

Guidelines for assessors

If you're responsible for carrying out the diagnostic assessment of an OU student with a specific learning difficulty, consult our background information on OU study, as well as the established guidelines for writing assessment reports.

Assessment reports

For many students, the diagnostic assessment report is used as evidence when applying for

- a [Disabled Students' Allowance \(DSA\)](https://help.open.ac.uk/dsa-guide) (<https://help.open.ac.uk/dsa-guide>)
- additional arrangements for examinations.

The assessment report must conform to the most recent [guidelines](http://www.sasc.org.uk/) drawn up by the [SpLD Assessment Standards Committee](http://www.sasc.org.uk/) (<http://www.sasc.org.uk/>). We recommend that the assessor is:

- a qualified psychologist experienced in working with adults, or
- a specialist teacher who holds a current Practising Certificate in SpLD Assessment issued by their professional association.

Once an OU student is found eligible for a DSA, there will be a separate study needs assessment to identify the equipment and study skills support that may be required.

What OU study involves

Our unique and flexible system of supported open learning encourages our students to become independent learners who feel confident to achieve their study goals. Our modules include:

- study materials ranging from print through multimedia to computer-based activities
- academic support from a tutor who marks the student's assignments and can be contacted by phone or email
- tutorials that can be by phone, online or occasionally face-to-face.

Our students are expected to undertake a lot of reading. A few modules have a residential school which involves tutorials, lectures and sometimes practical work, for example in a laboratory.

OU modules are worth from 15 to 60 credit points, depending on the amount of study involved. For students without a disability, long-term health condition, mental difficulty or specific learning difficulty:

- a 30-credit module takes between 9 and 14 hours of study a week, depending on the length of the module
- a 60 credit module takes around 18 hours a week over eight or nine months.

OU Support for disabled students

Study materials

Many modules contain study materials in alternative formats such as:

- audio recordings of printed material
- comb-bound books with a spiral binding that are more easy to use with a scanner or magnifier
- transcripts for DVD and audio resources.

Specialist equipment, including computers, may be available on loan where appropriate.

Additional support sessions

These can be arranged for students with a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia.

Examinations

Students who request additional examination arrangements must submit a diagnostic assessment report by a qualified assessor as evidence of their specific learning difficulty. It's helpful if the report recommends the type of examination arrangements that might be suitable for a student but final approval lies with the OU.

If extra time is required, the table below provides a guide of the amount of time students take to complete exam activities.

Table 1 Guide to the amount of time students take to complete exam activities

Task	Average	Moderately slow	Very slow
Writing	20 wpm	15 wpm	10 wpm
Reading	180 wpm	140 wpm	100 wpm
Checking work (3 hour exam)	10 minutes	15 minutes	20 minutes

Most OU students who have had a formal assessment for a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia are provided 10 to 15 minutes additional working time per hour in an exam.

Rest breaks may be needed for students who work more than 3 hours during an examination. As a guide:

- 10 to 30 minutes extra working time may need a rest break of 5 to 10 minutes
- over 30 minutes extra working time may need a rest break of 10 to 15 minutes.

You may wish to recommend other facilities to support a student during an examination, including:

- spell checkers
- word processors
- examination papers in alternative formats (enlarged print, coloured overlays or an audio version)
- a person to write down the answers dictated by a student, that is, an amanuensis or scribe.

International students taking an examination outside the UK need to discuss any recommended facilities with an adviser well in advance of the exam.