North West Regional College Policy and Procedures

Learning Support

Issue	Document title	Date 1st reviewed	Next Review Date	Responsibility of
1	Learning Support Policy	November 2024	November 2026	Siobhan Faulkner
Date approved by LMT	Agreed in principle – to be formally approved at meeting on 31 March 2025			

north west regional college
Derry~Londonderry • Limavady • Strabane

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1. Introduction

North West Regional College recognises that disability discrimination is unlawful and take steps to ensure that it does not take place as we deliver services to our learners. NWRC have systems and procedures in place to meet this requirement.

The North West Regional College continues to anticipate the needs of disabled students. Teaching, learning, research and assessment activities are designed from the start with people who have disabilities in mind and facilities and services are reviewed regularly. Some students however require individual adjustments in the form of additional learning support and this is coordinated through the NWRC Learning Link.

The College will provide this policy in alternative formats on request where reasonably practicable, eg, Braille, Large Print, Computer Disk, Audio formats, etc, and/or alternative language. The College is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This policy should be interpreted in a manner consistent with the aforementioned legislation.

2. Scope of Policy

This policy covers all students attending North West Regional College. It forms the basis upon which all staff, Board of Governors, volunteers and any other third party to the Colleges should base their approach to accommodating the needs of Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities.

3. Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that opportunities for Learning Support are provided to all students with additional needs in a manner that is compliant with legislation and in accordance with the College's commitment to equality and inclusion.

The policy aims to:

- Promote awareness of provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities at NWRC.
- Encourage good practice in all aspects of service delivery for Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities.
- Empower Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities to make informed decisions about their education, life experiences and wellbeing to allow them to live independent lives and integrate within the community.
- Provide and implement clear, accessible and consistent guidance in relation to the procedures.
- Encourage and promote continuous professional staff development in the approach to Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities provision.
- Encourage and promote engagement with parents/guardians/responsible adults with learner consent.

4. Context

The College will carry out its responsibilities under all relevant legislation, regulations and professional guidelines, which include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Article 13(2) of the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1997/1772/article/13 requires that 'the Governing Body of an Institution of Further Education shall have regard to the

requirements of persons over compulsory school age, who have learning difficulties'.

- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 (Section 49a & 49B) (as amended by Article 5 of the disability discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/part/5A requires that when carrying out its functions, colleges are required to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability, learning difficulty or long term medical condition: and encourage participation in public life ('the disability duties').

- Section 75 of NI Act 1998 requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and to have regard to promoting good relations http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/section/75

- FE and HE Colleges are required under The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (amended 2006) http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2005/1117/contents to make ***reasonable*** for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities so that they can access provision.

5. Additional Support

Additional Support is the term used to describe a range of support and services available to students with disabilities/learning difficulties. Additional Support includes technical and/or personal support (non-medical) and includes:

- Specialist Tutor/Adviser, such as hearing or visual impairment tutor, IT consultancy, speech therapist or counsellor;
- Lecturer or IT adviser (including technician);
- Interpreter (for students with a hearing impairment);

- Learning Support Worker
- Note taker, such as shorthand note taker and/or typist, for assistance with student notes;
- Staff time, specifically for meetings with students;
- Specialised enabling equipment, such as braillers, IT adaptations, specialist software and related licences, and IT hardware and hearing loops.

Students who require personal or medical care services whilst studying at College will need to arrange this through their local health trust or social services department.

6. Reasonable adjustments

FE and HE Colleges are legislatively required to make reasonable adjustments for SLDD so that they can access provision. A reasonable adjustment aims to remove or reduce any substantial disadvantages faced by people with disabilities or students. Further information and examples can be found in Section 6 of the Disability Discrimination Code of Practice for Further & Higher Education https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/SENDOCoPforFHE2006.pdf?ext=.pdf

The SENDO Committee will be consulted in instances where reasonable adjustments are deemed complex or where a particular case requires further consideration. A collaborative approach takes place with input from the Learning Link Team, Student Services Management, Senior Management, Tutors and relevant external agencies.

7. Disclosure

There is no duty on a student to disclose a disability, and some students may prefer not to disclose a disability for various reasons. In general, it is in a student's best interests to disclose so that staff are better informed on how to make learning more accessible. Students are able to request support at any stage during their course.

For some courses, there may be particular health and safety issues that require students to disclose certain impairments or conditions. All students must be made aware of the health and safety or legal implications of non-disclosure. With this in mind, the College provides appropriate opportunities for a disabled student/ applicant to disclose, for example:

- On application;
- On enrolment;
- Induction;
- When registering for exams;
- When arranging work placements;
- Online Student Portal

The Learning Support Referral Form is available on the Staff Portal A-Z of resources under 'L' and should be completed with the signed consent of the student wishing to be referred when a disclosure is made.

Information for Self-Referral is available on the Student Portal under My Support. The Learning Link operates an open door policy for students and staff wishing to make a referral.

Students can refuse the support offered to them however this may limit the support that can be provided beyond the North West Regional College's anticipatory duty. In some instances, learning support may be deemed necessary due to health and safety risks and refusal could result in course progression difficulties.

8. Assessment of Needs

Students must provide relevant documentary evidence or supporting information in relation to their additional needs in order to arrange additional support. Students will be advised of the nature of the evidence required after disclosure; information on the type of evidence is available on the Learning Support Referral form, which is distributed via email and post by the Learning Link Team. Learning Link staff aim to arrange an Assessment of Need within ten working days of receiving students' evidence.

Careful and sensitive screening of the needs of the individual will be made to assess the support/reasonable adjustments required to enable them to carry out their learning within the resources available to the College.

All students receiving additional support will have in place a Supplementary Learning Agreement (SLA) which will document individual support arrangements and must be signed by the student. Students will be actively involved in the Assessment of Need, which is completed with professional and trained staff. The SLA is subject to two annual review meetings.

Individual Learning Plans are created and circulated to tutors, with the consent of students, outlining the student's condition(s), overview of support required and recommended strategies within the classroom. Tutors are expected to refer to these regularly and consider the individual needs of students when creating lesson plans. The Learning Link aims to have support in place within 5 working days of the Assessment of Need.

9. Data Protection

Students discuss their support needs at the Learning Link in confidence with experienced staff. All staff at NWRC should abide by the NWRC Data Protection Policy.

Students can limit the scope of who can be informed about their disability/learning difficulty and what they can be told (for instance, the disability itself might remain confidential, but additional support requirements might be communicated more widely). A confidentiality request does not absolve the College of their duty to provide reasonable adjustments, but the range and success of adjustments that can be made may be compromised.

10. Access Arrangements

When undertaking external examinations some students may require some form of Access Arrangement. For example, some students may be granted additional time or allowed supervised breaks in examinations. It is important to note that:

- Students with special educational needs do not automatically qualify for Access Arrangements.
- The provision of Access Arrangements must not give a pupil an unfair advantage.
- Some students may have to undertake diagnostic assessments to justify an Access Arrangement.
- Final decisions on special exam arrangements are the responsibility of the Exam Awarding Body.

Students should identify their need for Access Arrangements at the beginning of their course so that an application can be made to the awarding body. Students should submit a Learning Support Referral Form which is available on the staff portal under

‘L’. Requests for Access Arrangements and evidence should be submitted to the Learning Link department no later than six weeks prior to students’ exams dates to ensure support is in place for examinations.

11. Placements/ Field Trips

NWRC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that students with learning difficulties and / or disabilities can participate in essential field trips, workplace visits, field studies, site visits, trips and other college related events and activities.

The College and the placement provider have a combined legal responsibility to students with disabilities who are undertaking a placement as part of their course.

The College must ensure that people with disabilities participating in work placements and field trips as an essential part of their course are not placed at a substantial disadvantage and that there is compliance with Health and Safety guidelines. The College has a duty to work with the placement partner and ensure that appropriate support is in place and that the placement is accessible.

The Placement Liaison Officer or Lecturer must ensure that the relevant disability information, as agreed with the student, is passed on to the placement provider and ensure that any reasonable adjustments are put in place prior to the placement commencing. The College must ensure that field trips are fully accessible and that any additional support requirements/ resources are readily available prior to the field trip.

The Learning Link may request that a student has an NWRC Medical Plan completed by their GP if there are medical concerns relating to whether they are fit for placement. The Medical Plan also requests information from the student’s GP relating to individual first aid procedures recommended in the case of an emergency.

Learning Support Medical Plan forms are available on the Staff Portal A-Z of resources under ‘L’.

12. Non-Medical Human Support

Non-Medical Support Workers provide the link whereby students achieve equal access to the curriculum. They are managed by the Learning Link Team in Student Services, not by the student or lecturer. Their role is to provide targeted learning support based on the needs of the student. Non-Medical Support Workers do not provide course specific tuition and they are not responsible for the behaviour or supervision of students.

Support Workers may perform the following tasks in the classroom:

- Scribing and note taking.
- Reinforcing information the lecturer has already provided.
- Prompting students to return to the task in hand.
- Enabling the student to participate in practical tasks.
- Assisting the student to access the resources of the College.
- Operating assistive technology such as digital recorders, electronic spell checkers etc., where necessary.
- Preparing laptops/ PCs for the student to use during class.
- Providing generic one to one study skills support.
- Providing mentoring support.

13. Monitoring and review

The Learning Support team will contribute to the Self-Evaluation process in line with the College policy for quality improvement.

The policy will be monitored every two years to ensure equality across the range of provision.

14. Temporary injury/ condition

Students who acquire a temporary injury or medical condition during their studies and require additional support should submit a Learning Support Referral form along with supporting evidence. Students will be invited to an Assessment of Need meeting to discuss supportive options. Where possible, supporting evidence should indicate the length of the time the injury/condition is likely to last.

15. Complaints and Compliments

Individuals concerned about any aspect of the management of Learning Support at the College may raise their concerns by following the Complaints and Compliments Procedure available via https://www.nwrc.ac.uk/about/corporate/college-policies

15. Key Personnel

Action	Responsibility
Meet to embed a whole college approach and support the implementation of SENDO and the DDA. To highlight and make balanced decisions on complex cases.	SENDO Committee
Manage Learning Support activity undertaken by Learning Link staff.	The Student Services Management Team
Responsible for providing an effective and consistent service to students with additional needs and promoting the service.	Learning Link Staff
To provide effective learning support to students studying at NWRC based on their individual needs and communicate relevant information to Learning Link staff. Ensure evidence of condition is up-to-date and meets the requirements outlined by DfE Circulars and Professional Bodies.	Learning Link Support Staff
Oversee learning support activity undertaken by teaching staff and Curriculum Learning Support Co-ordinators (CLSCs) within their areas.	Heads of Faculty
To circulate Individual Learning Plans to relevant tutors within their department and to promote the services of Learning Link.	CLSCs
Responsibility to adopt an inclusive approach in their work with students and to abide by relevant disability legislation and commit to continuous professional development in this area.	All Staff
Responsible for promoting the services of learning support to students who they identify as having	Lecturers

indicators of learning difficulty/disability and to make appropriate referrals to Learning Link. To ensure recommendations provided by Learning Link staff are followed through in the classroom, placement and in their lesson plan design.	
Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning, and to work in partnership with College staff in arranging appropriate and effective additional learning support measures.	Students
Ensure mandatory SENDO training is completed by all staff in the College. Ensure continuous professional development opportunities are available in relation to Disability Awareness.	HR
Ensure approved Access Arrangements are in place for examinations.	Learning Link Team Staff Exams Department

Record of Changes:

Page No	Change comment	Date of change	Initials
1	Update Review, approval and next review dates	December 2024	SS
Throughout	Department changed to faculty/section	December 2024	HMCG
13	Word Tutors changed to Lecturers	December 2024	HMCG
14	Addition of word 'placements' to point re ensuring recommendations are followed through	December 2024	HMCG
14	Addition of Learning Link Team as responsibility for ensure access arrangements	December 24	HMCG