



## **Support for Applicants and Students with Specific Needs and/or Disadvantages**

*GMBS explanatory document for MFHEA/Panel purposes, including model scenarios*

### **1. Objective of Support at GMBS**

GMBS operates as a fully online institution and ensures that applicants and students with specific needs and/or disadvantages have equal access to education. In this regard, GMBS has developed [internal policies](#) that form an integral part of its Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS). This document is grounded in, and draws upon, these existing internal policies and procedures. This support framework is designed to enable applicants and students to participate in their studies under appropriate conditions, to respect individual needs and life circumstances, while maintaining academic standards, the integrity of assessment, and the intended learning outcomes of study programmes.

### **2. Who This Support Applies To**

The support framework applies to:

- ✓ applicants (communication, admissions processes, pre-enrolment),
- ✓ students across all programmes and modes of study delivered by GMBS,
- ✓ teaching staff, Study Advisors, the academic administration, and other relevant roles involved in providing support.

### **3. Principles of Support**

#### **Equal opportunities and non-discrimination**

GMBS applies [the principle of equal treatment](#) and does not tolerate discrimination on the basis of disability or other relevant circumstances.

#### **Reasonable adjustments**

Adjustments are provided following an individual assessment. Adjustments focus primarily on the format and organisation of study (e.g., timing, communication methods) rather than reducing academic requirements. GMBS maintains:



- ✓ the same intended learning outcomes,
- ✓ the same assessment criteria (except for organisational format, not the substance of requirements),
- ✓ academic integrity.

### **Individualisation and proportionality**

GMBS makes every effort to create an inclusive and accessible learning environment and to provide reasonable accommodations and support to students and applicants with specific needs, based on an individual assessment of the situation and in accordance with the principle of equal treatment. At the same time, however, GMBS transparently states that there is no universal solution for all possible types of specific needs and life circumstances. In highly specific cases, there may be situations where, even with reasonable effort, it is not possible to provide the requested form of support or accommodation without undue organizational, technical, or financial burden, or without interfering with the essence of the study program and its academic standards. In such cases, GMBS will proceed on a case-by-case basis, provide the applicant/student with clear justification, consider alternative solutions, and recommend available external support options, if relevant.

### **Transparent limits of support**

In highly specific cases, it may not be possible to provide a requested form of support, in particular if it would:

- ✓ impose a disproportionate organisational, technical, or financial burden,
- ✓ require changes to the essence of the programme or reduce academic standards,
- ✓ be incompatible with the study platforms or processes in use.

### **Roles and Organisational Arrangements**

#### **1. Coordinator for Students with Specific Needs**

- ✓ receives requests for support and adjustments,
- ✓ assesses needs and proposes reasonable adjustments,
- ✓ coordinates communication between the student, teaching staff, Study Advisors and academic administration,
- ✓ ensures consistency and documentation of decisions,
- ✓ oversees the protection of personal data related to specific needs.



## 2. Study Advisors

- ✓ provide guidance on study planning, study progress, and organising academic obligations,
- ✓ cooperate with the Coordinator in implementing adjustments and support.

## 3. Teaching staff

- ✓ implement approved reasonable adjustments within their modules,
- ✓ maintain the same academic requirements and assessment criteria.

## 5. Request and Assessment Process (Step-by-Step)

### 5.1 When to request support

- ✓ before or during the admissions process (adjustments to admissions procedures),
- ✓ at any time during studies (adjustments to teaching/learning activities, assessment, deadlines, etc.).

### 5.2 What the request should include

- ✓ a description of the specific need and its impact on study,
- ✓ the requested support/adjustments,
- ✓ relevant supporting documentation (where available and appropriate).

### 5.3 Outcome of the assessment

Following an individual assessment, the Coordinator issues one of the following outcomes:

- ✓ approval of adjustments (scope, duration and conditions), or
- ✓ an alternative support proposal, or
- ✓ a reasoned refusal (where the request cannot be accommodated while maintaining the principles in Section 3).

### 5.4 Duration of adjustments

Adjustments may be approved for the full period of study or for a limited period (where circumstances are expected to change).



## **6. Forms of Support and Reasonable Adjustments (Examples)**

GMBS may provide reasonable adjustments, in particular in the form of:

- ✓ adjustments to the organisation of teaching/learning activities and consultations,
- ✓ adjustments to the conduct of examinations/assessments (time-based or organisational adjustments),
- ✓ adjustments to the format of submitting outputs (where content and performance standards are maintained),
- ✓ individual study planning and support provided by Study Advisors,
- ✓ recommendations on effective study strategies and approaches.

## **7. Specialised Software and Technical Arrangements**

Where specialised software/assistive technologies are required or recommended (e.g., screen reader, accessibility tools, speech-to-text):

- ✓ the student primarily secures such software independently and uses it on their own device,
- ✓ GMBS provides reasonable cooperation, including:
- ✓ information about platform compatibility,
- ✓ basic organisational adjustments within the online learning environment,
- ✓ reasonable support in configuring processes (e.g., alternative delivery of materials where justified).

## **8. Support in the Admissions Process**

Applicants may request reasonable adjustments to the admissions process (e.g., alternative communication formats, time adjustments, or an alternative way of demonstrating admissions requirements), provided that the substance of admissions criteria is not affected.



## **9. Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students**

GMBS provides scholarships for disadvantaged students (e.g., socio-economic disadvantage, specific life circumstances, or other relevant reasons). Conditions, criteria and awarding procedures are assessed according to predefined rules and in line with GMBS internal regulations.

### **Model scenario: Student with a Hearing Impairment (Practical Application)**

#### **A. Profile and identified barriers**

An MBA student studying fully online has a moderate hearing impairment and uses a hearing aid. The student reports difficulties in understanding real-time discussions, especially when multiple participants speak, when audio quality fluctuates, or when the pace is fast. The student also experiences barriers when participating in live consultations without consistent visual and text-based support.

#### **B. Request submission (how the process starts)**

The student contacts the Coordinator for Students with Specific Needs and submits a short description of the functional impact on study activities, with particular emphasis on live sessions and oral presentations. The student proposes practical measures such as captions or transcripts, a written alternative for selected participation activities, and a preference for written communication where appropriate. Where available and appropriate, the student also provides supporting documentation (e.g., a specialist recommendation or a concise functional impact statement).

#### **C. Individual assessment and reasonable adjustments (decision and setup)**

The Coordinator conducts an individual assessment focused on removing barriers to access while ensuring that intended learning outcomes and academic standards remain unchanged. Based on this assessment, the Coordinator proposes reasonable adjustments tailored to the delivery mode and module requirements. For live consultations and webinars, GMBS prioritises platforms that support automated captions where available and makes recordings of live sessions accessible within a reasonable timeframe. GMBS also promotes a moderated meeting format (one speaker at a time, consistent microphone use, and basic meeting etiquette) to reduce communication barriers.

For discussions and assessed participation, GMBS may allow the student to complete part of participation requirements in writing (e.g., via the LMS discussion forum) where assessment focuses on argumentation and content rather than oral delivery. For presentations, the same assessment criteria



remain in place; however, GMBS may allow written speaker notes or a pre-recorded presentation format, provided the student demonstrates the same competencies (analysis, structure, and argumentation). Where an oral examination is essential, GMBS considers organisational adjustments that do not change the substance of assessment, such as a clear structure and written display of questions (e.g., via chat). Where compatible with the assessment objective, GMBS may consider a reasonable alternative that achieves the same purpose without lowering standards.

#### **D. Coordination and implementation**

Once adjustments are approved, the Coordinator informs relevant teaching staff and Study Advisors strictly on a need-to-know basis to ensure proper implementation while maintaining confidentiality. The Coordinator ensures consistent application across modules and confirms whether adjustments are approved for the full study period or for a time-limited period (e.g., an academic year).

#### **E. Effectiveness review and continuous improvement**

After approximately four to six weeks (or after the first assessed output), GMBS conducts a brief review to confirm that the adjustments effectively remove barriers. This typically checks whether captions and recordings are consistently available and usable, whether new barriers arise (for example in group work), and whether refinements are required. The expected outcome is that the student has an equitable opportunity to achieve intended learning outcomes because the communication barrier is mitigated through organisational and technical adjustments, while academic requirements and assessment standards remain fully intact.

### **Model scenario: when GMBS cannot admit an applicant despite reasonable efforts**

#### **A. Applicant profile and nature of the specific need**

An applicant to the GMBS MBA programme has a severe short-term memory impairment, supported by an appropriate professional statement. The applicant reports significant difficulties with processing new information in real time, sustaining attention during extended analytical tasks, and independently applying complex concepts without continuous one-to-one assistance.

The applicant further explains that in prior educational settings they were able to function only under conditions such as:

- ✓ substantially extended time for all assessed outputs,



- ✓ continuous individual support (one-to-one assistance) while completing tasks,
- ✓ repeated reworking of assessed assignments until the required outcome was achieved.

### **B. GMBS individual assessment**

GMBS carries out an individual assessment to identify feasible reasonable adjustments that could enable the applicant to study without lowering the academic standards of the MBA programme. The assessment takes into account:

- ✓ the nature of an MBA as a programme requiring **independent analytical work**, decision-making, critical thinking, and application of concepts within time-bound academic requirements,
- ✓ intended learning outcomes that include the ability to independently analyse complex managerial problems, integrate knowledge from multiple areas, and present solutions without continuous assistance,
- ✓ the organisational and technical constraints of the GMBS online learning environment.

### **C. Why GMBS cannot provide the requested support as reasonable adjustments**

Following the assessment, GMBS concludes that the level of support required would:

- ✓ necessitate **continuous individual assistance** in completing core academic obligations,
- ✓ require **systematic repeated reworking of assessed outputs** beyond standard academic rules,
- ✓ effectively alter the substance of assessment of independence, analytical competence and decision-making, which are core intended learning outcomes of the MBA programme.

Such measures would **not constitute reasonable organisational adjustments, but would amount to substituting the student's performance, thereby** lowering academic standards and compromising the integrity of the programme.

### **D. Transparent communication and the non-admission decision**

GMBS communicates transparently to the applicant that:

- ✓ their circumstances were assessed individually,
- ✓ GMBS explored feasible reasonable adjustments within the online delivery environment,



- ✓ despite reasonable efforts, it is not possible to provide the required level of support without changing the essence of the programme and its intended learning outcomes.

On this basis, GMBS makes a decision **not to admit the applicant** to the MBA programme. GMBS clarifies that the decision is not based on the existence of a disability as such, but on an **objective inability to provide reasonable adjustments while maintaining academic standards**.

#### **E. Additional steps and guidance**

As part of an appropriate and ethical process, GMBS provides the applicant with a written rationale for the decision, advises the applicant to consider programmes or learning formats that offer a higher level of structured individual support or assisted study, where appropriate, offers signposting to relevant external educational or support services.