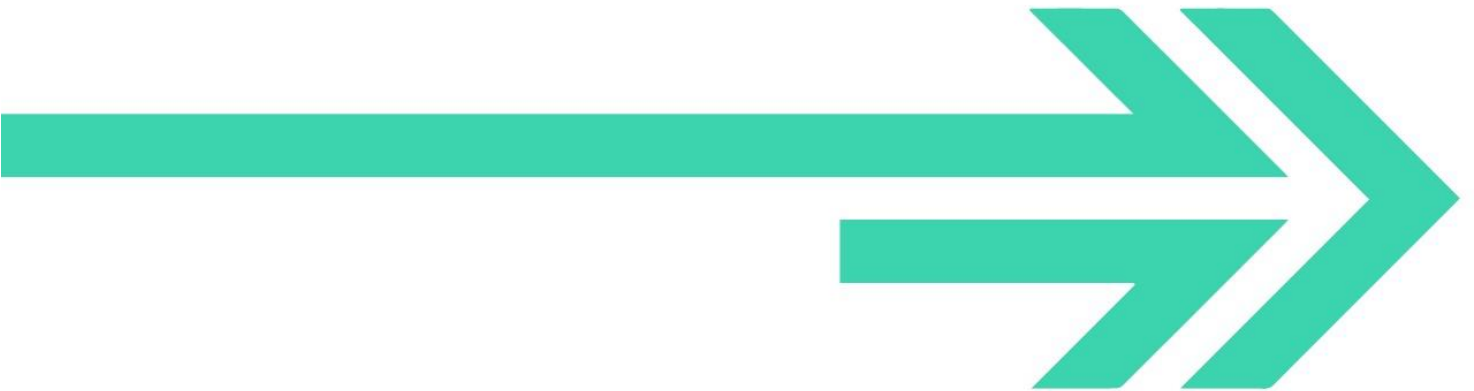




QAHE DISABILITY POLICY



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1. Introduction

QA Higher Education (QAHE) is committed to a policy of equal opportunities for disabled students and aims to create an environment which enables them to participate fully in the life of the University. The objective of the policy is to ensure that members of QAHE community with disabilities (mental, physical, learning disability or difficulty eg dyslexia) have access to both facilities and a learning environment that is, wherever reasonably possible, comparable to that of their non-disabled peers. This policy recognises that disabled students are an integral part of QAHE community. It takes as its starting point the premise that accessible and appropriate provision is not 'additional' but a core element of the overall service which QAHE makes available. The broad policy aims are based on the Equality Act 2010.

2. Definition of Disability

Under the Equality Act a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People who have had a disability within the definition are protected from discrimination even if they have since recovered. Impairment covers physical or mental impairment which includes sensory impairment such as affecting sight or hearing.

2.1 What these terms mean

Someone has an 'impairment' if any of their physical or mental abilities are reduced in some way. It could be because of an illness or medical condition but it does not have to be.

A 'substantial adverse effect' means more than just a minor impact on someone's life or how they can do certain things. This may fluctuate or change and may not happen all the time.

'Long-term' means either:

- it will affect them or is likely to affect them for at least 12 months
- it's likely to last for the rest of their life

It can still be considered long-term if the effects come and go. For example, a fluctuating condition might affect someone for a few months at a time with other times when they're not affected.

'Normal day-to-day activities' include things people do in their home and social life. It also includes things that let people participate fully with their studies.

2.2 Progressive conditions

A progressive condition gets worse over time. Examples include Alzheimer's disease, motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy and Parkinson's.



Someone with a progressive condition is considered by law to have a disability as soon as it starts to have an effect on their normal day-to-day activities, as long as this is likely to be long-term. The effect does not have to be substantial as long as it's likely to become substantial in the future.

2.3 What is automatically classed as a disability

People with these conditions and impairments are automatically protected under disability discrimination law:

- cancer
- an HIV infection
- multiple sclerosis (MS)
- a visual impairment – if someone is certified as blind, severely sight impaired, sight impaired or partially sighted.

3. Policies and procedures

3.1 QAHE will ensure that in all policies, procedures, functions and activities, including strategic planning and resource allocation, consideration is given to the means of enabling disabled students' full participation in all aspects of the academic and social life of the institution.

3.2 QAHE's publicity, programme details and general information will be accessible to people with disabilities.

4. Disclosure and confidentiality

4.1 QAHE is mindful of its responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 1998 and will ensure the needs of disabled students are not compromised by the competing requirements of this legislation with the responsibilities it places on QAHE in respect of the Equality Act 2010.

4.2 A student with a disability will not always be obvious to us. It is up to institutions to encourage students to disclose if they are disabled. Ensuring an open and supportive culture in which students feel comfortable in disclosing their disabilities is essential and providing as many opportunities to disclose as possible.

4.3 If a member of staff has been told about a disability, then the member of staff is required to inform the Learning Support team and under no circumstances should it be kept confidential.

4.4 QAHE will develop an environment within which individuals feel able to disclose their disability. Encouragement and opportunity will be given to students to disclose any disability that may have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities so that a discussion can take place about disability-related reasonable adjustments or other support that may be required. Individuals can choose to bring someone to accompany them at meetings to provide extra support if required.

4.5 QAHE will also encourage students to disclose any condition which in the short term has substantial impact on their day-to-day activities to ensure



that appropriate support can be provided.

- 4.6** Disclosing a disability is a personal matter and it is up to individuals whether they decide to tell the organisation and if so when to do this. However, if opportunities have been given to disclose a disability and an individual decides not to, QAHE cannot make adjustments. If you have concerns about disclosure and would like to discuss these confidentially contact the Learning Support team.
- 4.7** Disclosed information will be treated in the strictest confidence. QAHE will require explicit, informed and written authority for the giving of consent in respect of the processing, both internally within QAHE and externally by third parties of any sensitive personal information which is disclosed.
- 4.8** If a disabled student is to work frequently on his/her own has special requirements in relation to fire or general evacuation QAHE would encourage them to bring this to the attention of the Learning Support team so that appropriate plans and arrangements can be made. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that QAHE are informed of any disability in order that any issues can be addressed.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

QAHE will monitor the applications, admissions, academic progress and nature of impairment of disabled students. QAHE will operate systems to monitor and review the effectiveness of provision for students with disabilities, evaluate progress and identify opportunities for enhancement. This includes monitoring representation of disabled students in different QAHE activities.

6. Participation and accessibility

- 6.1** All applications will be assessed on the basis of academic suitability for the course in question. Discussions about the support requirements of students will be separate from that consideration. Criteria and procedures used for selecting students will relate to the requirements of the programme, including any professional requirements, and will not disadvantage or debar applicants with disabilities.
- 6.2** QAHE will ensure that students with disabilities will have access to the full range of support services, appropriate to their needs, which are available to their non-disabled peers. Where existing services cannot be made accessible, QAHE will make reasonable alternative services and arrangements available.
- 6.3** QAHE Senior Management team will advise on exceptional (disability) cases which require consideration outside current policy (i.e. where exceptional and possibly unusual adjustments are required).
- 6.4** QAHE will make information available about access to buildings and support facilities to enable disabled students to make an informed choice of University.



6.5 QAHE may, very rarely reject an application for a place or withdraw the student from their studies on the grounds of disability where:

- there is the application of an academic, medical or other standard ("competence standard") applied by or on behalf of QAHE for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability. For example, if the chosen course of study leads to a professional qualification and the relevant professional body has set particular competence standards which would preclude membership by a student with a particular impairment. (In such circumstances, QAHE should, however, enter into discussions with a professional body to ascertain whether such competence standards may be amended to allow membership by a student).
- There are material and substantial reasons such as overriding health and safety/duty of care concerns. A fitness to study will be conducted in all instances.
- Essential reasonable adjustments cannot be made to the course content and the course's structure of delivery or to the provision of suitable staff or facilities.
- When barriers caused by professional requirements and/or by regulations of professional **bodies preclude membership by people with specific disabilities.**

7. International students

7.1 QAHE is committed to supporting international students in their academic studies in an equivalent way to home students so far as is reasonably possible and in line with Equality Act 2010.

7.2 International students are strongly encouraged to declare a disability, medical condition mental health difficulty or specific need at application stage. Where a disability is declared, the same procedures are followed as for home students. Students and prospective students from outside the UK should be aware that international students are not eligible for the UK Disabled Students' Allowance. Students are advised to contact their home Government for information on any funding that may be available as a disabled student.

7.3 As international students do not have access to the financial support that the UK Government provides for students who are residents of the United Kingdom it is essential that students take into account how they will be able to cover the cost of any residential support, e.g. personal care they may need whilst studying from the financial resources that are available to them.

7.4 The Learning Support will be made available to all prospective students who wish to declare a disability in order to provide students with sufficient



time to fully explore and understand the support they will need and the extent to which QAHE can provide it.

7.5 Support available to all students include:

- Support from the Learning Support team to record lectures and seminars;
- Mentoring support from Wellbeing Practitioners: Mental Health
- Limited loans of equipment;
- Use of computer, reader or scribe in exams.;
- Sign language and teachers for the deaf

7.6 Some other support arrangements may be more difficult to obtain and arrange, as well as being expensive. It is likely that the international student or their sponsor will need to provide the funds to cover this support. Support arrangements which fall into this category may include Personal care e.g. help with washing, dressing, shopping, cooking.

8. Teaching and learning

8.1 QAHE will ensure that the requirements of disabled students are considered during programme validation and review and that appropriate amendments are made. Programme specifications that raise barriers to access by disabled people will be reviewed and reasonable adjustments will be discussed with the University partner to look to minimise such barriers

8.2 Academics and the ACE team must plan and employ teaching and learning strategies, which make the delivery of the programme as inclusive as is possible and, where reasonable, allow adaptation to accommodate disabled students' individual requirements.

8.3 Assessment and examination policies, practices and procedures should provide disabled students with the same opportunities as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes, which may, in some cases, include alternative assessment and examination arrangements. However, in all instances, QAHE would follow the University's partners policies and processes.

8.4 Where studying is interrupted as a direct result of a disability-related cause, in consultation with the student and considering the specific requirements of his or her disability, a plan will be agreed to ensure that the student's academic progress is not compromised.

8.5 Where appropriate evidence is provided, that delayed completion of assessed work, non-attendance at examinations, deferral or withdrawal has been due to a disability related cause, QAHE will ensure that this is recorded in non-prejudicial terms in all academic progress files and appropriate adjustments will be made (e.g. study plans, Summary of Adjustments, exam extensions etc).



9. Fitness to study

QAHE has a responsibility to balance its duty of care for disabled students with its duty towards all other students and staff. QAHE will make every possible effort to support students who need to suspend their studies on the grounds of fitness to study. Further information and guidance can be found in our Fitness to Study policy.

10. Suspension of studies

Where a medical condition or disability prevent a student from continuing with their programme of study, QAHE will attempt to provide advice and support on the options available according to the best interests of the student. Before suspending or withdrawing students are encouraged to explore the implications of their decision through consultation with their Faculty, Learning Support and Get Back on Track teams.

11. Complaints

QAHE has in place policies and procedures to deal with complaints arising directly or indirectly from a student disability. In the first instance issues should be raised informally. Students should email the Head of Student Wellbeing at qahe.welfare@qa.com; it is anticipated that the vast majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage. Should it be necessary for a formal complaint to be made students should email qahe.complaints@qa.com.