

HE Alternative Assessment Arrangements Policy

2023-25



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Policyholder:	Head of Student Support and Wellbeing
Contact:	quality@leedsconservatoire.ac.uk
Alternative formats:	Policy available on SPACE, alternative hard and electronic copy formats available on request.

Linked external codes/regulations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Act 2010
Linked documents/references
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Hull Assessment Regulations • Leeds Conservatoire Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement • HE Assessment Procedure: Performance (Recitals and Presentations) • HE Assessment Procedure: Timed Written/Practical Assessments • HE Mitigating Circumstances Procedure 2018-19 • Appendix 1: Guidance on implementing alternative assessment arrangements • Appendix 2: Guidance on supervised rest breaks
Equality Impact Assessment information
N/A

Policy Statement
<p>This policy applies to Leeds Conservatoire (hereafter referred to as ‘the conservatoire’) staff and students, irrespective of age, disability, gender and gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, neurodiversity, pregnancy and maternity/paternity, race , religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.</p> <p>The conservatoire recognises the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability; ‘A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities’ and recognises its duties under the Equality Act to provide anticipatory and continuing reasonable adjustments for access to facilities and services, practices and procedures, and provision of auxiliary aids.</p>

All disabled students of the conservatoire are entitled to alternative assessment arrangements appropriate to their course of study. Students may declare a disability at any point during application, interview and audition, registration or study.

Background/vision (if applicable)

N/A

Policy

1. Alternative Assessment Arrangements

The Disability Advisers contact all students who declare a disability to offer support and devise a support plan, which includes the details of any alternative assessment arrangements the student may need.

Alternative assessment arrangements will be agreed with each student as part of their support plan. Students are encouraged to discuss their needs with the Disability Advisers as soon as possible after registration to ensure alternative arrangements can be put in place. There is no need for students to apply separately for alternative assessment arrangements outside of their agreed support plan. Students can request additional assessment arrangements or a review of their existing assessment arrangements at any time once their support plan is in place.

The conservatoire will make every effort to put alternative assessment arrangements in place wherever possible for any form of exam or assessment, which counts towards the marks for a module ('summative assessments').

Alternative assessment arrangements may also be appropriate to allow disabled students to participate fully in informal assessments and demonstrate learning outcomes, even if these assessments do not count towards a final module mark ('formative assessments').

2. Suitable Evidence for Alternative Assessment Arrangements

If suitable evidence has not already been provided as part of the student's support needs plan, disabled students will be required to provide evidence for alternative assessment arrangements. Suitable evidence can include a diagnostic report, letter signed by a health practitioner (e.g. GP, occupational therapist, NHS consultant), DSA study needs assessment report or DSA medical evidence form.

3. Examination and Assessment

The following types of examinations and assessments are typical of those used on HE programmes of study at the conservatoire:

- Coursework based assessments - including essays, written assignments, performance or practical logs, compositions, technical and production recordings, video submissions, including submissions via My Portfolio.
- Individual performance based exams – vivas, sight reading, ensembles, recitals, presentations.
- In class assessments - performance, technical/multiple-choice examinations, aural and practical assessments, including some online computer and software based tests.
- Group work assessments – presentations, studio production practical and group recordings.

A full and up to date list of all exams and assessments taking place on a particular course or pathway can be found on the relevant course and module pages on SPACE, and on each student's individual area of SPACE. Specific details are provided in the individual assessment briefs. A full list of all types of exam, assessment and submission methods used on HE pathways is also kept by the HE Administration team.

4. Common Types of Alternative Assessment Arrangements

Where appropriate the following Alternative Assessment Arrangements are available at the conservatoire:

- Additional time allowances for timed exams and assessments, to be built in as appropriate e.g. additional time for thought processing prior to answering each question in a viva, or time added to the overall exam duration
- Extensions to deadlines for submission of written assignments
- Appropriate marking for students with dyslexia/specific learning difficulties (See Appendix 1)
- The use of a tinted overlay or reading ruler
- Examination paper in alternative formats, including music scores e.g. enlargement, modified stave notation (alternative colours or symbols), braille, tinted paper, use of colours or symbols to modify traditional notation
- Room allocation e.g. separate individual room, seat allocation at the front/back of the examination room, located near to an accessible toilet facility, located on the ground floor/floor with access to a lift
- Supervised rest breaks in addition to additional time allowances (See Appendix 2)
- Use of a specific personnel in examinations e.g. reader, scribe, amanuensis, sign language interpreter
- Specific equipment (e.g. word processor) made available or the use of assistive software (e.g. voice-activation, screen reader) made available to the student in an examination
- Ergonomic furniture e.g. chair, foot rest, height adjustable table

- Examination scheduling e.g. one exam per day, one day between exams, scheduled in the morning/afternoon
- Where appropriate taking the components of the exam in the student's preferred order
- Acceptance of alternative descriptive terms e.g. for cadences and scale descriptions
- Use of visual cues in technical tests for students with hearing impairments and/or specific learning difficulties e.g. right-hand/left-hand instructions should include pointing, pointing to the place in sight reading if a student gets lost, changes in the score in aural tests can be marked by raising the hand.
- Alternative approaches to performance e.g. instrumentalists who would normally stand can be seated
- Alternative methods of recording, presenting and submitting a student's work for assessment
- Alternative assessment procedures or exemptions e.g. a visually impaired student might not be asked to sight read
- Where it is not possible to adjust the examination/assessment method the student will not be penalized during marking for difficulties caused by an impairment e.g. speech stammer affecting fluency in a presentation.

Please note: this is not an exhaustive list and all proposed alternative arrangements will be considered by the conservatoire (see Responsibilities section)

5. Academic Standards

Assessors and examiners should always maintain academic standards whilst assessing students with access arrangements, so that disabled students can be graded according to the same learning outcomes as their peers. Access arrangements are designed to give students equal opportunity to demonstrate learning outcomes to the best of their ability and should not compromise academic standards in any way. Wherever possible, the conduct of assessment will be adjusted, rather than changing the way the assessment is marked. Differential marking is only appropriate in cases where it is not possible to put special arrangements in place during the assessment itself. Where an access arrangement has been put in place, such as extra time for an assessment, it may not be appropriate for another access arrangement, such as having access to the music in advance, to also be put in place. This is to avoid giving an unfair advantage to the student. Assessors and examiners should consult the Disability Advisers if they believe that any access arrangements are unsuitable, or advantaging or disadvantaging students in any way.

6. Confirmation of Alternative Assessment Arrangements

The Disability Advisers will discuss proposed alternative arrangements with the Exams Team in Registry and the academic staff involved in the exam or

assessment procedure. The Disability Advisers will send confirmation of alternative assessment arrangements to the student via their LC email as part of their support plan. Students may also be contacted about their access arrangements by the Exams Team or academic staff when they are arranging the exam or assessment.

7. Informing Staff of Alternative Assessment Arrangements

The Disability Advisers compile the list of all disabled students with alternative assessment arrangements, giving specific details of the arrangements for each student. The Disability Advisers will ensure the list is available for the Exams Team and academic staff. Staff will need to be given sufficient notice of access arrangements, for example when scheduling end of year specialist study recitals.

8. Keeping Alternative Assessment Arrangements under review

Any alternative assessment arrangements that are put in place should meet the individual needs of the student, and will need to be periodically reviewed by the Disability Advisers with the student or updated following any changes to the student’s support needs in order to ensure that this continues to be the case.

Students may discuss changes to their alternative assessment arrangements at any time by contacting the Disability Advisers. Any changes to alternative assessment arrangements will be passed onto the appropriate staff as above (7).

9. Mitigating Circumstances

Mitigating Circumstances are not part of the Alternative Assessment Arrangements policy, and should be applied for separately in the event that they are needed. An existing disability, which the conservatoire has evidence of and has already put alternative assessment arrangements in place for, is not usually considered to be a mitigating circumstance in itself, except where a student’s studies are unexpectedly affected as a direct result of a disability related cause e.g. a worsening of an existing condition. The Mitigating Circumstances Procedure is available on Space in the Registry, Examination and Assessment Support section.

Procedure

N/A

Responsibilities

Students are responsible for:

- Informing the conservatoire as soon as possible of the nature of their impairment if they want support
- Providing evidence in support of alternative assessment arrangements if this hasn’t already been provided as a part of their support needs plan.

- Updating the conservatoire with any changes to support needs which may affect alternative assessment arrangements
- Completing the Support Needs Referral form, which includes an opportunity for students to provide consent regarding what personal data Student Services can share and with whom it can be shared.

Academic Staff are responsible for:

- Considering whether assessment criteria unnecessarily disadvantages disabled students
- Ensuring that assignment briefs are written using accessible language
- Marking and assessing all student work where access arrangements are in place in accordance with 'Appendix 1: Guidance on implementing alternative assessment arrangements'.
- Putting in place access arrangements for any assessments which they undertake with students, for example during in class assessments.
- Raising any concerns or issues regarding access arrangements with the Disability Advisers.

Disability Advisers in Student Services are responsible for:

- Identifying the alternative assessment arrangements required by each disabled student, collecting the evidence and informing Registry and Academic staff as appropriate).
- Informing the student of any assignment extensions and access arrangements that have been put in place and explaining how the arrangements apply to them.
- Periodically reviewing the access arrangements to ensure they are still fit for purpose.
- Advising academic and support staff on all aspects of access arrangements as required.

Registry Staff are responsible for:

- Putting all alternative arrangements in place for assessments held during the main assessment periods.
- Amending SPACE accordingly when advised by the Disability Advisers of which students are entitled to assignment extensions (Exams team).
- Liaising with academic staff to assist them with access arrangements needed for in class assessments or assessments that take place as part of the course. This may include assisting with scheduling and contacting students to confirm arrangements (Exams team).

Procedure flowchart (if applicable)

N/A

Breach of policy (if applicable)

An individual is entitled to make a formal complaint via the conservatoire's Complaints Policy if they feel the conservatoire has not complied with the procedures set out in the HE Alternative Assessment Arrangements Policy.

Appendix 1 – Guidance on implementing alternative assessment arrangements



This guidance aims to clarify how alternative access arrangements (e.g. extensions to deadlines submissions, extra time, supervised rest breaks) should be applied to written assignments, timed assessments, assessed performances and assessed presentations.

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Written assignments and extensions to deadline submissions

The guidance below applies to extended assignment deadlines put in place as assessment arrangements for disabled students. Guidance relating to mitigating circumstances is set out in the 'HE Mitigating Circumstances Procedure 2018-19'.

Disabled students may be entitled to extensions to their deadlines for written assignments. This allows students to structure their work more carefully and provides sufficient time for reading and research. For example, dyslexic students will experience difficulties with reading ability due to slow processing speeds. Students with attention impairments will struggle with staying focused and concentrating on tasks. Students with physical impairments or health conditions will experience reduced stamina and difficulties studying for extended periods of time. Autistic students might struggle with organisation and time management skills.

Extensions to written assignments may be for either 1 week or 2 weeks, depending on the credit value of the module and the weighting of the assignment within it. Any late/length penalties that need to be applied are managed by HE Admin and academic staff after marking is completed and these penalties will be applied in the same way as they would be for assignments submitted without extended deadlines.

For group written work any alternative assessment arrangements put in place should be for an individual and should not be used when marking the group as a whole in order for non-disabled students not to be given an advantage. For example, a dyslexic student may have an agreed extension to the deadline for handing in group written work, but other members of the group will not.

Written assignments and appropriate marking for students with specific learning difficulties

No extra allowance should be made in the marking of timed written and practical assessments for overall structure, content and logical argument however where the core competencies of the assessment do not make explicit reference to spelling, grammar, punctuation, or sentence structure the content rather than the language should be marked. Any mistakes in spelling, grammar, punctuation, or sentence structure should be disregarded, as extensions to deadlines will not improve spelling and grammatical ability. It is recommended that the student's work is read through quickly to get an overall idea of the sense of the work, as this makes it easier to disregard spelling and grammar errors.

Common errors made by students with specific learning difficulties may include:

- omitted words or punctuation
- excessive or misplaced punctuation
- unsophisticated language structures and vocabulary
- word sequencing errors
- homophone substitution (e.g. there/their)
- phonetic equivalent spellings (e.g. dislecksia/dyslexia)
- incorrect substitution of similar words
- incorrect grammatical function words not picked up by spellchecker (e.g. in/on)
- American spellings substituted by spellchecker

Timed written/practical assessments and extra time

Disabled students may be entitled to extra time in written and practical examinations. This allows students sufficient time to read, process and structure

their work more carefully, skills that students with specific learning difficulties and autism can often find difficult due to slower processing speeds and poor time management skills.

The standard amount of extra time added to the original length of a written and practical examination is 25% however there may be exceptional circumstances where individual students are entitled to up to 50% extra time.

Extra time should not be permitted in assessments that are explicitly assessing the time in which a skill is performed and / or where timing is explicitly referenced in the core competencies of the assessment criteria. This should be considered carefully when assessments are designed to ensure that disabled students are not disadvantaged unnecessarily.

Timed written/practical assessments and appropriate marking for students with specific learning difficulties

No extra allowance should be made in the marking of timed written and practical assessments for overall structure, content and logical argument however where the core competencies of the assessment does not make specific reference to spelling, grammar, punctuation, or sentence structure the content rather than the language should be marked. Any mistakes in spelling, grammar, punctuation, or sentence structure should be disregarded, as extra time will not improve spelling and grammatical ability. It is recommended that the student's work is read through quickly to get an overall idea of the sense of the work, as this makes it easier to disregard spelling and grammar errors.

Common errors made by students with specific learning difficulties may include:

- omitted words or punctuation
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- incorrect substitution of similar words
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- American spellings substituted by spellchecker

Timed written/practical assessments and supervised rest breaks

Students may require rest breaks during a written or practical examination to attend to aspects of their impairment/disability/health condition. For example a student with hypermobility or arthritis may need to take breaks to relieve pain and discomfort. Students with irritable bowel syndrome may need to use the bathroom urgently and for varying amounts of time. Students with acute anxiety may need to take breaks in order to employ breathing exercises or mindfulness so that they can focus on their examination.

Unless otherwise stated, the standard maximum time allowed for supervised rest breaks per hour of assessment is 10 minutes. A student may use none or only part of their rest break time allowance and supervised rest breaks can be used flexibly across the time of the assessment. The student must clearly notify the invigilator that they need to have a rest break. The timing of the examination should be paused and re-started when the student is ready to continue. For each minute of the rest break an additional minute will be added to the end time of the total exam length up to the maximum allowed (including extra time allowance). During the supervised rest break the student must not have access to the exam materials as breaks cannot be used as additional time for reading or writing. Please see 'Guidance on supervised rest breaks' for more details.

Performances and extra time

Disabled students may be entitled to extra time in assessed performances. This includes 'Quick Study' assessments where the study material is provided in advance of the performance. Students will be entitled to additional time as part of the warm up period.

Extra time for assessed performances allows disabled students with, for example, specific learning difficulties and anxiety the opportunity to repeat, restart, replay (see below). Extra time may also be used by students with anxiety so that they can pause to utilise anxiety management strategies to regather their thoughts and focus on their performance.

The standard amount of extra time added to the original length of an assessed performance is 25% however there may be exceptional circumstances where individual students are entitled to up to 50% extra time.

Extra time should not be permitted in assessments that are explicitly assessing the time in which a skill is performed and / or where timing is explicitly referenced in the core competencies of the assessment criteria. This should be considered carefully when assessments are designed to ensure that disabled students are not disadvantaged unnecessarily.

Performances and supervised rest breaks

Students may require rest breaks during an assessed performance to attend to aspects of their impairment/disability/health condition. For example, a student with hypermobility or arthritis may need to take breaks to relieve pain and discomfort. Students with irritable bowel syndrome may need to use the bathroom urgently and for varying amounts of time. Students with acute anxiety may need to take breaks in order to employ breathing exercises or mindfulness so that they can focus on their performance.

Unless otherwise stated the standard maximum time set for supervised rest breaks per hour of assessment is 10 minutes. A student may use none or only part of their rest break time allowance and supervised rest breaks can be used flexibly across the time of the assessment. The student must clearly notify the invigilator that they need to have a rest break. The timing of the examination should be paused and re-started when the candidate is ready to continue. For each minute of the rest break an additional minute will be added to the end time of the total exam length up to the maximum award (including extra time allowance). During the supervised rest break the candidate must not have access to the exam materials as breaks cannot be used as additional time for reading or writing. Please see 'Appendix 2 Guidance on supervised rest breaks' for more details.

Performances and repeat, restart, replay without penalty

During assessed performances students with alternative assessment arrangements in place may be entitled to one opportunity to restart each task/piece if they make a mistake without being penalised, or to take their time to recall the scale or piece of music the task is based on before making their attempt at the task. For example, autistic students and students with mental health conditions may suffer from acute anxiety, which can affect performance skills.

Group performances and alternative assessment arrangements

For group performance, any alternative assessment arrangements put in place should be for an individual and should not be used when marking the group as a whole, in order for non-disabled students not to be given an advantage. The access arrangements in place for an individual student should allow them to be a fully participating member of the group. For example if a student needs to take a rest break during a group performance they must clearly notify the invigilator so the group performance can be paused and re-started when the student is ready to continue.

Presentations and extra time

Disabled students may be entitled to extra time in assessed presentations. For example, this means that allowances can be made for students with specific learning difficulties and communication difficulties who may provide delayed responses to questions. Students with learning, hearing and speech difficulties may stumble over pronouncing words, getting words in the right order, engaging with listeners, and maintaining the general flow of the presentation, especially when switching between visual and oral mediums. Students with mental health conditions and autistic students may suffer from anxiety, which can affect presentation skills such as fluency and engaging with listeners. Extra time will also aid students with anxiety so that they can pause to utilise anxiety management strategies to regather their thoughts and focus on their performance.

The standard amount of extra time added to the original length of an assessed presentation is 25% however there may be exceptional circumstances where individual students are entitled to up to 50% extra time.

Extra time should not be permitted in assessments that are explicitly assessing the time in which a skill is performed and / or where timing is explicitly referenced in the core competencies of the assessment criteria. This should be considered carefully when assessments are designed to ensure that disabled students are not disadvantaged unnecessarily.

Presentations and supervised rest breaks

Students may require rest breaks during an assessed presentation to attend to aspects of their impairment/disability/health condition. For example, a student with hypermobility or arthritis may need to take breaks to relieve pain and discomfort. Students with irritable bowel syndrome may need to use the bathroom urgently and for varying amounts of time. Students with acute anxiety may need to take breaks in order to employ breathing exercises or mindfulness so that they can focus on their presentation delivery.

Unless otherwise stated the standard maximum time set for supervised rest breaks per hour of assessment is 10 minutes. A student may use none or only part of their rest break time allowance and supervised rest breaks can be used flexibly across the time of the assessment. The student must clearly notify the invigilator that they need to have a rest break. The timing of the presentation should be paused and re-started when the candidate is ready to continue. For each minute of the rest break an additional minute will be added to the end time of the total exam length up to the maximum award (including extra time allowance). During the supervised rest break the candidate must not have access to the assessment materials as breaks cannot be used as additional time for reading or writing. Please see 'Appendix 2 Guidance on supervised rest breaks' for more details.

Presentations and oral communication

Assessors should take particular account of the points below regarding oral communication and not penalise disabled students for them, particularly where verbal communication skills are not explicitly part of the core competencies of the assessment criteria. Where oral communication skills are explicitly referenced in the core competencies of the assessment criteria, this should be considered carefully during the design of assessments to ensure that disabled students are not disadvantaged unnecessarily.

Appropriate allowances should be made for students who experience difficulties providing instant responses to questions, presentation fluency, word pronunciation, word order, reading from written materials. For example, students with learning, hearing and speech difficulties may stumble over pronouncing words, getting words in the right order, engaging with listeners, and maintaining the general flow of the presentation, especially when switching between visual and oral mediums. Students with mental health conditions and autistic students may suffer from anxiety, which can affect presentation skills such as fluency and engaging with listeners.

Group presentations

For group presentations, any alternative assessment arrangements put in place should be for an individual and should not be used when marking the group as a whole, in order for non-disabled students not to be given an advantage. For example, extra time should be applied to individuals entitled to it within a group not to the group as a whole. The alternative assessment arrangements in place for an individual student should allow them to be a fully participating member of the group.

Appendix 2 – Guidance on supervised rest breaks

For staff



Some disabled students will need to stop during their allocated examination time to attend to aspects of their impairment/disability/health condition and it would be discriminatory to expect them to use their standard examination time to do this. This is where supervised rest breaks would be permitted. The reasons that make these breaks might be necessary are varied (see below) and if/when they are used cannot be predicted so they need to be used flexibly.

The following are examples of circumstances when a disabled student would be entitled to supervised rest breaks:

- **Autistic spectrum conditions:** students may take breaks in order to use sensory management techniques to control their concentration and/or anxiety levels.
- **A long term health condition:** students with diabetes may need to regularly test their blood sugar levels and adjust them accordingly. Students with irritable bowel syndrome may need to use the bathroom urgently and for varying amounts of time.
- **Physical or mobility impairments:** a student with a chronic back condition and or hypermobility may need to take breaks to relieve pain and discomfort.
- **Mental health conditions:** students with acute anxiety may need to take breaks in order to utilise breathing exercises or mindfulness so that they can focus on their exam.

Guidance for invigilators

- Unless otherwise stated the standard maximum time allowed for supervised rest breaks per hour of examination is 10 minutes.
- A student may use none or only part of their time allowance.
- Supervised rest breaks can be used flexibly across the time of the exam.
- The timing of the examination should be paused and re-started when the student is ready to continue.
- Breaks must be taken in whole minutes and any smaller times will be rounded up to the nearest 10 seconds by the invigilator.
- For each minute of the rest break an additional minute will be added to the end time of the total assessment length up to the maximum allowed (including extra time allowance).
- During the supervised rest break the student must not have access to the exam materials as breaks cannot be used as additional time for reading or writing etc.
- The student can stay in the exam room or if the student needs to leave the examination room e.g. for a toilet break, an invigilator must accompany them to the entrance to the toilet door but not the cubicle.

For students

Before the exam

- Unless otherwise stated the standard maximum time allowed for supervised rest breaks per hour of examination time is 10 minutes.

- If you choose not to take any rest breaks, your exam time will not alter.
- Each minute of rest break that you take during the exam is an additional minute that will be added to the end time of the total exam length up to the maximum allowed (including extra time allowance).
- It is your responsibility to communicate to the invigilator how you might use your rest breaks and how you will signal to them if you need to take a rest break.

During the exam

- You will not be obliged to take any rest breaks during the exam and will not be prompted to take them by the invigilator.
- The total break time awarded to you for the exam can be used as you choose; the rest break time can be taken in one slot or broken up into any number of smaller time slots.
- Breaks must be taken in whole minutes and any smaller times will be rounded up to the nearest 10 seconds by the invigilator.
- If you do not take any rest breaks, the end time of your exam will not be revised.
- Breaks can only be used to rest and not as additional time for reading or writing etc.
- Each time you take a break you must clearly signal (e.g. raise your hand) to indicate to the invigilator that you are taking a rest break.
- During a break you must turn over any assessment materials e.g. question paper and answer paper and put down your pen.
- When you are ready to resume your assessment after a break, you must clearly signal (e.g. by raising your hand again) to the invigilator that you have finished your rest break, then you can continue the assessment.
- It is your responsibility to clearly indicate to the invigilator each time you are beginning and ending a rest break and to ensure the invigilator has understood.
- After the rest break allowance has been used up, you may take further toilet/rest breaks but these will be within the total assessment length, i.e. no additional time will be allowed for them.