

# UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

## Policy for determining Alternatives Modes of Assessment for Disabled Students

1. The following procedures are approved for the management of alternative modes of assessment for disabled students. In implementing these procedures it is noted:

- 1.1 that the majority of disabled students will continue to cope with the agreed assessment modes if provided with special arrangements such as extra time in unseen exams, or sheltered accommodation where they can deal with their disability without disturbing other candidates

- 1.2 that in circumstances determined by the Student Support Unit (SSU), consideration should be given to changing the mode of assessment for a course if that mode of assessment is potentially disadvantageous to a disabled student. Where it is not possible to demonstrate the learning outcomes of the course with an alternative mode of assessment without compromising standards, the University reserves the right not to change the mode of assessment.

2. **Principles**

- 2.1 The University operates under a general commitment to do its best within both the letter and the spirit of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) to ensure that a disabled student is not disadvantaged by assessment modes or practices.

- 2.2 This procedure can be invoked with respect to a prospective student who has made an application to study at the University before confirmation that they have met the entry requirements.

- 2.3 The procedure cannot be initiated simply by a request from the student. The procedure is activated only on the submission by the Student Support Unit that a student or potential student is "potentially disadvantaged" by a mode of assessment in the programme of choice.

- 2.4 This procedure is not to be extended to the ultimate assessment exercise undertaken by postgraduate research students who will be assessed by a thesis or project which cannot be substituted for alternatives due to the nature of research work.

3. **Initiation of Procedures**

- 3.1 *Pre-Application.*

A potential student may approach the University at any time. Where that initial approach involves a discussion or meeting with the Student Support Unit, the SSU will draw up and retain a report indicating potential disadvantage which requires consideration once the candidate has made an application to study at Sussex. When an application has been received, initiation of the procedure in 4 below can be undertaken.

- 3.2 *Post Admission*

- Undergraduate students who believe they may be disadvantaged by an assessment mode within their programme should approach the Student Support Unit before the last day of the Autumn Term. The construction of the undergraduate unseen examination timetable during the Spring Term requires all undergraduate cases to be resolved by the end of the fifth week of the Spring Term.
  - Postgraduate students should normally submit a request no later than week 6 of the autumn term in order to ensure that there is adequate time to consider a proposal and make any adjustments.
- 3.3 The Student Support Unit will look at any claims made with respect to disadvantage by asking for corroborative evidence of disability, and evidence that the student's disability makes the standard mode of assessment potentially unfair.
- 3.4 Students identified by the SSU as being potentially disadvantaged by modes of assessment will have an annual review for the remainder of their programme on modes of assessment in courses they have chosen to study. This review will occur in the Autumn Term of each academic year and will be undertaken by the SSU.
- 3.5 If the SSU believes the case for a changed mode of assessment has been substantiated, it will write a report detailing how the student is potentially disadvantaged by the existing mode of assessment. This report will be sent to the Assistant Registrar (Exams) in the Undergraduate Office, or, in the case of postgraduate students, the Assistant Registrar in the Postgraduate Office.

#### 4. **Operation of Procedures**

- 4.1 On receiving a report from the Student Support Unit, the Assistant Registrar will:
- contact the Head of the Department owning the programme (or Postgraduate Programme Convenor), the Subject Exam Board Chair responsible for the course, the Director of Student Support in the School responsible for the programme and the Head of TLDU. This should normally be done within 5 term time working days.
  - those contacted are required to advise the Assistant Registrar in writing whether the mode of assessment can be varied without undermining the learning outcomes of the course(s) in question; and if so, what that alternative mode should be. This should normally be done within 10 term time working days of their receipt of the request. The Assistant Registrar will co-ordinate and manage any resultant discussions.
  - The agreed alternative will be approved by the Subject Exam Board Chair responsible for the course. The Undergraduate or Postgraduate Office will retain the official record of the approved alternative mode of assessment.

- 4.2 If after due deliberation it is concluded that the mode of assessment cannot be varied (for example, because the approved mode is the only means of securing the required learning outcomes) the reasons for the decision must be clearly documented. The Undergraduate or Postgraduate Office (as appropriate) will retain the official record of the discussion and forward a copy to the Secretary of the School Curriculum Committee (SCC) for report to the SCC.
- 4.3 If the student remains concerned that the additional support will not obviate a perceived disadvantage (4.1) or about the decision to retain the original assessment mode (4.2), they can appeal against the decision following the normal appeal procedures detailed in the Ordinances and Regulations.

Original: December 2003

Revised: June 2006 (approved by Taught Programmes Committee meeting 16)