

Education

Current student - Exams and assessments

Higher Education -
Told them about disability - Yes



**RIGHT TO
PARTICIPATE**

Useful knowledge

The Equality Act covers exams set by higher education providers. This means colleges and universities are expected to make 'reasonable adjustments' to exams and assessments to make them accessible to disabled students.

Common examples include:

- Extra time or opportunities to take rest breaks
- Exam papers in your preferred format
- Assistive technology e.g. screen reading software
- Use of a separate room so that you're not disturbed by other candidates, and they are not disturbed by you
- Assistance from another person such as a prompter, scribe or reader

Useful knowledge

- Effective communication
- Negotiation skills
- Writing clearly
- Record-keeping

Ways to assert your legal rights

- 1.** Ask for a confidential chat with the staff member responsible for disability. This person is usually called the learning support adviser or disability adviser. Tell them about any difficulties you're having with your exams, assessments or assignments and ask what support can be put in place. Don't wait until it becomes a big problem.
- 2.** If you prefer, you could send an email or letter, telling the college or university that you have a disability. You don't have to go into detail about your condition but it may be useful to include the following wording:

Under the Equality Act 2010, education providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students. I would like to request all reasonable steps be taken to alleviate the substantial disadvantage I am facing in my studies.

Describe what has happened and the impact on your ability to progress on the course. Give the facts of the case, being specific and clear. Make sure to describe any disadvantage you're experiencing. Suggest as many different options for reasonable adjustments as you can.

You could also request a needs assessment. This is a face-to-face meeting with someone who understands how to support disabled students. With your agreement, the assessor can make additional recommendations for exams and assignments and write a report summarising the support you need.

3. If you're not satisfied after informal discussions, you can make a formal complaint. You can usually find information about the internal complaints procedure from your student handbook, the college or university website or directly from the college. They must make the complaints procedure available to you in your preferred format.

[Download template complaint letter about failure to make reasonable adjustments for exams](#)

You can have confidence in the process because

Colleges and universities have been covered by the Disability Discrimination Act since 2001 and the Equality Act since 2010. Most have a good understanding of their legal duties and well-developed systems for making sure disabled students progress in their studies.

We regularly hear examples of students who have successfully negotiated the support and adjustments they need through informal discussion and working through the learner support or disability service.

You can get more help from

The [Equality Advisory & Support Service \(EASS\)](#) runs a free helpline assisting individuals with equality and human rights issues across England, Scotland and Wales.

Telephone • 0808 800 0082
Text phone • 0808 800 0084
Email • [through websites form](#)

Disability Rights UK [student helpline](#)

Telephone • 0330 995 0414
Email • students@disabilityrightsuk.org

Disability Rights UK [Into Higher Education](#) guide

Disability Rights UK free factsheets on [Understanding the Equality Act](#) and [Making a complaint](#)