

## Learner Disability Policy

Limerick Institute of Technology is committed to implementing a policy of equal opportunities for learners with disabilities. The Institute will ensure, through the availability of learner support services, that no learner is disadvantaged by reason of having a disability, within reason and budgetary limitations.

This policy is in compliance with the Learner Charter and runs in tandem with all other existing policies at the Institute. Its successful implementation requires cooperation across all schools and departments.

The Learner Disability Policy will address the following areas of concern for learners and staff:

1. Definition of Disability
2. Inclusion
3. Disclosure
4. Applications and Admissions
5. Internal Support Services
6. Needs Assessments
7. External Support Services
8. *Fund for Students With Disabilities* – Higher Education Authority (HEA)
9. Exam Supports
10. Curriculum Access
11. Transport
12. Disability Awareness and Staff Training
13. Health & Safety
14. Complaints Procedure
15. Dissemination

### **1. Definition of Disability**

- 1.1 “Disability” is understood to mean: “a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.” *Disability Act 2005, p.6.*

### **2. Inclusion**

- 2.1 The Institute is committed to maintaining provision for learners with disabilities, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and those with medical conditions which may impact upon their studies.

- 2.2 The Institute welcomes applications from learners with disabilities and will take every reasonable action, within budgetary limitations, to ensure that specific requirements are met and that all learners are able to participate as fully as is practicable in the academic and social life of the Institute.
- 2.3 The Institute will ensure that all facilities are accessible to all learners insofar as is possible. This includes physical accessibility to and within the buildings, as well as access to information.
- 2.4 Access to buildings will be treated as a priority in the ongoing refurbishment and maintenance of buildings.

### **3. Disclosure**

- 3.1 The Institute encourages learners to disclose their disabilities during the application process or following admission to the Institute.
- 3.2 All learners are encouraged to disclose their disabilities, as non-disclosure will severely limit ability to access appropriate procedures, accommodations and supports. Consequently, learners are encouraged to register with the Access Service through the scheduling of a Needs Assessment early in the academic year.
- 3.3 It is the learner's responsibility to provide adequate and relevant documentation pertaining to his/her disability from relevant qualified professionals. It is recommended that documentation should not be older than five years at the time of initial registration.
- 3.4 The Access Service will complete a standardized Needs Assessment for all learners who disclose a disability. The Needs Assessment is strictly confidential and the Access Service will seek signed consent from the learner to release any details within the Institute as may be required.

### **4. Applications and Admissions**

- 4.1 All prospective learners should apply through the appropriate process, and should refer to the Admissions Office policy and procedures for guidance.

The Admissions procedure for learners with disabilities who choose to disclose is explained in Appendix 1 (*Special Needs Learners – New Admissions through CAO – Revised 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010*).

## **5. Internal Support Services**

- 5.1 The Institute provides services and personnel to support the academic and social inclusion of all learners, including those with disabilities. These services and personnel are listed in the learner handbook, an updated version of which is provided to all learners at the beginning of each academic year.
- 5.2 The Access Service assists learners with disabilities with relevant information and advice, and assists the Institute to deliver its agreed commitments, within relevant budgetary limitations.
- 5.3 Learners with documented disabilities must register with the Access Service in order to be provided with the services and supports available.
- 5.4 If learners are concerned that they might have a disability, they are encouraged to contact the Access Service.

## **6. Needs Assessments**

- 6.1 After a learner discloses a disability, the Access Service will complete a standardized Needs Assessment in order to determine what supports and accommodations will be required throughout the learner's programme of study.
- 6.2 The Needs Assessment is completed through: 1) interview with the learner 2) detailed examination of recent (no older than five years from the date of the Needs Assessment) and relevant documentation by qualified professionals. The learner is responsible for providing all documentation.
- 6.3 The Needs Assessment is strictly confidential. The Access Service will obtain written consent from the learner in order to release the learner's details within the Institute for the purposes of support and accommodation. For further information, refer to Appendix 1, Section 13.
- 6.4 The Needs Assessment is a working document and can be revised at any point throughout the learner's programme of study.

## **7. External Support Services**

- 7.1 Where appropriate, and with the learner's consent, learners with disabilities may receive referrals to external support services.

7.2 If required, external support services can carry out environmental assessments on site.

## **8. Fund for Students With Disabilities – Higher Education Authority (HEA)**

\*Please refer to *Appendix 2 – HEA Funded Supports for Students With Disabilities*

8.1 *“The Fund for Students with Disabilities allocates funding to further and higher education colleges for the provision of services and supports to full-time learners with disabilities. The Fund aims to ensure that learners can participate fully in their academic programmes and are not disadvantaged by reason of a disability.”*  
(<http://www.studentfinance.ie/mp7575/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/index.html>)

8.2 Upon registration with the Access Service, each learner will be assessed for eligibility for the HEA’s *Fund for Students with Disabilities*.

8.3 If a learner has provided relevant documentation which deems them to be eligible for the *Fund for Students With Disabilities*, the Access Service, in consultation with the learner, will complete an application for funding on the learner’s behalf, in accordance with the learner’s needs as determined through the completed Needs Assessment.

8.4 With the learner’s consent, the Access Service will submit the aforementioned application to the HEA by the appointed deadline (varies from year-to-year).

8.5 Upon receipt of funding, the Access Service will allocate funds on the learner’s behalf as deemed appropriate through the Needs Assessment.

8.6 If the learner is not approved for funding by the HEA, the Institute cannot fund supports requested.

8.7 The above procedures are subject to change, without notice, should the funding criteria or procedures for learners with disabilities set out by the HEA change. The Institute will not supplement costs if funding provided by the HEA in respect to a disability falls short of the actual cost.

## **9. Exam Supports**

9.1 The Institute will ensure that all learners deemed eligible for exam accommodations through their Needs Assessment will receive the appropriate entitlements, within reason and budgetary limitations.

- 9.2 Exam accommodations that are normally available to eligible learners include but are not limited to: access to toilet, access to food, answers on tape or transcripts where appropriate, extra time, fan required, spelling & grammar waiver, instructions required, quiet room, printer, reader, rest periods, scribe, use of a computer, and the use of voice activated software.

## 10. Curriculum Access

- 10.1 In order to facilitate curriculum access, the Institute will ensure that learners deemed eligible for learning-related accommodations through their Needs Assessment will receive the appropriate entitlements, within reason and budgetary limitations.
- 10.2 Learning-related accommodations that are normally available to eligible learners include but are not limited to: lecture notes in advance, personal assistant/note taker, extra tuition (subject specific), dyslexia tuition, assistive technology, assistive technology training, sign language interpreter, and extended loan periods for library materials.
- 10.3 In some instances, learners with disabilities may be deemed eligible through the Needs Assessment for the following equipment to aid in curriculum access: laptop computer, printer, scanner, recording device for lectures, software, magnification equipment, sound enhancement equipment.
- 10.4 The Access Service will help ensure curriculum access through the dissemination of information obtained through the Needs Assessment to relevant personnel throughout the Institute.
- 10.5 Information regarding the learning needs of specific learners with disabilities will be disseminated in the form of detailed reports which the Access Service will forward to relevant Heads of Schools, and copy to Heads of Departments and School Administrators.
- 10.6 If there is a change to a learner's specific needs, the Access Service will forward a revised copy of the detailed report to the relevant Head of School, and copy to the Head of Department and School Administrator.
- 10.7 It is the responsibility of the Heads of Schools to ensure that each learner's detailed report (and any ensuing revisions) are forwarded to the relevant heads of departments, school administrators, programme leaders, lecturers and mentors for each year that the learner is registered at the Institute.

10.8 If a Head of School, Head of Department, Lecturer or Mentor is unclear as to a learner's identified needs and/or how to meet these needs, they are encouraged to seek advice from the Access Service without delay.

10.9 If a Head of School, Head of Department, Lecturer or Mentor believes that a learner's identified needs are not being met, they are encouraged to report their concerns to the Access Service without delay.

## **11. Transport**

11.1 Disability Parking Permits for the Institute's parking facilities are available to learners who have a Disability Parking Permit.

## **12. Disability Awareness and Staff Training**

12.1 The Institute is committed to raising disability awareness amongst learners and staff.

12.2 Staff training can be facilitated to support learners as appropriate.

## **13. Health & Safety**

13.1 The Access Service will liaise with the Health & Safety Officer and the Estates Office on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the access issues of learners with disabilities are met, within reason and budgetary limitations.

13.2 If a learner with a disability has concerns about a health and safety issue, they are required to report it to the Access Service or the Health & Safety Officer immediately so that the concern can be dealt with in a timely fashion.

13.3 In a fire some learners may need assistance to reach a final exit. Visually impaired learners can best be guided on level surfaces by taking a Fire Marshal's arm and following his/her lead. On stairways the Fire Marshal should descend first and the visually impaired learner follow with a hand on the Fire Marshal's shoulder. If a visually impaired learner is accompanied by a guide dog, the learner should be asked how best he/she can be helped. Some guide dogs may follow on their owner's command but

generally if a helper is leading a visually impaired learner the guide dog should be held by the leash rather than the harness.

Many disabled people will be able to ascend/descend a stairway possibly with assistance whilst others will need to be carried. It is preferable for a wheelchair bound person to be carried in his or her own chair. However, motorized chairs cannot be accommodated by Fire Marshals if at elevated levels.

The Chief Fire Marshal should ensure that trained Fire Marshals are available to assist with the evacuation of learners with a disability. The procedure to be adopted when evacuating learners with a disability should include:

- On hearing the alarm the disabled learners should move or be directed away from the fire to a place of safety.
- The designated Fire Marshal, having carried out the evacuation/search procedure, should go to the disabled learner.
- If necessary, the learner with a disability will be assisted from elevated levels to the ground floor by the required number of Fire Marshals.

#### 14. Complaints Procedure

14.1 If a learner with a disability is not satisfied with any aspect of their interaction with the Access Service or feels that his/her specific needs are not being met at the Institute, he/she is encouraged to address the area(s) of concern directly with the Access Service.

14.2 The Access Service will take every reasonable measure to ensure that the learner's complaint is resolved. However, the Access Service is bound to act within the constraints of Institute policy.

14.3 If a learner has addressed his/her area(s) of concern with the Access Service and remains unsatisfied with the outcome, he/she is advised to engage in the *Problem-Solving Procedure* as detailed in the *Student Code of Conduct*. Copies of the *Student Code of Conduct* are available from the Students' Union upon request.

#### 15. Dissemination

15.1 This policy will be retained in the Quality Assurance Handbook.

15.2 This policy will be publicly available.

#### Disclaimer:

LIT endeavours to support learners with disability and to implement this policy as far as is practicable within constraints on resources and operational limitations. Hence, LIT accepts no legal responsibility to implement this policy in all cases.

*This policy is available in alternate print format upon request.*

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