

Alternative Assessment Policy

List of Appendices to this document :

Appendix A - Alternative Assessment Form

This document has been informed by the expectations, core and common practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Assessment. This can be found at the following location and contains further guidelines, references and resources: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance>

1. Introduction

The Academy aims to ensure, as far as possible, a 'level playing field' by providing appropriate forms of support to enable students to undertake assessments and achieve the learning outcomes of modules. The Academy is committed to eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for students.

This Alternative Assessment Policy has been developed to assist students who are disabled, have specific learning difficulties or have experienced exceptional medical or personal circumstances, by attempting to minimise any adverse impact on their study and performance in assessments through provision for alternative assessments (where a verifiable cause prevents the student from completing the original assessment activity). It is intended that this policy will be initiated at the start of the academic year, for all relevant modules where a student has identified relevant verifiable cause(s) for reasonable adjustment on their student record/ enrolment form. It may also be initiated at any other time during the academic year as verifiable cause(s) for reasonable adjustment come to light.

This policy applies to students with a disability or specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia) as defined in section 2 below. Where a student's academic performance has been or will be affected by a problem which goes beyond the normal difficulties experienced in life (such as illness or familial bereavement) during an assessment period, they should apply for a deadline extension via the Extenuating Circumstances policy.

2. Context

The Equality Act 2010 replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, 1995, amended 2001, 2005). In amending the DDA, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA, 2001) introduced the concept of 'reasonable adjustments' to the provision of higher education. The 2005 revision to the DDA placed a 'positive statutory duty' on public bodies (including the Academy) to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between disabled and other persons and to avoid

disability-related discrimination (among other obligations). All these provisions have been incorporated into the Equality Act, together with a new, broader public sector equality duty.

The public sector equality duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations between people with a 'protected characteristic' and those without. The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

Disability – Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 specifies that: **a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.** 'Physical or mental impairment' includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing. 'Long term' means that the impairment has lasted or is likely to last (may well last) for 12 months or more. 'Substantial' means more than minor or trivial. Case law has established that 'day-to-day' includes sitting examinations, which are not regarded as a specialised activity. Unseen impairments are also covered (such as mental ill health and conditions such as diabetes and epilepsy). Cancer, HIV infection and multiple sclerosis are considered disabilities under the Act from the point of diagnosis. Progressive conditions (such as lupus, multiple sclerosis) and fluctuating conditions (such as CFS/ ME, chronic pain) and conditions which may reoccur (such as depression) will amount to disabilities in most circumstances.

Disabled students at the Academy may include those with:

- Specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder (AD(H)D)*.
- Mental health difficulties, such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), bipolar affective disorder, psychosis.
- Autistic spectrum conditions*
- Sensory impairments, such as a visual or hearing impairment, blindness, deafness (with or without British Sign Language as a first or preferred language).
- Mobility difficulties, such as para- and quadriplegia, scoliosis, chronic pain affecting mobility.
- Long term health conditions, such as arthritis, cystic fibrosis, narcolepsy, repetitive strain injury (RSI), cancer, HIV, hepatitis, multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, chronic pain, lupus, chronic fatigue syndrome/ myalgic encephalopathy (CFS/ ME).

Students with any of the conditions listed above are regarded as disabled because they meet the definition of disability under the Act. This list is not exhaustive. A person with a long term health condition or mental health difficulty continues to be regarded as disabled despite fluctuations in the severity of their condition or, in the case of cancer, after recovery.

**Due to current wait times, where a student is undergoing, or due to undergo assessment for ADHD, autism or a mental health condition, the Academy will apply this Alternative Assessment policy (where documentary evidence is provided).*

Many disabled students receive funding for study support via Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). However, a student need not be in receipt of DSAs to be supported as a disabled student at the Academy; they need only be disabled as described by the Act.

2.1 Reasonable adjustments

Section 20 of the Act imposes a duty on institutions to make reasonable adjustments for students in relation to:

- A provision, criterion or practice – including assessment practices.
- Physical features – including access to assessment venues.
- Auxiliary aids – including exam support such as hearing loops, exam scripts in large print or Braille, and human support such as readers, scribes and sign language interpreters.

Where the Academy's assessment practices put a disabled student at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with students who are not disabled, the Academy must take reasonable steps to avoid the disadvantage. Consequently, the purpose of the duty is not to confer an unfair advantage on disabled students but to remove barriers where it is reasonable to do so, such that disabled students have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning. The duty to make reasonable adjustments to assessment is anticipatory. The Academy should not wait until an individual student discloses a disability or until adjustments are requested. Instead, likely solutions to predictable difficulties should be prepared in advance such that disabled students are not substantially disadvantaged. There is no legal defence for the failure of an institution to make a reasonable adjustment. This would be interpreted as discrimination under Section 21 of the Act.⁸

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education defines reasonableness as follows:

"The application of an adjustment will result from consideration of the circumstances of the individual student and will involve the student in discussion of possible courses of action. What is 'reasonable' for an institution will vary according to a range of factors and will depend on the circumstances of the individual case. Factors influencing the determination of what is reasonable will include the effectiveness of taking particular steps in enabling the student to overcome the relevant disadvantage, health and safety issues, the effect on other students and the financial cost to the institution."

It is important that adjustments meet the needs of the individual disabled student rather than providing a generic response to a class or type of disability. It cannot be assumed that what works for student A on course X will work for student B on course Y. Once implemented, adjustments do not provide automatic precedents for other students, but may be taken into account when considering what would be appropriate in a different case.

Extra time is often recommended for students with some kind of processing difficulty. This can be the result of a specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia), a mental health difficulty (such as depression), or an autism spectrum condition. It is also recommended for students with fatigue conditions (such as CFS/ ME) and for students who are prescribed medication which may slow cognitive processing (such as some medications for hyperthyroid conditions, depression or chronic pain). Extra time is often recommended at 25% of the prescribed examination/ assessment time but may range up to 100%. At the Academy this is likely to apply to Critical & Contextual Studies and Professional Development modules, however, as the Academy doesn't run exams, extra time allowances for project/ course work based assessments are likely to adhere to the maximum working days rule set out in section 3.

A **scribe** is recommended when a student can neither write nor type at a rate which would significantly disadvantage them in relation to their peers. As the Academy doesn't run exams, this is likely only to be necessary where a student has a physical impairment.

A student may be recommended a **scheduling adjustment**. This may be recommended for students with fatigue conditions, long-term illnesses (such as cancer or the after-effects of cancer) or mental health difficulties. In the context of the Academy's assessment procedures, this is likely to mean adjusting the schedule of presentations or Vivas.

A student with anxiety might be recommended a **smaller venue**. This might also be recommended for a student with an attention deficit disorder. In the context of the Academy's assessment procedures, this is likely to mean allowing certain students to present to a limited audience or within a different context.

2.2 Competence standards

Competence standards – reasonable adjustments are implemented to prevent disabled students from experiencing substantial disadvantage and hence to support such students to achieve their potential. However, in defining reasonableness, institutions are not required to compromise competence standards. Within the Act, competence standards are defined as: **the academic, medical or other standard(s) applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability**. Not all competences, assessment criteria or learning objectives which students might be expected to fulfil on a particular course are genuine competence standards as defined by the Act. These are the characteristics of a genuine competence standard:

1. Its primary purpose is to determine whether or not a student has achieved a particular level of competence or ability
2. It must be specific to an individual course (not applied institution-wide)
3. It must be relevant to the course
4. It applies equally to all students, not just to disabled students
5. It must not directly discriminate against disabled students
6. It must be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim

The 'proportionate' and 'legitimate' elements of this guidance refer to such considerations as:

- There must be a pressing need that supports the aim.
- The application of the competence standard must be causally related to achieving the aim.
- There is no other way to achieve the aim that has a less detrimental effect on the rights of disabled people.

While genuine competence standards are exempt from the obligation to make reasonable adjustments, the method by which students demonstrate their attainment of a learning outcome is not itself a competence standard (although there are occasions where the competence standard and the method of assessment are inextricably linked, such as in the case of a musical performance).

3. Process for Granting an Alternative Assessment

Where a student has declared a disability or specific learning difficulty on their student record/ enrolment form, they will be contacted at the start of the year regarding alternative assessment and support requirements. The Programme/ Department Leader will then meet with module tutors to agree proposals for alternative assessment (or extensions) for the academic year. This should be conducted, and the student informed of the new arrangements, prior to the release of the first assessment task information/ briefs release.

Students who think they may be eligible for adjustments under the Alternative Assessment policy but did not previously declare a disability or specific learning difficulty at enrolment, should seek advice from their PAT (Personal Academic Tutor), Programme Leader, Module Tutor, the Admissions & Student Services Manager or the Quality Manager.

The Alternative Assessment Policy can be initiated after the start of a module, but must be sufficiently in advance of the module deadline to ensure appropriate arrangements can be made (typically a minimum of ten working days prior, beyond this time frame an extenuating circumstances application should be made instead).

The relevant Tutor (Module Tutor or Programme/ Department Leader) must complete the Alternative Assessment Arrangement Form for each approved alternative assessment (Appendix A) on behalf of the student.

Documentary evidence of the verifiable cause should be requested/ produced and the alternative assessment (or extension) agreed; A verifiable cause is defined as a reason that can be supported by relevant documentary evidence (e.g. medical letter), or corroborated in writing by the Programme/ Department Leader.

On receipt of appropriate evidence, alternative assessment can be granted (one or both of the actions listed below):

1. *Extend an assessment deadline, up to a maximum of 15 working days;*
2. *set an alternative assessment, provided the alternative task meets the learning outcomes of the original assessment task.*

Where illness or other verifiable cause not previously declared (or identified by the Programme/ Academic team) will prevent a student from completing an assessment, they should contact the Programme Leader as soon as possible. In such instances the Academy's [Fitness to Study Policy](#) may be implemented.

The Programme/Department Leader will agree all alternative assessment, subject to the approval of the Director of Programmes and Quality Manager. .

All decisions to set an alternative assessment task must be recorded and reported by the Programme/ Department Leader, as appropriate, to the Examination and Progression Board.

The Programme/ Department Leader must ensure that the student understands the arrangements. If a student is not satisfied with the arrangements for an alternative assessment they should raise their issues of concern with the Director of Programmes via email in the first instance.

4. Design of alternative assessments

The design of the alternative assessment is the responsibility of the Programme Leader (subject to the approval of the Director of Programmes and Quality Manager) but it should be discussed with the student and, as appropriate, External Examiner. A student should not necessarily expect that a particular method of assessment will always be replaced by the same type of alternative assessment. However, an alternative assessment task will always assess the same learning outcome(s) as the original assessment task.

5. Circumstances where alternative assessment arrangements may not be granted

Alternative assessments will not be granted where it is not possible to demonstrate the learning outcomes with an alternative mode of assessment or arrangement without compromising standards. In such cases, students should request a deferral of the assessment through application for [Extenuating Circumstances](#).

6. Responsibilities

Students are responsible for keeping the Academic Team and/or their Programme Leader and PAT informed of individual factors affecting their progress during the year.

Students are responsible for providing the appropriate evidence to support the alternative assessment requests or ensuring that the Programme Leader has sufficient information to support their request. Academic standards must be upheld and the timely involvement of the External Examiner should be sought, where appropriate.

Whilst there is no limit on the number of alternative assessment arrangements granted to an individual student the Academic Quality, Standards and Student Experience Committee will review how the provision of alternative assessments has impacted on the Academy annually. The policy will be monitored through the Examination and Progression Board.

Policies and documents that supplement and reference this document:

Quality Handbook
Tutor Handbook
A Guide to Student Support (including Tutoring Policy)
Extenuating Circumstances Policy
Assessment and Feedback Policy
Teaching and Learning Strategy

Document name	Alternative Assessment Policy	Document owner	Thomas Groves, Quality Manager
Date originally created	April 2018		

Version	7	Review date	July 2025
Author of amendments	Darren Nair, Director of Quality & Student Experience	Next review date	July 2027
Changes (list sections)	Change of responsibilities from the Director of Quality & Student Experience to the Quality Manager.		
Approved by	Academic Board	Date of approval	Sept 25 AQSECC

Appendix A: Alternative Assessment Form

Art Academy

Alternative Assessment Form

This form must be completed on behalf of the student and forwarded to the Director of Quality & Student Experience. A completed copy must be sent to the student.

Student name:

student ID:

Programme:

Stage/ level of study:

I approved the alternative assessment:

Module Code :

Module Title :

Assessment task:.

Alternative assessment task, please include all arrangements, e.g. deadline:

Learning outcomes to be achieved:

This form MUST be signed by the Programme Leader or Head of Department before sending to the Director of Quality & Student Experience.

Authorised by the Programme/ Pathway Leader or Head of Department

Signed:

Print Name:

Date:

Approved by the Director of Programmes

Signed:

Print Name:

Date:

Approved by the Director of Quality & Student Experience

Signed:

Print Name:

Date: