

School of Language and Literature

Disability Support

Some notes on particular provision

This is by no means an exhaustive list! These are just some notes on certain types of provision about which I often receive queries:-

Note-takers

If your required provision involves a note-taker for your classes, we will arrange this for you. Note-takers are usually Honours or postgraduate students from the School, and they are always given preparation in how to take notes and how the arrangements for note-taking operate within the School.

Both you and the note-taker share responsibility for this process to work well. Once the note-taker has agreed to the hours for your classes (you may well have different note-takers for different classes), you will attend the classes together and it is up to the two of you to keep in touch with each other, arrange to meet on the way into the class and so forth. Be aware that **YOU MUST ATTEND ALL YOUR CLASSES**: note-taking is an additional provision put in place to allow you to listen to the lecture while someone next to you writes notes as a record of the class. It is absolutely unacceptable for you to miss classes and “send” your note-taker to the session instead, and you are expected to attend all your classes just the same as all other students. If you should happen to be ill, it is up to you to call your note-taker to let him/her know. It may be possible for the note-taker to attend one class without you, on the strict understanding that your absence is legitimate and certified in the usual way, but thereafter you must account for your absence like any other student. Both note-takers and students receiving note-taking provision are given notes on these issues when the note-taking begins. Note-takers are given a “contract of services” from the School and a form to complete for Student Support Services, which both the note-taker and student must sign to make sure the note-taking has been carried out properly and that the students is also attending.

Proof-readers

Proof-reading is put in place in order to amend inconsistencies with the following: grammar, spelling and syntax. Proof readers do not correct your writing style as such and they do not “correct” the content of your work before you hand it in, nor do they format references or bibliographies, all of which are learning outcomes you must achieve as part of your own studies. Proof-readers and

students receiving this provision receive notes on how this works, but do come and see me if you're unclear on what's involved.

If you require a proof-reader as part of your provision, we will arrange one for you. Both you and the proof-reader share responsibility for this process to work well. We will put you both in touch and thereafter, it is up to you both to arrange when and where you meet and to negotiate exactly what timeframe you will give the proof-reader to read your work and return it. The notes you will be given provide some guidance with this.

Course information

The bulk of course information is now placed on the university's website for the majority of courses in the School. We are increasingly going over to a system where all such information is available to every student via the website so that any students who need to manipulate the format can do so (to print it on larger font, for example). However, courses evolve and are constantly updated, so it may be that a particular course guide is not on the website; if that is the case, and if you do require to have an electronic or alternative format of the information, I will be happy to arrange for this to be produced.

Copies of notes, handouts and overheads

"Copies of notes" really means a copy of the data the lecturer is working from to give the lecture: in many cases, lecturers find they can best deliver a lecture based on notes or bullet points (or, perhaps, a Powerpoint presentation), rather than actual narrative text. When a lecturer provides copies of notes, then, these may be in a variety of formats, but the purpose is to provide you with a written record of the material to be covered in that class. Similarly, you may receive copies of overhead transparencies or Powerpoint slides, as appropriate. If your provision requests that you receive the notes ahead of the class, tutors will do the best they can to provide these; remember, though, that lecturers often have to amend the notes for a lecture from one class to the next, sometimes at very short notice, when themes and questions are raised in class. Where the class is a discussion, seminar or tutorial, the notes will inevitably be "points", rather than prose text, since the class is based on interaction within the group, rather than disseminating information.

Dispensation for spelling and grammar

It can be confusing for students of language-specific courses (such as modern languages) when provision involves "dispensation for spelling and grammar": obviously, this applies only as it can be applied in the case of courses where the learning outcomes specifically relate to spelling and

grammar. In other words, in a course like French language, among the learning outcomes for that course are various skills in grammar and spelling (such as gender agreements, for instance) and you will want and need to master these skills in order to become proficient in the field of study. The support we apply for you in a course like this needs to take into account that you're trying to reach a level of skills in that particular field, and so we need to support you in achieving this rather than "waive" the requirement for spelling and grammar in this case. Similarly, there are courses of study in the humanities where linguistic expression is a skill inherent in the field and so is a learning outcome of the course; in those cases, again, what we need is to support you in building those skills, rather than waive that aspect of your studies altogether. Think of this as a need to support you in developing your skills as opposed to denying you the opportunity to prove your skills in self-expression. As always, it will help to also read the course guide for your course and pay special attention to the learning outcomes for the course. If you are taking courses in modern languages (or English language, or indeed any course where linguistic expression is a factor) within the School, it's a good idea to come and see me to talk this over ahead of your first assessment (if possible) so that I can give you some more explanation of how this works. Just come to my open hours.

You might find some of the links to websites on dyslexia support useful reading too:

The Dyslexia Institute (UK based): <http://www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk/>

British Dyslexia Association: <http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/>

Both these sites have useful links to further info.

Extra time in examinations

If provision is requested for you to receive additional time to complete your exams in compensation for a disabilities-related issue, we will write to you ahead of your exams to let you know the arrangements for this. Be sure to check your university e-mail account regularly, as that is how we will be getting in touch with you about this support. Unless you have the specific provision of individual invigilation, you will be in an exam hall with other people who are also receiving additional time and for a variety of different exams taking place at the same time. When you receive your notification of the exam arrangements, all you need to do is reply to me to confirm that you've seen them and are not concerned about things, and go along to your exam in good time on the day, as per the details in the letter.

"Extra time" (the number of minutes requested for you by the university) applies to any diet of exams (January, June or August) and, where appropriate, to in-class exams as well. In practice, though, course coordinators may take one of 2 approaches in order to assess you fairly under test conditions in the case of an in-class test: you may be given the additional time in a separate venue

(since classes are of 50 minutes' duration and you would otherwise be interrupted and possibly made to feel uncomfortable by your classmates leaving the room before you); or it may be more practical for a number of reasons for you to sit the test in exactly the same way as the rest of the class group, but for the test marker to take into account the issue of time when grading your work.

Private circumstances for examinations

If you receive this provision for exams, we will write to you ahead of your exams to let you know the arrangements for this. Be sure to check your university e-mail account regularly, as that is how we will be getting in touch with you about this support. If you have the specific provision of individual invigilation, you will be in an exam room on your own, with the invigilator for that exam. It will normally be a classroom or small tutorial room, not a large exam hall. When you receive your notification of the exam arrangements, all you need to do is reply to me to confirm that you've seen them and are not concerned about things, and go along to your exam in good time on the day, as per the details in the letter. The invigilator for your exam will meet you there.

Tape-recording of lectures

If you have been given permission to tape-record lectures, this normally means that you are allowed to tape lectures for yourself (either onto audio cassette, or in whatever format works best for you). However, it is good manners to remind a lecturer that you are taping the session: although your tutor will have been informed that you have this provision, unless he/she already knows you, he/she won't know who it is who is doing the recording and so can't be aware of speaking audibly for the tape; very often, lecturers will offer to place the recording equipment in front of them to allow for better sound quality. If you have a provision request for various options, such as copies of notes/scribe/permission to tape lectures, obviously not all of these will be needed for the same class. If you're unsure which will work best, feel free to discuss this with me.

Visiting lecturers: we are extremely fortunate at Aberdeen that the university attracts a large number of visiting lecturers to speak here, both within the Word Festival and other seminar series. You of course have access to the same activities as all other students, but it is important to bear in mind that a visiting speaker will not be aware of things like provision for disabilities-related support. It would be extremely rude to just push a tape-recorder under a visitor's nose! This is simply an issue of good manners and doesn't mean you will be disadvantaged, only that it is very much better to ask your course tutor or coordinator to check with the speaker whether it will be OK to tape the session. If the seminar is not directly part of your course and you're not sure who the organiser you should ask is going to be, let me know in good time and I will help you to arrange this. Normally, visiting speakers are happy to have the recording take place when they are asked BUT you MUST respect the purpose of these recordings: permission for you to record a session is in lieu of taking written notes in the

usual way, and is intended to provide you, an individual student, with a record of that session on which to base your studies and revision. It is NEVER acceptable to distribute the recordings to anyone else. This is especially relevant when the lecture involves a writer who will be reading from unpublished work; the work is still the intellectual property of the writer/speaker, and you must adhere to the appropriate code of conduct, i.e. the recordings are for your ears only.

Accessibility of venues

King's College is a beautiful, ancient campus in a conservation area; this has certain implications for wheelchair access to all classrooms and, as you will have noticed, there are inevitably some rooms located on upper floors in buildings where lift access is not a possibility. Having said that, the university has invested substantially in adapting accommodation to allow for wheelchair access. If you are a wheelchair user, or if you have provision requested for ground floor access or lift-accessible venues, we will arrange for your classes to be given in suitable rooms. If the School is aware of your provision and your course choices are confirmed in good time for the start of the teaching semester, this can be put in place before the classes start. If provision is requested later, it means the classrooms for that course (or that group, in the case of tutorials, seminars, oral classes or language classes) must be changed for all the students involved. There is nothing you need to arrange here, and we will put in place appropriate classrooms as needed. Please do let me know if, for any reason, you find access to a particular room problematic. Please note that, wherever possible, we try to arrange accessible rooms for our largest courses as a matter of course.

Accessing resources on campus: language centre, library, computing facilities, university student societies

The Language Centre is equipped for wheelchair access to the ground floor (where the resources library, audio room, audiovisual room and language labs are located), and has a workstation equipped with an adjustable desk and with software for voice/text work for students who require this provision. You need to have permission to access this equipment (so that it is not used by students who could be using the Edward Wright Building facilities), so the first step would be to get in touch with me.

The main library (Queen Mother Library) is accessible to all. For fire safety reasons, access to upper floors implies certain considerations, however – see link to QML library:

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/library/qml/>

Computing facilities: there are many venues on campus where you can access computers. See links to DISS web pages: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/compserv/>

Student Societies: Societies are accessible to all, and society presidents will make arrangements for wheelchair access and the like if they are planning any activities outside campus. The best thing is to email the “contact person” from the society ahead of time if you’re concerned about access to an event, and they will make any arrangements with you as needed. Do go along to these events, they are for everybody!