

Procedures to Monitor, Review and Improve the Effectiveness of Resources and Support Services

7.10 Disability and Learner Support Policy

7.10.1 Objectives and Scope

The purpose of this policy document is to inform staff, applicants and learners of the procedures to be followed where applicants and learners require disability and learning support.

The roles and responsibilities of the college staff, applicants and learners are outlined in the Schedule to this Policy.

7.10.2 Learning Support Statement

Griffith College seeks to provide an inclusive learning environment where learners are respected and valued for their contributions to the wider college community.

While the college continues to extend its range of facilities for learners with disabilities and particular learning needs, it recognises that there may be applicants for whom its existing services and facilities will be insufficient.

It is important that applicants with disabilities and additional learning requirements engage formally with the college's Learning Support (LS) Department in advance of commencing their programme. In this way, the LS Department can engage directly with them to assess their needs and the extent to which they can be met by the college. This early engagement by applicants will allow them to make fully informed decisions about the college's suitability for their needs.

When engaging with applicants, the college will have regard to its obligations under the Equal Status Acts, 2000-2018, including its obligations under those Acts to reasonably accommodate applicants who require support (see paragraphs 1.6 and 1.8 for further details).

7.10.3 Physical Access to Buildings

Due to the historical nature of some of the college's buildings in Dublin, Cork and Limerick, some buildings or sections of buildings offer limited access to certain learners with physical disabilities. As significant access has been provided where permitted, and as all new buildings are fully accessible, the college is able to meet the needs of many learners with physical disabilities.

The college's LS team are delighted to meet applicants in advance of programme commencement and to provide a detailed tour of the college to assist applicants in determining the college's suitability for their particular physical needs.

7.10.4 Admissions Process

The college requests applicants to formally disclose that they have a requirement for learning support in advance of programme commencement and as part of the admissions process.

This disclosure is made using the college's online Applications Portal of the college's website, to a member of the college's Marketing and Admissions Teams who will then notify the college's LS Department, or directly to the college's LS Department.

Applicants applying through the CAO who indicate that they require learning supports will be referred to the Learning Support Department by the Admissions Manager.

Once the college is formally informed of an applicant's specific needs, the applicant's particular learning support requirements will be considered. Formal consideration by the college is guided by supporting documentation and discussions with the applicant and may include external professionals with more detailed knowledge of the applicant's particular capabilities and requirements. This allows the college to determine the range of additional supports it can provide.

7.10.5 Consideration by the Learning Support Department

The steps of the applicant's learning needs assessment process are as follows:

- a) Applicants identify themselves to the LS Department or the applicant is contacted by the LS Department as a result of disclosing they have a disability or learning requirement during the applications / admissions process.
- b) The applicant's requirements are considered by the LS Department. In order to fully assess their requirements, the LS staff may request medical documentation, a psycho-educational report, or other documentation relating to the applicant's disability, illness, specific needs, or learning differences.
- c) The LS Department will carry out an assessment needs analysis in consultation with the applicant. The objective of this consultative process is to determine the particular supports required by the applicant.
- d) Where the specific requirements of applicants are within the scope of the college's existing facilities and supports, the LS Department will make arrangements to meet the applicants' needs.
- e) To the extent that the college does not currently provide a type of special treatment, facility or support (i.e. a reasonable accommodation) that meets the requirements of the applicant, the request will first be considered by the college's Learning Support Department and, if required, by members of the college's Management Board having regard to, among other things, the college's legal obligations, implications arising from the timing of the request, the availability of funding/financing for the particular special treatment,

facility, or support that may be required, and whether or not the provision of the special treatment, facility or support gives rise to a cost other than a nominal cost. Applicants should be aware that, as a private college, Griffith College does not generally have access to the Higher Education Authority Fund for Students with Disabilities (known as the FSD) to which publicly funded colleges have access. However, the college may be in a position to make an application to the FSD depending on the nature of the applicant's disability or other learning requirements.

- f) The applicant will be informed of the extent of the college's ability to support the applicant's learning requirements, by the LS Department. The applicant will be invited to comment and make proposals before the specific supports to be provided by the college are finalised.

The following processes are used by the LS Department in relation to registered learners who require learning support.

- a) The learner is issued with a consent form to sign that permits the LS staff to discuss the learner's agreed needs with faculty staff and service departments. Where relevant, if not having already done so at applicant stage, the learner may be issued with a reasonable accommodation request form, to be completed by any learner requesting specific accommodations including, for example, those provided for examinations.
- b) Following a learning needs assessment meeting, and agreement being reached on the relevant learning support(s), the LS Department completes a Learner Individual Need Notification (LINN). The purpose of the LINN is an overview document informing the Programme Director and relevant faculty staff of a learner's particular needs.
- c) The Learning Support Department shares the LINN with the relevant Programme Director and liaises with faculties and departments to ensure the agreed supports are provided. This may involve a process of consultation with faculty staff to agree a solution that is practicable for all involved. Once agreed, relevant lecturers will be notified of the supports required to facilitate the learner.

7.10.6 Ongoing Learning Support

Learners will be registered with Learning Support for the duration of their studies, or until such time as they no longer need or wish to avail of learning support.

The LS staff and the learner will keep in contact throughout their period of study to ensure levels of support are maintained. Learners will have access to one-to-one meetings to assist with workload planning, transitioning to College, and ongoing individual progress plans. Learners can avail of skills workshops that address specific topics e.g. self-management skills, study and exam skills, presentation and writing skills.

Learners are encouraged to review their agreed reasonable accommodations and, if necessary, seek to amend / add to these throughout the duration of their studies. Any amendments and/or additions will be considered in accordance with sections 7.10.2, 7.10.3 and 7.10.5 above.

7.10.7 Reasonable Accommodations

Reasonable Accommodations (RA) is a special treatment, facility or support outside the mainstream services provided by the college that allows learners with disabilities, learning differences or specific needs to participate on an equivalent basis to their peers. The objective of an RA is to remove the impact of a disability, or learning difficulty or need in so far as it is possible so that learners can demonstrate their full level of academic potential while not being given advantage over other learners.

All RA forms completed by learners are considered and agreed in consultation with the college's LS Department prior to being implemented.

While the following list is non-exhaustive and is not intended to exclude other reasonable accommodations, it outlines the most common reasonable accommodations currently provided by the college.

During Assessments

i. Additional time

This may be allowed in examinations to allow for learners who tire easily due to their disability and where their disability is likely to slow their progress when completing exams. Additional time is offered at a rate of 30 minutes per examination. Where the learner's agreed RA specifies additional time, they will be accommodated in an alternative room. The details of the room location will be emailed to the learner by the college's Examinations office, in advance of the examination.

ii. Reader

The provision of a reader assists learners who have difficulty accessing exam material due to a disability. Where the learner's RA specifies a reader, the reader will be appointed by the Examinations Office. The learner's examination will take place in an alternate venue.

- iii. **Scribe**
An exam scribe types or writes down a learner's dictated answers to questions in an examination. This benefits learners who are unable, due to a disability, to physically write or type their own exams. Where the learner's RA specifies a scribe, the scribe will be appointed by the Examinations Office.
- iv. **Spelling and Grammar waiver**
Learners with significant learning difficulties (for example, dyslexia) may apply for a spelling or grammar waiver. Where the learner's RA includes a spelling and grammar waiver, the learners will receive a waiver sticker to add to the covers of their examination booklet. These stickers advise lecturers to mark for content rather than spelling or grammatical errors. Marks for spelling, grammar or punctuation are not deducted from those learners during exams or continuous assessment. Spelling and Grammar waivers may only be provided where English language is not a core competency or learning outcome being assessed.
- v. **Use of Information Technology**
Learners who have difficulties with writing due to their disability or who require other assistance are permitted to use Information Technology and Assistive Technology in lectures and exams. For example, a laptop may be used to record answers during an examination.
- vi. **Low distraction venue**
A low distraction venue is provided to learners who find it particularly difficult to work in a large examination hall. These venues have fewer learners and are designed to offer a quiet environment of minimal disruption.

In all cases relating to Teaching, Learning and Assessment Support, the LS Department will liaise directly with the learner's faculty and the college's Examinations Office to ensure that the learner's agreed RAs are provided.

7.10.8 Engagement with the Learning Support Department after Admission

The college requests all learners seeking learning support to make their requests known to the college in advance of programme commencement, as part of their admissions process.

Although advance notice is requested and preferred, the college recognises that certain learners may disclose their learning requirements to the college's LS Department at a later stage including during their programme as their learning needs emerge or evolve.

Where a learner later discloses a requirement for learning support that was not previously disclosed during the admissions process, the Learning Support Department will still consider the requirement in the light of its prevailing capacity and the other

factors outlined in sections 7.10.2, 7.10.3 and 7.10.5, but cannot offer any commitment that it will be in a position to provide the particular learning supports required.

7.10.9 Data Protection

Documentation relating to applicants' and learners' learning needs is securely stored in the LS Department in accordance with all applicable data protection laws, including the Irish Data Protection Acts 1988-2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

The college restricts the communication of knowledge relating to learners' disabilities and learning differences to those directly involved with the learners – for example, the lecturers, and programme team members involved in the learners' assessment processes.

Information regarding the learner's disability will be divulged on a need-to-know basis, i.e. lecturers and staff who directly engage with the learner.

Personal data that is acquired, used, saved and retained will be done so in accordance with all applicable data protection laws, including the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

7.10.10 Responsibilities

Learning Support Department

- Meets with learner to carry out an assessment of their learning needs
- Identifies appropriate support measures for learners with disabilities and learning differences
- Communicates reasonable accommodation requests to relevant faculties and departments (e.g. the learner's faculty, the college's examinations office, etc.)

Examinations Office

- Manages reasonable accommodation requests during examinations

Marketing Officer / Admissions Office

- Notifies Learning Support Department in relation to applicants with disabilities and learning differences

Programme Director / Head of Faculty

- Manages the coordination of information sharing with relevant lecturers, through the dissemination of LINN

- Liaises with Learning Support Department to ensure appropriate agreed supports are implemented

7.10.11 Contact / Further Information:

For further information, the Learning Support Team can be contacted at:

Phone: 01-4163376
Email: learningsupport@griffith.ie

Section H: Information and Data Management

Information Systems

Appropriate, quantitative and qualitative measures are identified which can be used as benchmarks or key performance indicators. Some examples include minimum and maximum learner numbers per programme; profile of the learner population; learner satisfaction rates; learner progression/learner attrition or drop-out rates/completion rates; graduation/certification rates, including grade analysis; career paths of graduates.

Various methods of collecting information are used as appropriate. Learners and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

Learner Information Systems

The provider learner information management system is robust, comprehensive and capable of:

- maintaining secure learner records for current use and historical review
- providing reports required for internal quality management and improvement
- generating data required for, and compatible with, external regulatory, professional or national systems as appropriate
- generating statistical and other reports to meet internal and external information requirements, for example, on the QQI database of programmes and awards as prescribed by the legislation
- ensuring that the database is maintained securely and that data relating to learner assessment is accurate and complete

The college uses a student information system to manage core aspects of its learner administration system, for example in relation to admissions, registration, assessment records, examinations, and financial records. Over the last 20 years, the college has continued to customise and develop the bespoke system to meet changing requirements. Following an extensive review of alternative systems and the college's anticipated future administrative requirements, the college commissioned the development of a new system (Themis), an Academic Information Management System to manage all learner records from registration through to graduation. to upgrade and replace the existing system. This project is considered a cornerstone of Griffith College's digital transformation efforts. The period under review saw continued investment in the development of this student information system, which reflects an investment of over €1m on external developers, in addition to extensive time commitments and support from key college staff to support the system design and testing process of key modules for managing the student lifecycle. The development project continues with the legacy system retained and run in parallel until the new system is fully commissioned.

Section H: Information and Data Management

The college has implemented multi-factor identification security settings for both learner accounts and staff systems.

A dedicated staff training and support specialist role, with responsibility for coordinating and delivering training on the college's platforms and processes, has been established. Through this role, QAE policies and existing processes and practices are combined to develop formal training supports and programmes for staff. Staff from the IT, Digital Learning Department, HR, and QAE departments collaborate on role-specific onboarding, training, and upskilling programmes, targeting knowledge transfer and skills' acquisition in those key roles which are required to support current transformational projects (for example, the Academic Information System upgrade project, engagement with the college's PowerBI Dashboards) and to provide long-term staff training and development supports in relation the college's platforms and processes.

This bespoke system, THEMIS, has been supported by an investment of over €1m so far, with a final projected budget of approximately €1.6m.

To ensure integrity of learner data, while incrementally introducing the new system, the college has also retained the existing system, Scholar, to run in parallel and to maintain core learner records. In the previous reporting period, all assessment records were managed through Scholar. In the period under review, all admissions and registration functionality were managed in Scholar, with programme management implemented, on a phased basis, in Themis.

Currently, THEMIS is used to populate a variety of reports that inform practice and decision-making, including programme review reports, the annual programme reports, and learner progression and retention reports. It is planned that Themis will continue to provide this information, with enhanced reporting and analytical tools.

The college has developed a suite of analytical reports presented in a unified dashboard using Microsoft's PowerBI. Examples of its uses are:

- Annual programme reports (APRs) and QQI programmatic review submissions. Visuals are used to enhance clarity of data in submissions for programme review and design.
- Programme and module results to facilitate module outcome analysis at exam boards.
- Data reports are used to identify potential learners at risk through a learner activity report and undergraduate learner retention report, allowing for potential interventions where necessary.
- Operations reports are used to identify potential problem areas in how the college functions which will improve services given and enhance the overall delivery of programmes to learners.
- Use by the national marketing team to provide a visual overview of the recruitment admissions process. This serves both as an overall management

Section H: Information and Data Management

tool, identifying key trends, whilst also providing detailed real-time feedback to faculties at a course and faculty-specific level.

Moodle is the college's virtual learning environment (VLE). Notices, class notes, reading materials, assessment submission links, and supporting documents are all posted to Moodle, as are links to videos and online support materials. The use of Forums within Moodle allows learners to engage with their peers and tutors, and assessments can be submitted through the system. Moodle is the main academic communication tool with learners. Online teaching is delivered using the remote conferencing app, Zoom. The college operates a Single Sign-On (SSO) system. All learners automatically receive an email with their username and password details after completing registration. This means learners can easily access all of the college applications and systems through one password. This includes access to Moodle, EzProxy Login, PC Login, Office 365, Eduroam (Wi-Fi), Papercut (printing), Library Services, EduGate and EduGain suites of applications, Unidays, etc.

The following systems allow day-to-day operational management of the specific areas they address, but also allow reporting to support management decisions:

- Microsoft 365 provides a robust productivity and collaboration platform.
- The management of room bookings and timetables is through the CMIS timetabling system.
- All room bookings and timetable management are handled through CMIS.
- Turnitin is used as an academic integrity and anti-plagiarism support.
- Financial management in the college is supported by Sage and Diveport systems which allow real-time monitoring of budgets and budget forecasting.
- An in-house attendance platform provides real-time check-in via learner's mobile devices and classroom Bluetooth beacons, built-in reports are available at learner, module and programme level.
- HubSpot CRM platform is utilised by national marketing teams during the learner recruitment process to manage communications with applicants and enquiries.
- Bookings in the Griffith Halls of Residence are supported through the Mercury Property Management System (PMS).
- The college has adopted the use of Zoom phones (through which existing extensions are available via Zoom on staff desktops and mobile devices), adding to our existing use of Zoom video conferencing, to provide a seamless communications platform, and greatly facilitating and enhancing the hybrid-working model.

Management information system

The management information system enables necessary information to be stored and channelled to where it is needed when it is needed. It facilitates timely analysis in light of key performance indicators and objectives.

Information for Further Planning

The information contained in the management information system is reviewed holistically from time to time to determine what additional insights are to be gleaned from it.

Completion Rates

Completion rates are collected, used and made available to external quality reviewers.

Graduation and award data is published by QQI (infographics) allow the college to benchmark its award statistics against other QQI providers for AQR, APRs and QQI programmatic review submissions.

Records Maintenance and Retention

There is a policy for the establishment and maintenance of quality-related records. It specifies data retention periods. Typically, records include items such as objectives, plans and targets; performance indicators; evidence used in the evaluation of performance against objectives; self-monitoring reports; evaluation reports; minutes of QA meetings; actions taken (including changes made to the quality assurance system) and the rationale for these; and follow-up reports.

The college's records' retention schedule was originally prepared in anticipation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2018. The schedule is grounded in the GDPR principle of data minimization. It is maintained and updated by the Data Protection Committee. The [data protection section of the college's website](#) provides a wealth of information and guidance on privacy best practice.

Data Protection

The information system is designed to enable compliance with data protection legislation. Obligations under data protection legislation are complied with. This includes the establishment of data access controls, data backup systems and ensuring learner information material makes clear what personal data will be collected, for what purpose and with whom it will be shared.

The college's data protection policy is maintained and managed by the Data Protection Officer, who is a director of the college, and a member of the Management Board.

Collaborative Partner Agreements include a commitment by all involved parties to adhere to data protection best practice in all organisational obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Data Protection Agreements (DPAs) are in place with all third-party data processors.

Section H: Information and Data Management

The Griffith College CCTV policy was reviewed and updated in 2021/2022. Signage regarding the use of CCTV across the Dublin campus was also upgraded accordingly.

The college renewed its incident response retainer with Integrity 360, a specialised cyber-security company and invested in a cyber training and awareness platform, CyberReady. Additionally, the college has implemented multi-factor identification security settings for all user accounts (both staff and learners).

Following its launch in June 2021, the college's Data Protection and Cyber Security Awareness training course on Moodle was engaged with throughout the period under review. This course aims to strengthen college staff's collective knowledge in these areas (given the pivotal role human nature plays in this area) to ultimately better support the college in defending its data and systems. It is also provided as part of the onboarding of new staff.

A significant project to upgrade the college's main website, from Drupal 7 to Drupal 9, to bring enhanced functionality and security features to the Griffith College website, commenced in early 2022 (with a completion date scheduled for the next reporting period).

Ongoing, from March 2020, the college has invested heavily to build a bespoke online exams management platform as part of the COVID-19 contingency response. This development took the form of a module built into the college's THEMIS system. (which is currently under development), and leveraging the existing VLE (Moodle) to provide the Exams Office with a platform to manage the scheduling, invigilation and submission of exams and exam scripts. It has proven to be a vital tool in the college's emergency response to remote assessment and provided crucial functionality over this time.
