

Disability Strategy and Learning Support Assistance

Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 requires that colleges do not discriminate against disabled students. Section 6 of the Act defines disability as follows: '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'. Birmingham Christian College welcomes applications from students with learning difficulties and disabilities and will endeavour to provide Learning Support Assistance (LSA) and make reasonable adjustments for these students.

The following guidelines are intended to help staff understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and to assist them in providing Learning Support Assistance (LSA).

Applications & Admissions

The college's application forms include a section enabling students to declare any physical or mental disability or learning difficulty. On receipt of an application where a student discloses a LDD the Registrar will send them a copy of the Disability Strategy Statement and contact the student to discuss how their condition affects them and their ability to study and what support they need to enable them to successfully complete their course of study. The Registrar will also ask for documentary evidence of a student's learning support need e.g. a dyslexia assessment, doctor's letter, an Educational Health Care Plan.

Information about a disability, assistance, condition or other medical needs should be treated with strict confidentiality. We have to work within the constraints of the Data Protection Act (2018), which makes particular conditions for sensitive personal data. Considering how a student can be supported may require liaising with a range of people. This can only be done with the student's agreement. The Registrar will therefore ask for the student's permission to discuss their support needs with other members of staff.

From the information provided by the student the Registrar will make an assessment as to whether the college is able to provide the level of support required (some guidelines about possible adjustments for students requiring LSA can be found in the Disability Rights Factsheet F11 – see appendix 1), discussing the matter with the Director of Studies and, if necessary, other members of staff.

As a small institution with limited financial resources (as a private college we are not in receipt of any Government funding to support students requiring LSA) we are not able to provide every type of LSA e.g. we do not have wet room facilities or support workers, signers etc. on staff. However, where students have funding through Disabled Students' Allowances we will discuss support provision/options with them.

If it is agreed that the college is able to adequately support the student, then the Registrar will contact the student to discuss the support the college can provide and ascertain that the student is satisfied with this. The Registrar will then write a report outlining the student's learning difficulty and/or disability and the LSA that the college has agreed to put in place.

With the student's permission this will be circulated to all staff who will be teaching or have contact with the student to enable them to ensure they are aware of and meet the support needs. Staff should also speak to the student themselves to understand their support needs and ensure they are coping with their studies.

If it is considered that the college is unable to provide adequate support the Registrar will contact the student explaining the college's decision and directing them to websites that might assist them in selecting an alternative place of study e.g. <http://www.bible-college.co.uk/>. International students will also be signposted to the UKCISA to seek guidance.

Staff Guidelines

The best way to include all students in academic activities is to plan them taking into account access for all, sometimes referred to as inclusive practice. Teaching strategies which are effective for students with learning difficulties or disabilities are also effective for non-disabled students. The term 'special needs' is unhelpful as the requirements of students requiring Learning Assistance are not 'special', they are generally identical to those of non-disabled students. For example, they need access to the teaching room, and access to the information that is being presented or discussed - so premises and teaching materials and styles should be well designed or adapted to provide that access. This may include:

- Moving the location of a lecture to an accessible room
- Having handouts available, and in an accessible format, well-labelled and in advance, if required
- Using and allowing the use of appropriate technology, such as a PA system, induction loops, digital recording devices, software such as screen readers
- Managing discussions and Q & A sessions to enable all to participate, and making explicit what is required

Guidelines For Making Reasonable Adjustments to Examination/ Assessment Arrangements

Introduction

1. The variation of assessment arrangements is intended to enable all students to have the same opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of specific learning outcomes.
2. At the same time, lecturers may choose to develop a more inclusive approach by, for example, considering the use of alternative methods of assessment.

Guidelines

3. The Exams Officer may permit reasonable adjustments to the arrangements for the conduct of examinations for students requiring LSA.
4. The college is responsible for taking all reasonable steps to identify the support needs of such students and shall publish clear information on the procedure and time limits for requesting reasonable adjustments. It is the student's responsibility to inform the Institution if he/she expects to have additional specific needs.
5. An application for reasonable adjustments shall be supported by appropriate documentary evidence. The disability may remain constant but the type of adjustment may vary over time. Requests shall normally be disregarded if not supported by appropriate documentary evidence. In the case of students with dyslexia, a report must be received from a qualified psychologist

- experienced in working with dyslexic adults or from someone with a qualification from a professional training course involving assessing adults with dyslexia.
6. The student will be made aware that it may not be possible to process an application outside the specified deadline in time for an examination which has already been scheduled. Where a student's circumstances are known to be prolonged or permanent, the identification of specific needs should be initiated prior to the start of the session.
 7. A range of reasonable adjustments may be considered at the discretion of the college. These may be technical, for example, use of a PC, or may require a change in the location of the examination or may be facilitated by the use of an appropriate Support Worker. More than one adjustment may be required. In some cases, an appropriate reasonable adjustment may be to change the method of assessment in order to allow the student to demonstrate their ability; this will need to be agreed with the relevant academic staff to ensure comparability.
 8. The adjustment will depend on the nature of the disability and will take into account the student's preference and the nature of the assessment.
 9. The choice of adjustment may be limited by the available technical, physical and human resources.
 10. The adjustment shall comply with the requirements for invigilation and security to ensure the effective conduct of the examination.
 11. The college, on receipt of a recommendation for reasonable adjustments, shall decide whether or not to approve the application and the provision which shall be made available to the student. The decision of the college shall be final.
 12. The student will be informed of the adjustment which has been approved by the Registrar. The range of adjustments can be amended subsequently, where this is required to meet the changing needs of the individual student.
 13. Depending on the adjustment provided, students shall be advised to familiarise themselves with its use before the examinations take place.
 14. Students shall inform the Exams Officer in good time if the adjustment needs to be modified or is no longer required.
 15. The lecturer and invigilator shall be notified of the adjustment which has been approved. The Examining Board shall receive a list of students with approved adjustments and no further allowance shall be made in reaching a decision on the performance of the student in the examination.
 16. The student may request a review of the case if he/she feels that the agreed adjustment does not meet his/her individual needs by sending their request in writing to the Registrar.