ACCESS NEEDS

Introduction

This policy sets out College procedure with regards to student access needs. It is written in conjunction with Equality and Diversity policy, and is designed to ensure that access and inclusivity for students with additional needs is a strategic function of the institution.

The Code Policy for Students with Access Needs is intended to reflect the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) QAA UK Quality Code; there is no specific chapter to refer to as the need to provide access for people who have differing individual requirements resonates throughout the Code. The policy is designed to ensure that the College's procedures satisfy the requirements set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001, the Disability Act 2006 and the Equality Act 2010.

The College aims to provide equal opportunity for all individuals, regardless of their background, to gain admission to a programme suited to their ability and aspirations. The College recognises students with access needs are an integral part of the academic community.

The College is also committed to supporting students with the development of literacy skills, numeracy skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to enable them to succeed on their programme of study and to play a full part in College life and wider society.

Scope

The College has adopted the social model of disability and recognises that consultation on an individual basis is necessary in order to determine the access needs and requirements of students. Disability is a term covering a wide range of impairments including physical and mobility difficulties, hearing impairments, visual impairments, and specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, medical conditions and mental health problems.

The College recognises its duty to anticipate the needs of students with access needs, and to provide opportunities for students to disclose information about their circumstances in an environment that encourages such disclosures. In order that an appropriate and flexible response can be made to an individual's declared needs, the College procedures and policies have a reasonable amount of flexibility so that the full range of access needs demonstrated by students can be taken into account.

Regular consultation with students with access needs will review the provision of support for students with access needs, monitoring effectiveness and identifying opportunities for enhancement.

This policy applies to students undertaking HE qualifications at Grantham College except where the regulations of the awarding body or validating institution take precedence.

General Principles
The overall aim of this policy is to ensure that the College is an inclusive and supporting environment where learning, achievement and progression are accessible for everyone.

The College acknowledges that to be an inclusive learning environment there is a need to recognise and meet the wide range of support needs, including disabilities, and their impact on the ways in which students learn. Through its strategies, policies, and procedures, the College will seek to embed its commitment to the fair and equitable treatment of students with access needs.

College Management Responsibilities
Governors and the Senior Leadership team are aware of their legal responsibilities relating to equality.

All staff will receive training on their responsibilities under the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. As part of their induction training staff will receive information about equality and diversity issues, with a focus upon disabilities, mental health conditions and specific learning differences. Staff are made aware that disclosure may occur at any time during a student's registration with the College or during the duration of their course.

Staff will take part in other continuing professional development activities to develop their practice and contribute to a fully inclusive organisational culture.

Staff identified as designated contacts for students with access needs will be given every opportunity to develop their skills through continued professional development.

All College staff, students and applicants will be made aware of the relevant institutional policies relating to confidentiality and disability disclosure.

Information for prospective students, current students and staff
The College website and virtual learning environment have been and will continue to be developed to include accessible features to ensure inclusivity for students with access needs, both prospective and current. Course information is available to students via the College's website and further information can be requested by e-mail.

Admissions processes and policies
Selection criteria and procedures will not unjustifiably disadvantage or create barriers for disabled applicants.   Where appropriate students with access needs will be given an opportunity to demonstrate alternative ways they can meet programme requirements.

The admissions procedure maximises opportunities for applicants with access needs to disclose details about their circumstances, so that individuals' needs and requirements can be identified as early as possible. Individual applicants will be asked to provide details of their access requirements and reasonable adjustments will be made whenever possible.

The registration process takes into account the individual access needs of entrants and reasonable steps will be taken to ensure barriers are removed from the process,

including the modification of relevant forms and/or the provision of support that will not compromise independence or confidentiality.

When a student discloses information about a disability they will have the opportunity to discuss their requirements with an appropriate member of staff. Where necessary referrals will be made to assess applicants' support needs to facilitate planning to accommodate need.

Where appropriate information will be provided to students regarding funding streams which can be used to support their studies, in some cases providing assistive technology or non-medical help (e.g. Disabled Students' Allowances, and Access to Work).

During the induction and orientation process information about physical access features on the campus will be provided. Students will be informed of the accessibility support available throughout their studies during the induction process and the induction period will be used to review arrangements to ensure effective support is in place.

Curriculum design
The College will make arrangements to ensure the inclusivity of curriculum design is a feature of the learning and teaching strategies for academic and technical staff.

Academic and technical staff will make adaptations to the delivery of programme materials where appropriate and consider methods of alternative assessment, liaising with awarding bodies or validating institutions where accommodations are considered.

The College will consider the accessibility of physical learning environments so that individual students with access needs are not disadvantaged.

Learning and teaching
Academic staff are committed to the on-going development and implementation of inclusive teaching and research practices to ensure students with access needs are able to engage in their studies with a minimal need for reasonable adjustment.

Information concerning the reasonable adjustments for individual students with access needs will be circulated to relevant members of staff. Staff will discuss individual adjustments with students where necessary and will work in liaison with the Student Support team where appropriate.

Discriminatory behaviour will be challenged, and reported through the appropriate disciplinary procedures

Academic assessment
The College will ensure its assessment and progression policies, practices and procedures provide students with access needs with the same opportunity as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes.

Assessment criteria will be made available to all students as early as possible and in accessible formats. Appropriate procedures will be implemented for the marking of assessed work, and the provision of feedback for students with access needs.

Students will be notified of the availability of alternative assessment and examination arrangements where appropriate and the College will ensure the rigour and comparability of the assessment are protected. Any reasonable adjustments for assessment purposes must be agreed with the awarding body or validating institution before being implemented. Such arrangements may include:

- Opportunities to demonstrate achievement using alternative ways, e.g. signed presentations, or viva voce;
- Additional time allowances, rest breaks and re-scheduling of examinations;
- The use of computers, amanuenses, readers, and other support in examinations;
- Availability of examinations and/or the presentation of assessed work in alternative formats;
- Additional rooms and invigilators for students using alternative arrangements.

Where a student has interrupted their study as a direct result of their disability, the College will ensure this does not unjustifiably impede academic progress. Where reliable evidence is provided that delayed completion of assessed work, non-attendance at examinations, deferral or withdrawal has been due to a disability-related cause, this should be recorded in files relating to the student's academic progress.

Where appropriate, refer to the Intercalation Policy.

Academic Support for Disabled Students
Students with access needs will be given advice and guidance in respect of the support strategies available to them through liaison between academic staff, the Student Support team and other relevant departments.

Students who are eligible for Disability Support Allowance must apply for it in order to access academic support. This needs to be done before enrolment.

All staff involved in the delivery of programmes to students will be advised of the learning implications of any access needs of the students on the programme and make reasonable adjustments to delivery.

Staff will respond to any feedback they receive from students with access needs, seeking further advice from Student Support where appropriate.

If necessary, alternative hardware or software will be provided to ensure inclusivity of academic resources.

Additional specialist IT facilities will be available to students with access needs, and appropriate support will be available to assist students using such equipment.

Policy and Procedure for Non-Medical Support via Disability Support Allowance (DSA) – HE Guidance

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
In line with DSA quality assurance guidelines, consent for the collection of personal identifiable information required to complete Non-Medical Helper (NMH) registration will be requested on first contact. The information is stored in a system compliant with current GDPR. Access to this information is limited to the nominated individual within the College.

Complaints Procedure
The complaints procedure is provided to the student as the Praise and Complaints Procedure document. The document is available on the College website and in other accessible formats on request. As an NMH provider, the College also maintains a complaint log which includes the student's name and account reference; the date of the complaint; a flag to indicate if the complaint is "open" or resolved; the nature of the complaint; a record (including dates) of our response and any actions taken; a record of subsequent correspondence or discussions with the student.

Cancellation Procedure
Information of how to cancel is provided within the first session with the NMH or Carer. Notification of cancellation is required for all sessions to the NMH. The period of required notification is 24 hours or more prior to the session taking place. The impact of non-cancellation is that should the student give less than 24 hours' notice of cancelling or missing the session, then the session may be charged to the student's DSA allocation. Should the NMH cancel the session, the support worker should make all reasonable efforts to contact the student. The reason for the missed session should be included on the supporting timesheet.

Student Feedback
In line with DSA quality assurance guidelines, the College requests student feedback once per year in the form of a survey available in online and hard copy format. The survey has the option of anonymity. Students are also made aware of informal channels to provide feedback on an ad hoc basis.

Access to student services
The College will ensure students with access needs have access to the full range of services and facilities.

The course tutor and Student Support team will liaise with key staff members; Study Support, Library, and other departments on behalf of the student as necessary. Student Support will also liaise with third party agencies for specialist support provision when this is required.

The physical environment
The College has undertaken an audit of the physical accessibility of campus facilities, and will continue to monitor issues relating to physical access and health and safety throughout the campus.

Where physical access is unreasonably difficult or impossible, a flexible approach will be taken to allow students with access needs to participate in their programme of study.

The College recognises that some of the buildings making up its campus have limitations regarding access, and that flexibility regarding where lectures and seminars take place is an important consideration.

Institutional procedures
The College ensures all student-facing policies and procedures are published in accessible formats including complaints and disciplinary policies and procedures.

In cases where a student with access needs is the subject of such proceedings, those staff making decisions will actively seek information regarding the student's requirements so that their impact on the student's situation can be considered.

The College's Subject Assessment Boards will consider reasonable adjustments to its procedures in cases where a student's access needs make it difficult for them to meet specific criteria (e.g. time limits) except where the regulations of the awarding body take precedence.

The College will ensure a non-discriminatory approach is taken to the application of its policies and procedures, including the appeal stages, to ensure an outcome is reached which is consistent with other similar cases in the same institution.

Quality Assurance – version control			
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