# **Examination Access Arrangements Policy**

## **Introduction**

Students with disabilities, specific learning differences (e.g. dyslexia) and temporary conditions (including pregnancy) can apply for Examination Access Arrangements (EAA) as part of the Queen Mary’s legal obligation to provide reasonable adjustments as specified under the Equality Act 2010.

The Examination Access Arrangements Policy is in place to ensure that examination arrangement requests are considered in a fair and transparent manner. At the same time, the policy is in place to ensure that students’ examination arrangements do not confer an unfair advantage over others, i.e. students who take their examination under standard conditions.

## **Making applications**

Applications should be made to the university’s Disability and Dyslexia Service. The simplest way for students to do this is to apply through their MySIS account, but a hard copy of the application form is available on request. For information on how to apply for Exam Access Arrangements students are advised to [follow the advice on the relevant page on the university’s website](http://www.dds.qmul.ac.uk/exams/#d.en.593857).

Once a student has applied for exam arrangements their application will be processed by an adviser from the Disability and Dyslexia Service. It may be necessary for a student to discuss their request in an appointment; similarly, if a student would prefer to discuss their request in person they can arrange an appointment with a member of staff. A student with multiple disabilities may meet with more than one member of staff to ensure that all of their needs have been considered.

[The Disability and Dyslexia Service’s contact details can be found here](http://www.dds.qmul.ac.uk/about-us/).

## **Appropriate supporting evidence**

## 3.1 The student’s application must be supported by appropriate evidence of the disability or condition; this may a letter from a doctor or other medical practitioner, or a report from a qualified diagnostician in the case of a specific learning difference such as dyslexia. Students can upload their diagnostic evidence using their MySIS account, but they can also send it to [dds@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:dds@qmul.ac.uk) or bring it with them to their appointment. In the case of medical evidence, this should be dated within the last two years.

3.2 If a student has been diagnosed with a specific learning difference, e.g. dyslexia, they will be required to provide an assessment report from a qualified diagnostician which must clearly state that the student has a specific learning difference. JCQ Form 8s in isolation are not suitable evidence of a specific learning difference. There is no lower age limit on accepting evidence of a specific learning difference, so long as the conclusion is that of a clear diagnosis.

## **Deadlines for applying for Examination Access Arrangements**

4.1 Applications must be made before the advertised deadline to guarantee that they will be implemented in time for the forthcoming examination period, i.e. the end of semester exams in January and May, or the Late Summer Resit period. If applications are made after the deadline Queen Mary cannot guarantee that they will be implemented until the following exam period.

4.2 There are deadlines for applying for exam arrangements in each of the two teaching semesters; these are advertised at the beginning of the academic year. More information is available from the Disability and Dyslexia Service and Registry. For students studying in the School of Medicine and Dentistry who’s exams are administered by the Assessment Unit at Whitechapel there is no specific deadline, but the university cannot guarantee that it will be possible to implement any exam arrangements agreed within thirty days of the student’s next examination.

## **Guidance on recommended arrangements**

**5.1** Visually-impaired or blind candidates typically require a greater allowance of additional time than a candidate with non-visual disabilities. The precedent at the university is that visually impaired or blind students will need 50% additional time in their examinations. The RNIB recommend anything up to 100% additional time as being reasonable, although the expectation is not that only the most complex of cases will warrant 100% additional time, for example where a student has to make extensive use of both an amanuensis and assistive technology owing to the nature of the assessment.

Other arrangements for visually impaired and blind students include converting the examination papers into Braille or enlarging the size of the text. Many students will require an electronic copy of the exam paper so that they can use text-to-speech software to hear the questions read aloud - such students will usually have access to this equipment to type their answers and proofread their responses. Other students may require a reader to read questions aloud.

5.2 **Dyslexic students and those with other specific learning differences** typically receive 25% additional time in their examinations, which is the level recommended in the 1999 Working Party report into supporting dyslexic students within Higher Education[[1]](#footnote-1). If their diagnostic report recommends more time than this staff within DDS may decide to ask the author of their diagnostic report for an explanation of why they have decided to recommend more than the usual amount. Staff within DDS will not necessarily ratify exam arrangement recommendations made by educational psychologists, other specific learning difference diagnosticians or medical practitioners, but will take the opinion of such people into account when making decisions on what to recommend for individual students.

5.3 Students with physical disabilities may require additional time so that they can take appropriate rest breaks during their exam or to compensate for their slow writing or typing speed as a result of their disability; they may also need either an amanuensis to dictate their answers to or a computer to type or dictate their responses onto using voice recognition software. Candidates with this arrangement will require additional time to proofread the work produced by the amanuensis or voice input software. They may also require specialist ergonomic furniture, such as adjustable seating.

Some students may need to bring food, drink or medication into the examination venue as a consequence of their disability. This has to be agreed by the Disability and Dyslexia Service in advance as part of the student’s examination arrangements.

5.4 Students with mental health diagnoses may require additional time in their examinations to compensate for their impaired concentration or to offset the effects of medication that they are taking. They may also require an arrangement that allows them to take their exams in a smaller room, e.g. with other students with additional time.

5.5 Students with Autistic Spectrum Conditions may require arrangements for verbal assessments, such as vivas, owing to the nature of their communication disorder. They may also require additional time in written examinations, depending on the specific nature of their diagnosis.

5.6 Students with temporary conditions such as broken limbs can also apply for Examination Access Arrangements, although these would only apply for one round of exams and they would need to reapply in the following academic session should they feel that there was still sufficient cause to merit the award of additional time. Students in this situation should also be advised of the Queen Mary’s ‘fit to sit’ rule, i.e. that if they are not well enough to take their examinations they should complete an Extenuating Circumstances form so they can resit their exams. More information on Extenuating Circumstances can be located on the Advice and Counselling Service’s website.

5.7 Queen Mary has a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to accommodate the needs of pregnant students, who form one of the ‘protected characteristics’ covered by the legislation. Pregnant students should present a MATB1 certificate to confirm their pregnancy to the Disability and Dyslexia Service who will be then able to recommend the provision of 25% additional time to compensate for the fact that they may need to leave the exam hall more frequently than their peers to use the bathroom. It is also advisable that pregnant students are sat near the door of the examination venue to minimise disruption to other students if and when they need to leave the exam room.

## Alternative assessments

Students can request an alternative assessment through the Disability and Dyslexia Service who will discuss the possibility of agreeing such an assessment with both the student and the School or Institute who deliver the relevant module. In doing so the Disability and Dyslexia Service will consider the need to provide reasonable adjustments along with the desired learning outcome of the assessment and, where appropriate, any core competencies.

Students are advised to read through the assessment methods for any module before making a decision on whether or not they should apply for it. The final decision on whether or not to grant an alternative assessment for a module belongs to the School or Institute and is subject to agreement at the relevant Subject Exam Board.

## False claims

Submitting a falsified claim for an Examination Access Arrangement (e.g. falsifying medical evidence) could be regarded as an attempt to gain an unfair advantage, which would be an academic offence that would be dealt with under Queen Mary’s Code of Student Discipline.

## **Implementing Examination Access Arrangements**

8.1 Once the application has been received the Disability and Dyslexia Service will process the application, reviewing the evidence presented and then making a decision on whether or not to agree to the request. The student may be offered an appointment with an adviser to discuss the requested exam arrangements, should this be deemed appropriate. The student’s application provides consent for the Disability and Dyslexia Service to communicate details of these arrangements to colleagues elsewhere in the university, e.g. Registry, the student’s School or Institute and other relevant staff such as IT Services.

Once agreed, these arrangements will then be entered onto the MySIS system where they can be viewed by the student as well as staff within Registry, who administer the university’s examinations and staff within Queen Mary’s Schools and Institutes, including those within the School of Medicine and Dentistry.

8.2 If a student wishes to amend or terminate their examination arrangements they can do so by contacting the Disability and Dyslexia Service prior to the deadline for making applications. If the student and their adviser within DDS agree to the requested change this will be implemented for the next round of exams; if there is a dispute the matter will be handled as in 9 (see below).

## **Examination Access Arrangement Review Group**

If the student is dissatisfied with the recommendations made by the Disability and Dyslexia Service their application will be referred to an ‘Examination Access Arrangements Review Group’. This will meet once per exam period (assuming there are cases to review), in the two weeks immediately after the deadline for applying for examination arrangements, and will consist of the Head of Student Wellbeing (or deputy), a representative from Registry and nominees from the three Deans of Teaching and Learning from each faculty. There is also student representation in the group, typically the QMSU Vice President for Welfare (or nominee). This will ensure that the practicalities of implementing proposed arrangements are considered, as well as the possible impact on academic standards. In addition, in the event of there being applications from students with specific learning differences the Disability and Dyslexia Service may also arrange for an external diagnostician to advise the group.

The Examination Access Review Group will then consider the application using the available evidence and make a decision accordingly.

## **Appeal Regulations**

If the student remains dissatisfied with the decision of the Examination Access Review Group they would then be referred to the university’s Appeal Regulations. The basis for appeal would be on one or more of the following grounds:

1. Procedural error where the process leading to the decision being appealed against was not conducted in accordance with QMUL’s procedure, such that there is reasonable doubt as to whether the outcome might have been different had the error not occurred. Procedural error includes alleged administrative/clerical error and bias in the operation of the procedure.
2. That exceptional circumstances, illness or other relevant factors had, for good reason, not been made known at the time or had not been taken into account properly.

If the appeal is accepted by Academic Registry and Council Secretariat then the matter will be referred back to the Examinations Access Arrangements Group for reconsideration or with another recommendation as appropriate. If it is rejected, then the recommendations previously agreed by the Disability and Dyslexia Service will be implemented.

**Disability and Dyslexia Service**

**Student and Academic Services**

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1. **Dyslexia in Higher Education: policy, provision and practice. Report of the National Working Party on Dyslexia in Higher Education, January 1999.** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)