

## CODE OF PRACTICE ON REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR STUDENTS

### Introduction and Context

1. This Code of Practice provides a framework for the implementation of reasonable adjustments to support students with a disability. The University of Suffolk aims to ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential and that no student is disadvantaged because of a disability in their admission to, and participation in, the learning environment of the Institution and in demonstrating that they have achieved the learning outcomes of their programme of study.

2. The Student Charter states that the University undertakes to:

- create an environment that is welcoming and inclusive, with all students being treated fairly, with courtesy and respect.
- enable students to be partners in their learning and teaching and educational experience, whilst providing the best opportunity for all students to achieve in their academic and professional development.

3. The Equality and Diversity Policy states:

- We are committed to an inclusive approach to the delivery of higher education (HE). We are working to ensure the University is open and accessible to all those wishing to participate in and are capable of benefiting from HE.
- We are committed to protecting people with “protected characteristics” and have a zero-tolerance approach to acts of discrimination or exclusion. The protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race and ethnicity; religion or belief; sexual orientation.

4. The University of Suffolk is subject to the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) which requires that the Institution pays due regard to the need to:

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

5. The Act confirms that a person has a disability if:

- they have a physical or mental impairment, and;
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

6. According to the Act, the effect of an impairment is a long-term effect if:

- it has lasted at least 12 months;
  - the period for which it lasts is likely to be at least 12 months; or
  - it is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected.
7. The Act (section 20) confirms the following requirements for reasonable adjustments:
- Where a provision, criterion or practice (of an institution) puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take, to avoid the disadvantage.
  - Where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take, to avoid the disadvantage.
  - Where a disabled person would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take, to provide the auxiliary aid.
8. The University of Suffolk is also committed to operating in line with the expectation set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
9. The University has a duty to anticipate reasonable adjustments in the design of its programmes and their assessment, and in the development and provision of other facilities and services that support students and their learning.
10. A reasonable adjustment is a reasonable variation or alteration made to Institutional processes so that a disabled student can access without disadvantage the HE opportunities of the Institution without compromising the expected academic standards. Such reasonable adjustments could apply to:
- the process of admission to the Institution;
  - the delivery of teaching, consistent with the learning outcomes of a programme or module;
  - the examination and assessment process.
11. There is no duty on the University to make adjustments to genuine ‘competence standards’, which are academic, medical or other standards applied by or on behalf of the University for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or capability. However, the duty does apply to the way in which that standard is assessed.

12. This Code of Practice applies to all enrolled students at the University of Suffolk. Students on courses which lead to professional registration may be subject to additional requirements detailed by relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

13. Reasonable adjustments are made on the basis of identifiable evidence verified by appropriate staff from Student Life or equivalent department. Reasonable adjustments a student may have had prior to their starting a programme of study at the University of Suffolk will not necessarily be adopted by the Institution.

## **Responsibilities**

### ***The Institution***

14. ***The University of Suffolk as an Institution*** accepts overall responsibility for implementation of this Code; however individual students and members of staff are required to abide by the principles set out under this Code of Practice and to assist the University in complying with it.

15. ***Schools and Partners*** are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments implemented at course level (for example by reviewing the performance of students with a disability in comparison with other groups of students through Risk-Based Monitoring and Enhancement (RiME) processes). ***The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee*** is responsible for monitoring effectiveness at Institutional level.

As far as possible any likely barriers to disabled students should be anticipated and removed. Where that is not possible, reasonable adjustments should be made to overcome those barriers as far as reasonably practicable.

Student Life or equivalent should be consulted by appropriate groups to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are considered at the planning stage.

16. ***Student Life or equivalent disability department at Partner sites*** has primary responsibility for working with individual students with disabilities in advising on their support needs and recommending an appropriate course of action. ***Schools and Partners*** and relevant ***Professional Services*** are responsible for ensuring these are implemented satisfactorily.

Student Life should be consulted where the programme of study involves work placements, field work and study or work abroad and will discuss these with the student and the relevant academic team to ensure all reasonable eventualities are anticipated and reasonable adjustments made.

17. ***Course Leaders*** are responsible for coordinating reasonable adjustments for their programme/s of study and will be the contact point for Student Life in this regard. When Student Life have completed and agreed a Reasonable Adjustment Agreement (RAA) for a student on a

course, it is the responsibility of the Course Leader to disseminate this to the course team and ensure they are aware and able to make the required adjustments. Where there may be concerns about any student with a disability, or about the recommended adjustments, the Course Leader should consult Student Life Department.

18. **Personal Academic Coaches** (or equivalent such as Academic Assessors) are a key regular contact point for all students and will prompt students to reflect on their reasonable adjustment agreements and how effective they are in support of the students' learning and progression. Where issues with the effectiveness of agreed reasonable adjustment agreements arise, students will be referred to the Student Life team to enable further discussion and possible revision of the agreement.

19. **Academic Administrators** (or equivalent at partners) will support with the dissemination of information on reasonable adjustments, through the provision of reports to Schools and/or course teams.

20. **All staff** involved in teaching and assessment, including any such persons not actually employed by the Institution, have responsibility for ensuring that reasonable adjustments, as agreed between the student, the School/Partner and Student Life are implemented as specified. In instances where a student discloses a disability or other reason such that they may be supported through a reasonable adjustment the staff member should refer the student to Student Services, and also inform Student Life to prompt their follow up. In cases of uncertainty, advice should be sought from Student Life or, in the case of adjustments to assessment only, from the Exams Office.

21. **Staff** are kept updated on good practice and current legislation through information on the University of Suffolk intranet (MySuffolk), online resources, staff training programmes and briefings, coordinated by Student Life Department.

22. **Students** Students are encouraged to disclose their disability at every possible opportunity and not just through the admissions process. Once a student has disclosed a disability to any member of staff, the Institution has a responsibility not to discriminate.

23. In order for a reasonable adjustment to be put in place, students need to disclose their disability, and comply with the Institution's procedures for determining and implementing their support and adjustments. Reasonable adjustments cannot be delivered unless a disability is disclosed, and appropriate consent given for dissemination of necessary information for implementation to a limited number of individuals on a 'need to know basis'. Students should also

note that the process for agreeing a reasonable adjustment agreement can take a significant period of time, and that there may be time constraints on when a reasonable adjustment can be applied, for example exam arrangements cannot be implemented less than three weeks before the exam date.

24. In the case of professional courses, students must also ensure they comply with any disclosure requirements specific to their programme of study in relation to ethical, registration of fitness to practise requirements of the Institution, and the relevant registration authority.

25. Although every effort to implement reasonable adjustments will be made, students are also required to show reasonable diligence in their conduct and programme of study. Students are encouraged to refer to those points in the Student Charter and the General Regulations which relate to their responsibilities as a student.

### **Identifying the Need for Reasonable Adjustments**

26. Apart from where it might impact on a student's fitness to practise, decisions on admission to the Institution are made regardless of any disability which a student may have declared prior to admission. Applicants are advised of support services and how to contact Student Life to discuss their individual needs, identify support arrangements and draw up a RAA. Should students choose not to disclose in this way, they are invited to contact Student Life directly via the online enrolment process.

27. In some cases reasonable adjustments may already be implemented (as anticipatory adjustments) at course level through inclusive teaching and learning practices:

- the specific design and delivery of teaching and the individual development of student's learning
- tutorial and feedback processes
- provision of advanced material for lectures. This may include outline lecture notes, copies of presentation slides and reading materials prior to the lecture, available on Learn or in hard copy
- provision of reading lists well in advance
- allowing personal use of a Dictaphones in taught sessions
- consideration of extensions to deadlines

28. For all students with a Specific Learning Difficulty, disability, including mental health conditions or other health conditions or multiple disabilities, additional reasonable adjustments may need to be considered. These will be determined on a case-by-case basis and may include consideration of alternative forms of assessment. In such cases Module Leaders (If required, in

consultation with Student Life) will discuss and agree individual adjustments as appropriate. Students should note there may be time constraints in applying reasonable adjustments, for example in the case of exam arrangements.

29. In the event that a student's needs are significant, appropriate adjustments will be considered and, where reasonable, agreed by the School or Partner, student and Student Life on a case-by-case basis. Additional input may be sought from relevant external services, including Occupational Health.

30. For students with disabilities as defined by the Act (points 5 and 6 of this Code refer), adjustments are only made from the point at which a RAA comes into effect. A new RAA must be put in place for any new programme of study undertaken by the student. Reasonable adjustments such as extra time for examinations can only be put in place once students have provided evidence of their disability or Specific Learning Difficulties and an RAA has been drawn up – screening results for dyslexia or other Specific Learning Difficulties do not constitute a diagnosis.

31. Students can declare a disability at any time whilst they are at the University of Suffolk. All students who consent to their information being shared will be provided with a RAA and students are advised of a likely timescale for support to be organised. Where there are any concerns within the School/Partner regarding the support that is recommended, an early case conference with Student Life should be arranged. Similarly, should a student have any concerns about their support at any time during their course, they are advised to speak to their Personal Academic Coach or Academic Assessor in the first instance or Student Life so that a case conference can be convened.

32. If a disability which might require reasonable adjustments emerges or is disclosed after the student has been admitted to the programme of study, then the student is advised to discuss matters with Student Life. Any student is free to refer themselves to Student Life without informing their School/Partner.

### **Confidentiality**

33. Information regarding a student's disability is confidential and Student Life, the Personal Academic Coach or Academic Assessor and the Course Leader must respect the dignity and confidentiality of a student disclosing a disability. Apart from cases where failure to do so might put at risk the health and safety of the student or others, or otherwise in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), information will not be disclosed further without the student's written consent and if this consent is given, any further disclosure will need to be on a

'need to know' basis. Should a student disclose to a member of staff at the University, or should a member of staff become aware of a student with a disability, the protocol for disclosure and consent should be followed. If a student declines to make this full disclosure then it should be understood that the help and support offered may be significantly limited.

34. The Student Life team will seek the written consent of students to share information about their disability and reasonable adjustment arrangements. Students have the right to request that the existence or nature of their disability be treated as confidential.

35. In determining whether it is reasonable to make an adjustment, staff will give regard to the extent that making the adjustment is consistent with a disabled student's request for confidentiality. In some instances this might mean that reasonable adjustments have to be provided in an alternative way in order to ensure confidentiality. In some cases a request for confidentiality may mean that a less satisfactory reasonable adjustment is provided or that no reasonable adjustment can be provided.

### **Implementing Reasonable Adjustments**

36. The Course Leader is responsible for implementing the recommendations in a RAA and should discuss and agree with the student the practical implementation of the recommendations. Should any element of the RAA or its implementation give cause for concern, the Course Leader should consult with Student Life who will review the RAA and implement any necessary changes. Where appropriate, staff are encouraged to discuss the practical implementation of a RAA with the student. The outcomes of any discussion between the Course Leader and the student should be agreed by both the student and the appropriate member of staff and recorded in writing. Student Life should be consulted regarding the need for any significant alteration or addition to the RAA.

37. The Course Leader is responsible for disseminating the adjustments recommended in the RAA to all appropriate staff within the School/Partner, for example the Personal Academic Coach or Academic Assessor and all teaching staff involved with that student. In consultation with teaching staff the Course Leader should consider all aspects of the programme of study to include lab work and practical sessions, placements, field work, study or work abroad and distance learning. These should be discussed with the student and Student Life to ensure where possible reasonable adjustments are made in advance.

38. Alternative examination and assessment arrangements are put in place by the Exams Office and are given only on the recommendation of appropriate staff from Student Life or equivalent department at Partners.

39. In cases where the School/Partner is unable to implement a certain adjustment on the basis that it is not reasonable, it should record the reasoning for this in writing and retain a copy in the student file. A decision not to implement a certain adjustment should be included in the review of support carried out in accordance with paragraph 36.

40. It is good practice for the School/Partner to hold a review with each disabled student, at least annually, and to direct the student to Student Life for further advice if this seems appropriate. In some cases where the student's condition changes or concerns are raised with the Personal Academic Coach or Academic Assessor, it may be appropriate for the School/Partner to hold a review with individual students more frequently.

41. Students should notify Student Life if there are any problems in receiving support, or if their condition changes so as to give rise to the need for an alteration to their level of support. The Personal Academic Coach or Academic Assessor should ensure that Student Life and the relevant Course Leader are notified of any additional needs. Any changes to a RAA should be made via Student Life. A student is also free to seek confidential advice from the Students' Union Advice Centre.

### **Adjustments for Short Term Conditions**

42. Although short term conditions are not specifically referred to in the legislation, Schools/Partners are encouraged to take a flexible and sympathetic approach to significant and properly verified short term conditions.

43. This Code of Practice defines a 'short term condition' as any condition not covered by the definition of a disability as defined by the Act as noted in paragraphs 5 and 6 above.

44. Schools/Partners may seek the advice of Student Life in handling such issues and may, at their discretion, put in place short term adjustments provided that properly verified evidence of the need has been produced.

45. The Extenuating Circumstances Policy could also be used as a way of handling some short term conditions and should be consulted in addition to this Code of Practice.

46. In the event of a short-term condition or other health concern arising during the examination/assessment period, Schools/Partners should act on a case-by-case basis. Medical or other appropriate evidence must always be sought, and the Exams Office informed.

### **Further Information**



47. In cases where it is felt that the disability of the student is such that they are not 'fit to study' and that embarking on, or continuing with, their programme of study is impossible, then a referral will be made to the Occupational Health service, consulting with the student as necessary in order to make recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor on this basis.

48. Schools/Partners should also consider whether it is appropriate in any given circumstances to discuss with the student the option of intercalating in accordance with the relevant section of the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

49. If Schools/Partners or students have any concerns or queries about the implementation of this Code of Practice, advice and assistance is available from Student Life Department. The Student Centre can also advise students about the University's extenuating circumstances, intercalation, appeals and complaints processes as appropriate.