Information for Academics – Alternative Arrangements Exams

Introduction

Approximately 400 students at UQ are registered with Student Services for Exam Adjustments. Many of these students will need to sit all written exam-style assessment (exams, tests, quizzes) – not just final Central exams – separately from the rest of the class so that their exam adjustments can be accommodated in a controlled manner.

Exam Adjustments may be approved because the student has a physical disability (eg. vision impairment), mental illness (eg. an anxiety disorder), processing disorder (eg. dyslexia), temporary injury (eg. broken arm), or illness (eg. diabetes), etc. Students with conditions such as ADHD and Asperger’s will most likely need exam adjustments, as will students who are required to take medications which affect their alertness.

Exam Adjustments are not included in a student’s SAP-D (Student Access Plan – Disability). Not every student with a SAP-D has Exam Adjustments, and not every student with Exam Adjustments has a SAP-D. If you are a Course Coordinator and have signed off on a SAP-D for a student, you may not necessarily know about that student’s Exam Adjustments (if any).

Exam Adjustments are accommodated in Alternative Arrangements Exams by the Examinations Section, even for quite short in-class written tests. In a very small number of cases it may be appropriate for the School to accommodate a student’s Exam Adjustments in class. This is usually only for logistical considerations, such as exams/tests which are held away from a main campus (such as Pharmacy exams at PACE), exams/tests which are being held at the end of a compulsory tutorial session and for which the start time may vary depending on the tutorial, or online tests which would be impossible to set up separately. Tests which are less than 20 minutes in duration should generally be handled in-house, but you should seek written confirmation from the Examinations Section of what the exam adjustments are, for equity reasons. Pracs / orals / listening tests / etc clearly need to be handled in-house. In the majority of cases, however, lecturers should not make private arrangements with students to accommodate exam adjustments. If uncertain, call Examinations.

Overview of Procedure for Written Tests/Quizzes/Exams

1. Student submits a request form to the Examinations Section (if they don’t do this, they won’t get alternative arrangements).
2. Examinations Section checks the student’s exam adjustments on DMS (Disability Management System).
3. Examinations Section checks the assessment details in the ECP (or with School staff, if the ECP is incomplete or conflicts with information provided by the student).
4. Examinations Section books a venue, engages a supervisor and requests a copy of the question paper from the School. (For Central exams, we may not need to request a copy)
5. Examinations Section prepares the exam materials and paperwork, which are picked up by the supervisor on the day of the exam.
6. After the exam, the Examinations Section retrieves and completes the paperwork and hand-delivers the completed exam/test/quiz to the School Office.

Overview of Procedure for Practical/Online/MATLAB/ Oral Exams

1. Student submits a request form to the Examinations Section.
2. Examinations Section checks the student’s exam adjustments on DMS (Disability Management System)
3. Examinations Section checks the assessment details on the ECP (or with School staff, if the ECP is incomplete or conflicts with information provided by the student).
4. Examinations Section sends an email to the Course Coordinator, the student and the Disability Advisor outlining the required exam adjustments.
5. Course Coordinator liaises with the student to ascertain the best way to accommodate the exam adjustments. Privacy of the student must be considered.
6. PLEASE NOTE: This is not optional. Exam adjustments must be accommodated as per Commonwealth and State law, and UQ Policies and Procedures (3.50.09).

Exam Adjustments

A student’s right to reasonable adjustments during exams is protected by Commonwealth and State law, and UQ Policies and Procedures. Students in UQ programs have fulfilled the criteria for entry into those programs, and their rights are protected by legislation.

Exam Adjustments do not exist in order to give any student an advantage over others. They only exist to attempt to eliminate a disadvantage. An obvious example is in the case of students who are vision-impaired and cannot read an exam paper. Having the paper printed in a larger font or provided electronically for use with read-aloud software on a computer does not provide any advantage to the student – it only removes the disadvantage of not being able to read the exam paper.

Exam adjustments are supported by current medical documents. They are not randomly allocated according to what the students ask for. If the documents do not support a student’s claim, the adjustments will not be approved.

Medical documents and case notes are protected by privacy laws – the only people with access to them are Disability Advisors. Information about medical conditions will not be given to School or academic staff under any circumstances. The reasons for a student having exam adjustments will likewise not be discussed.

Exam adjustments are reviewed by Disability Advisors on a regular basis. Feedback is provided by the Examinations Section after every major exam block, and this is used to tweak the adjustments as required. Updated medical documents are required for conditions which may change. Students with conditions which will not change, ie blindness, are generally not required to provide updated medical documents.

The Examinations Section makes the required arrangements to ensure that exam adjustments are accommodated, but does not necessarily have knowledge of the medical condition behind the adjustments.

Exam adjustments may include (but are not limited to):

- Extra working time
- Extra reading time
- Rest breaks
- A one-on-one venue
- Question paper printed in a larger font
- Exams at a particular time of day
- Ergonomic furniture
- One exam only per day
- Use of a computer
- Use of a reader
• Use of a scribe
• Permission to take medication, diabetes test kit, food, drink, etc into the exam room

Venues

During class time, venues can be hard to come by. If no central rooms are available, the Examinations Section will source a School room. Lecturers/tutors are not permitted to attend at an alternative arrangements venue.

Supervision

All written alternative arrangements exams are supervised by trained exam invigilators who are employed and paid by the Examinations Section. No costs are incurred by Schools for written alternative arrangements exams. Occasionally during end-of-semester exams it is necessary to run a separate sitting of an exam with a video component – in this case, an academic staff member is usually asked to attend.

Copy of question paper

This is required as a master copy which we can then make extra copies from as required. We make one copy for each student sitting the exam under alternative arrangements, and another for the supervisor. If you require the test to be printed on a particular colour paper, please advise the Examinations Section.

For Central end-of-semester exams, the Examinations Section has a master copy of all exams and will not need to request one UNLESS the student needs it printed in a different font (as an approved exam adjustment). A master copy will be requested if the exam is School-based.

Some students need an electronic copy of the question paper in a particular format on a USB. If so, the Examinations Section will request it from the School.

If a copy of the question paper has been requested, it must be provided in hard copy several days prior to the test date. Emailed question papers are very strongly discouraged, as email is an insecure mode of delivery. Failure to provide a copy of the question paper in a timely manner is extremely obstructive and should be avoided.

The completed exam script

Completed test/quiz/exam papers will be hand-delivered to the School office as soon as possible after the test. Academics and School staff cannot pick the papers up from the exam venue or from the Examinations Section. The only exception to this is for Schools not located on a main campus, for example Dentistry, Pharmacy, etc. In these cases only, School staff may arrange to pick up completed papers from the Examinations Section.

Privacy – practical exams

Lecturers should never, under any circumstances, refer to a student’s exam adjustments in front of other students. If an individual student is comfortable letting classmates know about the reason for exam adjustments, it is entirely and only that student’s prerogative to share the information.

For example, it is never appropriate to make an announcement along the lines of “Can the students who have extra time wait over there”. Students should never be singled out in front of the class as “different”. This is why it is necessary to discuss with the student beforehand the manner in which exam adjustments will be accommodated.
There are privacy laws surrounding individuals’ personal information. Please do not break these laws.

If a Course Coordinator feels that an exam adjustment in a practical exam conflicts with professional / industry registration requirements, please consult with the relevant professional body in a timely manner (i.e. long before the exam date) and discuss your concerns with the relevant Disability Advisor well in advance. Do not just refuse to accommodate the exam adjustments.

Exam Clashes

Students who have exam clashes, whether central or school-based, are entitled to have an exam shifted to the next available session. We can also extend this to exams which clash with compulsory classes.

The “next available session” for in-class exams will be determined according to the student’s class timetable. For example, if a student has both a one-hour exam and a 40-minute quiz (for different courses) scheduled to start at 2pm, the quiz may be shifted to 3.15pm to allow sufficient time for the student to complete the first exam, get to the new venue and do the quiz. If that student has a class from 3 to 4pm though, the quiz may be changed to 4.15pm.

During Central end-of-semester exams, clashes are resolved by shifting one exam to the next session, eg from 8am to 11.15am, etc.

Clashes with exams at another institution are resolved by shifting the UQ exam to the next earliest possible time once travelling time has been allowed. For example, if a student has an 8am exam at UQ and an 8.30am exam at QUT, we will consider the duration of the QUT exam and the length of time required to travel to UQ, and reschedule the UQ exam accordingly.

Occasionally, it is necessary to shift an exam to the following morning. For example, if a student has two UQ exams scheduled for 5.45pm, one will be held as scheduled and the other will be in the next available session (8am the next day). Under the GAR (1A.3.4) there is no provision for students to sit exams earlier than scheduled.

Religious Observance

Students who are unable to sit an exam due to religious observance have the right to have their exam rescheduled to the next available session. These exams are also arranged by the Examinations Section. All applications must be accompanied by a supporting letter/statement from the students’ church / mosque / synagogue / temple, etc.

It is generally expected that students who sit under alternative arrangements on the basis of religious observance will be given the same exam paper as the cohort, even though there may potentially be a delay from Saturday to Monday. A very small number of Schools have elected to alter the exam paper for the Monday sitting.

All students who sit exams under alternative arrangements, regardless of the reason, are required to sign a declaration stating that they have had no communication regarding the content of the exam with any other student who has already sat.

For any questions regarding Alternative Exam Arrangements, please contact Libby Schmidt at Examinations (x52625 / e.schmidt2@uq.edu.au).