

From Practice to Evidence:

Inclusive Assessment Design

- What Can We Learn from Assessment Adjustments?

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Pathways 15

2 December 2020



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Connecting the practice to evidence

- A goal in my performance review
- A chance conversation
- The potential of the database!
- The value added by the students and team
- The potency of evidence



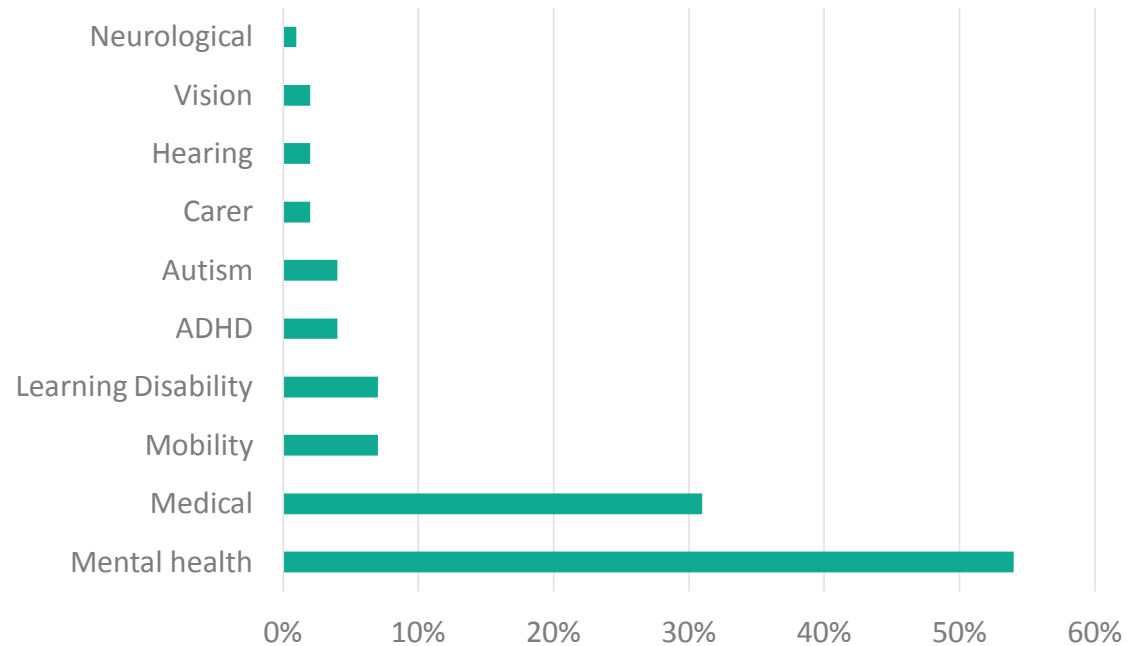
Why research into assessment adjustments and inclusive designs?

- Increasing numbers of students with a disability in higher education (Grimes et al 2017)
- We are morally and legally obliged to ensure students have the same opportunities to demonstrate achievement (Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) 1992; Disability Standards for Education (Cth) 2005)
- Exams, quizzes, essays, group projects, oral presentations, placements are problematic for various students
- Access plan adjustments are an ad-hoc, reactionary response
- Evidence adjustments often do not address student needs—little evidence that they do (Waterfield & West 2006; Weis & Beauchemin 2019)
- Some students do not disclose their condition (Grimes et al 2019)

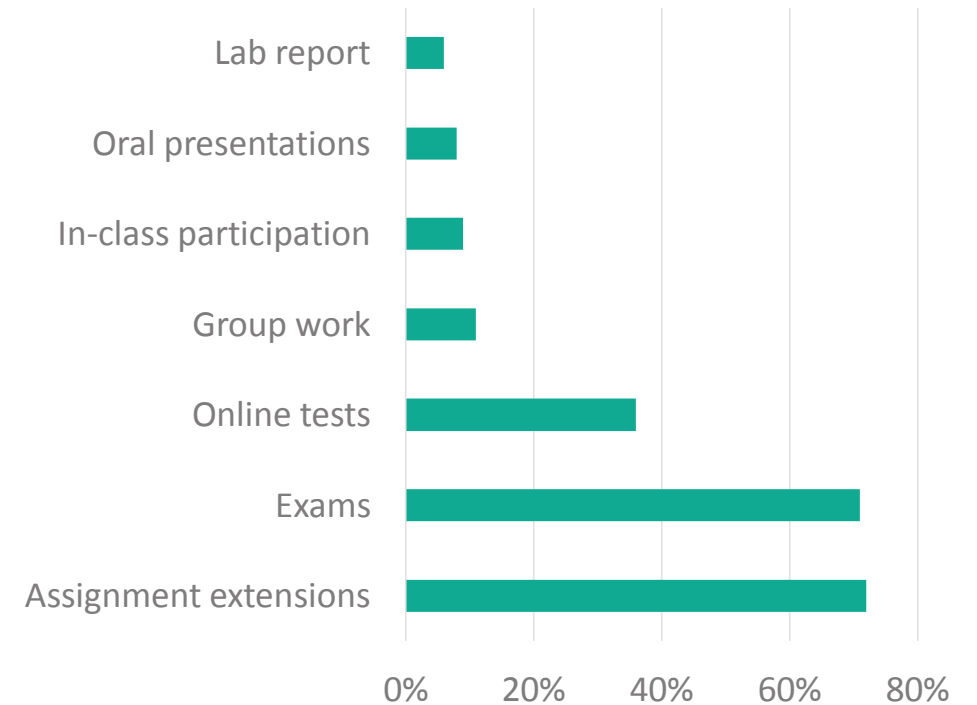


2018 database research: conditions/disabilities and adjustments

Conditions/disabilities



Adjustments by assessment type



Research questions (2020 student survey study)

- What are **students' experiences** of assessment adjustments?
- Which **types** of assessments suit the needs of students with disabilities and which do not?
- What kinds of **feedback** experiences support the learning of students with disabilities, and which do not?



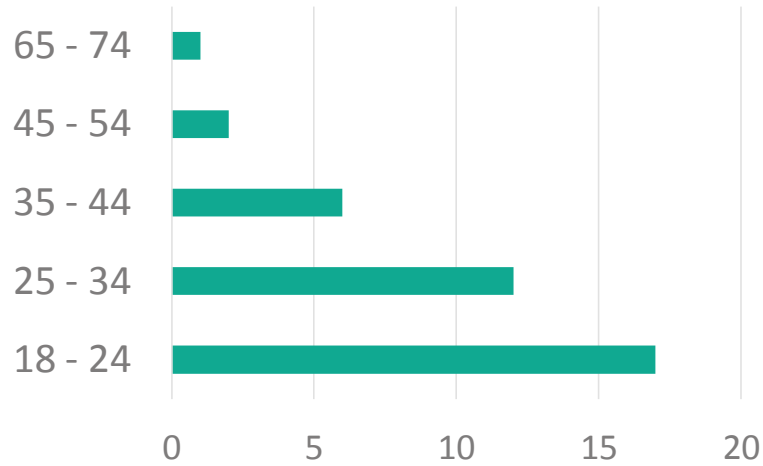
Methods

- Online survey sent to all returning Disability Resource Centre students (i.e. not 1st year students) in April 2020
- Open questions on:
 - reasons for assessment adjustments, types of adjustments
 - assessment methods in a unit that supported/did not support their learning
 - an assessment experience that elicits a lot of emotion
 - experiences of feedback
- 38 responses
- Thematic analysis of open question responses
- DUHREC ethics approval

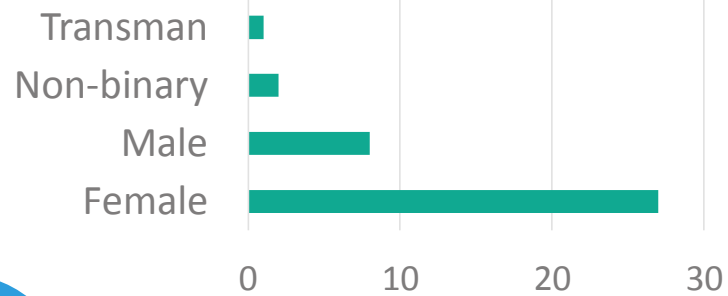


Respondents

Age range



Gender



Degree major	N	Degree major	N
Arts	2	Medical imaging	1
Business	1	Medicine	2
Education	4	Nursing	3
Commerce	1	Optometry	1
Criminology	3	Photography	1
Disability	1	Psychology	5
Engineering	1	Philosophy	1
Environmental Science and Anthropology	1	Real estate	1
Journalism	1	Science	1
International Relations	1	Social sciences	1
International and Community Development	3	Social Work	2
Language and culture studies	1	Visual Arts	1
Law	2	Visual Communication Design	1
Marketing	1	Medical imaging	1

Conditions and adjustments

Condition reported	N	%
Mental health condition	20	53%
Physical health condition	16	42%
Learning disability	9	24%
Life events	3	8%
Physical disability	3	8%
Unclear/not disclosed	2	5%

Types of adjustments used	N	%
Extension on due date	34	89%
Changed exam conditions, e.g. extra writing time, breaks, room and location changes	23	61%
Different format of assessment, e.g. oral vs written, group vs individual	9	24%
Changed attendance requirements (e.g. for subject intensives, placements)	6	16%
Leniency on spelling/grammar	4	11%
Use of assistive technology	4	11%
Other – subtitles for videos in exams	1	3%
Other – individual consultation with teacher	1	3%
Other – access to rubrics and exemplars	1	3%



FINDINGS

Positive experiences: assignment extensions

As the assignment due date loomed I knew there was no way I would be able to have everything together in time. I contacted the teacher requesting an extension, and the two extra weekends they gave me alleviated all of that pressure and frustration. (S15)



Positive experiences: exam adjustments

I also appreciate the longer exam time as it sometimes takes me a couple of goes of reading a question to understand what it wants and the extra time means I can complete the exam. In the past, before having the time extension I was unable to complete my exams. I have also appreciated being able to have breaks during my exam just to step out of the room to refresh and refocus and it not take away time from my exam. (S6)



Mixed experiences: teachers' responses to requests

I had a unit chair email me at the start of the trimester to say that he was reaching out to every student with a DRC plan ... no one had ever reached out like that before. I remember this experience as often is it already marginalizing to have a chronic illness in its own right ... i don't what everyone to know, but it is so nice to not have to explain yourself (something you already do in so many aspects of your life when you live with a chronic illness). (S16)



Mixed experiences: teachers' responses to requests

'it can take a bit of courage to talk to the teacher about it' (S33)

The coordinator emailed back saying that it was 'odd' that I was asking for more time and saying that if I submitted my work in a week, it 'might' be marked. I found this really upsetting, mostly because I was feeling quite fragile at the time. I ended up dropping out of the unit. I think that if I had been feeling better, I would have coped with this response from the coordinator just fine, but at the time it was fairly overwhelming. (S12)



Challenging types of assessments (cont'd)

Group work online

Group work in an online environment is impossible at the best of times, let alone when you're dealing with a disability and invisible trauma that you don't necessarily wish to disclose to the group (S1)

Oral assessments

Even though I have received special consideration in regards to my stutter it was still embarrassing to speak in front of my peers. I would have preferred to have instead recorded my presentations (S16)



Characteristics of preferred assessments (from the data)

Assessment sequencing

- smaller assessment tasks (rather than one large one)
- directly linked to course work
- involving formative feedback
- involving peer feedback
- early diagnostic

Assessment choice

- format
- topic

Assessment format

- multiple choice
- practical (with feedback and opportunity to re-do)
- oral:
 - recording instead of live
 - private
 - sign up for particular timeslot



Provisional implications and further research

- Individual academics and the institution as a whole must:
 - continue to communicate clearly about how assessments can accommodate diverse student ability
 - work proactively with students to ensure appropriate adjustments are in place where the assessment design cannot naturally accommodate diverse abilities
- NCSEHE project underway
 - Students with disabilities are sharing their experiences, of exams in particular, in-depth via interviews
 - We will workshop and develop inclusive assessment designs with staff & students



Realising the value of evidence to practice

- Finding and talking the language of a broader audience
- Extending the reach of the message
- Learning about research (and ethics committees.....)
- Meeting lovely people
- And continuing to find ways to grow the evidence!



References

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