

## **Disability Policy (Public Examinations)**

*Last Reviewed/Updated: May 2019*

*Next Review/Update: May 2020*

### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to offer advice, guidance and support to staff and managers in determining and agreeing reasonable adjustments during exams and assessments for disabled students. It is intended as a practical tool to identify the range of issues disabled people face and the kind of support the College can offer.

It is aimed at managers, exams and teaching staff who need to determine and agree reasonable adjustments with disabled people who take assessment at the College.

#### **The Legal Perspective**

The Equality Act 2010 gives rights to disabled people protecting them from discrimination, unfair treatment and harassment throughout the study relationship. The Equality Act also sets out the General Equality Duty, which applies to all public sector organisations.

For the purpose of the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability 'if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. 'Substantial' is defined by the Act as 'more than minor or trivial'.

An impairment is considered to have a long-term effect if:

- it has lasted for at least 12 months
- it is likely to last for at least 12 months, or
- it is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person

More specifically this might include sensory impairments, mobility difficulties, medical conditions, learning difficulties and mental health problems.

It is now a requirement on every college to make reasonable adjustments for existing students with disabilities. Moreover, colleges must make provision for future students, in terms of anticipating potential adjustments.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments arises where:

- a provision, criterion or practice, other than a competence standard, or
- any physical feature of premises

places the student at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled.

#### **Communication**

It is the duty and responsibility of the Head Teacher to establish and maintain a good, working relationship and clear lines of communication with peoples directly involved in making a reasonable adjustments for candidates, who fall under the heading of disabled in terms of the Equality Act 2010. These will normally include the Examinations' Officer, SENCO

and the relevant teachers and invigilators, so that everyone involved with the examinations, is clear as to their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

Communication with invigilators will normally be done by general oral briefing of invigilating staff. Attention will be drawn to the relevant needs of specific candidates on the day of their examination. Invigilators will also be briefed on the evacuation procedure and alternative means of communication for disabled candidates.

## **2. Public Examination Rooms**

The majority of the examinations at the school are taken in the Main Hall. A designated classroom is used for candidates who have special requirements, such as word processing.

It is our intention to

- Ensure that the entrance to the centre and corridors approaching the respective rooms are well lit
- Check lighting for suitability both during the day and for evenings
- Check that lighting is evenly distributed, ensuring as far as possible that it does not cause glare and shadows, especially when there are candidates with a visual impairment or with perceptual difficulties.
- Ensure that there is no lighting which may trigger seizures for those candidates with epilepsy
- Make sure that any obstacles are removed from corridors to enable a wheelchair to gain easy access.
- Make sure disabled toilets are in full working condition with appropriate lighting.
- Check that there is also a facility to open the door from outside in an emergency.

When there is a candidate whose disability requires it, we undertake to make the reasonable adjustments required which may include:

- Arranging examination rooms which are close to a disabled toilet.
- Ensuring the suitability of private rooms arranged for candidates, for example, that so far as is possible the decoration is not likely to result in discomfort or hyper-nervous stimulation if the candidate has autism, and that the room is warm/cool enough.
- Ensuring that there is sufficient space between desks and chairs to enable a candidate (or invigilator) who uses a wheelchair to enter and leave the area without difficulty.
- Ensuring that there are chairs available outside examination rooms to enable those with mobility issues or those who may simply be experiencing particular stress to sit and rest before they enter the examination.
- Ensuring that seating is appropriate and comfortable for those who may have a disability that affects seating and posture.
- Ensuring that those who need to take medication during the course of an examination can do so in privacy and as speedily as possible, usually placing them near the entrance to the exam hall.
- Ensuring that a candidate who may become unwell during the examination because of the nature of their disability, is seated close to the entrance to the exam hall to make them feel more comfortable and so that they can exit quickly and to limit disruption for others.

- Ensuring that disabled candidates can be safely evacuated from the building whatever their disability or impairment.

### **3. Signage**

It is the duty and responsibility of the Examinations' Officer to establish and maintain good lines of communication with the candidates. In terms of accessibility, this has an impact on examination signage. In particular we undertake to ensure that

- Wherever possible signage will be placed at consistent heights.
- All the signs for the examination and those provided by JCQ are suitably sized and adapted to meet the needs of candidates with disability.
- Sign content will be simple, short and easily understood.
- Text and lettering will be a clear, uncomplicated and reasonably sized font.
- The style, wording and designs of signs will be consistent throughout the exam centre.

### **4. Improving the Candidate Experience**

It is the duty of the Examinations' Officer to ensure that all practical steps are taken and all reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that the centre is appropriate for candidates with a disability. Special examination arrangements will apply to all examinations and in-house assessments, as well as practical examinations where appropriate.

These adjustments include:

- Modified test papers, for example enlarged font, specific typeface or Braille
- Up to 25 per cent extra time (or considerably more if a candidate's disability is of a profound and extensive nature)
- A reader or scribe – usually with extra time in a separate room.
- Supervised rest break. Candidates with hyperactivity or OCD may need opportunities to take a break and rest during an exam.
- Different coloured scripts
- Use of a bilingual dictionary
- A prompter. In some cases where a candidate may have difficulty with time, for example if a candidate has autism, a prompter will be able to assist the candidate to move on and not become fixated with a particular question at the expense of the whole paper.
- Use of computer (which has been checked to ensure that it is 'clean'), or other technologies.
- A separate room alone with an invigilator.