

The London Interdisciplinary School

Disability Policy

Introduction

This policy forms part of the School's overall commitment to ensuring equality for its diverse staff and student body. It outlines the School's duties and the options available to both students and staff with disabilities, including mental health disabilities, in seeking support or adjustments to their studying and working environment; and it provides a framework to support the ongoing development of an inclusive, safe, enabling and supportive environment for all of the School's staff, students, and visitors, regardless of disability. This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Scope

This policy applies to all LIS staff and students. Where relevant, the policy also applies to prospective staff, prospective students, and visitors.

Legislative context: Equality Act 2010

As a disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, public bodies such as the London Interdisciplinary School must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimization, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Public bodies are required to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into their day-to-day business and to consider how a function can affect different groups in different ways. This enables the School to reasonably anticipate the needs of disabled staff, students and visitors, and to address the potential impacts of any proposed changes to ensure they do not have an adverse effect.

Definitions

Disability

For the purpose of this policy, the term “disability” has the same meaning as that given in the Equality Act 2010 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001: “A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

While understanding the Medical Model nature of the definition used in the Equality Act 2010, the School recognizes the Social Model of Disability, which views disability as being created by barriers within society rather than locating the disability within the individual. Barriers can be: in the physical environment, such as inaccessible buildings or services; attitudinal, resulting in stereotypes, prejudices and assumptions about the capabilities of disabled people; or organisational, such as having inflexible policies and procedures. The School aims to address all of these barriers to ensure that disabled people are able to participate in all aspects of School life.

Reasonable Adjustment

A Reasonable Adjustment is defined as a decision taken by the School to allow changes to be made to standard arrangements for individual disabled staff and students, so that they may continue in their employment or studies at School.

Reasonable adjustments will also apply to prospective employees, prospective students, and visitors to the School.

Principles

The School is committed to addressing the barriers to inclusion (structural, cultural, organizational and attitudinal) that adversely impact upon people with disabilities, and views accessible, appropriate and inclusive provision as a core element of the School's provision. The School is committed to complying with the disability provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and the preceding legislation including SENDA 2001 by:

- Making its provision as accessible as possible, aiming to do this by using inclusive approaches, or by ensuring that anticipatory action is taken as far as is reasonably practicable to provide inclusive working, learning and teaching and access to the School's facilities and services. Where this is not possible and/or additional needs are identified, the School will seek to implement appropriate individual reasonable adjustments.

- Ensuring that any reasonable adjustments are evidence-based and are determined through an assessment of the individual's disability-related requirements, taking into consideration additional factors such as the environment, health and safety, academic standards, and principles of employment law to prevent substantial disadvantage.

- Taking all steps to ensure that nobody—whether prospective or current staff, prospective or current student or visitor—is treated less favourably on the grounds of disability.

- Promoting a positive working and studying environment for disabled staff and students.

- Providing training, support and guidance for all academic and professional staff to ensure that they are equipped to provide the necessary support and can respond appropriately to the needs of staff and students with disabilities.

- Encouraging a climate of openness and positive disclosure for staff and students with disabilities, including mental health disabilities. The Student Experience Department offers a safe and supportive environment for students to disclose their disability-related requirements; and Human Resources will be given guidance on facilitating discussions around disclosure and appropriate support for staff. In keeping with data protection legislation, any information disclosed by a student or member of staff relating to a disability shall only be passed on with consent and where there is a legal basis to do so.
- Regularly reviewing, monitoring and revising, as appropriate, all School systems, procedures, facilities, services and buildings in compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the SENDA 2001 in addition to the Human Rights Act 1998, which includes the right not be denied access to education.
- Creating, maintaining and disseminating information about services and facilities available for disabled staff, students, alumni, visitors and prospective staff and students.

Policies

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group plays a key role in contributing to and monitoring the work of the School in respect of disability-related matters. This Group will meet at least quarterly to discuss all matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.

The School will ensure that in all policies, procedures, regulations, functions and activities, including strategic planning and resource allocation, consideration is given to reasonable means of enabling disabled staff and students' full participation in all aspects of the academic and social life of the School.

The School 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.

The School will ensure that its publicity, programme details and general information is accessible to people with disabilities.

The School website will contain information on disabled access and support for staff, students and visitors.

The School will give encouragement and opportunities to staff and students to disclose any disability that may have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to undertake normal day-to-day activities. A discussion can then take place about disability-related reasonable adjustments or other support that may be required. Individuals can choose to bring someone to accompany them at meetings to provide extra support if required. Staff are encouraged to discuss their needs with their line manager or seek support from their HR representative. Students can seek advice via their personal tutor or the Student Experience Department.

Disclosing a disability to the School is a personal matter of which it is an individual's choice if and when they do so. Disclosing a disability will enable the School to inform staff and students about the options available to them. If individuals choose not to disclose their disability, this may have implications for the provision available to them. Whilst it is beneficial to disclose as early as possible, disclosure can be done at any time. Where a student requires reasonable adjustments to support them during assessments or examinations, they must notify the Student Experience Department at least one calendar month before the assessment window opens (the first exam sitting or the beginning of the submission window for coursework).

If students have concerns about disclosure and would like to discuss these confidentially, they can contact the Student Experience Department.

Where the Human Resources Department determines that reasonable adjustments for individual disabled staff are required, these might include, where appropriate:

- Reasonable adjustments such as reallocation of duties;
- Altering working hours;
- Changing work location;

- Modifying equipment; and
- Consideration of other roles.

Where the Student Experience Department determines that reasonable adjustments for individual disabled students are required, these might include, where appropriate:

- Additional support and assistance for assessments (e.g., a separate room, a scribe, a reader, a BSL interpreter, assessment materials in a different format, coloured overlays, a computer, assistive technology)
- Additional support for learning;
- Adjustments to learning environment;
- Provision of lecture notes in advance; and
- Consideration of alternative forms of assessment.

Reasonable adjustments will be made within the parameters of the following factors:

- The nature of student or staff circumstances following consultation with the individual and examination of available evidence and relevant assessments.
- The nature of the work or academic programme of study.
- The likely effectiveness of the adjustment in removing the disadvantage.
- The practicality of the adjustment, taking into account 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 School's preferred method of ensuring accessibility, rather than a reasonable adjustment.

When students apply for a placement as part of the School's Interdisciplinary Studies programme, they are encouraged to disclose any disability to the Work Department prior to accepting the internship, to ensure that appropriate support is in place. 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.

If a disability is disclosed to the School, a wide range of financial support can be accessed, namely:

- Government financial assistance is available to support people with disabilities in the workplace.
- External resources such as the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). DSAs are Government grants 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 or other course-related costs. The allowance is not means-tested and is not 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>.

If a disabled student or staff member has special requirements in relation to fire or general evacuation, the School encourages them to bring this to the attention of their personal tutor or line manager so that appropriate plans and arrangements can be made.

Prospective students who may have additional requirements (e.g., assistance or equipment) when visiting the School on an Open Day or Discovery Day can contact the Admissions Office in advance of their visit and adjustments may be made as necessary and appropriate. All applications will be assessed on the basis of academic suitability for the School programme. Discussions about the support requirements of students will be separate from any academic decision.

All school vacancies will be open to suitably qualified people irrespective of disability. All prospective staff who accept the offer of an interview will be asked in advance if they require any special arrangements to be made for them at the interview and adjustments may be made as necessary and appropriate.

Governance Requirements

Responsibilities

The Board is responsible for ensuring compliance by the School with equality law.

All School staff are expected to be aware of this policy and the legal framework, and to treat disabled people, whether staff, students or visitors, in accordance with these provisions.

In particular, *Heads of Departments and others in management positions* are responsible for ensuring that the policy and the legal framework are communicated effectively through staff development programmes and are being implemented in their area.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group will ensure that disability training and support will be made available for managers, and that disability equality guidance and information on good practice will be available on the School website. This Group will have representatives from the Admissions, Student Experience, Teaching and Learning, and Human Resources departments, as well as a student representative elected by the LIS Student's Union, and it will meet at least quarterly.

The Student Experience Department will determine any reasonable adjustments to be made for disabled students to support their learning and assessment.

The Human Resources Department will determine any reasonable adjustments to be made for disabled staff to support their ability to perform at work.

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

Monitoring and Evaluation

The School's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group will provide ongoing monitoring and review of the effectiveness of provision for staff and students with disabilities, as well as evaluate progress and identify opportunities for enhancement to advance disability equality at the School. The Group will also review this policy annually in the light of possible government/legislation changes.

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