

Free Church of Scotland College Disability Policy

The Free Church College is committed to building an inclusive, accessible and supportive environment which meets the needs of all staff, students and visitors. This includes a commitment to ensuring that disabled people enjoy equality of opportunity, and participate fully in the life and amenities of the College. Within this, we aim to identify and remove any barriers which inhibit access for disabled people to educational, social and employment opportunities.

In accordance with the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act, we understand disability to mean any physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect on people's ability to carry out normal day-to-day duties. This can include physical or mobility impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments, dyslexia, medical conditions and mental health difficulties.

Discrimination, on the other hand, we understand to mean (1) treating disabled people "less favourably" than others and (2) failing to make a reasonable adjustment when disabled are placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to others for a reason related to their disability.

However, the College seeks not merely to comply with the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act, but to conform to best practice in terms of institutional ethos, the provision of additional support, the training of staff and the adaptation of the physical environment.

Overall responsibility for the implementation of the College's Disability Policy lies with the College Senate, who have appointed Professor Donald M. MacDonald as Disability Co-ordinator. The Disability Co-ordinator's duties include

- Recommending anticipatory adjustments in view of the needs of future disabled students and staff
- Providing pre-entry advice for students with disability
- Serving as the first point of contact for any student or potential student who has a disability

- Offering support and advice to disabled students
- Ensuring an appropriate level of disability awareness throughout the College community
- Ensuring that the College's Disability Policy is kept under constant review

The employment of disabled people

- The College is committed to interviewing all disabled applicants who meet the essential published criteria for a job vacancy, and to considering them on their merits and abilities
- The College is committed to consulting with disabled staff to ensure that they have the support, resources and facilities they need to work to the best of their abilities, and to develop these abilities
- The College is committed to making every reasonable effort to make sure that staff who become disabled can continue in employment

Student Disability

The College is committed to developing an inclusive learning environment for all students, and welcomes enquiries from applicants suffering from such impairments as dyslexia, chronic medical problems, mental health conditions, impaired vision or hearing, and mobility problems.

Applicants are encouraged to disclose any disability at an early stage so that appropriate support may be arranged. Such support could include special arrangements for access, study and examinations. All such information disclosed to the College will be treated as "sensitive personal data" as defined by the Data Protection Act (1998) and will not be passed on to a third party without explicit signed consent.

Pre-entry advice

Initial information about the support available for disabled students can be obtained from the College's Disability Co-ordinator, Professor Donald M. MacDonald. His e-mail address is dmmacdonald@freescotcoll.ac.uk A personal interview with Professor MacDonald can be arranged on request.

Accessibility

- A ramp for wheel-chair access is available at the main entrance to the College

- A user-operated lift serves all floors
- All class-rooms, halls, common room, libraries and dining room have unimpeded access
- On-site parking is available (on request) for disabled students

Admissions

The College is fully committed to the principle that disabled students have an equal right to the benefits of higher education. Disabled applicants will be evaluated for admission by the same criteria as other applicants. As is the policy with all applications, disabled applicants will be interviewed by representatives of the College Senate, and in coming to a decision the Senate will focus not only on academic qualifications (the main criterion), but also on the applicant's levels of motivation and on his/her suitability for specific Free Church College programmes. The interview will also give disabled applicants an opportunity to visit the College and assess its facilities, and to discuss support requirements. However, the decision whether or not to offer a place on a College programme will be made on the basis of normal entry criteria. Requirements arising from disability will be addressed separately, and will normally have no bearing on the question of admission.

Assistive technology

For information and advice on specialist equipment and assistive technology for the disabled, students should consult the College's Computer Officer, Professor John A. MacLeod.

Dyslexia

Students who suspect that they have a dyslexia-related study problem are advised to consult Professor MacDonald. If appropriate, he will confer with the University of Glasgow's *Student Disability Service* with a view to arranging a Dyslexia Screening Assessment.

Library support

The Library has a high level of disability awareness, and will offer all possible support to disabled students. This support may include extended loans, private study facilities, a fetching and carrying service, help with the catalogue system and assistance with locating books and journals.

Exam support

Special examination arrangements may be made for students with temporary or permanent disability, to enable them to perform to the best of their ability. A student with disability or special needs should make his/her needs known to the Principal at the earliest opportunity, to allow adequate time for special arrangements to be made (in consultation with the University of Glasgow). All applications for special arrangements have to be supported by appropriate and relevant evidence of need.

In accordance with the practice of the University Glasgow, the range of possible special examination arrangements includes the following:

- Extra time
- Separate accommodation
- Use of ascribe
- Use of a reader
- Use of special equipment

Student accommodation

The College is non-residential, and does not provide an Accommodation Service.

Visitors

The College recognises its duty to meet the needs of all disabled visitors, in particular those who may wish to use the library or to attend public lectures, graduation ceremonies, special services or committee meetings. Visitors are encouraged to disclose their needs in advance. With reasonable notice, it should be possible to arrange car-parking for disabled visitors. Every effort will also be made, on request, to provide written or printed materials in accessible alternative formats (for example, Braille).

A loop system is available in the public lecture halls, lifts are available to all floors, and all venues and facilities have convenient, barrier-free access. “Front of house” staff have a high level of disability awareness, and appropriate arrangements are in place for the evacuation of disabled people in the event of fire or other emergency.

Responsibility

Everybody working within the College is responsible for ensuring that no disabled person suffers discrimination or unfair treatment within the College or in relation to its services on account of personal impairments. We further recognise it to be our duty to make all our services available to disabled people and to engage positively in removing all barriers of assumption, prejudice and stereotype.

Further information

Further information on Glasgow University Support Services, External Support Services, Disability Specific Organisations and Useful Resources for Students and Staff, can be found on the Glasgow University web-site at www.gla.ac.uk/studentdisability/Disabilitypolicy.html