

Guidance on New Template Letters in Support of Disabled Students:

- **Flexibility with submission deadlines, and**
- **Good Cause claims concerning flare-ups of relapsing and remitting conditions**

Summary

The following guidance note concerns academic support for disabled students, in the context of the University's statutory legal obligations to make reasonable adjustments to disabled students' learning, teaching and assessment. The key points of the guidance note are as follows:

- We are making a change to how disabled students evidence Good Cause claims relating to a flare-up of a relapsing and remitting condition. The Disability Service will no longer write bespoke letters in support of such claims; instead, a **template letter** will be issued.
- Guidance is also provided on how **coursework extensions** should be handled for disabled students whose Disability Entries Report indicates flexibility with submission deadlines.

Introduction

In recent weeks the Clerk of Senate has worked with colleagues in Academic Policy & Governance and the Disability Service (DS) to create two template letters for use by DS in support of disabled students as follows:

- (a) **Students whose record with the DS includes provision for them to negotiate flexibility in the submission deadline for a coursework assignment.**

Where such a student requests an extension, they should not be asked for any supporting evidence and should not be required to complete a Good Cause claim or use any other formal system (though they may of course choose to do so). The letter clarifies this position but notes that extensions will not always be available and that the student should have the opportunity to discuss their situation.

- (b) **Students registered at the DS with a relapsing and remitting condition who wish to submit a Good Cause claim in connection with an exam or other assessment.**

This letter provides the necessary evidence to support a Good Cause claim where such a student experiences a flare-up of the condition at the time of the assessment. The letter confirms that no additional time-specific evidence is required, though the student should indicate the timing and duration of the flare-up in relation to the date of the assessment.

It is likely that examples of these letters may be submitted to Schools (and in particular to Good Cause committees) during or after the Spring 2024 exam diet or over the summer period. The purpose of this short note is to provide colleagues with guidance on the rationale for creating these letters, to give colleagues a heads-up that Schools may receive them and to address some questions that colleagues may have about how the letters should be interpreted and used.

Legal Context

The Equality Act (2010) places a legal duty on the University to avoid, as far as possible, by reasonable means the disadvantage which disabled students experience because of how they are disabled.

The University's [Learning Through Assessment](#) framework (2023) highlights the importance of an *inclusive* approach to assessment. Where the design of assessment is not inclusive this means that a disabled student may be disadvantaged in relation to that assessment by means of their disability. Consequently, the Equality Act (2010) means that reasonable adjustments must be made so that the assessment is equitable. These adjustments must not compromise academic standards, i.e. the same ILOs should be tested irrespective of the adjustments applied. **However, it is essential that implementing the reasonable adjustments does not require a disabled student to engage with processes that are more difficult, complex or burdensome than those required of any other student. Any failure to meet this essential condition would be discriminatory and would place the University in breach of the Equality Act (2010).**

Specifically, then, the processes that a disabled student must engage with to submit a Good Cause claim in connection with an exam or assessment, or to request flexibility in the submission deadline for a coursework assignment, must be no more difficult, complex or burdensome than those required of any other student.

Once a disabled student has registered with DS their support needs will be evaluated and DS will complete a Disability Entries Report (DER) that identifies any reasonable adjustments appropriate to that student – for example in relation to flexibility with deadlines, or concerning chronic conditions that may experience short-term flare ups that could affect their performance in an exam. In particular, therefore, the DER will often contain information that would be relevant to any Good Cause claim or extension request submitted by the disabled student.

The main purpose of the two template letters developed with DS is to clarify and emphasise that the information contained within a disabled student's DER *already* provides sufficient evidence to support the student's Good Cause claim or extension request. **Hence, the disabled student must not be required to submit additional evidence or to provide a lengthy narrative to explain their request; to require this from the disabled student would be in breach of the Equality Act (2010).**

The sections below briefly discuss further details of these letters.

Letter 1: Flexibility with submission deadlines

The [first letter](#) relates to disabled students whose DER includes the following reasonable adjustment:

“Flexibility in deadlines for course work assessments to be negotiated by student for disability related reasons.”

The letter emphasises that it is in a student's best interests to submit coursework on time but advises that, where a disabled student believes that they may require a coursework extension, this extension request should be considered sympathetically.

The letter notes that in some areas of the University alternative systems have been developed to process short-term extension requests (e.g. the automated procedure that operates in parts of the College of Social Sciences). Colleagues should be aware that disabled students may prefer to continue to use these systems to request a short-term extension, in which case there should be no need for the student to present their letter when indicating that they require a short-term extension.

However, the letter also notes that disabled students may be requesting a longer extension for which alternative (e.g. automated) systems would not be available, or may simply prefer that their extension request is considered directly by a member of staff. **Colleagues should be aware,**

therefore, that disabled students may contact them seeking advice and assistance with an extension request when, previously, they would not always have done so. Colleagues are asked to provide assistance with these cases as promptly as possible.

As already noted, disabled students **must not be required to submit additional evidence or to provide a lengthy narrative to explain their extension request; to require this would be in breach of the Equality Act (2010).**

However, colleagues *are* asked to bear in mind that approving an extension may not be in the student's best interests and may be constrained by other factors such as the timeline for the return of feedback on the assessment. The letter highlights these points and notes that the disabled student should be offered advice on whether an extension is likely to be in their best interests.

Letter 2: Good Cause claims concerning flare-ups of relapsing and remitting conditions

The [second letter](#) relates to students who are registered at the Disability Service as having a relapsing and remitting condition, and who wish to submit a Good Cause claim in connection with an exam or other assessment because they have experienced a flare up or exacerbation of their condition. The letter indicates that the Good Cause claim may concern:

- an extension request for an assessment deadline; or
- an examination or other assessment that they were unable to take; or
- an examination or other assessment in which they consider that their performance was significantly impaired; or
- late submission of an online exam.

The letter advises that the student's ability to engage in their studies, complete assignments, and prepare for or take examinations will be impaired when they experience a flare up or exacerbation of their condition. Therefore, where this has occurred and the student is submitting a Good Cause claim, colleagues should be aware that **the letter provides the necessary evidence to support the student's Good Cause claim – i.e. no additional time-specific evidence or bespoke letter is required.** In particular, the student must not be asked for further evidence that they are disabled or have a relapsing and remitting condition, as this has already been provided to the Disability Service and the University of Glasgow must not ask disabled students repeatedly to evidence disability.

The letter goes on to clarify that the student's Good Cause claim should not *automatically* be approved, however. Approval would depend on the timing of the flare up in relation to the exam or assessment and should also depend on whether the student's learning has also been compromised. The letter contains the following specific guidance from the Clerk of Senate on these points:

"...in assessing the Good Cause claim, it is appropriate to verify that the dates of the flare up as reported by the student coincide with the date(s) of the named assessment(s). Please note that allowance must also be made for conditions where an episode requires recovery time and for conditions where effects of treatment may be variable.

It should be noted, however, that accepting a Good Cause claim would not be appropriate if the student's *learning* is likely to have been compromised by the nature and duration of the circumstances described. Where a Good Cause claim indicates difficulties that suggest the student's learning is likely to have been compromised, it

would be appropriate for their Adviser of Studies (or other relevant colleague) to contact the student and discuss how their learning can best be supported.”

Concluding remarks

It is hoped that the information contained in this guidance note is helpful. The information concerns a new development that has not yet been widely promoted but is an important element of the University’s support for our disabled students. It is not clear how many extension requests or Good Cause claims will be received by Schools that are supported by examples of these letters; it is expected that the number of such cases may be small but (as we have sought to explain) the letters have a crucial role to play in the University meeting its statutory legal duties under the Equality Act (2010). Schools are asked to contact [Academic Policy & Governance](#), following their Spring 2024 Exam Board and Good Cause committee meetings, to pass on details of the number of submitted Good Cause claims and extension requests that have been supported by examples of these letters. This information will help us to review the usefulness and effectiveness of the letters and to identify any ways in which their use within our Good Cause policies and procedures could be further improved.

In the meantime, should colleagues have any questions about the letters, please do not hesitate to contact the [Clerk of Senate](#).

[Brief guidance has also been prepared for disabled students, to assist with submitting a Good Cause claim that may include one of these letters. This guidance is reproduced in Appendix 1.]

Professor Martin Hendry
Clerk of Senate and Vice Principal
May 2024

Guidance on completing a Good Cause claim

You are registered with the Disability Service with a relapsing and remitting condition. In the event that a flare up or exacerbation of that condition impacts your assessment, you may wish to make a Good Cause claim and we hope that this guidance and the attached letter will support you to make such a claim.

General information about Good Cause is available in the [FAQs](#).

What does Good Cause cover?

Good Cause is concerned with circumstances that affect your ability to complete assessment. The usual outcome from a successful Good Cause claim is that you will take the assessment at a later date. It is important to understand that Good Cause only relates to affected assessment, i.e. it concerns events that prevent you from demonstrating in an assessment what you have learned on the course.

If you are experiencing longer lasting difficulties, meaning that your learning has been affected too, then Good Cause is not the appropriate process. In that case you should ask for advice: this could come from your own named Adviser of Studies (if you have one), the College Advising Office or a Student Support Officer. You may also wish to discuss with your Disability Adviser whether your support needs should be reviewed. The important thing is to seek help as soon as you find that you are having difficulties keeping up with your studies. Please do not wait until your assessments are due.

Completing a Good Cause claim

If your assessment has been affected by a flare up of your relapsing and remitting condition – meaning that you did not complete the assessment, you submitted it late or you believe that your performance was significantly affected – you should submit a Good Cause claim. This is done through [MyCampus](#).

Describing the circumstances

As noted above, Good Cause is only concerned with circumstances that occurred around the time of the assessment. You do not need to give an extensive description of the circumstances but it is very important that you explain that there was a flare-up of your condition and say what period of time was affected and how this related to the timing of the assessment. In the case of an exam that might include some of the revision period.

E.g. ‘I was unable to take my exam on 25 April because I was experiencing a flare up of my arthritis. The pain and swelling in my joints has been increasing for the last 10 days, meaning that my mobility has been badly affected and I have been very fatigued due to disrupted sleep. I have had to significantly increase my medication, which has also impacted my ability to concentrate.’

Evidence to support your Good Cause claim

As you complete your Good Cause claim in MyCampus you will be prompted to upload supporting evidence. The attached letter can be used for that purpose. It confirms that you are registered with the Disability Service with a relapsing and remitting condition, and that it is not necessary

for you to obtain any additional supporting evidence relating to the specific flare up at the time of the affected assessment.

Professor Martin Hendry
Clerk of Senate and Vice Principal
May 2024