



## Reasonable Accommodations Policy for Students with a Disability

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## 1. Purpose

Atlantic Technological University is dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment where every community member is valued and supported in reaching their full potential. This *Reasonable Accommodations Policy for Students with a Disability* outlines the framework for ensuring equal access and opportunities in *teaching, learning, assessment, and placement/work practice*. It aims to promote best practices in providing reasonable accommodations that enable students with disabilities to fully participate in university life.

This policy aligns with the University's legal obligations under the *Disability Act 2005*, the *Equal Status Acts 2000 (as amended)*, the *Technological Universities Act 2018* and the *HEA Act 2022*. It defines both standard and non-standard accommodations and guides the approval process for these supports.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate students with permanent or long-term disabilities (including learning differences and significant ongoing health conditions). It is designed to ensure these students have equitable access to a holistic learning experience, on an equal footing with all members of the University community.

The policy outlines the provision of reasonable accommodations, as defined by relevant legislation, to support students throughout their studies. The policy addresses both standard and non-standard accommodations.

## 3. Reference Documents

- Equal Status Acts (as amended), 2000-2018
- Disability Act, 2005
- General Data Protection Regulation EU 2016/679 (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act, 2018
- Technological Universities Act, 2018
- Higher Education Authority Act, 2022
- The National Access Plan, 2022 – 2028 (A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education, HEA 2022)

- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006.

## 4. Policy

The University has a legal obligation to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability.

In addition to our legal obligations, the *University's AQAE023 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy* sets out our commitment to promoting equality in all aspects of our activities and to creating an environment and culture where all students, staff and others are mutually treated with dignity and respect. Our approach to the provision of reasonable accommodations to students with a disability is underpinned by these values.

### 4.1 Definitions

#### 4.1.1 Disability

The definition of disability as set out in the Disability Act, 2005 is as follows:

1. the total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body,
2. the presence in the body of organisms causing or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness,
3. the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body,
4. a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction,
5. a condition, disease or illness which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.

A disability is significant, long term and/or enduring in nature, lasting longer than a year and shall be taken to include a disability which exists at present, or which previously existed but no longer exists, or which may exist in the future, or which is imputed to a person.

#### 4.1.2 Reasonable Accommodation

As outlined in the *Equal Status Act 2000* (as amended), a reasonable accommodation is any action that helps to alleviate a substantial disadvantage due to a disability and/or a significant ongoing illness. At ATU, reasonable accommodations for students with a disability aim to ensure equality of participation for students with disabilities, learning differences, or significant ongoing health conditions, enabling them to achieve programme and module learning outcomes. Key aspects of reasonable accommodations include:

- adjustments to procedures or programme delivery,
- provision of examination arrangements,
- modifications to the physical environment, and/or
- access to additional services such as assistive technology, materials in alternative formats, or extra tuition.

A reasonable accommodation may be standard or non-standard, please see Section 4.3 and 4.4 for further information.

#### 4.1.3 Needs Assessment

A Needs Assessment involves one or more meetings between a student and a member of the DLSS to identify the reasonable accommodations and/or supports required for the student to engage fully with their programme of study. During the meeting(s), the nature of the student's disability, programme / module requirements, and individual needs are discussed. The assessment is informed by the student's evidence of disability, educational history, and personal experience.

## 4.2 Determining what accommodations are reasonable

In determining reasonable accommodations for any student, the integrity of the programme and the learning outcomes must be maintained. The following factors will be considered when determining what qualifies as a reasonable accommodation:

- the effectiveness of the accommodation in helping the student overcome the relevant disadvantage,
- whether the accommodation would compromise academic standards or professional practices of the programme (including consideration of Programme Fitness to Practice Statements, where relevant - see *AQAE016 Fitness to Practice Policy*),
- health and safety considerations,
- the impact on other students, and
- the financial and resource costs to the University.

Under Section 4 of the Equal Status Acts (as amended), 2000-2018, failure or refusal to provide necessary special treatment or facilities is not reasonable unless the requested accommodations would incur more than a nominal cost for the service provider.

Furthermore, an accommodation is not reasonable if it impacts on the student's ability to safely participate in the programme of study. The University recognises that there are instances where a disability type may impact on a student's ability to participate in aspects of their programme of study, i.e. labs/practical classes, placements/work practice, and/or the student may not be able to work in their chosen profession or discipline, due to health

and safety grounds. In such instances, where possible, students may still choose to avail of appropriate reasonable accommodations to achieve the learning outcomes of a programme. The University commits to advising students on the potential impact to their future employability in their chosen discipline/profession and seek to provide information and support to students on their options.

In exceptional circumstances, a student may be prohibited from participating in a programme where serious health and safety considerations have been verified.

### 4.3 Standard Reasonable Accommodation

A *reasonable accommodation* is any action that helps to alleviate a substantial disadvantage due to a disability and/or a significant ongoing illness.

ATU defines a standard reasonable accommodation as an ***adjustment*** to a student's teaching, learning, assessment, placement/work practice, or final examinations that allows participation in their education.

Reasonable Accommodations are provided to the student for the duration of their studies. These are approved following registration with the DLSS and information regarding the approved accommodations will be accessible, as necessary, by academic staff for the duration of the students' time at ATU. Amendments to a student's approved standard reasonable accommodations may be recommended by the DLSS and communicated to staff if the student requests a review.

### 4.4 Non-standard Reasonable Accommodation

A non-standard reasonable accommodation may be provided when standard accommodations are not sufficient to meet a student's needs, and may involve ***alternative*** teaching, learning, or assessment methods.

For students with high support needs or exceptional circumstances, the Disability Officer will meet with academic staff and the relevant Head of Department to discuss and implement non-standard accommodations. More detail can be found on this process in the procedure supporting this policy (*AQAE060 Procedure for the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*).

## 4.5 Provision of Reasonable Accommodations to Students

The process for providing a student with reasonable accommodations is detailed in the *AQAE060 Procedure for the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*.

For students on a programme accredited by a regulatory body, provision of reasonable accommodations for placement/work practice are detailed in *AQAE061 Procedure for the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations for Students with a disability whilst on placement/work practice (programmes accredited by a regulatory body)*.

### 4.5.1 Disclosure and Registration

The University provides reasonable accommodations to students who disclose a disability and register with the DLSS.

Students are encouraged to register with the DLSS upon registration with the University. However, we recognise that a student may not wish to disclose their disability until later in their studies, or a condition may emerge during the course of their studies and a student may disclose their disability and register with the DLSS at any time during their studies.

### 4.5.2 Role of the DLSS

DLSS staff are trained facilitators, specialising in advising on and providing reasonable accommodations. They serve as a key resource for both students and academic departments in identifying and implementing accommodations in teaching, learning, assessment, and placement/work practice.

### 4.5.3 Evidence of Disability

Students must provide acceptable evidence of their disability when registering with the DLSS. This documentation must meet the University's standards and align with nationally agreed criteria.

### 4.5.4 Needs Assessment

The DLSS is responsible for conducting a needs assessment to determine the appropriate reasonable accommodations required to meet the student's academic needs.

A Learning Educational Needs Summary (LENS) report is then completed by the DLSS.

### 4.5.5 Communication of Accommodations

Once reasonable accommodations are approved, academic staff will be able to access this information for students registered on a programme and/or module throughout their studies. The information will be made available in a GDPR-compliant format, linked to the *Student Record System*.

#### 4.5.6 Data Protection and Usage

The DLSS will ensure student data is used solely for facilitating reasonable accommodations, fulfilling statutory reporting requirements, and accessing funding from the Fund for Students with a Disability (FSD). Student consent will be obtained before processing personal data.

#### 4.5.7 Confidentiality

University management, academic staff, and disability service staff will maintain confidentiality of records and communications related to students with disabilities, in accordance with data protection legislation and university policies. Disclosures shall only be made with the student's written consent.

#### 4.5.8 Review of Accommodations

Students can request a review or modification of their accommodations if circumstances change or if additional information is provided. The DLSS will conduct these reviews.

#### 4.5.9 Resolution of Disputes

Disagreements regarding reasonable accommodations will be adjudicated on by a committee chaired by the Vice President of Students, Teaching, and Learning. The details of the process can be found in *AQAE060 Procedure for Provision of Reasonable Accommodations for a Student with a Disability*.

#### 4.5.10 Review of Accommodations

Students can request a review or modification of their accommodations if circumstances change or if additional information is provided. The DLSS will conduct these reviews. A student may also appeal the decision of DLSS in respect of the provision of reasonable accommodations. This process is outlined in *AQAE062 Procedure for Appealing Decisions related to Provision of Reasonable Accommodations*.

### **4.6 Temporary Accommodations for Short-Term Disabilities**

Students with short-term disabilities or illnesses may receive temporary accommodations approved within their faculty. Additional support is available from Student Health Services, Student Counselling Services, and the Exams Office for temporary exam accommodations. The process is detailed in *AQAE063 Procedure for Provision of Temporary Accommodations due to Short-Term Disability*.

### **4.7 Awareness, Induction and Training**

The University is legally obliged and has a moral duty to create an environment where students with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities, and where disability



discrimination is actively prevented. The University's *AQAE023 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy* underscores our commitment to maintaining an environment of dignity and respect where all students can harness and develop their full potential. Failure to provide reasonable accommodations impacts a student's success and is prohibited under both Irish and international law.

Students will be informed at induction of the services provided by the DLSS and directed to resources to support them in registering with the DLSS and accessing supports. Further information on resources, training and services provided by the DLSS to students will be available through the *Student Hub*.

#### 4.7.1 Staff Training

To support staff in enhancing their knowledge and understanding, enriching the inclusivity of the University and fulfilling their obligations, the DLSS offers comprehensive and targeted training. The essential training ensures staff understand the University's legal responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations and supports the effective implementation of this policy across the university. All staff members are obliged to complete the training to ensure full compliance with our shared commitment to equality, inclusivity and accessibility.

Further information on resources, training and services provided by the DLSS will be available through the Staff hub.

## 4.8 Roles and Responsibilities

### 4.8.1 Students

Students seeking reasonable accommodations must:

- register with the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS), inform them of their disability, and provide appropriate evidence,
- engage in the Needs Assessment process with the DLSS to identify and secure reasonable accommodations, and
- ensure that requests for separate venues for Coursework Assessment are made in advance of the assessment, in accordance with the timelines outlined in the related procedures.

### 4.8.2 Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS):

The DLSS:

- approve reasonable accommodations, taking into account the nature of the disability, the evidence provided, health and safety considerations, input from

external stakeholders (e.g., Vision Ireland, Chime), student preferences, and programme/professional accreditation requirements.

- communicate approved reasonable accommodations to academic faculties,
- collaborate with academic staff, relevant support services, both internal and external (e.g., mental health services, DAWN, INCLUDE, AHEAD), to facilitate accommodations,
- ensure that the sharing of student data is with the student's written consent and in compliance with GDPR,
- facilitate and/or provide training to academic and support staff, and
- compile reports related to this policy to the Vice President Students, Learning & Teaching, as required.

#### 4.8.3 Head of Department

Heads of Department will:

- communicate to academic staff that students in their department have approved reasonable accommodations,
- ensure that all academic staff are aware of training requirements, and
- work with the DLSS to support and advise a student with a disability type that may impact on their ability to participate in aspects of their programme of study and may not be able to work in their chosen profession or discipline on health and safety grounds.

#### 4.8.4 Academic Staff and Support Staff

Academic and support staff must implement the approved reasonable accommodations as communicated by the DLSS in the teaching, learning, assessment, and placement/work practice environments.

All staff must:

- complete the mandatory training on reasonable accommodations, and
- apply the knowledge gained from the training to support students with disabilities and learning differences effectively.

Academic and support staff must implement the approved reasonable accommodations as communicated by the DLSS in the teaching, learning, assessment, and placement/work practice environments.

Academic Staff must:

- access the information provided to them related to approved reasonable accommodations for students registered on the programme and/or module on which they teach,
- implement approved reasonable accommodations for students, and

- seek advice and support in understanding a disability and implementing a reasonable accommodation, if necessary.

#### 4.8.5 Vice President Students, Teaching and Learning

The VPSTL has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

### 5. Documents Related to this Policy

- AQAE060 Procedure for the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations for a Student with a Disability
- AQAE061 Procedure for the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations for Students with a disability whilst on placement/work practice (programmes accredited by a regulatory body)
- AQAE062 Procedure for Appealing Decisions related to Provision of Reasonable Accommodations
- AQAE063 Procedure for Provision of Temporary Accommodations due to Short-Term Disability.

### 6. Revision History

Revision No	Description of Change	Approval Date
000	New Policy. Approved by Academic Council	06/12/2024