

SOP for Reasonable Adjustments of Assessments for Healthcare Programmes

This SOP is written for Year Leads and Exam coordinators within Healthcare programmes when considering requests for reasonable adjustments for assessment. This is written using GMC Valued and Welcome and Outcomes for Graduates (1), Outcomes for Graduates and Guidance of Reasonable adjustments (2,3) and guidance from Higher Education Occupational Physicians / Practitioners (4,5) Dental School Council Policy on Reasonable Adjustments (6) Nursing and Midwifery Council Reasonable Adjustments (7) HCPC Health Disability (8).

Note the use of Student Support Advisers within this document refers to Student Support Advisers within the University of Aberdeen Student Advice & Support Team. This should not be confused with the SMMSN Student Support Team

1.0 Key considerations

- All requests for reasonable adjustments must be considered. We are only obliged to make the adjustments which are reasonable and would make a difference to the candidates' performance. (1)
- The aim is to remove barriers for those with disability
- There should be individual consideration of reasonable adjustments (usually by the Student Support Advisers in the Student Advice & Support Team)
- There may be reasonable adjustments for assessment in the healthcare programmes that are not possible in the clinical workplace, ideally candidates should be made aware of this.
- For assessments that directly replicate clinical practice, and in particular time sensitive clinical situations (e.g., acutely unwell patient), there is no requirement to make adjustments.
- Regardless of whatever reasonable adjustments are provided, the learning outcomes for the Medicine/Dental/Physician Associate/Advanced Clinical Practitioner or other healthcare programmes must be met.
- Candidates should be given clear and timely information of the reasonable adjustments that can be offered.

2.0 Process of Assessment for Reasonable Adjustments

2.1 Disability Provision Deadlines for Healthcare Programmes

The Healthcare programmes of Medicine (MBChB), Dentistry (BDS), MSc Physician Associate (PA) and MSc Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP) have several examinations which take place out with the main examination diets.

The Institute administrator for Assessments will distribute a list of assessment dates for all programmes to the Student Support Advisers and SMMSN student support team, at

the start of the academic year, and if required during the academic year.

All requests for reasonable adjustments should be made as soon as possible from the start of the academic year. In accordance with the policy, new requests for provisions must be made **no less than four weeks** before an examination.

For the healthcare programmes, requests for additional provisions for students with known long-term conditions which have already been assessed by a Student Support Adviser, must be made **no less than 4 weeks** before a degree assessment.

This is due to the large amount of organisation and planning of persons, places and equipment required for summative assessments.

Issues that could not be anticipated that occur within 4 weeks of the assessment and may require reasonable adjustments should be reported to Exam coordinators as soon as practically possible.

If a student contacts the Student Advice & Support Team after the 4 week timeframe has passed and it is identified that they require adjustments for an upcoming assessment, the Student Support Adviser will advise the student that it cannot be guaranteed that the required adjustments will be implemented for the upcoming assessment, due to the short notice. An email will be sent to the [School Disability Coordinators](#) highlighting the student's required adjustments and the School will determine whether it is practically possible for the required provisions to be implemented. The Student Advice & Support Team recommend that the adjustments are implemented when practically possible for these to be administered. If it is not possible for the adjustments to be implemented, this will be communicated to the student by the Medical School and if they are unable to undertake the assessment or feel their performance will be affected, they will be advised of their options.

2.2 Requesting Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments can only be considered once a Student Support Adviser assessment has been conducted and recommendations received by the Year Lead and/or Exam Coordinator. This review and report can be initiated from various sources, but the candidate must self-refer.

- Students can access support from the Student Support Advisers (Disability) as per the information at the following link: [Disability Services | Students | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)
- Students may contact the Year Lead, Year Deputy, or another staff member, who should encourage student to contact the Student Advice & Support Team as per the information at the link above.
- A Student Support Adviser will assess the student's study-related support needs and will make recommendations for reasonable adjustments (referred to as provisions at the University). These provisions will be added to the student's record. The School Disability Coordinator regularly checks for updates to provisions and provides this information to the Assessment team. **A Student Support Adviser assessment and a provisions report is required before reasonable adjustments can be considered**

- Adjustments that are commonly used, such as extra time in written examinations or extra time for reading in ISCE, OSCE and OPSE assessments, will be included in the provisions report available via the student records system and the Disability Database to which the School Disability Coordinators have access.

In the lead up to assessments, the Institute Administrator for Assessment will regularly check for updates to the database and extract the adjustments for each year group and send them to the Year team / exam coordinators and Assessment team.

Candidates who have health issues may be referred to Occupational Health, who may advise on adjustments for clinical placements and occasionally assessment. With the candidate's consent, an OHS report may be sent to the Year Lead.

- If the Year Lead / Exam coordinator receives a report from OHS that has guidance about adjustments for assessment, they should encourage the student to contact the Student Support Advisers if they have not already done so.

2.2 Processing Reasonable Adjustment requests by Exam Coordinator

If a reasonable adjustment request is received by the Exam Coordinator, the coordinator should do the following:

- If they have not already done so, advise the candidate to make an appointment with a Student Support Adviser. **No further action is taken until the report is available.**
- Check the student records system and/or ask the School Disability Coordinator to check the Disability Database to see if adjustments have been added or updated. NB: If an OHS report is available, this should also be taken into consideration, but requests for reasonable adjustments can be processed without an OHS report.
- Exam coordinator/s reviews the request and associated documentation in accordance with guidance from 1.0 key considerations. They then produce the reasonable adjustments that can be offered to the student. **This is documented along with reasoning behind decisions.**
- Following review of the student's provision and other information such as OHS report, the Exam coordinator may:
 - Accept the recommendation from Student Support Adviser fully
 - Seek further clarification from the Student Support Adviser
 - Seek advice from the Assessment team and / or Year Lead
 - Decide that the reasonable adjustments need wider discussion and arrange a meeting / discussion with relevant parties, which may include the Assessment Team, Year Leads, Student Support Advisers, OHS or Programme Lead.
- Exam coordinator/s contact or meet the student to inform them of the reasonable adjustments offered. If the student's recommendations for provisions cannot be offered the reasoning behind this decision will be provided.
- Exam coordinator/s produce a report that contains the adjustments along with the decision-making process and reasoning and forwards a copy to Year Lead Team and Assessment Team

3.0 Consideration of reasonable adjustments

Consideration as to what may be considered reasonable adjustments (1) include:

- How effective is the change in overcoming disadvantage?
- How practicable are the changes?
- Organisation's resources – rooms, invigilators, examiners etc.
- The impact of the adjustment for the candidate and others
- Regulatory and other statutory requirements (e.g., Legal requirements, GMC Outcomes for Graduates)

Good documentation of decisions is important especially where the Student Support Adviser's recommendations are adapted or declined'

3.1 Reasonable adjustments

The following are reasonable adjustments that can be applied. These have been developed in collaboration with the Assessment Team, Exam coordinators, Student Advice & Support Team and SMMSN student support team.

It is recognised that with an individual approach to assessing for disability provisions, there may occasionally be provisions out with those listed in table 3.1 or within those listed but not normally considered reasonable, that Student Support Advisers may wish the Assessment Team to consider for a specific student. Under these circumstances, the Student Support Advisers **must** contact the Assessment Team to discuss these cases individually.

Consent should be sought from the student to share/discuss an extract (of assessment advice only) from the OHS report with the Assessment Team if this is required.

Key

*Green – is available and can be applied fully

** available under certain circumstances or restrictions

***Red – not available / not appropriate

(A) – denotes comments which can be found at the end of the table that provide more information

	Knowledge (SBA)	OSPE	Clinical (OSCE / ISCE)
1.0 EXTENDED TIME			
Extra XX mins per hour			
1.1 Reading	*Available	*Available (B)	*Available for reading outside station only (C) Not applicable to Dentistry (P) Not applicable to PA programme (R)
1.2 Writing	*** Not appropriate (A)	*Available (B)	*** Not available (C) *** Not appropriate Dentistry (Q)
1.3 Extra time within OSCE / ISCE stations	Not relevant	Not relevant	*Available with restrictions (N)
2.0 Additional Breaks / permissions			
	Knowledge	OSPE	Clinical (OSCE / ISCE)
2.1 X mins break for every X mins of assessment	*Available	*Available	**Available with restrictions (D)
2.2 Allowance of ad hoc additional breaks maximum X mins per hour of assessment (e.g., toileting, medication)	*Available	*Available	**Available with restrictions (E)
2.3 Allowance for eating, drinking, use insulin or prescribed medication	*Available	*Available	**Available with restrictions (F)

3.0 Accommodation arrangements	Knowledge	OSPE	Clinical (OSCE / ISCE)
3.1 Quiet room ie. up to 5 or 10 candidates (please specify) / Quieter run of ISCE/OSCE/OSPE	*Available	*Available	**Available with restrictions (J)
3.2 Use of visual barriers (eg desk dividers)	**Available with restrictions (U)	**Available with restrictions (U)	*** Not appropriate (T)
3.3 External noise reduction devices – eg ear defenders	*Available	*Available	***Not appropriate (V)
3.4 Near toilet	*Available	**Available with restrictions (K)	**Available with restrictions (K)
3.5 At front or back of examination hall	*Available	***Not applicable	***Not applicable
3.6 Allocation to specific sitting or run	***Not available	Available with restrictions (L)	*Available
4.0 Use of Aids	Knowledge	OSPE	Clinical (OSCE / ISCE)
4.1 Use of computer	Provided to all students as standard (A)	Provided to all students as standard (A)	***Not applicable (C)
4.2 Reader / text to speech hardware or software	*Available	*Available	*** Not applicable (C) Dentistry (Q)
4.3 Additional support – colour blindness	*Available	*Available (O)	Available (O) with restrictions
4.4 Assistive technology – magnification, font sizes, amplification stethoscopes etc	*Available	*Available	Available with restrictions (S)
4.5 Assistance in writing / typing (eg Scribe / voice to text software)	***Not applicable (A)	** Not available (X)	***Not applicable (W)
4.6 Proof Reader	***Not applicable (A)	** Not available (X)	***Not applicable (W)
5.0 Miscellaneous	Knowledge	OSPE	Clinical (OSCE / ISCE)
5.1 No penalty for poor spelling, grammar,	***Not applicable (A)	Available with restrictions (Y)	Available with restrictions (Y)

punctuation, syntax, or structure where meaning is clear			
5.2 Students permitted to use an agreed alternative word or expression	*Available	*Available	*Available
5.3 Sphygmomanometer with red flipper valve	***Not applicable (M)	***Not applicable (M)	*Available
5.4 CPR at end of OSCE / ISCE run	***Not applicable (M)	***Not applicable (M)	*Available
5.5 OSCE / ISCE station more accessible e.g., resus manikin placed on couch	***Not applicable (M)	***Not applicable (M)	*Available
5.6 Competent other instructed by candidate in resuscitation task	***Not applicable (M)	***Not applicable (M)	*Available

Comments

- (A) Currently all knowledge examinations are Single Best Answers / multiple choice type questions only and delivered electronically on the computer. No writing is required
- (B) OSPE examinations are inclusive by design with a minimal amount of reading (around 12 words maximum per question). Equally the number of words that the student must write is small (around 4).
- (C) Clinical OSCE / ISCE examination – stations have no or minimal writing OSCE. If any OSCE stations have over 60 seconds of reading / writing time, then there may be a provision of 15 seconds per minute extra time for reading/writing material inside station if that section is over 60 seconds in length
- (D) Dentistry – there may be stations with more extended writing however, extra time is added for everyone, so no additional time is required. Also, questions are given to the dentistry students prior to OSCEs.
- (E) Breaks in an OSCE / ISCE have to conform to the OSCE / ISCE format so will take the form of additional “rest” station/s between OSCE / ISCE stations. Interruptions within the OSCE stations will be dealt with usual processes and will be accommodated at the discretion of the exam co-ordinator, if practically possible and provided exam security is maintained.
- (F) Ad hoc breaks within the OSCE/ISCE is more challenging as exam security has to be maintained so student has to be supervised at all times. If necessary and available, the student can be quarantined and return to completed missed station/s either in a break (time permitting) or a subsequent OSCE / ISCE run.

- (G) These activities are not permitted within the anatomy lab (OSPE) and OSCE / ISCE stations. However, if needed provisions will be made at to accommodate this in an appropriate environment.
- (H) Whilst every attempt will be made to provide a private room in written / applied knowledge exams, practically from a personnel and physical viewpoint, this may not be possible. In all cases every attempt will be made to maximise privacy (e.g., use of privacy screens, allowing use of ear defenders)
- (I) Private runs of OSPEs are not available. The regulations only allow specimens to be within the limited confines of the anatomy lab. and the large numbers of students means that there is not the time or space to conduct a private run for an individual candidate. An alternative of a “quieter run” (3.2) may be offered.
- (J) Private runs of OSCEs / ISCEs are not available. The large numbers of students, the limited space capacity for conducting clinical examinations, and the availability of examiners (which include active NHS clinicians) means that there is not the time, space, or personnel to conduct a private run for an individual candidate. An alternative of a “quieter run” (3.2) may be offered.
- (K) Attempts will be made to place the student with OSPE / OSCE / ISCE run with less students. This cannot be guaranteed, however the nature of OSPEs and OSCEs / ISCEs is that every attempt is made to minimise noise and other students affecting a student’s performance
- (L) Where possible, the OSPE / OSCE / ISCE run will be held with toileting facilities nearby and allowance 2.2 (toilet breaks) can be instituted.
- (M) From available sittings.
- (N) Adjustments apply to OSCE / ISCE stations only
 Extra time within stations should not be given for extra time for reading and writing issues (see annotation (C) above). For verbal communication issues that may slow communication (eg stammer) this may be reasonable for stations that are predominantly verbal communication but NOT for those that are time sensitive or replicate clinical practice (eg Resuscitation stations)
- (O) For those who are colour blind students can ask examiners to support them in interpreting colours on charts and materials if required. Alternative written findings or adapted materials can be provided to such students. Where such materials are standard materials used in clinical settings (eg NEWS or prescription charts) no adaptation is offered.
- (P) For dentistry OSCEs all candidates are given extended readings times outside the station
- (Q) Dentistry - Where there is extended writing in the ISCE station the students who require adjustments can do so in an electronic format. For those requiring readers, printed text and an electronic personal reading aid will be provided (using headphones) to minimise disruption to other candidates
- (R) PA programme OSCEs are inclusive by design and mimic the national OSCE which includes 2 minute extended reading time for everyone, so there does not requirement to be individual adjustments with reading time.
- (S) Assistive technology for OSCEs / ISCEs can be made available to students who require this provision for disability-related reasons, and can be used in clinical practice (eg stethoscopes that link to hearing aid). Use of technology that cannot be used in clinical

practice or technology that may disturb other student's (eg has a loud speaker) should be discussed with the Assessment team

- (T) The OSCE / ISCEs are designed to minimise visual distraction from other students, so no additional adjustments are required
- (U) This can usually be provided for with sufficient notice, although there may be physical barriers to implementing this adjustment in certain environments
- (V) The OSCE / ISCEs require communication with examiners and Patient partners therefore communication cannot be impaired by use of noise reduction devices.
- (W) OSCE and ISCEs all are designed to assess written clinical communication in addition to Clinical skills (OSCE / ISCE). The student therefore should be able to demonstrate that they can communicate effectively using medical terms in written form (3,5). In OSCEs forms or charts to be filled in replicate clinical practice and is a required competence. Note this restriction does not preclude provision 5.1
- (X) The writing / typing involved in OSPEs ranges from one word to a few words. it is core and necessary requirement for students to be able to communicate in written format (3,5). For these reasons, it is not considered a reasonable adjustment. Note that additional adjustments (eg extra time) may be offered if appropriate
- (Y) It can be specified that allowance is to be made for grammar and spelling within assessments. However, where there is considered that patient safety may be compromised, the meaning must be clear, that is there should be no ambiguity or mistakes that would lead to clinical errors. This includes in the anatomy examination (OSPE) as ambiguity or inaccuracies in describing anatomical structures, or function could lead to patient safety errors.

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