



WC15 - Disability Policy

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Introduction

Westerfield is fully committed to a policy of equal opportunities for disabled staff and students and aims to create an environment that allows all students to fully demonstrate their potential. Please see the 'Key Contact' information below for details of the College support contacts.

In the context of fair access and participation, Westfield is committed to recruiting students from all backgrounds to our programmes and providing a level of support to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to succeed on their chosen programme. Our Access and Participation Statement (APS) sets out what we are doing to make sure we meet the expectations of a registered **Provider of the Office for Students (OfS)** - the Higher Education Regulator in England.

Westerfield has in place various policies and processes to support students at the College and where additional support has been identified, and subsequently arranged, the College will endeavour to maintain support of the students throughout their studies.

Key Contact

Key team members for disability and wellbeing support are as follows:

The College Disability and Wellbeing Contact - Admissions:

Name and contact number

The College Disability and Wellbeing Contact - College Services:

Name and contact number

Definition:

A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (Equality Act 2010).

Some students may already have a disability when they apply to the College whereas others may become disabled or become aware of an existing disability only after their programme has started. Others may have fluctuating conditions. Some students may be disabled temporarily by accident or illness.

As an organisation, we assess each applicant based on the support they may require when declaring a disability. The Admissions Policy and details below outline the admission requirements when applying to the College.

Admissions

Applications from candidates with disabilities will be assessed based on academic suitability for the course in question but will also be subject to the ability of the applicant to meet any professional practitioner requirements.

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If the College is unable to meet your additional needs or can only do so by compromising the learning experience which would disadvantage the applicant, we will endeavour to inform you as soon as possible.

The College's Admissions team is committed to developing educational opportunities, which can be accessed by all qualified applicants and, as such, the admission process is open to all persons with a disability, physical or mental, and specific learning needs.

The College strongly encourages applicants to fully disclose their disabilities, whether a mental or physical condition, as early as possible to ensure that any necessary support arrangements and reasonable adjustments to alleviate the effects of an applicant's condition can be considered, and where appropriate, made before arrival at the College. In instances where a disability or well-being concern is known in advance of the course of study, it is advisable to declare this no later than on acceptance to the course (**Acceptance Form**). It is also encouraged that a known disability likely to affect the use or participation in ancillary activities associated with the Programme, or where it is likely to mean that special arrangements will be required (for example about access, accommodation, travel), these be declared during the admission application stage.

The College Admissions Team will consider all applications following the Equality Act, 2010 and any associated applicable laws, statutes, regulations and associated guidance. In accordance with this, the College may reject an application on the grounds of disability where: •

- Necessary adjustments would not be reasonable either to the physical or staffing resource base of the College.
- The College cannot guarantee the health and safety of the applicant for the times that they are not in timetabled sessions at the College.

Do you need to declare your disability?

If you do not disclose your disability at admission, the College will not be aware of any additional support or needs you may have and thus no additional support will be provided to you upon arrival to the College.

We actively encourage you to disclose your disability as early as possible so that we can discuss your support requirements and ensure that we can provide adequate support. If you do not disclose your disability until after you have registered with the College, the College will seek to support you to the best of its ability but cannot make any guarantees on meeting your additional needs. As per the terms and conditions of a **student contract**, if the applicant/student fails to notify the College of any such disability at the time of application or during the programme of study of which the College subsequently determines that it cannot support the applicant/student despite its ability to make reasonable adjustments, then the College may refuse the student's application, withdraw any offer that has been made or where an offer has been accepted, withdraw the student from the programme of study and terminate the contract.

Do you need to provide evidence of your disability?

If you need to access any adjustments to teaching and assessment practices such as extra time in exams, you will need to provide documentary evidence to confirm the impact of your disability to our admissions team. It is your responsibility to provide the appropriate evidence and to ensure that it is current and up to date, normally within a year of your application to Westerfield.

What evidence can you use?

Physical, sensory, mental health, and other medical conditions In most cases a letter from an appropriately qualified medical practitioner confirming your disability and the nature of the difficulties it presents you with will be sufficient. Examples include:

- Physical impairments (e.g., back injuries, arthritis, wheelchair users, dexterity difficulties)
- Sensory impairments (e.g., deaf, blind, serious sight or hearing impairment)
- Mental health difficulties (e.g., depression, anxiety disorders)
- Long-standing illnesses or conditions (e.g., diabetes, epilepsy, chronic fatigue syndrome, digestive and bowel conditions, cancer, cystic fibrosis, severe facial disfigurement, HIV)

Specific learning difficulties and other cognitive impairments

Evidence requirements are more specific and rigorous. Essentially you will need to be assessed after your 16th birthday using tests designed for use with adults as opposed to children. The assessment will need to contain an assessment of your underlying cognitive ability as well as any areas of difficulty such as literacy and will need to be carried out by an appropriately qualified professional tutor or psychologist.

Examples include:

- Specific learning difficulty (e.g., dyslexia, ADD/ADHD, dyspraxia)
- Social impairment (e.g., Autistic Spectrum Conditions (incl. Asperger Syndrome)

On-Programme

Teaching and Learning

A key role the College has is to prepare you for future studies in Higher Education through an independent learning culture. This culture applies to disabled and non-disabled students alike. Reasonable adjustments are intended to minimise, as far as is reasonably possible, any adverse impacts a disability or disabilities might have on your capacity to access the teaching aspects of the College and typical examples would include:

- Access to course materials in alternative formats
- Class allocation based on accessibility
- Equipment loans of assistive hardware
- Assistive software
- Library support
- Tutorial and additional study skills

Examination and Assessment Procedures

Extensions to deadlines can be accommodated where necessary but this will be for relatively exceptional cases through a structural adjustment such as a reduced overall pace of study or alternative modes of assessment that is pre-planned, agreed and put in place from the outset.

A general option to seek extensions on an ad hoc basis is not available as it can lead to a cumulative and ultimately unmanageable backlog of unfinished work as the course proceeds and also completely undermines the necessary development of a systematic study habit. The

Academic and Student Services team in the College are on hand to support you with time management skills.

However, if you do experience an unforeseen worsening of your condition that does affect your ability to complete work on time or sit an assessment then you are eligible for consideration under Extenuating Circumstances rules, in the same way as all students who fall unexpectedly ill while at the College.

The exact nature of any reasonable adjustments shall be determined by the specific needs of the student but may involve adjustments to:

- a) Process of timed assessments - such as the provision of additional time, rest breaks, assessment in separate rooms, alternative formats, the appointment of a reader, scribe or amanuensis and use of word processing packages and assistive technology.
- b) Nature of all assessments - such as the substitution of an alternative assessment method where the maintenance of the existing method will place the student at a substantial disadvantage and such substitution will not compromise the rigour and comparability of the assessment.

Advice and Support

At the College, our Academic and Student Service Teams are here to support students with matters that may impact the quality of the student experience for all potential and existing disabled students. Please see the 'Key Contacts' section for details of local support.

This may include:

- Discussion and agreement on appropriate reasonable adjustments
- Any examination or assessment concessions.
- Any alterations to teaching methods, where appropriate;
- Support managing assessment load and time management skills;
- Arranging liaison with the relevant team at the University, pending your progression.

Other participation activities on offer at the College to support students include:

- Operation of a rigorous system of attendance monitoring designed to identify students who are at risk of failing or withdrawing;
- An attendance monitoring system that supports students who are at risk of academic failure or withdrawal;
- Availability of student support workshops on study skills, wellbeing and mental health, employability and cross-cultural communication challenges;
- Availability of personalised wellbeing and counselling services
- Representation of the student voice through a range of forums including the College Enhancement Teams, **Student Council** and Westerfield Academic Board.
- Provision of a specialised advisor for disability support;
- Careers support and services

Further Information and Guidance

Further information, guidance and interpretation of this Policy should be sought, in the first instance, from the Key Contact(s) listed in this policy.

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Other available information online includes:

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA):

DSA is only available to students who are ordinarily resident in the UK. For more information, please see <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/overview>.

UCAS:

UCAS helps to inspire and empower people to make aspirational choices about higher education and learning. They provide advice and guidance for all stages of university life. Specific support guidance for students with a disability can be found here:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/disabled-students/support-disabled-students-frequently-asked-questions>

British Council:

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. Information on student support including advice and guidance for students with a disability can be found on the website - <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/moving-uk/support-while-study>

Communication of the Policy

All staff must be aware of this Policy and must abide by its requirements. It will be published on the College website to ensure that it is available to all those within the College community who have a responsibility for the well-being of students.

Data Protection

The College will only share personal information of an applicant or student where strictly necessary and in line with relevant legislation including the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information about how we use your data, you can find the College's Privacy Notice on the College website.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Academic Board unless there are internal or legislative changes necessitating an earlier review.

Version History

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