



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

PROCEDURES – SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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¹ This document has been translated from Swedish into English. If the English version differs from the original, the Swedish version takes precedence.



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1. Description

Students with a disability can be awarded targeted study support or receive a recommendation that their study situation be adjusted. This procedure describes how students can apply for support and receive such a decision or recommendation. It also states who at Umeå University is responsible for implementing support measures or making adjustments for students with disabilities.²

2. Background

Swedish public authorities must ensure their premises, activities and information are accessible to people with disabilities.³ To ensure all students of Umeå University have equal opportunities in line with the country's Discrimination Act (2008:567), the University must strive to prevent students with disabilities from being disadvantaged during their studies. The University can, for example, make adjustments to a student's study environment to compensate for the limitations their disability entails.

The idea is to reduce inequality (insofar as possible) already when students' courses, programmes and study environment are being set up, to provide all students with the same basic conditions and remove the need for special adaptations and individual solutions. Sometimes, however, special solutions may be necessary for individual students, to compensate for any accessibility shortcomings that may exist or arise. Accessibility efforts must be guided by the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations' Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

At Umeå University, accessibility efforts are governed by:

- the university-wide rules that apply to all students with disabilities, such as those concerning examination adjustments (see Umeå University's legal framework on umu.se);
- the routines of each faculty, department and office, approved in line with the *Vice-Chancellor's decision-making and delegation procedure for Umeå University*; and
- the routines, decisions and recommendations concerning targeted study support for students with disabilities, in line with this procedure.

For more information, including an explanation of different support measures, please see the pages on disabilities under *Support for education* on Umeå University's staff website.

² This procedure does not apply to those participating in contract education.

³ Ordinance (2001:526) on the responsibility of public authorities to implement the Swedish Government's disability policy.



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2.1 Definition of disability

Sweden's Equality Ombudsman (DO) defines a disability as "a permanent physical, mental or intellectual limitation of a person's functional capacity that as a consequence of injury or illness existed at birth, has arisen since then or can be expected to arise" (see the Discrimination Act, 2008:567). A disability and the limitations it places on a person can prevent that person from fully participating in society on equal terms as anyone else.⁴

2.2 Delimitations

Students suffering from a temporary injury or illness that results in a temporary disability are not entitled to the disability support the student disability coordinators at the University's Student Services Office can provide.

Umeå University is responsible for neither

- individual aids such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, technical aids to assist with communication, or specialised software, nor;
- personal assistance with matters such as personal hygiene, eating, (un)dressing and communicating with others.

3. Applying for support

Information on how a student can apply for support must be published and communicated in a clear way on the page *Studying with a disability* on Umeå University's student website. Applicants can apply for support the moment they apply to studies at Umeå University. An application will only be reviewed, however, once the student has actually been admitted to Umeå University and has accepted the place they were offered.

3.1 Decision-making process

Applications are to be sent to the Student Services Office's student disability coordinators.⁵ They are the ones who decide whether to award the student support.

An application must include a medical certificate, medical evaluation or similar document that certifies the student has a permanent disability. This document must be issued by licensed medical professional, such as a doctor, psychologist or audiologist, or by a dyslexia diagnostician. The document must mention:

- the student's name and personal identity number/coordination number;
- the diagnosis the issuer established;
- the date of the medical evaluation or doctor's visit;

⁴ Swedish Government Offices, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

⁵ In this document, the term "coordinator" always refers to the student disability coordinators who work at the Student Services Office.



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- a description of the student's disability; and
- the name, profession and professional contact details of the issuer.

To determine the permanence of the student's disability, the University may in some cases demand that the certificate state how long the disability is expected to last, and how long the student has had it or been treated for it.

Should the coordinator find there is insufficient proof of permanent disability, they will ask the applicant to submit additional documentation. If such documentation is not submitted, the student's application will be dismissed. Students whose application was dismissed may apply a second time.

If the student is indeed found to have a permanent disability, a coordinator will assess their needs. Following this assessment, the coordinator will then consider which support the student might actually need during their studies.

Once the coordinator has decided which support to award the student or recommend, the student is informed of their decision.

Decisions or recommendations can refer to the following types of support:

- Decision on targeted study support:
 - note-taking support
 - mentorship
 - support from a fellow student
 - assistance with writing
 - educational interpreting
 - sound recording during lectures
 - photography of notes on the whiteboard or equivalent.
- Recommendation of study situation adjustments
 - adjustments of the teaching situation
 - adjustment of premises
 - special equipment
 - IT support and software
 - adaptation of course literature.

What these types of support entail is explained on the pages about disability under *Support for education* on Umeå University's staff website.

4. Decision on targeted study support

The Student Services Office's coordinators are the ones who review students' applications for disability support. They both decide on and are responsible for certain targeted study support measures (see 3.1). When a student is awarded targeted study support, they are informed of this through an official decision.

The coordinator in charge of a student's case is responsible for



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- if necessary, providing consultative support to the student and to employees affected by the support measures that the student was awarded or that were recommended for them;
- ensuring the student gets access to the targeted study support they were awarded, given a suitable support person can be found;
- if the student informs the coordinator that their needs have changed, reconsidering the student's needs and issuing a new decision (if necessary);
- coordinating the support persons who provide targeted study support and handling all related administration; and
- registering the student's application, their medical certificate/evaluation or similar document, and their support decision or recommendation.

Targeted study support is paid for by university-wide funds, with the exception of audio and video recordings.⁶

5. Recommendation of study situation adjustments

The coordinator informs the student that the University recommends their study situation be adjusted. The student is then responsible for presenting their recommendation certificate to the contact person at their faculty, department or the office responsible for them.

The idea behind recommending a student's study situation be adjusted is to ensure reasonable and justifiable adjustments are made for the student, to ensure they are given equal opportunities to pursue an education in line with the Discrimination Act (2008:567).

The formal decision to adjust a student's study situation must be documented by the designated decision-maker.

Once adjustments have been made, the decision-maker can apply for university-wide funding to cover the cost. The pages on disabilities under *Support for education* on Umeå University's staff website list the adjustments that are eligible for this type of compensation.

5.1 Recommendation of teaching situation adjustments

The student is responsible for presenting the certificate that recommends teaching situation adjustments to the relevant contact person. The contact person then tells the student whom to contact (dean, head of department or head of office), in line with the *Vice-Chancellor's decision-making and delegation procedure*. The designated decision-

⁶ If the annual cost of the support exceeds 0.3% of the University's direct government funding for first-cycle studies, the University can apply for additional funding from the Ministry for Education via Stockholm University, the national coordinator of this funding. This does not, however, apply to the cost of equipment or investments and measures that improve the University's general accessibility.



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maker then makes a decision, either agreeing to or rejecting all or some of the recommended support measures.

Examples of adjustments include additional teaching support, receiving lecture materials in advance, and adjusted examinations. These and other adjustments are explained on the pages about disabilities under *Support for education* on Umeå University's staff website.

5.1.1 Examination

If a student requests an adjusted examination, it is the examiner who decides whether and how to make adjustments.⁷ The adjustment must fall within the framework of the expected learning outcomes stated in the course syllabus. The student is then informed of the decision.

5.2 Recommendation of adaptation of premises

The University's premises must be designed in such a way that they can be used equally by everyone, regardless of users' level of ability. This may require door openers, signs, permanent hearing loops, reconstructive work or access to resource rooms.

5.2.1 Premises the University rents

A department's contact person for disability support can contact the Property Management Office to request the department's premises be adapted. The Property Management Office then looks into the request and makes a decision, in consultation with the contact person and the student in question.

The Property Management Office is responsible for distributing the costs of necessary renovations of premises the University rents. These costs can either be borne by the Property Management Office or the department in question.⁸

5.2.2 Premises of the Umeå University Library

Umeå University Library has multiple so-called resource rooms that can be booked by students with impaired vision or reading/writing difficulties. Special software has been installed on the computers in these rooms.

Umeå University Library's Reading and Writing Assistance team is responsible for giving students access to the booking platform for these rooms. The resource rooms are paid for by the Umeå University Library.

⁷ Rules for grades and examinations (FS 1.1-574-22).

⁸ The Property Management Office bears no responsibility for premises rented within the scope of the Agreement on medical education and research (ALF) or the Dentistry education agreement (TUA), or for premises a department itself rents to others. It can, however, provide advice when departments renting such premises need to adjust these premises.



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5.2.3 Priority access to group study rooms

A student can receive a recommendation that they get priority when trying to book a group study room. The Campus Services Office is responsible for this service and for informing students with priority access of the routines that apply.

The cost of group study rooms, which students with a disability can get priority access to, are borne by the internal lease model.

5.3 Recommendation of special equipment

Special equipment in connection with teaching situations includes portable hearing loops, adjustable desks and chairs, and audio recording equipment. The student contacts Infocenter, which then provides them with the necessary equipment.

Special equipment for written examinations includes computers and adjustable chairs or desks. If a department has ordered equipment from the Campus Services Office, the latter will provide the equipment; in other cases, it is the responsibility of the department itself.

The Campus Services Office decides on and is responsible for providing special equipment to meet the needs of the student, as specified in the document “Recommendation of Adaptation of the Study Situation” that the student has received from their coordinator.

The Campus Services Office must provide special equipment everywhere Umeå University offers courses and programmes.

Existing equipment that all students of a specific course or study programme have to use during their studies (such as stethoscopes or microscopes) but that needs to be adjusted for students with disabilities is funded by the department or office in question.

5.4 Recommendation of IT support and software

The University provides students with digital support resources, such as dictionaries, spell-check programs and speech synthesisers, via the student website. The Umeå University Library shows students how to use the software that the University provides.

ICT Services and System Development must provide IT support to students with a disability, and bear the cost of the reading and writing assistance software that is available to all Umeå University students.

5.5 Recommendation of adaptation of course materials

To order compulsory course literature in the form of an audio book or another medium the student requires, the student should contact the Umeå University Library, which in turn contacts the Swedish Agency for Accessible Media.

The department is responsible for providing all other course materials in an accessible format. The staff website contains templates and instructions on how to ensure the accessibility of course materials.



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Adapted course literature is usually funded by the Swedish Agency for Accessible Media. They are also the ones who adapt compulsory course literature and provide the literature the student needs to write their assignments in alternative formats. Course materials not provided by the Swedish Agency for Accessible Media are paid for by the faculty or department.

“Course materials” refers to all course materials except course literature.

6. Responsibilities of the education provider

The delegated decision-maker at the faculty, department or equivalent is the one who decides which support measures are reasonable and justifiable, based on the recommendation of the coordinator at the Student Services Office.⁹

The delegated decision-maker is responsible for

- deciding what support measures to provide in teaching situations such as lectures, seminars, lab sessions, excursions, group assignments, study visits, interviews, internships and examinations, insofar as the course syllabus allows for them;
- appointing a contact person for disability support for all study programmes and for each department; and,
- if anything changes, updating the list of contact persons for the faculty's programmes and departments.

6.1 Contact persons for students with disabilities

All study programmes and all departments that offer courses must appoint a contact person who is responsible for

- sitting down with the student to review the support a coordinator recommended they get, as specified in the document “Recommendation of Adaptation of the Study Situation” that the student received from their coordinator. The student does not need to present any medical certificate, medical evaluation or similar document to the department they are studying at;
- telling the student what they need to do and whom they need to contact to get access to support;
- helping to find another student willing to serve as a support person for a student entitled to assistance from a support person, if the latter says they require help finding a support person;
- contacting the Property Management Office when it has been recommended that certain University premises be adjusted, so the Office can look into the matter. If the Property Management Office concludes that it is the faculty or department that must fund the adjustments, the contact person must inform the relevant decision-maker of this. The contact person is then responsible for ensuring the matter is dealt with, in cooperation with the Property Management Office;

⁹ Responsibility for this task is delegated according to *The Vice-Chancellor's decision-making and delegation procedure for Umeå University*.



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- informing students of their options and the conditions that need to be fulfilled to get the support they need if they plan on studying abroad;
- notifying students that they must tell the department they are studying at if they need an examination to be adjusted, for example by having their writing time extended or by being provided with special equipment; and
- following the coordinator's instructions with regards to educational interpreting, if the student has been granted such support.

The programme's contact person deals with all *general* support-related matters during the entire time the student is enrolled in the programme. They also handle *specific questions* about courses at the department that is responsible for the programme.

The department's contact person, on the other hand, deals with questions about freestanding courses as well as *specific questions* about support during a particular course of the programme when that course is taught at another department.

7. Responsibilities of the student

The student is responsible for

- applying for support and certifying that they have a permanent disability (see 3.1: medical certificate, medical evaluation or similar document);
- following their coordinator's instructions on how to proceed to receive the practical or personal support they were awarded or recommended by their coordinator; and
- informing the relevant contact person of the teaching situation adjustments recommended to them, and then promptly following the contact person's instructions.

For more information on how students must be given access to support and for the list of current contact persons, please see the pages on disabilities under *Support for education* on Umeå University's staff website.

8. Appeals

Students can submit an appeal to the Higher Education Appeals Board if their application for teaching situation adjustments and/or adjusted examinations was rejected (see Chapter 4, Article 18, paragraph 2 of the Discrimination Act, 2008:567) A decision to reject a student's application must always include information on how the student can appeal the decision.