the student to discuss

their specific needs, challenges, and previous accommodations.

## 2. Standard Extra Time Allocation

* **Base Calculation:** Extra time is typically set at 10 minutes per hour of standard

examination time. For example, a 3-hour exam would include an additional 30

minutes.

* **Automatic Qualification:** Students with documented disabilities that clearly affect

processing speed, concentration, or physical endurance automatically qualify for the

standard extra time allocation.

## 3. Exceptional Circumstances

* **Extended Time Requests:** In exceptional cases, based on the needs assessment,

students may require more than the standard extra time. This could be due to severe

impairments or complex conditions that significantly impact exam performance.

* **Detailed Justification:** Extended time beyond the standard allocation should be supported by detailed recommendations from healthcare or educational professionals, specifying why additional time is necessary.

## Criteria for 20 Minutes Extra Time per Hour

**1. Severity of Disability**:

* + - Significant processing delays (e.g., severe dyslexia).
		- Profound attention issues (e.g., severe ADHD).
		- Major sensory impairments (e.g., severe visual/hearing impairments).
		- Severe physical disabilities affecting writing or typing.

**2. Functional Impact:**

* Documented evidence showing 10 minutes per hour is insufficient.
* Professional recommendations supporting the need for extended time.

**3. Past Performance:**

* Historical data showing struggles despite 10 minutes extra time.
* Educator recommendations based on observed performance.

## Criteria for 30 Minutes Extra Time per Hour

**1. Severity and Complexity:**

* Extremely severe learning or cognitive impairments.
* Multiple disabilities with compounding effects.
* Severe physical disabilities requiring frequent breaks or assistance.

**2. Comprehensive Impact:**

* Detailed assessments from multiple professionals indicating insufficiency of standard and 20-minute allowances.
* Evidence of substantial functional limitations necessitating more time.

**3. Exceptionally High Need:**

* Documented severe conditions that preclude demonstrating true abilities without substantial extra time.
* Historical accommodations indicating 30 minutes extra time is essential.

# 2. Guidelines for Low-Distraction Venues

A low distraction environment means that the student needs to take the exam in an area that is reasonably quiet with low stimuli, when compared to the classroom.

## 1. Purpose

* To establish controlled environments that significantly reduce sensory and environmental distractions, thereby supporting the academic success and well-being of students requiring specific accommodations.

## 2. Physical Environment Setup

**Location and Acoustics:**

**Quiet Areas:** Designate rooms in low-noise and people traffic areas. Distractions that need to be avoided include, but are not limited to; ringing telephones, conversations, rustling of chairs/papers, coughing, excessive movement, typing, traffic, etc.

* **Ergonomic Furniture:** Provide adjustable seating solutions to accommodate diverse physical needs, enhancing comfort and concentration.
* **Flexible Layout:** Organise furniture to facilitate both individual focus and necessary breaks within the same space.

**Lighting and Temperature:**

* **Natural Light:** Utilize natural lighting where possible.
* **Artificial Lighting:** Employ adjustable, non-flickering LED lighting to prevent eye strain.
* **Climate Control:** Maintain a consistent and comfortable temperature, supported by effective ventilation systems.

**Venue set up for invigilators:**

* **Low Distraction Venues:** Understand the importance of such venues in reducing visual and auditory distractions. Be aware of the physical setup that minimises distractions.
* **Individual Venues:** Know the heightened responsibilities in these settings where the invigilator might be the only other person present besides the student.

## 3. Specific Accommodations

**Headphones and Fidget Tools:**

* **Headphones:** Permit the use of noise-cancelling headphones to block external noise, subject to compliance with exam integrity standards.
* **Fidget Tools:** Allow non-disruptive fidget tools that aid concentration without affecting others.

## 4. Monitoring and Feedback

* Implement a structured feedback system allowing students to evaluate their experiences and suggest improvements.
* Regularly review and adjust the accommodations based on student feedback and emerging research in educational support and neurodiversity.

Conclusion

By adhering to these guidelines, Irish universities can provide effective and supportive low-distraction venues. This approach not only enhances the learning and examination conditions for disabled and neurodivergent students but also aligns with broader inclusivity and equity objectives within the academic community.

## 3. Guidelines for Permitting Food and Drinks in Examination Venues

## Ensuring that students with medical needs, such as diabetes, can manage their condition effectively during examinations is crucial for maintaining their health and ensuring they can perform to the best of their abilities. Here are comprehensive guidelines to govern the allowance of food and drinks and medical devices in examination venues for such students.1. Eligibility and Purpose

**1.1 Granting Permission:**

* Students who require food and/or drinks during examinations due to a medical condition must apply for permission through the institution's Disability Services.
* The application must be supported by medical documentation that clearly outlines the necessity for access to food or beverages during an exam.

**1.2 Documentation and Approval:**

* Approved accommodations will be documented in the student’s Learning Needs Assessment specifying what items are permitted and under what conditions.
* A copy of the Learning Needs Assessment should be available to the examination invigilators and the Examinations Office.

## 2. Types of Permissible Items

* Only odourless and quiet-to-access foods are permitted to minimise distractions to other examinees. Examples include soft fruits, bars, and sandwiches that do not contain strong-smelling ingredients like onions or fish.
* Beverages should be in containers that minimise noise when opening or handling, such as screw-top bottles or containers with sports caps.
* Students are required to repackage food items from noisy wrappers (e.g., plastic bags or foil) into quiet, non-distracting containers like silicone bags or bento boxes prior to entering the exam hall.
* Foods that create noise when consumed, such as crisps and crackers, are not allowed. The HEI reserves the right to refuse entry of any items deemed too disruptive.

## 3. Examination Conduct

* They should also be located in a way that they can access them without disturbing others.
* Examination invigilators will be informed of the students who have permission to bring food and drinks and will monitor to ensure guidelines are followed.

## 4. Monitoring and Feedback

**4.1 Feedback Mechanism:**

* Students are encouraged to provide feedback after their examinations regarding how their needs were met and any issues, they encountered with accessing their food or drinks.
* This feedback will help to refine the guidelines and arrangements for future examinations.

# 4. Guidelines for Permitting Electronic Devices for Health Monitoring in Examination Venues

## 1. Purpose

Students with medical conditions may require permission to bring related electronic devices into the exam venue for health and/or medication monitoring purposes e.g. Students who have Type 1 Diabetes may have an application on their mobile phone to check glucose level from their insulin pump.

## 2. Notification and Registration

Students must register their medical device needs with the Disability Service at the start of the academic term and include this requirement in their Learning Needs Assessment.

Prior to the examination, students should notify the invigilator about their need to access a mobile device during the exam for medical monitoring purposes.

## 3. Device Handling and Security

The student's mobile phone must be set to silent and flight mode before being handed over to the Senior Invigilator at the start of the examination.

The phone will be stored in a secure location accessible only by the invigilator.

## 3. Accessing the Device

When a student needs to check their device, such as to monitor glucose levels via an insulin pump app, they must signal the invigilator by raising their hand.

The invigilator will accompany the student to a designated area outside the exam room to access their phone. This ensures that the student’s use of the device is strictly for medical purposes and under supervision.

## 4. Post-Use Protocol

After using the device, the student will immediately hand it back to the invigilator, who will return it to the secure location.

The student will then re-enter the exam room to continue with their examination.

## 5. Time Accommodation

Any time spent accessing the device will be recorded and added to the end of the student's examination time to ensure they are given the full time allocated for their exam.

## 6. Privacy and Non-distraction

The examination venue for students needing access to electronic devices will generally be a smaller, shared venue to minimise disruptions to other examinees.

Devices must be housed in a non-reflective, muted case to further reduce any potential for distraction.

## 7. Venue Setup:

## Arrange appropriate venues that cater to the needs of students with disabilities, such as providing a quiet seminar room, a low-distraction environment, or access to necessary technological aids.

## 8. Consultation and Preparation:

## Maintain regular communication with the Disability Service to receive updates and guidance on accommodating students effectively.

## Develop and implement backup plans to address unforeseen issues during examinations.

## 9. Student Responsibilities:

## Students are required to initiate contact with their department well in advance of their exams to confirm accommodations and understand the procedures involved.

## Conclusion

## By adhering to these guidelines, universities can ensure that all students, particularly those with significant medical needs, are provided the necessary support to manage their conditions without compromising the integrity of the examination process. These measures aim to foster an inclusive academic environment that upholds both fairness and academic

# 5. Guidelines for Irish Sign Language Interpretation in Examinations

To effectively integrate Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpretation into assessment and examinations for students whose first language is ISL, universities should establish comprehensive guidelines that ensure the process is fair, equitable, and maintains the integrity of the examination. Here's a detailed set of guidelines that universities can adopt to facilitate this accommodation:

## 1. Pre-Examination Arrangements

## **Interpreter Booking**: Ensure that a qualified ISL interpreter is booked well in advance of the examination. The interpreter should be experienced in educational settings and familiar with academic vocabulary.

## 2. Interpreter Responsibilities

## **Arrival and Preparation**: The interpreter should arrive at the examination venue ahead of time to make necessary seating arrangements and to interpret any preliminary interactions between the invigilators and the student.

* **Fidelity to Content**: During the examination, the interpreter must translate the content accurately without adding, omitting, or altering the information. This includes translating examination questions, instructions, and any clarifications as needed.
* **Interaction Translation**: The interpreter is responsible for translating all communications between the examiner and the student. This includes questions, answers, and any requests for clarification.

## 3. Examination Conduct

## **Continuous Availability**: The interpreter should be available throughout the examination to translate all announcements and instructions given by the invigilator.

## **Clarity in Communication**: If clarification of a question is needed after the initial translation, the interpreter may rephrase their interpretation but must not introduce new information. Any unresolved issues should be referred directly to the examiner.

## **No Additional Assistance**: The interpreter must not provide examples, contextual information, or guidance that could aid the student in answering the examination questions.

## 4. Special Provisions

## **4.1 Translation of Responses**: If the student opts to answer in ISL and requires transcription, the interpreter may assist by translating the student’s responses into written English. Care must be taken to ensure that this translation does not disrupt the student’s flow or introduce inaccuracies.

## **4.2 Handling Disruptions**: If frequent clarifications are needed, impacting the student’s performance, this issue should be reported immediately to the Disability/Access Officer to consider finding a more suitable interpreter for future examinations.

5. Post-Examination Guidelines

* **5.1 Feedback Collection**: Collect feedback from both the student and the interpreter after the examination to evaluate the effectiveness of the communication and interpretation provided. Use this feedback to improve processes and training.
* **5.2 Review and Adjustment**: Regularly review the guidelines and practices associated with the use of ISL interpreters to ensure they are up-to-date and meet the students' needs effectively.

Conclusion

By implementing these guidelines, universities can provide a supportive and equitable examination environment for students who communicate through Irish Sign Language. This not only enhances their ability to perform to their potential but also ensures that the examinations are conducted fairly and respectfully, maintaining academic integrity.

# 6. Guidelines for Students Using Irish Sign Language to Answer Examination Questions

For students who choose to use Irish Sign Language (ISL) to answer questions in examinations, universities should have specific procedures to accommodate this preference efficiently and fairly. This includes the use of video recording to capture the ISL responses, ensuring that these are accurately transcribed and assessed. Here’s how universities can structure these guidelines:

## 1. Student Preparation and Notification

* **1.1 Advance Notification**: Students who intend to use ISL for their exam responses must notify the university’s disability services office well in advance of the examination date. This allows adequate time to arrange for the necessary resources and support.
* **1.2 Consent for Recording**: Obtain written consent from the student for video recording their examination responses. Clearly explain the purpose, use, and confidentiality measures concerning the video recordings.

## 2. Setup and Equipment

* **2.1 Video Recording Setup**: Arrange for a quiet, private examination room equipped with high-quality video recording equipment. The setup should include a camera with clear visual and audio capture capabilities to accurately record ISL responses.
* **2.2 Technical Check**: Perform a technical rehearsal before the exam to ensure all equipment functions correctly and that the recording angle and lighting conditions optimize the visibility of ISL signs.

## 3. Examination Conduct

* **3.1 Presence of Interpreter**: An ISL interpreter should be present not only to facilitate the translation of the examination paper and questions into ISL but also to assist in recording the student’s responses if necessary.
* **3.2 Clear Instructions**: Provide the student and the interpreter with clear instructions on how the responses should be signed to ensure clarity and ease of transcription later. Instructions should emphasize the need to maintain a consistent signing space and visibility to the camera.

## 4. Recording Guidelines

* **4.1 Continuous Recording**: The video recording should start before the examination begins and continue until completion to capture all interactions and responses without interruption.
* **4.2 Backup Measures**: Implement backup recording measures, such as a secondary camera or recording device, to prevent data loss due to technical failures.

## 5. Post-Examination Processing

* **5.1 Secure Storage**: Store the video recordings securely, with access restricted to authorized personnel only, to maintain confidentiality and integrity of the examination responses.

Conclusion

These guidelines aim to support students using Irish Sign Language in examinations by providing a clear, fair, and standardized process for recording and assessing their responses. By carefully planning and executing these steps, universities can ensure that all students have equitable opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities in a format that best suits their communication preferences. This approach not only enhances inclusivity but also respects the linguistic and cultural identity of ISL users.

# 7. Guidelines for the Provision of Rest Breaks in Examinations

## 1. Eligibility and Purpose

## Students eligible for rest breaks are those whose ability to complete an examination within the standard time frame is significantly impacted due to medical, sensory, psychological, or physical disabilities.

## 2. Implementation of Rest Breaks

* Rest breaks are typically allocated at a rate of 10 minutes per hour of examination time. These breaks are not included in the examination time.
* Students must inform the invigilator when they wish to take a break. Invigilators will pause the exam timer and document the start and end times of the break.
* Students are allowed to use their allocated break time in increments that best suit their needs, whether taking one extended break or multiple shorter breaks.

## 3. Conduct During Rest Breaks

* 1. **Supervision and Integrity:**
* Students choosing to leave the examination room during a rest break must be accompanied by an invigilator or another designated staff member to ensure exam integrity.
	1. **Activities Allowed During Breaks:**
* Students are permitted to use their rest break to go to the bathroom, consume food or beverages, or engage in light physical activity to relieve discomfort.
* Students may not discuss the exam content or consult any materials related to the exam during their breaks.

# 8. Guidelines for the Use of Scribes in Examinations

For higher education institutions (HEIs) aiming to provide equitable examination conditions for students with disabilities requiring scribe services, creating clear and comprehensive guidelines is essential. Below are guidelines developed to govern the use of scribes in examinations, focusing particularly on ensuring scribe proficiency and exploring alternative assessments when a proficient scribe is not available.

## 1. Eligibility and Provision of Scribe Support

**1.1 Criteria for Scribe Support:**

Scribes are provided to students who have difficulty with handwriting or use a computer due to disabilities.

* 1. **Scribe Allocation:**
* Scribes will be allowed in subjects requiring written communication skills.
* The use of a scribe is not permissible where assessment criteria include spelling, grammar, or written expression, except as allowed under specific documented accommodations.

## 2. Scribe Proficiency and Subject Knowledge

* 1. **Knowledge Requirements:**
* Scribes must have a good working knowledge of technical, scientific, mathematical or language. This is critical for accurately transcribing student responses, especially in technical, scientific, mathematical, or language exams.
	1. **Training and Familiarisation:**
* Where possible, both scribes and students should participate in training and practice sessions to familiarise themselves with the examination process. This training should occur well before the examination period.

## 3. Conduct and Responsibilities of Scribes

* 1. **Role of the Scribe:**
* The primary role of the scribe is to transcribe the student’s verbal answers without alteration. Scribes must write/type the exact words dictated by the student and refrain from any editing unless instructed by the student.
	1. **Examination Integrity:**
* Scribes may also serve as invigilators unless this dual role compromises the integrity of the examination environment. In cases where a student also requires a reader, the same person may fulfil both roles if deemed appropriate and practical.

## 4. Technological Support and Security

**4.1 Use of Technology:**

* Where possible, the student’s responses should be recorded using secure institution-provided computers to safeguard against data loss and ensure exam material integrity.
* Computers used by scribes should have auto-save features enabled to prevent data loss.

## 5. Alternative Assessment Strategies in exemptional circumstances

**5.1 When Scribe Proficiency is Insufficient:**

* If a proficient scribe in the subject matter cannot be found, the institution must consider alternative assessment methods. These may include oral examinations, practical demonstrations, or project-based assessments, provided they align with the learning outcomes of the course.

Conclusion

These guidelines aim to ensure that all students who require the use of a scribe receive support that is equitable, secure, and conducive to demonstrating their academic abilities. By emphasizing scribe proficiency and exploring alternative assessments, HEIs can better accommodate diverse student needs while maintaining academic integrity.

Non-standard Assessment Guidelines

# 9. Guidelines for Exam Schedule and Scheduling Adjustments

## 1. Purpose

To provide students with disabilities the necessary accommodations to complete examinations under conditions that meet their specific needs, including adequate time to rest and prepare between exams.

## 2. Scope

Eligibility:

* **Target Group:** Students, in exceptional circumstances who are granted extra time or other specific accommodations for exams due to documented disabilities such as cognitive impairments, physical disabilities, mental health conditions, or chronic illnesses that impact stamina and concentration.
* **Additional Documentation Required:** Students must submit documentation from a healthcare provider that specifies the need for extra time and/or other accommodations during exams.

Application Process:

* **Formal Request:** Students must apply for scheduling adjustments through the Disability Services office, outlining their exam schedule and the accommodations needed.
* **Supporting Documentation:** This includes medical or psychological evaluations and a recommendation from a healthcare provider detailing why the student should not have multiple exams in one day.

##

## 3. Assessment Adjustments

Scheduling Adjustments:

* **Planning and Coordination:** Disability Services will coordinate with academic departments and examination schedulers to ensure that students' exam timetables are adjusted appropriately. This may involve rescheduling exams or altering exam dates to accommodate this policy.

Approval Process:

* **Coordinated by Disability Services:** Applications for no multiple exams in one day are reviewed by Disability Services in collaboration with academic departments.
* **Adjustments Based on Need:** Decisions are made based on the severity of the disability, the nature of the exams, and the student’s historical need for rest between exams.
* **Notification of Changes:** Students will be informed of any changes to their exam schedule well in advance of the exam period.

Implementation:

* **Instructor and Examiner Notification:** Ensure that all exam officers, instructors, and examiners are aware of the accommodation to prevent scheduling errors.
* **Monitoring Compliance:** Regular checks will be performed to ensure that the scheduling adjustments are implemented consistently across all departments.

## 4. Review and Adjustment

Continuous Evaluation:

* **Feedback Mechanism:** Students are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the scheduling adjustments. This feedback will be used to improve future scheduling practices.
* **Periodic Reviews:** Disability Services will conduct periodic reviews of the scheduling policy to ensure it remains effective and responsive to students' needs.

Adjustment Process:

* **Adaptation to Student Needs:** If a student’s disability or condition changes, they may request a revaluation of their scheduling accommodations.
* **Flexibility in Implementation:** The university will maintain flexibility in exam scheduling to accommodate unforeseen circumstances that may affect a student’s ability to perform under standard conditions.

Conclusion

By ensuring that students who require additional time or other significant accommodations do not have multiple exams scheduled on the same day, universities can better support their academic success and health. This detailed approach to scheduling exams underscores the institution's commitment to fairness, inclusion, and the well-being of all students.

# 10.  Guidelines for Open-Book Exams

## 1. Purpose

To provide an examination format that supports students who perform better when they can access and utilise resources, thereby compensating for difficulties with memory retention or executive functioning. This format aims to assess understanding and application rather than memorization.

## 2. Scope

Eligibility:

* **Target Group:** Specifically designed for students with ADHD, memory impairments, executive functioning disorders, and any other condition that impairs memory-based testing capabilities.
* **Additional Documentation Required:** Students must provide documentation from a certified healthcare provider that clearly explains how their condition affects their testing capabilities.

Application Process:

* **Formal Request:** Students must submit a formal request to Disability Services, outlining their specific needs and the reasons for requesting an open-book exam.
* **Supporting Documentation:** This request must be accompanied by medical or psychological evaluations provided by qualified professionals.

Approval:

* **Criteria for Approval:** Decisions are based on the relevance of the student’s condition to the demands of traditional, closed-book exams and the appropriateness of open-book exams as an accommodation.

Conducting the Exam:

* **Resource Guidelines:**
	+ **Allowed Materials:** Clearly specify which types of resources students are allowed to use during the exam, such as textbooks, course notes, online resources, etc.
	+ **Prohibited Materials:** Define what cannot be used, such as answer keys, pre-written essays, or any resource that provides direct answers rather than information.
* **Exam Duration: Adjustments:** The duration of the exam may be extended to accommodate the open-book format, recognizing that time may be needed to consult materials effectively.
	+ **Standard Duration:** Provide a standard duration for the open-book exams, with the possibility of additional time based on the student’s documented needs.
	+ **Supervision and Integrity:**
* **Monitoring:** Use appropriate methods to monitor the exam to maintain academic integrity. This may include proctoring software for online exams or physical supervision for in-person exams.
* **Guidelines for Integrity:** Offer guidelines to students about academic honesty specific to open-book format to prevent misunderstandings about acceptable use of resources.

Post-Exam Processes:

* **Feedback Mechanism:** Provide a mechanism for students to receive feedback on their performance in open-book exams to ensure continuous learning and adjustment of strategies.
* **Review Process:** Establish a process for students to appeal or discuss their grades, especially if they believe that the open-book format did not adequately accommodate their needs.

Conclusion

By implementing these expanded guidelines, universities can better accommodate students with specific learning disabilities by offering them an examination format that leverages their strengths and compensates for their challenges. This approach not only aligns with inclusive educational practices but also enhances the overall fairness and integrity of the examination process.

# 11. Guidelines for Oral Examinations

## 1. Purpose

To provide a suitable alternative for students whose disabilities affect their ability to write or type, or who can more effectively demonstrate their knowledge and comprehension verbally.

## 2. Eligibility

Students with physical disabilities that impact writing or typing abilities. Students with learning disabilities that impair their written communication. Students with mental health conditions that inhibit performance in written exams.

Approval:

* A multidisciplinary panel including Disability Services staff, faculty members from relevant departments, and a student representative (where possible) will review applications.
* Decisions will be made considering the student’s documented needs, the nature of the course content, and the essential competencies being assessed.
* Students will be notified of the decision in writing, and a meeting will be arranged to discuss the outcome and any further steps.

Conducting the Exam:

* **Preparation:**
	+ Schedule the oral exam at a time that considers the student's best performance times (e.g., accounting for medication effects or peak cognitive periods).
	+ Ensure the exam location is accessible, quiet, and free from distractions. Provide the student with the exam questions or topics at least 24 hours in advance if this accommodation is included in their approved adjustments.
* **During the Exam:**
	+ Examiners should use clear and straightforward language and avoid ambiguous or double-barrelled questions.
	+ Record the exam using audio or video equipment to ensure that there is a reliable record for transparency and for review in case of disputes.
	+ Allow the student breaks if needed, as agreed in the accommodations plan.
* **Examiner Training:**
	+ Provide specific training for examiners on how to conduct oral exams with disabled students.
	+ Cover aspects such as appropriate questioning techniques, sensitivity to non-verbal cues indicating anxiety or misunderstanding, and strategies to ensure unbiased and equitable evaluation.
	+ Train examiners on the use of any necessary technology and on maintaining confidentiality and integrity during the recording process.
* **Feedback and Evaluation:**
	+ Provide immediate, constructive feedback during the exam to guide the student.
	+ Use a detailed rubric that outlines the criteria for evaluation to ensure consistency across different examiners and exams.
	+ Offer the student an opportunity to reflect on their performance and discuss it with the examiner at the end of the session.

## 3. Post-Exam Review

* Students can request a review of the oral examination process and its outcomes if they feel their accommodations were not properly implemented or they were unfairly assessed.
* A formal process should be in place for handling such reviews, which can include listening to the recordings, reassessing the student's performance by a different panel, and ensuring that all accommodations were indeed provided.

Conclusion

By implementing these expanded guidelines, universities can better accommodate students who require alternative examination formats due to disabilities. These comprehensive measures ensure that the examination process is fair, transparent, and adaptive to individual needs, thereby supporting the academic success of all students.

12. Guidelines for Splitting Examinations in Irish Universities

## 1. Purpose and Eligibility

* Split exams are designed to support students whose disabilities or health conditions make it exceptionally challenging to endure standard, extended exam periods due to physical or mental fatigue. Splitting the exam into multiple sessions allows these students to perform optimally and equitably.
* Students eligible for split exams will have this specified in their Learning Needs Plan, based on comprehensive assessments by health professionals and considering the student's course requirements and inherent academic standards.
* The Learning Needs Plan may include adjustments like exams split over multiple days, with mandatory breaks between sessions or different subjects. This is usually a non-standard agreement in consultation with the course director and dean of undergraduate & postgraduate studies.

## 2. Administrative Procedures

**Notification and Coordination:**

* The Examinations Office typically will be notified of this decision and co-ordinates the needs as specified in the non-standard Learning Needs Plan. Course Coordinators are responsible for preparing and submitting the necessary materials according to the established timeline.

**Scheduling:**

* Exams should be scheduled to accommodate the split as detailed in the Learning Needs Plan, ensuring there are appropriate breaks, and that each session is held on suitable days to manage the student's needs effectively.

## 3. Exam Paper Preparation

**Structure and Balance:**

* Divide the exam into sub-papers that are as equal in length and difficulty as possible. Ensure that the marks allocated are proportionate to the effort required for each sub-paper.

**Documentation:**

* Provide detailed cover sheets for each sub-paper, specifying the marks and time allowed for each section, including any allocated reading time.

## 4. Security and Integrity

**Conducting the Exam:**

* Where feasible, the student will sit the first sub-paper alongside peers completing the full exam. The student will sign a statutory declaration to maintain confidentiality and not discuss the exam content until all sessions are completed.

**Access to Sub-Papers:**

* Students will only have access to one sub-paper at a time to maintain exam integrity.

## 5. Additional Considerations

**Unequal Splits:**

* If it's impractical to split an exam into equal parts (e.g., a paper that doesn’t evenly divide into logical sections), consult with Disability Services to explore alternative arrangements, or adjust the duration and content of sub-papers appropriately.

**Transparency and Fairness:**

* Ensure that the format and marking structure of the exam and each sub-paper are clearly communicated and consistent with standard practices.

## 6. Student and Staff Communication

**Information Dissemination:**

* Regularly update students and staff about the procedures and rationale for split exams through university communication channels.
* Provide clear instructions on whom students should contact for further information about their specific arrangements.

## 7. Feedback and Continuous Improvement

**Review and Adaptation:**

* Gather feedback from students and staff involved in split exams to refine the process.
* Adjust policies and procedures based on this feedback to continuously improve the fairness and effectiveness of the accommodations.

Conclusion

These guidelines are tailored to meet the specific needs of students requiring split exams at Irish universities under exceptional circumstances, ensuring that all students have equitable access to assessment opportunities in line with their academic potential and health requirements.

# 13. Guidelines for Take-Home Exams

## 1. Purpose

To provide an exam format that accommodates students who require more time due to processing disorders, mental health conditions, or other disabilities that impact concentration and stamina, allowing them to complete exams in a controlled environment that is conducive to their learning and performance.

## 2. Eligibility:

Applicable to students with documented cognitive disabilities, mental health conditions, chronic health issues, or any condition that substantively impacts their ability to perform under standard timed exam conditions. Suitable for students who benefit from a low-stress environment, where they can manage their health needs concurrently with their exam duties.

Application Process:

* Students must submit a formal request to Disability Services. This request should include:
* A detailed description of their disability as diagnosed by a qualified health professional.
* An explanation of how the disability affects their exam performance.
* Medical or psychological evaluations that support the accommodations requested.
* The application should be submitted well in advance of the exam date—typically at the beginning of the semester or as soon as the course syllabus is available.

Approval:

* The Disability Services office will review each application in consultation with the course instructor to determine the appropriateness of the accommodation.
* Considerations will include the nature of the course, the type of examination traditionally used, and the potential for maintaining academic integrity.
* Approval will be granted based on a comprehensive assessment of the student's needs and the course requirements.

Exam Format:

* **Design of Questions:** The exam should consist of questions that require deep analysis, critical thinking, and application of knowledge, suitable for the extended time format.
* **Duration:** The duration allowed for the take-home exam should be clearly defined, typically ranging from 24 hours to several days, based on the complexity of the questions and the usual standards of the discipline.
* **Guidelines on Collaboration and Research:**
* Explicit instructions will be provided regarding what types of resources can be consulted (e.g., textbooks, online resources, lecture notes).
* Rules about collaboration with peers or others will be clearly stated to avoid any academic dishonesty.
* Students will be required to cite all sources and conform to academic integrity policies as specified by the university.

Conducting the Exam:

* **Submission Procedures:** Detailed procedures for submitting the completed exam will be outlined. These may include email submissions, uploads to a designated learning management system, or physical submission to a specific location.
* **Security Measures:** To maintain the integrity of the exam, random checks or follow-up viva voce might be employed to verify that the student's work reflects their understanding and capabilities.

Support and Resources:

* Disability Services should provide resources on effective take-home exam strategies, including time management, stress reduction techniques, and academic integrity.
* Students should have access to technical support if digital platforms are required for submission or exam completion.

## 3. Post-Exam Process

* **Feedback:** Timely and constructive feedback should be provided to help students understand their performance and areas of improvement.
* **Review Process:** If a student feels their performance was adversely affected by inadequate accommodations, a review process should be available to reassess their needs and the accommodations provided.

Conclusion

By expanding these guidelines, universities can better support students with disabilities by offering them a fair and accommodating exam environment. This detailed approach ensures that all students have the optimal opportunity to demonstrate their academic abilities in a manner that is reflective of their potential, irrespective of their disabilities.

# 14. University-Wide Guidelines for Supporting Candidates with Disabilities for Viva Voce Examinations

Purpose:

This document aims to provide standardised guidelines for the Viva Voce examinations across all departments and faculties at the university to support candidates with various disabilities. It outlines best practices and specific accommodations to promote inclusivity and equity in the doctoral examination process.

Scope:

These guidelines are applicable to all Viva Voce examinations within the university and are designed to ensure that candidates with disabilities are supported effectively, allowing them to demonstrate their academic capabilities under conditions that cater to their individual needs.

## 1. General Principles

* **Inclusivity and Equity:** Commit to creating an equitable testing environment where candidates with disabilities can thrive.
* **Transparency:** Maintain a transparent process for requesting and implementing accommodations to build trust and ensure fairness.

**Confidentiality:** Respect candidates' privacy by confidentially handling information related to their disabilities.

## 2. Pre-Viva Preparations

## **Venue Accessibility:** Ensure that the examination venue is accessible, considering mobility, sensory, and other disability-related needs.

## **Communication of Examination Details:** Provide candidates with comprehensive information about the examination process, including examiner details and the structure of the session, well in advance.

## 3. During the Viva

## **Communication Adjustments:** Adapt communication methods to suit the needs of the candidate, such as using sign language interpreters, allowing the use of communication devices, or providing written questions.

## **Time Adjustments:** Offer extra time for candidates to process questions and articulate answers, and allow breaks as needed.

## **Assistive Technologies:** Permit the use of assistive technologies that candidates typically use, such as screen readers, magnifiers, or special software.

## 4. Questioning Techniques

## **Clarity and Adaptability:** Use clear and concise questions, avoiding complex or ambiguous language. Be prepared to rephrase or elaborate on questions to ensure understanding.

## **Supportive Feedback:** Provide immediate, supportive feedback to help guide the candidate’s responses and ensure they understand the questions.

## **Visual and Physical Accommodations:** Utilize appropriate visual aids and ensure physical comfort and accessibility during the examination.

## 5. Post-Viva Procedures

## **Constructive Feedback:** Deliver feedback in accessible formats, tailored to the candidate's needs, and ensure that it is constructive and clearly outlines any required revisions.

## **Post-Viva Support:** Offer a follow-up session with the candidate to go through feedback in detail and discuss any further accommodations needed for future academic or research activities.

## **Extended Deadlines:** Provide flexibility in deadlines for thesis corrections based on the candidate's specific circumstances.

# 15. University-Wide Guidelines for Alternative Examination Formats

## 1. Purpose

To adapt examination formats to better accommodate the diverse needs of students with disabilities, ensuring equitable assessment opportunities that allow all students to demonstrate their learning effectively and fairly.

## 2. Scope and Eligibility

Eligibility and Application:

* **Target Group:** Students with disabilities, including those with cognitive impairments, sensory disabilities, physical disabilities, and mental health conditions.
* **Documentation:** Students must provide documentation from a certified healthcare provider detailing how their disability affects their exam performance.
* **Application Process:** Submit a formal request to Disability Services, including necessary medical documentation and a personal statement detailing preferred assessment methods.

Assessment Design Principles:

1. **Empowerment:** Involve students in the design of their assessment methods, allowing them to voice their preferences and contribute to the co-design process.
2. **Authenticity:** Ensure assessments are relevant to the students' learning and professional goals, integrating personal experiences and identities.
3. **Diversity:** Use a variety of assessment methods across programs to cater to different learning styles and needs.
4. **Manageability:** Consider the cognitive and physical load of assessments, ensuring they are equitable and do not disproportionately burden students with disabilities.
5. **Flexibility:** Offer flexible deadlines and adaptable assessment formats to accommodate medical and personal needs.
6. **Choice:** Allow students to choose from multiple assessment methods and feedback styles to best suit their learning and communication styles.
7. **Scaffolding:** Provide sequenced and integrated assessments that build on previous knowledge and skills, supporting continuous learning.
8. **Transparency:** Maintain clear and accessible documentation of assessment purposes, formats, and criteria.
9. **Cultural Responsiveness:** Ensure assessments are sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of all students, accommodating diverse perspectives and experiences.
10. **Active Citizenship:** Design assessments that encourage students to develop and apply skills in ways that contribute positively to society.

Implementation Strategies

* **Training and Development:** Provide ongoing training for faculty and examiners on inclusive assessment practices, focusing on flexibility, diversity, and student empowerment.
* **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish a system to regularly review the effectiveness of assessment adaptations, involving student feedback to continuously refine practices.
* **Resource Allocation:** Ensure adequate resources are available to support diverse assessment methods, including technology, staffing, and training.

Review and Adjustment

* **Feedback Mechanism:** Encourage students to provide feedback on their assessment experiences, using this data to improve and adjust practices.
* **Periodic Reviews:** Conduct semesterly or annual reviews of assessment practices to ensure they remain aligned with the latest educational research and best practices in accessibility and inclusion.

Conclusion

By adhering to these updated guidelines, universities can ensure that assessments are not only fair and accessible but also meaningful and empowering for all students, particularly those with disabilities. These principles and practices aim to foster an inclusive academic environment that values diversity, supports equitable learning opportunities, and promotes success for every student.

# Appendix 1: Guidelines for Granting Reasonable Accommodations to Students with a Disability who Have a Reading, Writing or Spelling Difficulty.

These guidelines have been informed by the criteria applied by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in Ireland and also by the criteria applied by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) in the UK.

These guidelines are intended to assist HEIs when determining the examination accommodations that may be required by students with a disability who have a reading, writing or spelling difficulty. The need for a particular accommodation is determined through the needs assessment process, taking account of the student’s individual needs and the impact of the disability in an examination setting.

In a small number of complex cases – where the learning profile of the student falls outside of these guidelines, there is a co-morbidity of diagnosis, or other mitigating circumstances that are deemed to constitute a significant barrier to performance – appropriate examination accommodations may be awarded based on the expertise, and at the discretion of, the Disability Officer.

Students with a disability who demonstrate a lower than average writing, reading, working memory or processing speed (i.e. at or below a standard score of 89/23rd percentile) may require extra time in examinations.

Students with a disability who demonstrate one or more of the following may require a computer in examinations:

* a lower-than-average writing speed (below 15wpm)

* a speed of processing at or below a standard score of 85/ 16th percentile

* a level of legibility that would make the paper unreadable to an examiner

Students with a disability who have a spelling attainment at or below a standard score of 70/ 2nd percentile may require the use of a scribe.

Students with a disability whose reading speed, accuracy or comprehension is at or below a standard score of 85/ 16th percentile may require a reader in examinations.

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# Appendix 2: Definition of Disability.

The legal definition of disability, which is outlined in the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015, defines disability as follows:

The total or partial absence of a person’s bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person’s body,

The presence in the body of organisms causing or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness,

The malfunction, malformation, or disfigurement of a part of a person’s body,

A condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or

A condition, illness or disease which affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions, or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.

These include “a disability which exists at present, or which previously existed but no longer exists, or which may exist in the future, or which is imputed to a person.” A disability is significant, long term and/or enduring in nature.

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# Appendix 3: Guidelines for Examiners When Marking Scripts from Students with a Disability Who Have a Reading, Writing or Spelling Difficulty.

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. 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.

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

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.

Errors in spelling do not necessarily 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.

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.

Grammatical errors, like incorrect tense endings, lack of subject-verb agreement and incorrect word order may not affect the meaning of the sentence.

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.

Students with difficulties in reading, writing and spelling might not always use punctuation as a tool to clarify 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 example: “The study considered three main areas of research. The effects of frequent drug use the role of the family in the offender’s behaviour and the impact of custodial sentences on reoffending. In this case the student’s meaning is clear, but errors in punctuation can lead to ambiguity which will be reflected in the mark awarded.”

Some students may have restricted vocabulary and use a far more limited range of words than one would expect. Avoid penalising students who may have an immature style of writing, unless written communication is a specified learning outcome.

Where grammar and spelling are core competencies of a course, a student’s work must be marked on the basis of accuracy in the language and therefore these marking guidelines will not apply.

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.

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