

Academic accommodations for students with specific learning and/or invisible disabilities

Rationale for academic accommodations

Under the Human Rights Act 1993, the University of Auckland is required to provide “reasonable accommodations for people who are defined as having impairments under the Act.”¹ Academic accommodations (also known as special conditions or academic adjustments) are part of a range of inclusive learning opportunities offered by the University of Auckland to ensure that “students with impairments are provided with equitable opportunities to achieve their individual capabilities and participate in all aspects of tertiary education life.”² Central to the provision of academic accommodations is the understanding that students with impairments are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged in the tertiary learning environment.

Academic accommodations are based on what is seen to be reasonable and appropriate for students attending the University of Auckland. Continuation of academic accommodations offered by or received from other learning institutions and/or recommended by external practitioners cannot be guaranteed.

Role of Inclusive Learning

Inclusive Learning Advisers within Te Tumu Herenga determine appropriate and reasonable academic accommodations for University of Auckland students with specific learning disabilities (i.e., dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia), attention deficit disorders (i.e., ADD and ADHD) and autism spectrum disorders. From time to time students with other invisible disabilities, which affect learning (such as acquired brain injuries) may be included. An evidence-based approach ensures that the accommodations provided by the University of Auckland are equitable.

Nature of academic accommodations

Academic accommodations at the University of Auckland include:

1. Special conditions in tests and examinations.

Some of the more common adjustments include: extra writing time, use of a reader and/or writer, access to a computer, and/or access to smaller examination venues with fewer students.³

2. Individualised academic tuition provided by Inclusive Learning.⁴
3. Note taking assistance provided by Student Disability Services.

Academic accommodations can be permanent or temporary depending on the nature of the impairment.

In some cases, the accommodations will be reviewed after a specific time period.

¹ Kia Orite. (2004). Retrieved from <http://www.achieve.org.nz/kia-orite/4.4>

² Kia Orite. (2004). Retrieved from <http://www.achieve.org.nz/kia-orite/3.1>: General Principles

³ For more information about special conditions, refer to the University's [Policy on Special Conditions for Written Tests and Exams](#).

⁴ See Inclusive Learning's "Guidelines for Individualised Tuition"

Principles for determining academic accommodations

Inclusive Learning adheres to the principles and best practice standards of *Kia Ōrite - Achieving Equity, the New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments*.⁵ It subscribes to a social model of disability:

*“Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are impairments. They may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments.” Instead, “disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have”.*⁶

With the aim of eliminating learning barriers and securing university-wide parity of academic accommodations for students with impairments, the following principles have been developed:

1. Each student presents with his/her own individual learning profile. Every application for academic accommodations is therefore reviewed individually.
2. Several influencing factors are considered when determining the appropriateness of an academic accommodation. For example, nature and severity of disability, prior experience using academic accommodations (such as computers or amanuenses in examinations), and personal preference are factors which may influence the decision-making process but they do not individually determine the outcome.
3. All documentation submitted by students is subject to internal moderation. Even if an accommodation is recommended in documentation, there is no guarantee it will be adopted. In some cases, a student may be asked to undertake further assessment, regardless of the date of the report.
4. Academic accommodations are based on what is seen to be reasonable and appropriate for students attending the University of Auckland. Continuation of academic accommodations offered by or received from other learning institutions and/or recommended by external practitioners therefore cannot be guaranteed.
5. Academic accommodations are negotiated confidentially between the student and Inclusive Learning Adviser, who represents the University of Auckland.
6. Students must apply for ongoing special conditions for a permanent impairment no later than the second Friday following the commencement of lectures. Applications for temporary special conditions should be made as soon as possible.
7. The agreed accommodations are open to review at any time on the understanding that reassessment may be required and that any subsequent adjustments to accommodations may not occur until the following examination period.

⁵ <http://www.achieve.org.nz/kia-orite>

⁶ <http://www.achieve.org.nz/kia-orite/setting-the-scene>.

Process for determining academic accommodations

1. Students seeking or enquiring about academic accommodations must first register with Student Disability Services.
2. Students applying for academic accommodations must submit relevant and current documentation; usually in the form of a learning assessment report or specialist letter.⁷
3. Students must be interviewed by an Inclusive Learning Adviser who will determine eligibility for academic accommodations.
4. The Inclusive Learning Adviser will complete an AS25 for special conditions in exams.
5. Once approved, students will receive email confirmation from the Examinations Office, with a copy of their AS25 attached.
6. If required, students can complete an online form through Student Disability Services to request special conditions for mid-semester tests.

⁷ See Criteria for supporting documentation: Special conditions for students with specific learning and/or invisible disabilities