



lyit

Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Leitir Ceanáin
Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Student Disability Policy

June 2018





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1. Introduction

Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in education, and to ensuring that students and staff have complete and equitable access to all facets of college life to the greatest extent possible. LYIT encourages the development of independent learning and is committed to supporting students with disabilities to achieve their academic goals.

The Curve at LYIT offers a confidential and accessible service for all students with disabilities and aims to identify and support students' learning needs during their time in college. The Curve is student-centered in its ethos and is committed, in so far as is reasonably possible, to empowering students with disabilities to achieve their academic and vocational goals, as well as to access and enjoy all aspects of college life.

2. Definition of Disability

"Disability" is understood to mean:

- (a) the total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body;
- (b) the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, disease or illness;
- (c) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body;
- (d) a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction; or
- (e) a condition, disease or illness which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.

(Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015, Equal Status Acts 2000-2015).

Included in this policy are procedures in the following areas that assist the Institute in dealing with students with disabilities:

- Access and Admissions
- Disclosure of Disability
- Screening for Suspected Difficulty
- Needs Assessment
- Communication with Parents
- Financial Support
- Academic Support
- Examinations
- Curriculum Access
- Physical Access
- Health and Safety
- General Disability Awareness in the Institute
- Complaints Procedure.

3. Access and Admissions

- 3.1 The Institute is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all of its students. It therefore welcomes all applications from students with disabilities and will endeavour to ensure that every possible effort is made to facilitate and encourage their access to, participation and success in their course of study.
- 3.2 The Institute currently treats all CAO applications from students with disabilities on the same academic merits as others. The concepts of human rights and human dignity are borne in mind in all processes involving all students with disabilities.
- 3.3 The Special Fund for Students with Disabilities, as administered by the Department of Education and Skills, is the main source of finance available in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The Curve is responsible for disseminating information on this Fund. Students with disabilities who may have specific needs for assistive technology and/or academic support must ensure that they contact the Disability Officer as early as possible in the academic year in order to apply to this Fund.

4. Disclosure of Disability

- 4.1 Students with a disability may indicate this fact by completing the relevant section on the CAO application form. Students who avail of this facility are then requested to provide further information and documentation to the CAO that can then be accessed by the relevant third level institutes.
- 4.2 Students who avail of this facility are invited to meet with the Disability Officer prior to registration in order to ensure that the appropriate arrangements are made should the student subsequently accept the offer of a place at LYIT.
- 4.3 In line with GDPR regulations, it is noted that information is collected from the CAO and also at this initial meeting and ongoing meetings with the student. The Disability Officer (or Learning Support tutor) collects and stores this information to allow them to provide their service. Some information collected qualifies as special categories of personal data under GDPR Article 9.2. The Disability Officer will request the student's explicit consent to collect and store this data and it is only processed for the provision of the Learning Support service at LYIT. The Disability Officer will hold this information securely on the LYIT server and in a secure location on site. This information will be shared only with academic staff for the purposes of providing support; the Exams Office for provision of exam allowances; and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for application for funding.

LYIT will disclose limited information to third parties if it is determined the disclosure is required to comply with law or in an emergency situation to avoid death or serious bodily harm. The student has the right to withdraw their consent to their information being used at any time. The student has the right to raise any concerns that they have around their information under GDPR directly with LYIT's Data Protection Officer. They also have the right to raise any concern with the Data Commissioner. The information collected will be retained in line with LYIT's Retention Policy which is available at www.lyit.ie/About/Policies-Publications/Policies.

- 4.4 All students are encouraged to disclose their disabilities, as non-disclosure has the obvious effect of severely limiting the provision of appropriate procedures, supports and facilities. It is the responsibility of the individual student to make contact with the Disability Officer as early in the academic year as possible.

- 4.5 It is the student's responsibility to provide adequate and relevant documentation pertaining to his/her disability from relevant qualified professionals. It is recommended that documentation pertaining to specific learning difficulties should not be older than five years at the time of initial registration.
- 4.6 If a student with a disability does not make him/herself known to the Disability Officer until after the beginning of the academic year, the Disability Officer will endeavour to ensure that suitable arrangements are made for that student, subject to resources.

5. Screening for Potential Learning Difficulty

The Curve offers a screening procedure for all students upon registration. This screening:

- Provides an insight into the student's learning style;
- Highlights any difficulties which are consistent with learning disability profiles;
- Highlights areas of concern and allows referral to an appropriate agency; and
- Allows the screener to advise a student on effective learning strategies based on a learning profile.

The student may be invited for further assessment if the screening result indicates a potential learning difficulty may be present.

The LYIT screening process is not a psycho-educational assessment service. Completing the three stages of the screening process with positive indicators of a learning difficulty does allow a student to register for supports with The Curve temporarily for one semester only. The three stages include the initial Quickscreen upon registration, completion of a computer-based Lucid Adult Dyslexic Screen (LADS) and, if the LADS is positive, completion of a written Dyslexic Adult Screening Test (DAST). Subsequently, in order to avail of general and specialist supports in LYIT, a full, independent psychological assessment must be completed, and a copy of the report forwarded to the Disability Officer. Once this report, with a diagnosis of a learning difficulty, is received, the student will be fully registered with The Curve.

6. Needs Assessment

- 6.1 The Disability Officer will complete a standardised Needs Assessment for all students who disclose a disability. This Needs Assessment will determine which supports and accommodations the student requires for the duration of their studies.
- 6.2 The Needs Assessment is completed through:
- Interview with the student, and
 - Detailed examination of recent and relevant documentation by qualified professionals (responsibility for the provision of such documentation rests with the student).
- 6.3 The Needs assessment is a working document and may be revised at any point throughout the student's study at LYIT.

7. Communication with Parents and/or Guardians

- 7.1 The Curve welcomes initial contacts from parents and/or guardians of students interested in studying at LYIT. However, once a student has registered with LYIT (including students under 18), The Curve is unable to disclose student information without the express written consent of the student.
- 7.2 Information about individual conditions or support provisions will not be disclosed to, or discussed with, any individual outside LYIT, including a parent and/guardian, without the express written consent of the student.

In exceptional circumstances, where the safety of the student is at risk, the Disability Officer may deem it necessary to contact the student's parent and/or guardian without their permission.

8. Academic Support

- 8.1 Depending on the recommendations of their assessment report, students with disabilities may be given the option of support sessions with a learning support tutor. The Disability Officer makes the arrangements for these sessions and payment to the support tutors is made through The Curve following appropriate authorisation.
- 8.2 It is the responsibility of the Disability Officer to inform the relevant Heads of Departments of students with disabilities who register with The Curve (with the student's written consent). Relevant information from the assessment report outlining the diagnosis of the disability, its impact on the student's performance, and recommendations for academic support and/or exam accommodations will be forwarded to the Head of Department via a secure password-protected portal.
- 8.3 It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to inform, in confidence, the relevant Programme Board and academic staff of all reports regarding students with disabilities. Subject to the recommendations made in the appropriate report, there may be flexibility with regard to course input demands (depending on the nature and degree of the disability, and on individual course requirements). The Programme Board will endeavour to inform the student of the decision reached in relation to accommodation and supports at the earliest possible opportunity. At all times the focus of the Programme Board's deliberations will be on facilitating student learning so that the programme learning outcomes can be achieved.
- 8.4 In so far as is possible, academic staff will endeavour to assist students with disabilities to meet their full academic potential by providing reasonable accommodations, where appropriate. All accommodations will be in adherence with the Institute's Policy on Guidelines and Procedures for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to Students with Disabilities.
- 8.5 If, by virtue of his/her disability, a student is finding it difficult to maintain academic progress, a limited amount of funding may be available through The Curve in order to pay for extra tuition. Each case will be handled on an individual basis.

9. Examinations

- 9.1 The principal policy in relation to examinations in respect of students with disabilities is the Policy, Guidelines and Procedures for the Granting of Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations to Students with Disabilities.

Where a student's disability may adversely affect their performance in exams, the following arrangements, where appropriate, may be put in place in consultation with the Head of Department, Disability Officer, and Examinations Officer:

- Extension of exam time
- Separate room and invigilator
- Reader
- Scribe
- Use of equipment and assistive technology
- Enlarged text on examination paper
- Spelling/grammar exemption
- Rest periods
- Use of a computer
- Other individualised arrangements.

The criteria for receipt of exam allowances is as directed in the Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN) 'Reasonable Accommodations in Exams' policy document (available at www.dawn.ie/resources/policies/).

- 9.2 These exam equality accommodations ensure that student with a diagnosed disability are provided with an equal opportunity to perform to the best of their ability.
- 9.3 It is the responsibility of the individual student to discuss their examination requirements well in advance of any examinations with the Disability Officer, and provide documentary evidence of same, preferably at the beginning of the academic year.
- 9.4 It is the responsibility of the Disability Officer to liaise with the relevant Head of Department/School and the Examinations Officer with regard to the examination requirements of all students registered with The Curve.
- 9.5 It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to inform, in confidence, the relevant course board and academic staff of the student's disability and to request that this be taken into account when preparing and marking examinations.
- 9.6 It is the responsibility of the Examinations Officer to arrange separate invigilation for students requiring this facility.

10. Curriculum Access

- 10.1 In order to facilitate curriculum access, the Institute will ensure that students deemed eligible for learning-related accommodations through their Needs Assessment will receive the appropriate entitlements, within reason and budgetary limitations.

10.2 Learning-related accommodations that are normally available to eligible students include but are not limited to:

- lecture notes in advance
- personal assistant/note taker
- extra tuition (subject specific)
- learning support
- dyslexia tuition
- study skills
- assistive technology
- speed text operator
- assistive technology training
- photocopying
- extended loan periods for library materials.

10.3 The Curve will help ensure curriculum access through the dissemination of information obtained through the Needs Assessment to relevant personnel throughout the Institute and will contribute to course development as requested.

10.4 Information regarding the learning needs of specific students with disabilities will be disseminated in the form of information on the secure password-protected portal. The Curve will forward the password to relevant Heads of Schools and Heads of Departments, who may then inform relevant lecturing staff.

10.5 If a Head of School, Head of Department, or Lecturer is unclear as to a student's identified needs and/or how to meet these needs, they are encouraged to seek advice from The Curve immediately.

10.6 If a member of staff believes that a student's identified needs are not being met, they are encouraged to report their concerns to The Curve immediately.

11. Physical Access

11.1 LYIT is committed to ensuring that all students with disabilities can access all buildings and teaching rooms on campus (*Building Regulations, Part M, 2010*).

11.2 It is the responsibility of individual students to be aware of the emergency evacuation procedures and to inform the Disability Officer if the measures in place do not accommodate their needs.

11.3 PEEPs (Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans) will be discussed in detail during the Needs Assessment and put in place with students, where applicable, by the Disability Officer or a Learning Support Tutor nominated by the Disability Officer.

11.4 Copies of all the Institute's Health and Safety documentation are available online through the internal Institute link for LYIT users (www.lyit.ie/About/Policies-Publications/Health-Safety).

12. Disability Awareness

- 12.1 Disability Awareness Training is made available to staff through the Disability Officer on a regular basis. Specialised training will be made available to individual staff members if necessary.
- 12.2 Each Head of Department will endeavour to ensure that an appropriate number of staff engage with any training provided and will bring relevant matters to the attention of staff at Programme Boards.

13. Complaints Procedure

- 13.1 If a student with a disability is not satisfied with any aspect of their interaction with The Curve or feels that his/her specific needs are not being met at the Institute, he/she is encouraged to address the area(s) of concern directly with The Curve. All students registered with The Curve are provided with the opportunity to complete a questionnaire relating to service provision. This feedback is then reviewed with a view to implementing any necessary changes to the provision of the service.
- 13.2 The Curve will take every reasonable measure to ensure that the learner's complaint is resolved. However, The Curve is bound to act within the constraints of Institute policy.
- 13.3 If a student has addressed his/her area(s) of concern with The Curve and remains unsatisfied with the outcome, he/she is advised to follow the Learner Complaints Procedure as detailed in the Quality Assurance Handbook.

LYIT endeavours to support learners with disabilities and implement this policy as far as is practicable within constraints on resources and operational limitations.





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