



## Disability and Mental Health Support Policy

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Point Blank welcomes all students who meet the admissions requirements and who are motivated to benefit from the various programmes offered.
- 1.2. We are committed to actively promoting equality of opportunity ensuring that all students reach their learning potential and achieve success on an appropriate course of study. This means that disabled applicants and students may be entitled to receive support to enable them to participate as fully as possible in college life and to enable them to complete their programme of study successfully.
- 1.3. Point Blank welcomes applications from anyone regardless of disability. Central to the Student Disability and Mental Health Support Policy is the aim to look at the needs of the individual and enable accessibility to study at Point Blank.

## 2. Legal Context

- 2.1. The Equality Act 2010 drew together, simplified, strengthened and replaced previous legislation, consolidating equality legislation with respect to nine protected characteristics, including disability.
- 2.2. Related Policies & Procedures are:
  - Equality & Diversity
  - Equality & Diversity Charter
  - Student Charter
  - Additional Learning Support Policy
  - Fitness to Study

## 3. Purpose

- 3.1. Point Blank recognises its responsibility to make anticipatory and reasonable adjustments to all policies, procedures and provision of services, including teaching and learning, and actively seeks to widen the participation of students with disabilities in higher education.
- 3.2. Point Blank seeks to actively promote inclusive practices and encourages students to disclose information regarding additional needs as early as possible in the application process to allow support planning and provision to be most effective. Students can disclose their needs confidentially at any stage of the student life cycle.
- 3.3. We understand there is a transition into Higher Education when starting at Point Blank and our aim is to support students to study as independently as possible during their time here. We will support students to progress and gain strategies to succeed as independent graduates. It is the aim of Point Blank to foster independence, self-awareness and personal responsibility amongst students. We encourage students take an active part in the process and take appropriate steps to manage their own health and wellbeing in order to fulfil their academic potential.

## 4. Definition of Disability

- 4.1. The Equality Act (2010) makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people and places a positive duty to promote disability equality. Legally disability is described as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term (normally longer than 12 months) adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The range of disabilities includes:
  - sensory (visual / hearing / speech) impairment
  - a mental health issue
  - a mobility impairment
  - a dexterity impairment
  - a physical disability
  - Asperger's Syndrome or other autistic spectrum disorders
  - chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, epilepsy.)
  - chronic pain / chronic fatigue
  - specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia)
  - any other condition which has a long-term and adverse effect
- 4.2. The definition includes cancer, HIV/AIDS and Multiple Sclerosis effectively from the point of diagnosis.
- 4.3. Point Blank recognises its responsibility to make anticipatory and reasonable adjustments to all policies, procedures, and provision of services, including teaching and learning, and actively seeks to widen the participation of students with disabilities in higher education.

## 5. Responsibilities arising from the Policy

- 5.1. Students are responsible for disclosing their disability to Point Blank
- 5.2. Students have the right not to disclose a disability or to request that the existence or nature of their disability be treated as strictly confidential and therefore not shared with relevant staff across Point Blank. Requests for strict confidentiality may mean that a less satisfactory adjustment is provided or that no adjustment can be provided.
- 5.3. Students are responsible for requesting any review of implemented reasonable adjustments, if such adjustments are not proving effective in meeting their entitlements.
- 5.4. Where students do not inform Point Blank of any disability and the effect of said disability at the point of application, Point Blank may defer admission onto the course whilst reasonable adjustments are considered or if the student has commenced the course, temporarily interrupt study whilst reasonable adjustments are considered.

## 6. Responsibility for the Disability and Mental Health Support Policy

- 6.1. The Head of Registry is responsible for the implementation and operational review of this policy. The policy is reviewed annually.
- 6.2. The Wellbeing Team have delegated authority to make minor changes to Policy wording and content. Such changes will be reported to the Head of Registry.

- 6.3. Major changes to the policy, such as significant content changes, changes to responsibilities, policy application or changes resulting from new legislation, must be approved directly by the Quality and Standards Committee.

## 7. Disclosure

- 7.1. Applicants are strongly encouraged to disclose their disability to Point Blank as early as possible in the application process and as much information as possible should be provided in respect of the nature of the condition and how it affects the applicant. Should the applicant be required to attend an interview or audition then applicants will be asked if they require any reasonable adjustments to be put in place to ensure an applicant is not disadvantaged.
- 7.2. If a disability is disclosed in the initial application form, a Reasonable Adjustments Form will be sent to the student requesting details of their disability.
- 7.3. Should disability not be disclosed on the application form, further opportunity will be provided through the student registration form or by contacting the Wellbeing Team.
- 7.4. Point Blank will require medical evidence of the disability or evidence from an appropriately trained relevant expert in order to fully consider the request for adjustments and to determine whether Point Blank is able to support the student in their studies.
- 7.5. Should the student fail to provide the relevant information when requested Point Blank may not be able to assess what adjustments are required or put those adjustments in place, and entry may be deferred or study suspended.

## 8. Confidentiality

- 8.1. Students can seek confidential advice and support from the Wellbeing Team at any point.
- 8.2. Applicants and students have the right to request their disability is kept confidential. Where absolute or limited confidentiality has been requested, Point Blank may not be able to make adjustments that would otherwise be reasonable, particularly in relation to disabilities that are hidden and complex or where the related needs are specific to the individual.
- 8.3. Where confidentiality has not been requested, Point Blank will manage the process of information sharing and will treat all personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998); access to disability-related information will be provided on a need to know basis only, in order for reasonable adjustments to be implemented.
- 8.4. If a student chooses to disclose a disability informally to a tutor or any other member of staff (Admissions Officer, Personal Tutor, Programme Leader), then by law, Point Blank is deemed to know about that student's disability. Levels of confidentiality should be negotiated with the student and they should be encouraged to explore reasonable adjustments, but at the very least the disclosure should be documented with the Wellbeing Team.
- 8.5. Where a student is on an exchange to another institution or on a placement as part of their degree programme, relevant information may be shared with the consent of the student to ensure reasonable adjustment will be provided at the host institution/organisation and to ensure no disadvantage is experienced by students engaged on exchanges and placements.

## 9. Assessment of Need

- 9.1. Any student requiring an assessment of support needs is referred to the Wellbeing Team. This may involve a referral to an independent assessor to prepare a Study Needs Assessment Report. Applicants may be invited to discuss support requirements with the Wellbeing Team and the relevant Programme Leader responsible for their course. The Wellbeing Team will make recommendations relating to any support needs that can be met in line with the Additional Learning Support Policy. These can include:
  - arranging for non-medical help (i.e. specialist tutors, mentors, note takers, transcription support)
  - recommendations regarding examination arrangements
  - advice about physical access to courses
  - advice to staff regarding disability awareness
  - advice about the Disabled Students Allowance
  - Advice on producing written material in alternative formats where possible.
- 9.2. All disabled students have the opportunity to have their needs clearly stated and additional support requirements will be documented in a Learning Support Plan drawn up between the student and Point Blank. This will be confirmed and signed by the student and shared with relevant teaching and administrative staff unless the student requests otherwise.
- 9.3. Assistance and Information on the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) application process will be provided.
- 9.4. In circumstances where a disabled student has complex needs and/or Point Blank is being asked to make an adjustment and hence provide the funding for it, Point Blank may refer the case to the Executive Committee to ascertain the adjustments that are reasonable in the specific circumstances and the extent to which Point Blank is reasonably able to support the student. Point Blank is required to ensure that each applicant can meet the learning outcomes of the course as per the validation document approved by Middlesex University (Point Blank's validating partner). Any adjustments required to make a change to the learning outcomes to facilitate course completion are required to be approved by Middlesex University prior to an offer of a place on the course.
- 9.5. Very occasionally, it may not be possible to make the adjustments required to enable the applicant to undertake the course applied for. For example, this may be because the person is unable to meet the course learning outcomes under the terms of the Middlesex validation agreement. In these situations, the School and the Student Support Team would work with the student to consider if a place on an appropriate alternative programme could be offered. If no agreement can be reached regarding an alternative programme, and Point Blank decides that it cannot offer a place to the student, the applicant should be informed of this decision in writing by the General Manager (or his/her nominated representative) and provided with reasons as to why reasonable adjustments were not possible. The applicant should be supported in the process of securing an alternative programme at another institution.
- 9.6. In the event that Point Blank finds that it is unable to meet an applicant's support needs after an offer has been issued, it may in exceptional circumstances be necessary to withdraw the offer. In such cases the applicant will be informed of the

reasons as to why no reasonable adjustments were possible. Where possible, the applicant should be involved in discussions to find a place on an appropriate alternative programme at Point Blank and, if this is not possible, the applicant should be assisted in the process of securing an appropriate alternative programme at another institution.

## 10. Health & Wellbeing Fitness to Study Policy

- 10.1. The Fitness to Study policy outlines the steps that Point Blank will follow when concerns are raised about the fitness to study of one of its students. It is intended as a supportive procedure which can be used by staff when a student's health, wellbeing and/or behaviour is having a detrimental impact on their ability to progress academically and function at Point Blank. In addition, the procedure should be used for any student whose ability to cope with student life, to study or progress on their course is compromised as the result of their health, wellbeing or a disability. Any student who is absent due to serious health issues (including mental health) or injury is requested to attend a 'Fitness to Study' meeting.

## 11. Assessment and Examinations

- 11.1. Point Blank has a policy of providing special assessment and examination arrangements, where necessary, for disabled students. Any adjustments required will be included in the Learning Support Plan and will be agreed in advance with the Assessment Team. Adjustments will cover the duration of the student's course unless otherwise stated.
- 11.2. The Assessments Team will be responsible for ensuring that the Assessment Adjustment is reflected on the relevant assignment brief.
- 11.3. Any further ad hoc or additional adjustments requested by the student should be made directly to the Assessments team and will only be added to the Learning Support Plan if agreed by Assessments and the Wellbeing Team.
- 11.4. Students requiring adjustments to be made prior to taking unseen examinations, must make this situation known at least one month prior to the date of the examination.

## 12. Publication and Review

- 12.1 We will publish this Policy and any associated advice and guidance and make it available on our website.
- 12.2 This Policy will be reviewed regularly and will be amended from time to time in accordance with legislative changes. When statutory law changes, the Policy is held automatically to have been amended by that change and it will be updated as soon as is practically possible.