Student Reasonable Adjustments Policy

Contents

Alternative Format

If you require this Student Reasonable Adjustments Policy in an alternative format, please Contact Us, telephone us on +44 (0)300 303 5303, or contact your Student Support Team via StudentHome, if you are a current Open University student. If you are studying an apprenticeship, please contact the Apprentice Enrolment and Support Team (AEST) by email on apprentice-support@open.ac.uk, or telephone (+44 (0) 300 303 4121). Welsh-speaking Students and Learners are welcome to speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on +44 (0) 29 2047 1170. Research Degree Students can contact the Graduate School via email graduate-school@open.ac.uk.

Introduction

This policy explains our commitment to making your study with us accessible. Where necessary, we make adjustments to ensure you can participate in your study. We attempt to make anticipatory adjustments openly available to all students; where that is not possible, you will need to request adjustments (click on the link to see an explanation of what this means) that fit within our teaching and learning approach and the qualification or module you are studying. It also outlines the types of adjustments we generally put in place, how to seek support for your study and request adjustments - for examples, see section 4. The policy also explains that you may need to develop study and digital skills, including the use of assistive technology, that will support your study and help you become a more confident learner. It also explains that you should apply for government funding for additional study costs related to your needs because of a disability before we provide any adjustments that would normally be funded in this way.

Scope

What this policy covers

This policy covers you if you are, or will be, an undergraduate, postgraduate, apprenticeship or postgraduate research student who has disabilities, long-term health conditions, mental health challenges or specific learning difficulties which will last longer than a year. For brevity, the term 'disabled students' is used in this policy to refer to all these situations. Similarly, when we say, 'your disability', this includes all disabilities if you have more than one. See also the definition of disability below.

If you have a health condition that will last less than a year, but it is still affecting your studies, and so you are falling behind please contact your Support Team to get advice on your options.

Throughout this policy, "we/us/our" refers to The Open University, and "you/your" refers to any Student or learner who falls under the scope of the policy.

Microcredential and short course learners will find their online materials are accessible. However, as these types of study do not have a tutor or tutorials, we do not provide a profile or any other additional support.

What this policy does not cover

This policy does not cover students studying with one of our partners or subsidiary organisations. It does not cover informal learners using OpenLearn, who can find guidance on the Contact OpenLearn page. If you are a student in a secure environment, our Supporting Students in Secure Environments team will work with you to establish what reasonable adjustments are possible for your situation; not all the adjustments mentioned in this policy may be applicable.

Support and Information

How to contact us

If you have any queries about this policy, please Contact Us. To check the contact details for the Open University, please see OU Offices. If you are studying an apprenticeship, please contact the Apprentice Enrolment and Support Team (AEST) by email at apprentice-support@open.ac.uk, or telephone (+44 (0) 300 303 4121). Welsh-speaking Students and Learners may speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on +44 (0) 29 2047 1170. Research Degree Students can contact the Graduate School via email at graduate-school@open.ac.uk.

Help Centre Articles

You may find the following articles in our Help Centre provide practical advice:

- Disability support

- Accessibility - using a computer for OU study

You may also find the guidance on Disability from our Equality and Diversity website useful.

Reporting Bullying and Harassment

The Open University is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment where everyone feels safe and is treated with dignity and respect. Unlawful discrimination of any kind across The Open University will not be tolerated. We encourage staff, students, learners and visitors to report incidents of assault, bullying, harassment, hate crime or sexual harassment through Report + Support. This platform also provides information about what you can do if you or someone you know experiences such incidents, and where you can find support.

Policy

1.   Policy Purpose

This policy:

1.1   Outlines how we aim to ensure that our courses and services are designed to be accessible and under what circumstances we provide reasonable adjustments necessary for your study.

1.2   Specifies the sort of adjustments we can make to help with your studies. This covers learning experience, assignments, exams, residential/day schools, ceremonies and administrative assistance.

1.3   Explains what you need to do so that we can best support you.

1.4   Provides links to practical support, advice, and guidance.

2   Policy Principles

2.1   Openness: You can tell us about any disability without fear of this counting against you.

2.2   Design: We design our teaching materials (delivered via a module website), support services and events (online and otherwise) to be accessible. These are embedded adjustments and are available to all students. In addition, we aim to work collaboratively with you to identify and implement any on-request adjustments, or case-based supplementary adjustments that support your success. These are tailored to your individual needs and are considered in the context of our distance learning model and the learning outcomes of your module, ensuring that adjustments are meaningful and aligned with your study goals.

2.3   Accessibility: As all our modules and most services are delivered online, digital accessibility is important to us. We are working towards being compliant with the [Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018](), and we are working towards complying with our obligations under [the Equality Act 2010]() in England, Scotland and Wales, the [Disability Discrimination Act 1995]() for Northern Ireland or any other statutory duty or obligation. This means it should be possible for you to study with us, having set up your computer and assistive technology appropriately for your needs, without further modifications. You can read about how we meet these standards in our [accessibility hub.]()

2.4   Responsiveness: We evaluate and update our [embedded adjustment]() options to students as our teaching and services change, alongside changes to software and [assistive technology](). or the DSA

2.5   Further Support: It is not possible to anticipate all adjustments that might be appropriate and required; you can request further [on-request adjustments]() or [case-based supplementary adjustments]() through your [support team](). See [section 5.2]() for more information.

2.6   Providing Supporting Information: Evidence of a disability is only requested when necessary and support is available to help students provide it. [Adjustments]() may be made without a diagnosis, especially in urgent or severe cases. Where evidence is required, this is explained in the Help Centre and related policies for the situation.

2.7   Responsiveness: Whether or not you have not told us that you have a disability, if you are struggling to study, contact your [support team]() immediately who can discuss your options with you. Our teaching approach requires self-study and so we may not immediately notice that you are struggling until you tell us. If you speak with other staff members, they may refer you to your [support team](), allowing us to discuss support options with you. If you tell any staff member about a disability, we must act on it in order to fulfil our regulatory duties. This means we will share the information without the need for explicit consent in every case. However, we only share information with staff who need it to support your study. For more information on how we use your data, please see our [Student Privacy Notice]().

2.8   Transparency: You can read about our [embedded adjustments](#) that are available to everyone and about the most frequent [on-request adjustments](#) and [case-based supplementary adjustments](#) that we offer to students when needed in [section 5](#) below. You will need to read this information to determine whether you need to ask for adjustments.

3.   Preparing for study

To ensure we can fully support you, please review the information in this section to confirm you are ready to study with us. If you have any queries, let your [support team](#) know so we can assist you. Please see [Steps to prepare to study with a disability](#) in the Help Centre to give you an idea of what to expect.

3.1.   Understand how our method of distance learning can support your study.

Most Open University students study through [distance learning](#), which may be different from your previous experience of education. To find out more about how our distance learning works, see our [What is distance learning](#) pages. You may also find our collection of [essential skills for Open University study](#) helpful.

If you are a postgraduate research student, your study may include on-campus teaching, supervision, or fieldwork, depending on your programme and research area. While many research students study at a distance, we recognise that some are based at an Open University campus and receive face-to-face support. Your supervisor (rather than tutor) and faculty team will work with you to ensure that your study needs are supported appropriately.

Once you have registered as a student, you will be able to access [induction resources](#) in the Help Centre, which will tell you more about studying with us.

For information for those attending in-person day schools, see [section 4.7](#) below.

3.2. You should apply for funding as soon as your registration on a module is confirmed.

If you live in the UK, you may be eligible for the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), to cover the extra study-related costs you incur as a result of your Disability. For more information about how to apply, see our DSA pages in the Help Centre. When you apply for DSA, you will receive an assessment of your needs that can help you identify what additional support you require. When you apply for DSA, you will be asked to consent to share the information with us. If you do, we will update your information in line with your needs assessment report and share your needs with others who are supporting you, including third-party suppliers. For more information, please see our Student Privacy Notice.

If you are waiting for the outcome of a request for DSA support, or if you are not eligible, we can discuss what support we can provide.

The DSA assessment that you receive will include recommendations about adaptations for us to review. Note that some of these suggestions may not be applicable to our distance learning method of teaching. If this is the case, if you tell us about your assessment, we will discuss with you how we can apply the recommendations to distance learning.

If you are an apprentice in the UK, government funding will come from the Government's 'Access to Work' programme, how you apply for this is explained in the Access to Work for apprentices information in the Help Centre.

If you live outside the UK, the availability of funding will depend on where you live, so you will need to check what is available to you in your country.

3.3. Ensure that you know how to set up your computer to support your study with us and that you can use any assistive software you may need.

Our modules are designed to be accessible and can be used with assistive technology or adaptations that you can make to your computer and web browser. You may need to make these adaptations to help study on a screen or learn how to use assistive technology, such as a screen reader or voice recognition software. More information can be found in our computing guide, which is available as soon as you register.

3.4. Check how your module is taught and what you need to do to study successfully

If you are studying undergraduate or taught postgraduate module, the details of how you will study, and the available adaptations vary by module. You should check how your module is taught through the module descriptions available on our courses website or StudentHome (available when you enrol). In addition, your module website will have a detailed accessibility guide in the *resources* section.

Once you have registered, you should check all the assessment tasks shown on your module website. If you think that any of these may present accessibility problems for you, discuss your options with your support team as early as possible. This will make it easier to get help and assistance; avoid waiting until the assessment deadline is near. Additionally, our assessment policies include some degree of flexibility for deadlines and information on options to postpone final assessments or defer study. It is therefore important to familiarise yourself with these options. We also have a process to manage requests for exam adaptations, such as additional time for disabled students, where this would be a reasonable adjustment. See our Exams Policy for more information.

Occasionally, modules can have compulsory events that may be online or at a physical location. This can include compulsory tutorials, day schools or residential events. How you can request reasonable adjustments is explained below in section 5.6.2.

Where modules use set books or materials that are provided in print, these are usually available in digital formats for use with assistive technology. Any other adaptations that you need can be discussed with you by contacting your support team.

3.5.   Artificial Intelligence and accessibility

We know that one use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is to increase accessibility. Much of the software provided to disabled students through Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) incorporates AI in a way that is designed to mitigate the impact of any disability. Our guidance on the use of generative AI reflects this and makes it clear that if you have a disability, you are able to use tools that employ AI. However, AI rules outside of those relating to reasonable adjustments can vary between modules. To check what applies to you, see the assessment section for each module.

4.   Reasonable adjustments we can make

This section explains the embedded adjustments, on-request adjustments, and case-based supplementary adjustments we can make to support to help you navigate and engage with the course content. Any adjustments we may make are in addition to the module study materials; they do not replace them. As we may not be able to anticipate all of your individual needs, if you cannot find something in this section which you think you will need, please contact your support team.

4.1   Embedded adjustments

Embedded adjustments are anticipatory measures put in place to reduce or remove barriers. They are available to all students in most cases without you needing to ask for support or provide evidence of why you need adjustments. Embedded adjustments may require the use of assistive technologies; learning to use these tools can help develop independent study and employability skills. For information about using assistive technology, see Specialist technology support in the Help Centre.

Here we outline how typical embedded adjustments can help with your study. If you are a postgraduate research student, some of the examples below will not apply.

1.   Help with spelling and grammar

All students have access to Office 365 including Microsoft Word, which has built-in spelling and grammar assistance. It can also check for the accessibility of documents.

2.   Difficulties sitting at a computer or laptop for extended periods.

a.   You can usually download a version of our online materials from your module website, which can be printed or read on a tablet, e-reader, or use the in-built read aloud functionality.

b.   We also have a [mobile study app](#) for many of our modules which gives you access to your study planner, forum posts, and study materials. Note that this is not available for research students who do not have pre-prepared study materials.

c.   You can use [SensusAccess](#) provided by the library to enable you to create accessible versions of documents and research papers for personal use.

3.   Focusing and reading large volumes of text

You can use read-aloud functionality on your web browser to listen to your module website or download a version of the online materials, which you can then listen to using Word, Adobe Acrobat or [assistive technology](#). You can also explore the focus settings or [bionic reading](#) to help your concentration or focus.

For materials that are in print, you can usually download electronic versions from the module website to use with assistive technology or read aloud functions in Word or Adobe Acrobat for PDF files.

4.   Unable to hear pre-recorded videos

All our pre-recorded videos have captions and transcripts available in the module website.

5.   Anxiety or challenges with group work

Unless required for an assignment, group work is usually optional. However, if you have an assignment which requires group work, please contact your tutor or support team at least a month before the group work is due to start to discuss if any alternative is possible. Note that evidence to support your needs may be required. We can also note this in your profile so your tutors are aware.

6.   Struggling to complete assessment by the deadline

Our assessment policies allow for flexibility in submission deadlines where possible with the exception of End of Module Assessment (EMA), End of Module TMA (emTMA) and exams. We also offer options for students to defer study or postpone exams in certain situations. This is explained in more depth in section 5. You can also read more about these options in the Assessments and exams section of the Help Centre.

7.   Undertaking research using materials that are not designed to be accessible

Our library services strive to provide accessible resources. You can also use SensusAccess to convert documents into other formats. When we provide access as an embedded adjustment to digital versions of material that are usually provided printed, you should note that this is copyright material that should not be used for non-study use. See section 8 (i) of the Student Computing Policy.

4.2   On-request adjustments

These are a type of reactive adjustment which are well-established and commonly provided but typically need to be requested to ensure they are appropriately matched to your needs. How you make those requests is explained in more detail in section 5. The typical adjustments include:

1.   A personal profile created to support tutors and other support staff to appreciate your situation and help them consider how to adapt communication styles, feedback approaches, etc. It will include a note to apply the dyslexia marking guidelines when evidence of a dyslexia assessment is provided.

2.   Arrangements for events, including learning events like tutorials and residential schools e.g. permission for a non-medical helper to attend tutorials or advanced provision of materials for tutorials, where appropriate. You may find that we need supporting information or evidence in these cases to ensure appropriate support is in place.

3.   Avoiding being "put on the spot" by unexpected questioning at learning events e.g. residential schools. We can note this in your Profile, if you book in advance, so that the tutor facilitating the learning event is aware. If you book a tutorial not run by your own tutor, you should let the tutor running the event know, as they may not be able to check your profile.

4.   Anxiety or challenges with group work

Unless required for an assignment, group work is usually optional. Should your assignment include group work, we recommend contacting your tutor or support team at least one month before the activity begins to explore possible alternative arrangements. You may find that we will ask for supporting information or evidence in these cases. We can also note this in your profile so your tutors are aware.

5.   Advocacy and Support

You can contact your support team to let us know if you have an advocate who can speak on your behalf. See our advocacy policy.

4.2   Case-based supplementary adjustments that usually require supporting evidence

We recognise that some students may still face barriers that cannot be addressed through embedded adjustments or on-request adjustments and need different types of support. Usually, supporting evidence or information is required to ensure the right support is put in place. These adjustments are called case-based supplementary adjustments, another type of reactive adjustment which is usually provided through Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). The support provided is based on an individual's needs assessment and appropriate evidence of a disability. We aim to support students in accessing and using their DSA-funded adjustments. This includes practical arrangements, for example, enabling access to tutorials for BSL interpreters.

We can also work with you to agree case-based supplementary adjustments that we can put in place, for example, providing materials in Braille or providing alternative versions of the module material which is meant to be printed. We may also be able to provide adaptations to assessments explained in section 5. These arrangements can take several months to put in place, so you are advised to notify us of a disability in advance of your module start date.

4.2.1 Provision of support if you are not eligible for the Disabled Students' Allowance or are waiting for an assessment

If you find you are not eligible for a Disability Support Allowance if your needs are more costly than the disabled student allowance limits, or if you are waiting for an assessment or confirmation of an award. We will ask you for evidence of your DSA assessment, ineligibility and disability.

4.2.3. Non-medical helper (NMH) support

Non-medical helpers are professional support workers (e.g. for example, British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters for deaf BSL users) who can assist you with study related tasks that help you access and engage with your study. They do not provide medical or personal care. It's important to know that the support and skills non-medical helpers offer are general and not specific to your subject. This means they won't be experts in the course you're studying, but they can still help you overcome barriers to engage with study. You must not use non-medical help for anything other than OU study and balance the time within your module study calendar. Usually, we can provide non-medical helpers if you are not eligible for DSA or, temporarily, while you are waiting for an assessment when supporting evidence or information is provided. This is decided case-by-case.

When we provide non-medical helpers, we will monitor use, so we can allocate any unused hours to other students. You can choose to stop receiving non-medical help by contacting your support team. If non-medical help is provided by the DSA, if you stop or change your study, you must let them know so they can adapt the funding set aside for your non-medical help.

4.2.4. Loan of assistive software and equipment

Assistive software and equipment are often provided through your [DSA](#). However, should a delay to your DSA arrangements impact your ability to study, we have a limited loan scheme of equipment provided case-by-case, depending on your module. For example, assistive equipment may include an electronic braille display, and assistive software may include screen readers for students with sight loss. Any equipment or software provided must only be used for your study with us. You are responsible for:

- Insuring any equipment against loss or damage

- Returning any equipment or software provided as soon as you stop studying with us. We will let you know when and how to do this

Note that postgraduate research students do not study modules, so these arrangements may not be appropriate. Research Degree Students should email the Graduate School (graduate-school@open.ac.uk) to discuss your specific needs.

5. How to request additional support for on-request or case-by-case adjustments

This section provides an overview of how to tell us about a disability, and how we will discuss the adjustments to study that may be helpful to you.

5.1 Telling us you have a disability and requesting reasonable adjustments

If you tell us about any disability, long-term health condition, mental health challenges, or specific learning difficulty using our disability support form, you will receive:

- The opportunity to discuss what sort of support you may need. This may be by phone or email.

- A profile that explains what adjustments we can make to support you. You will be able to view and update this in StudentHome, and it can be seen by your tutor and support staff.

- Any reasonable on-demand or case-based adjustments we agree to put in place with you for your study.

We keep this information in line with our [Privacy Notice](#). It will be shared with the staff who will support your studies and, if appropriate, with third parties who provide services to us, for example non-medical helpers.

5.2   Completing your profile and letting us know what adjustments you need.

You can tell us about your support needs by completing the [disability support form](#) in the Help Centre. This form helps us understand how your disability affects your studies and what kind of support you might require.

The form will ask you to submit supporting evidence, but we only usually require that for on-request and case-based adjustments described in [Section 4](#). Therefore, not all students will need to provide evidence, but in some cases you will. If you have supporting evidence and it is convenient for you to do so, please include it when submitting your disability support form as this will help us to ensure we fully understand your needs and provide appropriate support. If not, and we later need supporting evidence, one of our advisers will talk you through what we can use and how to provide it. Evidence can include assessment documentation, a doctor's or other health professional's letter, medical reports, or referral letters. If you are concerned about providing evidence, please complete the form, and we will discuss your needs and evidence requirements. For more information, see [Preparing to fill in the Disability Support Form](#) in the Help Centre. Alternatively, you can contact Your [Support Team](#).

5.3   Reviewing your needs and updating your profile

We understand that circumstances change and that may mean that you need to update the details on your [profile](#). You can inform us of any changes to your disability and how that might affect any reasonable adjustments you need at any time during your study by using the [Update your disability profile](#) form available on your StudentHome profile. Alternatively, you can contact your [support team](#).

After updating your profile, we will discuss with you how changes to your disability are affecting your studies and what extra support might help.

5.4 Requesting assessment adaptations for exams and assignments.

We recognise the importance of ensuring that assessment methods do not create unnecessary barriers for disabled students. Reasonable adjustments may be made to assessment formats where these do not compromise the competence standards of a module. Where a specific method of assessment is required by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB), we will work with you to explore alternative approaches that maintain academic integrity while supporting your access needs. We will consider adjustments case-by-case. If you experience difficulties during your study that affect your performance in any assessment or you feel your adjustments were insufficient, you can submit a Special Circumstances form. There are strict deadlines for submitting this information. For more detailed information, you can visit the Special Circumstances pages in the Help Centre. Details of assessment policies, including that covering special circumstances, can be found on our Student Policy and Regulations website.

5.4.1 Assignments

We aim to design assessments that are accessible but individual adjustments may be required in some cases.

If you need more time to complete a Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA), you can contact your tutor to ask for an extension. You cannot have an extension for an Interactive Computer-Marked Assignment (iCMA), but these are usually open for several weeks, giving you flexibility on when to complete them. This is all explained in our TMA and iCMA policy.

If you find that you cannot complete an assessment task because of your disability, immediately talk to your tutor, or your support team. It is advisable to review your assessments early in the module so that there is time to discuss and consider options to support you.

5.4.2   Final Assessments

If you use any help or aids to complete your TMAs, such as specialist software or a [non-medical helper](), you can still use these for your End of Module Assessment (EMA) or End of Module Tutor Marked Assignment (emTMA).

You cannot request an extension for an EMA or emTMA. However, if you have a disability and need longer to study the module, you can ask to postpone your first submission opportunity for your EMA or emTMA. You can find more information and details of how to apply in our [Postponement Policy]().

As with continuous assessment, if there is something about the EMA or EmTMA which you cannot complete because of your disability, discuss this in the first instance with your tutor as early as you can. Your [support team]() is your second contact point.

5.4.3   Exams

Not all modules have exams, but where they do, depending on the specific arrangements for the module or qualification, reasonable adjustments will be considered.

If you have told us that you have a disability, you will receive an email with details of how to apply for adjustments five months before your exam. You have to respond by the date shown on the [exam arrangements for disabled students]() page in the Help Centre, as it is not possible to agree on arrangements close to the examination date, and you may have to postpone the exam or defer to restudy the module. If you do not complete the form, we will assume you do not need any reasonable adjustments.

If you do not receive the email (e.g. because it has been sent to your junk folder), you can directly complete [the Exam arrangements for disabled students form]() in the Help Centre.

If you have any unexpected temporary illnesses or injuries, we will try to accommodate requests up to four weeks before the exam. However, it is important to note that requests made after the deadline may not be accommodated and you may have to postpone the exam or defer to restudy the module.

If you have not previously supplied supporting evidence of your disability from a qualified professional, you will usually be asked to do so. While efforts will be made to meet your needs, not all requests can be guaranteed.

Typical adjustments include (this list is not exhaustive, and we may be able to make other changes):

- **Extra Time**: Additional time can be provided to complete the exam to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by their condition

- **Rest Breaks**: Scheduled breaks during the exam to help manage fatigue or other health-related needs

- **Alternative Formats**: Providing exam papers in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, or digital formats to suit your needs

- **Assistive Technology**: Allowing the use of assistive technology such as screen readers, speech-to-text software, or other necessary devices

- **Separate Room (for in-person exams)**: Arranging for you to sit the exam in a separate, quiet room to minimise distractions

- **Scribe or Reader**: Providing a scribe to write down your answers or a reader to read out the exam questions

- **Modified Exam Papers**: Adjusting the layout or format of exam papers to make them more accessible

- **Alternative Assessment Methods**: In some cases, alternative methods of assessment may be considered if traditional exams are not suitable

- **Flexible Scheduling**: Allowing exams to be taken at different times or on different days to accommodate specific needs

If your module has an online invigilated exam, please see the information on [online invigilation](#) in the Help Centre. If you are offered an [Additional Assessment](#), please see section 5.4 of the [Additional assessment policy](#).

If you are a Post Graduate Research Student who always has Vivas, the Graduate School will work with you to put appropriate adaptations in place. See the Research Degree Regulations for more details.

Requests for adaptations that are not listed here are referred to the Assessment and Exams Referral Panel for consideration to ensure fairness and best practice is followed.

5.5 Learning events, including tutorials

5.5.1 Online learning events

Most modules will include a range of online tutorials and other types of learning events, most of which are not compulsory. You can find information about how to use the video conferencing system for online tutorials/learning events in the computing guide. You can attend the learning event live or for some learning events a recording will be made available if you are unable to join or to aid any notetaking. Learning events can be booked through **StudentHome,** and you will find recorded tutorials listed in your module website. You can read about this in our Policy for recording of online tutorials. If you are a BSL user and have a non-medical helper to sign for you, we can make arrangements for them to join the group. We can also note in your profile if you do not want to answer questions, or if you want to keep your camera offline. Disabled Students may make their own audio recordings of any online learning events. Note that these should only be used for personal study and not shared.

Our video conferencing system, Adobe Connect, provides automatic closed captions for live and recorded learning events which cannot be edited after the event. If you are likely to need additional support to join online tutorials see adjustments you may need to attend tutorials in the Help Centre. The Adobe Connect Accessibility Guide in the Computing Guide has information on assistive software, keyboard shortcuts, and also different options for captions.

5.5.2 In-person optional learning events

We very rarely hold optional in-person learning events, but if you want to attend one that is offered, we aim to book venues with suitable accessible facilities.

Think about any adjustments you may need and let your support team know in plenty of time. This could include access to venues, specific types of chairs, sitting near the door, regular breaks, or having your BSL interpreter attend the event.

Each venue may have different policies and arrangements for service animals (such as laboratories or places with other animals), so you are advised to inform us if you intend to bring a service animal so we can discuss this with you and the venue. Please allow enough time for us to enough time so that appropriate facilities are available for you and your service animal.

5.6 Requesting reasonable adjustments for in-person or online compulsory events

5.6.1. Occasionally, a module may have a compulsory in-person or online event. These can be a day school, residential school, project or lab/field school where you have to travel to a venue to take part in the event. The compulsory element may be for one day or more. For convenience, these are called 'compulsory events' in the rest of the policy.

5.6.2. If you are studying undergraduate modules and have a disability, you can request additional support as soon as you book the compulsory event by completing the Request support at residential school form available in the Help Centre. This applies to both compulsory in-person events and those that are held online and will vary by module. If you find it difficult to complete the request support at residential school form, you can discuss your requirements with your support team.

Once you submit your form, we will acknowledge receipt and usually process it within 15 working days. We prioritise students who are about to start their residential or day school over those starting later.

While we strive to meet your reasonable adjustments, we cannot guarantee that all requested facilities will be available or approved.

If your circumstances change, you can re-submit an online request with any changes. For more information about the types of adaptations we can make, please see the 'Residential school and disability' pages in the Help Centre. They include:

- **Alternative Formats**: Providing materials in large print, Braille, or digital formats.

- **Modified Materials or learning activities:** Adjusting the layout or format of materials or activities to make them more accessible.

- **Special Equipment:** Providing necessary special equipment, such as ergonomic furniture.

- **Accessible Accommodation**: Ensuring that accommodation is adapted for wheelchair users, including en-suite facilities or separate adapted bathrooms.

- **Campus Transport**: Arranging campus transport between teaching and catering facilities. Electric scooters can usually be arranged, but not all sites are suitable for them.

- **Parking:** Arranging an accessible parking space near the rooms you will be using to keep your journeys as short as possible.

- **Communication Support:** Providing sign-language interpreters, or other communication support, for example, hearing induction loops.

5.7 Degree Ceremonies

Full details on how to book an Open University degree ceremony can be found on our [Ceremonies website](). During the booking process, you will be asked to indicate whether you or your guests have any additional requirements such as accessible parking. If you have, the Ceremonies team will contact you to discuss your requirements and agree what is possible and what support can be put in place, taking account of the venue and the format of the ceremony. Accessibility information for each venue is shown on the [venue page]() on the ceremonies website.

If you require support up to or across the stage, this must be provided by a guest accompanying you as university and venue staff will be unable to assist. Please notify the Ceremonies team at least four weeks in advance to ensure your guest can be accommodated.

Whilst we cannot guarantee all requests can be met, we will do our best to ensure this is the case. If you need further information, contact the [Ceremonies Centre]().

5.8 Urgent cases

Our Urgent Cases process is only for disability-related circumstances and is separate from other types of requests.

This process is for situations where a student either develops or experiences a sudden disability, or there has been a serious change in their pre-existing condition and where at least one of the following applies:

- Risk to Health & Safety: Circumstances where delay could cause physical or mental harm.

- Imminent Academic Deadline: Requests for reasonable adjustments arriving too late to be managed through standard lead times, yet necessary for fair access.

- Risk to continued study: Situations where, without immediate intervention, a student with disabilities would be unable to participate at all with their studies.

If you have an urgent need, you should contact your support team in the first instance, making it clear why it is urgent.

We will do our best to accommodate and support urgent cases, depending on time and availability (e.g. getting assistive technology sent out the same day may not be possible, but alternative solutions will be offered, such as a postponement without bias).

Where adjustments are not made in time or you are concerned that they will not be, you should contact your support team. If the issue is not resolved, you may escalate the matter through the complaints and appeals process. See How to make a complaint or appeal for more information.

Non-compliance

If you feel that we have not supported you in making reasonable adjustments while studying with us, as specified in this policy, you should contact your support team. If this does not resolve the matter, you can complain using our complaints and appeals process. For more information, see How to make a complaint or appeal in the Help Centre.

Requests for reasonable adjustments should be based on a genuine need related to a disability, long-term health condition, mental health challenge, or specific learning difficulty. If a request is found to be dishonest or misleading, it may be addressed under section 2.4.4.b, Acts of Dishonesty, of The Code of Practice for Student Discipline.

Assessing whether an adjustment is reasonable

Whilst we will attempt to anticipate accessibility needs, we recognise that owing to the breadth of accessibility requirements, there may still be occasions where your specific needs or requests may be new to us. In such cases, where adjustments are requested and it is unclear whether they may be considered a reasonable adjustment, the requests will be referred to the

- Accessibility Referrals Panel for study matters.

- Accessibility Exams Referral Panel where it is related to exams.

These panels are responsible for assisting with clarifying what reasonable adjustments can be put in place for you. You will be informed if your requests are referred and what the outcome is.

Definitions

Additional Assessment

These may be offered after the end of the module but before a module result outcome can be awarded. This happens when the Module Result Panel (MRP) is unclear about the result outcome to award for a module result. See also the [Additional assessment policy.](#)

Assessment tasks

For most modules you will be assessed by a mixture of Tutor Marked Assessments throughout the module (TMAs), exams (usually taken at home) or End of Module Assessments (EMAs) or end of module Tutor Marked Assessments (emTMAs). Some modules may also have Interactive Computer Marked Assessments (iCMAs). For more information see our [Assessment and Exam pages](#) in the Help Centre. If you are a Post Graduate Research Student, the graduate school can explain how you will be assessed.

Bionic reading

This is software that revises text for the reader by cutting distractions and focusing on the most concise parts of the most significant words. This may help those with ADHD or dyslexia to improve their reading comprehension.

Compulsory events

These are compulsory module elements that you have to attend in person or online and include day schools, residential schools, project or lab/field schools. These are not common, but if they are included in a module, details will be found in the module description and module website.

(Generative) Artificial Intelligence

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is a type of Artificial Intelligence that can create new material, including text, images, videos, and music, based on the data it has been trained on. It differs from traditional AI, which is used to predict or analyse data. GenAI learns patterns and structure in data, then generates new data that shares similar characteristics.

While there are rules about use of GenAI as a study tool for each module, in some cases the use of certain GenAI software is an acceptable reasonable adjustment, e.g. Grammarly.

Assistive Technology

Devices and software that helps students access their studies and participate fully in academic life. This includes hardware such as laptops and printers, as well as software such as screen readers, speech-to-text, text-to-speech, mind mapping, magnification and note-taking software. In some cases, the provision of Assistive Technology can be funded through the [Disabled Students' Allowance](#).

Case-based supplementary adjustments

This is support that is tailored to your circumstances and study choice, typically requiring supporting evidence and additional time to implement.

Disability

If you live in England, Wales or Scotland, you are defined as disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. For more information see the [Government's definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010](#). This is very similar to the definition that applies to students living in Northern Ireland, where the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) applies. Further information can be found [Definition of Disability under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#).

Profile

When you tell us about a [Disability](#), we will set up a profile to record how your disability may affect your study and the adjustments we have put in place. This is viewable from StudentHome and can be updated. For more details, see [Telling the OU about your disability](#) in the Help Centre. Postgraduate Research students may have adjustments made rather than via a profile.

Disabled Students' Allowance

The Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is support provided by the Government to cover the study-related costs you have because of a mental health problem, long-term illness or any other disability. This can be on its own or in addition to any student finance you apply for. The type of support and how much you get depends on your individual needs rather than your household income.

Distance learning

Instead of attending lectures and seminars on a campus, you study at home or work. Teaching, materials, and support are accessible and are delivered online. You also submit assessments online and, in most cases, take exams online as well. This allows you to mostly study when you want to within any week, in an environment that suits you, with all the support you need, including working with other students. Note that Postgraduate Research Students study is different and is explained in our [research degree website](#).

Embedded adjustments

These are adjustments that are specified in the context of the Equality Act 2010 and are built into the way we teach and are available to all students without the need for a specific request. They reflect inclusive design and accessibility best practice and Learning Experience.

The way in which we present our study materials and supporting activities for each module. This is centred on the use of the module website that hosts all the study materials you will need and related online activities such as interactive materials, use of specific software or forums. It also provides access to learning events such as tutorials. Occasionally, study may also involve the use of printed materials or in-person events such as residential schools. The module description and accessibility guide provide full details. Note that this does not apply to Postgraduate Research Students.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are specific, measurable statements describing the knowledge, skills, and abilities a student should be able to demonstrate after completing a particular piece of study. The emphasis is on what you will be able to do as a result of the study, rather than just what you know.

Non-Medical Help (NMH)

These are professionals who support students with a disability to d students engage with their studies. It is usually funded by the DSA and covers various forms of support, including specialist mentoring and study skills support.

On- request adjustments

These are adjustments that we frequently provide but typically need to be requested to ensure they are appropriately matched to individual needs.

Adjustments/Reasonable adjustments

These are changes or modifications made to ensure that disabled students are not substantially disadvantaged in their studies. This adjustment is considered 'reasonable' if it does not impose an undue hardship on The Open University, such as excessive cost, significant disruption, or fundamental alteration of what and how we teach. We have the following types of reasonable adjustment:

- Embedded adjustments

- On request adjustments

- Case-based supplementary adjustments

Support Team

If you are a taught undergraduate or postgraduate student, you can find the contact point for your Student Support Team on [contact us](#), If you are studying an apprenticeship, please contact the Apprentice Enrolment and Support Team (AEST) by email on apprentice-support@open.ac.uk, or telephone (+44 (0) 300 303 4121). Welsh-speaking Students and Learners may speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on +44 (0) 29 2047 1170.

Research Degree Students can contact the Graduate School via email [graduate-school@open.ac.uk.](mailto:graduate-school@open.ac.uk)

'You/your' and 'us/we/our'

Throughout this policy, "we/us/our" refers to The Open University, and "you/your" refers to any Student or learner who falls under the scope of the policy.

Related Policies and Legislation

- [Advocacy Policy](#)

- [Special Circumstances Policy](#)

- [Exams Policy](#)

- [Dignity and Respect Policy](#)

- [Our online Accessibility Statements](#)

- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) at the Open University

- [Equality Act 2010](#) in England, Scotland and Wales

- [Fitness to Study Policy](#)

- [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#) in Northern Ireland

- [Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018](#)

Give Us Your Feedback

If you have any comments about this policy and how it might be improved, please share these with us by emailing SPR-Policy-Team@open.ac.uk.

Our Student Charter Values

The Student Charter was developed jointly by The Open University and Open SU. It is a declaration of our shared values and the commitments we make to each other. This document has been developed with the Student Charter values as its foundation.

Our commitment to Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Our commitment to equality and inclusion is embedded in all that we do and reflects our mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas. We celebrate diversity and the strengths that it brings, whilst challenging under-representation and differences in outcomes within our institution. We promote and manage equality and diversity to meet both our strategic goals and our statutory equality duties. We achieve this in many ways, including the development of inclusive policy.

Welsh language standards

Safonau'r Gymraeg (Welsh Language Standards)

The Open University is one of several universities named in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. This means that any students in Wales can expect to receive certain services from the OU in Welsh. These are outlined in our Welsh language standards.

This means that you can speak to our student recruitment and support team in Welsh or contact the university in Welsh. You can find out more about your rights as a Welsh language user on the OU in Wales website.

About this Document

Summary of Significant Changes since last version

The following changes have been made:

- The policy has been completely rewritten to improve relevance, clarity, reflect updated regulatory requirements, updated terminology, and changing student needs.

- It includes more practical information about the types of adjustments we can make and how we provide support, as well as supporting links to advice and guidance in our Help Centre and Computing Guide.

Policies Superseded by this Document

This policy replaces the previous Student Accessibility policy, dated April 2023.

Document Information

Version number: 1.0

Approved by: Delegate of Director, Academic Services

Effective from: November 2025

Date for review: May 2026

Charity Statement

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England and Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to its secondary activity of credit broking.