

Disability Support Information for Managers

Introduction

Imperial College is committed to providing equality of opportunity to all staff and is a “Two Ticks” employer¹. Managers have a key role in helping the College achieve and maintain this aim. As an educational establishment the College has a duty to be ‘anticipatory’ to the needs of disabled students, and extending this best practice to staff is key. Acting in an ‘anticipatory’ fashion expects education providers to have undertaken planning for the needs of disabled people as a whole, as opposed to simply responding on a case-by-case basis.

These guidance notes provide information on how a manager can fulfil their responsibilities and provide support to a disabled staff member. In any situation, a manager's first concern once aware of a disability is to ascertain whether the person needs support or adjustments in their work or working conditions and to pro-actively provide for these needs.

The aim of this guidance

This guidance can be used to address the following:

- managers who will be interviewing disabled candidates;
- managers supporting a member of staff with a disability;
- managers who have a team member who has recently disclosed a disability.

In the first instance, any prospective employees are encouraged to state if they need any particular arrangements to be made, or support provided, if invited for interview. A new employee is encouraged to disclose their disability confidentially using the online ICIS system and to speak directly to their line manager. An existing employee may develop a disability or impairment that has not previously impacted on their work. In some cases a person may only become aware that they have a disability after they experience difficulties with certain tasks or activities. Individuals with a long-standing "unseen" disability such as a mental health problem may only disclose its existence after they have settled into a job: concern that they might not be offered the job may inhibit them from disclosing it at recruitment.

What counts as a disability?

The Equality Act (2010) defines a disability as any condition that substantially interferes with a person’s ability to carry out day-to-day activities and lasts, or is expected to last, for more than twelve months is considered a disability. Examples of conditions that are defined as a disability are given in the Appendix 2 below. Normal day-to-day activities are defined as involving any of the following:

- mobility;
- doing something with your hands;
- physical coordination;
- continence (controlling your bladder and bowels);
- ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects;
- speech, hearing or eyesight;
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand.

¹ For more information please see Appendix 1

Providing support

An employer is legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to successfully carry out their work. [Imperial Expectations](#), also emphasises the key role managers play in upholding equality and diversity in the workplace. In College, the line manager has the primary responsibility for ensuring that the necessary adjustments are in place for any disabled staff they manage. There are a number of sources of advice and assistance available in College to help you in meeting this responsibility, please see information below about support in College.

All staff are encouraged to record and update their personal details on their HR records. This assists College in planning for meeting the needs of disabled staff, e.g. for monitoring purposes and for demonstrating compliance with equality legislation.

Determining support needs

Firstly, it is essential to speak to the member of staff. Individuals are the experts on the effects of their disability and are best placed to discuss their support needs. It is important to avoid making assumptions. Ask the member of staff whether and how the disability affects them in the workplace and what support might be useful.

Most adjustments are made on a common sense basis following discussion between a manager and the member of staff in respect of what might be helpful and possible. "Expert" advice from a disability specialist, Occupational Health or HR can be useful but is not always required. Such help is readily available in College if you are unsure what support is appropriate or how to arrange this, please see support available in College below.

Reasonable adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is the legal term for any adaptation made in the workplace to ensure equal access and opportunity for a disabled person. Adjustments should be made to avoid any disabled staff being put at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled staff. The need to make reasonable adjustments can apply to the working arrangements, or adapting physical aspects of the workplace. Adjustments will vary according to the nature of the impairment, the effect of this on the person's work and the type of work that they do.

Not all disabled persons will require adjustments: in some cases their job may be able to be carried out without requiring any particular adjustment. However, prior to any decision making, the member of staff will need to communicate their needs and their preferred work style and how to carry out their role.

For those who require an adjustment to enable them to fulfil their work duties, the adjustment may be very simple. It can be understanding that the person will carry out their work in a different way to other members in your team. Examples of reasonable adjustment can be found in the table in Appendix 3, at the end of this document.

In other circumstances more specific support might be necessary, examples include:

- providing equipment (for example assistive computer software or a height adjustable desk)
- changes to the workplace or the physical environment to improve accessibility
- alterations to a person's duties, working routines or hours

- reallocation of minor duties or tasks to another member of staff
- the services of a support worker (for example, a personal assistant or sign-language interpreter)
- written materials into accessible formats for smart phone or tablet readers
- agreeing time off or a flexi-time arrangement to enable the person to attend for treatment
- training or coaching to help acquire new skills and/or ways of working

Attending appointments

The expectation is where possible appointments related to an employee's disability will be arranged outside normal working hours. However, where this is not possible, examples of leave considered under this guidance, where staff can attend in working time include:

- Hearing aid tests
- Any aids that may need adjusting, repairing or replacement
- Training with a guide dog or hearing dog
- Counselling or therapeutic treatment
- Complementary therapy that is related to the disability
- Regular medical treatments related to the declared disability, such as dialysis or blood transfusions
- Chemotherapy and subsequent recovery

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Line managers and Heads of Department may wish to seek further advice from the Equality and Diversity Unit and the local HR Faculty Advisers for more information.

Support available in College

Human Resources: [HR Advisers](#) can advise on implementation of adjustments, particularly where these might require alterations to a person's job or hours of work. HR will also advise on reasonable adjustment and how best, and sensitively, to introduce any necessary adjustments.

Equality and Diversity Unit: The Equalities Unit has a specialist **Equality and Diversity manager** who will support disabled staff and advise their managers, alongside HR. If a more specialist assessment is required e.g. to advise on or select appropriate software packages to assist with data input or screen reading the adviser will assist with obtaining this from an external resource, e.g. liaising with Access to Work or other specialist assessors. To contact her please email l.okhai@imperial.ac.uk or T: 42887

[The Equality and Diversity Unit's](#) purpose is to ensure compliance, promote diversity, inclusion and fair treatment, and ensure equality is embedded throughout College. It provides advice and guidance on policy development and implementation, arranges and ensures delivery of specialist training, encourages positive action initiatives, such as [the Two Ticks positive about disability symbol](#), along with a range of activities to promote these aims.

Occupational Health (OH) Service: [The Occupational Health Service](#) provides services to protect health at work, assess and advise on fitness for work and to ensure that health issues are effectively managed.

OH can provide advice about adjustments that may be appropriate to accommodate impairment which arises from an acute illness or exacerbation of an active medical condition. Similarly, with the

staff member's agreement, you can refer the person for an occupational health assessment. The Adviser will then see the person in clinic, undertake a formal assessment of their needs and provide a report making recommendations on reasonable adjustments. This report belongs to the staff member who can choose to share it with their manager.

OH Advisers can also assist the Equality and Diversity Manager with workplace assessments and provide advice on adaptations to office furniture and computer workstations. OH hold a small range of alternative office chairs, computer keyboards and input devices that can be lent out to staff on a trial basis to see whether it meets their needs before advising purchase where needed.

Building managers: if any physical alterations are required to rooms or buildings to help with accessibility you should discuss this with your local building manager.

College Fire Officer: The [College Fire Officer](#) will assist with risk assessments for those who, in case of an emergency, may be unable to exit a building unaided. If an individual does require assistance the fire officer will draw up a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP).

The Disability Advisory Service: are primarily for students, however in some cases they may be able to carry out a dyslexia screening test on staff and advise them on where they could get a full assessment if this was indicated.

Able@Imperial: is the [College's staff forum for disabled staff](#), staff with disabled dependents and staff who have an interest in disability in the workplace. There is an e-mailing list and a core working group who set annual objectives and organise awareness raising events. To find out more please email l.okhai@imperial.ac.uk

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be respected at all times. It is advisable when speaking with the member of staff to ask them whether colleagues (who may need to know about their disability) can be told something of their disability. This may be particularly important in situations where adjustments will require changes to the work of other team members; it can be useful for others to have some understanding of the situation. In the rare case you may be concerned that a disclosure may pose serious risk of harm to the member of staff or to others then it may be necessary to inform Human Resources or the Safety Department, even if the member of staff did not agree to this. This is likely to be a very rare circumstance and must be carefully considered. Advice can be sought from HR, OH and the Equality and Diversity Unit.

Disability in recruitment

For general advice on how to ensure that you do not inadvertently disadvantage disabled persons in recruitment see Recruitment Guidance note number one:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/hr/procedures/recruitment/recruitselection/guidancenotesrecselection/gn1>

Requests from potential applicants for information to be provided in alternative formats should always be complied with. If you need assistance in providing this contact the HR team assisting with the recruitment.

Both the College Disability Policy and Two Ticks accreditation require that disabled applicants who

meet the minimum essential criteria for a post must be short-listed for interview. Ensure all applicants are given information on the interview format and invite all applicants to identify if they require any particular arrangements. A candidate with a speech impairment, for example, may request extra time to give a presentation. All reasonable requests should be met.

At interview you should not ask questions about a disabled candidate's impairment. However, you should respond to any questions the candidate asks about adjustments to accommodate their disability.

For more information on fair selection process see Recruitment Guidance notes points seven and nine:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/hr/procedures/recruitment/recruitselection/guidancenotesrecselection>

For more information about Two Ticks and recruitment see:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/equality/disabilities/twoticks>

Funding available through Access to Work

Access to Work is a Department of Work and Pensions sponsored scheme that provides grants to purchase equipment or training for disabled staff. They may also be able to help fund travel costs for someone unable to use public transport or pay for a support worker if this is necessary. They carry out their own assessment of the person's needs and award grants on the basis of this. When necessary they will arrange for the assessment be undertaken by an assistive technology specialist or other specialist adviser.

New staff who require adjustments that will incur any cost are encouraged to apply to Access to Work for a needs assessment. Where possible, this needs to be done prior to starting work at the College, or within the first six weeks of their employment here. This should enable them to receive the maximum amount of support.

The costs of equipment or training will be shared with the College, although the scheme will pay 100% of costs if the application is made before the start of the staff member commencing work here or during the first six weeks of starting work. Access to Work may also be able to fully fund any additional travel costs or employment costs of a support worker.

For other costs, such as software or smaller ergonomic arrangements the College is expected to cover the first £1000, and 20% of costs over and above this amount up to £10,000. This includes any special dyslexia or SpLD assessments. Departments will be expected to fund any costs incurred in making adjustments up to a ceiling of £1000. For any costs above this, requests can be made to ask for funding from central College HR resources via the Equality and Diversity Unit.

Where Access to Work is making a grant towards the cost of adjustments the employer is expected to purchase the equipment of service from the provider recommended by Access to Work and reclaim the cost from them. The HR team for the department will usually process the reclaim.

Applying to Access to Work

The disabled staff member has to make the application themselves. The College cannot apply on the person's behalf although the dedicated Equality and Diversity Manager, an HR Adviser or an

OH Adviser can help with an application if needed. The London [Access To Work Centre](#) is contactable on 020 8426 3110 or email: atwosu.london@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

More detailed information on the application process can be found on the central [Access to Work](#) website as well as the [College's Access to Work page](#). The assessment is often made without reference to the employer but on occasion the assessor may contact an applicant's manager for information on the person's work or visit the workplace if there are access or ergonomic issues to assess.

Carer's responsibility for someone with a disability

Members of staff with a disabled child are entitled to a total of 18 weeks' leave which can be taken up until his/her 18th birthday. For staff with a disabled dependant, this could be a partner, adult child or parent, or for example, an elderly aunt or grandparent you provide care for, should refer to the Family Leave, Flexible Working and Special Leave policies.

For further advice and support on disability please contact the Equality and Diversity Manager who covers staff disability in the Equality and Diversity Unit on 42887 or email l.okhai@imperial.ac.uk.

Appendix 1: Two Ticks Positive About Disabled People symbol



The symbol is awarded by Jobcentre Plus to employers who have made commitments to employ, keep and develop the abilities of disabled staff.

The five commitments

Employers who use the disability symbol make five commitments regarding recruitment, training, retention, consultation and disability awareness.

These commitments are:

- to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and to consider them on their abilities
- to discuss with disabled employees, at any time but at least once a year, what both parties can do to make sure disabled employees can develop and use their abilities
- to make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment
- to take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make these commitments work
- to review these commitments each year and assess what has been achieved, plan ways to improve on them and let employees and Jobcentre Plus know about progress and future plans

Appendix 2: Examples of disability

A disability is any condition which impairs a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activity.

The definition includes:

- sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing (some visual impairments are automatically deemed to be a disability) ;
- physical impairments or illnesses that affect mobility, dexterity or control of movement e.g. prolonged use of a wheelchair or crutches, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, stroke;
- developmental conditions, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or autistic spectrum disorders (ASD);
- progressive diseases, such as motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy, forms of dementia and lupus;
- illnesses with impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects such as multiple sclerosis (MS), myalgic encephalitis [ME]/chronic fatigue syndrome [CFS], sickle cell anaemia, epilepsy and diabetes;
- mental health conditions and mental illnesses, such as depression, phobic anxiety, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorders, as well as personality disorders and some self-harming behaviours;
- HIV infection from the point of diagnosis even where there is no adverse effect on day-to-day living;
- cancer from the point of diagnosis even where there is no adverse effect on day-to-day living;
- other long-term illnesses that significantly impairs a person's ability to function, physically and/or mentally. This can be due to the effects of the illness or the effects or demands of treatment e.g. needing to attend hospital or taking debilitating or time-consuming treatment;
- facial disfigurements.

N.B.: It is important to note that staff with long term conditions, such as epilepsy or diabetes may be more vulnerable in labs and when undertaking lone working, leading to a potentially very dangerous situation in terms of their health and safety.

This list is not exhaustive.

Some specific impairments are excluded from the definition of disability those which could be relevant in employment include:

- addictions, other than as a result of the substance being medically prescribed, eg alcoholism, drug dependency or smoking addiction;
- deliberately inflicted disfigurements such as tattoos which have not been removed, skin piercing and something attached through such piercing;
- seasonal allergic rhinitis (egg hay fever), except where it aggravates the effect of another impairment such as unstable asthma, or severe chronic irreversible airflow limitation;
- problems with standard vision, corrected by contact lenses or spectacles

Appendix 3: Examples of reasonable adjustments

Disability	Area of consideration for line-manager and/or team	Possible adjustment
Anxiety	Travel in rush hour in crowded conditions	Allow flexible working to enable staff member to avoid peak periods
Autism spectrum	Team member understanding office culture and social norms in the office	Assign a 'buddy' to assist and explain office culture and norms. Explore the option of a mentor
Depression	Early shifts or working patterns could be a problem at certain points or time in the year	Adjust shifts/working hours to start later where this can be done ,for example 10am, as oppose to 8am with a later finish time
Dyslexia	In certain cases typing agendas, minutes and papers	Enable certain meetings to be recorded and install <i>Read and Write Gold</i> software to facilitate tasks.
Epilepsy (photosensitive)	This is a type of epilepsy where seizures are triggered by flashing or flickering lights.	Older types of computer monitors may trigger seizures in people who have photosensitive epilepsy . Ensuring all lights are in good working condition and do not flicker. Inform staff member prior to any intense flash photography
Hearing impairment	Feeling included in the team and being able to fully participate in meetings	Ensure all staff have hearing impairment training. Support the member of the team with appropriate technology and ask whether they would like a BSL interpreter at meetings depending on the HI.
Lupus	Being able to physically be present at work in the case of flare-ups/pain/treatment	Allow flexible working, working from home to aid with recovery.
Severe back pain	Sitting or standing for long periods of time	Full ergonomic assessment of desk station or working area and duties. Height adjustable desk may be required as well as regular standing or rest breaks
Visual impairment	Having access to information the same time as other members of the team	Use JAWS or Claro screen reading software with dictation tool like Dragon. Provide minutes and papers in advance, in a suitable format for the appropriate software reader. Find out what format the staff member prefers in terms of hard-copy format (e.g. Braille, large print)