

Conducting a well-prepared support assessment about studying with special needs

Approximately 30% of the students in higher education have special needs. Some 10% of all students experience obstacles with regard to studying. Studying with special needs is one of the key quality assurance criteria for educational institutions (ITK: Instellingstoets Kwaliteitzorg). The Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) addresses the need for provisions to improve the accessibility and study programme feasibility for students with special needs.

The issue is addressed in Standard 2 of the ITK (2016) assessment framework: 'The institution effectively realises its educational vision, as is evidenced by appropriate policy measures and processes, particularly in the sphere of staff, assessment, facilities and students with special needs.' This guide will help you prepare and conduct support assessments with regard to studying with special needs.

The questions marked with a + are questions for a student with special needs and the questions marked with a • (bullet) are questions for employees of the institution.

1 What is the vision on studying with special needs?

- + To what extent do you recognise yourself in the vision?
- How well is the vision supported by the staff?

2 How is the policy embedded in the organisation?

- + To what extent are you familiar with the support options available to students?
- Is the 'studying with special needs' policy embedded in a wider policy, such as a diversity policy or flexibility policy?
- Does the policy address every aspect of the reference framework: provision of information, physical

accessibility, supervision, expertise, flexible learning pathways, assessment and examination, assurance of quality and continuity, as well as work and work placements? (Please see reverse for more information.)

3 How are students with special needs and staff involved in the policymaking?

- + What is your role (or that of your fellow students) in the making and implementation of policy?
- Are all employees involved in the making and implementation of policy?

4 What is the staff policy in this respect?

- + Do you feel that employees are well aware of issues related to studying with special needs?
- Are staffing levels sufficient to implement the policy?
- What measures are in place to safeguard employee expertise?
- What form of consultative structure has been implemented?
- Is studying with special needs discussed during performance and appraisal interviews (e.g. with lecturers, supervisors and facility services staff)?

5 How is the policy evaluated?

- + How are you (routinely) involved in these evaluations?
- Has the vision been realised?
- Have goals been achieved?
- Is there any insight into the academic success of students with special needs?
- Has it been recorded, in annual reports for example?
- Has policy been amended?
- What ambitions have been formulated?

Would you like to discuss any aspect of the Standards Committee's reference framework?

The detailed aspects are listed in full below:

1 Provision of information

- Studying with special needs is addressed during information sessions and the study choice check.
- The information provides insight into all relevant aspects.
- The information is intended for prospective students with special needs, lecturers and student counsellors, and is available through various channels.
- All students receive information about studying with special needs during enrolment, when they can notify any disability or with special needs.

2 Physical accessibility

- Buildings, teaching rooms and facilities comply with Accessibility Manual guidelines.
- The website has attained the Drempeelvrij.nl seal of approval and the digital or physical learning environment complies with WCAG criteria.
- Study materials are user-friendly and available in good time.

3 Supervision

- Students with special needs are actively approached for an intake.
- Students with special needs receive extra supervision as required.
- Agreements are recorded in writing and duly fulfilled.
- Every effort is made to ensure that a student with special needs has a designated supervisor.

4 Expertise

- Employee expertise is actively encouraged.
- Directly involved employees possess a basic level of knowledge.

5 Flexible learning pathways

- Flexible learning pathways are available to students with special needs.

- Lecturers take students with special needs into account when teaching.

6 Testing and assessment

- The Examination Board applies set criteria for decisions on individual applications from students with special needs.
- Studying with special needs is reported on annually in the annual report.
- Lecturers are encouraged to provide accessible assessment (such as alternative assessment methods and modified layout).

7 Guarantee of quality and continuity

- Policy continuity is guaranteed.
- The policy is evaluated and students with special needs are interviewed in this respect.
- It is clear what is done with the evaluation data.
- How matters concerning students with special needs are provided for is laid down in the Student Charter.

8 Extra: Work and work placements

- When work placements are allocated, the concerns of students with special needs are taken into account.
- Work placement officers are adequately informed.
- There is contact with employers who are specifically seeking students with special needs.
- Students with special needs receive additional career guidance.



ECIO, Expert centre on inclusive education, informs, advises and supports universities, universities of applied sciences and senior secondary vocational education (VET) in issues relating to inclusive education and student wellbeing. In this way, students with an special needs can successfully complete their education and move on to a job that suits them. Education for all. Without barriers. www.ecio.nl/en.

This guide has been developed in cooperation with the Dutch - Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO), the Erasmus University Rotterdam, Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam and Fontys.