



Bishop Grosseteste University

Code of Practice for Students with Access Needs

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Responsibilities:

Quality Assurance and Student Data

Centre for Educational Development and Research

Diversity and Equality Committee

Senate

Purpose and aim

The purpose of this Code is to address the process for supporting students with access needs.

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Introduction

1. The *Code of Practice for Students with Access Needs* is intended to reflect the 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.
2. It should be read with reference to other University Codes of Practice (notably the *Code of Practice for Admissions*), the Diversity & Equality Policy, the Disability Statement, and the Disability Equality Scheme.
3. The *Code of Practice for Students with Access Needs* is designed to ensure the University's procedures are in accordance with the precepts set out by the QAA, and 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.
4. The University 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 University recognises students with access needs have been under- represented in the higher education sector and, further, that these students are an integral part of the academic community. Ensuring access and inclusivity for students with additional needs through the *Code* is a strategic function of the institution.
5. Through the *Code*, the University acknowledges its duty to take account of the full and diverse range of access needs applicable to students. The University recognises that policies and procedures must incorporate a degree of flexibility in order to ensure that the requirements of disabled students are taken into account, and to ensure that the University is maximising the inclusivity of its programmes of study.

Scope

6. The University 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, as defined by the relevant legislation, is a term covering a wide range of impairments including physical and mobility difficulties, hearing impairments, visual impairments, specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, medical conditions and mental health problems.
7. The University 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.
8. In order that an appropriate and flexible response can be made to an individual's declared needs, throughout the duration of their programme of study, the University will ensure that its procedures and policies are capable of a reasonable amount of flexibility so that

the full range of access needs that may be demonstrated by students can be taken into account.

General Principles

The University will, through its Board and Committee structures, strategies, policies, and procedures, embed its commitment to the fair and equitable treatment of students with access needs.

The University acknowledges that the access needs of students must be considered when planning and revising, its strategies, policies, procedures, both for academic and non-academic services. Where a policy or procedure is introduced, or reviewed, an equality impact assessment will be undertaken to ensure due consideration of the requirements of students with access needs are taken into account. One of the areas of assessment will be accessibility.

Regular consultation will be undertaken with prospective, current and former students with access needs. The resulting detailed information will contribute to the provision of individualised responses to the requirements of students with access needs. Consultation will be undertaken in a variety of ways:

- Questionnaire before registration (electronic/paper).
- Access Needs form at Registration (paper).
- Follow up during each semester of the programme (telephone/email).
- Exit Questionnaire (email/paper).

Consultation outcomes are communicated, as appropriate, to senior management.

The University will regularly monitor its policies, procedures, strategic planning and resource allocation in order to establish the effectiveness of its systems with regard to students with access needs and in order that those systems might be continually improved.

Institutional and Strategic Management

Responsibilities of senior managers towards students with access needs will be identified and communicated clearly to ensure the University responds effectively and systematically to its duty to take account of the access needs of students.

Information about the action taken by the University will be published annually in the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) annual report. The DES, and its annual reports will be made available to the public via the University website.

The University is committed to establishing regular staff development opportunities in

all agendas relating to the promotion of equality of opportunity, including accessibility. Senior managers and other key staff will be required to have an adequate understanding of the relevant legal framework relating to students with access needs in Higher Education.

Planning monitoring and evaluation

The University's *Access Needs Disclosure: Response & Support Procedure* sets out the procedures by which information about students with access needs is disseminated to relevant parties throughout the University in accordance with Data Protection principles.

All University staff, students and applicants will be made aware of the relevant institutional policies relating to confidentiality and disability disclosure. Staff are made aware that disclosure may occur at any time during a student's registration with the University and the *Access Needs Disclosure: Response & Support Procedure* provides guidance about how to respond most effectively to a disclosure of access needs.

The extent of the University's confidentiality and disclosure policy is limited in respect of instances where there is substantial evidence of an individual being at risk to themselves or others, and/or in the interests of ensuring health and safety standards are upheld.

The University will regularly monitor applications, admissions, academic progress and the nature of impairment of students with access needs. Statistics will be produced for diversity and equality monitoring, and to contribute to the enhancement of the experience of students with access needs.

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.

The University will use its Action Plans for Widening Participation and Diversity and Equality, together with the Disability Statement and the Disability Equality Scheme to embed a strategic approach to the further development of services to students with access needs.

Continuing professional development

The University will provide an on-going programme of accessibility awareness training to all staff, including part-time and contract staff, covering issues relating to accessibility, i.e. awareness, the legislative context, and inclusive practice whether academic, non-academic, or relating to the physical environment.

Staff with specific responsibilities, e.g. the admission of students, learning and teaching, assessment, curriculum development, and the provision of learning resources will receive specific information and training about the needs of students with access needs.

The University requires teaching staff to be aware of the range of support services available to assist students with access needs in their studies, and developments in inclusive practice. Academic staff will receive, as part of their inductor training, information about equality and diversity issues, with a focus upon disabilities, mental health conditions and specific learning differences.

Specialists will be approached to provide detailed training and awareness in order to build on basic accessibility awareness training and to develop skills within the University. The University will respond pro-actively to individual staff requests for training regarding specific areas of accessibility.

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

Information for prospective students, current students and staff

The University will ensure that full and accurate information relating to its programmes is available in accessible formats. Furthermore, it will provide details of key staff involved in providing and coordinating support to students throughout their studies. Information regarding the support available through Disabled Students' Allowances is also available via the University website.

The University is committed to the development of accessible resources in all aspects of its business. The University 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, including information relating to placement opportunities, is available to students at an early stage – details are available via the University's website and further information can be requested by e-mail.

The University will ensure enquiries from students with access needs will be handled promptly and professionally, with appropriate staff providing full and accurate information to the student.

Admissions processes and policies

The University, through its Admissions Policy, will ensure its criteria and procedures for selecting students are relevant to the programme of study and, where applicable, will take into account the requirements of professional bodies. Selection criteria and procedures

will not unjustifiably disadvantage or create barriers for disabled applicants and, where appropriate, students with access needs will be given an opportunity to demonstrate alternative ways they can meet programme requirements.

Equality training is provided to all tutors and administrative staff involved in the recruitment of students, including emphasis on accessibility awareness.

The University will ensure that its admissions procedure maximises and encourages the opportunities for applicants with access needs to disclose details about their circumstances, in order that individuals' needs and requirements can be identified as early as possible.

The University will give consideration to the needs of applicants with access needs during the admissions process, including the interview stage, and individual applicants will be asked to provide details of their access requirements. Late applications received during clearing will be given the same consideration as those made via the standard UCAS route.

In addition to the formal opportunities for applicants to disclose information about their requirements via UCAS, students are also given the opportunity to disclose information when attending interview days at the University and reasonable adjustments will be made whenever possible.

Upon receiving a disclosure, the student will have the opportunity to discuss their requirements with an appropriate member of staff. Where required (e.g. by a professional body) appropriate referrals will be made to assess applicants' support needs in order that admissions tutors and students are able to make an informed decision.

Applicants will receive full summaries of the support that will be put in place for them at the University, and via third parties, at the earliest opportunity.

The University registration process will take 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 the provision of appropriate support that will not compromise independence or confidentiality.

The University *Declaration of Access Needs* form will outline the data protection and confidentiality principles which apply to the data the student discloses. Students will be informed of the accessibility support available throughout their studies during the induction process. Similar information will be made available via informal processes and in instances of limited disclosure.

The support needs of entrants will be taken into account during the induction process and orientation training will be provided, e.g. providing information about and demonstrating physical access features around the campus for mobility impaired students.

The induction period will be used to review arrangements to ensure effective support is in place.

Curriculum design

The University will establish procedures to ensure the validation and re-validation of programmes will include well-informed consideration of the requirements of students with access needs. The University 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, usually in accordance with those recommended by an Assessment Centre, e.g. ensuring materials prepared for students are available in advance and/or in alternative formats, considering methods of alternative assessment, or flexible/interrupted study for students with variable illnesses and/or mental health conditions (these examples are an illustration and are not exhaustive).

The University will consider the accessibility of physical learning environments so that individual students with access needs are not disadvantaged. Information will be gathered from placement providers in order to ensure an anticipatory approach to placing students with access needs.

Due regard will be made to fitness to practise requirements of external professional bodies, and alternative means of demonstrating a required standard will be discussed with individual students.

Learning and teaching

University 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 (including placement and field-trip settings) with a minimal need for reasonable adjustment. Staff are aware of the need to discuss individual adjustments with students where such a need arises, and will work in liaison with the Student Support team wherever necessary.

The University will ensure reasonable adjustments for students with access needs are circulated to relevant members of staff in order that an anticipatory approach to requirements can be implemented. Arrangements for adjustments will be regularly reviewed and, where necessary, dialogue with the student will occur to ensure the effectiveness of support.

Appropriate information will be provided to students and trainees regarding the appropriate 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).

Any discriminatory behaviour will be challenged, and reported through the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

Academic assessment

The University 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. Reference should also be made to the University's *Code of Practice on the Conduct of Examinations*.

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.

Provision of alternative assessment and examination arrangements for disabled students will be well publicised and procedures will be easy to follow. Adjustments in assessments and examinations will allow for flexibility in the conduct of the assessment and will be available without delay.

Any adjustments to procedures for assessments and examinations will be applied consistently across the University and will ensure the rigour and comparability of the assessment are protected. Adjustments to procedures for assessments and examinations will not depend on an individual student's funding arrangements.

The following adjustments are examples of reasonable adjustments which may be made:

- Flexibility in the balance between assessed coursework and examinations;
- 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 (scribes), 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 University 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 non-prejudicial terms in any files relating to the student's academic progress.

Academic support for disabled students

The University will make accessible information available about the content and structure of courses, in order that potential students with access needs are able to make informed decisions when choosing courses and options within programmes. The University will ensure all staff advising students will be aware of aspects of courses that can present barriers, or be inaccessible to students with particular conditions.

The University will provide students with access needs with comprehensive information, 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.

The University will ensure all academic and technical staff involved in the delivery of programmes to students are made aware of the learning implications of any access needs of the students on the programme. Research supervisors will similarly be made aware of the learning implications of any access needs of students they supervise.

All staff involved in the delivery of the programme are expected to access information about the access needs in order to understand the learning implications for the students with whom they work. Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments to the delivery style and learning tasks will be agreed and implemented. Staff will respond to any feedback they receive from students with access needs, seeking further advice from Student Support where appropriate.

The University's IT strategy and related procedures will give full consideration to the development of responding to the needs of students with access needs, ensuring course and electronic information and learning materials are fully accessible to students. If necessary, alternative hardware or software will be provided to ensure inclusivity of academic resources.

The University is committed to the on-going development of its virtual learning environment as a platform for the delivery of inclusive teaching and learning practices.

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

Access to student services

The University will provide academic, pastoral and social campus-based services which are fully accessible and appropriate to the requirements of students with access needs.

The University will ensure students with access needs have access to the full range of services and facilities it provides.

The provision of services across all areas will be regularly reviewed and enhanced through the implementation of the Disability Equality Scheme and its associated annual action plan.

The University Student Support team will play a lead role in co-ordinating support to students with access needs, liaising with key staff members; Learning Advice, 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.

Student Support provides confidential, non-judgemental and impartial information, advice and guidance and the team are trained to provide an effective response in all aspects of the requirements of students with access needs. Student Support will liaise with the Schools to assist in the implementation of reasonable adjustments for students with access needs.

The University will deliver accurate, appropriate and timely advice and information to enable students with access needs to be independent members of the University community, enabling them to engage fully in the student experience.

The University provides careers education, information and guidance through its academic programmes and through its Careers Service. Careers information resources will be published in accessible formats and individual requirements of students with access needs will be taken into account. All services provided by the Careers Service are available to students with access needs.

The Careers Service and academic teams will refer matters arising from employment or placement settings to Student Support to ensure appropriate advice, guidance and support is provided.

Detailed information and guidance will be available to students with access needs at all stages of their engagement with the University, from admissions to graduation and beyond. This includes the requirements of their programme of study, together with what can be expected from the career route they aim to follow.

The University will ensure details of a full range of graduate opportunities, including postgraduate taught and research based programmes, are made readily available to students with access needs.

The physical environment

The University 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. All University buildings, including Halls of Residences, teaching and learning accommodation and resources, and leisure and recreational facilities, and any new build projects are subject to impact assessment and the access audit process.

Where physical access is unreasonably difficult or impossible, the University will endeavour to ensure that a flexible approach is taken which will allow students with access needs to participate in their programme of study, e.g. by identifying alternative venues where classes have been timetabled to take place in an inaccessible environment. The University 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.

When timetabling teaching sessions, administrators and academic staff are required to make sure arrangements are made to ensure enough time is available to mobility impaired students to travel between sessions, including the provision of transport arrangements, where applicable.

The University will ensure its policies and procedures allow students with access needs to participate in ceremonial events.

In accordance with relevant health and safety factors, the University will ensure that its facilities and equipment comply with the required standards for disabled access. The University will regularly monitor its existing and future facilities and equipment in respect of:

- Design and layout of furniture.
- Accessible signage, including publication of wheelchair accessible routes.
- Publication of information in accessible formats.
- Using contrasting tones on the interior and exterior buildings for visually impaired students.
- Appropriately designed and sited accessible toilets.
- Design of lighting systems.
- Use of hearing loops and other strategies, including paying attention to the acoustics of teaching spaces, for deaf and hearing impaired students.
- Provision of accessible IT equipment.
- Provision of alternative safety systems, e.g. flashing fire alarms or vibrating pagers.

Institutional procedures

The University ensures all student-facing policies and procedures are published in accessible formats. The regular review of policy and procedural documentation ensures a process of equality impact assessment is undertaken taking into account the needs of students with access needs. This process includes policies and procedures relating to complaints, harassment, disciplinary matters, and academic affairs (including academic appeals, and extenuating circumstances).

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. This will usually be achieved through liaison with the Student Support team who will have access to the specialist information required.

The University's Board of Examiners 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). The conduct of any panels for which attendance by the student is either desirable or mandatory should make appropriate allowances for that student's requirements, (e.g. accessible locations or in the length of time allocated to proceedings).

The University will ensure a non-discriminatory approach is taken to the application of its policies and procedures, including appeal stages. Where an appeal is made against a decision, on grounds of impairment, the decision-making panel will have access to guidance ensuring an outcome is reached which is consistent with other similar cases in the same institution.

Sufficient flexibility exists to allow for variation to the detail of regulations, where required by the nature of a student's impairment, while ensuring that the case is decided within the spirit of those regulations. Institutions make it clear how they will address claims arising from a previously undiagnosed impairment within their regulations.

The University's Student Support team will be available as a source of advice to students preparing submissions relating to policies and procedures. The Student Support team will receive appropriate training in order to ensure they provide students with access needs with information and advice regarding their entitlements.