AUC Policy on Studying with a disability

Endorsed by the AUC MT on 27-08-2026

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Background

The Executive Board of the University of Amsterdam strongly recognises the importance of inclusive education. In the 2023-2024 academic year, the Board identified an urgent need to granting study accommodations, from now on referred to as academic adjustments, more accessible for students with a disability in the long term. Although various support is already available in practice, there was no cohesive UvA-wide framework for granting adjustments. Both UvA employees responsible for student guidance and support and bodies that oversee these activities have expressed a need for greater cohesion and clarity in support for students with a disability. They have specifically raised:

- The desire for a more uniform process for granting examination adjustments and teaching and learning adjustments to students with a disability.
- The need for clear, UvA-wide, basic policy principles on accessible and inclusive education, on which faculties can build in terms of both policy and implementation.

To address these concerns, in January 2026, the UvA produced a new framework that aims to provide direction, clarity and consistency in support for students with a disability and enables employees who are responsible for student guidance and support to fulfil their role within a clear structure. This revised policy framework is an update of the 2016 'Studying and working with a disability' policy.

As a college within the UvA, AUC sees the need to adjust its current policy and procedures to fit within the new UvA-wide policy framework and address existing issues. AUC employees responsible for student guidance and support as well as students have raised concerns regarding AUC's current policy and procedures:

- Students can find it difficult to obtain sufficient information from AUC about the (standard) types of academic adjustments that can be requested, and applicable timelines, particularly before enrolment. Due to unclarity, (prospective) students have a tendency to contact multiple people for information (tutors, SLOs, senior tutor, members of the admissions committee, DoE).
- There is no clear procedure that prospective or incoming students can follow. Prospective students normally must wait to submit a request for academic adjustments until after their arrival at AUC.[1] Instances where students withdrew from AUC in the autumn semester because they had anticipated academic adjustments that could not be provided have been registered. In other cases, incoming students struggled with uncertainty about whether or not their academic adjustments would be approved.

[1] In case of particularly complex requests, academic adjustments have been reviewed and processed prior to a student's arrival at AUC. However, this is not common practice.

- There is a lack of alignment between the academic adjustments approved by AUC and academic adjustments provided by the UvA.
- As an institution, AUC experiences the impact of a multitude of specific academic adjustments requests, such as requests for separate exam rooms for individual students. It has been established that AUC generally approves more of those requests than other UvA programmes. The outcomes can be challenging to administer and require considerable organisation and resources from AUC.
- Due to the unique characteristics of AUC's program and structure, adaptations to the UvA-wide policy framework are required. This policy document serves as a framework for how the UvA-wide policy will be implemented at AUC and includes sections that are specific to AUC's needs.

This policy document outlines how the UvA-wide policy framework will be implemented at AUC. It includes adaptions to the framework that aim to address AUC's unique needs.
This policy applies to:

- Prospective and current students with a permanent disability or chronic illness. This policy does not apply to temporary exceptional circumstances.
- Those who have a working relationship with students with disabilities.

Objectives

The following principles form our departure point in the redesign of academic adjustments procedures:

- AUC's policy should follow the UvA policy framework closely while still addressing the unique characteristics of AUC.
- Sufficient information about available academic adjustments and procedures to request such adjustments should be accessible to (prospective) students.
- It should be clear for (prospective) students what they can expect from academic adjustments, and which adjustments are normally provided.
- Students should be able to apply for academic adjustments immediately after receiving confirmation of enrolment - before arrival at AUC - and throughout their studies.
- The procedure to apply for academic adjustments should be clear and simple for the student.
- AUC is part of the VU and the UvA and principally works with the UvA for student support services. Differences between the types of academic adjustment requests approved or rejected by the UvA and AUC should be minimised as much as possible, to contribute to an easy transition from Bachelor to Master programmes and the partaking of students in courses at other UvA faculties.

Terms and definitions

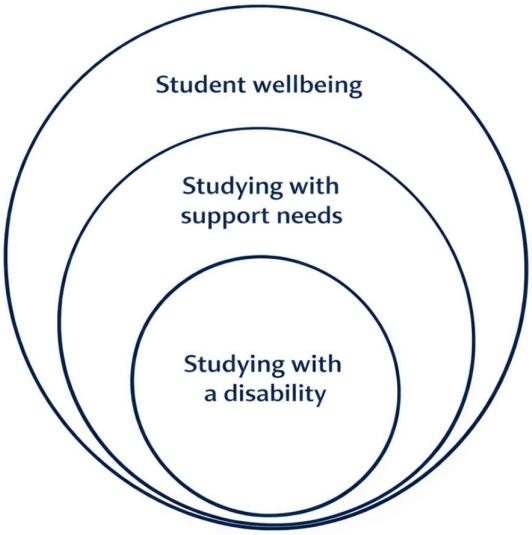


Figure 1: Care circles for students. Included based on ECIO research and focus groups.

Studying with a disability falls under 'Studying with support needs', which is part of the broader theme of 'Student wellbeing'. Studying with a disability focuses on promoting accessible education for students with a temporary or permanent disability.
The broader overlying category of 'support needs' also relates to other groups such as informal carers, young parents or students running a business. Although the nature of the support needs can vary, the adjustments, such as additional examination time or financial support, can be the same. Student wellbeing transcends these categories.
Despite developments in inclusive language at the UvA, such as the use of the term 'support needs', we continue to use the phrase '**studying with a disability**'. AUC is thereby adhering to the existing national frameworks and terminology. By using this terminology, we ensure that it is clear to everyone which group of students we are talking about and how they can be granted adjustments to enable them to follow a study programme at the UvA.
A **disability** is any physical, sensory or other disorder that may prevent a student from participating in education, assessment and study-related activities, as described by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).
This includes:

- Visual, auditory and motor/physiological disabilities.
- Psychological disabilities such as phobias and anxiety disorders.
- Mental disabilities (neurodivergence), including but not limited to conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD and autism.

- Disabilities due to a chronic illness, problems with speech, stamina, memory, concentration and so on.

A physical, sensory or other disorder above will be relevant for **AUC students** if:

- it delays their study progress.
- they have problems with the physical and/or digital accessibility of education and assessment.

The term **adjustment** refers to an arrangement that aims to remove a barrier to participation in educational activities due to a disability. The term adjustment replaces the previously used term *accommodation* in order to align with the UvA-wide policy framework. Adjustments are subdivided into two subtypes:

- **Teaching and learning adjustments** referring to adjustments required to carry out study activities other than formal examinations.
- **Examination adjustments** referring to adjustments required during formal examinations.

Each subtype of adjustments can be categorized as a:

- **Basic adjustment** referring to an adjustment that can be granted in connection with a disability and/or chronic illness to students with a disability for the duration of the study programme or for a specified period.
- **Individual adjustment** referring to an adjustment that can be granted in connection with a disability and/or chronic illness to students with a disability for the duration of the study programme or for a specified period, which does not feature in the list of basic adjustments. The process for determining individual adjustments should be equal, transparent and fair for each student, and the outcome should always be reasonable, well-substantiated and justifiable despite individual situations varying widely. The following framework is used to determine what is a reasonable adjustment in a given situation. The specified elements and questions serve as a guide for careful decision-making.
    - Purpose: does it help to remove a specific barrier?
    - Effectiveness: is offering the adjustment effective in practice?
    - Proportionality: is the adjustment proportionate to the nature and severity of the student's disability?
    - Disproportionate burden: can the educational institution make the adjustment without facing a disproportionate burden?
    - Alternatives: are there other measures that achieve the same effect?

Mandates

The parties responsible for granting adjustments are:

- *Basic teaching and learning adjustments*
  The mandate is attributed to the **AUC Student Life Officers (SLOs)** by the AUC Dean. The AUC SLOs will review basic teaching and learning adjustment requests and grant these.

- *Individual teaching and learning adjustments*
  The mandate is attributed to the **AUC Director of Education (DoE)** by the AUC Dean. The AUC DoE will review individual teaching and learning adjustment requests and grant these. The DoE will consult with the Dean if there are budgetary concerns.

- *Basic examination adjustments*
  The mandate is attributed to the **UvA Student Counsellors** by the AUC Board of Examiners. The UvA Student Counsellors will review basic examination adjustment requests and grant these.

- *Individual examination adjustments*
  The **UvA Student Counsellors** will review individual examination adjustment requests and advise the **AUC Board of Examiners**, who will deliberate and reach a decision based on the specific circumstances of the case.

The distribution of mandates per type of adjustment largely follows the UvA-wide policy framework. The main deviation, regarding examination adjustments, stems from the fact that the Vrije Universiteit (VU) is currently responsible for the (procedures for) the judicial protection of AUC students, including when it comes to exam decisions. Currently, the mandate cannot therefore be fully attributed to the UvA Student Counsellors as suggested in the policy framework. AUC establishes the UvA Student Counsellors as an adviser to the AUC Board of Examiners in cases of individual examination adjustments. If and when the responsibility for the (procedures for) the judicial protection of AUC students would be placed with the UvA, this would allow AUC to conform more closely to the policy framework.

Procedures

Procedure for granting an adjustment

Step 1. Students will use a Microsoft form to submit adjustment requests. One form will be available for Examination Adjustments and one for Teaching and Learning Adjustments.

Step 2. The forms are monitored by the UvA Student Counsellors and the AUC Student Life Officers respectively. After classifying the requested adjustment into a basic or an individual adjustment, the UvA Student Counsellors and the AUC Student Life Officers will relay the information to the party holding the mandate for that type of adjustment. For an overview of which party reviews each type of request see the "Mandates" section.

Step 3. The party in question will review the request and take a decision.

Step 4. *(only for individual adjustments)*

> **Examination adjustments:** upon a decision being reached, the Board of Examiners will inform the UvA Student Counsellors.
>
> **Teaching and learning adjustments:** upon a decision being reached, the Director of Education will inform the SLO.

Step 5. The responsible party (UvA Student Counsellors or SLO) will register the decision in SIS. This registration will trigger an automatic email sent to the student informing them if the adjustment has been granted or not.

Step 6.

> **If the adjustment is not granted,** the SLO or the UvA Student Counsellor will offer to meet with the student.
>
> **If the adjustment is granted,** the procedure outlined in the following section will be followed.

From the moment that step 1 is completed by the student, step 5 should be reaching within a maximum of six (6) weeks.

Procedure after an adjustment is granted

Step 1. The SLO will check SiS on a regular basis and contact the Graduate Assistant to the SLOs (GA SLOs) with the information of the student, including name, student number and adjustment granted.

Step 2. The GA SLOs will contact the student via email introducing themselves as the contact point regarding adjustment logistics and implementation. When needed, the GA SLOs will schedule a meeting to discuss how to best implement the adjustment.
For students with the adjustment "extra time", the GA SLO will only send an email explaining the transition period. The implementation lies with the lecturer.
For students with (a) complex adjustment(s), the GA SLO will contact the HoS.

Step 3. When meeting with the student, the GA SLOs will explore the student's individual circumstance and characteristics that should be taken into account when implementing the adjustment (e.g., weekly schedule, type of assessments, desire to have the adjustment implemented or not, etc.)

Step 4. The GA SLOs will follow up with the student at the start of each semester to plan how the adjustment will be implemented in the new courses the student will be taking.

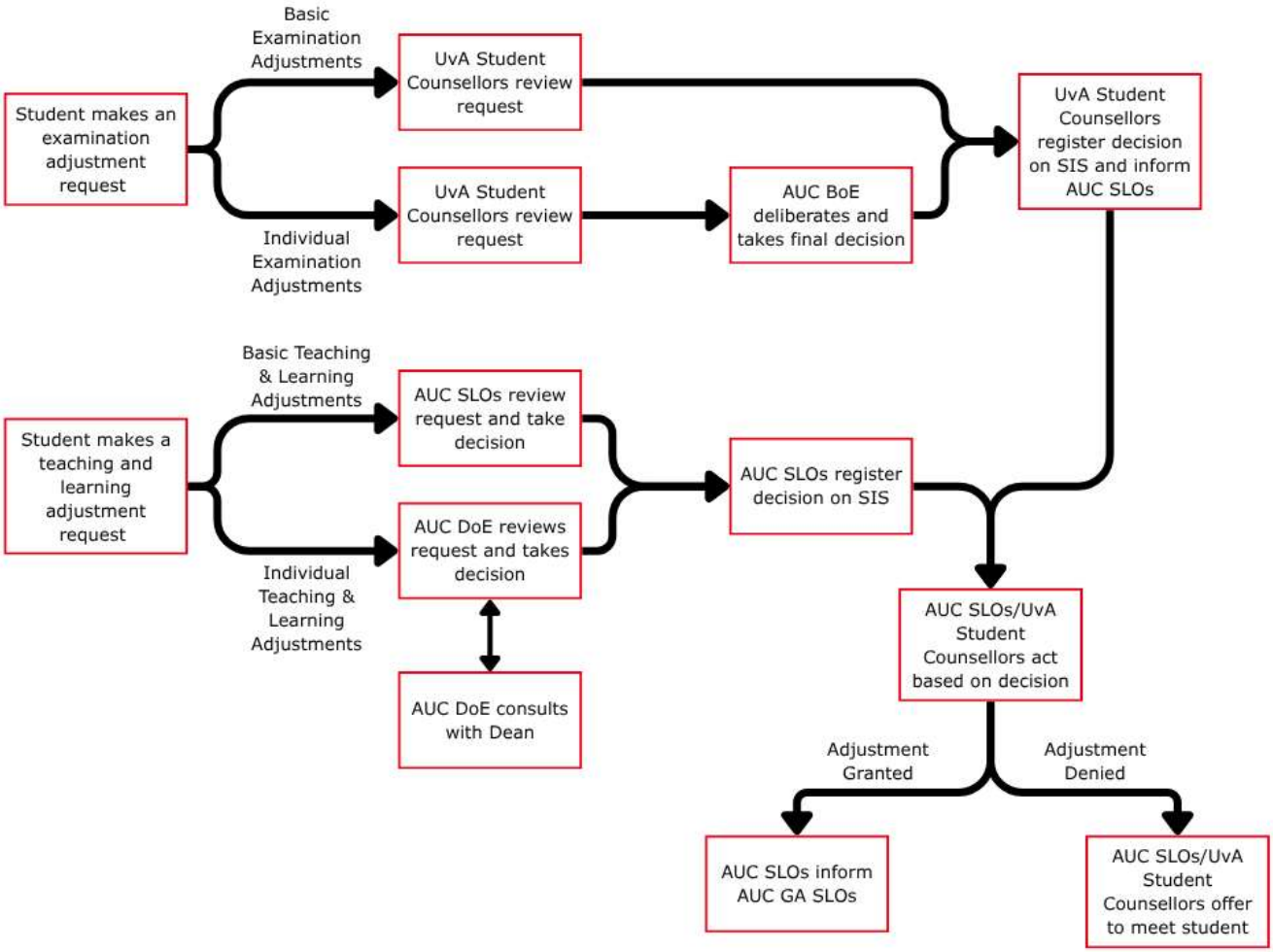


Figure 2: Flowchart of steps involved in granting an adjustment when it is requested by the student and steps to be taken after a decision is reached.

Procedure for appeals

An appeal against a decision regarding exam adjustments and, thus taken by the Board of Examiners, can be lodged with the Examination Appeals Board of VU (VU COBEX).
An appeal against a decision regarding teaching and learning adjustments and thus made by the DoE or SLO on behalf of the Dean, can be lodged with the Arbitration Committee for Student Objections**.**

Supporting documentation and accountability

Students must be able to present evidence in support of their request for adjustments, so that the request can be assessed and a decision reached as to whether or not an adjustment will be granted. This means that students with a disability and/or chronic illness must be able to produce written evidence of their disability and/or chronic illness. Examples include a certificate issued by a doctor, general practitioner or specialist, a treating therapist, psychologist or psychiatrist, social worker or other authority. This certificate can be used to determine the support or adjustments to which a student is entitled. A table showing the frameworks for the medical certificate can be found in appendix 2.

Information for students

In order to ensure that it is clear for (prospective) students what to expect from the adjustments procedure, an overview of the information that should be available to students is outlined below. To make this information accessible to (prospective) students changes will be made to AUC's websites.
Through the "Studying with a disability" webpage on student.auc.nl the following information will be made available to (prospective) students:

- How to request an adjustment (Examination and Teaching and Learning)
- Guidelines on what qualifies as an exam adjustment and what qualifies as a teaching and learning adjustment
- Guidelines on what kind of medical evidence is accepted
- Timeframe for a decision being taken
- List of basic examination adjustments and list of basic teaching and learning adjustments

Newly enrolled students will be informed/reminded of AUC's procedure for granting academic adjustment though the "Welcome newsletter for new students" sent via email after their acceptance.

Appendix 1 – Basic adjustments

Basic examination adjustments

The UvA Student Counsellors review basic examination adjustments.

Adjustment (Voorziening)	**Description**
Eating and/or drinking during examinations (Eten en/of drinken tijdens tentamen)	The student is permitted to eat and/or drink during examinations.
Medication use (Gebruik medicatie)	The student is permitted to take medication during examinations.
Toilet breaks (Toiletbezoek)	The student is permitted to take one or more toilet breaks when needed, when feasible under the supervision of an invigilator.
Leaving the room (Zaal verlaten)	During the examination, the student is permitted to stretch their legs or take a break outside the examination room, exclusively under the supervision of an invigilator. The end time of the examination remains the same. At AUC, this adjustment implies that the student will be placed in an individual room.
Own keyboard/mouse (Eigen toetsenbord/muis)	The student is permitted to use their own keyboard/mouse for digital examinations, provided the device is compatible with the other hardware and software the UvA uses for digital assessments.
Magnifying glass (Loep of vergrootglas)	The student is permitted to use a magnifying glass, to be supplied by the student.
Non-electronic ear defenders (Niet-elektronische gehoorbescherming)	The student is permitted to use non-electronic ear defenders, as sold in DIY stores. NB: foam earplugs are allowed at all times and do not require and official request. To be supplied by the student.
Paper examination (Papieren toets)	Where feasible, the student is entitled to a paper version of a digital examination.

Adapted furniture (Speciaal muebulair)	The student is entitled to adapted furniture in accordance with the description in SIS. Possibilities vary per examination room, assessment of allocation by GA SLO or UvA examinations office.
Examination laptop (Examenlaptop)	The student takes the examination on a laptop provided by the faculty/degree programme. Depending on the module, this adjustment cannot be granted in a separate room if specific software is required. This is at the discretion of the GA SLO or UvA examinations office.
Larger font (Vergroot lettertype)	For paper examinations, the student is entitled to exam papers printed in Arial font in size 12, or if not possible, to an examination printed in A3 size. For digital examinations, all students can zoom in to enlarge the font.
Text-to-speech software (Voorleessoftware)	The student uses text-to-speech software. In the case of paper examinations, this adjustment is granted in addition to an examination laptop.
Examination in an individual room (Afname in individuele ruimte)	The student takes the examination in a separate room
Examination in a small Group (Afname in kleine groep)	Small-group examination setting
Choice of seat (Keuze zitplaats)	The student is entitled to a preferred seat in the examination room in accordance with the description in SIS
Additional examination time (Extra tijd) (Tentamentijd +15 of +30)	The examination time is extended by 15 or 30 minutes depending on the duration: - For examinations lasting up to two hours (<2 hours): 15 minutes of additional time - For examinations lasting two hours or more (≥ 2 hours): 30 minutes of additional time

Note regarding basic exam adjustment of additional examination time:

Up until the present moment, AUC's basic adjustment of additional examination time consisted of 25% extra time. In order to align with UvA's policy, this adjustment will be altered to the stated on the table above.

As AUC exams on average last 90 minutes, the transition to the UvA policy will result in around 8 minutes less extra time for students with this adjustment.

There are a number of currently enrolled students that hold the adjustment of 25% extra time for the entirety of their AUC career. In order to avoid logistical difficulties (examiners, for the next 2-3 years, would have to arrange for multiple different types of extra time adjustments) and unfairness towards students who have not requested an adjustment in their 1st or 2nd year due to, for example, not yet having a formal diagnosis, AUC will establish a transition period.

For the next two years (up until AY 2028-2029) all students temporarily fall under the AUC policy. After the end of these two years, the AUC policy will no longer be in place, and all students will fall under the UvA policy. Students who already have an adjustment will continue to benefit from the AUC policy, whereas new adjustment requests will fall under the AUC policy for a limited period of 2 years.

Importantly, this change does not have any effect on students who have other types of extra time adjustments, such as 50% or 100% extra time. These adjustment falls under the category of individual adjustments.

Basic Teaching and Learning Adjustments

The AUC Student Life Officers review basic teaching and learning adjustments.

The adjustments listed below are not automatically available to all students. Teaching and learning adjustments are always granted on the basis of an individual assessment by a Student Life Officer. This assessment takes the personal situation into account, as well as a relevant diagnosis or statement.

Adjustments for which a formal decision is required	
Adjustment (Voorziening)	**Description**
Flexibility with AUC's attendance policy	Student is allowed to miss more than 25% of the lectures/tutorials
Assistive listening system / audio induction loop system (Solo-apparatuur/ ringleading)	Use of assistive listening system by lecturer/audio induction loop system – equipment to be supplied by the student
Sign language interpreter (Gebarentolk)	Use of a sign language interpreter (including Canvas guest account) – the student is responsible for covering the costs of the sign language interpreter from their personal budget/UWV benefit
Live subtitling (Ondertiteling colleges)	Ava application licence (use of live subtitles during lectures)
Speech-to-text interpreter (Schrijftolk)	Online access to speech-to-text interpreter during lectures
Field trip buddy companion (Excursie: buddy mee)	Field trip: buddy companion - the student is responsible for covering the costs from their personal budget/UWV benefit
Field trip: own room (Excursie: eigen kamer)	Field trip: own room - the student is responsible for covering the costs from their personal budget/UWV benefit
Building accessibility (Toegankelijkheid gebouw)	The student has certain limitations regarding access to specific areas, as specified in SIS.
Adapted furniture (Speciaal meubulair)	Teaching Logistics - Building accessibility - Office chair - Support services

Emergency services (Hulpdiensten)	Student with a medical condition provides instructions on how to act in case of an emergency.
Converting a book/text to PDF (Omzetten van boek/tekst naar PDF)	Converting a physical book or physical text to PDF. After the adjustment has been granted, the student must report to the University Library, location Vendelstraat.

For the adjustments listed below, it is not necessary to apply for formal approval. However, it is advisable to do so, so that lecturers and support staff are informed in advance that the student will make use of this support tool during teaching activities.

Adjustments for which no formal decision is required	
Adjustment (voorziening)	**Description**
Sunglasses* (Zonnebril)	Student wears sunglasses during lectures and/or tutorials – sunglasses to be supplied by the student).
Use of medication* (Gebruik medicatie)	Medication on table and medication use – medication to be supplied by the student
Use of mobile phone* (Gebruik telefoon)	Student uses mobile phone during lectures and/or tutorials due to medical reasons
Walk around* (Rondlopen)	The option to occasionally walk around during lectures and/or tutorials
Assistance dog* (Hulphond)	Student is accompanied by assistance dog during lectures and/or tutorials
Non-electronic ear defenders* (Niet-electronishe koptelefoon)	Non-electronic ear defenders (as sold in DIY stores) – to be supplied by the student

- Provisions marked with an * do not conflict with existing regulations and/or follow from legislation, and therefore no formal decision is required for them. The student may use these provisions in consultation with the SLO and/or lecturer. The provision is only recorded in SIS after consultation with the student.

Appendix 2 – Medical certificate frameworks

Medical certificate frameworks	
Definition of *certificate*	A *certificate* is a medical or paramedical certificate or medical diagnosis issued by a BIG or other registered professional or an internationally recognised equivalent. See the student website for a detailed explanation.
Who can request a certificate?	Based on the key principles in the GDPR, the person authorised to request the medical certificate is the person who must decide whether the student is entitled to the basic adjustment. - For examination adjustments: the Student Counsellor and the Board of Examiners. - For teaching and learning adjustments: the Student Life Officer and the Director of Education in consultation with the Dean.
Who can inspect the certificate?	Only the person or persons who need the certificate to perform their duties, namely deciding whether or not to grant the adjustments, can inspect the certificate. In practice, depending on the type of adjustment, this therefore means the student counsellor, the Board of Examiners, the Student Life Officer, the Director of Education or the Dean.
What information can be requested/used?	When requesting and processing medical and other certificates, the AUC and the UvA must not process any more data than strictly necessary. The processing must comply with the basic GDPR principles, including proportionality and subsidiarity. The minimum information required to take a decision is therefore established in advance. It must be clear what the purpose is and why the requested data is necessary for this purpose. As processing special personal data such as health data is essentially prohibited, AUC/UvA relies on the ground for exception under Article 9(2)(b) of the GDPR when implementing this policy. This basis allows processing in the context of legal obligations

	and specific labour law and social protection rights.
Where is information stored?	The certificate is stored at a central location where only the person who needs the certificate for the performance of their duties (deciding whether or not to grant an adjustment) has access to the information.
How is this data destroyed?	The specified retention period is currently up to one year after termination or expiry of the adjustment. If necessary, this may be amended to up to one year after a student is no longer enrolled at the UvA.