

Reasonable Adjustments

What They Are, How to Ask, and How to Make Them Stick

University of Warwick • Neurodiversity Champions Initiative

About this document

This guide has been written by neurodivergent staff, for neurodivergent staff. It is not an official University document — it is our plain-language companion to the University's reasonable adjustments framework, combined with the legal protections under the Equality Act 2010.

Reasonable adjustments are one of the most powerful protections available to neurodivergent staff — and one of the most misunderstood. People often do not ask because they do not know they can, do not know what to ask for, or have been made to feel that asking is a burden or an 'unfair advantage'. It is neither. It is about levelling the playing field so you can do your job safely and effectively.

This guide explains what reasonable adjustments are, how to request them, what to do when they are agreed but not implemented, and how to protect yourself if someone tries to remove an adjustment that is already in place.

This document reflects our interpretation of University policy and the Equality Act 2010. It is not legal advice. For individual situations, contact your Trade Union, ACAS, Citizens Advice, or an employment law adviser.

Part 1: What Is a Reasonable Adjustment?

The legal basis

Under the Equality Act 2010, if you have a disability, your employer has a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments. This duty exists to remove or reduce the disadvantage you experience compared to non-disabled colleagues.

Neurodivergent conditions — including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and others — are recognised as disabilities under the Equality Act where they have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on day-to-day activities. You do not need to prove you are 'disabled enough'. If your condition affects how you work, the duty applies.

You do not need a formal diagnosis to trigger the duty to make adjustments. If you have disclosed a condition and it is affecting your work, the University should be considering adjustments — even without a diagnosis on paper. In practice, an Occupational Health referral is likely, but it should not be used as a delaying tactic.

What does ‘reasonable’ actually mean?

The law does not define ‘reasonable’ precisely — it is assessed case by case. Courts consider factors including how effective the adjustment would be, the cost involved, the employer’s resources, and the disruption caused.

As the University of Warwick is a large employer with significant resources, the legal threshold for what is considered ‘reasonable’ is much higher than it would be for a small business. Financial cost or minor administrative disruption is rarely a valid excuse for an institution of this size to refuse an adjustment.

‘It’s not our policy’ and ‘we don’t normally do that’ are not valid reasons to refuse a reasonable adjustment. The Equality Act takes precedence over internal policy preferences. ‘Management preference’ is not a justification that will stand up under the law.

What kinds of adjustments exist?

Adjustments generally fall into a few categories — though this list is not exhaustive:

| Type of adjustment | Why it helps neurodivergent staff |
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| Working from home / hybrid flexibility | Reduces sensory overload, social exhaustion, and commute-related dysregulation |
| Flexible start and finish times | Supports executive dysfunction, sleep differences, and fatigue patterns |
| Written communication for instructions | Reduces reliance on verbal processing and provides a reference point |
| Quiet workspace or noise-cancelling headphones | Manages sensory sensitivities in shared office environments |
| Extra processing time for responses | Supports those who need longer to formulate written or verbal responses |
| Structured and predictable schedules | Reduces anxiety caused by unpredictability |
| Regular 1:1 check-ins with manager | Provides consistent, low-pressure communication without group dynamics |
| Adjusted deadlines or chunked tasks | Supports executive function differences and task initiation difficulties |
| Adjustments to formal processes | Meetings sent in writing in advance; ability to submit responses in writing |
| Fixed desk instead of hotdesking (your own consistent desk when you are on campus) | To allow more control over your environment and reduce anxiety |

For a list of examples of adjustments already implemented at Warwick, visit Social Inclusion’s adjustments page: warwick.ac.uk/services/socialinclusion/projects/adjustments. Please note, not all adjustments will be considered reasonable for all roles, and this is not an exhaustive list, your needs may go beyond what is listed.

Part 2: How to Request an Adjustment

You do not need to wait to be asked

Many neurodivergent staff wait for their manager or HR to suggest adjustments. You do not need to. You can — and should — put forward what you need. Coming prepared with specific requests tends to lead to better outcomes than waiting for others to work it out.

Think in advance about what would genuinely make a difference. 'I need to work from home where possible' or 'I need to work from home on days with high sensory fatigue' is clearer and easier to act on than 'I struggle in the office sometimes'. Specificity helps.

The request process — step by step

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| 1. Disclose your condition | You do not have to disclose, but the duty to adjust only applies once the University knows — or should reasonably know — about your disability. Disclosure can be made to your manager or HR. Remember: You do not need a diagnosis in hand to do this. |
| 2. Put your request in writing | You do not have to wait for an OH appointment to request support. Put your adjustment requests in writing immediately using the official Adjustments Form found on the Social Inclusion web pages. It is very easy to complete; it asks what barriers you experience at work and leads into the adjustments requested. Further information on Adjustments guidance can be found at the following link: https://warwick.ac.uk/services/socialinclusion/projects/adjustments/guidance/ |
| 3. Ask for an OH referral (if needed) | While filling out your form, you or your manager can ask for an Occupational Health referral. OH can formally document your needs and recommend adjustments, creating a professional, independent record. Use the Adjustments Form to get interim support in place while you wait for the OH appointment. |
| 4. Book a time with your manager to discuss the adjustments form | This meeting is for you and your manager to formally agree to the adjustments. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If an adjustment is rejected: The manager must note it in the specified section on the form, alongside their business reasoning.• If you cannot agree: The issue should be escalated immediately to your department's People Partner (HR)• Funding: If an adjustment incurs a cost (like specialist software or ergonomic gear), your manager may obtain central funding by emailing HRadjustments@warwick.ac.uk The form has space to note what the wider team need (you should only disclose what you wish to disclose) and a space for review notes. |
| 5. Agree a review date | Set a review date to check how the adjustments are working. Ensure you receive a signed, written copy of the finalised form for your own records. Note: If your manager fails to diary or uphold the review meeting, your agreed adjustments do not expire – they remain active. |

Adjustments are not a one-time only request: Conditions fluctuate, job roles evolve, and technology advances. If an adjustment isn't working as intended, or you discover a new tool that would benefit you, you have the right to request a review meeting sooner than the agreed date.

If you feel unable to disclose to your manager

If you do not feel safe or comfortable disclosing your neurodivergence to your direct line manager, you can disclose to HR directly.

You can also contact a Neurodiversity Champion. We can help you think through how to approach the conversation, help you fill out the form, or simply act as a sounding board. You do not have to do this alone.

Part 3: If Agreed Adjustments Are Not Implemented

Once adjustments have been agreed you should not need to chase up their implementation. Unfortunately, we have heard from many colleagues that implementation is one of the most frustrating parts of the process. If you find that agreed adjustments are not being acted on:

What you can do

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| Chase in writing | Send an email to your manager referencing the adjustment that was agreed, when it was agreed, and asking for an update on implementation. Keep the tone matter-of-fact. You are not complaining — you are following up on something that was confirmed. If your manager says they are waiting on budget approval, remind them they may be able to access central funding (HRadjustments@warwick.ac.uk) |
| Ask for a reason in writing | If an agreed adjustment is not being implemented, you are entitled to ask why — in writing. If you are not getting a satisfactory response from your manager, raise it with your HR People Partner. |
| Record everything | Keep a log of dates, what was agreed, who agreed it, and what has or has not happened since. If things escalate, this record is valuable. |
| Raise it at your next formal opportunity | If you have a return to work discussion, a 1:1, or any formal meeting, state explicitly that the agreed adjustment has not been implemented and ask for it to be recorded in the notes. |
| Escalate if necessary | If chasing has not worked and the adjustment is important to your health and ability to work, contact a Champion, your Trade Union, or ACAS. You should not have to keep asking indefinitely for something you are legally entitled to. |

If an agreed adjustment is not implemented and your health deteriorates as a result, this may constitute a failure to comply with the Equality Act. Document the timeline carefully and seek advice from ACAS, a Trade Union (if you are a member), Citizens Advice, or an employment law solicitor.

Part 4: If Someone Tries to Remove an Adjustment

You may find that an adjustment, even one that has been in place for a long time, is suddenly questioned, challenged or removed. This can happen during a change of manager, a restructure, or as part of a managed process. It can also be done more subtly, through repeated questioning of whether the adjustment is 'still needed'.

An adjustment that has been agreed does not expire automatically. If your condition is ongoing and chronic, the need for the adjustment continues unless there has been a material change in your role or circumstances that justifies a review. 'We would prefer you to work differently' is not a material change.

What to do if an adjustment is challenged

| The situation | What you can do |
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| Somebody says it is 'no longer needed' | Ask what has changed in your role or condition that would justify removing it. Ask for this in writing. If nothing has materially changed, the adjustment stands. |
| Somebody wants a new OH referral to 'review' it | You can engage with this — but ensure you review and consent to the referral form before it is submitted. See the ND Champions Occupational Health guide for your full rights in this process. |
| A new manager was unaware of the adjustment | Your adjustments should be documented and transfer with you. Ask HR to confirm the adjustment in writing to the new manager, and send your new manager your adjustment form. You should not have to re-justify an existing adjustment from scratch every time management changes. |
| Somebody claims it is 'operationally difficult' | This is a factor the University may raise — but it must be weighed against your legal entitlement. Ask them to explain in writing why it is not reasonable, given your role and their resources. |
| The adjustment is removed without discussion | Put in writing immediately that the adjustment has been removed without your agreement and without explanation. Contact a Champion, your Trade Union, or ACAS. |

If an OH report recommends an adjustment and management does not implement it, they must provide a written justification. Ignoring an OH recommendation without a clear explanation is very difficult to defend under the Equality Act.

When repeated questioning becomes something more serious

There is a difference between a legitimate review of an adjustment and a pattern of repeated pressure to give it up. Once OH has confirmed that your condition is chronic and that an adjustment continues to meet your needs, repeated attempts to remove or challenge that adjustment — particularly where they cause you distress — may go beyond what is reasonable.

This is especially worth noting where:

- Your condition has been confirmed as chronic and unlikely to change
- OH has already confirmed the adjustment remains appropriate
- The repeated reviews are causing you documented distress or anxiety
- You feel pressured to relinquish the adjustment rather than genuinely reviewed

This pattern may constitute harassment related to disability, or discrimination arising from disability, under the Equality Act. If this is happening to you, do not dismiss what you are feeling. Seek advice from your Trade Union, ACAS, or Citizens Advice — and document everything, including the effect it is having on you. Ensure you seek support from your GP if required.

Part 5: Adjustments and Formal Processes

Formal processes — sickness absence management, capability reviews, disciplinary procedures — do not suspend your right to reasonable adjustments. The duty to adjust applies directly to how those processes are conducted.

Examples of adjustments to formal processes

| Adjustment | Why it matters |
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| Agendas and questions in writing in advance | Reduces processing anxiety and allows preparation — particularly important for autistic staff who find unexpected questions difficult to respond to in real time. |
| Submitting responses in writing | Supports those who process and communicate better in writing than in spoken meetings. |
| Having a support person present | You are entitled to bring a colleague or Trade Union representative to any formal meeting. This is your right, not a concession. |
| Adjusting the meeting format or location | Formal meetings can be held via Teams or at an alternative location if attending in person creates significant distress related to your disability. |
| Additional time to respond to correspondence | If you need extra processing time for formal letters or decisions, this can be requested as an adjustment. |

If you are in a formal process and reasonable adjustments have never been properly discussed with you (either through an Occupational Health referral or the adjustments form), raise this immediately — in writing and at the meeting. Under Section 22.2 of the Sickness Policy, reasonable adjustments must be reviewed before any capability process can be finalised. This is also a requirement under the Equality Act.

Part 6: Where to Get Support

| Who | What they can do |
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| Neurodiversity Champions | Help you understand your rights, identify what should have happened, and think through your options. We have lived experience and are not part of the management structure. |
| A trusted colleague | Can accompany you to any formal meeting. You do not need a union rep — a colleague you trust is equally valid under policy. |
| Your Trade Union | Can advise on your rights, accompany you to meetings, and formally represent you in disputes. |
| HR (People Team) | HR has a duty to advise employees as well as managers. Be aware HR works for the University — treat their advice as one source among several. |
| ACAS | Free, independent employment advice. Available before anything formal happens. Also offers free early conciliation if a dispute escalates. Call them on 0300 123 1100 |

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| Citizens Advice | Free, confidential guidance on employment rights. A good starting point if you are not sure where to begin. |
| Employment law solicitor | Worth considering for serious situations, particularly where discrimination is involved. Many offer a free initial consultation. |
| Your GP | Speak to your GP about how your condition affects you at work. Notes on your medical record create an independent contemporaneous record that can be important if things escalate. |

Neurodiversity Champions — University of Warwick

Email: ndchampions@warwick.ac.uk

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