

Inclusive additional exam time pilot

FAQs for Staff and Students

What are we doing?

Piloting the provision of inclusive additional time for exams/class tests across a small number of modules in Tri B 24/25. All students on these modules will receive 25% additional time for class tests and exams. Students who are recommended 25% additional time in a RAP will not receive individual adjustments, as their needs will be addressed through the inclusive additional time granted to all students. Students with RAPs which recommend any exam adjustments other than 25% additional time (more time, single occupancy rooms, Readers/Scribes etc) will continue to receive these as before.

Why are we doing this?

The university is undertaking an institution-wide review of our inclusion and support of disabled students. The backdrop to the review is increasing levels of disability disclosure and increasing complexity of needs. The review aims to support the promotion of disability-inclusive practice, which will improve the overall university experience for disabled students and will reduce the proportion of students requiring individual adjustments. This in turn will free up resources to address the needs of students with more complex needs. Currently, over 80% of all RAPs include a recommendation for 25% additional time in exams and class tests.

If we give all students additional time doesn't that just mean a longer exam?

No, the additional time given to all students will be genuine additional time. It can be used by any student how they see fit. Students can use the time to pace themselves, check their answers, or take the time they need to read the questions and write their responses. Guidance will be produced for students on how they can use the additional time.

If a class test is designed to take 1 hour to complete, then 1 hour and 15 minutes will be given to all students. Lecturers may instead, to avoid timetabling issues, reduce a class test to 45 minutes, so that all students can complete it within the hour.

Won't disabled students be disadvantaged if we take away their additional time?

By granting additional time to all students, we are not taking away additional time from disabled students. Instead, we are ensuring that any student who might need additional time receives it. This includes students without a formal diagnosis or medical evidence of their needs, and disabled students without RAPs, or who haven't yet had an assessment of their needs. This approach supports GCU in meeting its anticipatory duty towards disabled students under the Equality Act 2010.

Are we sure about that?

A number of other universities in the UK have already implemented similar arrangements, with success. They point to research which indicates that (provided an exam is designed with enough time for all students to complete it), granting additional time to all students does not raise exam performance for non-disabled students. A few links to studies are provided here:

Duncan, H. & Purcell, C, (2019), Consensus or contradiction? A review of the current research into the impact of granting extra time in exams to students with specific learning difficulties (SpLD), *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 44(4), pp.439-453, DOI: [10.1080/0309877X.2019.1578341](https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2019.1578341)

Runyan, M. K. 1991. "The Effect of Extra Time on Reading Comprehension Scores for University Students with and without Learning Disabilities." *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 24 (2). doi:10.1177/002221949102400603.

Zuriff, G. E. 2000. "Extra Examination Time for Students with Learning Disabilities: An Examination of the Maximum Potential Thesis." *Applied Measurement in Education* 13 (1): 99–117.

We will also be evaluating the GCU pilot, gathering the views and experiences of staff and students, and reviewing performance data, to address any unintended consequences.

How will this benefit disabled students?

Providing inclusive additional time for all students would help students who currently require a RAP for 25% additional time. These students would no longer face the administrative burden involved in securing a RAP. It would also help those students who do not have a formal diagnosis, or who have not yet had their needs assessed by the Disability Service. Providing inclusive additional time will demonstrate to disabled students that we are actively considering their needs in advance, and in the design of our assessments. We hope that this will help generate a better sense of belonging for disabled students and demonstrate our commitment to the common good.

We also know from our annual surveys of disabled students that around 30% of RAPs are not fully implemented each year, and that almost half of all disabled students affected don't raise this with anyone, meaning that their needs remain potentially unmet. We are hopeful that inclusive additional time will contribute to a reduction in non-implementation.

What will success look like for the pilot?

No adverse consequences. We will establish this through our before/after evaluation of the pilot. The ultimate aim of the ongoing Disability Review is to promote more disability-inclusive practice and reduce the need for individual adjustments. So, if we can demonstrate that inclusive additional time offers a viable and scalable model to support that end, we will consider the pilot to have been a success.

We understand that change can cause anxiety for both students and staff. So, it will be important, to allay any concerns, that we establish and maintain good communication with all persons involved in the pilot, and that we share the pilot objectives and findings with the wider university community. As such, updates will be communicated through the usual channel of staff and student emails, and on our dedicated [Disability Review webpage](#).