



**EXCELSIA
COLLEGE**
Sydney - Australia

Document Name

**INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT, MAKING REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS
AND PROVIDING FOR ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT
ARRANGEMENTS ***

Document Number

STA-G27

Document Status

Author	Chief Academic Officer	April 2019
Approving Authority	Academic Board	June 2019
Publication	Issue 4	June 2020
Review Date	Issue 4	June 2023

*This policy replaces “STA-G27 Assessment Guidelines - Students with Disabilities”, and the title reflects the revision.

Purpose

This policy sets out the College's commitments to promoting and facilitating an inclusive environment for learning and assessment, including making provision for reasonable adjustments and alternative assessment arrangements for disabled students, students making religious and spiritual observances, students with language barriers as well as cultural background or perceptions barriers.

The Policy outlines Excelsia College's commitment to support all students with a disability in accordance with the obligations outlined by the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

Reasonable Adjustment - Reasonable adjustment to assessment refers to special conditions or considerations with respect to examinations and other assessment exercises or tasks, including placements, for students with disabilities

Disability – Is defined in accordance with the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992. As used throughout this Policy, disability shall refer to all illnesses, disorders, and other conditions listed below.

In broad terms, a disability involves an alteration to a person's functioning and includes:

- physical
- intellectual
- psychiatric
- sensory
- neurological
- learning disabilities
- physical disfigurement

Disability can be:

- temporary or permanent
- apparent or hidden
- slight, moderate, or severe
- existing in the past or present.

Excelsia College also recognises students with additional special needs that can affect learning such as:

- mental health conditions (e.g. anxiety, depression, PTSD)
- medical conditions or ongoing illnesses (e.g. chronic fatigue syndrome, acquired brain injury)
- temporary conditions (e.g. broken arm)
- learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, auditory processing disorder).

- Special needs

Overview

Through its mission and values, Excelsia College has a strong commitment to social and educational inclusion. The College's Teaching and Learning Plan and Assessment Policy define inclusion as central tenets of professional practice. These commitments mean ensuring that disabled students (including those with long term medical conditions) and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary. This applies equally to assessment.

Excelsia College is committed to the provision of reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of students with a disability, who choose to declare it, and provide appropriate supportive documented evidence. Reasonable adjustments may be made to accommodate a student with a disability and reduce the impact of a disability on a student's academic success.

Adjustments may include modifications to the learning environment, learning resources, teaching method, or assessment conditions to increase the participation of a student without compromising the academic standard or the inherent course requirements. The College provides all prospective students with advice that informs them of the inherent course requirements, including information detailing specific competencies required.

Excelsia College does not restrict enrolment on the basis of disability or discriminate against students with a disability. However, the College may deny entry based upon reasonable belief of a student's inability to successfully complete the course, based upon potential limitations applied by the disability and restricted participation within course requirements.

Current or future students with disabilities, mental health and medical conditions who believe that they will require any reasonable adjustments will be required to disclose the nature of their impairment/medical condition and provide appropriate supporting documentation about its impact on them in the context of the learning environment in a timely manner and to the appropriate staff.

Prospective students with disabilities, mental health and medical conditions are responsible for disclosing the nature of their disabilities and/or condition(s) during the admissions and enrolment process. Failure to disclose may result in the College being unable to provide the individual with any accommodating requirements.

Disclosure of a disability, mental health or medical condition at admission does not lead to the automatic provision of Learning Equity and Access services. The prospective student is responsible for meeting with the Disability Advisor about the Learning Equity and Access Plan and the documentation required for registration.

It is reasonable for the College to seek information and evidence about a pre-enrolled student's disability, mental health or medical condition, providing the purpose for the inquiry is to provide equal opportunity or to provide reasonable adjustments to support the

student in achieving the learning outcomes of the course. As such, The College may request, in advance, supporting evidence from a Qualified Medical Professional or other experts relating to the nature of the student's disability, mental health or medical condition.

Scope

The policy has been drawn up with reference to good practice available within the education sector. It applies to all staff of the College, and particularly to staff who teach and/or provide learning support for students. It is a professional and legal responsibility for staff to ensure practice is inclusive, in line with this policy. The policy and procedures are of particular relevance to students with disabilities, special educational needs or long-term medical conditions.

Assessment Arrangements

Assessment arrangements should be organised to ensure that a student's disability does not, unfairly, disadvantage them in demonstrating that they can satisfy course unit of study learning outcomes. Reasonable adjustments typically include revising the assessment arrangements and, in those circumstances where this is not appropriate, offering an alternative mode of assessment. In the case of the latter, the student is expected to meet the same academic standards as other students and all course unit of study learning outcomes must be assessed.

The following adjustments may be made, where agreed with the Disability Advisor at least four weeks before examinations commence:

- additional time of 25% of the assessment duration
- using large print format or colour overlays
- providing assistive technology such as a PC, voice activated PC
- in exceptional circumstances, providing rest breaks, where a needs assessment report indicates such is required
- providing clean, unmarked dictionaries or specialist spell checkers
- providing separate venues
- providing personal assistance in the form of a signer, reader, scribe or prompter

Only in exceptional circumstances can assessments that are written in a language other than English be assisted through the use of a scribe. In assessments where a scribe is exceptionally used, and criteria include the accuracy of spelling, a separate spelling test will be undertaken by the candidate.

In giving feedback, lecturers should be mindful that typical errors of students with a Specific Learning Difficulty such as dyslexia include:

- omitted words or punctuation
- excessive or misplaced punctuation
- repeated phrases

- unsophisticated language or simplified language (often part of a strategy to reduce grammatical or spelling errors, but which does not necessarily denote unsophisticated thinking)

Alternative Modes of Assessment

In circumstances where adjustments to assessment arrangements are not sufficient to overcome the disadvantage of a student that is caused by their disability, the Disability Advisor will work with individual unit leaders to agree, with the approval of the Head of School and Learning and Teaching Committee, alternative modes of assessment. In determining alternative modes, the revised assessment must test the student's ability to demonstrate all course unit of study outcomes, including any related to effective communication.

Curriculum Modification

Reasonable adjustments will be considered for students with disabilities where evidence indicates that 100% attendance is unrealistic. Where a reasonable adjustment to attendance requirements has been agreed, the College normally expects a minimum level of attendance of 60%. The approval of reasonable adjustments to attendance levels will only be approved where student attainment levels are satisfactory or where attendance at mandatory, competency-based skills development sessions is not affected.

If a student is unable to meet this requirement, then the college will discuss alternative options, which could include transfer to part-time study or postponement of study.

The curriculum can be modified to the extent that students will be supported, as far as is reasonable, to develop the intellectual, practical, technical and transferable skills and the knowledge and understanding demanded within the published programme specification. Where a student's disability prevents them from being able to develop specific skills (eg practical skills requiring good co-ordination), a programme can be negotiated that allows the student, within the constraints of their disability, to develop and demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding commensurate with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015.

Requesting and approving alternative arrangements

Disclosure of a disability may be provided on the student original admission application or by the student providing the Disability Advisor with a complete and signed Learning Equity & Access Plan Medical Practitioner Report. Students requesting alternative assessment arrangements should first discuss their needs with the Disability Advisor at the Student Support Centre. Documentary evidence (medical or specialist) must be produced to support the request.

This evidence should normally be no more than two years old at the time of the student making an initial application for alternative assessment arrangements and should have been

conducted when the student was aged 16+. In the case of dyslexia or other specific learning difficulty, a diagnostic report carried out when the student was aged 16+ will be sufficient.

Students must normally apply for alternative assessment arrangements at least four weeks before the date of the assessment. Late applications will not normally be considered unless directly related to the individual's impairment, although due consideration will be given to individual circumstances.

Students should discuss their alternative assessment needs with their course and/or course leader(s), who may consult with the Disability and Dyslexia Service. Requests for alternative assessment arrangements will normally be agreed between the student, the Disability Advisor and the Head of school where appropriate, after liaising with the course unit leader concerning learning outcomes.

Placements may require different adjustments to those made for academic study. Students should initially talk to the person responsible for arranging the placement about their needs, making reference to their College entitlements. The Disability Advisor may be able to offer additional advice should this be required.

Determination of Reasonable Adjustment

Wherever practical, reasonable adjustment to the College policy or procedure will be made to meet the needs of a student with a disability. There are three main factors to address when considering Reasonable adjustments:

1. Whether the student is disadvantaged by the method of teaching or assessment;
2. Whether the suggested adjustments would help overcome the disadvantage;
3. Whether the adjustments are reasonable both in terms of proportionality and practically/implementable.

To determine if an adjustment is reasonable, the following must be considered:

- A student's disability, and any barriers, needs, or challenges that may affect that student throughout a subject or course
- The views of the student or the student's advocate
- Whether the adjustment will impact on the academic standards or inherent course requirements
- Whether the adjustment creates an undue advantage for the student, or an undue disadvantage for another student
- The costs and benefits to all parties of making the adjustment
- The 'willingness to pay' the costs associated with the adjustment on behalf of either party.

The bearing of costs associated with reasonable adjustment will be negotiated with the student at the time of the Reasonable Adjustment Plan being established. In general, if the student requires a support person in a classroom or regular situation (e.g. as a notetaker), any costs associated with the appointment of that support person will be borne by the student. However, if the student requires such a support person in an assessment situation

on campus (e.g. exam, skills assessment), the support person will be supplied by Excelsia College and the costs associated with the appointment of that support person will be borne by the College to ensure integrity of assessment is upheld.

Exceptions

- Excelsia College is not obligated to provide adjustments for a student who chooses not to disclose a disability.
- Excelsia college is not obligated to make any adjustment that may impose an unjustifiable hardship on the College.
- Excelsia college cannot compromise the academic standards or inherent course requirements

International students

International students on student visas who request adjustments which will affect the length of their study are advised that they must seek up-to-date immigration advice promptly.

Grievances

Any student not satisfied with the outcome of a reasonable adjustment request should follow the Student Grievances Policy and Procedure available at: <https://excelsia.edu.au/documents/2015/04/student-grievance-policy-procedures.pdf/>

References

Universities Australia (AVCC) Guidelines for Students with a Disability 2006 Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015

Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005

Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Learning Equity and Access Plan

Learning Equity & Access Plan Medical Practitioner Report

Teaching and Learning Plan

PO-STU-03 Assessment Policy