

Academic Policy Statement GPS7

STUDENT DISABILITY POLICY

Introduction

Middlesex University is committed to ensuring that disability does not provide a barrier to full participation in learning and teaching, facilities and services for existing and prospective students.

The University supports an anticipatory approach that requires pro-active consideration of access to learning, teaching, services and facilities to ensure adjustments are made in advance of individuals with disabilities attempting to study or use the services and facilities.

The University is committed to addressing the barriers to inclusion (structural, cultural, organisational and attitudinal) and takes as its starting point the premise that accessible and appropriate provision is not 'additional' but a core element of the overall service, which the University makes available.

All Faculties and Services will use inclusive practices and reasonable adjustments to change procedures or environments to remove any disabling effects or barriers to participation.

This Policy applies to all disabled students regardless of nationality, fee status or place of residence.

Definition of Disability

A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (Equality Act 2010). Long-term means it has lasted for at least 12 months, it is likely to last at least 12 months, or it is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person. Disability covers a wide range of physical and mental impairments, including physical and mobility difficulties, hearing impairments, visual impairments, specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, medical conditions and mental health problems.

Principles

The University will ensure that in all policies, procedures, functions and activities consideration is given to the means of enabling disabled students full participation in all aspects of the academic and social life of the institution.

The University's publicity, programme details and general information will be accessible to people with disabilities.

A rolling programme of adjustments will be established to make existing buildings accessible, based on priorities outlined in current access audits and financial resources.

University staff will work in partnership with the Disability & Dyslexia Support Service alongside disabled students to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made, enabling disabled students to meet their full academic potential. These requirements are detailed in the Learning Support Form.

The University will ensure that the requirements of disabled students are considered during programme validation and review and that appropriate amendments are made. Programme specifications that raise barriers to access by disabled people will be reconsidered and reasonable adjustments made to minimise such barriers.

It is the responsibility of Deans and Directors to promote equality and diversity throughout their Faculties, School and Services and to ensure that the policy and legal framework are communicated effectively and are being implemented in their area.

Students are responsible for requesting any review of implemented reasonable adjustments, if such adjustments are not proving to be effective in meeting their entitlements.

Disclosure and Confidentiality

The decision of whether or not to disclose a disability and the timing of any disclosure belongs entirely to the individual student. However, if opportunities have been given to disclose a disability and an individual decides not to then the University will not be able to offer them individual support or adjustments.

For entry to some professional programmes, occupational health clearance is mandatory. Students will be required to submit a health questionnaire disclosing any known health conditions to the occupation health service provider, who will assess the student and make recommendations for any adjustments that would need to be made.

The University cannot be held liable for not implementing reasonable adjustments retrospectively (i.e. prior to disclosure of disability).

The University will manage the process of information sharing and will treat all personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (and subsequent legislation which may replace this); access to disability-related information will be provided on a need to know basis only, in order for reasonable adjustments to be implemented. Where a student is on an exchange to another institution or on a placement as part of their degree programme, relevant information may be shared with the consent of the student to ensure reasonable adjustments will be provided at the host institution/ organisation and to ensure no disadvantage is experienced by students engaged on exchanges and placements.

Reasonable Adjustments

The University seeks to increase the inclusivity of learning and teaching to optimise the learning experience for all however it is recognised that this does not negate the need for reasonable adjustments. Where a disabled student may be placed at a substantial disadvantage the University is required to make a reasonable adjustment, which is defined as a decision taken by the University to allow students non-standard arrangements.

Adjustments may include specific examination arrangements, provision of additional support for learning, adjustments to assessment practices and accommodation arrangements.

Adjustments will be made within the parameters of the following factors:

- The nature of student circumstances and needs following consultation with the student and examination of available evidence and relevant assessments
- The nature of the academic programme of study
- The likely effectiveness of the adjustment in removing the disadvantage
- The practicality of the adjustment, taking account of: disruption, health and safety issues, the reasonable expectations of others and external factors (for example, factors in relation to student placements)
- The costs, including the availability of external funding sources to assist in the adjustment
- Legal precedent
- The possibility of using inclusive measures, which is the University's preferred method of ensuring accessibility, rather than a reasonable adjustment.

If students require adjustments to be made in a placement area, the placement provider will be responsible for assessing the feasibility of these being provided during the student's period of placement

Disabled Students Allowance

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) are a Government grant available to eligible disabled students on higher education courses in the UK, to help with extra course costs they may incur by attending their course, as a direct result of their disability. The allowances can help to pay for a non-medical personal helper, items of specialist equipment, assistive software, travel and other course-related costs. The allowance is neither means-tested nor repayable.

DSAs are not available to all students, but are subject to eligibility criteria, which are stated on the Gov.uk website, together with the amounts payable at: <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/overview>.

A disabled applicant may be offered a place at Middlesex University, but that offer is not a guarantee of eligibility to receive DSAs.

Following changes to the Disabled Students Allowance DSA funding will no longer be available for bands one and two of Non Medical Helper Support. Responsibility for meeting these needs for students with disabilities has transferred to Middlesex University.

All students who are affected by these changes and who register with the Middlesex University Disability Service will have an assessment of needs with a Disability Adviser and support will be put in place to ensure equality of opportunity. Where possible inclusive practices will make individual support unnecessary but where barriers resulting from disability still remain the student will be offered reasonable adjustments, which may include a university funded band 1 or 2 Support Worker.

University Funded Disability Support

The University's primary method of ensuring accessibility is by developing and embedding inclusive teaching and learning practices however it is recognised that the need for some individual adjustments remains.

For most UK domiciled students the funding for additional support will come from the DSA and any DSA-eligible student is required to provide evidence of having submitted a completed application for the DSA to Disability & Dyslexia Support staff before the service can agree to fund individual support packages. In some cases however a student's support needs will exceed the funding available from the DSA. The University will endeavour to ensure these needs are met whilst recognising the limits of the overall Disability Support Service budget.

EU and International students are not eligible for DSA and their requirements for disability-related academic support are met through University funding in consultation with the Disability & Dyslexia Support Service.

In order for the University to predict and control budget expenditure, it is necessary to set an upper limit to the amount it will contribute to a student's additional costs for each year. The indicative upper limit is set at 50% of the corresponding DSA maximum (full-time undergraduate, part-time undergraduate or postgraduate).

This limit may be adjusted by the University Executive, but any such change would only be applicable to new students or applicants. Where needs exceed these limits the University will provide funds only if available and will advise on external sources of finance and support.

Disability & Dyslexia Support Service

The Disability & Dyslexia Support Service (DDS) is part of Student Support and Wellbeing. The Service offers students and applicants an opportunity for confidential disclosure of personal information relating to physical or mental health. For those with a documented health condition the service assesses support needs and arranges for appropriate reasonable adjustments to be made across the University. DDS also acts as an advisory service for students in receipt of DSA or applying for DSA and to University Staff who request guidance on inclusivity or reasonable adjustments. In addition DDS works closely with colleagues in Counselling and Mental Health who provide specialist support for students with mental health conditions.

Applicability to Academic Partners and Overseas Campuses

This policy applies to students studying on joint collaborative programmes and collaborative research programmes. It does not extend to students on validated or franchised collaborative programmes.

Middlesex University overseas campuses operate within a different legislative environment and will provide advice and support to students, ensuring equivalence of experience as far as possible. Local arrangements for advice and support are articulated in campus guides.

Review

This policy was approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee in July 2017 and is due for review in June 2022