

# Inclusive Assessment Design

UPR TL05 version 01.0

## Policies superseded by this document

This is the first version of this document.

## Summary of significant changes to the previous version

This is the first version of this document and it should be read in full.

## Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.3	Definitions .....	2
2	Our Legal Obligations.....	3
3	'Inclusive-First' Design Approach .....	3
3.2	Identifying and distinguishing competence standards and learning outcomes .....	3
3.3	Drafting assessments.....	4
3.4	The relationship between inclusive design and academic integrity .....	4
3.5	Reasonable adjustments.....	5
4	Time Limits.....	5
4.2	Extensions of time.....	5
4.3	Extension of time limits for digital quizzes, and tests .....	5
5	Attendance as an assessment provision .....	6
6	Ensuring Compliance .....	6

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The following regulations on the design of assessments applies to all staff involved in learning, teaching, and assessment. The regulations set out the considerations that must be taken into account when designing assessments so that they are inclusive for all students, align with our principles for Herts Learning (see UPR TL03) and Herts Experience (see UPR SA01) and also meet our obligations under equality legislation.

These regulations should also be read in conjunction with the University's Guidance on Designing Inclusive Assessments.

- 1.2 To fully implement our Herts Learning and Herts Experience principles and meet our obligations, the University adopts an 'inclusive-first' approach to assessment design. This means that all assessments should be designed from the outset to be inclusive, equitable, and provide flexibility in how the method of assessment is set. Such an approach also rests on creating an inclusive learning environment where dialogue between staff and students is actively encouraged.

### 1.3 Definitions

- 1.3.1 For the purposes of this document, the following definitions apply:

i Disability

"A physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [a Person's] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." Equality Act 2010, s.6.

In this context, 'substantial' means "more than minor or trivial" (s.212), and 'long-term' means it has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least 12 months (Sch. 1, para. 2).

ii Competence standard

"A competence standard is an academic, medical or other standard applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability." Equality Act 2010, Sch. 13, para. 4(3). Any standard must be objectively justified within the context of the programme of study in which it is being applied.

iii Learning Outcomes

A set of statements capturing the intentions of a programme or module. They describe what a student will typically know and understand at the end of the module or programme as well as the intellectual, practical, and transferable skills that they will develop. They set a minimum threshold for passing an assessment. How well they are met is reflected in the grade students achieve. It is not a competence standard in and of itself.

iv Method of assessment

The means by which an assessment is conducted to determine whether a competence standard or learning outcome has been met.

v Reasonable adjustment

A change to a university provision, criterion, or practice that is reasonable to ensure that any student does not suffer substantial disadvantage arising from a disability, whether declared or not.

vi Study Needs Agreement (SNA)

An agreement between the university and a student who has declared a disability that identifies the agreed reasonable adjustments to the provision

of education to the student and which lasts for the duration of their studies or until it is revised during their studies.

## 2 Our Legal Obligations

- 2.1 The University adopts its legal obligations within its processes, policies and regulations. Under the Equality Act 2010, s.91(9), the University is subject to an anticipatory duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities. Our duty comprises three requirements that apply, amongst other matters, to the provision of education and the conferment of qualifications and thus includes the assessment of our students.

First, where any University assessment provision, criterion or practice, puts a disabled student at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with students who are not disabled, the University will take such steps as are reasonable to avoid the disadvantage. However, this does not apply to a provision, criterion, or practice that is applying a competence standard.

Secondly, where a physical feature of the premises occupied by the University, including the location where an assessment is to take place, puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled, the University will take such steps as is reasonable to take to avoid the disadvantage.

Thirdly, where a disabled person would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled, the University will take such steps as it is reasonable to take to provide the auxiliary aid.

All information supplied to students that is related to an assessment that the student is required to undertake must be supplied in an accessible format and complies with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

## 3 ‘Inclusive-first’ Design Approach

- 3.1 As part of our ‘inclusive-first’ approach to designing assessments, staff involved in the drafting of assessments should be guided by the QAA Quality Code, Advice and Guidance on Assessment (p5), Guiding Principle 4:

“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.”

- 3.2 **Identifying and distinguishing competence standards and learning outcomes**

Programme sites must contain a page stating the programme learning outcomes from the Programme Specification document. The programme site must also make clear which of those learning outcomes are considered a competence standard on the programme, along with the year of study in which any such standard is assessed. The page should also clearly indicate how students can demonstrate they have met the requisite standard along with the relevance to the programme of meeting that competence.

Module sites should also clearly indicate which of its learning outcomes are competence standards.

It will only be in rare circumstances that the ability to undertake a method of assessment will amount to a competence standard.

### **3.3 Drafting assessments**

Each individual learning outcome, whether at programme or module level, must be drafted in clear, plain English and be consistent with the level of study in question. Each individual outcome listed must be measurable, realistically achievable, and summatively assessed (see the University's Guidance Notes on Drafting DMDs). The learning outcomes in the Definitive Module Document (DMD) must align with the curriculum activities and the assessment(s).

The method of assessment that is designed to enable a student to demonstrate that they have met a particular learning outcome, should be designed from the outset to be as flexible as is reasonably possible. Flexibility may relate to the format of any output that a student produces as part of the assessment or relate to the instructions given as part of the assessment brief such as how an output is produced, or relate to both.

Where a method of assessment has been designed with flexibility in terms of the format of any output that is produced by a student, grading criteria and marking schemes must be drafted in a way that ensures parity between different assessment formats.

Module teams are encouraged to contact the Student Wellbeing Team when designing an assessment to gain advice on any issues around inclusivity, accessibility and SNA compliance, to pre-empt any issues arising once teaching on the module is underway and an assignment has been published. The Learning and Teaching Excellence Team within CLASS are available to support module teams incorporate any advice that is given by the Student Wellbeing Team.

### **3.4 The relationship between inclusive design and academic integrity**

While any assessment must be designed and conducted with strong academic integrity measures in place, the imposition of assessment design features to strengthen academic integrity should not compromise the inclusivity of the assessment.

### **3.5 Reasonable adjustments**

The University recognises that a significant number of students may have an undeclared disability, and may not seek to declare it, or may be waiting some time for a formal declaration to be recorded. Similarly, some students may have an undiagnosed disability. Therefore, as part of the University's 'inclusive-first' approach, and in line with our anticipatory duty, reasonable adjustments to methods of assessment should be incorporated at the assessment design stage.

## **4 Time Limits**

- 4.1 A requirement to complete an assessment within a specified time limit is permissible. However, a time limit applied to an assessment will not be considered a competence standard “unless the competence being tested is the ability to do something within a limited time period.” Equality and Human Rights Commission (2014), *Technical Guidance on further and higher education*, para.7.35.

### **4.2 Extensions of time**

All students are able to request an extension of time for submitting a piece of coursework (see UPR AS12, Appendix 1). Each programme of study must have a clearly worded extension request process, in an accessible format, on its Virtual Learning Environment programme site.

Where a student with a SNA requests an extension for a piece of coursework, the student may request an extension up to a maximum of 10 calendar days (see UPR AS12, Appendix 1, paragraph 4.2b). When deciding whether to grant the extension or the number of days to grant, the decision must not place the student at a substantial disadvantage compared to a student who does not have a disability.

### **4.3 Extension of time limits for digital quizzes, and tests**

In anticipation of a student undertaking a quiz having an undeclared or undiagnosed disability, an additional period of time should be added to the duration of the quiz and applied to all students. This should be the case irrespective of a student having a SNA in place. Such a provision helps the University to discharge its anticipatory duty towards students with a disability, but also takes into consideration the existence of other personal circumstances that could substantially disadvantage students' ability to undertake the quiz which cannot be covered by a SNA.

The standard amount of time needed to complete the quiz or test, plus 25%. Where an individual student has an SNA in place that provides for more than 25% additional time for a quiz or test, that individual student should be allocated the duration provided for by the SNA.

If a student with a SNA requests further time on top of that provided above, so that they have more time than any other student who does not have a SNA, it may be reasonable to make a further adjustment to the time allocation and give that student more additional time.

## 5 Attendance as an assessment provision

Module assessments should only be assessing learning outcomes set out in the module's DMD. 'Attendance' of itself cannot be a learning outcome within the DMD. Where attendance is inherently required to demonstrate a competence standard has been met, the learning outcome will simply be the competence standard that needs meeting.

Non-attendance at an assessment that is not demonstrating the meeting of a competence standard should not result in the marks for any other assessments within the module being reduced or capped.

## 6 Ensuring Compliance

- 6.1 Each academic school must have an effective framework in place to ensure not only that all SNAs are complied with, but that all assessments are designed and published in line with these regulations.
- 6.2 An effective framework will include, as a minimum, ensuring that -
- i. the review of any individual assignment prior to its publication to students (see UPR AS12, paragraph 5) considers the inclusivity of that assignment, including the information supplied alongside it;
  - ii. all assessment strategies are reviewed annually to consider any inclusivity issues that arose in that academic year and whether those strategies remain appropriate in light of any new cohort of students who will be subject to them in the next academic year; and
  - iii. monitoring, and reporting on, the performance of students with a disability compared to non-disabled students with regards Office for Students B3 metrics and Access and Participation Plans.

Sharon Harrison-Barker  
Secretary and Registrar  
Signed: **1 August 2024**

### Alternative format

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at [governanceservices@herts.ac.uk](mailto:governanceservices@herts.ac.uk) or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.