Study-related provision guidance document for disabled postgraduate researchers

Assessment and examination

Provisions for assessment and examination will need to reflect individual circumstances and the format of the examination, noting that the viva may be conducted online. Some provisions may require additional approval from Registry or the Dean for PGR.

Examples of support & reasonable adjustments for PGR level assessment/examination to be agreed on a case-by-case basis:

- Early awareness raising of assessment timescales and work required for assessment.
- Assistive technologies to support argument development and proofreading.
- Facilitating access to British Sign Language Interpreter.
- The provision of subtitles (online).
- The attendance of a supporter.
- Support to transcribe questions to written form during the assessment/viva.
- Reasonable adjustments to the assessment format may be considered in exceptional cases.
- Questions may be reworded to ensure understanding.
- Asking the panel chair/internal examiner to ensure that panel members give a PGR time to find information within the thesis or to compose a response.
- Additional time for assessment/viva is not appropriate for PGRs however, PGRs can request additional or more frequent breaks during the viva. It is suggested vivas are not less than 1.5 hours and where it is envisioned a viva will last longer than 2 hours, breaks are agreed at the very outset by the internal examiner.
- An extension to the time period given to complete thesis corrections (after the viva).
- Written guidance for Viva examiners detailing specific disability-related requirements such as clear communication, sufficient opportunities for clarification of questions, and sufficient time for processing questions and answers.

It should be noted the deadline for Annual Progression Exercise 1 cannot be moved and therefore any additional time required needs to be granted through earlier awareness of the deadline rather than by extending beyond the 12 months. Discussions about timescales and expectations of work required for assessment should take place within the first month from the PGR's start date, which will be no later than 6 months prior to the work submission date. This should be raised by the PGR as part of the Supervisor/ Student meeting.

Academic Support:

- Support from supervisors to help with or adapt methodologies or techniques required for the PGR to undertake their research, for example, if required, assistance with fieldwork.
- Discussion and implementation of work preferences and working patterns (usually at initial supervisor/student meeting (led by supervisor)), which may include:

- o Dividing large projects/assignments into several smaller tasks.
- o Supervisors providing advance notice of upcoming work milestones.

- It may be possible for individual supervisory sessions to be either recorded or supported by a note-taker. PGRs must discuss this firstly with their supervisor and Student Advice & Support to ensure that it is appropriate (e.g., confidentiality of research data/Intellectual Property rights) for supervision sessions and/or research group meetings to be recorded or minuted by a note-taker. This may be applicable to other meeting/training situations. PGRs must discuss their requirement to either audio record or be accompanied by a note-taker with their supervisor, meeting organiser, and Student Advice & Support.

Academic Writing

All PGRs can access support with writing through the Student Learning Service and disabled PGRs may be referred for specialist study skills support coordinated by Student Advice & Support.

If identified as a reasonable adjustment with Student Advice & Support, PGRs may receive access to proof reading support which sits out with the University's [Policy on Proofreading]. Where there is a confidentiality agreement or IP contract in place, this must be disclosed by the PGR to Student Advice & Support who will coordinate the proof-reading support.

It is important that supervisors recognise there may be more spelling/grammatical/phrasing errors where students have a SpLD and should approach feedback sympathetically.

Feedback:

PGRs and supervisors to consider the way feedback is presented and agree on a suitable format e.g.:

- Separating out feedback on content, from feedback on structure.

- Providing digitally recorded feedback where appropriate (this could be applicable to all forms of feedback including progression and monitoring exercises).

Updated – December 2023