

Section G: Learning Support Plans

1 Introduction and Scope

- 1.1 The University has a legal responsibility and an ethical commitment to ensure that students have fair access to education and equality of opportunity in teaching, learning and assessment. This is underpinned by the legal framework of the Equality Act (2010).
- 1.2 Recommendations for Learning Support Plans are made where a student has a '[protected characteristic](#)' (as defined within the Equality Act) that impacts their ability to learn and perform under specific teaching conditions or in particular types of assessment tasks (e.g. disability, pregnancy/maternity). Students concerned about the scheduling of assessments during religious festivals or other periods of observance should refer to the guidance on [Religious observance and examination arrangements](#).
- 1.3 All students are assessed against the stated learning outcomes for a course. These objectives rarely include reference to any specific assessment methods, although this may occur on certain professional courses (and may be implicit, rather than explicit).
- 1.4 In admitting a student onto any course, the University makes a positive statement that it believes there is a reasonable chance that the student will meet the learning objectives. Any student who is admitted to a course should be assessed using methods which permit him/her to demonstrate these learning objectives. In some cases, teaching and assessment methods must be adapted to meet an individual's needs, in accordance with the institution's legal responsibility to make *reasonable adjustments*.
- 1.5 Any such adaptation will be managed in such a way as to avoid the introduction of any source of unfairness in the teaching and assessment process.
- 1.6 Recommendations for adjustments to teaching and learning will be provided for schools by the Disability and Dyslexia Team in Student Services through a *Learning Support Plan*. The team is also available to advise staff across the institution if it is felt that the recommendations made are not in keeping with the stated learning objectives for a course or module or fall outside the PSRB standard guidelines, or where further guidance is required.
- 1.7 Mitigating circumstances (**refer Section B6**) should not be used as an alternative to Learning Support Plans. However, there may be occasions where *exceptional and unforeseeable factors* present themselves which mean that a Learning Support Plan is unable to provide adequate *reasonable adjustments* for a situation. Examples of this could include:
- i. when providing adjustment for disabilities which for the most part are quiescent but have flare ups;
 - ii. if a student experiences a new and unforeseen life-event (e.g. bereavement, a short-term illness) that impacts separately on their assessment performance;
 - iii. if a student has actively engaged with the support process but it has not been possible to put examination/assessment adjustments in place in time. This could include where a student has had a dyslexia screening but is awaiting confirmation from an Educational Psychologist so that a Learning Support Plan can be issued.

1.8 Where mitigating circumstances are submitted, students must also provide additional evidence as part of this submission. This evidence should differ from that which has already been supplied to the Disability and Dyslexia Team at the time that the Learning Support Plan was issued.

2 Rationale for Learning Support Plans

2.1 Learning Support Plans will be created by the Disability and Dyslexia Team in response to a student submitting evidence of a *protected characteristic* which affects their teaching, learning and assessment.

2.2 Adjustments for disability

2.2.1 No attempt is made to list all possible disabilities which may be covered by this policy, although in general terms any student who falls under a category of disability on the UCAS admissions form may be entitled to some variation to teaching and assessment methods (though the same disabilities apply to all University taught courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels).

2.2.2 Under the Equality Act, a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a student's ability to perform normal day-to-day activities. These disabilities include, but are not limited to:

- i. dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties;
- ii. hearing impairment;
- iii. visual impairment;
- iv. mobility problems;
- v. chronic illness;
- vi. Autism and Asperger's syndrome;
- vii. mental health difficulties; and
- viii. other unseen disabilities (such as, for example, epilepsy).

2.2.3 In addition to adjustments to teaching and assessment environments, additional non-medical helper support and assistive technologies may be provided for the student via the Disability and Dyslexia Team.

2.3 Adjustments for Pregnancy and Maternity or Adoption

2.3.1 Additionally, adjustments to teaching and assessment may sometimes be required in order to support students whose studies overlap with a period of pregnancy and/or maternity (which is defined by the Equality Act as the period throughout pregnancy and for up to 26 weeks after the birth of a child), or with the adoption of a child.

2.3.2 Evidence of pregnancy will normally be supplied in the form of a MATB1 form or other letter from a medical practitioner. Adjustments will be made on the basis of the pregnancy itself, plus any medical conditions arising there from (e.g. morning sickness) and for the maternity period following childbirth. This time limit will be stated in the Learning Support Plan at time of issue.

- 2.3.3 Evidence of adoption will normally be supplied in the form of a Matching Certificate, but a letter from social services or another relevant agency would be accepted in the interim if this certificate was not available with sufficient notice. Adjustments may be requested if an assessment period coincides with the start of the adoption period and will be supplied in the form of a temporary Learning Support Plan.
- 2.3.4 Although it is recognised that Pregnancy, Maternity and Adoption do not fall within the remit of disability, Learning Support Plans should be issued by the Disability and Dyslexia Team in these instances in order to ensure that recommendations are appropriate and consistent.
- 2.3.5 More information about support available for students who are pregnant or who have young children, can be found on the University website at:

<https://www.brighton.ac.uk/current-students/my-student-life/health-and-wellbeing/pregnancy-and-parenthood/index.aspx>

2.4 Temporary adjustments

- 2.4.1 Some temporary conditions, falling outside the equality legislation, might require a Learning Support Plan. These will be issued specifically where it is deemed more appropriate for a student to continue with the assessment than to submit mitigating circumstances and/or defer the assessment.
- 2.4.2 Temporary adjustments may be recommended in situations including, but not limited to:
- i. where a student has sustained a physical injury, such as damage to the writing arm or wrist;
 - ii. where a student is experiencing a temporary flare up to an otherwise controlled medical conditions; and/or
 - iii. in response to emotional or stress reactions to events such as bereavement.
- 2.4.3 A time limit will be put on the Learning Support Plan at time of issue.

3 **Procedure for the determination of adjustments and issue by Student Services**

- 3.1 The student should contact the Disability and Dyslexia Team to discuss the disability or short term medical condition and subsequent learning, teaching and assessment needs.
- 3.2 Formal written evidence from an appropriate professional such as a medical practitioner, educational psychologist or occupational health professional must be provided in all cases where a Learning Support Plan is issued.
- 3.3 This evidence will be viewed and recorded by the Disability and Dyslexia Team in Student Services. Where appropriate, the team will be responsible for determining the maximum duration for which this evidence will be deemed valid. Evidence may also be subject to review at a later stage if it is apparent that a student's situation has changed.
- 3.4 Following discussion with the relevant Disability and Dyslexia Team Support Officer, the Disability staff member enters the student's details and full recommendations on the Disability Database (WADS) and an email is sent automatically to the Head of School and Head of School's nominee who distribute and administer the Learning Support Plan as

appropriate within the School (**refer Section G4**). A copy of the recommendation will also be sent to the student.

- 3.5 The Learning Support Plan will include details of recommended reasonable adjustments, together with time limits where appropriate. Except where Health and Safety issues arise, the plan will not normally detail the nature of the disability, medical condition and/or underlying protected characteristic from which these recommendations have originated, in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act (2018).
- 3.6 Where no time limit is stated in the Learning Support Plan, it must be assumed that the conditions and recommendations are applicable for the duration of a student's programme of study, or until further guidance is issued.
- 3.7 In all cases, the Learning Support Plan must be issued by a party that is independent from the course team and academic school so that the fairness and consistency of adjustments across the University can be maintained. This will normally be the Disability and Dyslexia Team.

4 Procedure for the receipt and dissemination of Learning Support Plans within academic schools

- 4.1 Learning Support Plans will be sent to the Head of School, plus the Head of School's nominee by email from the Disability and Dyslexia Team.
- 4.2 As most disabilities will be expected to last throughout a student's studies, notification of this to the student's School is required only on the first occasion. Schools have a responsibility to note the details of the Learning Support Plan and to ensure that it is followed for all future assessment periods, unless further notification is provided.
- 4.3 Nominated staff are able to generate a report at the beginning of each term or semester of the students in their School who have had recommendations made in relation to a disability. Reports are available from both SITS and Infoview.
- 4.4 The School has several responsibilities that must be met on receipt of a Learning Support Plan:
- i. to review the recommendations and approve them. If the School feels unable to approve the recommendations as described, they must ask the member of staff who has issued the Learning Support Plan in the Disability and Dyslexia Team for guidance so that an updated version can be issued (**refer Sections G4.6 and G4.7**);
 - ii. if a major variation in assessment is recommended the approval of the appropriate Chair of the Examination Board (or nominee) is required (**refer Section G8.7**). A record of this must be kept on the student's file within the School;
 - iii. to acknowledge acceptance of the Learning Support Plan to the Disability and Dyslexia Team;
 - iv. to acknowledge receipt of the Learning Support Plan with the student and to advise on any particular local support arrangements (for example, the procedure for applying for assessment extensions);
 - v. to liaise with the Student and the Disability and Dyslexia Team to coordinate any requirements for human support during examinations (e.g. readers, scribes). These staff will also act as exam invigilators, to remove the need for further additional staffing (**refer Section G4.5**);

- vi. to share details of the Plan with all appropriate staff within the school, including with Visiting Lecturers if appropriate;
- vii. to share the plan with other Schools, if required (for example, where joint programme modules are being followed within other academic areas). This may include staff remaining mindful of what courses frequently involve joint school modules and then emailing a copy of the Plan to the partner School's Learning Support Plan inbox.

4.5 Where human support (e.g. reader or scribe support) is required by a student in exams, the School has responsibility to contact the student prior to each assessment period to ask the student to confirm their requirements. The School should then contact the Disability and Dyslexia Team to share examination timetable details so that appropriate staffing can be arranged and confirmed back to the student and School. Where Schools are able to demonstrate that they have contacted the student three times prior to the examination with no reply from the student, the School is deemed to have made a reasonable attempt to provide the recommended adjustment(s) for the student.

4.6 If the School is unable to implement the recommendations then they must discuss this with the Disability and Dyslexia Team to consider alternatives. If it is still not possible to implement an adjustment then the School are responsible for informing the student which adjustments can be implemented and to also keep a record of those adjustments which cannot be implemented and the reasons why.

4.7 Reasons why an adjustment cannot be made would normally fall within one of three categories:

- i. Where a particular assessment method can be deemed as a *"proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim"*. This wording, taken from the Equality Act (2010), means that adjustments are not required where the form of assessment and/or teaching is inherently linked to a specific learning objective of the course and module in such a way as this objective cannot be achieved through an alternative method;

For example:

For medical students there is an academic requirement for students to gather information about patients through physical examination (e.g. by palpating the patient). It could be impossible for them to demonstrate the same level of medical knowledge through theoretical study alone and so an alternative assessment may not be possible.

- ii. Where PSRB regulations limit the application of an adjustment, and it is not possible to negotiate any variation;

For example:

On Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) courses, allowances cannot be made for students regarding spelling and grammar, as these are considered to be core educational requirements by the Department for Education.

- iii. Where it is not possible for an adjustment to be made because of lack of resource or logistics. This should be assessed according to the University's resources as a whole rather than on those of an individual department.

For example:

Where recommendations are made for students sitting examinations in individual rooms, this can be difficult for academic schools to accommodate. It would be appropriate in these cases to consult with other academic schools regarding the availability of any alternative premises before refusing the adjustment on the basis of a lack of rooms.

- 4.8 A guide for academic staff acting upon recommendations from the Disability and Dyslexia Team can be accessed along with further information relating to supporting disability in the academic environment from:

<https://staff.brighton.ac.uk/ss/Documents/LSP%20guide%20for%20academic%20staff.pdf>

5 The responsibilities of the student within this procedure

- 5.1 The Learning Support Plan process is triggered by the individual student making contact with the Disability and Dyslexia Team to discuss what support they require for their disability or (other protected characteristic), and when they supply appropriate evidence.
- 5.2 Students are encouraged to make contact with the Disability and Dyslexia Team as soon as possible to provide information about their support needs, since adjustments to assessments may take up to eight weeks to be arranged (**refer Sections G8.3 and G8.4**)
- 5.3 Students hold responsibility within the process for checking and responding to requests from Schools in advance of examination periods. These will be sent to the student's University email address. Schools will contact students up to three times to ask them to confirm what human exam support is required, and if no response is received then it will not be put in place. Additionally, the School will be deemed to have made a reasonable attempt to provide the recommended adjustment(s) for the student. In such cases, mitigating circumstances based on the absence of human support would not normally be upheld.
- 5.4 If students believe that their support adjustments are no longer appropriate to meet their needs, they should approach the Disability and Dyslexia Team so that their Learning Support Plans can be adjusted appropriately and so that this information can be shared with their academic team. Examples of situations where this might be appropriate could include:
- i. As a result of a significant change in the way or severity in which their disability is impacting their studies;

For example:

The definition of disability includes medical conditions that may result in the deterioration or amelioration of a student's situation over time. In these cases, a regular review of the Learning Support Plan by the Disability and Dyslexia Team can ensure that support provided meets the student's current needs.

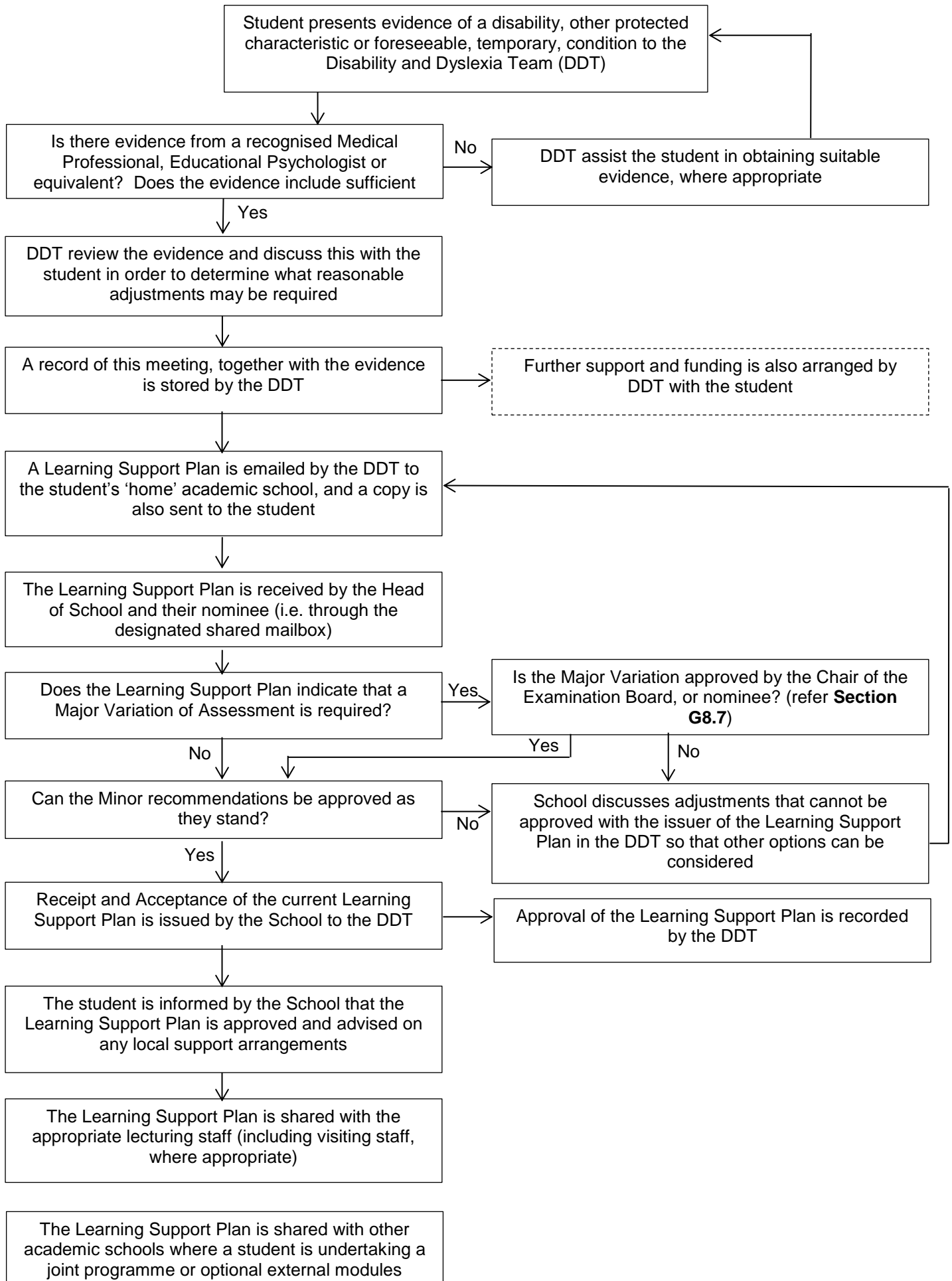
- ii. As a result of a change in their course contents, teaching method or assessment methods which cause the existing Learning Support Plan to be insufficient in providing suitable 'reasonable adjustment'.

For example

Some students study courses with optional assessed placements or modules, and a student may be unaware of the full requirements of these options when they approach the Disability and Dyslexia Team at the start of their course. If this component presents new or different teaching and assessment situations, it may be appropriate to contact the Disability and Dyslexia Team so that the Learning Support Plan can be updated.

- 5.5 Where students feel that support is not being put in place or if they are aware of particular barriers to the implementation of support (for example, if they are studying optional modules in a different academic area or if they are undertaking placement activities) they should take a more active approach to discussing their Learning Support Plan with their school to ensure that information is shared.
- 5.6 Information, Advice and Guidance is available for students from the Disability and Dyslexia Team, or they can also access advice independent from the University from the [Student Union Support Service](#).
- 6 Flowchart of the Learning Support procedure**
- 6.1 The following flowchart provides an overview of the Learning Support procedure within Student Services and Academic Schools:

Section G: Learning support plans



7 Adjustments to Teaching and Learning Practices

- 7.1 Learning Support Plans may include adjustments to Teaching and Learning Practices. Common adjustments may include, but are not limited to:
- i. a request that the student be permitted to audio-record lectures and seminars;
 - ii. a request for hand-outs and other lecture materials to be provided in advance of timetabled sessions;
 - iii. access to supportive equipment (e.g. a stool in laboratories);
 - iv. specific Access adjustments (e.g. lectures and seminars to be held in accessible buildings);
 - v. a requirement for the School to issue a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).
- 7.2 The need for individual adjustments can often be mitigated by the adoption of more general inclusive practice within the teaching and learning environment and through the integration of technology. Guidance on good practice can be found in the Disability and Dyslexia Team area of staffcentral and from the Centre for Learning and Teaching.

8 Adjustments to Assessment

- 8.1 An assessment method or task may include electronic submission as part of the assessment and as such falls within the scope of this policy. Recommendations for adjustments to assessment are included within the 'Assignments' and 'Examinations' sections of the Learning Support Plan document. Please note that examination adjustments do not apply to in-class tests where these do not contribute towards overall module marks.
- 8.2 Two categories of variations of assessment methods are established, minor and major.
- 8.3 All requests for a variation in assessment methods should be submitted by the Disability and Dyslexia Team to the academic department in a Learning Support Plan at least eight weeks before the date of the assessment.
- 8.4 While a reasonable attempt will be made to process applications received after this deadline, there is no guarantee that this can be achieved within the necessary time period; priority will, during this time, be given to applications where the condition is temporary in duration and could not have been notified previously such as recent physical injury. Where making an adjustment would have no impact on existing arrangements (e.g. where a student requires extra time and the School has already made provision for other student(s)), the recommendation should be accommodated. Where changes are more substantial, the student should be advised by the Disability and Dyslexia Team that this may not be possible for the current examination and the student be advised to submit mitigating circumstances.
- 8.5 In some cases it may not be possible to implement the adjustments detailed in a Learning Support Plan (**refer Sections G4.6 and G4.7**).

8.6 Minor variations of assessment

8.6.1 Minor variations are those where the student is assessed in the same way as all other students taking that assessment, and where the completed work is, as such, indistinguishable from that of other students. In most cases, minor variations will involve little or no additional cost. Any costs associated with minor variations will be met by the School responsible for the module or unit.

8.6.2 Minor variations will be granted automatically by the School provided that they receive the Learning Support Plan from the Disability and Dyslexia Team before the deadline (**refer Section G8.3**), and unless specifically excluded for the particular component (**refer Section G4.6**).

8.6.3 Minor variations often affect the way in which an assessment is delivered and include the following:

- i. use of larger fonts on examination papers;
- ii. extension to coursework deadline of between 3 and 14 days;
- iii. use of a computer including appropriate adjustments to display and input modes;
- iv. use of alternative coloured paper;
- v. additional time, rest breaks, location in proximity to toilet facilities;
- vi. separate room (alone or with others), with or without medical supervision;
- vii. use of a scribe, reader or prompter, or technology to support this;
- viii. provision of a supportive chair for timed assessments.

8.6.4 Additionally, some variations may affect the way in which a work is marked. Specifically, this includes the recommendation that a student is not penalised for poor spelling and/or grammar arising from a Specific Learning Difficulty when completing timed, hand-written assessments. There may be some exceptions to this recommendation (**refer Section G4.7 [ii]**).

8.6.5 The completed work should be included with all other work before marking, and should be identifiable only by student number.

8.7 Major variations of Assessment

8.7.1 Major variations are those where the nature of the assessment is changed. The introduction of such changes may also result in the creation of potential unfairness, which will be closely monitored.

8.7.2 Major variations may cover a wide range of circumstances, such as:

- i. alternative format for assessment (for example, poster presentation in lieu of written work);
- ii. essays in place of examinations;

iii. *viva voce* examination in place of a written examination.

8.7.3 The nature of major variations will mean that the work will often be easily distinguished from that of other students, as it will often be in a different format. Approval of major variations is the responsibility of the Chair of the Examination Board or appropriate nominee.

8.7.4 The Chair of the Examination Board (or nominee) may, however, wish to discuss the case with other members of the University such as Module Leaders and/or the Disability and Dyslexia Team and/or the External Examiner, as well as the student before reaching a decision on the most appropriate assessment method.

8.7.5 In considering the variation, the Chair of the Examination Board (or nominee) should be mindful of certain issues, which include the following:

- i. the appropriateness of the proposed variation - *whether the variation as proposed would allow the student to demonstrate the learning objectives of that item of assessment;*
- ii. the potential introduction of unfairness into the assessment process - *whether the revised method might result in the student being either advantaged or disadvantaged when compared against other students;*
- iii. how the work should be calibrated - *if the revised method leads to a different form of work (such as a viva voce examination instead of a written examination), how to ensure that no advantage or disadvantage accrues, with specific attention paid to how other students might have performed had they been assessed in this manner;*
- iv. whether or not the external examiner(s) has been consulted - *if it is deemed appropriate to consult the external examiner(s) about the proposed variations, their comments should be included, where possible in writing;*
- v. any issues surrounding professional accreditation - *if the course leads to professional accreditation and the assessments have been approved by a PSRB, whether the external examiner(s) or the PSRB should be involved in the approval of any variations.*

8.8 Adjustments for students undertaking placements and field work

8.8.1 In some cases schools may hold responsibility for the coordination of placements and/or field work as part of a programme. In these cases, depending on whether a placement is considered to be an integral or optional part of a programme, the School may have responsibility for sharing Learning Support Plan information with the placement provider.

8.8.2 Further information and guidance regarding students with disabilities on placements can be found in the University's [Student Placement Policy \(Appendix D\)](#).

8.9 Resourcing adjustments

- 8.9.1 Schools are responsible for the resource implications of variations to assessment methods as the external funding body (such as Student Finance England, NHS or Research Council) will not pay for any additional assessment costs from the Disabled Students Allowance.