

# Students with special needs, and accessibility at the Police University College

Guide

Police University College

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## Students with special needs, and accessibility

### Guide to taking students with special needs into account at the Police University College

The Police University College needs to ensure the accessibility of the studies and work as part of their operation (e.g. Non-discrimination Act 1325/2014).

The training is controlled and the quality of teaching and learning at the Police University College is ensured through the use of pedagogical guidelines. They steer the planning, organisation, assessment, and development of teaching and learning. The pedagogic policies, particularly the curriculum, facilitate the development of knowledge and skills and growth into an expert. The studies support and emphasise the student's own active participation in the learning process as well as the development of professional and personal growth and competence. Learning must be motivational, creative, responsible and investigative work that develops professionalism.

The objective of these procedural guidelines is to assist in finding solutions for removing study obstacles. Many of the measures promote learning for all students.

As a concept, accessibility is to be understood in broader terms than just physical accessibility, as it encompasses not only the physical environment but social and psychological aspects as well. At higher education institutions, accessibility refers to the creation of various work and study environments where all students and members of staff can act equally well despite their individual characteristics. In other words, at a higher education institution accessibility refers to how well the features of the institution, such as its premises, electronic systems, learning environments, teaching methods and attitudinal climate, enable involvement and equality among the students, who possess a range of personal traits and whose situations in life vary. Accessibility also entails adapting the study conditions so that they support the learning of each student as well as possible in various flexible ways.

The Police University College promotes the accessibility of studies, for instance, by offering a range of flexible study opportunities. Flexible study opportunities refer to the organisation of studies in a variety of ways and in a range of learning environments. The purpose of flexible learning opportunities is to advance the studies of all students. Flexibility also refers to the multifaceted nature of student assessment as well as to the flexibility of study paths and their realisation. The

accessibility of studies can be supported by different test and teaching arrangements, varied teaching methods and sufficient guidance and consultation services.

Sometimes the flexible study opportunities provided by the curriculum are not enough to support the effective progression of studies. The student may be granted access to special study arrangements due to, for instance, a confirmed learning difficulty or a condition or disability that affects studying. **Special teaching or study arrangements do not refer to compromises in learning objectives but only to the support given to reach those objectives.**

### Students with special needs

Study skills and learning vary from person to person, and there is no one correct way of studying or learning. Each student is unique and different as a learner. The differences between students may be expressed in different learning styles, ways of acquiring information, learning strategies and learning difficulties. The most important thing for the student is to understand their own ability to learn and to develop the ability by creating solutions to the potential learning-related challenges.

It is important to an adult learner to understand the personal value and usefulness of new knowledge. They need to take responsibility for their learning and the advancement of their studies. An adult learner's attitude towards learning and their self-image as a learner are key. For instance, bad learning experiences in the learner's youth may have strengthened the adult's negative perception of themselves as a learner.

### Information on learning difficulties

In general, learning difficulties refer to difficulties in achieving study objectives. The term is used when the attainment of objectives set for studying requires more time and effort from a student than usual. Learning difficulties have nothing to do with talent or the ability to learn. Learning difficulties may assume different forms depending on the learning challenge and age.

Learning difficulties include, for instance, **difficulty with reading** (dyslexia), **language impairment, impairment in mathematics**, various **perceptual impairments** or **attention disorders**. Up to one in ten Finns is estimated to have difficulties with reading. Learning difficulties may also occur due to other than developmental reasons. Issues with mental health, such as depression, burnout or mental disorders, may make learning difficult.

**Difficulty with reading** may affect not only one's ability to read but also to listen and write. Its central feature is the difficulty to perceive and process information related to phonemes. It can manifest itself in spelling errors, reading errors and slow reading, difficulty in producing text, difficulty to concentrate and, for example, difficulty in repeating phrases or text and problems with memory.

**Attention disorder** may cause issues with things such as controlling, directing and maintaining one's attention and regulating one's actions, objectives and alertness. Concentration may be easily disturbed, and a person may not be able to focus on one thing for a long time. The student may find completing assignments, performing monotonous tasks and revising difficult.

### Supporting students with learning difficulties

Many teaching-related solutions that promote accessibility will also support those students who have special learning difficulties. Recognition and acknowledgement of prior learning at the beginning of the studies may free up more time for the rest of the studies and also make effective progress towards the completion of the degree.

**The teacher makes the decision on the support measures that can be put in place.** The decision will primarily be based on an assessment of how the learning objectives will be met, and it aims to ensure equality between students.

### Examples of support measures and special arrangements in teaching:

- Organising the teaching so that it forms a coherent whole: presenting the main points at the beginning of teaching and revising at the end.
- Using different visual aids during the teaching.
- Speaking in a calm manner, using examples, acknowledging the students' reactions, asking and answering questions during a presentation and using the sound system in larger lecture halls.
- Using succinct and clear standard language in the teaching materials.
- Sharing the materials with students before the class if possible, for instance, through Moodle.

- Recording a class, lecture or instructions and saving them for later use.
- Multi-sensory teaching. Think of multiple ways of explaining the same thing: approach the subject through seeing, hearing, doing and showing. Multi-sensory teaching is beneficial to everyone.
- Avoiding competitiveness.
- Black text on white paper can seem restless to someone whose text rows get jumbled. Try printing out the text on coloured paper or give the student a coloured overlay to help with reading.
- Sufficiently large and clear font (e.g. Arial), highlighting the text as needed, using boldface instead of italics or underlining.
- Using short lines, narrow columns and left alignment will make reading the text easier.
- Listening and taking notes at different times.
- Do not speak to the projection screen or board: many students want to see the movements of the mouth.

#### Examples of support measures and special arrangements during examinations:

- Clearly presented, unambiguous questions and instructions, which are given at the examination both in oral and written form.
- Questions clearly marked compulsory or optional.
- Sufficient space for answering.
- Avoiding questions that need to be answered under time pressure: they do not assess learning but speed.
- Avoiding multiple choice questions.
- Possibility to take an oral examination/test or to complement the answers orally.
- Possibility to take the examination in some alternative form, e.g. by writing an essay.
- Possibility to use a computer.
- An undisturbed room and plenty of space between seats, or a separate space with the possibility of using ear plugs.
- In examination answers, important assessment criteria include grammatical correctness, clarity and accuracy. Typing errors or unclear handwriting are no grounds for minus points, however, as the assessment is focused on the student's knowledge and skills.
- More time for taking an examination. For example, 20–30 minutes in a two-hour examination.

When you need special arrangements, do the following:

1. Acquire an **official statement on your learning difficulty**. When a student needs special arrangements, the learning difficulty, condition or disability needs to be confirmed on the basis of an expert statement or certificate.
2. Deliver the official document on your learning difficulty to your **study advisor**, who together with you will prepare a **Proposal for Special Arrangements**.

The Proposal for Special Arrangements will include justification for the need for special arrangements on the basis of the specialist statement and discussion between the study advisor and the student as well as suggestions and ideas for the teacher for carrying out the special arrangements. The period of validity will also be recorded in the Proposal for Special Arrangements.

3. Contact the teacher of each course to agree on the possible special arrangements as well as on taking the learning difficulty into account in the course assessment. Here you can use the Proposal for Special Arrangements as a guideline. The teacher and the student may also agree on other justifiable and course-appropriate arrangements. The **decision** on the special arrangements to be implemented is **made by the teacher**.

The student needs to contact the teacher with regard to the special arrangements well in advance before the start of the course. The need for special arrangements may be short- or long-term and the special arrangements may apply to one or several courses at a time. The teacher cannot tell the other teachers or members of staff about the student's learning difficulty without the student's consent.

The teacher may support the student if they notice that the student has problems with studying, even without an official statement having been provided.

4. The student needs to contact the teacher of the course about any special arrangements concerning the **examination** at least two (2) weeks before the examination date. The student still needs to register for the examination within the normal registration period.

The teacher will inform the student services about a student needing special arrangements during an examination. The student services will reserve a separate room for the examination, the teacher organising the examination will be responsible for any other arrangements.

If you suspect you might have a learning difficulty, talk to your teacher, teacher tutor or study advisor. Student health care will also provide help and instructions.

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Sources and further information:

Accessible studies

[ESOK.fi \(mostly in Finnish\)](http://ESOK.fi)

Taking student diversity into account at higher education institutions

[ESOK project leaflets \(in Finnish\)](#)

Accessible studies: OHO! project promotes the accessibility of studies

[ESOK's OHO! project](#)

Promotion of study abilities, well-being and involvement at higher education institutions

[OHO project](#)

[Opinverstas \(in Finnish\) - possibility to take a reading test](#)

[Erialaisten oppijoiden liitto ry \(in Finnish\)](#) (reading tests, sensory channel test, personal way of learning)

Oppimisvaikeus.fi – Information on learning difficulties and support for young people, adults and professionals (incl. a check list for recognising learning difficulties)

[Oppimisvaikeus.fi \(in Finnish\)](#)

[Oppimisvaikeus.fi \(in Finnish\) - Literature on learning difficulties in adults](#)

Information on learning obstacles: [Niilo Mäki Institute](#)

[Proposals for Special Arrangements at the Tampere higher education community](#)