

North West Regional College Policy and Procedures

Learning Support

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Scope of Policy.....	3
3. Purpose.....	3
4. Context.....	4
5. Learning Support.....	5
6. Reasonable adjustment.....	5-6
7. Disclosure.....	6-7
8. Assessment of Need.....	7
9. Data Protection.....	8
10. Access Arrangements.....	8-9
11. Placements/Field Trips.....	9-10
12. Non-Medical Helper Support.....	10-11
13. Finance.....	11
14. Monitoring and Review.....	11
15. Learning Link Process.....	12
16. Key Personnel.....	13-14

1. Introduction

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 disabled people 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.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy:

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

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:

- Special Educational Needs Order NI (2005) amended (2006).
- Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
- Equality Commissions Code of Practice for Further and Higher Educational Establishments
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).
- Data Protection Act (1998)
- DFE FE Circular – Funding for students with a Learning Difficulty – Additional Support Fund
- Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) – Student Finance NI
- Higher Education Authority (IE) – Funds for Students with Disabilities
- Training for Success Operational Requirements and Guidelines

The North West Regional College recognises the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 definition of disability.

A person is regarded as being disabled if he/she has *“a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities”*.

5. Learning Support

Learning Support is the term used at North West Regional College to describe a range of support and services available to students with disabilities/learning difficulties. Learning Support includes:

- Adjustments made by teaching staff within the classroom
- Assistive technology, equipment and software
- The provision of non-medical human support such as a note-taker, sign language interpreter etc.
- Access Arrangements in examinations
- Adaption of materials
- Advice, guidance and referral to external agencies

6. Reasonable adjustments

The College is committed to making reasonable adjustments for learners within certain boundaries. Reasonable adjustments ensure that as far as is reasonable, a student with additional needs has the same access to the curriculum and services as other students. The following factors will be taken into account when considering adjustments:

- The need to maintain academic standards
- Health and Safety
- Financial resources available and cost
- The relevant interests of other stakeholders, including other students
- Practicality
- The effect of the impairment on the individual disabled student
- Other aids or services available/funding

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 should be able to request support at any stage during their course.

For some courses there may be particular health and safety requirements that students disclose certain impairments or conditions. All students must, therefore, 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 - email

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 will 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 and up-to-date documentary evidence or supporting information in relation to their additional needs in order to permit reasonable adjustments to be made and support put in place. Students will be advised of the nature of the evidence required as soon after disclosure. 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 should 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.

9. Data Protection

All student disability information should be treated as 'sensitive information' under the Data Protection Legislation. This means that you must store the information in a secure place, treat it as confidential and dispose of it safely, in line with the College's Data Protection Policy.

Students discuss their support needs at the Learning Link in confidence with experienced staff. This information should not be passed on to other staff or external bodies without their signed consent, unless they are at risk to themselves or others.

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 doesn't 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.
- Access Arrangements do not carry over into a new academic year. It is the student's responsibility to make sure they have been assessed by a Learning Support Officer before the deadlines set by NWRC and the exam awarding body.
- Word Processors will only be granted where evidence is provided to the Learning Link. Evidence must highlight that a disability/learning difficulty exists and that it has a substantial impact on a student's ability to write legibly.

Students who are approved for Access Arrangements, according to the Joint Council Qualification regulations, will be given the opportunity to use their specific Access Arrangement during examinations and this will be arranged through the Exams Department.

Academic standards must not be compromised and the integrity and validity of assessments must remain.

11.Placements/ Field Trips

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

The College must ensure that disabled students 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.

This Placement Liaison Officer or Tutor 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 placement. In addition, if the College becomes aware that a disabled student is being discriminated against whilst on a work placement, then it is responsible for preventing the discrimination continuing or recurring, even if the student has signed a contract with the placement provider. 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

The North West Regional College provides non-medical human support to eligible disabled students. 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.

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

Non-Medical Helpers may perform the following tasks in the classroom:

- Scribing and note taking.
- Reinforcing information the lecturer has already given.
- 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 to students who are anxious in class

13.Finance

Students in mainstream provision are supported under the DfE Additional Support Fund. Students in discrete provision are supported under the DfE Discrete Special Needs Fund. Both of these funding streams are subject to budgetary constraints.

14. 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. This will form part of the Learning Support Annual Report.

15. Learning Link Process

Disclosure and Referral

Student ticks the Learning Support box on their application form. Student receives an Additional Needs Form and evidence of their disability is requested. Student returns form and evidence.

Student self-refers by contacting the Learning Link through telephone, email or walk-ins. Student is provided with an Additional Needs Form and evidence is requested.

Tutor refers student, with consent, through LL Referral Form and attach evidence.

The Learning Link aim to arrange an Assessment of Need within 10 working days of receiving a student's evidence.

The student is invited to an Assessment of Need which is carried out by a Learning Support Officer. Support arrangements are planned and agreed using a student led approach. The Learning Link aims to have support in place within 5 working days.

Individual Learning Plans are disseminated to tutors through the Curriculum Learning Support Coordinators.

Exam Contracts are drawn up and sent to the Exams Department so that Access Arrangements are in place before their exams. Some students attend a follow up appointment for diagnostic assessment.

Human Support is organised by the Learning Support Officer. This includes the services of support workers, study skills tutors and examination support workers etc.

Students are referred to other services to include:
Careers Academy,
Finance, Safeguarding,
Counselling, TFS/AppNI
Contracted Providers

Students are invited for a review appointment twice a year to discuss progress and support arrangements. The Learning Link is a safe space for our students and operates an open door policy so that students can discuss and review their support throughout their studies.

Learning Link.

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 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 and in their lesson plan design.	Tutors
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	Exams Department

