

Procedures to Monitor, Review and Improve the Effectiveness of Resources and Support Services

7.10 Disability and Learner Support Policy

7.10.1 Objectives and Scope

The purpose of this policy document is to inform staff, applicants and learners of the procedures to be followed where applicants and learners require disability and learning support.

The roles and responsibilities of the college staff, applicants and learners are outlined in the Schedule to this Policy.

7.10.2 Learning Support Statement

Griffith College seeks to provide an inclusive learning environment where learners are respected and valued for their contributions to the wider college community.

While the college continues to extend its range of facilities for learners with disabilities and particular learning needs, it recognises that there may be applicants for whom its existing services and facilities will be insufficient.

It is important that applicants with disabilities and additional learning requirements engage formally with the college's Learning Support (LS) Department in advance of commencing their programme. In this way, the LS Department can engage directly with them to assess their needs and the extent to which they can be met by the college. This early engagement by applicants will allow them to make fully informed decisions about the college's suitability for their needs.

When engaging with applicants, the college will have regard to its obligations under the Equal Status Acts, 2000-2018, including its obligations under those Acts to reasonably accommodate applicants who require support (see paragraphs 1.6 and 1.8 for further details).

7.10.3 Physical Access to Buildings

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

The college's LS team are delighted to meet applicants in advance of programme commencement and to provide a detailed tour of the college to assist applicants in determining the college's suitability for their particular physical needs.

7.10.4 Admissions Process

The college requests applicants to formally disclose that they have a requirement for learning support in advance of programme commencement and as part of the admissions process.

This disclosure is made using the college's online Applications Portal of the college's website, to a member of the college's Marketing and Admissions Teams who will then notify the college's LS Department, or directly to the college's LS Department.

Applicants applying through the CAO who indicate that they require learning supports will be referred to the Learning Support Department by the Admissions Manager.

Once the college is formally informed of an applicant's specific needs, the applicant's particular learning support requirements will be considered. Formal consideration by the college is guided by supporting documentation and discussions with the applicant and may include external professionals with more detailed knowledge of the applicant's particular capabilities and requirements. This allows the college to determine the range of additional supports it can provide.

7.10.5 Consideration by the Learning Support Department

The steps of the applicant's learning needs assessment process are as follows:

- a) Applicants identify themselves to the LS Department or the applicant is contacted by the LS Department as a result of disclosing they have a disability or learning requirement during the applications / admissions process.
- b) The applicant's requirements are considered by the LS Department. In order to fully assess their requirements, the LS staff may request medical documentation, a psycho-educational report, or other documentation relating to the applicant's disability, illness, specific needs, or learning differences.
- c) The LS Department will carry out an assessment needs analysis in consultation with the applicant. The objective of this consultative process is to determine the particular supports required by the applicant.
- d) Where the specific requirements of applicants are within the scope of the college's existing facilities and supports, the LS Department will make arrangements to meet the applicants' needs.
- e) To the extent that the college does not currently provide a type of special treatment, facility or support (i.e. a reasonable accommodation) that meets the requirements of the applicant, the request will first be considered by the college's Learning Support Department and, if required, by members of the college's Management Board having regard to, among other things, the college's legal obligations, implications arising from the timing of the request, the availability of funding/financing for the particular special treatment,

facility, or support that may be required, and whether or not the provision of the special treatment, facility or support gives rise to a cost other than a nominal cost. Applicants should be aware that, as a private college, Griffith College does not generally have access to the Higher Education Authority Fund for Students with Disabilities (known as the FSD) to which publicly funded colleges have access. However, the college may be in a position to make an application to the FSD depending on the nature of the applicant's disability or other learning requirements.

- f) The applicant will be informed of the extent of the college's ability to support the applicant's learning requirements, by the LS Department. The applicant will be invited to comment and make proposals before the specific supports to be provided by the college are finalised.

The following processes are used by the LS Department in relation to registered learners who require learning support.

- a) The learner is issued with a consent form to sign that permits the LS staff to discuss the learner's agreed needs with faculty staff and service departments. Where relevant, if not having already done so at applicant stage, the learner may be issued with a reasonable accommodation request form, to be completed by any learner requesting specific accommodations including, for example, those provided for examinations.
- b) Following a learning needs assessment meeting, and agreement being reached on the relevant learning support(s), the LS Department completes a Learner Individual Need Notification (LINN). The purpose of the LINN is an overview document informing the Programme Director and relevant faculty staff of a learner's particular needs.
- c) The Learning Support Department shares the LINN with the relevant Programme Director and liaises with faculties and departments to ensure the agreed supports are provided. 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 required to facilitate the learner.

7.10.6 Ongoing Learning Support

Learners will be registered with Learning Support for the duration of their studies, or until such time as they no longer need or wish to avail of learning support.

The LS staff and the learner will keep in contact throughout their period of study to ensure levels of support are maintained. Learners will have access to one-to-one meetings to assist with workload planning, transitioning to College, and ongoing individual progress plans. Learners can avail of skills workshops that address specific topics e.g. self-management skills, study and exam skills, presentation and writing skills.

Learners are encouraged to review their agreed reasonable accommodations and, if necessary, seek to amend / add to these throughout the duration of their studies. Any amendments and/or additions will be considered in accordance with sections 7.10.2, 7.10.3 and 7.10.5 above.

7.10.7 Reasonable Accommodations

Reasonable Accommodations (RA) is a special treatment, facility or support outside the mainstream services provided by the college that allows learners with disabilities, learning differences or specific needs to participate on an equivalent basis to their peers. The objective of an RA is to remove the impact of a disability, or learning difficulty or need in so far as it is possible so that learners can demonstrate their full level of academic potential while not being given advantage over other learners.

All RA forms completed by learners are considered and agreed in consultation with the college's LS Department prior to being implemented.

While the following list is non-exhaustive and is not intended to exclude other reasonable accommodations, it outlines the most common reasonable accommodations currently provided by the college.

During Assessments

i. 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. Where the learner's agreed RA specifies additional time, they will be accommodated in an alternative room. The details of the room location will be emailed to the learner by the college's Examinations office, in advance of the examination.

ii. Reader

The provision of a reader assists learners who have difficulty accessing exam material due to a disability. Where the learner's RA specifies a reader, the reader will be appointed by the Examinations Office. The learner's examination will take place in an alternate venue.

- iii. **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. Where the learner's RA specifies a scribe, the scribe will be appointed by the Examinations Office.
- iv. **Spelling and Grammar waiver**
Learners with significant learning difficulties (for example, dyslexia) may apply for a spelling or grammar waiver. Where the learner's RA includes a spelling and grammar waiver, the learners will receive a waiver sticker to add to the covers of their examination booklet. These stickers advise lecturers to mark for content rather than spelling or grammatical errors. Marks for spelling, grammar or punctuation are not deducted from those learners during exams or continuous assessment. Spelling and Grammar waivers may only be provided where English language is not a core competency or learning outcome being assessed.
- v. **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.
- vi. **Low distraction venue**
A low distraction venue is provided to learners who find it particularly difficult to work in a large examination hall. These venues have fewer learners and are designed to offer a quiet environment of minimal disruption.

In all cases relating to Teaching, Learning and Assessment Support, the LS Department will liaise directly with the learner's faculty and the college's Examinations Office to ensure that the learner's agreed RAs are provided.

7.10.8 Engagement with the Learning Support Department after Admission

The college requests all learners seeking learning support to make their requests known to the college in advance of programme commencement, as part of their admissions process.

Although advance notice is requested and preferred, the college recognises that certain learners may disclose their learning requirements to the college's LS Department at a later stage including during their programme as their learning needs emerge or evolve.

Where a learner later discloses a requirement for learning support that was not previously disclosed during the admissions process, the Learning Support Department will still consider the requirement in the light of its prevailing capacity and the other

factors outlined in sections 7.10.2, 7.10.3 and 7.10.5, but cannot offer any commitment that it will be in a position to provide the particular learning supports required.

7.10.9 Data Protection

Documentation relating to applicants' and learners' learning needs is securely stored in the LS Department in accordance with all applicable data protection laws, including the Irish Data Protection Acts 1988-2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

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

Information regarding the learner's disability will be divulged on a need-to-know basis, i.e. lecturers and staff who directly engage with the learner.

Personal data that is acquired, used, saved and retained will be done so in accordance with all applicable data protection laws, including the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

7.10.10 Responsibilities

Learning Support Department

- Meets with learner to carry out an assessment of their learning needs
- Identifies appropriate support measures for learners with disabilities and learning differences
- Communicates reasonable accommodation requests to relevant faculties and departments (e.g. the learner's faculty, the college's examinations office, etc.)

Examinations Office

- Manages reasonable accommodation requests during examinations

Marketing Officer / Admissions Office

- Notifies Learning Support Department in relation to applicants with disabilities and learning differences

Programme Director / Head of Faculty

- Manages the coordination of information sharing with relevant lecturers, through the dissemination of LINN

- Liaises with Learning Support Department to ensure appropriate agreed supports are implemented

7.10.11 Contact / Further Information:

For further information, the Learning Support Team can be contacted at:

Phone: 01-4163376
Email: learningsupport@griffith.ie
