

Special Examination Arrangement Policy

1. Introduction

Students with disabilities, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and temporary conditions (including pregnancy) can apply for Special Examination Arrangements as part of the College's legal obligation to provide reasonable adjustments as specified under the Equality Act 2010.

The Special Examinations Arrangements Policy is in place to ensure that special examination arrangement requests are considered in a fair and transparent manner. At the same time, the policy is in place to ensure that special examination arrangements do not give a student an unfair advantage over others, including the students who take their examination under standard conditions.

2. Making applications

Applications must be made to the College's Disability and Dyslexia Service using an application form provided by the service (see Appendix One). This form is also available electronically from the Disability and Dyslexia Service's website (www.dds.qmul.ac.uk).

Once a student has completed the form the candidate will meet with an adviser from the Disability and Dyslexia Service to discuss their arrangements. A student with multiple disabilities may meet with more than one member of staff to ensure that all of their needs have been considered.

3. Appropriate supporting evidence

3.1 The student's application must be supported by appropriate evidence of the disability or condition; this may be a letter from a doctor or other medical practitioner, or a report from an educational psychologist in the case of a specific learning difficulty like dyslexia.

3.2 In the case of medical evidence this should be dated within the last two years. If a student has been diagnosed with a specific learning difficulty, e.g. dyslexia, they will be required to provide an assessment report from a chartered psychologist, or equivalent - preferably an educational psychologist. This should have been completed after the candidate's sixteenth birthday.

4. Deadlines for applying for special examination arrangements

4.1 Applications must be made before the advertised deadline to guarantee that they will be implemented in time for that year's examination period. If applications are made after the deadline the College cannot guarantee that they will be implemented until the next exam period.

4.2 The current deadline for making applications for special examination arrangements for the main end of year examinations is two weeks before the end of the second term. There is no equivalent deadline for students within the School of Medicine and Dentistry, although those students are advised to apply within two weeks of their exams to guarantee that there is sufficient time to implement their arrangements.

5. Guidance on recommended arrangements

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

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

5.2 **Dyslexic students and those with other specific learning difficulties** typically receive 25% additional time in their examinations, which is the level recommended in the 1999 Working Party report into supporting dyslexic students within Higher Education¹. If their educational psychologist's report recommends more time than this staff within DDS may decide to ask the educational psychologist for an explanation of why they have decided to recommend more than the usual amount. Staff within DDS will not necessarily ratify special exam arrangement recommendations made by educational psychologists or medical practitioners, but will take the opinion of such people

¹ Dyslexia in Higher Education: policy, provision and practice. Report of the National Working Party on Dyslexia in Higher Education, January 1999.

into account when making decisions on what to recommend for individual students.

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

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

5.4 Students with mental health issues may require additional time in their examinations to compensate for their impaired concentration or to offset the effects of medication that they are taking.

5.5 Students with conditions on the autistic spectrum, such as Asperger's Syndrome, may require arrangements to verbal assessments, such as vivas, owing to the nature of their communication disorder. They may also require additional time in written examinations, depending on the specific nature of their diagnosis.

5.6 Students with temporary conditions such as broken limbs can also apply for special examination arrangements, although these would only apply for one round of exams and they would need to reapply in the following academic session should they feel that there was still sufficient cause to merit the award of additional time. Students in this situation should also be advised of the College's 'fit to sit' rule, i.e. that if they are not well enough to take their examinations they should complete an extenuating circumstances form so they can resit their exams.

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

6. False claims

Submitting a falsified claim for a special examination arrangement could be regarded as an attempt to gain an unfair advantage, which would be an academic offence that would be dealt with under Queen Mary's Code of Student Discipline.

7. Implementing Special Examination Arrangements

7.1 Once the application has been received the student will be offered an appointment with an adviser working within the Disability and Dyslexia Service to discuss the requested exam arrangements. At the end of this meeting the adviser will agree on the recommendations with the student and both parties will sign the completed application form.

Once agreed, these arrangements will then be entered onto the MySIS system where they can be viewed by both staff within Registry, who administer end of year examinations and staff within academic departments (including those within the School of Medicine and Dentistry).

7.2 If a student wishes to amend or terminate their examination arrangements they can do so by contacting the Disability and Dyslexia Service prior to the deadline for making applications. If the student and their adviser within DDS agree to the requested change this will be implemented for the next round of exams; if there is a dispute the matter will be handled as in 8 (see below).

8. Special Examination Review Group

If the student is dissatisfied with the recommendations made by the Disability and Dyslexia Service their application will be referred to a '**Special Examination Arrangements Review Group**'. This will meet once per year, in the week immediately after the deadline for making special examination arrangements and will consist of the Head of the Disability and Dyslexia Service, a representative from Registry and nominees from the three Deans of Teaching and Learning from each faculty. There is also an intention to have student representation in the group, most probably the QMSU Vice President for Welfare. This will ensure that the practicalities of implementing proposed arrangements are considered, as well as the possible impact on academic standards. In addition, given the likelihood of there being applications from students with specific learning difficulties the Disability and Dyslexia Service will also arrange for an external educational psychologist to advise on cases where a student presents with a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia or dyspraxia.

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

9. College Appeal Regulations

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

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

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

Disability and Dyslexia Service
Student Services
November 2013

Appendix One: Special Examination Arrangement application form



APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS

Students should complete **Section A** only and then return the form by 14 March 2014 to the Disability and Dyslexia Service, Room 2.06, Francis Bancroft Building, Mile End.

Section A - to be completed by student

Student Number:

Surname:

Forenames:

Telephone Number:

Email address:

Reason for Special Arrangement Please Mark Appropriate

Specific Learning Difficulties Disability Other - Please provide details:

What Special Arrangements do you require? Please circle/highlight

Please note that you may be seated separately from the main examination room

Additional Time Use of a computer Amanuensis Reader

Other - Please provide details:

By signing this form you are agreeing that the Disability and Dyslexia Service can share this information with other College departments in order to facilitate your Special Examination Arrangements.

Student Signature:

Date:

ALL REQUESTS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY RECENT EVIDENCE FROM A MEDICAL
PRACTITIONER OR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Section B - Provision required as authorised by the Disability and Dyslexia Service

Responsibility of Registry:

Responsibility of Student's Department:

Review arrangement next year: Yes/No

DDS Staff Member:

Signature:

Date:

Under the terms of both the Disability Discrimination Act and the Equality Act, the College is obliged to provide the arrangement detailed above.

CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF THIS FORM: **14th March 2014**

Department Informed on:

Department Contact:

Entered onto SITS on:

By: