Reasonable Adjustment Policy

Table of Contents

Reasonable Adjustment Policy

University of Gold Coast

Document Control

Policy Number: UGC-RAP-001

Version: 1.0

Effective Date: January, 2024

Review Date: January, 2029

Policy Owner: UGC Student Services Department

Approved By: Academic Board

1. Purpose and Scope

· This policy establishes the University of Gold Coast's unwavering commitment to providing reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities, ensuring equal access to educational opportunities, services, and facilities across the entire institution. The policy applies comprehensively to all students enrolled at the University of Gold Coast across undergraduate, postgraduate, research, and continuing education programs, regardless of study mode, duration, or location. It encompasses academic accommodations, assessment modifications, physical accessibility improvements, technological adaptations, and comprehensive support service provisions designed to eliminate barriers to educational participation.

· The policy extends to all university facilities including libraries, laboratories, recreational centers, residential accommodations, dining facilities, online platforms, digital learning environments, and extracurricular student activities. Staff members, faculty, contractors, service providers, and third-party vendors are required to implement this policy within their respective areas of responsibility, ensuring consistent application across all university operations while maintaining compliance with relevant disability discrimination legislation.

· This policy recognizes that reasonable adjustments are not merely legal obligations but fundamental elements of educational excellence and social justice. The university commits to creating an inclusive environment where students with disabilities can participate fully in academic, social, and professional development opportunities, contributing to a diverse and vibrant campus community that benefits all members through enhanced understanding, innovation, and collaborative learning experiences.

2. Legislative Framework

· The University of Gold Coast operates under comprehensive legislative frameworks including the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth), Disability Standards for Education 2005, and relevant state anti-discrimination legislation, which collectively mandate that educational institutions provide reasonable adjustments to eliminate discrimination against students with disabilities. These laws establish clear obligations for universities to ensure equal access to education while maintaining academic standards and institutional integrity.

· The university recognizes its legal obligation to make anticipatory adjustments where possible and to respond promptly to individual accommodation requests within reasonable timeframes. Compliance extends beyond basic legal requirements to encompass digital accessibility standards such as Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), physical infrastructure requirements under building codes and accessibility standards, and pedagogical practices that reflect universal design for learning principles.

· The institution maintains currency with evolving legislative requirements, court decisions, tribunal findings, and regulatory guidance that impact reasonable adjustment obligations. Regular legal reviews, conducted in consultation with specialized legal counsel, ensure policy alignment with current statutory frameworks and emerging jurisprudential interpretations of reasonable adjustment duties. The university also monitors international best practices and human rights conventions, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to exceed minimum legal requirements and demonstrate leadership in inclusive education practices that serve as models for other institutions.

3. Definitions

·   **Reasonable Adjustment** refers to modifications, accommodations, or alternative arrangements that enable students with disabilities to participate in educational activities on the same basis as other students, provided such adjustments do not impose unjustifiable hardship on the university or fundamentally alter the essential requirements of courses or programs. These adjustments are individualized, evidence-based responses to specific functional limitations that remove barriers to educational participation while preserving academic integrity.

·   **Disability** encompasses any temporary or permanent condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities, including physical impairments, sensory limitations, cognitive differences, neurological conditions, psychological disorders, learning disabilities, chronic health conditions, or any combination thereof. The definition adopts a functional approach, focusing on how conditions impact educational participation rather than diagnostic labels or medical classifications.

·   **Unjustifiable Hardship** means accommodation requests that would impose excessive financial burden relative to institutional resources, fundamentally alter essential program requirements or learning outcomes, compromise health and safety standards that cannot be adequately mitigated or require modifications beyond reasonable institutional capacity. Determinations consider factors including cost, institutional size, financial resources, and the impact on program integrity.

·   **Academic Standards** are essential learning outcomes, competency requirements, and performance criteria that maintain program integrity, meet professional accreditation standards, and ensure graduates possess necessary knowledge and skills. These standards may not be compromised but may be demonstrated through alternative methods or formats that accommodate diverse learning and assessment needs while maintaining equivalency.

4. Principles

· **Equity and Inclusion:** The university commits to creating a genuinely inclusive educational environment where students with disabilities can achieve their full academic, personal, and professional potential without facing systemic barriers, discrimination, or prejudice. This principle extends beyond mere accommodation provision to encompass cultural change that values diversity and recognizes disability as a natural aspect of human variation that enriches the educational experience for all community members.

· **Student-Centered Approach:** Reasonable adjustments are developed collaboratively with students through respectful dialogue that recognizes their expertise in understanding their own needs, preferred accommodation strategies, and personal goals while respecting individual autonomy in decision-making processes. Students are active partners rather than passive recipients of services, with their preferences, cultural backgrounds, and personal circumstances informing accommodation planning and implementation strategies.

· **Confidentiality:** All disability-related information is maintained with strict confidentiality protocols, shared only with relevant personnel on a legitimate need-to-know basis and with explicit informed student consent. Information security measures protect sensitive personal data while enabling effective accommodation coordination and support service delivery.

· **Dignity and Respect:** Students are treated with dignity throughout all interactions, avoiding patronizing attitudes, assumptions about capabilities based on disability labels, or language that reinforces stereotypes or stigma. The adjustment process respects student agency, cultural sensitivity, and individual preferences while maintaining professional boundaries and institutional requirements.

· **Proactive Planning:** The university anticipates common adjustment needs through universal design principles, infrastructure planning, and staff development initiatives that reduce individual accommodation requirements while maintaining flexibility for personalized solutions and emerging accessibility challenges.

5. Eligibility Criteria

i.   Students must provide appropriate documentation from qualified healthcare professionals, registered psychologists, specialist physicians, or other recognized diagnostic specialists to establish eligibility for reasonable adjustments. Documentation should include comprehensive information about current functional limitations, specific impacts on educational participation, evidence-based recommended accommodations, expected duration of adjustment needs, and any relevant medical or therapeutic interventions that may affect accommodation requirements.

ii.   The university may request additional information, clarification, or independent assessments if initial documentation lacks sufficient detail for effective accommodation planning or if there are questions about the relationship between documented conditions and requested adjustments. This process respects student privacy while ensuring accommodation decisions are based on appropriate evidence and professional expertise.

iii.   Temporary disabilities resulting from injury, illness, surgical procedures, or medical treatment are eligible for short-term adjustments with appropriate medical certification that documents functional limitations and expected recovery timeframes. Students with episodic conditions such as mental health disorders, autoimmune conditions, or chronic illnesses may establish ongoing eligibility with provisions for adjustment activation during symptomatic periods or exacerbations.

iv.   Self-identification is encouraged but not mandatory, and students may request adjustments at any point during their enrollment, though early disclosure facilitates more effective planning, resource allocation, and implementation timelines. The university maintains flexible processes that accommodate varying comfort levels with disclosure while ensuring adequate support for student success and equal access to educational opportunities throughout their academic journey.

6. Types of Reasonable Adjustments

·   **Academic Accommodations** include extended time allowances for examinations and assignments based on documented processing needs, alternative assessment formats that maintain academic rigor while accommodating diverse demonstration methods, professional note-taking assistance or peer note-sharing programs, priority seating arrangements to optimize learning environments, modified attendance requirements where justified by disability-related limitations, and flexible deadlines that account for medical appointments or symptom fluctuations.

·   **Assessment Modifications** encompass alternative examination venues that provide distraction-reduced environments, computer-based testing with assistive technology integration, oral examinations as substitutes for written assessments when appropriate, modified question formats including multiple-choice alternatives to essay requirements, extended time provisions based on documented needs, and alternative demonstration methods for practical skills while maintaining essential competency measurement and academic integrity standards.

·   **Learning Support** provides comprehensive access to cutting-edge assistive technologies including screen readers, voice recognition software, and specialized applications, alternative format materials such as large print, braille, or digital text, qualified sign language interpreters and real-time captioning services for lectures and seminars, specialized tutoring tailored to individual learning differences and academic goals, study skills training adapted for diverse learning styles, and peer mentoring programs that connect students with similar experiences.

·   **Environmental and Digital Accessibility** ensures physical accessibility through ramp access, elevator priority, accessible parking allocations, modified laboratory equipment and workstations, adjustable furniture and ergonomic accommodations, acoustical modifications to enhance learning environments, and comprehensive digital accessibility including screen reader compatibility, captioned multimedia content, accessible online platforms, and alternative format electronic resources that meet international accessibility standards while maintaining full functionality.

7. Request Process

i.   Students initiate reasonable adjustment requests by contacting the Disability Support Services office through multiple accessible channels including in-person visits, telephone consultations, email correspondence, or online application portals designed for accessibility and user-friendliness. The formal application process involves completing comprehensive assessment forms, submitting required documentation within established timeframes, and participating in confidential consultation meetings that respect student privacy and individual circumstances.

ii.   Initial consultations involve thorough needs assessment discussions between experienced disability advisors and students to identify appropriate accommodations, explore creative solutions, develop individualized support plans, and establish realistic implementation timelines. These collaborative sessions consider academic goals, personal preferences, cultural factors, and practical constraints while ensuring accommodation effectiveness and student satisfaction.

iii.   The university processes standard requests within fifteen business days of receiving complete documentation, with urgent or time-sensitive requests receiving expedited consideration through streamlined review processes. Complex cases requiring extensive consultation or resource coordination may require additional time, with students receiving regular updates on progress and expected resolution timeframes.

iv.   Students may request formal review of accommodation decisions through established appeals processes, and accommodation plans undergo annual reviews or modification when circumstances change significantly. Emergency adjustments may be implemented temporarily pending formal assessment completion to ensure continuity of educational access and prevent academic disadvantage. Clear communication channels are maintained throughout all processes, with regular check-ins scheduled to ensure accommodation effectiveness, address emerging needs, identify implementation challenges, and celebrate student successes in achieving educational goals.

8. Implementation and Responsibilities

·   **Disability Support Services** coordinates comprehensive accommodation implementation through systematic planning, maintains secure confidential records with appropriate privacy safeguards, provides ongoing professional development and disability awareness training for university staff, monitors accommodation effectiveness through regular student feedback collection and outcome tracking, and serves as the central liaison between students, faculty, and administrative departments to ensure seamless service delivery and consistent policy application.

·   **Academic Staff** implement approved accommodations in courses, lectures, laboratories, and assessment activities with professionalism and discretion, maintain strict confidentiality regarding student disability information, participate actively in disability awareness training and professional development opportunities, communicate effectively with support services regarding implementation successes or challenges, and adapt teaching methods to incorporate universal design principles that benefit all students while meeting individual accommodation requirements.

·   **Administrative Services** ensure comprehensive physical accessibility across campus facilities, maintain technology compatibility with assistive devices and software, facilitate policy compliance throughout all university operations, provide accessible communication and documentation formats, and support seamless service delivery through coordinated departmental cooperation and resource sharing.

·   **Student Responsibilities** include timely disclosure of accommodation needs with appropriate documentation, active participation in accommodation planning and review processes, appropriate and responsible use of provided adjustments and support services, prompt notification of changing circumstances affecting accommodation requirements, and constructive engagement with support staff to optimize accommodation effectiveness.

·   **Senior Management** provides adequate financial and human resources for accommodation provision, supports comprehensive staff training initiatives and professional development programs, ensures systematic policy compliance monitoring and evaluation, champions inclusive practices throughout institutional

culture and strategic planning, and maintains appropriate budgetary oversight while prioritizing accessibility and student success outcomes.

9. Appeals Process

i.　Students may appeal reasonable adjustment decisions through a structured, fair, and transparent process that begins with informal resolution attempts through direct discussion with Disability Support Services staff and relevant academic personnel, allowing for collaborative problem-solving and mutual understanding before formal procedures commence. This initial stage encourages open communication and often resolves concerns through clarification, additional information sharing, or minor accommodation modifications.

ii.　Formal appeals are submitted in writing to the Student Appeals Committee within twenty business days of the contested decision, including detailed grounds for appeal, supporting documentation, evidence of informal resolution attempts, and specific remedies sought. The appeals process maintains procedural fairness through clear timelines, defined procedures, and transparent decision-making criteria that protect student rights while ensuring institutional integrity.

iii.　The committee comprises representatives with disability expertise, academic staff with relevant knowledge, an independent student representative, and external members when appropriate, who review cases objectively and comprehensively through document analysis, stakeholder consultations, and evidence evaluation. Committee members receive specialized training in disability law, accommodation principles, and fair hearing procedures to ensure informed decision-making.

iv.　Appeal hearings allow students to present their cases personally or through advocates, with decisions communicated in writing within thirty business days of hearing completion, including detailed reasoning and any recommended actions. Further appeals to external bodies such as human rights commissions, ombudsman offices, or specialized disability complaint mechanisms remain available if internal processes do not resolve disputes satisfactorily, ensuring students retain all legal remedies and access to justice.

10. Monitoring and Review

The university conducts comprehensive annual reviews of reasonable adjustment provision effectiveness through systematic student satisfaction surveys, detailed outcome data analysis including academic performance indicators and retention rates, extensive staff feedback collection from all relevant departments, and comparative benchmarking against sector best practices and international standards. These evaluations identify trends, measure success indicators, and highlight areas requiring improvement or additional resource allocation.

Monitoring includes systematic tracking of accommodation request volumes and patterns, processing timeframes and efficiency measures, appeal rates and resolution outcomes, student academic success indicators compared to general population benchmarks, staff compliance levels and training effectiveness, and cost-benefit analyses of various accommodation strategies to identify optimal resource utilization and program sustainability.

Regular consultations with student disability advocacy groups, external disability organizations, legal experts, and professional associations inform policy refinements and ensure continued relevance to evolving student needs, emerging technologies, changing legislative requirements, and contemporary best practices in inclusive education. These partnerships provide valuable external perspectives and accountability measures.

Quality assurance mechanisms include periodic comprehensive audits of accommodation implementation processes, systematic staff compliance assessments and performance evaluations, proactive accessibility barrier identification surveys across all campus facilities and services, technology compatibility testing with assistive devices, and longitudinal studies tracking student outcomes and satisfaction levels.

Review outcomes directly inform strategic planning processes for resource allocation decisions, staff development priorities and training program enhancements, infrastructure improvement projects and accessibility upgrades, policy refinements and procedure modifications, and institutional commitment demonstrations to inclusive education that position the university as a leader in accessibility and student support excellence.

For further information or to request reasonable adjustments, contact:

Disability Support Services

University of Gold Coast

Email: disability.support@ugc.edu.gh

Location: Spintex, Accra, Ghana

Website: www.ugc.edu.gh