

Griffith College
Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policies, Procedures, Practices
and Guidelines

Title	Academic Learner Support Policy
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Responsibility for Implementation	Programme Directors Learner Support Coordinator
Related Documents	Programme Information Provision Policy (QAE C1)
	Learner Induction Policy (QAE D2)

QAE D5 Academic Learner Support Policy

1. Objectives

- 1.1 To outline the roles and responsibilities associated with the management of, and participation in, learning support for learners with disabilities.
- 1.2 To illustrate recommended procedures and practices for successful provision of learning support.

2. Scope

This purpose of this policy document is to inform staff and learners of the procedures for learning support provision for learners with a disability.

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 Learning Support Coordinator
- 3.2 Learner
- 3.3 Admissions Manager
- 3.4 Marketing Officer
- 3.5 Examinations Officer

4. Learning Support Statement

At all times, Griffith College promotes an inclusive learning environment where all learners are respected and valued for their contributions to the wider College community.

Griffith College is committed to maintaining a supportive environment whereby learners are encouraged and facilitated, enabling them to maximise their potential, both educationally and socially. While the College continues to extend its range of facilities for learners with particular needs, it recognises that there may be learners for whom its existing services will be insufficient.

For this reason, it is important that all learners who have particular requirements engage formally with the College in advance of commencing their programme. In this way, the College can consider its ability to meet their particular needs, and allow learners the opportunity to make fully informed decisions about the College's suitability for their needs.

This policy takes into consideration the legal requirement for Education providers to make reasonable adjustment for those with a disability. Griffith College will provide the resources and accommodations deemed reasonable in terms of costs and adaptations.

Physical Access to Buildings

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

The College would be delighted to meet any prospective learner in advance of programme commencement to arrange a detailed tour of the College to assist them in determining the College's suitability for their physical needs.

5. Inclusive practice during the admission process

- 5.1 In order to assist learners who may have particular requirements, the College requests learners to formally disclose any disability or requirement they have to the College. In the case of new direct applicants this disclosure may be made directly to the relevant Marketing Officer, who will then liaise with the Learning Support Coordinator.
- 5.2 Applicants coming from the CAO are managed initially by the Admissions Manager and detailed by means of a separate attachment to the admissions form. Current Learners with particular disabilities or changes in their circumstances are asked to discuss their needs and requirements with the Learning Support Coordinator or with their Programme Director.
- 5.3 Once formally disclosed to the College, the learner's particular circumstances and requirements are considered in detail allowing the College to provide a range of additional supports where appropriate. Formal consideration by the College may also be guided by supporting documentation, and discussions with external professionals with more detailed knowledge of the learner's particular capabilities and requirements.
- 5.4 Learners will be registered with the Learning Support Office for the duration of their studies, or until such time that the learner no longer wishes to avail of learning support.

6. Specific disabilities and additional needs

A description of some specific disabilities and associated learning supports/reasonable accommodations is outlined below. This list is not exhaustive. For comprehensive information on the diversity of disabilities learners may present with, please visit the data presented by the Association of Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) at www.ahead.ie.

Arrangements of support may differ from learner to learner and are agreed upon based on the specified recommendations of an appropriately qualified professional e.g. An Educational Psychologist, GP or other specialist consultant.

6.1 Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

6.1.1 A specific learning difficulty (SpLD) is any of a diverse group of conditions that cause significant difficulties in perceiving, processing and/or producing either auditory, visual and/or spatial information. A SpLD covers disorders that impair functions as reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia) and mathematical calculation (dyscalculia).

6.2 Hearing Impaired, Deaf, hard of hearing

6.2.1 The extent of the challenges faced by a learner with a hearing impairment will vary depending on the degree of deafness diagnosed. Learners are met with individually to discuss their needs and adaptations that might need to be carried in advance of programme commencement.

6.2.2 In the case where a learner who is deaf has the requirement of Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreter, the cost of this will be borne by the learner.

6.3 Blind or Visually Impaired

6.3.1 Arrangements for visually impaired learners will vary according to their level of vision. As the effect of a visual impairment varies widely, learners are met with individually, by the Learning support Coordinator to discuss their needs and any adaptations that might need to be carried out, for example advance copy of lecture material to allow time for them to be recorded, enlarged, scanned into the learner's computer or transcribed into braille. This and other accommodations can be agreed in advance of programme commencement.

6.4 Mental Health Illnesses

6.4.1 Mental Health illness covers a range of different diagnosis including depression, Bi-Polar disorder, eating disorders, schizophrenia, and anxiety.

6.5 Significant On-going Illnesses

6.5.1 Learners may join their programme with a significant illness or acquire an illness during the duration of their programme. Some illnesses are brain injury, speech & language difficulties, diabetes,

6.6 Physical or mobility disabilities

6.6.1 Learners with physical or mobility disabilities may require supports related to the physical access to the learning environment.

7. Initiating a request for additional learning support

The following steps constitute the process:

- Learner identifies themselves to Learning Support Coordinator or the Learner is contacted by the Learning Support Coordinator as a result of disclosure at the admissions stage.
- Upon providing medical documentation / psycho-educational report, verifying their disability, illness or learning difficulty, the learner is registered with Learning Support Office. The documentation submitted by the learner is stored in the Learning Support Office.
- The Learning Support Coordinator carries out a needs assessment with the Learner - a structured consultation to determine what supports the Learner needs to minimise the impact of their disability on their studies. The action plan resulting from this assessment is agreed upon by the Learning Support Coordinator and the Learner.
- The Learning Support Coordinator liaises with other departments to ensure the agreed supports are appropriately put in place. 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 they are required to facilitate for the learner.
- The Learning Support Coordinator and the learner keep in contact throughout their period of study to ensure levels of support are maintained.

8. Needs Assessment

- 8.1 A needs assessment is the first initial contact with the Learning Support Coordinator in which the individual educational needs of the learner will be assessed through consultation with the Learner's documentation (Consultant's letter or Educational Psychologist's report).

9. Reasonable accommodations

9.1 What are reasonable accommodations?

A reasonable accommodation is a required facility outside the mainstream provision to allow the learner with a disability to participate fully, and without an educational disadvantage in comparison with his / her peers.

Reasonable accommodations aim to remove the impact of a disability so that learners can demonstrate their full level of academic potential, while not being given any advantage over other learners.

9.2 Applying for reasonable accommodations

Learners will complete a reasonable accommodation request form and return this to the Learning Support Coordinator who will approve the request and in doing so, may request further documentation from the Learner. The Learning Support Coordinator

will coordinate with the relevant faculty and the examinations office to ensure the requested accommodations are instituted.

9.3 Reasonable accommodations/practical arrangements

The following list is non-exhaustive; it outlines the most common reasonable accommodations provided by Griffith College.

During the teaching semester

Learning Support

Upon registering with the Learning Support Office, learners will have access to one to one meetings to assist with workload planning, transitioning to College and individual progress plans.

Learners can also avail of skills workshops that address specific topics e.g. self-management skills, study and exam skills, presentation and writing skills.

During assessment

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. Learners who wish to avail of additional time will be accommodated in an alternative room. The details of the room location will be emailed to the learner by the examinations office, in advance of the examination.

Additional time during an In-class examination

The lecturer is notified by either the, the Learner or, in advance of the in-class examination (two weeks' notice must be given to allow for logistical planning). The Learning Support Coordinator communicates with relevant lecturers at the beginning of the semester to inform them of the individual supports agreed with learners. The learner in this case, is reminding the lecturer in advance of an in class examination.

Low distraction venue

A low distraction venue is provided to a Learner who finds it particularly difficult to work in a large examination hall. This is a venue with few learners. Venues are designed to be quiet and offer an environment of minimal disruption.

Reader

The provision of a reader assists learners who have difficulty accessing exam material due to a disability. Where learners are entitled to use a reader for examinations, this reader will be appointed by the examinations office. This examination will take place in an alternate venue.

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. The scribe will be appointed by the Examinations Office.

Spelling and Grammar waiver

Learners with significant learning difficulties (for example, dyslexia) may apply for a spelling or grammar waiver. In these cases, such learners receive a waiver sticker to add to the covers of their examination booklets. These stickers advise lecturers to mark for content rather than spelling or grammatical errors. Marks for spelling, grammar or punctuation should not be deducted from those Learners during exams or continuous assessment. Spelling and Grammar waivers will be provided where English language is not a core competency or learning outcome being assessed. The Learning Support Coordinator will liaise with the examinations office to ensure this process is carried out by the invigilator in the examination venue.

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.

10. Data Protection

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

Generally, information regarding the learner's disability will be divulged on a need-to-know basis, i.e. lecturers who will teach or staff who directly engage with the Learner.

Personal data that is acquired, used, saved and retained will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 2018.

11. Responsibilities

11.1 Learning Support Coordinator

- Meets with learner to carry out an assessment of need
- Identifies appropriate support measures for learners with learning disabilities
- Communicates reasonable accommodation requests to the examinations office
- Communicates reasonable accommodation requests to faculty staff

11.2 Learner

- Informs College, on programme commencement, of nature of learning disability
- Provides Learning Support Coordinator with appropriate certification of learning disabilities

11.3 Examinations Office

- Manages the facilitation of reasonable accommodation requests during examinations

11.4 Marketing Officer

- Provide Learner information to Learning Support Coordinator in relation to applicants with disability

11.5 Admissions Office

- Provide Learner information to Learning Support Coordinator in relation to applicants with disability