

Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Policy

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Feedback or issues arising on implementation of this policy should be communicated to the policy author.	
Policy Author:	Head of Student Life and Learning/ Head of Learner Support & Student Services

Policy Management Framework Compliance Review as requested by EMT all draft policies should be reviewed by the Policy Review Group ¹ in advance of review by EMT. Please confirm that the policy was reviewed by the policy review group.	
Date Policy Reviewed:	25 th October 2023

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1. Introduction/Context

South East Technological University (SETU) is committed to ensuring that students with disabilities have as complete and equitable access to all facets of University life, as can reasonably be provided. SETU is mindful of our statutory obligation under the Disability Act 2005, the Equal Status Acts 2000 (amended), the HEA Act 2022 and the Technological Universities Act 2018 to support access to services and facilities for people with disabilities.

The Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Policy (the “Policy”) provides a framework for the provision of Reasonable Accommodations for SETU students with a disability/specific learning difficulty/ongoing health condition. This Policy is developed in accordance with the Acts listed above. In particular the Equal Status Act 2000 (and amendments) clearly outline SETU’s duty, as an educational establishment to provide reasonable accommodations.

1.1 Equal Status Act 2000 (Amended)

This Act prohibits discrimination at an 'educational establishment'. Section 7 of the Act defines an educational establishment as:

".. a pre-school service within the meaning of Part VII of the Child Care Act, 1991, a primary or post-primary school, an institution providing adult, continuing or further education, or a university or any other third-level or higher-level institution, whether or not supported by public funds."

All higher education institutions (HEIs) are covered by the Act, and the Act prohibits all educational establishments from discriminating on the basis of any of the nine discriminatory grounds in the legislation, including disability. Educational establishments (under section 7) are prohibited from directly and indirectly discriminating in relation to:

- The terms or conditions of admission,
- Access to any course,
- Access to any facility or benefit provided,
- Or any other term or condition of participation in the establishment,
- Expulsion of a student or any other sanction against a student.

Direct discrimination for the purposes of the Act is defined as treating one person less favourably than another on one of the discriminatory grounds, including disability (section 3(1)). Subsection 3(1)(c) refers to the concept of indirect discrimination, which occurs when a provision, criterion, or practice that appears neutral actually puts persons with disabilities at a particular disadvantage compared to others, unless that provision can be objectively justified or reasonable accommodation is provided.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy and is to provide a framework for the provision of Reasonable Accommodations for students with disabilities studying in SETU.

Students with a disability are encouraged to register with the Disability Service to seek supports where disability could affect their ability to participate fully in all aspects of their course.

Reasonable Accommodations will be put in place after a student has registered with the Disability Service. Students are strongly encouraged to apply within advertised dates. For more details please see Appendix 1.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the other related Disability Service policies which are available from respective campus Disability Services.

3. Definitions

3.1 Disability

For the purpose of this document the definition of Disability is taken as that stipulated in the Employment Equality Act 1998 and Equal Status Acts (2000) as amended, is as follows:

1. The total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body,

2. The presence in the body of organisms causing or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness,
3. The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body,
4. A condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or
5. A condition, illness or disease which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.

3.2 Reasonable Accommodation

For the purpose of this Policy and all SETU policies relating to students with disabilities, a Reasonable Accommodation is any action that helps to alleviate a substantial disadvantage due to a disability and/or a significant ongoing illness.

A "reasonable accommodation" (as it is referred to in the Equal Status Act) is an amendment to the student's course of study which enables her/him to participate fully in their education. An adjustment is

- intended to help ensure disabled students are not disadvantaged
- available to students with specific learning difficulties, other disabilities and/or a significant ongoing illness
- intended to address a disability-related issue, not an ability "gap".

Factors influencing the determination of what is reasonable will include;

- The effectiveness of taking particular steps in enabling the student to overcome the relevant disadvantage;
- Whether the steps would significantly compromise the academic standards or professional practices associated with the course of study;
- Health and safety issues;
- The effect on other students;
- And the financial and other cost to the institution.

For the purpose of this Policy, Reasonable Accommodations are defined as Standard or Non-Standard Reasonable Accommodations.

3.3 A Standard Reasonable Accommodation is defined as an amendment to the student's teaching, learning and assessment which enables them to participate fully in their education. SETU is committed to ensuring that its examination system (undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes) as far as possible enables students with disabilities who are registered with the Disability Service to compete equally with their peers who do not have a disability. Examples of Standard Reasonable Accommodations are listed in Appendix 2.

3.4 A Non-standard Reasonable Accommodation occurs when the University recognises that academic Faculties/Schools and Departments may need to consider providing alternative non-standard teaching learning and assessment methods where standard Reasonable Accommodations are not sufficient to meet the needs of the student. Examples of Non Standard Reasonable Accommodations are listed in Appendix 3 and occur in exceptional circumstances only. The principles of providing Reasonable Accommodations apply to Non Standard Reasonable Accommodations also. SETU will supply necessary support and training for teaching staff if required.

3.5 Discrimination

As per the Equal Status Act 2000 (section 4(1)), discrimination "includes a refusal or failure by the provider of a service to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability by providing special treatment or facilities, if without such special treatment or facilities it would be impossible or unduly difficult for the person to avail himself or herself of the Service"

3.6 Assistive Technology

Assistive technology for students in third-level education refers to tools, devices, software, or systems that support individuals with disabilities or learning challenges in accessing, engaging

with, and succeeding in their academic studies. This technology is designed to accommodate a range of needs, including physical, sensory, cognitive, and learning disabilities, by providing alternative ways to interact with educational content, complete assignments, and participate in classroom activities.

4. Scope

This Policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate students with disabilities studying at SETU who are registered with the Disability Service.

‘Student’ is any person who has accepted an offer to study and is pursuing a course of study at SETU and includes any Visiting Student. ‘Visiting Student’ means any Student who may also be bound by the terms and conditions of their contract (of employment and/or the policies and procedures of their host institution) and are considered as Students under SETU Regulations, Policies and Procedures.

The Policy defines standard and non-standard Reasonable Accommodations available to students with disabilities. The Policy explains how Reasonable Accommodations are granted and communicated to all relevant stakeholders. The Policy demonstrates SETU’s compliance with relevant national legislation.

It shall be made generally available and published publicly via the University web-site.

5. Principles

The principles of this policy are:

- SETU will endeavour to create an environment where students are comfortable in disclosing a disability and are provided with opportunities to do so at various stages throughout their time in SETU. SETU endorses the principles of inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment. SETU will ensure that its courses and programmes are as inclusive and as accessible as reasonably practicable.

- Students with disabilities who are registered with the Disability Service will have access to appropriate academic Reasonable Accommodations and/or additional supports as determined by a Needs Assessment carried out by a suitably qualified staff member in the Disability Service and in accordance with the individual's certified disability.
- The student, the academic staff, Faculties/Schools, Departments, the Disability Service and the Vice President for Student Experience are key partners in the development and provision of Reasonable Accommodations, which enable the student's participation in all teaching, learning, and assessment.

6. Confidentiality for Students with Disabilities

SETU encourages students with disabilities to disclose information on their disability to the Disability Service before they apply to SETU or at any point during their studies. Such disclosure is encouraged so that SETU can work with the student to ensure that Reasonable Accommodations are identified and facilitated in conjunction with the student.

Information about disability is classed as sensitive personal data and will be processed by the University in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2003, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the SETU Data Protection Policy. The University cannot pass on personal or sensitive information without the student's written permission. When the student registers with the Disability Service they are asked to sign a 'Consent to disclose form' allowing the Disability Service to forward on any relevant information regarding their Reasonable Accommodations to the relevant academic Faculties/Schools, Departments and service areas.

An electronic record of the student's contact with the Disability Service is held securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the SETU Data Protection Policy, and information provided to the Disability Service is

regarded as 'sensitive personal data'. The information may also be used for statistical and monitoring purposes without the student's identity being revealed.

Any documentation or information presented in disclosing a disability is held by the Disability Service, and specific medical or other documentation will not be disclosed to any third party except where necessary to provide Reasonable Accommodations.

Where a student requests, and is granted any form of Reasonable Accommodation, such as extra time in examinations, or permission to record lectures, the Disability Service will, in consultation with the student, disclose relevant information to the individuals in those Faculties/Schools/Departments and other areas responsible for providing or facilitating students in accessing such accommodations. In such instances, only information relevant to the accommodation provided will be disclosed.

A student is not obliged to disclose detailed information to the Faculty/School about their disability. A discussion about disability disclosure takes place during the Needs Assessment process between the Disability Service staff and the Student. This allows the Disability Service to share the student's Reasonable Accommodations via the student record system.

Where academic staff contact the Disability Service for information regarding the nature of the individual students' disability, staff will be informed that it is necessary to obtain the permission of the student in writing, before the individual case is discussed.

7. Disclosure of Disability

SETU welcomes applications from prospective students with disabilities and is committed to making Reasonable Accommodations to enable students to fully participate in student life.

Students with disabilities are actively encouraged to disclose their disability to the SETU Disability Service. Once a student discloses a disability and seeks disability support via the disability registration process and provides the appropriate evidence of disability, they will be invited to complete a Needs Assessment to identify their Reasonable Accommodations.

If a student does not disclose their disability to SETU or allow the disability service to share information on their reasonable accommodation to academic/relevant areas, it will not be possible for reasonable accommodations to be implemented.

8. Needs Assessment Process

Reasonable Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis through a Needs Assessment.

The Needs Assessment process is based upon appropriate evidence of disability and information obtained from the student on the impact of their disability and their academic course requirements.

Needs Assessments are carried out by suitably qualified members of staff in the Disability Service who are viewed as experts in the area of Reasonable Accommodations. They act as a resource to both students and academic Departments in the identification and implementation of Reasonable Accommodations in teaching, learning, and assessment.

The Needs Assessment process involves advising and/or providing Reasonable Accommodations.

Following a Needs Assessment, a Needs Assessment Report is prepared by the Disability Service and provided to the student. The information within the Needs Assessment report is communicated to the relevant academic Faculties/Schools and Departments through the student information system.

Students with disabilities may require additional disability supports on professional placement. Following the Needs Assessment, the student is offered a Needs Assessment for professional placement. On request from the student, the Disability Service prepares an Individual Professional Placement Needs Assessment detailing the Reasonable Accommodations to be implemented. Placement Co-Ordinators are advised of the recommended Reasonable Accommodations. Students must give consent for this to occur. If consent is not given, accommodations for placement cannot be put in place.

Needs Assessments can be reviewed and amended by SETU if, for example, circumstances change and /or additional information is provided. The student can contact the Disability Service to request a Needs Assessment review should their circumstances or needs change.

9. Granting of Reasonable Accommodations

SETU will endeavour to ensure that its examination procedures are effective in assessing the knowledge and abilities of all students, whilst at the same time ensuring the maintenance of academic standards.

SETU endorses the practice of inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment, and aims to ensure that courses are accessible and enable full participation for all students. Faculties/Schools are encouraged to ensure that accessibility is a key consideration when developing new courses or when redesigning or evaluating existing courses.

Reasonable Accommodations must be made to any aspect of teaching or assessment that would substantially disadvantage a student with a disability in relation to their peers, unless this accommodation would compromise the academic standards or professional practices associated with the course of study. SETU will supply necessary support and training for teaching staff if required.

If the Disability Service and the Faculty/School/Department do not reach an agreement as to the requested Reasonable Accommodation(s), firstly, efforts should be made to assess whether an alternative, effective, and reasonable form of accommodation can be made for the student in question.

In the event of an agreement on an alternative, effective and reasonable form of accommodation not being reached, the matter will be referred to the Vice President for Student Experience who will adjudicate as to what accommodation should be made for the student in question.

In the case of postgraduate research students registered with the Disability Service, the principles of Reasonable Accommodation are similarly applied. The distinctive nature of learning on research degrees requires that Reasonable Accommodations may differ in form or scope from those at taught-course level. Reasonable Accommodations will be agreed on a case-by-case basis and may include any of those outlined in Appendix 2 or additional academic Reasonable Accommodations based on an individual's disability needs and pertaining to the type of study the research student is undertaking. Reasonable Accommodations will be recommended by the Disability Service as part of the Needs Assessment (see Section 9.) and communicated to the supervisor and relevant academic Department. Supervisors should be mindful that disclosure of a disability is often a source of anxiety for research students, in particular, as research students may have teaching responsibilities in their Faculty/School.

10. Sharing of Reasonable Accommodations with Relevant Faculties/Schools and Departments

Following Needs Assessment, the Disability Service with the consent of the student will share information about Reasonable Accommodations with their Faculty/School and relevant Departments/Professional Services for the purposes of their implementation.

It is the responsibility of each Faculty/School to have an effective dissemination and implementation system in place to allow for information on Reasonable Accommodations to be circulated to all relevant lecturers and administrative staff who are required to implement Reasonable Accommodations within the Faculty/School e.g. those organising examinations, work placements and timetabling. This information should be disseminated in line with the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's Data Protection Policy and associated procedures. Further information on dealing with personal and sensitive data can be obtained from the University's Data Protection Office.

11. Responsibilities

Recognition of roles and responsibilities of staff and students is essential to the implementation of this policy. For the purposes of this policy, reference to the term “staff” also incorporates external service providers working on behalf of SETU.

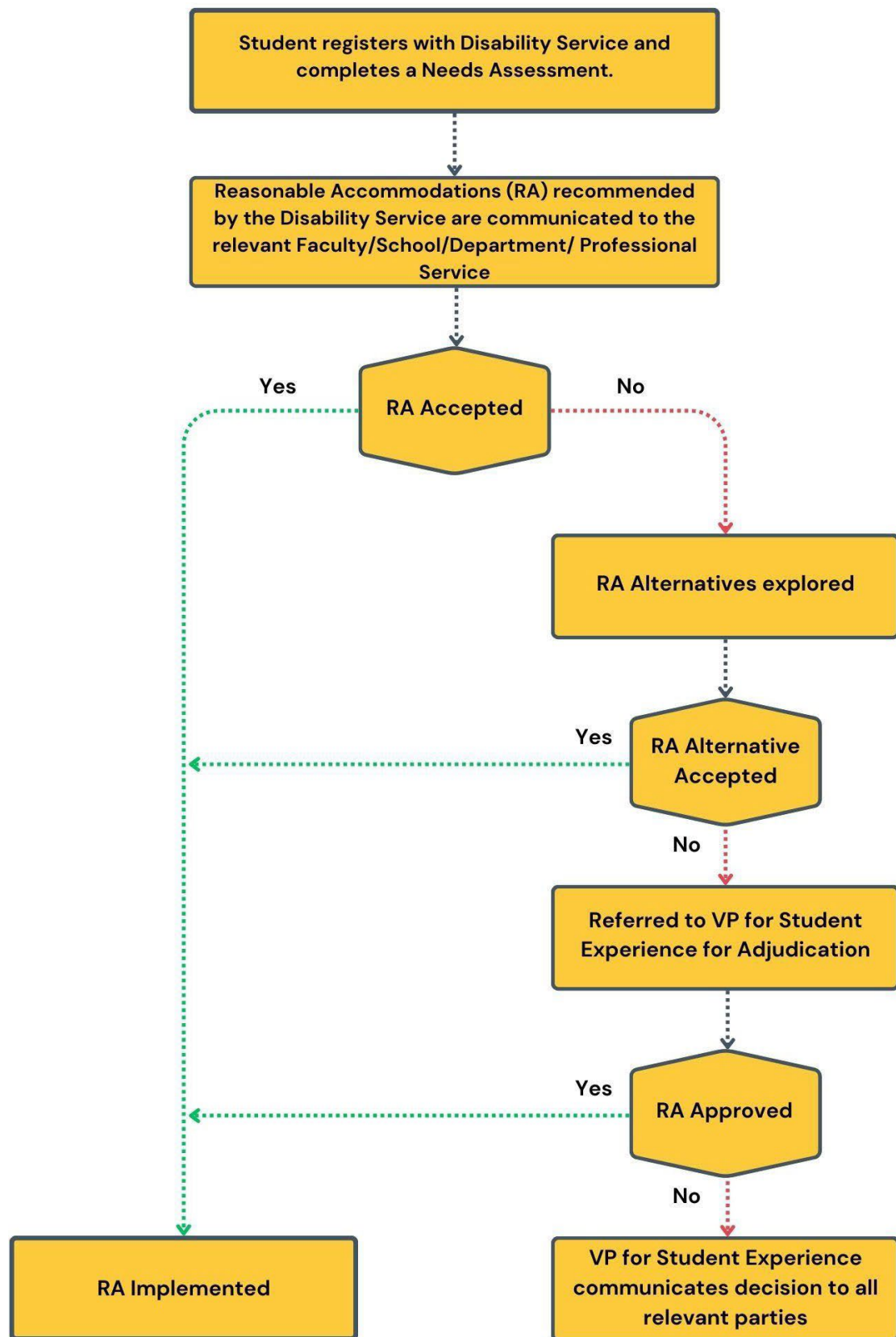
Responsible Office/Person(s)	Role
SETU Staff	Staff have a legal responsibility to support the implementation of reasonable accommodations . Academic staff and SETU professional services, external service providers and work placement providers have a duty to facilitate Reasonable Accommodations identified through Needs Assessment.
SETU Students	To avail of Reasonable Accommodations, it is the responsibility of the student to notify SETU Disability Services of their disability/learning difficulties/ongoing health condition, provide verifiable evidence and undergo a Needs Assessment. It is also the student’s responsibility to follow specific guidelines related to accessing Reasonable Accommodations in a timely manner.
SETU Disability Service	The Disability Service has a responsibility to complete Needs Assessments in partnership with the student and to advise the student regarding any procedures relating to accessing Reasonable Accommodations.

12. Complaints

Complaints by students relating to the implementation (or failure thereof) of this policy are to be made using the SETU Student Complaints Policy.

13. Overview of Reasonable Accommodations Decision Making

The flowchart below provides an overview of Reasonable Accommodations decision making:



14. Document Control

This policy will be reviewed in advance of the review date i.e. December 2026 and/or as soon as possible following new or updated legislation, national or sectoral policy.

15. Policy Author

The authors of this policy are the Head of Student Life and Learning/ Head of Learner & Support Services. Any feedback or issues arising on implementation of this policy should be communicated to the policy authors. They are responsible to ensure that the Policy Owner is aware of these comments when reviewing the policy.

16. Appendices

Appendix 1. Relevant Closing Dates.

There are closing dates for registration with the Disability Service for approvals for Reasonable Accommodations in each semester. This is to ensure adequate time and resources to conduct a Needs Assessment and arrange necessary supports. These dates are advertised on the SETU website before each semester commences.

After the closing dates in each semester Reasonable Accommodations in examinations for students with disabilities cannot be guaranteed under the Policy.

Appendix 2 Standard Reasonable Accommodations

Standard Reasonable Accommodations are listed below but not limited to:

Standard Examination Accommodations
Extra time (10 mins Extra per hour)
Scribe in a separate centre
Reader in a separate centre
Electronic reader in a shared centre
Group / Low distraction venue
Invigilator in a Separate Centre
Enlarged Paper (Font sized Specified)
Waiver in Spelling and Grammar
Use of a computer to type in shared venue
Use of a computer to type in separate centre
Special Furniture
Permission to bring food and drink into examination venue
Specified additional other information e.g. requires to be seated near toilet or requires wheelchair accessible desk etc.

Standard Disability Teaching and Learning Accommodations
Allow additional time to develop practical skills
Provide accessible teaching & learning locations
Allow student to record lectures
Allow personal assistant/lab assistant/academic assistant/ note taker
Prioritised reading lists/ course material in alternative formats,
Provide enlarged hand-outs
Provide feedback on continuous assessment
Provide lecture materials in advance, wherever possible
Professional placement supports
Ensure field trips and off-campus visits are accessible where reasonably practicable
Use of assistive hearing devices for the hard of hearing in teaching venues (microphones)
Permission to eat and/or drink in teaching venues
Use of Assistive Technology (AT) in teaching & learning venues
Permission to take rest breaks in teaching and learning session
Irish Sign Language (ISL) Interpreter in teaching and learning sessions

Standard Disability Teaching and Learning Accommodations Explained

Allow additional time to develop practical skills.

Where possible, students with reduced fine motor skills; processing speed difficulties; or disabilities which can cause pain, fatigue, or reduced mobility, should be given additional time to develop alternative techniques or to practice specific practical skills.

Provide accessible teaching & learning locations.

Most teaching and learning spaces in SETU are accessible but there are some buildings that are not accessible or are only partially accessible. If a student has an accessibility issue, the Disability Service will communicate this to the Faculty/School to ensure that all teaching venues are accessible.

Allow student to record lectures.

Students with disabilities may be permitted to record lectures and tutorials if as part of the Needs Assessment it is deemed a Reasonable Accommodation by the Disability Service. Students are informed to seek permission to record as part of needs assessment. For further information in relation to policies on the recording of lectures as a Reasonable Accommodation, please refer to the SETU website or contact the Disability Service.

Allow personal assistant/lab assistant/academic assistant/note-taker.

Some students may require an assistant to attend their lectures or labs to assist them with a physical task such as note-taking or carrying equipment or materials.

Provide prioritised reading lists / course material in alternative formats, wherever possible.

The provision of reading lists, texts and notes that need to be provided in an alternative format for students with sensory/print disabilities should be provided well in advance of classes.

In rare circumstances, students with visual impairments may require course material in alternative formats such, large print, or electronic format as part of a reasonable accommodation. In these cases, it is important to ensure that reading lists are available as early as possible at the start of term to ensure that books can be sourced by students from publishers in an appropriate format.

Provide feedback on continuous assessment.

Students registered with disability service require ongoing feedback on their continuous assessment and course work. This will allow students to get reassurance on meeting course demands.

Provide lecture materials in advance, wherever possible.

Due to disability, some students have difficulty with concentration and processing information and therefore may require handouts of PowerPoint presentations or slides in advance of class to ensure that they are not placed at a significant disadvantage in comparison to their peers. Where, for academic or professional practice reasons, a Faculty/School is unable to provide this Reasonable Accommodation, it is important that the lecturer liaises with the Disability Service to discuss alternative Reasonable Accommodations.

Professional placement supports.

As part of the Needs Assessment process, the Disability Service can help students on prepare for placement. The Disability Service can also provide advice to placement staff on disability related issues. The Disability Service works closely with students and placement staff to provide guidance by:

- Discussing work placement demands as part of the Needs Assessment process.

- Encouraging students to start thinking about the impact of their disability, and the types of Reasonable Accommodations that may be required on placement.
- Helping students understand the disclosure process and support them to make informed choices about disclosure on placement.
- Supporting students to engage with placement staff if Reasonable Accommodations are required.
- Providing guidance to placement staff on disability related issues and Reasonable Accommodations that may be needed.
- Attending placement planning meetings if required to identify work placement needs.

Ensure field trips and off-campus visits are accessible.

Academic staff should in advance, in consultation with the student, do all that is reasonable and practicable in relation to the accessibility of field trips. Where there are insurmountable difficulties in relation to the accessibility of a field trip, academic staff can seek advice from the Disability Service regarding a possible alternative reasonable accommodation.

Use of audio devices/assistive hearing devices for the hard of hearing in teaching venues (microphones).

Lecturers may have to use a microphone or other equipment to assist those with hearing difficulties if requested.

Permission to eat and/or drink in teaching venues.

Permission to eat or drink should be given to the student if so required by their disability. For example, lecturers should be aware that diabetics may require food at specific times.

Use of Assistive Technology (AT) in teaching & learning venues.

Lecturers should allow the student to use a laptop or computer to take notes or use assistive technology software during class. Students have a responsibility to use the AT solely for this purpose in class and will have signed an agreement to this prior to receiving this accommodation.

Permission to take rest breaks in teaching and learning session.

Lecturers should allow the student to take rest breaks if they have been granted rest breaks as a Reasonable Accommodation. This may involve taking a short break between classes. The lecturer should note that a student with such a disability may sit close to the exit to allow for this, or may be absent for certain periods of the teaching session.

Irish Sign Language (ISL) Interpreter in teaching and learning sessions.

Lecturers should allow ISL interpreters in all teaching, learning, and assessment sessions. This will provide deaf students who use ISL interpretation as their means of communication with the appropriate tools to function in their course.

Appendix 3 Non-standard Reasonable Accommodations

A non-standard Reasonable Accommodation occurs when the University recognises that in exceptional circumstances standard examination accommodations are not sufficient to meet the needs of the student. This applies to only a very small number of cases.

Examples of non-standard examination Reasonable Accommodations and non-standard teaching and learning accommodations are outlined below. Examples are not limited to the following and are decided upon on a case by case basis.

Examples of non-standard examination accommodation	
Flexible examination arrangements	<p>Refers to any alteration in the standard form assessment. For example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Provision of an oral examination instead of a written test● Some flexibility around the scheduling of examinations, such as allowing more time between examinations for a student with a physical disability who experiences fatigue● Examinations split into more than one session, <p>Flexible examination arrangements are granted in exceptional circumstances only.</p>
Alternative forms of examination assessment.	<p>For some students with disabilities, where appropriate standard accommodations cannot be made, it may be necessary to consider an alternative form of assessment to an examination. The law requires the HEI to make “reasonable accommodations” and encourages flexibility and inclusivity by providing assessments that are suitable for as many students as possible. In this way, fewer adjustments need to be made for Individuals.</p> <p>Items to consider in designing an alternative assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Are current learning outcomes effectively measured using the proposed assessment?● How are the needs of the student with disabilities met by using the proposed assessment?● Have the proposals been discussed with the student?● If it is not possible to meet their needs through use of an alternative assessment, it would have to be considered whether or not the learning outcomes are in any way discriminatory. If so, they may need to be re-evaluated.● Will academic standards or professional practices be maintained if the alternative assessment is used?

Examples of non-standard teaching and learning accommodations include	
Flexible assessment deadlines	<p>Some students may require additional time to complete some aspects of their coursework arising from their disability.</p> <p>The reasons may include a period of illness for someone with a fluctuating medical condition or difficulties completing a high level of reading within a standard timeframe for students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.</p> <p>The individual needs of each student are considered alongside specific course requirements, meaning the length of an extension may vary. Flexibility of assessment deadlines is normally granted for a limited duration and/ or for specific circumstances.</p> <p>Where a student has the accommodation of Flexibility with assignment deadlines, an extended submission date must be agreed upon between the student, the lecturer and the Disability Service.</p>
For Research student assessed by Viva Voce	<p>In very exceptional circumstances the Disability Service, after discussions with the student, may recommend Reasonable Accommodations be made to the format of the Viva Voce.</p>