

Disability Disclosure and Reasonable Adjustments Policy

Introduction

The University of Essex Online is dedicated to providing all our students an equal opportunity to engage, learn, and succeed on their chosen course. In order to provide the most appropriate support, it is important that we are made aware of any disability or condition a student has – whether the student believes it may affect their studies or not.

Students are therefore encouraged to disclose any disability, or to seek advice from their Admissions Adviser, Student Support Team, or Disability Team at the earliest given opportunity. If a student is unsure whether they might have a disability, or unsure if it could affect their ability to successfully study on their course, they should raise this with their Admissions Adviser or Student Support Team, or contact the Disability Team directly. The relevant Adviser can either provide guidance themselves or refer the student to the Disability Team.

A person is considered disabled under Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial and long-term adverse effect’ on their ability to carry out normal daily activities.

Note: For the purpose of this document and throughout all other University of Essex Online documents and related support, the term ‘Disability’ is used in reference to any disability, learning difficulty, mental health issues or long term medical condition i.e. all such conditions which might require additional support.

Reasonable Adjustment Plans

A reasonable adjustment is defined as a decision taken by the University of Essex Online to allow changes to be made to standard arrangements for students in relation to their online studies.

Under the Equality Act 2010 and the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the University of Essex Online has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students. We therefore take a proactive approach and continually attempt to anticipate the needs of those with disabilities. Part of this process is to encourage students to disclose their disability at the earliest possible stage so that a needs assessment can be carried out and any relevant reasonable adjustments can be made. Requests for adjustments to be considered can be made at any time from the point at which contact is first made with University of Essex Online (e.g. at application, enrolment or after commencement of the course).

What adjustments can be provided?

There are a number of possible adjustments that could possibly be provided. Examples include:

- Spelling and grammar will not be considered under the 'Presentation' section of the grading criteria.
- Allowance to submit assignments within the 7-day late submission period, without needing to provide further supporting evidence, and with access to the full range of marks.
- Subtitles and transcripts provided for lecturecasts.

How to request a Reasonable Adjustment Plan

Upon informing a member of staff of a disability, the student will be sent a Disability Guidance Form. This should be completed and returned directly to our Disability Team, indicating the student's wishes regarding a reasonable adjustment plan. If necessary, the Disability Team will contact the student in order to discuss their situation and advise on the next steps.

What documentary evidence should be provided?

If a student would like to request a Reasonable Adjustment Plan, they will need to submit supporting information to enable us to make an appropriate assessment. The types of information that would help an application would be:

- Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) assessment report

- Educational Psychologist report
- Reports supported by the British Dyslexia Association
- Doctors' letters detailing the impacts of your disability on your ability to study online

These examples are not exhaustive, and students may wish to submit other information which they feel would assist us with our assessment.

If a student wishes to submit supporting evidence of a medical nature, any medical evidence provided needs to be current and accurate and carried out by a qualified Health Professional or Practitioner. In order to carry out our assessment, the following medical information would be helpful in supporting an application:

- Diagnosis and symptoms or information of the student's disability/ongoing health condition
- The effect of this disability/ongoing health condition on the student's daily life
- The effect of this disability/ongoing health condition on the student's ability to study online, for example, concentration levels, ability to process information, fatigue
- The date of diagnosis of the disability/ongoing health condition
- The state of the condition; recurring, fluctuating, long-term, substantial
- Potential side effects of medication
- Guidance on recommended adjustments for the student's study online

It's important for the Health Professional or Practitioner to be thorough and detailed with the report in order for us to best assess the needs of the student.

Translation of supporting documents

The University of Essex Online require official English translations of any supporting documents written in any language other than English. These translations must be produced by an accredited translation agency and be signed off with a signed statement of the truth.

Assessment by the Disability Team

The Disability Team will try to determine if any adjustments could be made to the provision of the course, in light of the information provided. In assessing such adjustments, the Disability Team normally takes into account:

- The severity of the student's disability
- How the student's disability affects their ability to engage with an online course
- Whether it is possible to gauge the effect of the disability upon academic performance
- The type of assessment affected
- Any supporting documentary evidence

It may not be possible to make any adjustments, or the adjustments made may not be to the scope or extent that the student expected. Similarly, a student's disability may change over time and start to affect their studies in new ways, or more than had previously been experienced. In such circumstances, a student can present further evidence to enable the Disability Team to carry out a secondary assessment.

All students are asked to return a signed copy of their final Reasonable Adjustment Plan in order to confirm understanding and acceptance of the adjustments being made for them.

Data Protection

Although University of Essex Online will respect the sensitivity of any information provided by students in relation to a disability of any kind, it will be necessary for such information to be shared with relevant members of staff across the business. Where this occurs, it shall be done in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA), which is the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Our forms are designed and processed also having regard at all times to the DPA.

False Claims

Students should note that submitting a false claim or false documentation is a serious matter and would be regarded as an attempt to gain unfair advantage. This would be an academic offence and would be dealt with under the Academic Offences Procedures. We reserve the right to check on the validity of the document(s) students submit by contacting the third party directly.

Non-Disclosure

We understand that some individuals may not wish to call themselves 'disabled' and respect their right not to do so, or to be so labelled by virtue of receiving support. However, we do strongly advise students to consider carefully the implication of not declaring a disability in terms of the level of support they can reasonably expect as a result.

Further information and advice can be obtained by emailing the Disability team directly;
disabilitysupport@online.essex.ac.uk.

Responsible Manager	Name	Date Approved	Related Policies
Head of Student Experience and Welfare	Matt Tamplin	13 th January 2021	Equality & Diversity Policy Extenuating Circumstances for Performance Policy Late Submission of Coursework Policy