7 tips from students for secondary vocational education (VET) and higher education institutions

Accessible assessments and exams for students with special needs

1. Listen to what students with special needs indicate what they want.

Students* themselves often know best which provision suits them.
Yet student input is not always adequately considered.

> *"Educational institutions should listen better to students and not decide for them. "*

2. Make an overview of possible facilities.

An overview gives students* more confidence and clarity if they know in advance which facilities are possible for them.

3. Inform students in time about how they can apply for adjustments and facilities.

The examination board often meets only once a month to assess applications. Students may then not be able to get facilities in time. Therefore, it is important that students know in time how to apply for facilities.

> *"Sometimes a course started just after the exam board meeting. This resulted in long waits, no provision and sometimes having to use a resit as the first moment of assessment."*

4. Make one person within the educational institution responsible.

Students are often sent from one contact person to another. It is often confusing for them who they should contact.
It helps if one person within the educational institution is responsible for the process and is available for supporting the student.

> *"The sorting out process is complicated and takes time. studying or your student life is affected."*

5. Allocate facilities for a year so that it does not have to be reapplied for each course has to be reapplied for.

On some courses, you have to reapply for provision for every subject or semester. This is asking a lot from students. Therefore, it is helpful if you only have to apply for facilities once a year.

6. Always explain why an application is not approved.

The examination board decides whether to approve a facility.
Sometimes students are not given an explanation as to why an application is not approved. This makes it difficult for them to find an alternative provision that is approved.

> *"To find out why a facility is not possible, you are sent from one contact person to another."*

7. Provide alternative forms of assessment.

When alternative forms of assessments are not provided, students* sometimes cannot complete all the questions on the assessment or even the entire assessment. Sometimes, as an educational institution, you are dependent on external providers for this. Stay in dialogue with them to enable alternative forms for these assessments as well.

> *"On my course, I have to take assessments that everyone else gets. Due to my visual impairment, I cannot read the questions."*
>
> *"I don't get the assessment in a closed environment, which means I can't use reading software."*
>
> *"Questions with a corresponding picture I can't complete anyway, because of this I always miss points."*

* Here we mean students studying with special needs.

The 7 tips were collected during the brainstorming session on 18 May 2022 with students with special needs from VET and higher education. An initiative of:

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