



# Accessible teaching

A handbook for staff who interact with students in their everyday work

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES | LUND UNIVERSITY



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# Part 1

## Lund University's work for an inclusive learning environment

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*The number of students with lasting impairments who apply to higher education has increased in recent years. Disability Support Services have therefore produced this handbook to support staff who encounter students with impairments at Lund University.*

*The handbook is intended for teaching staff, study advisors, course administrators, directors of studies and others who interact with students who have long-term impairments.*

*We hope that this handbook will provide you with tools to help you in your interactions with students with impairments at Lund University, so that they in turn are afforded equal opportunities to succeed in their studies.*

### **INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

At Lund University, we welcome students with impairments through a positive and flexible approach and we offer compensatory, targeted learning support. This adaptation is not meant to lower requirements, but the path to achieving learning outcomes may be different and should therefore be designed in such a way as to avoid putting students with impairments at a disadvantage in relation to their fellow students.

Course directors and examiners may need to adjust their teaching and assessment to make them accessible to students who have an impairment. They may also need to be more available for dialogue and questions. It may take longer for students with impairments to get used to a new situation and to acquire new strategies that work for them.

In an inclusive learning environment, you should strive to make your teaching accessible to as many students as possible. Educational adaptations in teaching, which are necessary for an individual student, often benefit the entire group and can lead to educational development. Students with impairments may encounter obstacles in both the physical and the digital environment – obstacles that can usually be removed through good teaching methods and forethought in course planning. One effective way of making your teaching more accessible is to review the course content and remove unnecessary thresholds to learning.

An increasingly heterogeneous student group sets higher demands on flexibility in teaching. One suitable approach can be to offer all students various choices in their engagement with, assimilation of and accounting for knowledge. This enables more students to benefit from teaching without individual adaptations. This approach is known as UDL, Universal Design for Learning, and is about making teaching accessible to as many students as possible – with or without impairments.



### **Do you want to learn more about UDL?**

Watch the video "[Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education](#)" from HumberCTL on YouTube

Some more specific obstacles will always need to be removed or reduced through various forms of targeted learning support. But the more generally accessible the teaching, the fewer special adaptations will be necessary.

### **IMPORTANT CONCEPTS**

Here you will find a number of concepts that can be useful to know when working with students in various ways.

The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare uses the concepts of impairment and disability as follows:

**Impairment** – reduced physical, mental or intellectual function, which can arise as a result of illness, another condition or a congenital defect or acquired damage.

**Disability** – limitation that an impairment entails for a person in relation to their surroundings. The impairment is not static but occurs in the encounter between the individual and the environment. In line with other authorities including the Equality

Ombudsman, the Swedish Agency for Participation and others, we use the concept of disability in this context to describe limitations to a person's functional ability.

**Duration** – an impairment can be lasting without necessarily being a chronic or permanent condition, but it should be considered in relation to the word temporary. In order to receive targeted learning support, the student needs to prove the existence of a lasting impairment. This means, for example, that a broken arm or a temporary depressive episode cannot be considered lasting conditions and thereby do not generate targeted learning support from Lund University.

## TARGETED LEARNING SUPPORT

As a higher education institution, we are obliged to offer support in their studies to students with impairments. Pursuant to the Discrimination Act, a student with a documented lasting impairment is to be offered the opportunity to study in a comparable situation to that of a student without that particular impairment. Thus, the University is to take measures to enable this, for example by offering what is known as targeted learning support.

Assistance in this process is available from the coordinators at Disability Support Services, a unit in the central administration. Our remit is to analyse the student's need for support in consultation with the student and based on their doctor's certificate, before taking a decision on the design of targeted learning support, and issuing recommendations regarding teaching and assessment.

### The path to learning support

1. Students themselves have the main responsibility for their studies and apply for learning support via the Swedish Council for Higher Education's (UHR) NAIS system (National Administration and Information System for Coordinators).
2. The relevant coordinator summons the student to a personal meeting to discuss support measures and recommendations.
3. The coordinator takes a decision on appropriate support and writes recommendations<sup>1</sup> on adaptations to teaching and assessment based on the meeting with the student and their doctor's certificate.
4. A copy of the NAIS decision is sent to the relevant study advisor, or another appointed person, who discusses the information strategy with the student.

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1. The support mentioned under the recommendations in the NAIS (National Administration and Information System for Coordinators) decision is support measures deemed to bring about a study situation as comparable as possible to that of a student with no impairment.

5. The department is responsible for finding reasonable solutions and converting the support into practice. The study advisor often plays a central role in this work.
6. The lecturer/course director/examiner decides what forms of adaptation are possible to implement in relation to the learning outcomes and other course requirements. The adaptation is not meant to entail the lowering of requirements to achieve the learning outcomes, but the path to their achievement may be different.



According to Lund University's regulations regarding degrees and first and second cycle education an examiner can decide to offer a student with a long-term or permanent disability an examination alternative equivalent to that of other students.

**“The examination shall be held in accordance with the forms of assessment that are stipulated in the syllabus. If necessary, the examiner may, after consultation<sup>2</sup> with the Disability Support Services, decide on an examination alternative for a student with a permanent disability so that the student is given an equivalent examination alternative in comparison to that of a student without disabilities.”**

*Translated, item H2 in Föreskrifter gällande examina och utbildning på grundnivå och avancerad nivå vid Lunds universitet.*

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2. Consultation here means that the examiner primarily refers to the recommendations issued by Disability Support Services for the student in question. However, the coordinators at Disability Support Services remain available to discuss ways to design legally compliant support for the student.



## Examples of support at Lund University

A student with a lasting impairment at Lund University is offered support so that their study situation becomes comparable to that of other students. The support for the student may include the following:

- Note-taking support
- Support from a mentor
- Exam support
- Talking books and speech-synthesising software
- Support in writing academic papers
- Tutoring in study technique

Read more about our various forms of support on [www.lunduniversity.lu.se/disabilities](http://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/disabilities)



## *Part 2*

### **Practical tips and advice for teaching staff**

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#### **MAKING YOUR TEACHING INCLUSIVE**

To achieve an inclusive learning environment, it is always possible to develop educational strategies that enable all students, including those with impairments, to benefit fully from teaching. The suggestions below broaden the educational framework and make teaching more accessible.

One fundamental principle of an inclusive teaching environment is to create a constructive relationship with the students and bring about an open dialogue characterised by understanding, both for the teaching group and for the individual student. Listening to the students' views and thoughts about your teaching is rewarding and often provides knowledge about how you can develop your teaching in such a way as to get through to everyone.

When it comes to students with impairments, it is important to establish a dialogue so that the right support can be identified and set up. Remember that the students themselves are experts on their own impairments and needs. Sometimes, students need to be treated differently in order for their conditions to be as equal as possible in the context of teaching and assessment.



**Think about whether there is any element in the courses you teach that could present additional difficulties for students with impairments. By applying a few simple educational strategies, you can make your teaching accessible.**



## GENERAL ADVICE IN TEACHING

### Educational clarity and structure

- Structuring your teaching material in a clear and logical way helps all students, but above all those with impairments.
- It is a good idea to compile a page of key words and important terms for the course. Try to explain abstract models and concepts in specific terms.
- During group discussions, it can be advisable to ensure that a student or several students are entrusted with taking notes on what is being said, so that the notes can be distributed to the participants after the session.
- Try to allow for regular breaks so that the students have time to recover.
- Allow aids in the form of mnemonic support tools such as calculators, spell-checking software, dictionaries and so on.

### At the whiteboard

- When using PowerPoint or a whiteboard, read any written text aloud and remember not to turn your back to the students when speaking.
- If questions or comments come from the students during the lecture, repeat them into the microphone so that everyone can hear them, especially any students using a hearing loop.
- It is easier for all students if you write clearly in large letters on the whiteboard and if your PowerPoint presentations don't contain too much text or text in too small a font.

### Advance planning

- To enable students to prepare for the lectures, you should publish the relevant PowerPoint presentations ahead of time.
- The required reading list should be known well in advance of the start of the course. If a book is not available as a talking book, time must be allowed for it to be recorded.
- It is easier for all students if any changes to the teaching timetable and class venues are communicated in good time.



## Assessment

The learning outcomes for the course determine to what extent it is possible to be flexible regarding the forms of assessment, but it is possible to think beyond the traditional, invigilated, final written exam. As the lecturer, you can work for example with:

- Short ongoing spot tests during the course
- Oral exams
- Written take-home exams and oral follow-up assessments

Remember that various types of exams make it easier to ensure assessment is fair.

## Common impairments you may encounter in teaching and relevant advice

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There are a number of different types of impairments and, as a teaching staff member, you may find it helpful to know about them and the kinds of support available. Some of the most common impairments among students are presented here, together with tips and advice as to what you can do to facilitate everyday studies for these students.

## VISION IMPAIRMENT

Vision impairment can be understood according to a falling scale, with mild forms of vision impairment on one end and complete blindness on the other.

### **What teaching staff should consider in the case of vision impairment:**

- Where is the student sitting? A good position near the whiteboard or the screen is important.
- Give permission for the student to record the class/lecture.
- Ensure that the student has note-taking support.
- Everything written on the whiteboard should be read aloud.
- Provide an extended timeframe for information searching, as the student may need material that takes time to produce in an accessible format.
- Offer alternative forms of assessment such as take-home exams or oral exams.
- Investigate the possibility of producing a recorded exam or allowing recorded answers from the student.

## HEARING IMPAIRMENT/DEAFNESS

The greatest challenge of hearing impairment is communication. A lot of strength and energy goes into listening while simultaneously trying to understand what is being said. Many students compensate for their hearing impairment by lip-reading, for example. In the case of total deafness, sign language interpreters are required for communication with hearing people.

### **What teaching staff should consider in the case of hearing impairment:**

- Inform the student of the opportunity to get note-taking support.
- Make it a habit to use a microphone connected to a hearing loop. A student with hearing impairment should not have to tell everyone that they have difficulty hearing.
- Ensure that everyone in the room uses a microphone when speaking. Alternatively, remember to repeat questions and comments from others in the room so that they can be heard through the hearing loop.

- Send your lecture notes and PowerPoint presentations to the interpreters in advance.
- Ensure that the student is seated to face the lecturer, interpreter and whiteboard – while maintaining contact with the rest of the group.
- Address a deaf student directly when speaking, not their interpreter.

### **READING AND WRITING DIFFICULTIES AND DYSLEXIA**

Dyslexia entails difficulties with reading and writing. For the students concerned, this means that it takes longer to get through the required reading. People with dyslexia invert the order of letters and words, which has a negative impact on their comprehension of the text. Numerical memory is also affected, which can entail difficulties with getting figures in the right order and learning multiplication tables and formulas. Dyslexia can take different forms; some students only have difficulty with one skill, while others can have problems with both.

#### **What teaching staff should consider in the case of reading and writing difficulties and dyslexia:**

- Make study instructions and key words available as support for studying the course material.
- Provide oral and written directives regarding submission deadlines.
- If possible, be flexible regarding submission deadlines.
- Enable the student to record the lecture so that they can listen to it more than once.
- Make your PowerPoint presentation available in advance so that the student has time to prepare for the lecture.
- Remember that when explaining abstract models, you should write about them using specific terms or illustrate them with examples. Use your own experiences, models or visual images, such as diagrams and maps, for example.
- Provide logical and concrete instructions for assignments.
- Make the list of required reading available well in advance of the start of the course to allow time for the production of talking books.
- Give the student the opportunity to complement a written assessment with an oral one.

## **NEUROPSYCHIATRIC IMPAIRMENTS: ADHD, ADD, AUTISM**

Neuropsychological diagnoses include ADHD, ADD, autism spectrum disorders and high-functioning autism, formerly known as Asperger's syndrome. Students with these diagnoses not only have difficulties arising from their symptoms but are also exposed to other people's prejudices regarding their impairment.

### **ADD/ADHD, hyperactivity syndrome with attention deficit disorder**

The diagnosis affects people's ability to concentrate and restrain impulsive behaviour. Some people with this diagnosis alternate between extreme focus and distraction. The difference between ADHD and ADD is that a person with ADD is not hyperactive but difficulties with focus and organisation remain.

With regard to academic studies, people with these diagnoses often find it difficult to schedule and organise their studies. They also often have a high sensitivity to stress.

### **What teaching staff should consider in the case of ADD/ADHD:**

- Provide concrete instructions both orally and in writing.
- Provide clear reading references and timetables and be careful to specify time and place.
- Offer a separate room for assessments.
- Offer extra time for assignment submission deadlines and take-home exams.
- Suggest the support of a mentor who can help to structure and follow up on the student's work.
- Allow the student to record the lecture for their own use.
- Allow the use of mnemonic aids such as a calculator, dictionary and spell-checking software.
- Take regular breaks so that the students have time to recover and can stay focused on the lesson.

### **Autism spectrum disorders**

Autism spectrum disorders is a collective term for various diagnoses, with a common denominator in difficulties with social interaction and communication. This means that it is difficult to interpret the thoughts, actions and feelings of one's fellow human beings. People with autism thrive best with clear structures and routines. Some have

difficulty with a sense of time and determining how long to spend on an assignment. In their studies, therefore, they need support in both planning and organisation. Some people with autism are very sharp-sighted and rational which is an advantage in academic studies.

### **What teaching staff should consider in the case of autism:**

- Take charge of dividing students into groups.
- Remember that all changes, such as changes to the timetable, should be made well in advance. Also ensure that the changes are made clear. Changes are very laborious for students with autism.
- Ensure that the assignments and expectations on the course are clear and structured.
- Provide extra time for submission deadlines and take-home exams.
- Suggest mentor support to help the student structure and follow up on their studies.
- Allow the student to record the lecture for their own use.

### **MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS**

Mental health conditions include a number of different diagnoses such as depression, exhaustion, bipolar disorder and post-traumatic stress. Depression is a common illness that can affect anyone. However, there is a clear difference between feeling down and having clinical depression, with the latter being an impairment. Having any of these impairments makes everyday life as a student more difficult. There are also prejudices about these diagnoses that can negatively impact the student.

### **What teaching staff should consider in the case of mental health conditions:**

- Have a conversation with the student to determine their needs and possibilities, and focus on these.
- Provide clarity and structure.
- Offer the opportunity for rest and recuperation.
- Provide support and possibly individual alternatives to group work.

## PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS

There are many physical illnesses and physical impairments are therefore a broad concept. In summary, they can be considered chronic physical injuries that affect the student's studies. One common physical impairment is reduced mobility of which a clear example is a student who uses a wheelchair. This requires adjustments to the teaching environment. Another example is chronic pain, which affects the ability to concentrate. This condition also requires strong medication which may increase fatigue.

### What teaching staff should consider in the case of physical impairment:

- Create good conditions for the student's placement in the teaching premises.
- Offer extended time for assessments and submitted assignments.
- Offer regular breaks.



## Advice for digital teaching and assessment of students with impairments

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**Digital teaching makes great demands on both the teaching staff member and the students. For students with impairments, this form of teaching can entail further challenges.**

Disability Support Services can adjust the student's decision on support to suit digital teaching. You are welcome to contact the coordinator for the faculty in question if you want advice and support on adaptations and accessibility in digital teaching and assessment.

### **DIGITAL ASSESSMENT**

If a student needs extended time for an invigilated written exam due to their impairment, the same applies when the exam is done digitally. Difficulties with working memory and automatised retrieval of memorised knowledge require more time and are common to a number of diagnoses. Extended time may also be needed for take-home exams, as it takes longer for some students to express themselves in writing.

Some students find writing exam papers at home to be significantly more challenging in terms of concentration and focus, and it is important that they should still be assessed in a comparable situation to their fellow students. They should therefore be offered the possibility of extended time, both in the case of an invigilated written exam conducted digitally and in the case of take-home exams. Also remember to provide extra time to upload exam responses.

### **GENERAL ADVICE FOR DIGITAL TEACHING**

The following advice may help students who experience additional difficulties in digital teaching.

- The teacher should use a microphone/headset and encourage the students to do the same. The sound quality improves considerably, which benefits everyone.
- The teacher should speak towards the camera so that the audience can lipread and see their facial expressions. This increases comprehension and stamina in the listener.



- Everything written on a whiteboard should be in black or blue pen and be read aloud.
- Questions and comments from the audience should be repeated by the teacher.
- Students should be encouraged to write questions in the chat window for the teacher to read aloud.
- Provide extra clear instructions about what is to be done, preferably both orally and in writing.
- Divide larger assignments up into several small subsections.
- Make it clear how the course structure has changed and which elements in the required reading are essential. Not all students have the same ability to sort through information to find what is more or less important. This becomes even more difficult in a more isolated study situation.
- In cases where an assessment has been considerably changed in relation to expectations, offer digital run-throughs and the opportunity to ask questions both before and during the assessment.
- As the teaching staff member, provide your contact details on the learning platforms.
- Live-streamed lectures can be more vivid than pre-recorded material, which makes it easier to maintain concentration.
- Live-streamed lectures can be complemented with recorded lectures. This enables students to go back and watch the lecture several times.
- Take extra breaks. Digital teaching can be very taxing in terms of concentration, for both students and teaching staff.



## Accessibility in Canvas

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You can easily set the exam time in Canvas for those students who require extra time. This group of students can be placed in a separate Zoom room with their own invigilator. It is important that this group is given the same information as their fellow students and that the examiner visits their room to answer questions, just as they would in an invigilated exam on campus.

[Read more about setting extended exam time in Canvas](#)

Canvas also features Ally, an accessibility tool, which can generate your text in various formats such as audio, Braille, OCR (Optical Character Recognition) and so on. This enables all students to access the text in the way that best suits them.

You can also give the students the opportunity to submit their assignments in alternative formats by ticking the formats you want to allow.

When you work in the “text editor” there is a function that rapidly reads the page and determines whether your content is accessible pursuant to the accessibility directive: it is called **Accessibility Check**.

[Read more about accessibility in Canvas](#)



### **Remember the value of personal contact in digital teaching**

- The need for feedback from you as the teacher increases in digital teaching. It is important to maintain contact with the students to avoid isolation and students dropping out.
- Have regular contact with all students and especially with students who have told you that they have an impairment. They are in a particularly vulnerable situation.
- Encourage the students to create their own digital meetings and study groups to maintain contact and keep up their motivation.

## Further reading

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### UDL

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- Melin, M. & Johansson, E. (red.) (2012). *Inkluderande möten i högskolan*. [Inclusive meetings in higher education institutions] Lund: Student literature.
- The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (2012). *Möjligheter till högre studier – för studenter med psykisk eller neuropsykisk funktionsnedsättning*. [Opportunities for higher education – for students with mental or neuropsychological disabilities]

All higher education institutions are to work to combat discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities within their organisation. The work is described in the Discrimination Act and is referred to as active measures.

Read more about active measures on the website of the Equality Ombudsman: [www.do.se/choose-language/english/active-measures](http://www.do.se/choose-language/english/active-measures)

### **Disability Support Services**

We encourage you to visit the Disability Support Services' web page for staff, where you will find more information including the contact details of our accessibility officers.

[www.staff.lu.se/learning-support-students-disabilities](http://www.staff.lu.se/learning-support-students-disabilities)



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