

Policy Statement on Disabilities and SENDA Compliance

Mattersey Hall is committed to the principle of equality of opportunity for all staff and students. As obligated under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA), the college is concerned in particular to make all reasonable provision for students with disabilities so that they may participate in all our programmes without disadvantage.¹

This requires the college to review and make adequate provision not only for the needs of present students, but for the probable needs of future students and candidates for admission, at undergraduate and postgraduate level. For undergraduates, the college recognises the primary responsibility of the Director of Studies, alongside the Disability Officer, to co-ordinate a student's studies, alerting the faculty and individual tutors to any difficulties or problems as necessary. The college also recognises its duty to aid staff in this area and to facilitate the co-ordination of provision.

To this end, the college have a named Disability Officer. The role of the Disability Officer is to discuss requirements with, and offer support to, students who have special needs and disabilities, to represent those requirements to members of the teaching faculty and other members of staff, and to identify ongoing training, and information that will help college staff to work with students who have special needs and disabilities. The Disability Officer is a member of the teaching faculty, therefore they sufficiently understand academic pressures and can effectively advocate for the extra needs of the students concerned.

We will also seek to remove potential barriers to learning in lectures, classes and tutorials through the following measures:

- Recommending that all teachers follow the college guidelines for hand-outs concerning font sizes and styles, coloured paper, etc. (see Appendix 1);
- Equipping the college chapel with an induction loop system for the hearing impaired, at the earliest opportunity permitted by financial constraints;
- Scheduling wherever possible of lectures, classes and seminars in venues accessible for wheelchair users who give reasonable notice of their intention to attend;
- Providing electronic versions of syllabus reading lists and course documentation, with the possibility (where appropriate) of making this available within a reasonable time frame in a variety of formats, for example large print, Braille, audio.
- Ensuring that at the admission and pre-admission stage the college's commitment to equal opportunities for students and the contents of this policy document and DSA support are made known.
- Asking the Librarian to review library provision for students with disabilities on a regular basis and respond as positively as finances and other practicalities permit to suggestions made for improvements in this area.

¹ This document should be read in conjunction with the Regulations and Guidelines of the University of Chester relating to students with learning disabilities: <https://www.chester.ac.uk/campus-life/support-for-students/disability-support>.

The college is also committed to helping students with disabilities in whatever practical way it can. In the past this has involved the provision of signers for deaf students, special arrangements for examinations, special furniture or IT equipment and additional staff assistance. To access this additional help the student needs to produce an official assessment of need. The college is pleased to do whatever it can to facilitate full implementation of any reasonable adjustments required within such assessments. We need to make it clear that as a private institution we do not receive the necessary funding to enable us to finance the testing of any students who may have learning difficulties. However, where students commence their studies at college *without* having had such testing already carried out, the Disability Officer will give advice and support as to how this can be done. When an assessment of need is available, the Disability Officer will discuss the implementation of its recommendations with each individual student.

The Disability Officer will also contact prospective students to make them aware of the support available, and where necessary give advice on how to obtain an assessment of need – this will occur before their college course begins, so that any provision may be implemented from the start.

Whilst it will be our intention to offer to remove any potential barriers to learning, this may not be done if it prejudices the academic or other prescribed standards of the college (and validating University). However, if a disabled student is at a ‘substantial disadvantage’ it will be a legal requirement to take such steps as are reasonable to prevent that disadvantage. When considering whether a disabled person is placed at a substantial disadvantage, the time, inconvenience, effort or discomfort entailed in comparison with other people should be taken into account. A substantial disadvantage is one that is more than minor or trivial.

‘Reasonable adjustments’ will depend on individual students and how their impairment affects their learning. Therefore it is not possible to draw up a set of specific arrangements appropriate to each student with a particular impairment. A range of possible reasonable adjustments are set out in Appendix 2, but this list is not exhaustive. When determining what makes a reasonable adjustment, the following factors will need to be taken into consideration:

- the learning outcomes that need to be assessed [note, however, that the learning outcomes must be met by all students, irrespective of learning disabilities]
- the nature of the student’s impairment;
- the student’s usual study methods;
- any professional requirements;
- any previous successful arrangements;
- any advice from an educational psychologist or specialist external agency.

In all cases it shall be the responsibility of the student to liaise with the Disability Officer over their special needs, and the college will require reasonable notice (ordinarily a minimum of 14 days) in order to respond to any request.

Whilst the college has newer buildings for lectures, Chapel, research, and for dining and accommodation facilities, the college offices are located in an old house which is a listed building, which cannot be substantially modified. As a result, access to those in wheelchairs or who find walking difficult is limited. There is access for wheelchairs to the chapel (via a lift), the teaching block, the dining area, and the ground floor of the hall of residence. The Research Centre has disabled access; it has two floors and provides access to the second floor via a lift. There is also a disabled toilet in the teaching block and Research Centre.

Students who believe they have been treated in any way contrary to this policy should, in the first instance, discuss this with the Disability Officer. Should this not satisfy the student, they can follow the complaints procedure which can be found in the student handbook. Finally, if there is still any further concern the student should contact the University of Chester.

The requirements of job applicants and existing members of staff who have a disability will be reviewed, to ensure that wherever possible reasonable adjustments are made, to enable them to enter into or remain in employment with us. Promotion opportunities, benefits and facilities of employment will not be unreasonably limited and every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that disabled staff participate fully in the workplace.

Any service that the college provides to the general public is covered by Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), and the college's policy is to treat the needs of visitors as it does students, so that equal access and opportunities are available for all.

Appendix 1: Clear Print Guidelines

Guidelines	Reasons
Provide typed hand-outs.	Typed script is easier to read for everyone.
Use a sans serif font e.g. Arial.	These are plainer and easier to read.
Do not use small print on hand-outs; where necessary provide hand-outs in a larger font 14pt print on hand-outs and 24 on OHPs.	Many students find larger print easier to read, including students with vision impairments, dyslexia and concentration difficulties.
Avoid using red & green ink/chalk at all times.	Students who are colour-blind will find these impossible to read. Green is the hardest colour for people with vision impairments to read.
Ensure there is a good contrast between the background colours of hand-outs and projection slides and the foreground (text) colour.	Dark text on a light background or light text on a dark background are the easiest to see. For example, white text on a blue background or black text on pale yellow works well.
Where possible, provide hand-outs on coloured paper.	Black print on white paper can create a lot of glare. Both students with dyslexia and vision impairments may benefit from having hand-outs printed on pastel coloured paper.
Avoid using glossy paper.	Material printed on a matt finished paper is easier to read and creates less eye strain.
Print text on a plain background	Printing text on a patterned background can often obscure the text and make it difficult to read.
Use Bold text for headings and avoid faint text at all times.	Bold text is often easier to read for those with vision impairments.
Where possible avoid CAPITALISATION and Underlining.	People with Dyslexia often recognize words by the patterns they form. Capitalisation removes all word patterns as all letters are the same height making words more difficult to recognise. Underlining can often make text run together, again making it difficult to read.
Where possible avoid the use of Italics or text at an angle.	Text in Italics is often difficult for people with vision impairments and dyslexia to read
If writing in pen for a student with a vision impairment, use a black medium tip pen or a felt tip pen.	Black pen is often easier to read, as it provides a good contrast and is usually darker than a blue pen.

Leave plenty of space between columns of text.	If columns are placed too close together then it can be difficult for some students to realise that a column exists.
Leave plenty of white space on hand-outs.	Cramming too much information onto OHPs or slides makes them difficult to read. Everyone benefits from having some white space on a page.
Have no more than six bullet points on any projection slide.	This allows for well-spaced, easy to read information.
Try to have only one topic per slide.	Having one topic per slide makes overheads easier to follow.
Where possible provide written descriptions of and/or a tactile version of important diagrams and pictures.	Students with dyslexia benefit from the use of diagrams; however, students with visual impairments will need this information presented in an alternative way.
Left justify text and leave the right margin jagged.	This makes it easier to follow the lines of the text for people with dyslexia.
Avoid starting a new sentence at the end of a line.	Students with dyslexia can find this difficult to follow.
Avoid wrapping text around diagrams if it means that lines of text will start in a different position.	This can make lines of text difficult to find.
Use headings and page numbering consistently.	This makes allows people with vision impairments to navigate around the material easily.

Appendix 2 – Reasonable Adjustments to Assessment

(including assignments, placement learning, field work, examinations, etc.)

- Exam paper in appropriate format (e.g. on disk, audio tape, large print, braille, coloured paper)
- Overlaying the question paper with a coloured acetate sheet
- Use of reader, amanuensis, communicator or interpreter
- Procedural instructions conveyed in writing
- Key to identify different colours
- Description of diagrams or any other visual information
- Audio/Video-tape to record answers (as in the case of deaf students, who record their answers to examination questions on video and have them transcribed by a signer)
- Opportunity to use interpreter/assistive technology when undertaking oral assessments
- Opportunity to move around during an examination
- Use of room near toilet facilities
- Extra time (it is typical to give an additional two-weeks for continual assessment and 25% extra time in examinations – though this may vary in individual cases)
- Concessions for spelling/syntax difficulties when learning outcomes permit (if such difficulties prevent a marker from ensuring that learning outcomes have been met, this should be reflected in the mark given).
- Accessible venue
- Ergonomic furniture
- Rescheduling of exams to allow medical or dietary needs to be met
- Arrangements for assistance dogs

Students will be issued a form by the Disability Officer to attach to examination papers indicating that they are dyslexic, and highlighting particular difficulties which are to be taken into consideration when possible. Students with specific learning difficulties submit their assignments electronically, therefore the Disability Officer will highlight their assessment numbers *only* (to maintain anonymity where possible) to the teaching faculty therefore consideration can be made when marking - guidelines on this are supplied to all teaching staff.

Where learning outcomes permit, work should then be marked for content, ideas and critical acumen. The same principle should apply to deaf students. The majority of pre-lingual profoundly deaf students may be sign language users and this may be regarded as their first and only language choice. Sign language is linguistically different from English or Welsh. This may affect the student's command of spelling and grammar for which allowance should be made by the assessor when learning outcomes allow.

For students with mental health difficulties, it may be necessary to consider flexible deadlines for assessed course work, additional time and flexible schedules for examinations, and other forms of assessments to replace oral presentations. The student may need to be seated near an exit in the examination room or may need a separate room.

Appendix 3 – Guidelines for the use of Support Workers in Examinations

Amanuensis

Students who have an impairment which restricts their ability to hand-write, type or maintain the posture required for writing, or students who, as a result of an impairment, present information better in oral than written form, may require an amanuensis. Students should be given an opportunity to practise with the amanuensis beforehand. Additional time and a separate room will be required.

Reader

Students who are unable to access print, or students who, as a result of an impairment, access auditory information better than visual information may require a reader. Additional time and a separate room will be required.

Personal Care Attendant

Some disabled students may be accompanied by a personal care attendant. Arrangements should be made for such an attendant to sit in close proximity to the student and invigilators should be informed of the role of the personal care attendant.

Communicator/Interpreter

Students who are deaf may require a professional communication worker to access some assessments. The means of communication used should be appropriate to the need of the student and may include: saying the word or phrase, use of sign language, or use of writing. If questions are signed, because of the change to a visual form of presentation, some re-phrasing may be inevitable. However, such rephrasing must not give the student an unfair advantage and the communication worker must ensure not to indicate the meaning of technical words, where an understanding of these words is inherent in the question.

Practical Assistants

Some disabled students may require the use of practical assistants if they have impairments which prevent them from carrying out the practical task themselves. In practical assessments, where learning outcomes permit, a practical assistant will transmit visual observations and/or carry out some or all of the task at the student's instructions. The use of a practical assistant should neither give a student an unfair advantage, nor should it disadvantage the student. It should enable a true assessment of the student's knowledge, understanding and skills to be determined.