



# *Law Society of Ireland*

## **Policy and Procedures for Students and Staff on Alternative Exam & Study Arrangements for Students with a Disability and / or Those Requiring Temporary Adapted Exam Arrangements**

The Law School is committed to providing an equal opportunities learning environment, which meets the specific and diverse needs of all of our learners.

This Policy applies to all Law Society examinations. This policy aims to enable students with disabilities to participate fully in their chosen programme of education and/or to undertake examinations and assessments without experiencing any significant disadvantage arising from their disability.

The Law School adopts and draws upon the guidelines and policy devised by the Association for Higher Education Access & Disability (AHEAD).

## **1. Notification of Disability**

While it may be difficult for some students to come forward and discuss a disability, it is the surest way of ensuring a swift and understanding response. Ideally this should happen as soon as you confirm your intention to attend a Law School course or to undertake an examination/assessment.

Applicants are required to complete a Disability Registration Form and to provide relevant medical/assessment documentation. The Law School will then assess your circumstances and help you to access appropriate adaptations. Applications will not be considered in the absence of the relevant documentation (see Appendix 1 for details of acceptable documentation). All Students who require adapted arrangements are required to complete and submit this form for any exam sitting they are undertaking. This enables the appropriate adapted arrangements to be put in place to support them in case their needs have changed from year to year.

## **2. Learning Support**

Certain Professional Practice Course students with specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, may benefit from learning support.

Additional support in certain core subjects may be arranged given prior notice.

## **3. Examinations**

The Law School seeks to minimise the stress and pressure associated with the examination process. Students are invited to discuss specific needs with the appropriate staff member at least six weeks in advance of all examinations. It is your responsibility to declare any condition or situation that may require accommodation and to complete the requisite paperwork, which will necessitate supporting documentation. This enables the appropriate adapted arrangements to be put in place to support you. This timeframe may only be reviewed in exceptional circumstances<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Exceptions include accidents and bereavements.

Consideration can be given to the following arrangements having particular regard to your circumstances: -

### **Additional Time for Examinations**

In the case of applications for additional time please note that a medical consultant or specialist letter is required (see Appendix 1) and a GP or other medical letter will not suffice. An additional allowance of 10 minutes per hour of an examination<sup>2</sup> may be granted in the following situations:

- Where the average speed of communication and/or reading of the candidate is below that of candidates without disability.
- Where a candidate's communication is affected because they tire easily, or have limited strength or flexibility.
- Where disability worsens due to stress and /or environmental variations (e.g. psychological/psychiatric conditions, epilepsy, arthritis).
- Where candidates experience pain and/or muscular spasm.

### **Dictation to a Scribe**

A scribe may be assigned to students to type answers dictated by a candidate. Please note students using a scribe will be recorded to allow examiners to check material presented. A separate examination room is provided when this accommodation is used. Scribes will only be granted for students who cannot use a computer due to the nature of their disability. It is the responsibility of the candidate to have had adequate practice in the use of a scribe. A practice session is strongly recommended and can be arranged by special appointment if required by the candidate.

#### **A Scribe:**

- Shall not provide any factual help or offer suggestions to a candidate;
- Shall not advise the candidate on how to organise responses.

### **Readers**

A reader will read and re-read the entire, or part of the examination paper, as well as any part of the candidate's text, as requested. Sometimes a candidate may need a reader and a scribe. In such instances the same person may act as both.

The reader will be able to read accurately the examination paper at a reasonable rate. It is the responsibility of the candidate to have had adequate practice in the use of a reader. A practice session is strongly recommended and can be arranged by special appointment if required by the candidate. If a reader is not the primary means by which a candidate is accessing an

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<sup>2</sup> This may be reviewed in exceptional cases, such as in the case of students with multiple disabilities.

examination paper (e.g. if it is being provided electronically or in Braille), then it may be possible for the invigilator to read the paper or parts thereof to the candidate.

**A Reader:**

- Shall not provide factual help or offer suggestions to a candidate;
- Shall not advise the candidate on how to organise responses.

**Use of Technological Aids**

Students may be granted permission to use voice-recorders, personal computers/lap-tops and/or relevant software, as appropriate.

**Presentation of Examination papers**

The following alternative presentations are allowable and the Law School will endeavour to provide them on request:

- On coloured paper.
- Enlarged to A3.
- Audio versions.
- Sign-language interpreters.
- Braille.
- Speech synthesiser.
- Readers.

**Alternate Exam Location**

Students may be facilitated to undertake examinations in an alternate setting. Only in exceptional circumstances should a candidate have a separate and individual venue.

The Law School has a right to deny a request for accommodation and/or auxiliary aid if the documentation does not identify a specific disability and/or functional limitation, if it fails to verify the need for the requested services or if it is not provided in a timely manner.

The Law School can refuse to provide an accommodation and/or auxiliary aid that is inappropriate or unreasonable, including any that: pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others, constitute a substantial change or alteration to an essential element of a course or examination, or pose undue financial or administrative hardship on the School.

*Updated August 2013. Please note that this policy is subject to change without notice.*

### **Notification of Disability to Examiner**

The Law School may notify examiners of your disability at your request. All examination papers are marked anonymously and the candidate's identity will never be disclosed to examiners. It is your responsibility to provide details of the exam(s) you are applying to sit on the Disability Registration Form at each exam sitting in order that your examiner(s) can be notified of your disability.

When marking scripts from students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SLDs), examiners are advised to follow marking guidelines as detailed in Appendix 2.

### **4. Assessments**

Students with disabilities will be assessed in the same way as all other students. However, the conditions of the assessment may vary. Possible alterations, which include extended deadlines, can be discussed with relevant Law School staff.

### **5. Traineeships**

Should trainees have specific disability-related requirements regarding traineeships, these are to be made known to the Trainee Executive, whose role it is to liaise between trainees and their placement firms.

### **6. PPC I and PPC II Lectures/ Tutorials**

PPC I and PPC II students may wish to have access to the written notes of two of their peers, by special arrangement. This will be facilitated upon request.

### **7. ESF Fund for Students with Disabilities**

Much of the study related-support for students with a disability is financed through the **European Social Fund for Students with Disabilities**. The National office on behalf of the Department of Education and Science allocates this funding. Please contact the Student Development Service ([studentadvisor@lawsociety.ie](mailto:studentadvisor@lawsociety.ie)/ 01-6724802) for details of the educational support available and how to apply.

**Further information is available from:**

- Professional Practice Courses (PPC I & II) – Emma Cooper, Student Development Service Advisor (studentadvisor@lawsociety.ie / 01-6724802).
- FE-1 Examinations – Paula Sheedy, Education Officer (p.sheedy@lawsociety.ie / 01-6724802).

**Completed form(s) should be returned to:**

- Professional Practice Courses (PPC I & II) – Student Development Service, Law School, Law Society of Ireland, Blackhall Place, Dublin 7.
- FE-1 Examinations – Paula Sheedy, Education Officer, Law School, Law Society of Ireland, Blackhall Place, Dublin 7.

## Appendix 1A

### Documentation Required for Application of Adapted Study & Exam Arrangements (Registered Disability)

| Condition:                                    | Supporting documentation from:   |
|---|--|
| Blind / Vision Impaired                       | Ophthalmologist  |
| Deaf / Hard of Hearing                        | Audiologist, ENT Consultant  |
| Physical / Mobility Disability                | Orthopaedic Consultant, Neurologist (consultant), other Consultant specific to condition |
| Medical Condition                             | Relevant consultant in area of condition   |
| Dyslexia / Specific Learning Disability (SLD) | Adult Educational Psychologist (Full adult assessment report required)                   |
| ADD / ADHD & Asperger's Syndrome              | Clinical Psychologist / Psychiatrist   |
| Head/Traumatic Brain Injury                   | Consultant Physician, Neurologist, Neuropsychologist                                     |

| Condition:              | Supporting Documentation From <sup>3</sup> :   |
|-------------------------|--|
| Mental Health Condition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychiatrist (report) – where additional time is being sought</li> <li>• GP/Psychologist/Psychotherapist – where alternate exam venue only is being sought</li> </ul> |

Source: Adapted from DAWN Policy & Practice on Assessment and Examination Accommodations for Learners with Disabilities, June 2008.

#### Please note:

- A GP medical certificate will not be accepted as suitable medical evidence for candidates with a permanent disability (except for applications for an alternate exam venue only in the case of a mental health condition as detailed above).
- All Certificates must be current and should confirm:
  - Exact nature of the disability,
  - Impact of the disability on a student's ability to participate in study and to undertake examinations,
  - Confirmation that the adaptations (which should be named) being applied for are medically necessary.
- All relevant certificates should be attached to the application form.

<sup>3</sup> This may be reviewed in exceptional circumstances.

Updated August 2013. Please note that this policy is subject to change without notice.

## Appendix 1B

### Documentation Required for Application of Adapted Study & Exam Arrangements (Temporary Condition)

| Condition                          | Supporting Documentation From:   |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Broken Bone / Serious Sprains etc. | Hospital Doctor  |
| Physical Mobility Condition        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chiropractor, Neurologist Consultant, Orthopaedic Consultant, Osteopath, Physiotherapist, other consultant specific to condition – where additional time is being sought</li><li>• Medical Practitioner – where alternative venue only is being sought</li></ul> |
| Medical Condition                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relevant consultant in area of condition – where additional time is being sought</li><li>• Medical Practitioner – where alternative venue only is being sought</li></ul>   |

| Condition               | Supporting Documentation From <sup>4</sup> :  |
|-------------------------|---|
| Mental Health Condition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Psychiatrist (report) – where additional time is being sought</li><li>• GP/Psychologist/Psychotherapist – where alternate exam venue only is being sought</li></ul> |

Source: Adapted from DAWN Policy & Practice on Assessment and Examination Accommodations for Learners with Disabilities, June 2008.

#### Please Note:

- In the case of applications for additional time, please note that a relevant consultant's letter is required and a GP or other medical letter will not suffice.
- Certificates must contain the following information:
  - exact nature of the illness/injury/condition,
  - impact of the illness/injury/condition on the applicant's ability to undertake examinations,
  - confirmation that the adaptation being applied for (which should be named) is medically necessary.
- All relevant certificates should be attached to the application form.

<sup>4</sup> This may be reviewed in exceptional circumstances.

## Appendix 2

### Procedures for Examiners when Marking Scripts from Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SLDs).<sup>5</sup>

When marking the examination script of a student with a SLD, the following Marking Guidelines should be taken into consideration:

1. First, read the script quickly to judge the student's underlying understanding of the topic; then assess their performance against the learning outcomes. If the script contains all the required elements but does not introduce them in a clear logical order, avoid penalizing the student for a lack of structure in their writing unless this is a stipulated competency being assessed.
2. Errors in **spelling** do not mean that the student is confused about the meaning of the word or its function in their writing. Generally, such errors do not lead to ambiguity and should not be penalised when subject knowledge is being assessed.
3. **Lexical** errors, such as *coarse* for *course*, do not mean that the student is confused about the meaning of the words. This kind of error should not be penalised unless it leads to ambiguity.
4. **Grammatical** errors, like incorrect tense endings, lack of subject – verb agreement and incorrect word order may not affect the meaning of the sentence. This kind of error should not be penalised unless it leads to ambiguity.
5. **Punctuation** may not be used as a tool for clarifying meaning. Scripts may contain long sentences that are difficult to follow with indiscriminate punctuation or no punctuation at all. Very short sentences or fragments of sentences might also be produced. This kind of error should not be penalised unless it leads to ambiguity.
6. Some students may have **restricted vocabulary** and use a far more limited range of words. Avoid penalising students who may have an immature style of writing, unless written communication is a specified learning outcome.
7. In all subjects, if the surface errors or structural flaws make the student's work so ambiguous that it is impossible to decipher the meaning, then this diminishes his/her ability to demonstrate the module's learning outcomes and this would be reflected in the marks awarded.

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Guidelines for Marking the Work of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (University of Central Lancashire).