

Disability and Neurodiversity

Our Approach to Inclusion

The School is committed to ensuring the inclusion of all students with complex and diverse needs such as disabilities including physical/sensory impairments, mental health difficulties, learning differences, and neurodiversity.

This Policy is intended to support and facilitate students with a disability, impairment, or other support needs to engage positively and fully with their course and to fulfil the expectations of the training. It also aims to support and facilitate the experience of current and prospective staff of the School. It is designed to support the needs of all students and staff and sits with the School's [Support Through Studies Policy](#) and similarly aligned policies.

Scope of the Policy

This Policy applies to students studying on a course of Higher Education who are registered students of the School. It also applies to staff employed by the School, particularly those who manage staff or support or teach students.

This Policy is particularly relevant to disabled staff and students including those with specific learning differences (SpLDs), mental health conditions, sensory and physical impairments, and other diverse and complex needs. We will provide support to an individual who discloses disability. It is important to make sure that anyone who discloses a disability feels included and supported by the School.

This policy is also relevant for staff and students without impairments who are directly supporting a person with an impairment. More broadly, it also seeks to support and encourage an inclusive environment for the entire School community.

Although the Policy provides a guide about how disabled staff or students can be supported during their employment or education, this should be very much informed by the individual concerned and they should be thoroughly consulted along the way. Whatever the individual circumstances, the School is committed to being flexible, supportive, and making clear that discrimination and harassment against disabled people will not be tolerated.

The Social Model of Disability¹

The School operates under the Social Model of Disability. The 'Social Model' takes the view that society creates barriers that 'disable' people from participating fully and on an equal basis with others. Wherever possible, these barriers ought to be removed. The School is committed to removing unnecessary barriers during the application, audition and interview

¹ For more information about the Social Model of Disability see: [Social model of disability | Disability charity Scope UK](#)

processes and throughout training. We aim to provide appropriate support so that all students and staff can achieve their full potential.

Admissions

The School judges student applicants solely on their talent and potential to develop the skills required for their chosen profession. We are committed to admitting and supporting all students. We warmly encourage all applicants to inform the School of any specific support they might need so that this can be put into place as soon as possible.

The School welcomes applications from disabled people and judges applicants solely on their talent and potential to develop the skills required for their chosen profession. We are committed to admitting and supporting disabled students and warmly encourage applicants to inform the School so that appropriate support can be put into place as soon as possible.

It is the School's policy to invite all applicants to a first-round audition (either in person or through a recording). To make the audition process as fair as possible, it is important that applicants inform the School of the kind of support they may need for application. There is a space on the application form for applicants to declare any impairment or condition, for example dyslexia or other learning difficulty, a physical or sensory impairment or a long term medical or mental health condition that might have an impact on the audition or interview process, or on subsequent training. The School takes responsibility to make reasonable adjustments to avoid as far as possible the disadvantage which a disabled prospective student experiences because of their disability.

Student Support

Disabled Student's Allowances (DSAs) are Government grants available to eligible disabled students on higher education courses in the UK to help with extra course costs they may incur during their course as a direct result of their disability. The allowances can help to pay for a non-medical personal helper, items of specialist equipment, assistive software, travel, and other course-related costs. The allowance is neither means-tested nor repayable. DSAs are not available to all students, but are subject to eligibility criteria, which are stated on the [Gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk), together with the amounts payable.

At Central, we work to ensure equality of opportunity for all students to develop contextual and professional skills. Ensuring equality of opportunity requires collaboration and provision of ongoing support across academic, professional, pastoral and specialist services.

In making this provision, the student support team and the wider School consider and anticipate the needs of both the individual student and the wider student body including considerations of protected characteristics. In this way we aim for all students to flourish through their learning experiences.

Central has sufficient appropriately qualified staff to deliver a high-quality learning experience. They are highly skilled in meeting the learning and support needs of students, ensuring effective acquisition of skills and understanding.

Academic Learning Support

Central provides effective academic learning support for all students to achieve successful learning outcomes. To meet the academic learning needs of the students, the HE team provide:

- Individualised academic support such as proof reading, draft feedback, study skills, research skills, etc.
- Guidance for study skills, self-organisation and planning skills, independent study programmes and tutoring
- Screening of all students upon entry to course for Specific Learning Differences (SpLDs)
- Organisation of diagnostic assessments with external specialist partners, as required
- Enhanced Learning Agreements (ELA) planning and coordination with internal and external providers
- Application for DSA funding, and coordination and management of weekly DSA-approved support for relevant students throughout their course
- Support and coordination of training for assistive learning equipment
- Additional bespoke weekly classes for Direct Entry and incoming international students

As and when necessary, the School utilises the University of Kent regulations to make reasonable adjustments to assessments to avoid as far as possible the disadvantage which a disabled student experiences because of their disability. This enables all students to fairly demonstrate their capabilities across the course.

Our approach to Academic Learning support is highly effective in enabling students to continue to succeed in Contextual Studies modules. They consistently report in the NSS and End-of-Year Feedback that the Academic Learning Support they receive is of high quality. Many students choose to access additional 1:1 tutorial and/or small group support, and those students with SpLDs have external 1:1 specialist study skills provision and assistive software training that is tailored to their needs. For more information about Student Support please refer to our [Guide to Student Support](#).

The Support Through Studies Policy

The Support Through Studies Policy refers to a student's ability to engage positively and fully with their course of study and to fulfil the expectations of the training and course. The full policy can be found on the [Student-related Policies](#) page of our website.

Support Through Studies comprises of informal frontline resolutions and more formal procedures. The policy has three stages under which a student may be formally referred, although the principles can be informally followed where appropriate. When the Support Through Studies policy is being used, even informally, the student should always be made aware of this.

It is important to remember that the Support Through Studies Policy is intended to be a positive and supportive process rather than a punitive one. Support Through Studies should create a dialogue that allows students to take ownership of their education and training.

Staff Recruitment

In terms of staffing, the School welcomes and encourages employment applications regardless of complex and diverse needs. The School is committed to ensuring no employment advertisement and job description presents unnecessary barriers to individuals and that candidates are only assessed on their individual capacity to undertake the role in question and nothing more.

It is against the law for employers to discriminate people because of a disability. The Equality Act 2010 protects employees and applicants and covers the following areas:

- application forms
- interview arrangements
- aptitude or proficiency tests
- job offers
- terms of employment, including pay
- promotion, transfer, and training opportunities
- dismissal or redundancy
- discipline and grievance

The School welcomes and encourages employment applications from disabled people. The School is committed to ensuring no employment advertisement and job description presents unnecessary barriers to individuals.

Under the Equality Act 2010, a potential employer can only ask about health or disability in the following ways:

- to help decide if a person is able to carry out a task that is an essential part of the role;
- to find out if a person is able to take part in an interview;
- to decide if reasonable adjustments are needed for the selection process;
- if an employer is actively trying to increase the number of disabled people they employ;
- if an employer needs to know or the purposes of national security checks;

When inviting a candidate to interview, the School endeavours to ensure that an individual's needs are met by, for example:

- securing ground floor interview rooms,
- changing the font on question papers,
- printing assessments on coloured paper,
- allowing additional time to complete written assessments or tests.

All staff employed at the School should expect to be fully supported in the carrying out of their duties. In addition to reasonable working adjustments, a range of support may be offered to all staff that may be particularly relevant to those with complex and diverse needs. Reasonable efforts will be made to enable a member of staff who becomes disabled or whose level of disability increases to continue working in the post in which they were originally employed.

The role and working conditions of disabled staff will be reviewed periodically, according to individual needs, and especially in light of any changes in their disability. Each disabled member of staff will have an opportunity at least annually to discuss any current employment issues they may have and any future training and development needs. Staff who have declared a disability may choose to include this discussion as part of their appraisal review or as a separate discussion following their annual appraisal.

Definitions of Disability

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is considered disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

A substantial impairment is when the effects of an impairment, while not minor nor trivial, may be alleviated or removed by aids or on-going treatment. An impairment which has lasted, or is expected to last, more than 12 months is considered long-term. This definition includes those who have had a disability in the past and/or whose impairment is fluctuating or recurring.

A disability can arise from a wide range of impairments, including but not limited to):

- Specific learning differences (SpLDs), such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Dyslexia and Dyspraxia
- Sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing
- Impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects such as depression, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic fatigue syndrome (ME) and epilepsy
- Progressive conditions, such as motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy, forms of dementia
- Organ specific conditions, including respiratory problems, such as asthma, and cardiovascular diseases, including thrombosis, stroke, and heart disease
- Cancer, HIV/AIDs, Multiple Sclerosis (MS) are covered from the point of diagnosis, even if symptoms have yet to occur
- Mental health conditions, such as schizophrenia, eating disorders, bipolar affective disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders, personality disorders. Depressive illnesses can amount to disabilities where they are long-term.

Disclosure and Confidentiality

The School will respect the confidentiality of disabled people and will not reveal information without the prior agreement of the individual.

The decision of whether or not to disclose a disability and the timing of any disclosure belongs entirely to the individual. However, if opportunities have been given to disclose a disability and an individual decides not to do so, then the School will not be able to offer them individual support or adjustments.

The School will manage the process of information sharing and will treat all personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Access to disability-related information will be provided on a need-to-know basis only, in order for reasonable adjustments to be implemented.

Where a student is on a placement or similar, as part of their degree course, requests for any reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act (2010) should be made and managed under Support Through Studies, as well as any additional reasonable adjustments which may be specifically required for collaborative/external activity.

Protection Against Harassment and Bullying

All staff, students and other stakeholders should expect to be treated with respect at all times. All complaints of harassment or bullying will be treated seriously and thoroughly investigated. Disciplinary action can be taken in cases where bullying/harassment have been proved.

Any act of harassment or bullying toward a person based on their sexuality will normally, in first instances, be dealt with under the School's [Sexual Misconduct, Harassment and Related Behaviours Policy](#).