



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

DISABILITY POLICY

Introduction

The following information is produced in line with the requirement of the Department of Education for Northern Ireland that each university should produce a Disability Statement. It is designed to inform students with disabilities of facilities and resources that are available to assist them throughout their course and how to access these services.

Stranmillis University College is no longer dedicated solely to the education of teachers, but over the past years has developed into a higher education institution offering diversified degrees at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Although its core undergraduate business remains at present the education of teachers via the Bachelor of Education route, in the autumn of 1999 it welcomed full-time students to two other undergraduate programmes. This process of diversification is likely to develop further in future years.

The following policy and procedures apply to all students, undergraduate and postgraduate as well as full and part-time, except where otherwise specifically indicated.

Welcoming statement by Board of Governors

The Board of Governors of Stranmillis University College endorses this policy and welcomes applications from all students, irrespective of disabilities, who meet the entry requirements to courses for which they are eligible to apply. The Board will continue to support developments to facilitate the successful completion of courses by all students, with or without disabilities, where it is reasonably practicable to do so.

General Policy

The following policy guides Stranmillis University College practice in this area.

- The principle of equal opportunities applies to students with physical disabilities, sensory impairments and specific learning difficulties. This principle implies that the University College should ensure equality in terms of access to information, safety and physical access, in so far as it is reasonably practicable and most appropriate.
- The University College recognises its responsibility to:
 - promote informed, positive and constructive attitudes to disability among its staff and students.
 - adjust practices, policies and procedures if they create disproportionate difficulties for disabled people and make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled students to make use of services.
 - encourage students with disabilities to apply to the University College for admission to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. All applicants are treated equally in terms of academic suitability for a course. In addition the following matters are taken into consideration:
 - The nature of the disability and its likely consequences for the candidate's ability to undertake the course;
 - The University College's ability to provide for the candidate's special needs in relation to the particular disability and course of study.

In addition, Article 67(2)(a) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 requires the governing body of a teacher training institution not to admit a student to a course of initial teacher training unless satisfied as to his/her health and physical capacity for teaching.

- The University College believes that adequate provision for disability depends on co-operation with a variety of agencies:

The University, local education institutions, the Education and Library Boards and groups representing disabled people.

The University College commits itself to appropriate co-operation with these agencies and with disabled students of the institution.

Specific procedures

1. Access and Admissions

Current University College policy, stated in the Prospectus, is to consider applications from students with physical disabilities, sensory impairment and specific learning difficulties against the same academic criteria as are applied to all others. Specific guidance exists for these candidates.

However, specific admission criteria apply to those seeking admission to courses leading to 'eligibility to teach'. Teaching is a demanding career undertaken in close contact with children and young people at vulnerable stages in their physical and emotional development. It is necessary, therefore, that a candidate for initial teacher education should be physically and mentally fit to enter the teaching profession. All students who have been offered a place on an initial teacher education course must complete a Declaration of Health. In the light of the replies given, the Medical Officer of the University will either classify a candidate as fit, or seek specialist advice before classifying the candidate as either fit or unfit for entry to initial teacher education and subsequent employment as a teacher.

2. Examinations and Assessments

If a student's disability might affect examination performance, an assessment is undertaken by the University Occupational Health Medical Officer or by an educational psychologist. On the basis of the report, special arrangements may be made for examinations and assessments for students with disabilities to ensure they are not unfairly disadvantaged or advantaged. These may include:

- enlarged text examination papers;
- extra time to complete the examination;
- use of a special examination room;
- special lighting;
- the services of a scribe or access to a computer with appropriate software;
- any other adjustments which are appropriate and practicable.

Students should complete the appropriate form available from Academic Registry during the first semester if they wish to have a specific disability given special provision during the examination periods.

The University College also has a Dyslexia Policy and provides specific guidance for University College tutors and students.

3. Financial Assistance for Students with Disabilities

The University College seeks to maximise students' access to financial assistance. Advice is provided by the Personal Support Team and Director, Staff & Student Services in consultation with the Director, Corporate Services. Under the terms of the Disabled Students Allowance, only full-time students may apply for assistance from the Education and Library Boards. Full time and part time students can also expect to receive careful consideration when applying to the University College Hardship and Access Funds.

4. Charges for Facilities

It is University College Policy to make no additional charges for facilities provided to disabled students as a result of their disability. This includes the services of the University College and University Medical Officers and the Director, Staff & Student Services. Students with specific disabilities recognised by the University College are exempt from photocopying charges for additional notes and other prescribed readings or materials supplied by course tutors arising from personal need resulting from their disability. The photocopying of published materials shall be in accordance with the 'Agreement for Licence to Photocopy' issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

Designated parking spaces are also available to students with physical disabilities.

5. Personal Support Team

This team, led by the Director, Staff & Student Services, has responsibility for providing personal support and guidance to all students. In addition, Advisers of Studies, Heads of Subject and tutors provide support and guidance, particularly of an academic nature. The range of support mechanisms is detailed in the booklet distributed to all new students – **Guidance on Student Support**.

The Director, Staff & Student Services has a specific remit to facilitate applications to the Education and Library Boards for the Disabled Student Allowance and makes arrangements to interview disabled students on an individual basis. This enables the Director to prepare the supporting documentation to accompany a claim for this allowance. This allowance can provide support for disabled students which may include specialised equipment and personal helpers.

6. University Resources

All University College students, as students of The Queen's University of Belfast, have access to a range of the University's resources. These include those services specifically available to disabled students. The Director, Staff & Student Services can advise on these facilities.

7. University College Staff

The University College will seek to develop a programme so that teaching and non-teaching staff with whom disabled students will work or interact can receive disability awareness training. This will enable staff to provide equality of opportunity as far as is reasonably practicable.

8. ICT Provision

University College provision: within its financial resources, the University College aims to acquire or develop:

- dedicated equipment for disabled students including speech recognition software on PCs, spell-checking and other software for specific learning difficulties;
- open access ICT facilities for all students.

The University's facilities, including the "Hearing Enhancement Technology Room", are also available to University College students. Personal ICT equipment may be funded for full-time students by the ELBs under the Disabled Students Allowance.

9. Occupational Health Facilities

The Occupational Health Medical Officer is available to provide assistance to any student throughout her/his course, whether or not the student is registered with the University Health Service. The Medical Officer is located at the University Health Centre in Lennoxvale and may provide assessments and reports to support funding applications, explain problems with assessments and examinations, or recommend temporary withdrawal on medical grounds. In addition, an Occupational Health Nurse is present in the College Health Centre in the mornings during term time.