

London School of Theology

Alternative Assessment Policy and Procedure for Students with a Disability

Process of ratification:	Academic Board, Executive Team
Executive Team Member Responsible:	ASDAS
Individual Responsible:	Disability, Inclusion and Learning Support Manager
Date Last Approved:	March 2026
To be Reviewed:	Every 3 years
Review consultation:	Programme Leaders
Date of Next Review:	March 2029

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Policy outlines requirements for an alternative and modified assessment strategy. The associated Procedure outlines the process for applying for alternative and modified assessments for students with a disability.
- 1.2. The Policy and Procedure apply to all disabled students enrolled on LST's taught programmes.
- 1.3. The QAA Code of practice on assessment guidance states that "Every student has an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement through the assessment process, with no group or individual disadvantaged. In designing assessments, the needs of students are considered, including those studying at different locations, from different cultural/educational backgrounds, with additional learning needs, or with protected characteristics. Assessment procedures and methods are flexible enough to allow adjustments to overcome any substantial disadvantage that individual students could experience".
- 1.4. LST is committed to ensuring that students are encouraged, supported and enabled to achieve their full potential. As part of the commitment, reasonable adjustments should be made to ensure that those with disabilities are able to engage as fully as possible.
- 1.5. These guidelines intend to ensure that equitable and uniform practice is followed when a decision is taken to provide an alternative assessment to a formal exam/assessment. Alternative arrangements must not give a student an unfair advantage over other candidates or disadvantage them due to their disability.
- 1.6. These guidelines recognise that it is not possible to draw up a set of arrangements that are appropriate for every student – this will depend on individual circumstances, the format of the examination/assessment, the required learning outcome of the module and whether an assessment is governed by an external professional body such as the BACP.
- 1.7. The guidelines acknowledge that academic requirements and standards will not be compromised. Alternative modes of assessment must be pursued to minimise the impact of an impairment on the student's performance and must not be allowed to compromise learning outcomes.

2. Definitions and Principles

- 2.1. In the context of an assessment, a **reasonable adjustment** is a change to an assessment to ensure that a student has a fair and equitable opportunity to complete an assessment without disadvantage. Reasonable adjustments may include modified or alternative assessments.
- 2.2. A **modified assessment** is where a student undertakes the same assessment as their peers, but there is a modification to the assessment for disability related reasons. For example, additional time in an examination, or an individual room for a student to take an examination.
- 2.3. An **alternative assessment** is where a student, for disability related reasons, is unable to engage in the same assessment as their peers, so an alternative assessment is needed. For example, where a

student is unable to engage in a presentation, even with modifications, it may be appropriate to permit the student to complete a piece of written coursework instead.

- 2.4. An appropriate modified assessment, or an appropriate alternative to the standard assessment, should be provided for students who are unable to undertake the standard assessment, due a disability or long-term health condition, to ensure that all students are able to engage with the assessment task fully.
- 2.5. The alternative or modified assessment must meet and assess equivalent learning outcomes as the original assessment.
- 2.6. The alternative or modified assessment should be of an equivalent level and standard to the original assessment.
- 2.7. If the alternative or modified assessment is provided as a reasonable adjustment for a student with a disability, then it must be appropriate for that student's needs.
- 2.8. Alternative or modified arrangements must not give a student an unfair advantage over other students or disadvantage them due to their disability or health condition.
- 2.9. For level 5 and 6 Modules that are greater than 20 credits, the External Examiner should be involved in the approval of the alternative assessment or modified task.
- 2.10. There are very few circumstances when it would not be possible to offer an alternative or modified assessment. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) accredited programmes may have prescribed assessment types. In these cases, the Programme Leader should contact the PSRB to establish whether an alternative is permitted. If an alternative is not permitted, then no further action can be taken in relation to a change to the assessment. Programme teams should, however, explore alternative support and modifications to enable the student to complete the original assessment if an alternative assessment is not permitted
- 2.11. It is recognised that it is not possible to draw up a set of arrangements that are appropriate for every student as this will depend on individual circumstances. Appendix A offers examples of modified and alternative assessments.

3. Process

- 3.1. Students are advised to ensure that the LST is aware of their disability by contacting the Disability, Inclusion and Learning Support (DILS) Manager. This means that all aspects of support can be considered, including alternative assessments. This is ideally done through a DSA Needs Assessment carried out by an approved assessor.
- 3.2. Ideally, specific arrangements for exams/assessments should be made at the beginning of the course. However, it is recognised that this may not always be possible due to changes in the effect of an impairment, the student becoming aware of the disability after they have begun their studies or the student not being fully aware of the impact of their disability on their studies until they have experienced an exam/assessment period. Unless this is the case, students are advised to apply for an alternative examination assessment by the end of the first term. If a student does not apply within this time, alternative assessments may not be available to them.
- 3.3. A student can submit an application to request a modified or alternative assessment using the form which can be found here (to be drafted).
- 3.4. Strict deadlines apply to requests for an alternative or modified assessment. This is to enable the alternative assessment or modified assessment to be put in place prior to the assessment date/deadline. **Applications must be received no later than four weeks after the start date of the relevant module.**
- 3.5. The DILS Manager will undertake an initial review of each application to:

- 3.5.1. Determine whether the request could be met
- 3.5.2. Seek further information or clarity from the student where needed
- 3.5.3. Decide if the request can continue along the alternative assessment process.
- 3.6. When sufficient information is available, the DILS will liaise with the student's Module Leader/project supervisor to discuss the application.
- 3.7. Alternative assessment arrangement will require the approval of the Programme Leader.
- 3.8. For level 5 and 6 modules above 20 credits, discussion with the relevant external examiner is required together with final approval by the Academic Dean. If the Academic Dean is the Module leader/project supervisor, final approval will be delegated to the Head of Research.
- 3.9. Once an alternative assessment has been agreed, all paperwork and approval emails must be forwarded to the ASDAS who will keep a register of Alternative assessments for each academic year.
- 3.10. If the request is rejected, a student may wish to discuss the outcome with their Programme Leader or the ASDAS. If, after discussion, a student disagrees with the outcome of their request, the route of escalation is through the Student Academic Complaints Procedure.

Barrier	Rationale for Approval	Examples of Assessment Modifications	Examples of Alternative Assessments
Recall	<p>Where the ability to recall specific information due to a disability, particularly where time constraint increases stress and the ability to recall.</p> <p>Where the effect of medication impacts upon recall.</p>	<p>Glossary of terms to be provided for timed exam</p> <p>Approved handouts and/or key texts/sources to be taken into the exam under agreed constraints.</p> <p>Different parts of the exam taken, with significant breaks in between, across the course of a full day rather than within a concentrated period of 2–3 hours—under supervised/controlled conditions to prevent collusion with other students who have completed the exam within the default timeframe. Significant breaks to allow further final revision for the upcoming next part of the exam.</p>	<p>Continuous assessment through a project, portfolio or essay.</p> <p>Staggered or intermittent micro-assessments through the module, to mitigate the need for recall of substantive accumulated material in a single end-of-module exam Open book exam</p>
Duration of exam	<p>Where the duration of the exam will have a detrimental impact on the student due to concentration/fatigue levels, excessive pain or general health if expected to undertake an exam of a significant length.</p> <p>Consideration in incidences where the nominal ten minutes per hour rest breaks would not be sufficient adjustment. Or where the rest breaks and extra time extend the overall duration of the exam, prolonging the impact that the access</p>	<p>Different parts of the exam taken, with significant breaks in between, across the course of a full day rather than within a concentrated period of 2–3 hours—under supervised/controlled conditions to prevent collusion with other students who take the exam within the default timeframe. Significant breaks to allow further final revision for the upcoming next part of the exam.</p>	<p>An assessment strategy which permits the student to demonstrate their competence within longer time constraints and/or with more ‘seen’ preparation, and which allows longer rest breaks and/or the environment to be more controlled by the student, such as with extended ‘take away’ exams or a shorter personal presentation prepared a significant time in advance.</p>

	<p>arrangements are designed to mitigate against.</p>	<p>'Seen' or 'take away' exam issued to all students on a particular day, with students then given a week or more to complete it, with access to Library, online resources, etc. Students identified with more acute disabilities/learning needs allowed to complete it within a longer period – e.g., 10 days or 2 weeks. Academic Misconduct around copying from/collusion with other students in the completion of the exam would apply as usual, to be detected by Turnitin.</p> <p>Shorter personal presentation, to be prepared over an extended period on a known topic or topics in advance, that equitably tests the Programme and Learning Outcomes in relation to more formal, unseen default assessment.</p>	
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The following are **suggestions** for adapting or adjusting existing assessment methods to students with specific disabilities:¹ We are/may be doing some of these already and it may take time to implement new ideas, however, gaining the awareness and understanding of the difficulties disabled students face is a crucial step towards that.

APPENDIX I

Activity	May be present challenges to	Potential adaptations/adjustments
Aural/listening examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D/deaf or hearing-impaired students. • Students with auditory processing difficulties (may include some neurodivergent students in some cases). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check and improve sound quality. • Use of a 'live speaker' (or video) instead of audio recording (visual plus sound cues). • Use a familiar speaker. • Limit background noise e.g. use headphones rather than speakers. • Allow adjustments to settings (volume, speed of playback etc). • Extra time, and extra listen through, as agreed with DILS.

¹ 'Adapted, alternative and inclusive assessment', University of Leeds

<p>Computer-based assessments (in person). This may apply to short tests within certain online modules.</p>	<p>Any disabled student, but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who experience oversensitivity to some sounds, and who may be distracted by the noise of computers and keyboards. • Students who may find it difficult to identify items on a screen, such as visually impaired students. • Students who need to ‘dual task’ by looking at a screen and listening to instructions or working in groups. • Learning new tasks quickly may be difficult for students with memory or sequencing differences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you have student's attention before giving instructions • Provide written instruction • Use facilities where assistive technology is available (e.g. screen reader or ZoomText) • Encourage student to adjust their monitor settings (colour, contrast, font) • Use teaching aids such as demonstration networked to all the monitors, or on screen including showing keyboard actions.
<p>Continuous/weekly, with no options for extensions</p>	<p>Any disabled student but particularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurodivergent students (e.g. dyslexia, autism, ADHD) • Students with fatigue-related disabilities • Students with mental health conditions that impact pace of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a holistic review of all of the student's assessments over a semester and use any possible flexibility to avoid ‘crunches’ in advance.
<p>Dissertation or final year project</p>	<p>Any disabled student but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with organisational/planning difficulties • Students who find academic writing difficult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the dissertation or project brief is clear and written in inclusive language • Enable students to seek clarification • Ensure there is sufficient time for students to complete the work, remembering that students work at different paces and some students may need to coordinate support • Consider intermediate deadlines or the opportunity for feedback on plans/drafts • Offer several exemplars to assist with visualising the end product.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate students applying for extensions via the standard process when required.
Essay	<p>Any disabled student but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with organisational/planning difficulties • Students who find academic writing difficult • Neurodivergent students (e.g. dyslexia, autism, ADHD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider whether an essay is the best or only way to meet the learning outcomes it maps to • Ensure the assessment brief is clear and written in inclusive language • Enable students to seek clarification • Ensure there is sufficient time for students to complete the essay, remembering that students work at different paces and some students may need to coordinate support • Carry out a holistic review of all of the student's assessments over a semester and use any possible flexibility to avoid 'crunches' in advance • Consider intermediate deadlines or the opportunity for feedback on plans/drafts • Facilitate students applying for extensions via the standard process when required • Offer several exemplars to assist with visualising the end product.

Fieldwork (with assessed element) / Placement	<p>Any disabled student but applies particularly to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with organisational/planning difficulties • Students who may find the physical environment in accessible • Students who may have anxiety around new and unfamiliar environments and/or groups • Students with sensory impairments such as hearing or visual impairments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not penalise the student for issues relating to accessibility • Facilitate completing fieldwork in a different location or in a different manner to others • Offer virtual fieldtrips, if appropriate.
Groupwork assessment	<p>It should be noted that, due to stigma, assumptions, and stereotyping around disability, and the difficulty of ensuring peers implement reasonable adjustments, assessment via groupwork can often penalise disabled students.</p> <p>This applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurodivergent students who may find the social interaction and neurotypical communication required in group work difficult • Students who may have anxiety in social settings. • Students who experience a communication difference, such as D/deaf and hearing-impaired students or students who stammer • Blind or visually impaired students who may find engaging in group work more difficult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In brief: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid summative and/or credit-bearing assessment via group work, especially when assessed by peers • Give students clear marking criteria which are not based on normative assumptions about ‘good’ communication, social interaction, or team working skills. Consider the competence being assessed • Give clear guidance to students on what and how they should give feedback to each other or criticise – e.g. discuss content only not use of grammar, spellings; treat each other with respect • Arrange smaller groups • Decide whether groupings are student or tutor choice, or randomised, to ensure disabled students are included • Agree ground rules for how groups will work together. • Facilitate an environment where all students are encouraged to share information about their needs if they wish to do so • Give groups credit for planning ahead and meeting members’ needs

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit the student to complete work on their own • Facilitate the student contributing to the group in a way that accommodates them, without penalising them for this • Exempt the student from presenting within a group but enable them to contribute to the presentation in other ways.
Long answer tests/quizzes	<p>Any disabled student but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who find generating, structuring, and checking academic writing difficult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the question is clear and written in inclusive language • Ensure pay particular attention to your marking criteria and methods of feedback.
Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)	<p>Any disabled student, but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who may find complex language, ambiguity, or small differences in sentences confusing, such as some D/deaf students or some neurodivergent students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the question is clear, unambiguous, and written in inclusive language. • Ensure questions test subject knowledge. • Consider the number of questions and linguistic demands of each exam and across the cohort of exams for that semester to ensure a good balance of assessment. • For formal university exams, check whether the student has a recommendation for Language Modification. If so, ensure you follow the process for passing papers to Disability Services. • For online MCQs, ensure that backtracking is permitted (i.e. being able to return to questions, or see questions in advance).

Online time-limited assessment (OTLA)	<p>Any disabled student, but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who require specific adjustments to timed assessments, such as extra time, rest breaks, access to assistive software etc. • Students who find a lack of instruction or direction difficult to manage (may over or under work). • Students with energy-limiting disabilities that affect the amount of available time they have to work effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember that any OTLA which lasts less than 48 hours, and/or which has restrictions on how long students may take to complete the assessment once they start, must include all of the student’s exam access arrangements. Contact the DILS for more information. • Avoid the use of proctoring software as this will prevent the use of assistive software. • Ensure you follow the guidance elsewhere in this document referencing specific types of assessment, e.g. MCQs, long answer questions etc.
Oral examinations	<p>Any disabled student, but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who may experience difficulty or anxiety around speaking or formulating and articulating arguments under pressure. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurodivergent students • D/deaf or hearing-impaired students • Blind or visually impaired students • Students experiencing poor mental health, especially anxiety • Students with speech or fluency impairments, such as stammering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider whether assessment specifically via oral examination is a genuine competence standard. • In brief: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for extra rehearsal time. • Allow extra time to present. • Allow the student to present to a smaller group. • Allow the student to present to familiar people, or to the tutor only.
Oral presentations	<p>Any disabled student, but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who may experience difficulty or anxiety around speaking or formulating and articulating arguments under pressure. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurodivergent students • D/deaf or hearing-impaired students. • Blind or visually impaired students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider whether an assessment, specifically via oral examination, is a genuine competence standard. • Make assessment criteria clear in advance, avoiding assessment of skills which are not considered competence standards, such as fluency, eye contact and audience engagement. • In summary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for extra rehearsal time.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students experiencing poor mental health, especially anxiety • Students with speech or fluency impairments, such as stammering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support practice or rehearsal sessions. • Allow extra time to present. • Allow the student to present to a smaller group. • Allow the student to present to familiar people, or to the tutor only. • Allow pre-recorded presentations. • Facilitate questions from other participants being typed as well as given verbally (e.g. via a Teams Chat, Padlet or Vevox Q&A), or agree a mechanism for capturing questions in advance so the student has time to prepare a response. • For group presentations: exempt the student from presenting within a group, but enable them to contribute to the presentation in other ways.
Reflective journal/learning log	<p>Any disabled student, but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who do not learn or reflect on their learning in normative ways, which may include some neurodivergent students. • Students who have a poor perception of their skills and learning because of societal standards around those things, which do not account for disability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the assessment brief is clear and written in inclusive language. • Enable students to seek clarification. • Ensure there is sufficient time for students to complete the work, remembering that students work at different paces and some students may need to coordinate support. • Offer several exemplars to assist with visualising the end product. • Assist students with identifying skills, based on other elements of assessed work.

Time-limited assessment	<p>Any disabled student, but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who experience significant anxiety and find unfamiliar settings and people (e.g. invigilators) stressful (e.g. students with mental health condition, neurodivergent students) • Students who find handwriting difficult (e.g. due to physical impairment, dyspraxia, hypermobility pain or fatigue) • Students who process language differently and who may therefore find literary demands problematic (e.g. some D/deaf students, neurodivergent students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out and replicate the exam arrangements the student accesses for formal exams (check with the DILS). Common adjustments include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% extra time • Rest breaks • The use of a PC or scribe • Taking exams in a smaller or separate room
VLE - blogs, discussion boards or Teams Chats, multimedia	<p>Any disabled student, but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who may be unsure of the 'rules' and appropriate level of participation • Students who experience difficulty with writing or with confidence in their literacy skills • Students who find it difficult to access IT, or who use assistive technology to access IT, which may not always be compatible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow time for posts so student can prepare & check off-line first • Actively monitor/moderate interactions • Make sure any platforms used are compatible with standard assistive software • Ensure audio material is described in text, and visual material has text description for visually impaired students.
Worksheet or article to be discussed in class	<p>Any disabled student, but applies particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who experience literacy or processing difficulties and who may find reading or responding under pressure stressful (e.g. Dyslexic students and those with memory problems) • Students who may feel that the presentation or format of their work is not sufficient, due to disability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a clear copy of any worksheets or resources to be used. Ensure it is well-laid out, in appropriate format (large print, electronic) if required. • Allow sufficient time for all students to read it and complete the work. If a particular student needs substantial extra time, ensure this is arranged in advance.

APPENDIX II

Examples of some alternative assessment options²

Original	Alternative
10,000-word dissertation	Dissertation: 5000 words, plus a 20-minute viva
3,000-word essay	20-minute presentation with live Q&A with the tutor on a later date
Standard OSCE (objective structured clinical examination)	Bespoke OSCE on individual circuit with reasonable adjustments in place.
Standard 3 hour closed book examination	Examination split into 3 separate (and unique) papers.
Standard 3 hour closed book examination	Examination split into 1 standard paper and 2 separate take-home essays
Standard 3 hour closed book examination	Replaced with a timed full essay plan (rather than full essay), followed up with a mini-viva, with adjustments.
Standard Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ) closed book examination	Alternative paper utilising different question structures e.g. true/false, short answer, complete the sentence, etc.
Poster presentation	Essay alternative
Computer-based exam	Paper-based written alternative
Video/PowerPoint presentation with slides	Audio presentation with transcript with adjustments
Class presentation	Presentation to module tutor
Recitals with a large audience	Recitals with students' chosen audience
Listening exam (video or audio)	Transcript with adjustments

² 'Adapted, alternative and inclusive assessment', University of Leeds