



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

Stranmillis University College – Disability Service Strategy: 2007

1. Introduction

Stranmillis University College is committed to developing an environment that is inclusive, fair, open and welcomes individuals from diverse groups. Equality and diversity are promoted, valued and encouraged at all levels of the University College and in all its functions. This ethos is underpinned by legislation which, in particular, prohibits discrimination against students with disabilities and places a responsibility on the institution to make reasonable adjustments in order to accommodate support needs. This means that as well as actively discouraging discrimination against students with disabilities, Stranmillis University College is committed to providing equal access and academic adjustments (eg exam and assignment arrangements) for students with disabilities in order to increase their opportunities at University.

In line with the Disability Service at QUB with whom it has a close working relationship, Stranmillis University College subscribes to certain principles which underpins the College's commitment to equality of opportunity for all its students. These are:

1. Equality to physical access, to information and to safety, as far is practically possible.
2. The responsibility to promote informed and constructive attitudes to disability.
3. The responsibility to adjust customs and practices if they create inequality of opportunity for people with disabilities.
4. The recognition that fewer students with disabilities apply for academic courses at Stranmillis University College than it would wish. Stranmillis University College therefore recognises its responsibility to encourage an increase in the proportion of students with disabilities who apply and are admitted to the University College to a level, which is more reflective of the proportion of people with disabilities in the community at large.
5. The responsibility to accommodate, insofar as is practicable, all qualified applicants irrespective of disability.
6. That adequate provision for disability depends on cooperation among local educational institutions, and between them and groups which represent people with disabilities, and Stranmillis University College actively commits itself to such cooperation.

This document brings together relevant information for students with disabilities and includes information about student support in the following areas:

Access and Admissions arrangements
Accommodation
Confidentiality
Educational facilities and support
Examinations and Assessments
Placements
Teaching and Learning
IT, Library and Learning Support Services

2. Support for Students with Disabilities

Students who wish to contact the University College about their access needs, often arising from various disabilities and specific learning difficulties should meet with the College Disability Officer in the first instance. It is recommended that students get in touch at an early stage in order that the necessary support is in place as close to the start of their course as possible.

Students with disabilities have the right to equal access to facilities and courses offered throughout the University College, and an equal opportunity to work, learn and receive reasonable resources and academic adjustments that will enable them to reach their full potential.

The College Disability Officer (028 90384513, b.booth@stran.ac.uk) is located in the Student Support Centre and will play a key role in co-ordinating the following services for prospective and current students who have access needs.

- Offering one-to-one consultations to discuss detailed individual requirements.
- Making referrals for diagnostic tests, eg to an educational psychologist.
- Giving advice and assistance about contacting the Education & Library Board to apply for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) (www.studentfinancenl.co.uk)
- Arranging appointments with QUB Disability Service for DSA assessments (www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/)
- Arranging appointments with Occupational Health.
- Liaising with Tutors, Advisers of Studies, Heads of Departments and other University College departments to arrange reasonable adjustments and ensuring that maximum support is made available.
- Keeping in regular contact with students to review support requirements and to obtain student feedback on the effectiveness of the support.

Students can apply for a DSA which will enable them to purchase relevant equipment such as a computer with screen magnification, and the additional support they may need. The latter could include extra time for examinations and the use of a computer in exams, extended library loans, arrangements with lectures regarding handouts and lecture notes, or permission to record lectures.

The Library also has a range of equipment, eg spellcheckers and Dictaphones which students may borrow until their own DSA funded equipment arrives.

Confidentiality

It is strongly recommended that any student with a disability or additional needs due to a medical or other difficulty register with Disability Services as soon as possible.

Any information regarding any student's support needs will only be disclosed on a "need to know" basis to those staff who require it in order to make any adjustments necessary to enable full participation in student academic and other opportunities.

No information will be disclosed without consent being given by the student and confidentiality and privacy will be respected at all times.

2.1 Physical Access and Health & Safety

Students who wish to discuss physical access to the campus or Health and Safety issues should contact the Disability Officer, the Estates Manager or the Domestic Bursar in the first instance.

The campus at Stranmillis University College is well established and recently significant alterations have been made to help make the campus buildings more accessible. Most of the key learning environments are now accessible by lift and ramps have been introduced in appropriate areas. The Library and IT services have fully accessible workstations as well as various assistive software packages and hearing loops are installed in some buildings. The improvements to campus are on-going and further assistive technologies for dyslexic and visually impaired students are planned.

Stranmillis University College currently has the following facilities (see web link below).

www.stran.ac.uk/studying/studentssupport/Disability.html

There will be close liaison with the Estates department regarding audits of the physical environment with the view to assisting students with disabilities.

2.2 Accommodation

Students with disabilities requiring on-campus accommodation should contact the Domestic Bursar and also inform Disability Services/Estates Services about any specific arrangements to be made regarding their accommodation, for example, emergency alarm systems for learning impaired students. A number of tailored rooms are available for students with mobility difficulties but these are limited, so early application is advised.

2.3 Educational Facilities and Support

The type of support that the University College arranges will depend on the student's individual needs as determined by an assessment interview with the Disability Officer. The type of support could be one or more of the following:

2.3.1 General Support

General support is given to all students and support for students with disability could include

- Arrangement of University accommodation
- Campus orientation tours
- Assistance with parking facilities
- Accessible rooms and furniture.

2.3.2 Learning and Teaching Support

Academic programmes utilise learning and teaching strategies that are aimed at making course delivery as inclusive as possible. As well as electronic presentation packages and whiteboards most of a student's course materials are available on Queens online, which is an electronic learning environment. Each individual student will have appropriate adaptations and adjustment arrangements in place.

This could include:

- The provision of Xerox's of OHP's
- Materials in alternative and accessible formats eg audio, large print, documents printed on pastel paper
- Materials available in advance of lectures/seminars
- Recording of lectures
- Access to Support Provider, e.g. Dyslexia Support Tutors, note-takers or typists. For more information on the role of Support Providers please see:
www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/Services/SupportProviders/
- Asking Tutors to make sure they repeat any questions from other students, so that a student with a hearing impairment is fully aware of the content.

The Disability Officer will liaise with Heads of Departments and Advisers of Studies in order to ensure that any reasonable adjustments are being implemented.

2.3.3 Examination Support and In-course Assessment

The University College always tries to ensure that students with disabilities are not at a disadvantage in their examinations or in-course assessment.

Alternative arrangements can include

- Extra time or rest breaks
- Use of a quiet room with individual supervision
- A scribe, reader or interpreter
- Adapted written materials, eg large print, pastel coloured paper
- Use of a computer for written examinations
- Tape recording of exam answers in an alternative supervised room or other negotiated arrangements where necessary.

Academic staff are normally informed of students who have specific learning difficulties and it is recommended that staff adopt appropriate marking strategies. An example of good practice with regard to inclusive teaching is Sheffield Hallam University's Accessible Assessments.
<http://www.shu.ac.uk/services/lti/accessibleassessments/>

2.3.4 Support for Placement Students

The University College Placement Tutors are informed of any reasonable adjustments that students may require during placement.

Tutors, with the student's consent, are able to liaise with placement providers on the student's behalf to ensure that appropriate adjustments are put in place.

2.3.5 IT Provision and Support

The University College has excellent IT facilities with network access for all students. The IT staff are committed to giving advice to students about specialist equipment, such as ergonomic keyboards, large monitors and specialist software, eg scanning and reading software and screen magnification software.

Assistive technology. Examples of such can be found at www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/Services/AssistiveTechnology/ and can be funded via the student's DSA allowance.

2.3.6 Library Support and Learning Resource Centre

The University College Library is committed to a policy of equal access to information and resources for all students and every effort will be made to respond to individual requests in a positive and proactive manner. The type of Library support available includes:

- Extensions of short-term loan materials
- Loan of reference materials if viewing/reading equipment is requirement
- Reservation and renewal of ordinary loan material by telephone and e-mail.
- Assistance with photocopying
- Assistance with database searching

In relation to the above support the Learning Resource Centre holds specialist equipment eg Spellchecker and Dictaphones which can be borrowed by students with disabilities.

2.3.7 University College Facilities

University College facilities aim to be part of an immediately accessible environment for all students and include the following:

2.3.7.1 Medical Facilities

The University College has a health centre (www.stran.ac.uk/studying/studentssupport/Occhealth.html) with a trained nurse on site. Students with disabilities such as epilepsy, diabetes, asthma are encouraged to inform the medical staff at the Centre.

2.3.7.2 Religious and Spiritual worship

The University College has a Chaplaincy team (www.stran.ac.uk/policies/student/CollegeChaplainsList.pdf) and a Chaplaincy office in the Students' Union.

2.3.7.3 Award Ceremonies

All students have an entitlement to attend and participate in the University College award ceremonies and arrangements can be made to ensure that access and support measures are in place eg access for wheelchairs or signers to interpret the ceremony.

2.3.7.4 Careers

Stranmillis University College Careers Service makes every effort to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities by providing:

- Guidance and Advice
- One-to-one interviews with Careers Advisers
- Information - Staff are available to provide personal advice, physical access to, and retrieval of all the information resources. Where possible, efforts will be made to provide information in an alternative format, if required.
- Events and career programmes - Careers staff will consult with academic staff as appropriate to ensure students with disabilities can participate fully.

2.3.7.5 Counselling Service

The student counselling service is freely available to students and staffed by a qualified and experienced counsellor. Most students have problems at some time and many find it useful to share these with someone outside their own circle of acquaintances in order to find help and support.

Counselling offers students an opportunity to talk freely about their situation with someone who won't judge or rush to offer advice. Students will be encouraged to develop an understanding of what is happening, in order to begin planning for and working towards change.

The Counselling Service is committed to offering a confidential service and the counsellor is very aware of the need to be sure that any information, which is disclosed, will not be passed on without permission. Although this is most usually the case, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. In exceptional circumstances, the counsellor may feel it is necessary to alert a third party, should there be grave concerns about risk of harm to self or others.

3. Future Activity and Policy Development

The University College is continuing to take positive steps to increase its accessibility to students with disabilities and has spent almost £1 million enabling students with physical mobility difficulties to have access to all teaching areas, catering facilities, halls and the University College Library.

It has, in addition, a programme of staff development which aims at promoting the awareness of and meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

4. Objectives/Quality Standards for Disability Services

Objective 4.1

To provide an impartial, professional and confidential support service that will enable students with disabilities to enjoy an equitable University career.

Quality Standards

- Support is provided by professional staff.
- Emergency/Crisis interviews within 24 hours.
- Follow-up interviews to be offered and/or referral to other agencies.

Objective 4.2

To ensure that all potential clients know about the service.

Quality Standards

- Information about Disability Services to be included in all induction material.
- Posters to be displayed in relevant areas.
- Pamphlets and flyers to be distributed.
- Disability Officer to attend appropriate induction meetings for new students and staff.
- Opening times well publicised.
- Updated web pages, and regular e-mail postings to all students and staff.
- High visibility for Disability Services in the University College.

Objective 4.3

To provide a service delivery system that is easily accessed by all students.

Quality Standards

- Annual review of Disability Services publicity.
- Use of varied appointment times during the day including during lunchtime to accommodate the needs of students.
- Active collaboration with the International Officer, Widening Access office, Careers Service, Accommodation/Halls, Students' Union, Occupational Health other University College Departments, and associated services at QUB which provide services to students.

Objective 4.4

To evaluate Disability Services and pursue a policy of continuous improvement.

Quality Standards

- Responses to urgent cases within 24 hours.
- Regular monitoring of reception staff arrangements regarding the booking of appointments and dealing with queries including those of a routine or emergency nature.

Objective 4.5

To create and maintain consultative links with other functions within the Student Support Centre as well as with academic departments, other relevant University College departments and QUB.

Quality Standards

- Attendance at staff team meetings to promote Disability Services.
- Attendance at any support groups (including those at QUB) to which invited.

Objective 4.6

To act as a referral service linking students to other University College and Community Services as appropriate.

Quality Standards

- Annual review of how to refer clients to external agencies.
- Annual update of referral agency details.

Objective 4.7

To provide educational programmes/workshops and consultation services to students.

Quality Standards

- Regular organised programmes/workshops as appropriate.

Objective 4.8

To maintain a programme of continuous professional development.

Quality Standards

- Attendance at specialised training courses eg those run by SKILL.
- Annual programme of CPD activities.

Objective 4.9

To address student needs by liaising with the student body.

- Regular liaison between staff, student representatives and the Student Union body.
- Frequently updated promotional materials and displays on disability issues and services.

Objective 4.10

To raise issues and provide information to management and staff on policy, law and social change that affects students with disabilities.

Quality Standards

- Attendance at appropriate management and policy meetings.
- Input on staff development days and workshops when requested.
- Annual review of regular/routine links with organisations and agencies related to disability, eg ELB, DSA Officers, QUB Disability Services.

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